

Fall 1991

Fall 1991

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In a Neighbor's Pond, I Find Cold Fire

*I wonder what could have made the rain,
That autumn was the only time for us, Emperor Gorbachev.*

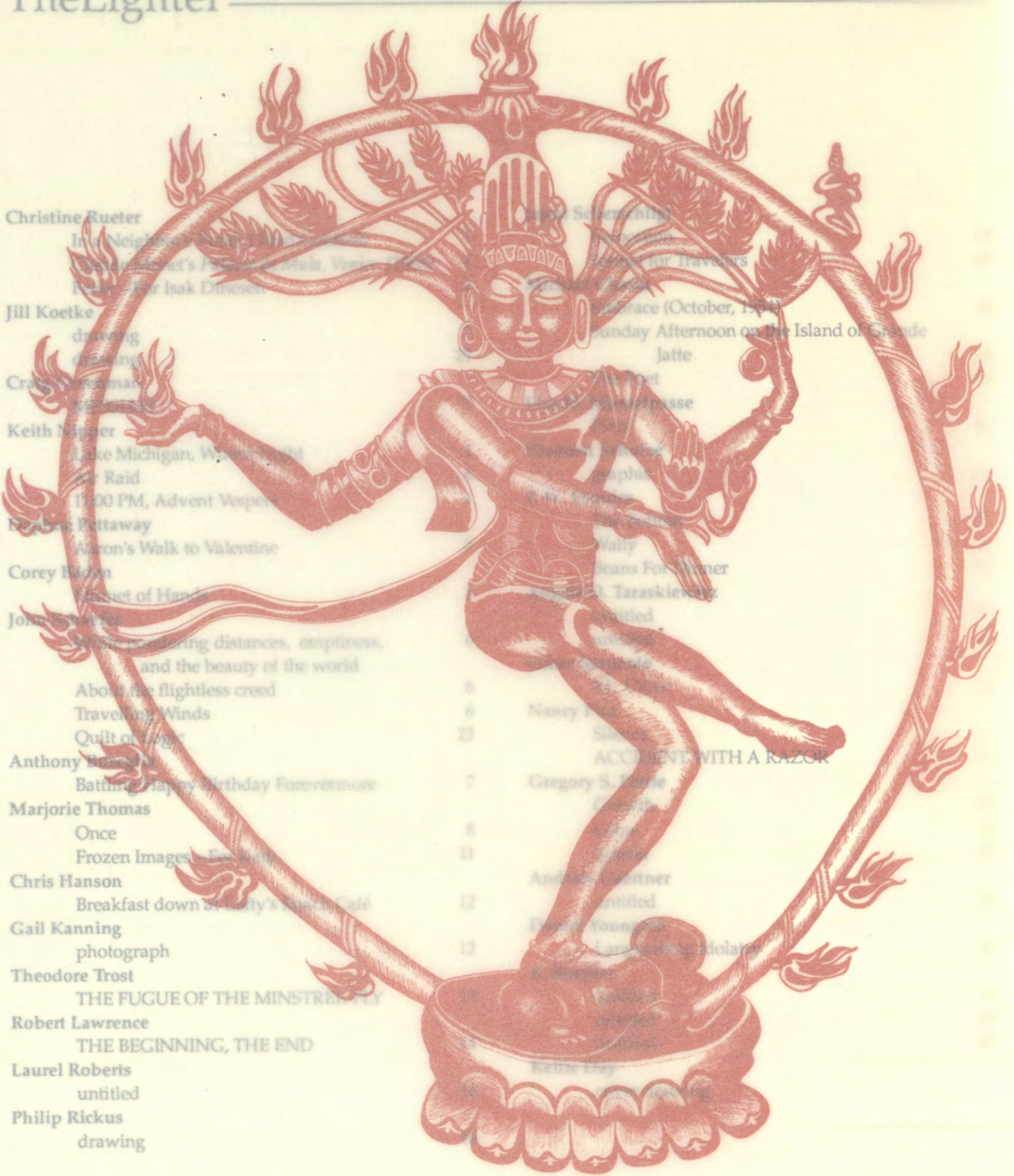
In a neighbor's pond, I find cold fire
skimming beneath the surface
fading orange, fire-buffed lanterns
on long poles, knocking
darkness, making me
The bridge arching beam keeps
the distance. They dance
like secrets constrained
for years, passing time
under glass. The sunlight retreats
silhouetting the ridges of trees
scratching against the thin
membrane which separates us.

Testing the water with my palm,
dragging my fingers in child-like
net, wanting to expose a shadow
to air, wanting to brush its bronze
shell against the dying horizon
as a sacrifice.

Claude Monet, Palazzo da Mula, Venice (1908)

What linger tonight
in the spreading shadows
are spirits of former
lovers. Their wrinkled
forms rise from dust
sprinkled in alleyways,
hovering over my words
like guards come to cushion
you. The buildings march
past in procession,
solemn, sensing the sting
of "I don't love you"
slapping against the sky.
You walk between walls
past shops closed for
now, leaving no words.
A streetlight shades
from sleep, winking. Soaked
in false light, dove
in arrow quivers,
I see you
in the corner and slash
the moon.





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In a Neighbor's Pond, I Find Goldfish

*I wonder what could have made me think
That autumn was the only time for dusk?* Emperor Go-Toba

In a neighbor's pond, I find goldfish
skimming beneath the surface,
fading orange like dulled lanterns
on long sticks, mocking
darkness, mocking me.
The bridge's arching beam keeps
the distance. They dance
like secrets constrained
for years, passing tamely
under glass. The sunlight retreats,
silhouetting the ridges of fins
scraping against the thin
membrane which separates us.

I sting the water with my palm,
dragging my fingers in child-like
net, wanting to expose a shadow
to air, wanting to brush its bronze
shell against the dying horizon
as a sacrifice.

Claude Monet's *Palazzo da Mula, Venice* (1908)

What linger tonight
in the spreading shadows
are spirits of former
lovers. Their wrinkled
forms rise from dust
sprinkled in alleyways,
hovering over my words
like guards come to cushion
you. The buildings march
past in procession,
solemn, sensing the sting
of "I don't love you"
slapping against the sky.
You walk between walls,
past shops closed for hours
now, leaving no words.
A streetlight shudders
from sleep, chanting. Soaked
in false light, a dove
in archway quivers,
longing to break
from the corner and slash
the moon.

Fever

—For Isak Dinesen

I read your book
when I was fourteen
and hated writing.
I hated you, too,
a woman alone, afraid
of nothing, scribbling
down wild thoughts. I saw
you tall, brown with sun,
carrying your rifle
like a strong soldier,
and lions falling gently,
fresh red, and the way
you peel flesh
away from the ribs
like a wrapper. I
couldn't whisper
passion. It slipped
from my tongue, almost
foreign. I played
Mozart and mother clapped,
"How beautiful!", the
notes pulled from
deep in my chest.
In truth, baking
with heat, you
must have stripped
the carcasses
joylessly, dreaming
the skeletons
were just frames,
like thin sentences.
When I heard of you
years later,
you were fragile,
confined by thick
white sheets, and I
was alone, blue
with moonlight,
reading you again.



drawing by Jill Koetke

MESSIAH

last week i was picked up, spent a night at the county jail
it was a drunk, lonely, sleepless night until i posted my bail
in the next cell over a vietnam veteran was screaming
kept us up about half the night just to tell us what he was feeling
he said

i am the messiah, i've come to save the world
sometimes i think i'm satan 'cos i killed my little girl
jehovah, won't you come down and set your poor boy free
i'm just an ever-faithful, crazy marine who fought for His Country

but the guards didn't hear him as he pounded his fists on the door
they were all gathered 'round the t.v. watching the t.v. war
the former private was all alone in his own private hell
he said that he didn't want to die, but it would have been just as well.
then he said

i am the messiah, i've come to save the world
sometimes i think i'm satan but i loved my little girl
jehovah, won't you come down and set your poor boy free
i'm just an ever-faithful, crazy marine who fought for His Country

later i was listenin' to the radio, heard about some soldiers dying
the funeral was live on NBC, and oh how those mothers were crying
Our President was there to give a eulogy for the dead
he stepped up under the American Flag and this is what he said
he said

We are the Messiahs, We fight to save the world
you know hussein is satan - he'd even kill your little girl
jehovah, won't you come down and help Us set those kuwaitis free
god bless those ever-faithful marines who died for Our Country

today i was walking around town thinking about what's gone wrong
nobody's learned the lesson they taught us at vietnam
but i think i may know why there are no teachers to be found
they're all rotting in prison or six feet under the ground.

and i say

Where is the messiah who will save us from this world
conquer all our satans and save our little girls
jehovah, won't you come down and set your people free
we're just victims of a Nation with a twisted morality
i say we live in a Nation with a twisted morality.

Lake Michigan, Winter Night.

If you look off the rusted cement pier
into the depths of the black inland sea,
there is no horizon.

Look off the pier,
you cannot see your reflection,
but the place where the sky curls
underneath the flat earth.

See the clouds in the night sky?
Now look at those patches of ice.

They are also clouds
floating in the sky here
at the end of the earth.

Don't step off the pier,
for you will never stop falling.

Air Raid

Night City:
Dresden in the distance—
Listen carefully
(please),
voices screaming
in red and black
sound so small,
you can just hear
them under
the continuous
drone of the siren.

11:00 PM, Advent Vespers

My fingers on the keyboard
are warm, soft tones;
dissonance is pushed and controlled,
but unresolved.

The mighty organ's pipes
are massive above me,
whispering mysteries.

The light snow outside
is an improvisation:
a swirl, a mild crescendo;
I am gliding
someplace where snowflakes
and flickering candlelight
blend into each other.

Daphne Pettaway

Aaron's Walk to Valentine

Aaron walks and talks
and sings his song,
And all the maidens sing along.
To market with some
bread to sell.
His mind full of the
adventures he'll tale.
Stop to see the
old rabbi.
Speaks "How-do?" to
the preacher as he pass by.
Squats to scratch an
old tom cat.
Sees Old Miss Plum
bow and tip his hat.
Gives the shoes a
quick spit-shine,
b'fore to see Miss Valentine.
"Goin' to'er arr ya now?"
Asks the Miller Dan.
"Off with ya, poo!"
Aaron dismiss with a wave of his
freckled hand.
Bends to pluck some
springtime daisies at
milkman Pete's.
Stops to get some
lover's treats.
At her door Aaron lay
soft knock, knock.
Blue Aaron's eye
watches as turns the lock.
And there before stands
a beauty of the greatest kind
The sweet, sweet Lady Valentine.

Minuet of Hands

The Other,
Engaged in a capricious clasping,
Rolling gently toward the ballerina,
Tips and slides
Haltingly
In metered motion
As introductions are made,
Curtsying and bowing as homage toward boundaries,
Yet rising on tingling extremities to measure
The mountains of tactile inadequacy.

Dipping below a nervously taut surface
Into cool waters,
They ripple, those tips,
In fitful circles of dizzying and playful
Dance.

Swaying in a water waltz,
Hearts dripping in some distant wood
Where moonlight vibrates
As if harmony could be achieved
Without strings,

Their features freely smile
In quiet light
Of a moon which is itself a marionette
Whose hypnotized gaze
Graces the tide pools.

The grasping, and then the
Letting go.

While pondering distances, emptiness, and the beauty of the world

With every snowflake that falls,
the world gains beauty.
In the dim glory of the night,
I sense a distance.
Strange to think that
two souls under the
same moonlight might
think of each other.
How happy they must be.
They feel empty, yet
they weren't till they met.
It's foreign to me,
delicate and patient.
Reluctant to say love,
not knowing what that is.
Remembering the fingers,
the hand that held my arm,
the softness of an angel's hair.
I stop, for fear of building a castle
of imaginary stones.
For so long I've spent my
pennies as I've found them.
Now I find myself holding
a single coin. One that becomes more
valuable as I gaze.
Uneasy, with troubled mind,
I sit at your side.
Slowly my years of stone
crumble into deep canyons
where sparkling rivers flow
along cool blades of grass.
But you are not here,
I'm in company with myself,
with you in my memory
and with every second that passes,
the world gains beauty.

Travelling Winds

Me and a dog that I found
on the way to the place
that I'd never been.

He walked along side me
mumbling my name and
humming forgotten songs.

We slipped from puddles
of lamppost light across the
sidewalks of glass

and the dog who never
introduced himself
quietly went on his way.

About the flightless creed

Who claims to know the songs and theology of the penguins?
If you tell me you do, you are a liar.
For this knowledge is reserved for no man other than those
who travel in rolling chairs.
Only they shall feel it's wisdom,
and should they speak it, may they die.

Battling Happy Birthday Forevermore

The brown dirt bivouac was barren and crowded
The men inside were empty with joy
A Celebration of Life in War
The sordid soldiers partied with canned chicken
And a cupcake with a candle
Waxen smoked wafted; guns momentarily put aside
Fortunately the music played loud
This made the squalor seem festive
The soldiers danced and some cried
For home, wiping their tears with shame
It was like being ten years old again

The flimsy door cracked in two when
The gun shoved its way in and popped.
Intruding; crashing the party
The bodies fell to the floor
Even the Birthday Boy who saw the bullets ricochet
Away from the dreaming gunner
Watching the grenade roll in
Squirming furiously into the corner
Green and red legs scattered with black boots still on

The wheelchair rolled in.
The big Birthday banner
Didn't make much sense
And it was already one year later
The people who said they were friends
Began howling like incessant Vietnamese
Scarecrows who didn't understand.
The wheelchair started to reel
Although no hands were guiding it
The soldier's head throbbed with a ringing numbness
The walls were brown and barren
The corpses fell to the floor
And the grenade rolled in.
A pair of black boots nestled in the corner closet

Once

"What the hell were you thinking, Lee?" Steven demanded from his wife of two years. "That guy could have pulled out a gun and made you drive away — never to be seen again. Then what? Do you think I would have been able to find you? I'm no magician!"

Leanne Forester just sat, stiff-backed on the right edge of their new king size mattress in the master bedroom, waiting for him to finish. She knew that interrupting Steven at this point would be a mistake, infuriating him more, and she had learned not to rile him.

"I don't even know if you were thinking. I certainly don't see the point in housing this bum just because you have suddenly taken it upon yourself to play the Samaritan." Steven paused, his small ears red, and pulled a tan hand through his short blond hair. "I don't suppose you have an explanation?"

"I told you Steve, the poor man was on the corner of Highland and Valley avenue, holding a sign reading 'Seeking Employment Will do Odd Jobs.' I felt sorry for him, so I pulled over. He's hungry, has no money, and could use clothes, a shower, and a warm bed. I think we're in the position to be generous." Lee spoke quietly, knowing that her words were of little consequence to Steven.

"He's not staying in my house...a Goddamn freeloader! While I work ten hours a day to make a more than comfortable living, this guy is loafing around. I donate to that charity of yours — I don't want any part of this!"

"Steve, we can't make him leave now — without food and a night's sleep. What if he stays tonight and then you ask John and Paulie if they have any extra work needed around their houses? You were talking about putting that deck in outside, the one around the hot tub, maybe Matt can help."

"Matt," Steven pronounced the name with a sarcastic drawl, "is not going to play handyman in my house just because my wife has caught some breezy notion in her head. And I'm certainly not asking John or Paulie if they'd like to let him into their homes."

"Steven, please. Let me fix him some dinner and then I'll call Pastor David and see if he and Sharon will house him for a few days. He'll be here a couple of hours at most, I promise."

"I'm supposed to play basketball with the guys tonight. It's Tuesday, Remember?"

"You can go ahead. Dinner will be in the oven when you get home, like usual." It was the closest Lee had gotten to sassing him during the whole fight.

Steven stood staring at her with his hands on his hips, "Lee, I really don't want to leave my wife alone in my house with some dirty stranger."

Lee shrugged softly, "He isn't going to hurt me, he's a nice man. Besides..."

Steven cut her off briskly, "So I shouldn't care that some weirdo is inhabiting my home while I'm gone, is that it?"

"It's not nice to interrupt." She spoke evenly, for the first time almost meeting his hard gaze.

Steven threw up his hands, "Fine, fine. I'll go and leave you to your social work. If something happens, don't bother crying to me about it!"

"Nothing is going to happen Steven," Leanne whispered. She knew that the argument was over.

Steven, dressed in sweat shorts that showed his tan muscular legs and a UCLA half T-shirt, grabbed his sweatband from the

dresser table and stretched it over his head, securing it across his brow. Leanne watched him bend down to double knot his Reeboks and then snatch his keys; she heard him grunt a good-bye to her, saw him walk out of the bedroom, leaving the door gaping, and refrain from casting a glance in her direction

The house, though well-decorated and very tidy, was small and Leanne could hear Steven stomp furiously through the various rooms. She knew that Matt was sitting in the front room by the TV and that Steven would have to pass him in order to exit the house. Unable to shut out the words, Leanne heard Steven growl as he was departing, "Don't think because you're here now means that I like it, or you, for that matter. I wouldn't get too comfortable. Leanne may have a soft spot for lost causes, but I don't fall for them. You just watch yourself, mister, you hear?" and then the heavy front door slammed.

Oh Steven, you are so tough, Leanne thought wearily. She wondered if he would tell the guys about the incident — she doubted it, because most likely, John or Paulie would bring up the practical point that in a way, she had won — the unfortunate man was staying in his house, eating food prepared by his wife. Smiling slightly, Lee pulled herself up with the help of a hand on the nightstand. She was seven months pregnant and had recently blossomed like a helium balloon being filled in slow motion.

Leanne walked over to the closet and opened the door discovering the pile of dirty laundry she knew had been waiting for her. Planning to make two trips, she bent over, using her knees, and scooped up half of the pile. Then she headed out to the back of the house where the washer, dryer, and ironing board, as well as her sewing materials, were kept. The dryer was rocking slightly, as it tumbled some of Steven's damp clothes she had washed earlier on in the day. She began dumping the clothes from the bedroom into their properly ordered baskets — permanent press, dark, whites, and delicate — when Matt appeared noiselessly at her side, "Would you like some help?" Leanne breathed in his light voice.

"No thank you Matt, I can manage. I was thinking that maybe you'd like a shower, before I started these clothes." Lee looked at him expectantly, hoping he would take her up on the offer.

"That would be nice," he stated simply and waited for her to continue.

"Well, I'll just show you the bathroom then. Follow me."

Leading him back through the house, Leanne ushered him into the bathroom which was adjacent to her and Steven's bedroom. Pointing to a set of monogrammed navy towels, Leanne told him to use them and then demonstrated the workings of the shower.

"Just use any shampoo and soap that's in there — whatever you want. Oh, I laid out some of Steven's old clothes for you here, I'm sure they'll fit." She stood still briefly, "Well, I think you're set."

"Yes, I believe so."

Leaving him to himself and probably the first shower he had had in weeks, if not months, Leanne, with hands on her lower back for support, shuffled into the kitchen to start dinner. She could not do laundry until he was out of the shower in order to allow him the luxury of good water pressure. Once in the kitchen, Leanne scanned the contents of the pantry to see what would complement her lemon baked chicken and rice dinner. Peering into the freezer, she pulled out a frozen box of broccoli florets and cheese sauce, thinking it a good match, and also decided to prepare a salad, believing that her guest could use

roughage in his diet. The spotless white Amana revealed an abundance of food stuffs, as had the pantry, because, as it seemed to both Steven and herself, she was always hungry. After getting out lettuce, carrots, sprouts, raisins, tomatoes, pepper, celery, and cucumber, Leanne spied a cardboard tube of crescent roll dough and knew they would satisfy her craving. She started humming a sweet Disney tune as she rolled out the rolls, arranging them on a cookie sheet and then brushing them with egg. Next, she stood at the two-tubbed sink and washed vegetables, chopping them after they were cleaned and throwing them into the wooden salad bowl. For spice, she dusted the salad with crumbled bleu cheese and then stuck the claw-shaped bowl in the fridge.

The smooth, polished bowl had been a wedding gift from her Aunt Jean and Uncle Dick. A matching set of dinner bowls and also a pair of clumsy wooden tongs were resting in the side closet where she kept the vacuum cleaner and other miscellaneous household items. It had not been one of her favorite gifts, but she liked that her godparents had thought of her. Steven had given her the washer and dryer that were still waiting for her in the multi-faceted laundry room, and a red silk teddy she had worn on their honeymoon, and now traditionally on their anniversary and Valentine's Day. Leanne had bought Steven a new suit to wear to the small beach town's law office he had been clerking for and had subsequently secured a position at and would begin work on their return from Hawaii. Her parents had topped all the gifts, actually setting up a dowry for her, knowing that her one goal through the end of high school and during college was to marry Steven and take care of him and his house. She never questioned whether or not the trust fund had stirred Steven's interest into a proposal — Leanne retained full rights of withdrawal and had her own account at the Wells Fargo uptown. Steven used to say his one goal was to support them and their then unborn family. Stroking her stomach, Leanne remembered Steven's proposal: he had walked into her Modern Russian History class, the second semester of her senior year at UCLA, and had got down on one knee to ask her for her hand in front of her classmates and her professor. Steven had been more carefree in those days.

Lost in these thoughts and others, she had not been listening to the shower and did not realize that it had stopped. Leanne was about to lift the large broiling pan from the oven, when Matt stepped in front of her, taking the padded mitts from her, grasped the pan of chicken, and set it on the wooden cooling platform on the counter near the sink. "You should be careful lifting things with your back," he said to her kindly.

She was taken aback. He had shaved off his beard and looked considerably younger — closer to her age. She stammered, "Pregnant women are strong you know."

"Yes, but at this stage you are more susceptible to muscle strain." He noted her look of muddled surprise and smiled, "I hope your husband won't mind. I used his shaving kit."

"No, that's fine." At the mention of Steven, Leanne felt a surge of guilt, "Look Matt, I'd really like to apologize for Steven. It was rude of him to yell like he did."

"I heard him from the bedroom — I'm sorry that you had to endure that because of me."

"He's really a caring man, it's just that he's been so tense lately with work and the baby coming and all..." she finished lamely, knowing how weak she sounded. They were both silent; she saw that he was unable to look at her. "Mattie." He had been surveying the kitchen and her voice drew his eyes to her face. "I didn't tell Steve that I...that we used to know each other. I just

couldn't." She found herself pleading with him.

"It was a long time ago." Matt turned away from her and went back over to the opposite counter, "Shall we dish up the chicken?"

Lee waited to see if he would say more. When she heard no more words from him, she agreed, "Of course, and there's salad, broccoli, bread, and I have wine or beer or soda."

"Soda's fine."

"Um, Diet Coke?"

"Sure."

Together they laid out the dinner onto the square kitchen table and Lee took plates and utensils from the cabinets, after pouring soda into one glass and milk into another. While finishing this task, Lee thought of the summer she had met Matt. It was during the first and only summer that Lee had been separated from Steven since they had met. He had journeyed to his aunt and uncle's small town in Iowa to intern at a law firm. Though it was a seemingly unimportant firm and faraway, they had offered him travel expenses and an above minimum wage salary, because one of the partners was a friend of his uncle's. While Steven remained in the Heartland, Lee worked as a waitress and went to parties at night, going out with her friends. At one of the largest parties of the summer, two weeks after the Fourth of July, she was approached by Matt who offered to keep her company until her date returned. "Well, I guess you'll be at my side for the rest of the summer then," and laughed, explaining that her boyfriend was away. Lee had not meant to flirt or be suggestive, but something in the air, whether it had been the warmth of the night breeze, the several glasses of spiked punch, or the cool blueness skulking in the stranger's eyes, had compelled her to speak before thinking — something she was not accustomed to doing. And yet they had spent the following seven weeks together: going for walks on the beach, having dinner, going to parties, and often just hanging around in his apartment drinking or getting stoned — he had introduced her to that world. It was the first time Lee had ventured into that dark zone, the realm of the "bad seeds" so feared by her parents and other suburbans. Sitting across from him, years later, in the conventionality of her own home, Lee remembered how easy the fall from grace had been, how smooth, the ride.

He was looking at her in between bites of food and she could not help but bring up the past. "You must've known that I'd go back to him."

Matt studied his food, "I guess."

"Why are you here?"

He lifted his head to stare at her. "Because you picked me up."

"I thought you were going to go live in that co-op, the one with all the other writers."

"Too cramped."

Lee felt sorry for him and she knew he hated that. "How's the food?"

"Great." A pause. "So why did you marry him anyway?"

"He was my first love. Isn't that what all little girls do? Marry their first love?"

"Or the first man they sleep with."

Lee lifted her chin. "That's fair."

Matt shrugged and, finished with his plate, got up from the table. "Would you like help with the dishes?"

"No. You're the guest, just make yourself at home."

He laughed, an unhappy noise, and departed from the kitchen. By herself at the table, Lee wondered if he was still

angry at her for leaving him — as angry as he had been that summer when she told him that Steven was returning and she would be terminating their relationship and going back to her old life. She supposed he was, as she remembered how infuriated he had been. Such anger could not have melted away despite the eroding years that had passed.

"What the hell for!" Matt had demanded.

"I belong with him, Mattie." She was careful not to mention Steven's name. "This is not my life," she gestured to Matt's spacious, but dark loft. "You knew that, probably before I did."

"What I know is, that I am better for you than he is. He's gonna domesticate you. I wanna set you free."

"Don't you see? I want a house, and a husband who supports me, and a dog, and 2.5 children, and a white picket fence. Where's the wrong in that?"

"The Ameri-fuck-can dream. How noble."

Rarely did he swear — only when extremely angered — and for the first time, she had been frightened of him. "There's no reason to..."

"To what...to get angry because you're dumping me for this yuppie schmo? I think that's big cause to get angry."

"And I think I have to do what's right for me. You of all people should understand. You're the one who wants me to think for myself."

"Not if you're gonna screw up your future."

"No, Mattie, not if I'm gonna go against you. You are just as bad as he is."

And what could he have said to that? His only recourse was to let her go, and himself disappear into the woodwork, living on, only in her memory. Trying to shake the fight out of her mind, Lee began to clear the table, stacking the dishes in the sink, waiting to be rinsed, and wiped off the formica table top. She discovered that the dishwasher was full of clean dishes — Steven had neglected to empty it — and bent over to put items away in their proper cupboards. Lee had no fear of Matt now, though he was wandering about the house aimlessly — she could hear him go room to room, sifting through her and Steven's things — but he was a destroyed character; there was a time she had thought him great, someone destined to be famous, yet he had somehow missed his chance. Still, she sensed a dim magic within him, and she thought that maybe she could stimulate his productivity. She wondered who needed her more.

Remembering the clothes, both clean and dirty, Lee left the kitchen in slight disorder, knowing that she would finish the chore later. Back in the laundry room, she took the dry clothes out of the dryer and folded them, placing them onto a long table behind her. Then, she dumped a basket of dirty clothes into the washer, added soap and softener, and started the cycle. It was nice to have her own machines. The summer she and Matt were together, she had practically moved in — she was over at his place so much, and they went to the nearby laundromat to wash their clothes. Lucky that she was waitressing, Lee contributed all her change from tips to the laundry fund. That she always paid for the machines never bothered her. Matt bought the detergent and allowed her to live in his apartment for free. But there was something so detached about washing clothes away from home; it was one of the factors that made her leave. Coupled with this insecurity was Matt's insistence that they move out of the city into the mountains and "rough it," and Lee decided that she could not follow him around, not fulfill her own dreams.

So she left Matt for Steven, but never forgot that summer. She was not able to, for Mattie had sent her a letter that she kept in a

small drawer under the shelf in the laundry room. Steven would never find it — he was rarely in that room and had no cause to snoop. Wanting to read it because it had been so long since the last time, Lee pulled it out of the drawer and slid the notepaper out of the envelope. She began to read. It was not a letter really, only a poem, and she did not need to read the words to recall the lines.

Often
out in the open night air
I think of you,
as I am
prodded by the stars,
and the moon that
haunts me.
Like your face—
a distant reality.
The silver floodlights
are not for me
but touch every soul
here.
So why do you persist
in my waking moments
as well as my dreams
begging yet
resisting
offering yet
withholding
teasing taunting torturing
my mind and being
Always.
You do love me, you know.

He had not signed it or addressed it to her except on the front of the envelope. But she had known it was from him: the postmark was from some town in Wyoming. The letter had finally found her almost a year after they had parted.

Realizing that she had never had the chance to thank Matt for his poem, Lee went out to search for him and discovered him in the bedroom, holding her and Steven's wedding picture in his hand, while gazing at it intently.

"Mattie?"

He lifted his head. "Yeah?"

"I never got an opportunity to thank you for your poem. It was beautiful."

He shrugged.

"It's just that, you had never written me anything before."

"Everything I ever wrote was for you."

Uncomfortable, she said, "What we had..."

"What we had meant the world to me."

"I had to go back."

"At my expense? Look at me! Look what you've done!"

"There's nothing wrong with you. You are fine. You're the same." But that was not true and Lee saw the evidence in his face and in his walk. Whatever had happened since their last meeting had taken its toll.

"Do you really believe that?"

"I want to help you, if I can."

"I don't want your pity, damnit."

"It's not pity. It's..." Lee took a step towards him and then thought better of it. "We had something once, but I needed something more than love. Something more..."

"More like this?"

Lee remained in the doorway, frozen by his stare, but when he turned away from her, she deserted him again.

The kitchen needed tending so Lee returned there and began washing the hand dishes. She was lost in thought a short while and then felt Matt's presence behind her. Turning around to face him, she thought he had come in to finish their conversation, but found that his eyes were not resting on her, but instead, on an object that was hanging above her head to his left. He strode over and reached up to it, grabbing it off of its hook. Lee cringed, and the old fear, felt only one time, returned.

"You know, before you came into the bedroom, I walked through the house and almost accepted your decision, almost grew accustomed to the notion that this was right for you. I could relate to the house, because I don't have a roof over my head and it's not the greatest, and a husband, though he's not my first choice, you don't have a dog, and even the kid plan's OK, because it would be nice to have something live on after me, but then you came in and reminded me of what you had given me and then took away. You've kept that poem all this time and still don't get it, still, you deny me. How can you think that this is better for you than our love? So then, I walk in here and I see this hanging over your head, like some kind of homemaker's halo, and it hits me, like pow — all of a sudden — what you've become in spite of me." Matt shook the rolling pin at her, a hand-me-down from her mother. "Isn't this just the ultimate symbol of the household? I suppose when he cheats on you at forty or forgets to bring home the eggs, you're gonna knock him around a bit? Is that it? Has this all been worth it?" Matt had finally found an answer to her words years ago. He advanced toward her and she barely shrunk from him, thinking that possibly she deserved this end for her treatment of him. After all, she had destroyed him, and one good turn deserved another. His strong arm held the raised pin over his own head while his fiery eyes met her own. There was no panic in her expression, not even for the baby, because he was Steven's anyway and would never have known about this incident had he lived. Lee felt a shadow enshroud her as his arm descended in slow motion and then brought the pin crashing down onto the counter, shattering it and cracking the hand-painted tile squares in places. Unflinching, he stood with the handle gripped in his blue-white fist; she whimpered as wood shrapnel pierced her lower back and calves. Dropping the remains of the rolling pin, Matt fell to his knees and grabbed her about the waist.

"Is it so wrong to have wanted you for myself?"

And Lee was unable to answer. She could only wrap her soft arms around him and stroke his hair and think to herself: No, no of course not, how could it be so?

Steven returned home from basketball every Tuesday night to find his clothes washed and folded in the laundry room, the kitchen clean, his wife reading in the bedroom, and his dinner in the oven. Not much was different this particular Tuesday except on his arrival, he discovered the stranger gone, the rolling pin broken in pieces on the linoleum floor, and his wife missing, along with some select personal items. His chicken, however, was wrapped in tinfoil and waiting for him on the warmed oven rack.

Frozen Images

For Katy

You called that night,
and as I listened to one of your tales,
I pictured your laughing eyes
and that smile you share
with so many others. Your voice racing,
you talked about the snowflakes dropping
in droves from the tangerine sky,
how you couldn't believe their size
or that each one had its own distinct pattern—
frozen glass images, like rare gems
that melt in the heat of the sun.

Afterwards, I drank champagne,
and thought about the fact
that you can't really miss
something you never had.
The wind blew outside my room,
pushing ice-laden limbs
in a suspended dance of crystalline moves
and clear white wonder. I had never known snow
before I came to this place,
never crunched through a fresh-fallen coat
of soft, cold powder, my deep footprints,
incriminating evidence of the path I had chosen.
And I had never met you before all this.

We share a mutual fascination with winter;
just as the ice-enameled trees and the snow
have a magic I never knew existed,
you have filled a part of my life
I never saw as empty.
Now, whenever it snows, I imagine you
making snow angels or building
your first of many snowmen or dancing
in a cloud of shimmering fragile crystals:
a young woman doing child-like things—
the younger sister I never had.

Breakfast down at Lofty's Roach Café

Breakfast

Down at Lofty's Roach Café

Has enlightened me

these past days

"We'll be the only ones left,"

Fred states with a grin

As he pulls his little roach stool

up to the counter.

He's looking dapper today,

suit and tie.

Eating with roaches

can be terribly bothersome,

the feelers swat you in the face

when they spin to fill you

with the latest news byte.

And they feel no shame

in public defecation.

I just can't tell

if it comes out their mouths

or somewhere else.

Roach guts are funny that way.

Fred turns again,

"What a deal,

we get to ruin everything

and we don't even have to pay for it.

Can't argue with that."



photo by Gail Kanning

THE FUGUE OF THE MINSTREL-FLY

I. Beneath a Purple Dawning Sky

Beneath a purple dawning sky
Wakes first the Minstrel-Fly

Unseen to all, but by all hearkened
He is the rhythm of the unconscious mind

Not a sound but for nightly drones
E'en the lark's voice tucked under wing;
But listen, listen now
A faint cadence, with portent grows

As Apollo above the sky-drawn horizon rises
Buzzing ever more, hailing the mighty master
Slowly they multiply in number:
They, the voices of the forest

And among swaying towers of green
Find then equal towers of human hand:
Two mighty castles of glorious proportion
Reflect themselves in foreign lands

Pointed-pinnacle leaves and towers of gold
Live as one together:
Knights of glamour from courts of amour,
In the misty wake of pre-dawn slumber,
Ride silver schooners on milky crests
Racing with the neighbor.

II. Toller of Times Untended

Awaken first the Minstrel-Fly, toller of times untended
Swirling velvet mists of silver string's harmonies
When to hear, whence to act
He orchestrates disparate voices many;
With gallant flair, and Debonary aire
He marks for all a time and meter.

And the Butter-Fly who, with Butter-Fly-dye
Paints 'round spiralling, spiralling Minstrel-Fly
Earth-tied clouds, rustling, green and gold,
And creatures of silent soaring majesty
Who see two lovers lying lazily in the shade
Far, far below

Once cacophony, now symphonie,
They sip from one vein of clear elixir:
They of the forest, and they of straight lines
As strings and brass in a fly's eye fugue
And of the earth, and stars, and skies, and seas,
Of those with or without voice: none are left behind.

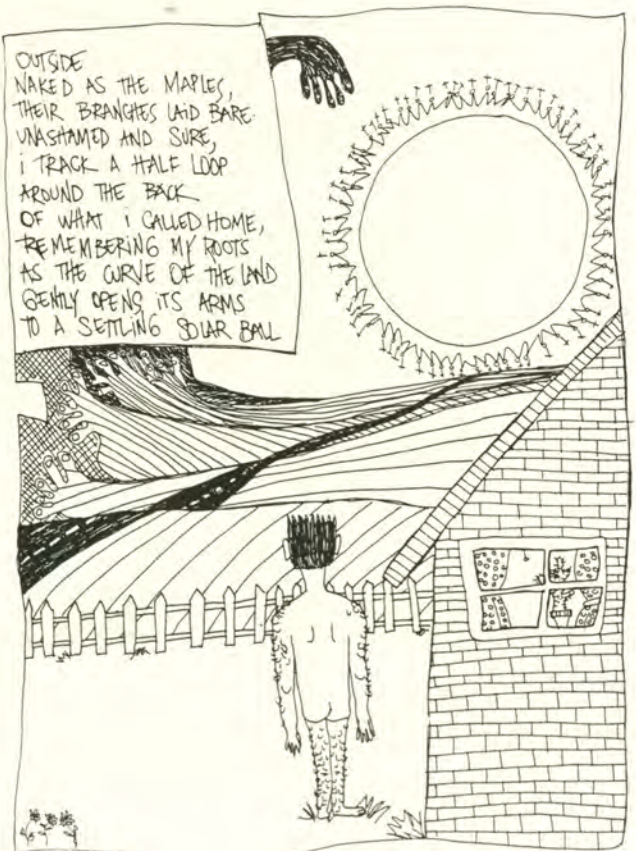
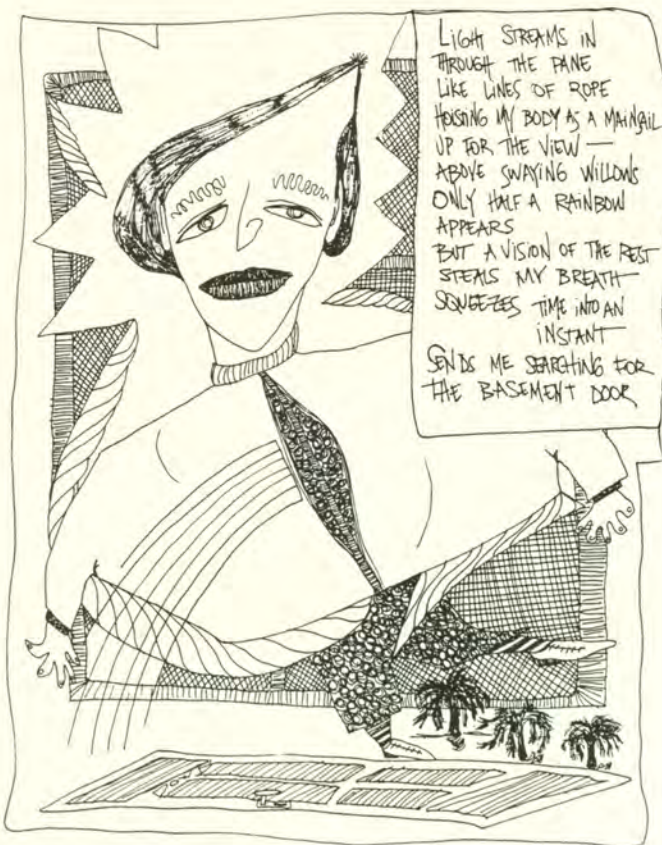
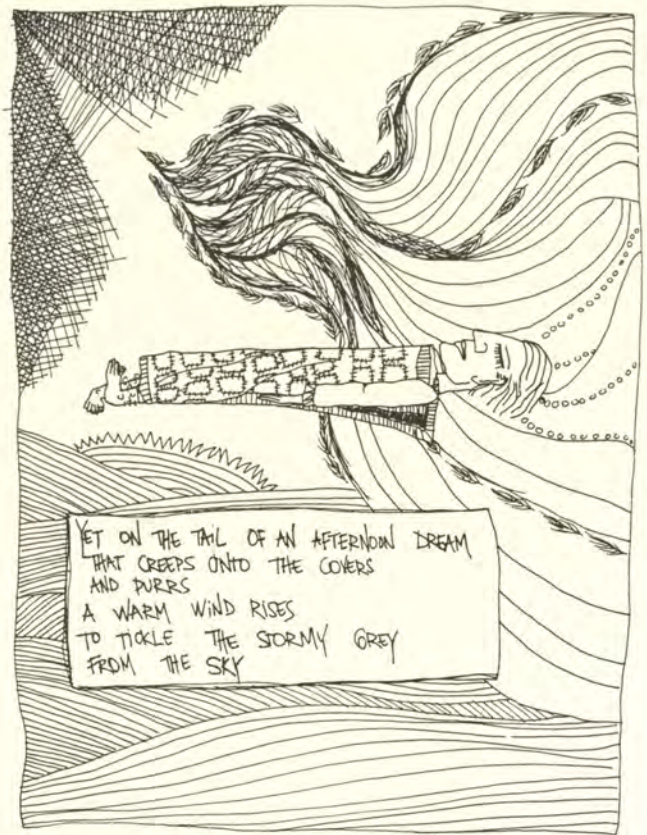
III. Apocalypse

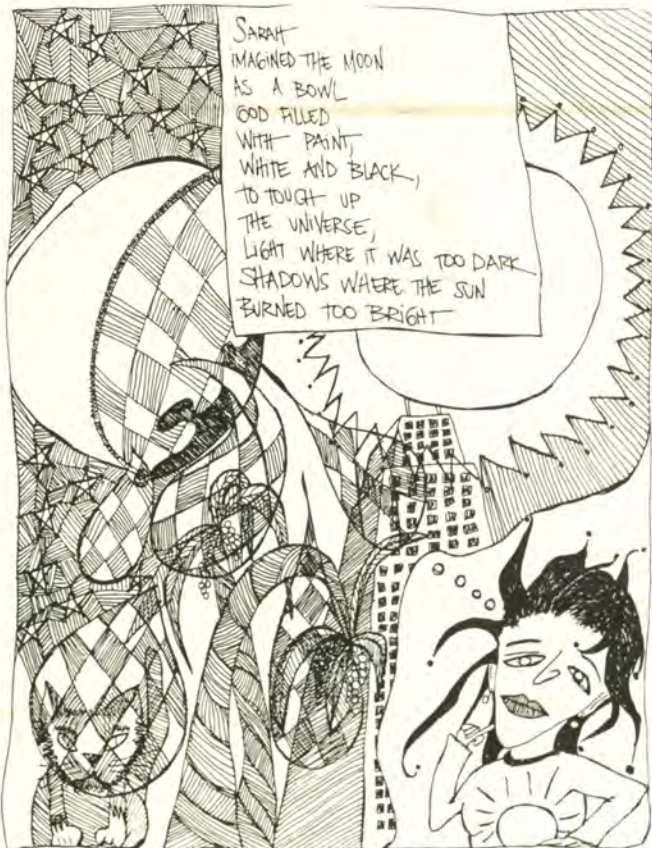
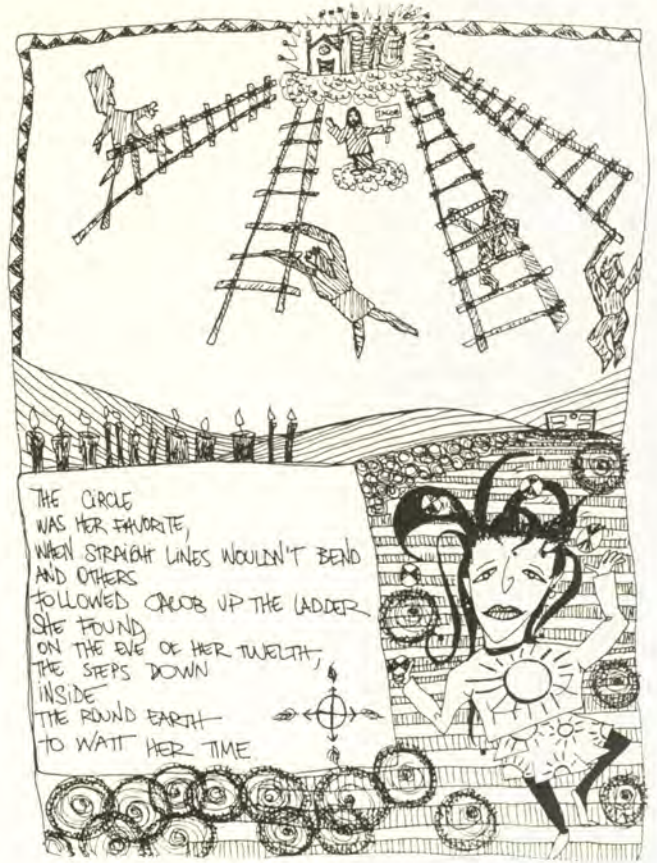
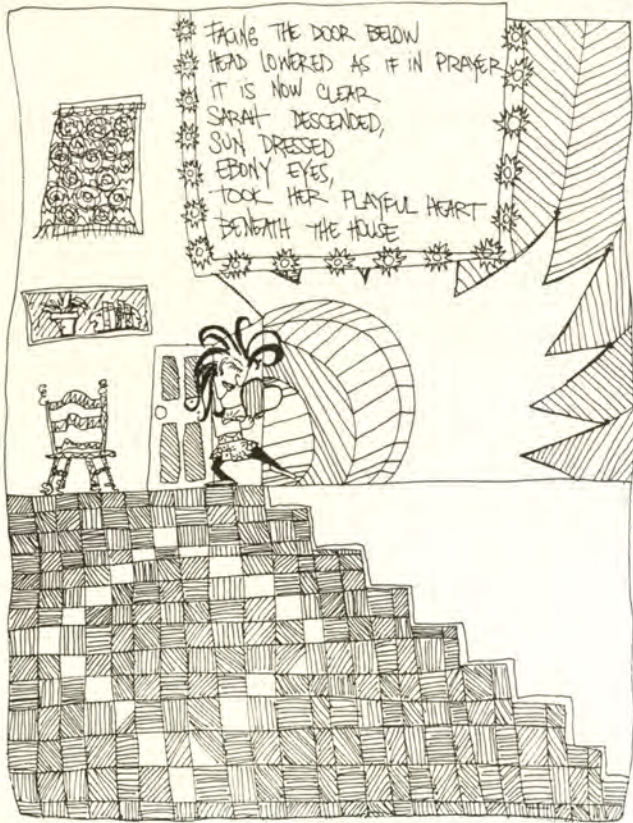
Hulking tanks lumber through the mud
Great mountains of rumbling steel
and rusting iron they are;
Screaming, crying, blood-caked
stones kicked from their torn heels
And flame, then fire, then
anguish piercing as spears
through the very soul of the earth
Two castles, hanging different flags
—now torn—smother one another
with smoke and fire, and their monsters
rape the earth, and flat cold
streams flow only with Rocketdyne wine,
from which those who ravish take
their fill, and swim in oblivion, and
the Butter-Fly is ripped in two, and
Minstrel-Fly crushed under foot,
and the land is laid, laid to waste
Day after day the insatiable hell
consumes all until
nothing lives to burn.

IV. Epilogue

beneath a slate-gray sky
black charred slopes spill their crumbled ash,
are covered with the spikes of jagged tree-skeletons

past wispy shrouds rising
deep in burdened wombs of smoldering twig,
—a Minstrel-Fly is born.





The world has poisoned my being;
colored flesh
stripped from its entity
is marred and mangled,
then burned in the flames of ignorant hostility.

People are only real
under their white facades.
Those who claim supremacy
are robed and masked:
cowards incognito,
slaying the scapegoats as they go through life.

So, damned was I into this.
Where hues breed contempt.
Although my ivory soul trembles and rages within,
it must feign a serenity
which can never be,
for effigies have been created:
amber, like the earth
and ebony, like the night
in art aesthetic
on skin misunderstood.

And because I remain a fragment
of the whole which misunderstands
I shall forever don the hood of chagrin.

-on guilt



drawing by Philip Rickus

Invocation

O SlenderGhost,
My spirit host,
Grant me final dignity
As sacrifice,
Thy worthy price,
Rapture from my worship tree.

Your moonlit dance
Bestows a chance
To realize the perfect trip:
Whisk me above
The wreckage of
This blue sinking pirate ship.

Dance on my bones,
Dance among stones,
Dance to the music of trees!
Kiss a fresh soul,
Love me now whole,
For an instant I'll unfreeze.

Sonnet for Travelers

If on some lucky day I were to move
Again through colorful nations I would
Not, I hope, try observational truth-
Seeking, For I now realize that good
Is not witnessed nearly as often
As some American-Dream-Builders hope,
But instead is found when people soften
Hands in thick dirt, or, even better, stoop
On humbled knees in an exotic land
And leave flecks of skin and salty tears
To nourish the ground, hallow the air, and
Perhaps commune with those familiar fears
That I discern on the fresh, hopeful face
Of the curious boy in this strange place.

Embrace (October, 1954)

The rusty sandpaper leaves,
brittle with approaching cold,
tap dance in ink-stained trees
that turn the blue-black October sky.
Dew-dropped blades of grass
hold tiny moons of light
that shiver when the brisk wind blows.

Goose-bumped and glossy-eyed,
I walk beneath the heavy boughs
of your well-kept cherry trees.
You used to walk with me,
pointing out the cherry blooms in Spring,
teaching me that lady bugs
are more than subjects for a song.
When the geese turned South,
stretched in drawn-out V's across the sky,
and pregnant fruits pulled down the trees,
you'd pluck a certain ripeness,
roll its fat between your hands,
and watch the Autumn day reflect
off the heart of deep maroon.

Mom would make the pies,
pies tht yawned a cherry red,
criss-crossed on top with home-made dough.
We'd eat pie for weeks,
cartons of fruit filling up the coop,
saturating the old wood walls
with the sweet smells of harvest.
When the winds grew harsh,
and Winter dropped its crystal white,
I'd sit and read in the empty rooms
and sniff the heavy cherry walls.

And jam! Mom boiled and mashed
and boiled and mashed the thick red pulp
and gave the ribboned jars of jam
to everyone on Christmas Eve.
In the middle of the night,
I'd slink downstairs,
praying that the wooden steps kept mum,
and I'd spread that sweet red jam
on two thick slices of fresh-baked bread
and munch in the kitchen darkness.

This night I pick a cherry heart.
The fruit reflects a silver slip of moon
and holds the jam of Winters pat,
the pies of Autumn youth.
I hold this crystal ball of red,
protect it in my pocket's grip,
and once again I walk with you
beneath the outstretched reach of cherry limb
and interwoven thoughts of cherry Spring.

Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte

That's quite a pipe, sir.

It's a Sunday pipe, I think,
designed for smoking
in La Grande Jatte shade.
You puff and puff, curls
of cool tobacco smoke
swirl and disappear.

I'd press my nose
against the spotted canvas
and whisper secrets in you ear,
telling you of yellowed teeth
and warning you of cancer.
But seeing that you lie
beneath the women's parasols,
seeing that you smoke
among the proper men
who sport their proper suits
and proper hats, seeing
that you've ripped your sleeves
so Sunday's wind might tease
your well-worked arms,
I think that I'll refrain
from speaking my advice
and let you smoke in peace.

I'm sure you watch the lake.
Steamboats tug their foam,
sailboats swell with wind,
and sculling crews slice
like surgeons on the water.

But you've also got the look
of a man who dreams,
of a man who'd sail beyond
this proper Sunday park.

I see eagle feathers
fastened on the bowl
of your Sunday peace pipe.
A campfire dances and flirts
with shadows on your painted face,
and the hollow rhythm of a drum
knives into the night.

The Poet

The stage:
A thousand thousand
fragmented needle trees
push shadows through the mist,
pulling down a steel-wool sky.
Frenzied waters run,
cascade along a board-walk path
and tumble blindly
through the spray's embrace.

The characters:
Her ruffled hair
waterfalls past neck
and shoulders, skin-soft
in the eerie dampness,
his hand, her hand,
his glasses flicker
with some forgotten light
like a signal mirror
on a distant hillside.

The plot:
Contoured shades arrest
and stand beneath the vertical
reach of trunk and limb.
Her hands, his hands,
her eyes, his signs,
their kiss:
language.

Piety

Praying to their Sunday God
In Sunday garb,
The Churchgoers turn to Monday
And cast the first stone.



graphic by Clement Schulze

The Bottom

Moonlight brushes your cheek
like a feather dancing across a bare expanse
exposed to the night
like a great rounded opal, set with skill
next to its sister

Wally

Long and sultry
wet as ice
pulses, stretches, without device
pushing blindly, mutely drives
through the rich, moist
loose earth it strives

innocence
no hand could stave
pushes onward
through the grave
to the surface
one rainy night
To come above
So plump, just right

Beans For Dinner

stars against the night sky
dandruff on black velvet
explosions in the canyon
thunderous flatualation of giants
Sulfurous assaults
engorge my nasal passages
inflaming my intense desire
to be elsewhere,

<p>for it's whispering lips</p> <p>You know me. I am the crow who sat in the tree</p>	<p>Ha! And you wonder why that dog no longer follows me</p> <p>cigarette smoke glides silent on my cheek</p>	<p>It's the shaking of my sweaty palms</p> <p>I watched you as your boat bobbed in the deep wet ponds</p>	<p>a resting head breathes softly with eyes that gasp for sleep</p> <p>dark air cries</p>
<p>and glimpses through my eyelids of the promised land I sneak</p> <p>I've kicked him, I've screamed at him, I've made him know pain</p>	<p>I saw you..</p> <p>I saw you sitting on your afternoon worries</p> <p>that blew out the match</p>	<p>while the cool silver moon laughs about</p> <p>and by my lonely campfire, I had the dream again</p>	<p>and thought about the deeds I've done with stolen magic wands</p> <p>that keeps me from</p>
<p>that was struck in the dark</p> <p>I am an angel who happened past you on the street and I am</p>	<p>I've turned him loose in the cold to wander hungry in the park</p> <p>the sun behind his back</p>	<p>lighting the candle that reminds me of you</p> <p>I watched you... I watched you as your glassy eyes patrolled the skies</p>	<p>I'm sitting in a library next to stacks of books</p> <p>and the thunder rolled in silence, it was felt without a sound</p>
<p>and the cloud is but a thief slipping stars into his sack</p> <p>I've bruised his paws and shunned his wagging tail</p>	<p>wondering why your troubles dripped so heavy off your brow</p> <p>to keep us from wondering</p>	<p>and my feet pound a rhythm on the wet streets of our town</p> <p>the words, they are foreign, and still I understand</p>	<p>and if I hadn't known I might have thought even you were waiting for another star to form your shadow</p>
<p>if the madman still stood staring in the backdoor window</p> <p>The Quilt</p>	<p>and now I wonder why that dog ever followed me</p> <p>because the night storms they are coming and the sun has long been down</p>	<p>like a nomad on my bedroom walls</p> <p>and I'm wishing that peaceful breezes from my wings could blow them all away</p>	<p>but when I wake in morning, they're snifted like the sand</p> <p>Of Logic</p>

Tongues of twenty-thousand pines
whisper to the wind
the secrets of the ageless hills
the sages and their sins

Noting this with bows and nods
the pinecones add their song
bobbing on the silver sounds
of sunsets here and gone

A twinkling rises in the west
the first star begins to dance
the heavens now awake, alive,
the shadows seize their chance
A ballroom then the sky becomes
the nightbird begins to sing
orchestrations, constellations
everywhere and everything

A science breathes.

A music stops.

An art arises.

A spirit drops.

Life evolves, progresses, dies
and still this passion fills the skies!

Through it all we dream our dreams,
sleep our sleeps, scream our screams,
Withdraw. With hope, we enter in,
As dawn awakes and day begins.



Undefinable emptiness.

That stuff always seems to overcome the inside-out of even
the strongest stoic. Always accepting nothing, short of
long embraces and divinations for reassurance.

We wonder at the coolness of the night.

Wonder if we smile enough or if we speak with joy or
laugh with sincerity. (As if to cry would move the moon.)

As if inside the turns of fortune a merciful hand would
search us out, and somehow then in reaching, would raise
us up.

Is a man a slave if his course is wrought by love?
Or indeed, does every tear and every grin become
enshrined in some museum of the soul?

I guess believing it is ten percent of making it real.
The other ninety percent is holding hands and looking at
the art.



VI. Clinic.

(A clinic; late afternoon. Chairs, and a table with magazines. LEONARD, GLEN, HARRY, and DAVID sitting, waiting for their appointments. Silence: count ten.)

LEONARD: Would you pass me that magazine there?

(GLEN passes LEONARD a magazine.)

LEONARD: Thank you.

GLEN: Okay.
(Pause.) What time do you go in?

LEONARD: Soon.

HARRY: Is he running on time?

DAVID: Little behind.

(Silence.)

DAVID: Are you sick?

(Silence.)

LEONARD: Which one of us are you talking to?

DAVID: Any. Speak right up.

LEONARD: Just the antibodies.

DAVID: Oh...lucky you.

LEONARD: 'Sthat supposed to mean?

DAVID: That you are lucky.

LEONARD: (Pause.) Oh. Okay.

GLEN: You?

DAVID: Full score. Harmony. Choir behind. The works.

LEONARD: I'm sorry.

DAVID: You're what?

LEONARD: I'm...didn't you hear?

DAVID: You're sorry.

LEONARD: Yes.

DAVID: I see.
(Pause.) Why?

LEONARD: What?

HARRY: David...

DAVID: Shut up.
(To LEONARD): Why? I mean, all right, let's see. Have you ever slept with anybody who's ever slept with anybody who's ever slept with anybody who's ever slept with anybody...

HARRY: David...

DAVID: *What?* I'm trying to help him. I'm trying to put his mind at ease.
(To LEONARD): Have you?

LEONARD: I don't know.

DAVID: *Whoops.* Well, I guess you won't be sleeping tonight. I mean, the thought of my whatever being on your head.

HARRY: (standing) I think I should call my wife.

DAVID: And I think that is profoundly distasteful.
Here sits the one person who quite probably did or did not have anything to do with my present condition, and you're running off to check on your pretty little suburban cell. You're a ladybug, that's what you are.

HARRY: I won't be long.

DAVID: And what if I fall down?

HARRY: I'll be back before you go in.

DAVID: I don't trust you.

HARRY: Yes, well, on this you'll have to, I'm afraid.

(HARRY exits. Silence.)

DAVID: One of these days I really am going to blow up his house. To get his attention.

GLEN: How do you feel?

DAVID: Like a million...oh, sorry.

LEONARD: I'm fine.

(Silence.)

DAVID: I hope they've gotten rid of that temporary. He took my temperature last week, nearly punched a hole through my chin.

LEONARD: He's doing his best.

DAVID: God bless him.

(Silence. HARRY enters.)

HARRY: No answer.

DAVID: I told you, she's having an affair. Humping the brains out of that limbo dancer from Jamaica.

HARRY: That's not funny.

DAVID: Shoot me. (Laughs.) Please shoot me.

(Silence.)

GLEN: Michael went onto the unit yesterday.

LEONARD: From Batavia?

GLEN: Yes.

LEONARD: My God.

GLEN: (Pause.) The last in a long line of dirty jokes.

(Pause.) He never...*had* anything.

(Pause.) His claim to fame is that he's the one-thousandth bed on the unit.

(Pause.) They gave him a small party.

DAVID: Excuse me. Michael. The druggist?

(Pause.) From Batavia?

LEONARD: I don't know...

DAVID: I'm...oh, Jesus, oh...help...

HARRY: Oh, David, come on, don't...

(Arms around DAVID.) ...it's all right...don't do this, you don't even know...stay calm...Breathe. Breathe. Breathe.

LEONARD: Do you want me to get the assistant?

DAVID: No! Not until I pass out, please, he terrifies me He'll try to take my temperature. I'm all right. I'm...oh, Jesus, Michael...

HARRY: David, come *on*...Breathe. It's all right. Breathe.

DAVID: Stop saying that. "Breathe."

Leave me alone.

If I want to stop breathing altogether, I will.

The only thing I *have* to do is die.

I'll decide whether or not I *breathe*.

HARRY (stands): Fine.

(Pause.) I need to...

DAVID: Oh, by all means, go ahead. I won't go into labor

now for another few minutes. Feel free.

HARRY (to LEONARD): I'm right outside. If anything...

DAVID: Will you just call the cunt and come back here?

(Silence. HARRY exits.)

DAVID: We're deeply in love.

And right now I'd like to pull his pecker off and hand it to her with my fucking initials branded onto it.

For all I know, *she* gave it to *him*.

She was told if she collected any more semen she'd have to have a license.

The temporary, that stupid little sot, he doesn't know, or hasn't been *told* (in which case it's *everybody's* fault) that it's his job to buy the candies they give you after your appointment.

So we're out of little candies now.

And at these fucking prices. I mean to tell you...

And every time they put that Goddamn stethoscope on me, I wheeze from the cold.

And if I sit here much longer, I'll get a nice bruise on my ass which makes me oh-so-desirable, even if I thought I was *entitled* to be desirable, and I *am* entitled to be desirable, I'm just not entitled to *do* anything about it.

Ever, ever again.

I don't even jack off anymore.

I keep thinking that my come...is some sort of acid and I'd burn my hands. Or my belly. Or there'd be burns on the sheets when my loving husband got home and he'd know...what I'd been up to.

(Pause.) Did you know I'm a priest?

(Pause.) It's true.

(Pause.) I am a man of God.

(Pause.) I was once a God of Men. Or so all the little priests thought.

(Pause.) And I am here with acid roaring through my body.

My soul was the first thing to go.

I hope I'm upsetting you. It's the only way I have of reaching *out* to anybody anymore.

Am I?

GLEN: (Pause.) Yes. I am upset.

DAVID: God bless you. Are you sick? I can give you two blessings if you like. I'm running a special since I'm going out of business.

GLEN: That's all right.

DAVID: So you aren't sick.

(Pause.) But *you've* seen the ghost. Eh?

LEONARD: I...the what?

DAVID: The ghost.

(Pause.) The monster.

(Pause.) The *antibodies*, have you no sense of

metaphor?

You've seen the face of the creature.

You've come away with a slight scratch.

(Pause, to GLEN): And how do you feel about that? That's he's been, obviously, well, I'll put this as delicately as I can, *fucking around*?

GLEN: See here...

DAVID: I do see. I see very well, thank you. So far. And I asked you how you felt about this rather blatant display of promiscuity, the results of which are (even now) digging their foxholes in his glands, behind his eyes, laying in supplies, twisting his lungs ever so slightly, just a touch, just testing the waters, just seeing how far can they *twist*... before everything every little thing goes *pop* and the air (that is to say, the *life* squirts out of him onto the bed and he zips around the room, perhaps noisily, for I hear that's how we go sometimes (I'm sure Michael will go that way, he's always *such* fun at parties) and then with one last *flit*, flit under the door and right out onto the high road, onto the next life, and you'll find it's such a comfort to believe in reincarnation and you promise both yourself and Shirley MacClaine that you'll be more careful *next time*.

(Pause.) And how do you feel about that?

GLEN: I'll call the assistant.

DAVID: Well, be careful. If he comes at you with a thermometer, tell him you had your jaw wired shut for a diet.

(GLEN exits to the offices. Silence.)

DAVID: So it's just you and me.

LEONARD: Yes.

DAVID: Want to fuck?

LEONARD: I don't think so.

DAVID: You've already been exposed. You'll probably get it, you know.

LEONARD: That's not true.

DAVID: Yes, you're right.

(Pause.) Well, fuck me anyway and maybe I'll get well.

LEONARD: I'm sorry. I really am. I really am very sorry that you are going to die.

But I cannot help you. And we all have to die. Perhaps not so soon. You're very young.

DAVID: Not so young. I'm older than I look. God keeps us looking young to drive the nuns crazy.

LEONARD: Be that as it may...

(HARRY enters.)

DAVID: Ah! I am dying, Egypt.

HARRY: Yes.

DAVID: You needn't be so agreeable, cock. You, or maybe your little wifey, or maybe neither one of you got me into this. Just remember that.

(GLEN enters.)

GLEN (to DAVID): They said you could come in first.
(to LEONARD): It's okay?

LEONARD: Certainly.

DAVID: Well, help me up. Anyone have a weapon of any sort? If I must do battle with this little sot, I want to be prepared. No? Piss.

(HARRY helps DAVID up and toward the office.)

DAVID: Wait. Before I go in there, there is something I simply must say.

(Pause.) It's all a Gag.

(Pause.) I'm serious. It's a massive publicity stunt cooked up by the Vatican to bring you all to the Church.
(Pause.) SMILE! YOU'RE ON CANDID CAMERA!
(Hops feebly from one foot to the other.) See?
SUCKERS!!!

HARRY: Come on now...

DAVID: I am completely serious. Everybody you thought was dead? They're all behind that little picture frame there, which is actually a concealed camera. And they are laughing their little bruised asses off.

(HARRY is leading DAVID off.)

DAVID (shouting off): Doc!

(Laughing.) I'm sorry, Doc! I blew the whistle! I just couldn't keep a straight face, it was giving me kidney stones.

(DAVID is now offstage.)

DAVID (off): Where's Michael? That sonofagun! Look at that make-up job! Where's the champagne? Wait'll the Pope hears I blew the cat right back into the bag! Boy, is he gonna be *pissed*! Think he'll crucify me? Hanh?
Ha ha HAH!

(DAVID's laughter is heard. GLEN and LEONARD sit. Blackout.)

Silence

In the beginning there was silence.
Silence was broken; replaced by sound.
It ceased to be heard—
Lost like a pearl engulfed in a sea
To be washed up on a lonely shore.
A captive biding its time...
In the end the pearl will drown the sea;
Silence will then be set free.

ACCIDENT WITH A RAZOR

Crimson colored droplets forming on my skin—
Little shining beads alive and growing
Frantically scurrying down to form a miniature
pool on the ground.
No pain do I feel as I watch them hurry on their
merry way—
Only suddenly brought to life.

A bead here— a river there—
Flowing on to some greater purpose
Of which I could never understand.
Yet as I gently dab at each and every
one,
They regenerate and continue upon their way.

I sit back and watch them go—
And I think to myself— how fragile life is!
How easily given, and how easily taken away!
As mightily as reinforced concrete;
Yet as gossamer as a web.

So I study the little droplets tumbling down
to form a scarlet stream
And I know that is me,
And I am that.

Growth

My flower rises, reaching for reason,
unsure only in time's revelation. She shies
not from mystery, hungrily questing,
thus finding finery, the water of wisdom
some seeming strong truly thirst for.

Sunlight draws the sleepy veil, faintly
like the dark curtain 'casing the many
who lack fearless inquisitiveness. Wracking
my mind, unbound beauty to see, smoky hollow
dead roots ring in surrounding ground's
rigidity, renaming effort's fruitlessness.

Lie still, let open bloom enlighten world. Let
tensest emotion take hand, hardened
in vain attempts to guard against mischance;
sweet sense, from determined likeness draw,
toward bright shared sight urge.

Lotus

Tiniest innocense, poolside beautiful,
bursting with want, potential undirected.
Provinced inexperience graces greenness
and provocatively-shaded brown.
Sight, striking white, perfectly etched,
draped by burnished black, all embracing.

Young arms stretching, straining Heavenward,
seeking newness, increasing sensible surface.
Inhibition passing hindering, holding growth,
time-tainted blossom cleansed with golden crystal tears.
Budding glory, bent to experience,
aching for lively wonderment withheld.

Rising, increasing, wonderful flower,
blessedly willing to show passing frustration.
Always open, ever drinking empirical light,
learning even in darkness.
The model, the student's ideal, exotic bloom;
littlest teacher, accept my meager heart.

Lesson

I question a time
the knowledge by which she might know
she'll never love another

So, I contradict my claim
of her utter innocence;
for whom but a child has
so little empirical clutter
to cloud her judgment



drawing by Jill Koetke

As if by practicing balancing I could conquer
my immobilizing fear of heights,
I walk on the tracks until rusty rails
become unspoken mantras, possibilities and might-
have-beens rising and falling inside me.
Each step a confidence building ritual
in concentration, awash in a sea
of cyclical motion, I walk myself whole.
Step. Step. Step. Om. Om. Om.
Feeling it through half an inch of synthetic sole,
the cold rail touches, my soft feet respond.

————— Daniel Youngren

Languishing Idolatry

Give to me your crimson lips
From which intoxicating passion drips,
And submerge my senses in your redolence
That quite drives me into submission.
My curiosity grows weary of your virtue
For on caressing your May born hips,
Blood is drawn by every prick.
The impulse rushes synapse to spine
But to climax still,
 you prevent its climb.
Permit these tainted hands
To cross your sanguine threshold,
Or forever shall they ardently persist
To erode your nettlesome chastity.
Allow our souls to become entwined
Despite what nature thinks,
And draw me in through the roots of your existence.

Tainted her
 but took nothing else
Made her nauseated
 but never sick
Cut a scar upon her face
 with a summer blade of grass
Sitting on a new train
Rocking upon orange carpet
Next to a thin brown man
Smacking my head on the metal window frame
I taste a rhythm
An orchestra humming in a distant town
A tune I might know
But the people won't stop talking
God stop talking and talking and
I can't understand what you mean
We all suspect that China doesn't exist
 and you're just babbling foreign recipes
Because you cut her hair
 then wanted it braided
Helped her out of her parachute
 and sent her soaring
Pounded in silver nails
 with a diamond smile
Tainted her
 but took nothing else
Cut a scar upon my face
 with a summer blade of grass

✱

(melly melly
smelly from smoke
bitterness too
we don't like to have you
around
your past presses us all
into confusion
"Let's finish what we started"
the phrase curls your hair
and your nervous laugh
racks our bodies
into imagination
of cars and attacks
and cruel, cruel men
who say
"Let's finish what we started"
up in the attic
down in the bathroom
soft cut skin
hard cut soul
press charges
please press charges
we won't let you
we can't help you
finish what they started)

✱

they've shoved the steely bit
cold from disuse
worn, rugged leather
"you may trot
but never, never run"
crack in the apple
rolling eyes
bite now, bite down
swallow steely shavings,
grind away,
for you may never, never run
prancer - dancer
trotting around the pole
my legs itch
insects fall from the hide
cocaine in the sugar cube
I have cantered
tasted the pure forest
spit on family dear
until they shoved the golden bit
cold from too much use
cold from disuse.

✱

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Faculty Advisor

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