

Spring 1985

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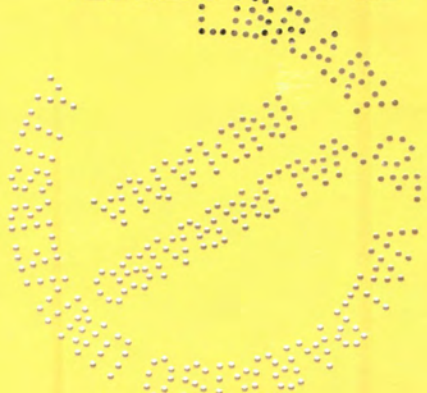
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*The  
Lighter*

SPRING 1985

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY'S  
MAGAZINE FOR  
CREATIVE EXPRESSION





# The Lighter, Volume 29, Spring 1985

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The Lighter encourages any criticism concerning the content and appearance of the magazine. Please address your comments to the Editor.

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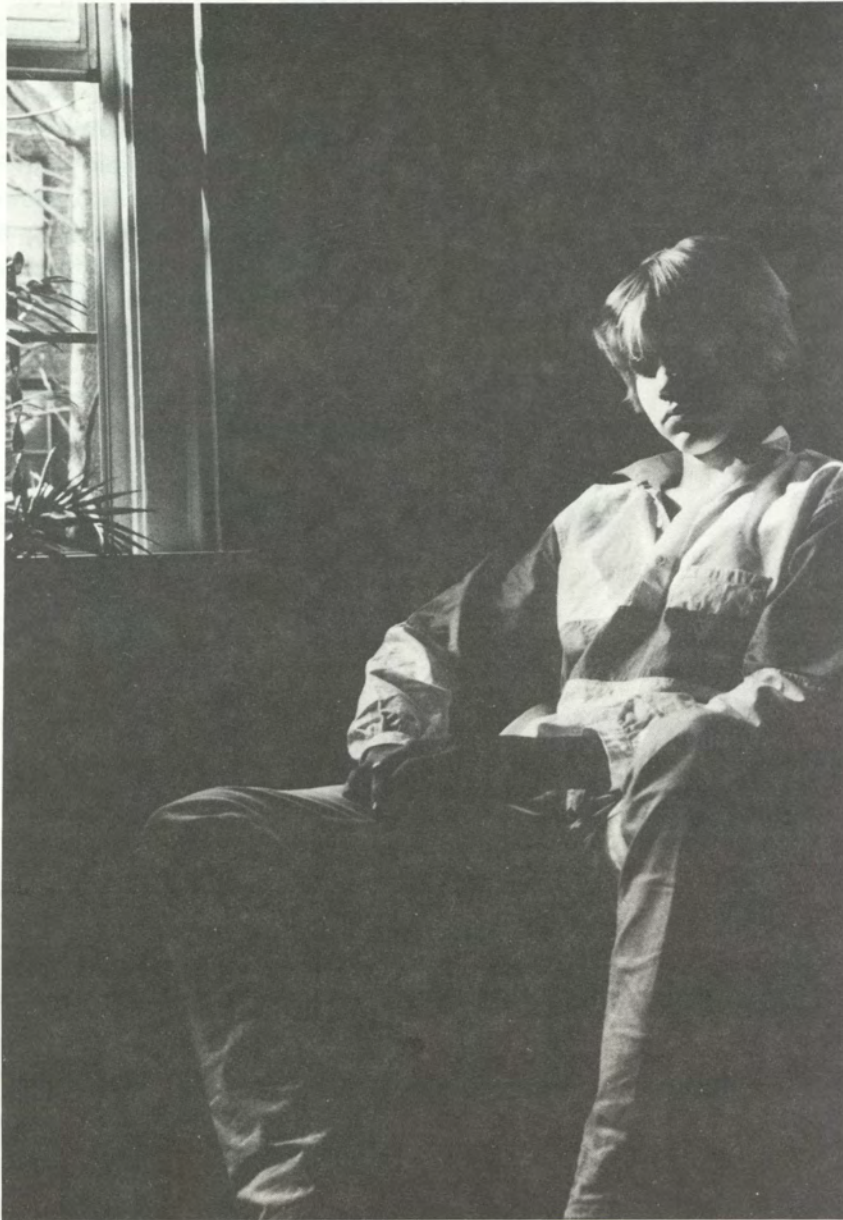
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## Ripe

The man told me  
If I was good  
He'd let me play outside.

But out here there's  
Dead things and  
Mean people and  
Bruised knees and hurt feelings.

And what the man didn't tell me was  
Once you go out  
You can't come back  
In

# Love Chant

One tune I never thought  
I'd be humming again.  
They say it's like a flower breaking the night  
after the creek has flooded.  
Hallelujah!  
I am singing for a sum  
greater than its parts,  
in awe of the light  
in the kitchen,  
where new herbs rise  
on the sill.  
Oh, to be green and thin,  
and so lucky as I am,  
thick as cat feet in  
the mint leaves  
of this garden.

## Huron

Sparkling and Blue she beckons,  
an inland sea that shimmers,  
reflecting blues skies above,  
casting shadows and glimmers.

A gem, jewel, precious thing,  
her vast beauty astounding,  
a wintry crystal desert,  
teeming with live abounding.

But beneath her sparkling depths  
is a land of murky dusk,  
waiting, watching for a sign,  
beckoning to souls who trust.

Unlike man, bold and (showy,)  
she uses satin fingers  
to lull and draw down all those  
who should carelessly linger.

## The 7:16 Express from Suburbia to Minneapolis

We emerge from our ordered and box-like suburban houses still half asleep. The snow is gently falling. As we wait, our breath rises in the cold morning darkness.

The long red monster pulls up the same time as yesterday, as tomorrow. The doors hiss open and we file on board--frozen commuters with bus passes in hand.

The snow swirls around the street lamps creating furry halos circling the light. At the outer edge of the city, just past suburbia, are the old store fronts and worn-out houses still boasting the simple artistry which once made the pride of the neighborhood. As we approach the city, we cross the mighty Mississippi, still small and clean. Steam rises from its steady currents licking the grey ice lining its banks. Downtown, lights flicker on as the skyscrapers wake.

It is deathly quiet inside. No one talks but deep sighs express the boredom of routine.

NO. I won't become a part of their tedium.  
I want to scream to the other passengers, "Wake up! Open your eyes!"  
There is more substance to this ride than continually recycling  
40 hour MondayFriday. "Look outside these windows and see  
the warmth and beauty all around us!"

But no one has heard my silent scream and I enjoy these  
gifts alone.  
And I pray that I always will be awake enough to find the beauty that  
God can reveal even through dirty bus windows.



## Their Separate Wintry Grace

The town at night, in winter,  
 Hours of walking through the hard, cold streets,  
 A night when I feel like I've lost, or don't know something  
 that a walk may help me find.  
 The fine old trees, in their wintry grace seem searching and wanting as well.

Generations have grown up in these houses along here,  
 have sat talking through long summer evenings,  
 have run and loved and breathed  
 and lain on the lawns looking through the trees at the softly  
 calling stars.  
 They've gone on, and left the trees behind.  
 The trees moved but weren't touched by the people.  
 A warm voice doesn't send a gentle light through their  
 bodies and years.

The trees and I are out in the winter this night.  
 But this walk has done what I wanted.  
 I am not separate, chained to the winter.  
 The light flows through me, and back  
 to others, filling them  
 like sunlight fills the rooms of these houses.

## Plane View

How can we understand what it is like  
 To see our world  
 As someone else sees it?

Our attempts to find ecstasy--  
 Love, music--  
 Are ridiculously inadequate at that height  
 And nothing we attempt can compare:

Not the tender hands  
 Of the best lover  
 Not the most delicate or exuberant passage  
 That any composer could imagine.

From up there  
 It is all only a myriad  
 Of small houses and clouds  
 Small enough  
 To be gathered in one handful.

It is only in coming down  
 That one again sees  
 The beauty

## Cold Awakening

Shouting  
Muscular night  
Flinging  
Shattered crystal  
Lashing  
White skinned face  
Uplooking.

Sparkling  
Green steel eyes  
Flashing  
Sharpened words  
Piercing  
Castled hopes  
Unseeing.

Shrieking  
Winter wind  
Slashing  
Stone from tissue  
Baring  
Red moist diamond  
Weeping.

## Summer Details

Bored kids eating unsprayed green apples in a neighbor's backyard,  
Puckering with each sour bite,  
Whipping them unfinished at passing cars.  
Sump pump belching swamps in crew-cut lawns.  
A tan kid in a red convertible with wind-tossed hair,  
Sandy feet, and a wasted smile  
Drives past a shady cemetery,  
Where black-suited mourners filter out of a church  
After a dry-tasting funeral afternoon.  
The bruising arms of humidity hugging you as you ascend the stairs  
From the basement.  
Cruising on a bike, gears purring, soft currents sifting your hair,  
As you sip the sunset.

## Unacquaintances

Somewhere is a girl who doesn't know me.  
I don't like her much,  
But that's ok  
Because I don't know her.  
We don't know each other.

You're not made of wood,  
But the trees are.  
And if you caught on fire  
The song might be over.  
So open your eyes.

And it makes me ill  
To think of all the people  
Who've never given me a chance.  
But that's ok,  
Because I don't know them  
And if they fell  
Into a really big hole  
I probably wouldn't care much  
at all

## In Exile

I find myself staring out of my dorm room window more often lately. Just before I go to sleep, I lay under the covers on my stomach and gaze out the window—past the typewriter and book laden steel shelves, over the plateau of roof, past the parking lot and the night-lit convenience store. Cars pass by, and occasionally people wander past, but beyond it all is a line of stark, skeletal trees, denuded by the winter yet still forming an impenetrable web around the world I see through my window. The street lamps do not penetrate this border, and above the dark, black forms of the trees is only the deep night sky.

There are rarely times in which I feel more isolated than when I find myself catching a last glimpse of my college world before sleeping. My mind may be filled with the revelations of Freud, a guitar may be playing in the room next door, yesterday's Chicago Tribune may be laying on the floor, but still, this is not the world that I know, this is not enough to burst these confines of solitude. I am trapped. Knowledge does not make

experience; it may moves minds, but I find that it takes a little more to move hearts.

Think about it; we come to college to be educated, to learn, to find out what makes the world tick, but while we're embroiled in our studies, the world passes by without us. We learn the mechanisms, but we miss the reaction. I find myself with no time for television, and perhaps I pick up a newspaper every few days and skim through it, but still, that wall of trees blocks everything. I'm being educated at the expense of the outside world. The world here is enclosed, and those of us who do not have cars or the time to break away from our studies and take the train or bus some place find ourselves slowly becoming more and more detached from the world that we once knew; home becomes a little less conceivable, a little more indistinct, it recedes a little further beyond a wall of black, webbed trees.

I'm no longer in touch with my own world. Old friends, even though we write letters, call each other, visit during vacations, are becoming more

distant. We no longer have fresh common experiences to bind us, but there's still so much that ties us together; we grew together, after all. But gaps still grow, trying to separate me from what was once familiar, casting me into a virtual maelstrom of new faces, new scenes, new experiences—at times, an almost totally transient existence. I know that I will never see many of these college people after we all graduate. Distances may be too great, majors may carry us into different spheres of society. And for that reason, relationships, and good, solid communication becomes all that much harder to come by. I miss that.

I find that people here are more wrapped up in their futures. There are few people that I have met here that do not know, or even really care what they are going to do after graduation. After all, we came to college to train for a career, didn't we? Mind are more made up, the present is enmeshed in a rigid grid of constants, people are less open to all-out intellectual wonderment and

discovery. Humanities rarely finds its way into engineering, and instead of stretching the mind a little further after classes, alcohol seems to be a major refuge, or simple vegetation, or retreat back into rigidly set habits and past-times. Of course, I'm not such an innocent myself.

The people here have chosen what college to go to, they chose their major, chose their classes, chose their future; they seem to have forgotten what it's like to be tossed into a high school and more or less allowed to fend for themselves in a diversified atmosphere. But maybe it wasn't that way for them back then. Sure, there are differences in the people here, but large quantities of the college people I have met here can be categorized into large, homogenous groups.

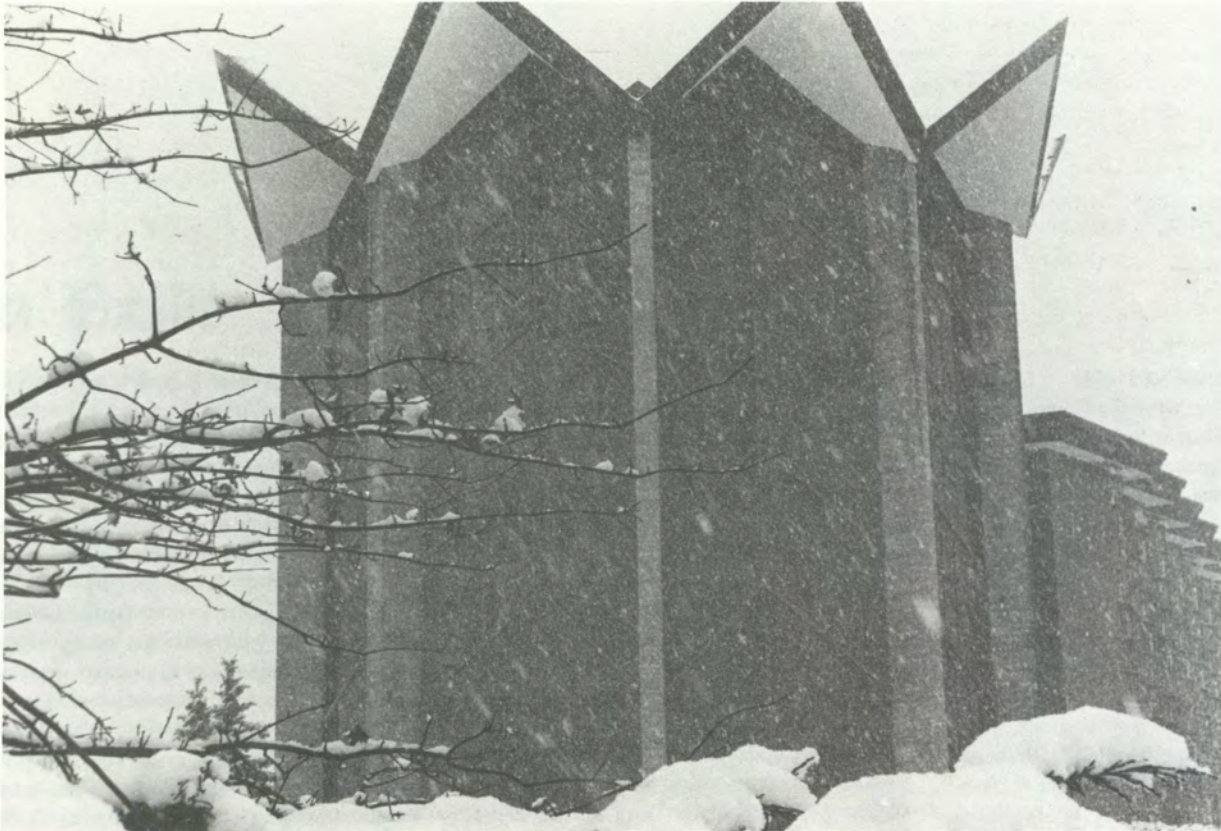
Things are more restrained here than in a large city—in a city you can maintain a certain anonymity on the streets. Here, do some off the wall act and you're in danger of building up a reputation that you may not want. So you're more careful, you try not to make waves because this place is

small enough, and this place is cliché enough that you can lose friends and be even more alone here than if you were in a company of strangers. You can be more lonely in a place where you know eighty percent of the people than in a crowd of people on an el platform. Not everybody makes choices in a crowd; you don't always get to choose who you stand next to on a bus, sit next to on a train, and nothing is truly expected. True, you're supposed to act like a decent human being, but not overly mature, or 'collegiate'. You don't have to achieve anything or be anything in anyone's eyes, because you'll never see these people after those few minutes. You don't have to live with them for extended periods of time. Their impression of you really doesn't matter.

I wouldn't give up my college experience; I learn things that I never knew before, realize ideas that had previously been inconceivable to me— but when I go home on vacations, the city has to open up to me again. I return with a different perspective, and I must reacclimate

myself to my own home.

There are times, however, when I lay in bed and stare out of my window and take myself beyond that wall of trees. I wish that I was standing on an el platform, high above the street, leaning against a railing and staring out across the city. I watch the cars and pedestrians, all these anonymous people, each with completely individual and unknown stories. I'll be one of them then, part of the city, part of the world that I am now learning about. This is the world that I grew up with, this is the world that I want to return to after college, and no amount of intellectual knowledge will ever replace the feelings that I have for the world beyond that line of dark, webbed trees.



A monstrosity out of some psychedelic scream dream  
Gargantuan head with a ring of spiked horns  
Jagged scaly elongated carcass

We sit uncomfortably stiff in its ribs  
And stare out through its sightless stained face

# It's Not the End of the World

## Dawning

The rising sun draws me from sleep;  
(I do not want to go)  
Draws me from a deeper peace  
Than waking ever knows.

Shadows of dreams slip from my mind,  
Sun strikes the windowpane,  
Flooding the room with rose-colored light,  
I blink against it in vain.

Then dreams disappear like dew in the light;  
Memory holds them not.  
The window releases the fancies of night  
To melt in sunlight, hot.

No more will dew with coolness keep  
The dreams of droplets spun;  
The peace I felt in the shadow of sleep  
Is banished by the sun.

It's not the end of the world  
As we crawl into holes in the ground  
And breathe the stale air that may soon burn our lungs  
And hold each other tight  
And pray--

He hit me, Tommy cried  
He called me names and wouldn't stop, said Phillip  
He kicked over my sandcastle, Tommy cried  
And pushed me over.

A small bruise, a cut--a drop of blood among the tears.  
It's not the end of the world.

I'm not your friend anymore!  
Shall you cry with me as we tend this wound  
Stop an infection that has already gone deeper than medicine  
Heal the skin while the mark is left inside

Cain had the mark too.

Tommy grown to Tom  
Phillip to Phil  
They stand children with guns  
And they no longer cry at cuts and bruises.  
At night they curl up in corners  
Clutching the gnawing fear in bellies  
And whimpering in whispers.  
Their eyes are lost souls.

Shall you cry with me as they leaving shut the door  
Cut out the cancer that was our love but now comes to kill us  
Wait for the heart to heal over the mark inside.

Some call it a memory.

We're your friends, said a man at the door  
And left a cut so deep the blood still flows with the tears  
He pushed over me  
Inside the house that crumbled like sand  
He spoke words that were only words to him  
They're dead, he said.

--eyes like lost souls  
And hands like greying ashes  
And stale air that may soon burn our lungs  
While we wait in holes in the ground.  
It's not the end of the world.



## Fish Nightmare

Dad,  
you were an old man who worked  
the warehouse by the docks, and  
you threw me fish I caught  
in my teeth.  
You tossed them in pieces and we  
ate them for dinner.  
We smoked them like fat cigars.  
We built a fence around our backyard  
with them, stockpiling fish  
behind it, like warheads.  
Our neighbors were drowning in the scent.  
One night they came over and pulled  
fish from the ground, Dad,  
and our house flooded.  
The water became an eating thing.  
It took wood,  
time;  
it took our mouths.

## The Coldness of Snow is Not Forever

I scooped up the hard snowball  
you had tossed at some friends today,  
and carefully concealing it  
in my nest of mittened hands,  
brought it into my room.  
I sat on the edge of my bed,  
holding it in my bare hands,  
feeling the snow shrink and die,  
melting between  
my red chapped hands and interlaced fingers,  
the water dripping onto the floor,  
until it was completely gone.

I buried my face  
in my hands  
and cried  
for a long time,  
until my hands  
were no longer cold and numb,  
just wet and salty with my tears.  
If only letting go of you  
could be as easy as that.  
Then I could let all memories  
of you, and of us,  
melt away  
like a snowball,  
and wipe it up neatly  
like just another mess  
that maybe never should have happened.

## The River

The reflected starlight shimmered,  
capturing infinity;  
Curled in sleep on misty banks,  
whisps of song and poetry;  
While the dreaming never murmured,  
breathing softly as it slept,  
The gentle breeze rode rockinghorse  
and dew-filled roses wept





## Frozen

Just about the time  
 that you get fed up  
 with  
 chapped lips  
 cold wind  
 sniffles and  
 sneezes  
 the sun decides to break through  
 and dance on the snow,  
 allowing the diamond beauty  
 to play with your eyes  
 and heart.  
 And just about the time  
 that you feel your  
 spirit soar  
 eyes smile  
 and lips curve  
 in appreciation of winter  
 your melancholy returns.  
 For no one  
 is there to share the moment.  
 And you walk on  
 and wrap your scarf  
 around yourself more tightly  
 so that your tears  
 won't freeze on your face.

# Mime's Victory

Trapped in his invisible box,  
the mime searches for a hole in the walls--  
none.

Stopping in frustration,  
he looks past his own plight  
(through his colorless cage)  
and sees the color of the outside world.  
The box dissolves, and the mime's voice  
blends with his brothers'.

## Kitchen of Eden

He squatted innocuously in the dimness of a corner. His legs were too young, wobbly, warped to stand. Therefore he merely rested his weighty body on his spindly thighs.

In tranquility he sat.  
Swells of summer heat wafted past wobbly, warped, weighty.

He paid no attention.

Buzzes of blue bottle flies attempted to assault wobbly, warped, weighty.

He paid no attention.

His fledgling consciousness concentrated on the others of his immediate world. Kitchen. Oven, orange; rotissory, Roquefort; stove, sponge; spoon, stool; radio, ravioli.

Then she appeared. Zip-zapped in from the bathroom toilet, he surmised. Flushed flesh...certainly the humid heat of hot summer was affecting her, she is (kiss?) female.

In confusion she paced.  
Swells of summer heat bombarded her face, flushed, flesh, female.

She paid attention.

Buzzes of blue bottles assaulted her lobey ears.

She paid attention.

Her restless consciousness was a yawning abyss yearning for a spring stream of satisfaction not present in her immediate world. Non-complacent was she, whispering, "WANT."

Suddenly, she saw he--he still squatting innocuously in the dimness of a corner.

Shock.

Sweat.

Piqued curiosity.

Movement.

Approach.

As her body flowed forward, her left hand groped backward and gently grasped an apple--radiant, red, ripe. She brought the radiant, red, ripe to her lips. And took...one...bite...of...its...succulent...hardness, its juice dancing around the pink crevasses of her teeth.

A smug, sinister smile enveloped her lips.  
She lunged at he.

Silence.

He lay crushed beneath the radiant, red, ripe; his eight young, wobbly, warped united with the cold, no-wax linoleum.

God was no longer in the kitchen.

## From: The Zoo Odd Vengeance

They sat on the bus, she sideways on the seat before him, her chin resting on her folded arms on the back of the seat. She intently watched him as he finished reading the last few lines of the essay, reading his expressions as he went along. His eyes scanned the last words, and his gaze grew softer, less focused as he turned the content of the essay over in his mind, mulled over it before he would be sure of what he thought it said.

"Well?" she asked him, brushing a strand of brown-blond hair out of her eyes. He looked up, his hands folding the paper in half, his fingers running along the fold and pressing it into sharpness.

"I'm not really sure," he said. "Not very sure at all. I follow his points, like where he calls a day a 'morass of mundanity', and how he feels that we all live our lives striving to be normal, part of everything around us, and that we tend to get lost in it all..." He paused, glanced out the window at the scenes passing by. "But are you sure he's right in denouncing normality, as well as maturity, and even day? I mean there has to be some order out there, some direction to grow in, some way so we don't all get lost—"

"How can we get lost as long as we know who we are?" she asked, her eyes glittering as if she held all the answers.

"How do we know who we are? If we can't even tell who those around us are, how can you expect to figure ourselves out? What if we strip away all those masks and layers we affect and find out that all we are is those masks and layers, that we are nothing but who we try to be?" he said. "What if we really have no identity beyond what we affect?"

"Can't you see that everyone I've met tonight, even you, you're all trying to escape the masks that you classify as those of 'day' by simply putting on the masks of night. You're even going so far as to rebel against rebellion, all because some people may see you as rebels! And because you feel that you're doing it, you are doing it—it's not your biological function, it's not what you've been commanded to do, it's not because you have no other choice. But still, you all act as if it were your duty to act as you do, only because you've decided to make it your duty to act that way."

"At least we want to be who we are," she replied. "We're not feebly accepting what others tell us to be, what others see in us. We mould their opinions of us, they don't mould us of their opinions." She brushed the strand of hair out of her face again. "It's a zoo out there, and do you want the zookeepers to decide what kind of animal you are? Do you want to be a

lion because they told you to be, or a snake because they've declared that that is your function in society? No, it's our duty to be who we are, to be a pangolin instead of the hermit crab they expect of us." He opened his mouth to say something in objection, but she cut him off. "I know, the animals are a bad analogy, but it does apply to us, and I for one, would rather defy classification all together and remain a spectator of the rest of society. Maybe we're not all perfect, but then, neither are we all corrupt. You're not destined unless you allow yourself to be." He suddenly remembered something that someone had said at the party—she's not innocent for she knows too much, she's not corrupt for she's pure in what she is. He looked at Chris and tried to fit the saying to her features.

The bus struck a pothole and they lurched in their seats. She glanced out the window. "This is my stop," she said, rising to her feet and holding onto the bar attached to the back of the seat for balance. "Listen, Rick, I'm glad I met you. Maybe we'll get back together later." She turned and hurried down the aisle, almost swinging from rail to rail to keep from falling prey to the wild motions of the bus.

"Wait!" he called, half-rising. "I don't have your number! I can't—"

And the doors shut behind her, the bus rumbling off. Through the grimy windows he caught sight of her heading down a side street. He hadn't even had the chance to glimpse the street sign before the bus had begun moving again.

He should get up and get off at the next stop, he told himself, but stop after stop went by and he didn't move from his position. He wasn't quite sure that he ever would. Something had just been lost, something had just occurred that was irreplaceable—the entire night, and merely running after her wouldn't have allowed it to continue. Day was not far off. He was scared, he realized; frightened to return to (gasp) normality, afraid to find out that everything that had been said against it might possibly be true, but he was even more frightened to turn his back on it.

Maturity, adulthood, mundanity, normality; threshold terms that before now hadn't been all that tangible for him, and now loomed with dark ferocity in the near but murky future. What would happen after graduation, what would happen if he got into and through college? What would happen—

The paper he still held suddenly caught his eye—was this the key? To face the world with an acidic disposition, trying to hold onto what you

could, not really expecting it to last, not daring to hope but instead half-heartedly dreaming of what it could be? Living life with the realization that you probably never will figure it all out, that it didn't matter since there was no specific reason for anything?

He began to unfold the essay to skim through it once more and suddenly noticed the phone number scribbled on the back. He had forgotten all about it; it was the number of the author of the essays, so that he could call and give him his 'feedback' on them.

There was the link; this was the way that he could renew communication with all of those he had met that night, and eventually, he could work his way through them all, back to her again, maybe even unexpectedly popping up in her life like she had abruptly appeared in his. His mouth curved into a tight smile, and somehow, he knew that she had planned it all...

Buildings, trees, side-streets, cars, early morning walkers, all sped along in a panorama beyond his window, and he absently watched them, not thinking of where the bus was taking him, his attention flicking from scene to scene of the night's experiences. First there had been the party, then the movie, the diner, the gangs, the police, the bag lady, the rest of the cast and crew all revolving in some

weird harmony that had inexplicable reached out to include him.

He looked up and recognized where he was. He rose and walked slowly toward the front of the bus. "I'll get off here," he said to the bus driver as they neared the intersection.

The traffic light turned green as the bus slowly lurched to a halt next to the lamp post with the blue and white bus stop sign attached to it. The doors wheezed open with a hydraulic hiss, and he descended the rubber carpeted steps to the concrete curb. The doors closed behind him and the bus roared through the intersection in a cloud of exhaust as the light clicked to yellow.

He stood there for a moment, hands in pockets, his hair ruffled by the cool lake breeze. Dawn was just a short while away, and city behind him was beginning to flex itself in preparation of one more day. He should have still been asleep at Mike's house, or at the very least, still on the bus and heading for Belmont, where he could catch another bus heading home.

Looking around, he wondered why he had chosen that particular place to get off the bus. Fullerton. Lincoln Park Zoo was just south of where he stood; the north entrance to the rookery opened up onto Fullerton, a bit further toward the lake. The zoo wouldn't be open yet he knew, it was

too early, and he didn't really know what time the place opened its gates. Anyway, the zoo didn't seem to be his immediate destination.

The entire thought of a zoo turned him off slightly, left a strange taste in the pit of his stomach. Not that it was someplace that he could never bear to go to again, or even consider, but with all that talk all night about society, personalities and such, and the zoo itself, it seemed that if he were to go in, he would spend more time watching and observing the people rather than the animals. And that idea left him numb, the fascination wearing thin. It was time to let his mind have a chance to relax, clear it of everything that had happened, everything that he had seen. Later on he would watch, and decide whether or not it truly was a zoo out there.

It's a zoo out there— her words still rang in his ears. But which was worse, she had asked him when he had first queried about that phrase; doomed to confinement in cages of emotions and fears, living in houses of conformity and cliques, or condemnation to the outside, to wander forever beyond the bars of the cages, staring in at the antics of those within, wondering if you would be so much happier with them than in the sparse company of your fellow aliens...

It wasn't so simple.

He began to walk toward the lake, the fence enclosing the rookery ahead, the interior shrouded with thick foliage. The sky was still dark, and the scenery around him all seemed to be varying shades of black and white; the greens of the plants and grasses, the yellow of the street's dividing line, the red plaid of his flannel shirt, all fading into some hue of grey. Lake Shore Drive hummed before him, headlights streaming past on the bridge over the street he walked along. The rush hour had already begun.

Some days—winter really he'd get on the bus for school when it was still dark, and he's sit there, gazing out the window, going over his homework, reading a book, doing something, and when he got off in front of his high school, the sun would be in the morning sky, the snow reflecting the light, blinding everyone as they walked to the doors of the building. He'd never actually seen the sun rise, never.

That was what he was doing, he suddenly realized. He was going to the lakefront to sit down and watch the horizon and watch the sun come up. There was always a first time for everything, after all. It was about time.

As he walked, on the other side of the street, heading in the opposite

direction, was a woman and her dog. A nice looking woman, early twenties, undoubtedly succesful, or on the verge of being, and living in one of the nearby condominiums. Both she and he dog turned their heads to glance at him about the same moment, and then, dismissing him as something less than harmless, their minds simultaneously went back to their previous thoughts.

He watched the dog, trotting ahead of her, the leash hanging slack between them. The animal was a pleasant, typical, domestic breed—collar on, chain securing the umbilical cord between master and property. What a symbol of bondage; bondage as in man tied to possession and morning rituals, to an incessant drive to pounce home the mundanity of life—and he let out a loud laugh. For some reason, he kept seeing things in terms of symbols. Everything that he say he could derive some subtler meaning from. The bus, his comb, the cops, the lights, the party, the zoo, the day—they all stood for something; they had to. After this night, it couldn't be any other way. The night had read like a novel, originating with the thoroughly improbable meeting between him and her on the bus yesterday evening, going from one bizarre event to the next, finally trailing off and moving here; somehow,

he felt cheated of a climax, a thundering resolution, and since there was nothing but continuation, he might as well see inferences that may or may not be present.

The rookery entrance was behind him now, and he stopped for a few minutes on the bridge over the water that connected the lake to the North Lagoon. The stone rails had black wrought iron spikes jutting at a slant outward, keeping people from climbing up and falling in.

He watched the water rippling beneath him, the sky mirrored below. It was getting brighter, and he could see the horizon becoming lighter beyond Lake Shore Drive. He walked on, his hand outstretched and bouncing on each spike. Picket Fence Blues—was that what John had called it? An image of John playing his guitar at the party came to his mind, and then another picture of John passed out on the couch, the coffee table littered with beer bottles and reefer ashes, everyone in the living room at some degree of being stoned, and getting drunker and more stoned—the group of them had left the party at that point, heading downtown for some obscure reason—he didn't remember what excuse they had used anymore, just what they had finally done.

He passed under the Drive, a few

cars passing him, going on or getting off the expressway above his head. Beside him, the concrete walls were painted white, and across the wall was scrawled a stream of black spray—painted words—blackrosesblackrosesblackrosesblackroses, and at the end was placed a black and red illustration of the flower. There was other graffiti too, the usual who loves who, fuck somebody else, I was there, and so on. Normal stuff of a normal generation, a symposium of normality underneath Lake Shore Drive.

But written across the normality ran the black roses; why black roses? Who had written them for what justification? Self—gratification and expression? Gang turg? Emotional difficulties? Maybe. He didn't doubt that, if it were half-possible, that she herself had written it there, just to get to him one last time and keep him wondering him. It would be just like her to do that. It was so much like what she would have done.

He dragged his fingers along the wall as he walked, rubbing the black words, across the rose, until the white paint ended and he emerged from the dimness of the tunnel into the growing light of pre-dawn. The exit and entrance ramps to the Drive were here, regulated by a cluster of traffic signals. The beach was across the

pavement, behind a high fence with open gates. He stepped off the sidewalk, crossing the exit against the light and heading toward the open gate.

The fence opening was the portal, and the Theatre On The Lake as off to his left, partially hidden behind some trees and a closed refreshment stand. He'd seen plays at that theatre before. Plays had always fascinated him, had always been more fantastical than even the most special-effect laden movie. A few people with enough nerve to get up on stage and rearrange their personalities and features to entertain a group of strangers with the privilege of observing a replicated slice of life. The actors were on display, distanced from the rest of the world but somehow juxtaposing matters so that it was the audience contained within the bars of the stage, not them...But right now, the theatre was dark and silent, the dark stained walls meshing with the rest of the present-reality.

Reality? Hardly—the whole evening, including this episode right now, was fraught with unreal images, so that it seemed like the world didn't really matter anymore. In fact, no one even knew that he was out here; sure, people had seen him, his existence was assured for the moment, but who truly and actually acknowledged his

presence in their mind? His entire identity at that moment was purely arbitrary. What people were aware that he was standing at that particular spot?

He was alone in the world, totally isolated, existing for the instant only in his own mind. A chill crept through his body as he realized just what a peculiarly eerie feeling that was—if he were to step off the embankment into the lake and slowly sink to the bottom, breathing out his last in a few unidentifiable bubbles, no one would ever know.

But what use would that be? There was no reason to commit the act, even though and in spite of the fact that the entire book he had just experienced had no purpose, no direction, no aim...

Existence.

What an odd feeling, what an odd form of vengeance to take against the real world. No reason for him to do anything; no reason at all. Anything he did right then would have no consequences for anyone but himself, whatever he thought, whatever he did—no, that wasn't quite true. There was what Julia had said at the party—the revelation itself has no bearing but the reaction to it does. No matter what he did, there would be some sort of reaction. But sometimes, futile, inconsequential acts were best

for the soul. Let everything fly where no one would see you, where there was nothing to hold you back, no bars, no cages, no spectators staring either way through the glass confines of the small mammal house. Revelation—revelation in ignorance of the rest of the world...there was something there, but he just couldn't pin it down...

Revelation...revolution...revel...

Persistence will endure.

Lord—why did everything have to be so difficult, yet so insanely easy that simple persistence was usually enough to carry you through? He walked further along the concrete path, following the curve of the lakefront, the grey waters of Lake Michigan undulating on his right, and across the water, farther south, the pillars of downtown, a forest for civilization, towering dark and primeval. A low wall ran along his left, forming a plateau of grass and trees stretching back to Lake Shore Drive.

He sat on the wall, staring out over the lake, across the grey ripples, over the kaliedescope of motion of the shimmering waves, toward the beginning orange of the horizon. At last, he thought, his mind could rest. The evening; the night—it was over now. He had seen things he had never seen before, done things that he'd heard

others had done—he had learned.

What she said was true, you know, he said to himself. The zoo and all. Never before had he felt so, so separated from the world. The neon and headlights, the people and music, and then morning.

His hands were cold, and he rubbed them together, breathing through them. He pulled his flannel shirt closer about him and brushed his hair out of his eyes, and then thinking better of it, pulled his comb out of his back pocket—but no, his hand closed on nothing, and he remembered that he had lost it.

Gold spread across the lake and the horizon glowed with a stronger light, adding another dimension to the steely waters. Birds wheeled across the sky; 'Look across the sea to what there is to see, and then we'll become we...'

He pushed his hair back once again, and the sun erupted from the waves.

# Mannequins

20

When the lights dim,  
And the shadows grow and encompass  
The windows where the illumines retreat,  
The Store awakens, and  
The Plastic People come to life,  
Step down from their pedestals,  
but not too far  
And sacrifice their beauty for a few timid hours  
of animation.

And, with trepidation, the party begins.  
The Plastic People stretch and  
cry empty tears. It's been a long day.  
Compassion and sorrow and fear  
Laughing and Sneering and Lying  
And empty tears,  
For Plastic People can't cry.  
And the party continues.

But now, the lights come on  
And the Empty-Headed Plastic People  
flee in a nervous anxious  
h e l t e r - s k e l t e r  
Take their places in the flourescent, electric dawn-  
Pose in dramatic stillness.  
And when the Real People come with the  
light  
They Laugh  
at the empty tears  
and the frozen, molded smiles of the  
Empty-Headed Plastic People  
And the world turns its cold shoulder  
and sleeps.

## Where

Where all the farmers' fields were  
come in suburban row.  
Hoops are in driveways  
where plow-blistered hands busted dry sod.  
Rich earth of sweet darkness  
covered by cement patios with Weber grills.  
Wild grass once waving with restless winds  
is neatly-trimmed astroturf.

They're paving parking lots,  
they've got their flags unfurled.

God bless  
American progress.

## Unfettered

When the sludge of depression sucks me down,  
When I overreact to a female's single syllable,  
When the fruits of procrastination bury me,

that picture--  
me and her, sunglasses on, laughter bursting out of us,  
the last party with all our friends before we went off to school,  
dancing under the summer stars, arms entwined,  
Friendly wet kisses on the cheek, shouting lyrics and jumping,  
slipping and kicking to the pounding music  
on the beer-puddled deck of the paddleboat chief Waupaca  
--coaxes me to smile.



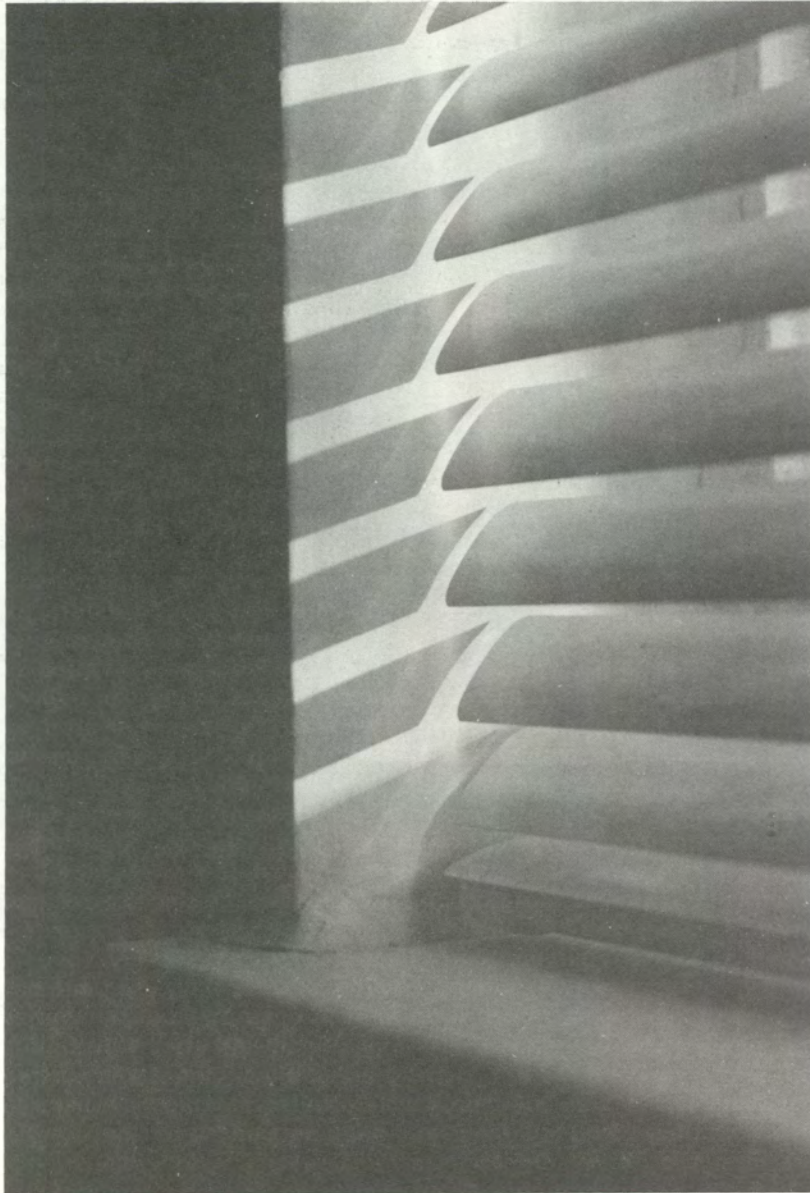
## Metal Crayons

man  
 likes to paint the sky  
 with brushes  
 too big for his hands.  
 ball point smoke-stacks  
 writing with either  
 black or white  
 air ink;  
 scribble all over  
 the big blue page,  
 over the birds and trees.  
 they doodle away until  
 the landscape becomes  
 a filthy cluttered  
 mural of graffiti.

man has a growing collection  
 of pens and pencils;  
 newest are the  
 huge metal crayons  
 tracing lean white fluffy lines across the sky,  
 leaving a billowing mushroom  
 over the blue page,  
 scribbling out the pictures beneath.

we must have forgotten  
 that when you press too hard,  
 you rub a hole in the paper  
 that can never be replaced.





## Prize Every Time

Take one, they're free Take two  
 They're small One  
 Size fits all(Middle class)  
 "Place your order here...May I  
 help you?" how  
 About some piano lessons "HAVE  
 A  
 COKE  
 AND  
 A  
 SMILE" or  
 large fries The  
 Door's always open in  
 That case Guess Who's Coming to  
 Dinner  
 I'm gonna tell I'm gonna tell I'm  
 After all This  
 is  
 the  
 Land of the free, home of  
 Horatio Alger so  
 Go  
 For  
 It

# La Baleine Blanche

(The White Whale)

The Coney Island Zoo wonders if the White Whale is pregnant. I guess I wonder, too. Are the expectations of life as complex as life itself?

The hazards are there daily:

Foxes with firebrands tread through fields of hope; and disaster lurks in the lingering gloom--the universe. I meet fear face-to-face, and countless horrors await me in imaginings, perhaps Baroque; in reality, too, I think. Horrors like the harrowing of Hell, and others, diurnal, nearly dull.

I turn. My eyes and mind behold the true scene of the moment:

The filtered sun, streaming through the narrow, lengthy mud-stained window, pierces the deep-purple heather with blades of warmth. The orange tree spreads capriciously; it is strangely formed, but gleaming. The fern entangles the spacious begonia, the Queen, indeed, of this melange of plants. Ah, let us not forget the spindly coleus, in need of pruning; it vies with the heather to reap praises for its color.

There is joy in this sight.  
I understand, and I do not:

The whale moves and groans. It may be hunger, or a babe.

## Goodbye Frank Lloyd Wright

Lord, where did the odyssey go wrong?  
bending to reams of self-psychoanalytic thought  
restraining mind and spirit against  
the winds of change--

constant as I imagined that I was,  
only to find that the world was not as it seemed--  
dreaming;  
and in dreaming  
lie for the future and cause all manner of effect,  
reverting to semi-persistent cries of rage,  
sinking to new depths of Quixotic confusion,  
twisting novelizations of life  
into something less than sane,  
the magic seeping through  
outstretched fingers--  
all too soon, muttered in tones meant only for God's ears,  
and reflected, rejoined, mulled over and discussed,  
reverberating in the hollows of the intellect,  
finding substance in echoes,  
and existence in the wind.

where has the journey gone wrong?  
where have the idealistic patterns of the past gone,  
trembling and fading into black?  
Turn down the lights and set the actors in motion;  
the play has just begun,  
and reality must now live only in memories.

# In the Park

24

Innocent and simple and curious comes the child  
Equipped with dictionary and thesaurus and legal pad and ball point pen,  
it deftly wields these awesome tools  
in search of what is true  
of what is real

Naive and fragile and exposed comes the child  
And the park is peaceful.

Full and lush and satisfying stands the tree  
Adorned in a glorious vestment of leaves,  
it proudly towers from the soft grassy floor  
Tall and green and good stands the tree  
And the park is peaceful.

Cool and refreshing and new comes the breeze  
Concealing its awful secret,  
cloaked in the sweetness of truth,  
it passes unnoticed among the blissfully ignorant creatures of the park  
Mrs. Snake--happily slithering in the tall grass;  
the groundkeeper may break her bones  
but words will never hurt her  
Mrs. and Mr. Bird--chirping loudly;  
chirping what they mean  
meaning what they chirp  
Mr. Squirrel--gathering nuts;  
because he is a squirrel

Restless and ripe and hungry blows the breeze  
And the park is peaceful.

Conscious of the task  
Striding boldly to the tree,  
the child raises its eyes  
and gazes thoughtfully at the fullness  
at the lushness

And with the examination thus complete,  
the evidence is thus gathered

The child concludes,  
and shouts, "THIS IS A TREE!"

And the child is satisfied  
And peace leaves the park.

For the breeze of awareness,  
lying in ambush  
until the moment of satisfaction  
Blows with a deafening WOOSH  
And rips the leaves of green  
from the desperate clutches  
of what lurks beneath  
And scatters to the ends of the park  
the now meaningless devices

Black and tangled and forever remains the bitter side of truth  
Victorious and here and now rests the breeze  
Stunned and empty and ruined goes the child  
And the park is again peaceful.

## Choices

He puts his chin on top of her head and says nothing.  
He hugs her hard, holding for however long it'll take.  
All he said was "I'm not sure sometimes".  
She looked straight in his eyes and, in a crackly voice, said,  
"You're so cold...sometimes."  
He feels her warm tears trickle down his neck.

He could sigh and say her name a few times--  
but that would be a movie.  
He could let go and stand back with a face as insensitive as stone--  
and she would run away in tears of disbelief.  
He could tell her he was sorry and didn't mean it,  
but he'd be lying to himself.

He rests his chin on her hair, waiting silently  
for her clenched eyes to dry  
for her to smile  
for her to say, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cry."

## Earth

Spring. Life breaks forth anew to revel in the love of the sun. Freshness and beauty are reborn on the earth. Joy dances, leaping and daring to laugh threats at the sky. And the children of nature frolic among the grasses.

Night. Life burrows away. The very sky seems to thunder back the insults and idle threats of the day. Hatred screams out in anticipation and pain. And the children of nature cower in fear of the unknown.

Dawn. Life steps out, wary of the curious black towers on the horizon. Newness reaches forward, razor-sharp even at such a distance. But the children of nature are gone.

And the cities of the southern sky are born.

## Kentucky

Half a stolen melon glows  
by a glass jar full of lightning bugs  
that the boys and I collected up,  
before the skeeters drove us  
from the sea of weeds beneath the stars and moon  
to the slightly spooky dimness of the hayloft.  
We took the melon from old Lester's place up in the holler.  
He came out and threatened with his shotgun,  
but his shells are older than his withered legs  
and quavery voice,  
and we outran them both,  
or else he did not shoot  
because he remembers stealing melons too.  
Jesse fell in Lester's creek.  
He's little and was scared,  
but her pretended that he couldn't climb the bank  
till he got finished crying.  
He's asleep now, all worn out from running,  
and from trying to look brave through Jason's goblin stories.  
Jason's sleeping too, still looking sick  
from the plug he snuck  
from Pa-paw's sweater hanging off the armchair in the parlor.  
He's older than me, but has a wild streak  
that came down from the witchy women on Ma-maw's side.  
I'm writing under light from a helmet lamp  
that Pa-paw used in the dog mine that's all played out now.  
He used to crawl in on his side  
and shovel coal into a little cart.  
It was hard work, and he was poor,  
but the sun was bright when he came out at twilight.  
I'm looking out the loft door,  
and the moon seems bright to me on the hills and on the fields.  
And I wish that I would see a bobcat or a bear.

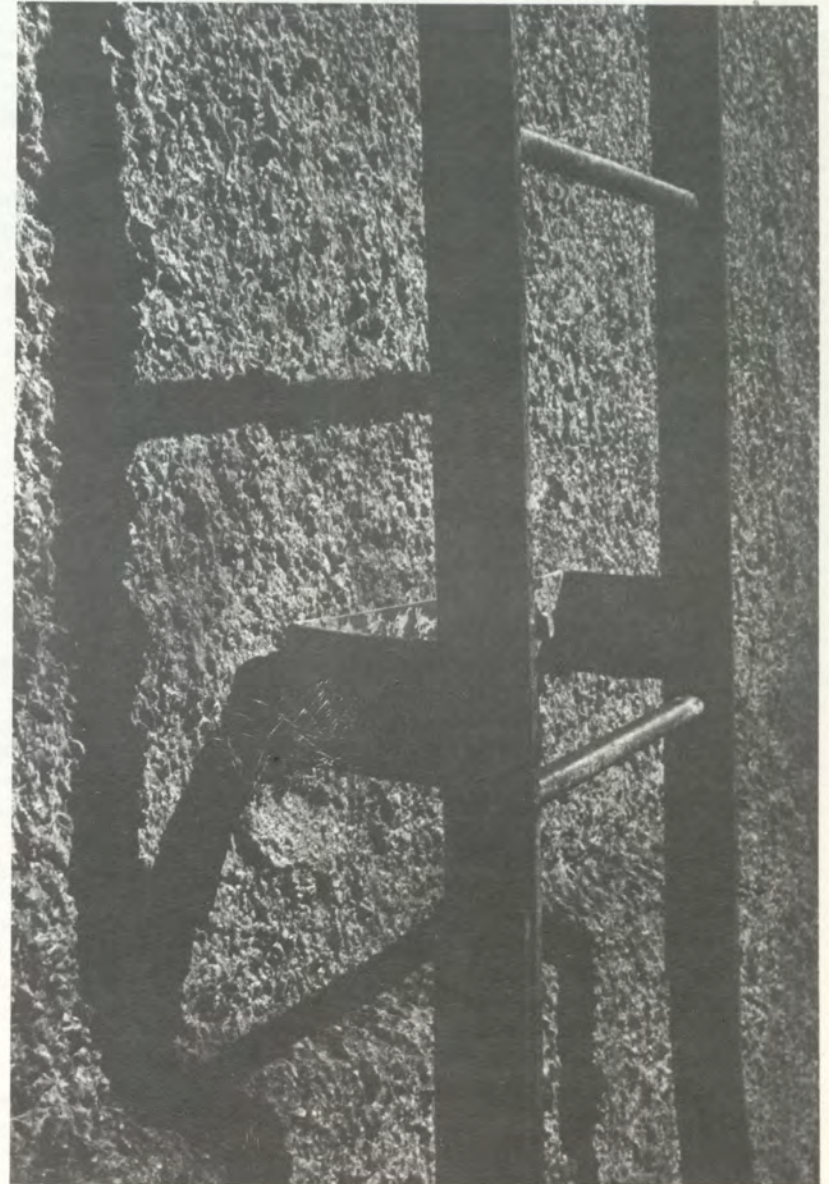
## in my time of missing

candle flames flicker in our open Fall window,  
 long green and red Gogay curtains billow inwards  
 from glass doors that open onto a littered rainy-wet patio  
 littered with shards of broken mirrors and burnt broomsticks,  
 pieces of a shattered sherry glass sparkle in cloudy moonlight  
 scattered among small piles of broken gold chain  
 and lost hopes.

I sat looking from the ugly green vinyl couch,  
 ears ringing from the concert music,  
 strange simple phrases written in blue ballpoint  
 on my arms, legs, and stomach,  
 wine bottles carelessly tossed about the room.  
 and my mind created,  
 somewhere in the vicinity of my fuzzy wet brain  
 small dim sparks, dark forebodings,  
 but not of the omnipresent trip home,  
 rather, of trouble with the nice neighbors,  
 and a hangover from the neighbors' all-too-good  
 homemade apple wine.

I fell asleep in a Cambridge time and place,  
 dark sparks harmlessly dancing,  
 and awoke in my time of missing,  
 dark sparks become a raging fire:  
 Death picked up his harmonica, smiled,  
 and played flaming holes through the delicate,  
 billowing fabric of my happiness and hopes,  
 as blood stained moonlit glass edges.

(to the Neo-Gothic Monks: "there's a feeling I get when I look  
 to the west and my spirit is crying for leaving")



# People of Chicago

HE surveyed me from the rim of my hat to the heels of my boots as I stood shivering on the overpass. The taillights below made an ugly stream of red as the cars inched along, moving, braking, then moving again. The first bus to come was full.

HE stepped onto the second bus ahead of me and moved to the back. I found an empty seat in the middle. I was joined at the next stop by an old bearded man who politely excused himself as I moved my things to clear him a seat. His face looked worn and hardened, yet his eyes smiled tenderly like a grandfathers.

I glanced down the length of the bus. The faces ahead of me were tired, those in back seemed cold and angry.

HE began to yell obscenities with a group of teenagers in hats and dirty tattered coats. The bell signaling the driver to stop sounded like an elevator. They pulled it over and over, laughing and teasing the driver to let them off. I stared at an overhead advertisement for "Ultra Sheen" and wondered what my roommates were making for dinner.

The bus lurched to a halt and I felt a tug at my side, then another. My head was jerked back by the rim of my hat. Everyone was so rude and pushy on public transportation! Suddenly my head was knocked forward as if I had been a child's punching toy that you hit to watch it pop back. The old man was out of his seat, swinging his

fist out the door as HE hurried down the steps. "Did anyone git a lookit dat punk?" he asked the rest of the bus loudly. There was silence.

The door closed and the old man was thrown back into his seat by the starting of the bus. He mumbled to himself. Now I knew what the tugging had been. I looked down to my side, half expecting my purse or at least my checkbook from its front pocket to be gone. Instead I found I was nearly sitting on it.

"You O.K. Miss?" the old man asked.

I nodded.

"Ya done gotta be watchin' ebry minute of dey steal you blind!" He looked straight into my face. "Ya hadn' oughta carry ya purse out like dat."

I stared out the window wishing I could just be home. The old man rambled on about these young punks making the city so bad for good people these days. But somehow I felt it was my fault too—for being white, for being a woman, for looking vulnerable...and for having a decent coat and hat.

"How's da head?" inquired the old man.

"O.K." I smiled weakly. He had been so nice. I wished I could give him something. It seemed funny that my purse, after all that, contained no more than three dollars.

My stop came and I pushed my way to the door. As I crossed the street

and walked up to the school I thought of the old man. My head throbbed.

"How was you week?" asked the secretary as I waited for my roommate to get his coat. I looked at her, my face neither happy nor sad.

"I met the nicest man on the bus today..."



## Take the gift I offer you

O Lord, You know my heart and soul;  
 You know my mind and will.  
 You know when sin will take its toll,  
 And You are with me still.  
 You knew when life first had its start  
 That I would be impure,  
 That I would rule within my heart  
 And follow evil's lure.  
 But still You give me all Your love,  
 You send me grace and peace;  
 You send Your Spirit from above  
 To bring my soul release.  
 You let me fall, You let me be,  
 You let me try my way.  
 Then when at last the gift I see  
 You come to me and say:

Take the gift I offer you  
 The life I lived, the blood I shed,  
 The tears I cried, the agony,  
 To raise you from the dead.  
 Take the gift I offer you:  
 Be the daughter of the King.  
 The price I paid has brought you life  
 And makes your spirit sing.

O Lord, You know my heart and soul;  
 You know my mind and will.  
 You know your love can make me whole,  
 And you are with me still.

# Swansea three times

(for Ron and Stu)

## I. swansea, wales, the beach: 3:37 p.m.

long beach, factories up there,  
some kind of purple slime on the shore, and  
an endless sloping seawall.  
Ron, Stu, Stuart and seagulls only,  
fighting for beach neighborhoods.  
penknives drawn, we stalk the seagull-beach hogs  
stepping on stones above tidal mud,  
small bubbly things ooze to safety at our approach.  
stepping to a worn driftwood thing,  
jump off and scream, charge those beach hogs!  
gulls lift as one feathered sheet, only to settle  
on territory already won...  
finally, battle-weary, the gulls settle in a group  
just off shore,  
plotting for their next attack, perhaps in the morning when  
Ron, Stu, and Stuart are a continent away.  
but for tonight, on the beach,  
there's Liebfraumilch and laughs  
Heineken and Hacky  
and the distant, brilliant red sunset.

## II. swansea, wales, jazz pub: 7:09 p.m.

pints in this plush pub  
taste warmer and smoother than usual,  
with its red carpet and oak everything  
well dressed friendly Welsh waitresses  
and blonde barmaids,  
informal jazz group on the low stage,  
soft dim lighting, and mellow  
jazz sounds mixing with bitter in my jar.  
discussing beach hog conquests,  
how they run silent and deep, and  
how they are burying mines in the sand  
in expectation of our morning return  
when we are on a distant real train.  
Ron has had a little too much,  
but the Stuarts are mellow warm fine.  
my mind is wall to wall red carpeted,  
teeth tingle, and ears pleased with sax,  
we pick a movie from the Swansea Sentinel  
steal a few coasters and  
a bar rag when the blonde turns away,  
wave goodbye to the dark excellent sax man  
and flow mellow warm fine into the night.

## III. swansea, wales, after the movie: 10:01 p.m.

after the American movie  
a glance to my American watch  
tells Stu, Stuart, and Ron that  
we have six minutes to catch  
the last real train from Swansea.  
we bounce down cinema stairs  
out cinema doors into the sobering Swansea night air  
and the race is on.  
running with full bladders  
through teen-packed Welsh streets  
that look vaguely American,  
under a busy intersection, through a concrete tunnel  
they call a subway,  
past a laughing couple who cheer us on  
then a double couple, the same,  
past the outdoor store,  
through a parking lot paved paradise  
dodging Minis, Saabs and Porsches,  
into the modern, gleaming Swansea station.  
no one checks our tickets, and  
as we board the train,  
a distant sound reaches our ears,  
and the Stuarts and Ron instantly know  
what it must be:  
distant, victorious beach hogs  
laughing a seagull chorus  
as we begin a lengthy retreat.

## post script, on a real train, east of swansea, somewhere: 11:12 p.m.

not many people ride the last train from  
Swansea to Carmarthen  
just three tired Americans  
and a worn-out, nervous intellectual woman  
reading Nabakov in the corner.  
It's too bad so few people ride  
through the subdued Welsh night  
distant family room lights run past  
to the rhythm of train wheels  
and cool train breeze.  
fingers sticky from kiwi fruit,  
I drift asleep, not talking,  
on worn, blue British rail seats  
legs stretched across the aisle, and as  
mellow warm feathered thoughts slip away,  
the unpunched ticket falls from my fingers,  
breezes along the floor and out the window.





## It rains the First Afternoon we Walk San Miguel

so we duck into a mercado.  
Swinging bulbs,  
dusty stall,  
carrots 2 kilos for 35 pesetas,  
We count prawns,  
scallops, langostino,  
the one huge fish strung across the stall  
in a light where butchers  
can barely see  
the cleaver's gleam.

Plum tulips,  
speckled beef roped to the rafters,  
oranges, octopus, dulces de chocolate.  
In a back room  
men are laughing,  
stirring shrimp in a pan brown with olive oil.  
White aluminum stove,  
espresso cups,  
the cook giving a Latin shrug.  
A beggar swallows prawns whole  
under the counter.  
Butchers toss sides of beef  
off the 3 o'clock truck  
from the narrow street;  
clerks hiss at us from behind the pork chops.  
"Hey, You speak English?"

We're checking the half kilo of Queso  
we buy for mama  
for mold, bugs,  
some sign of a common decay.  
Rain washes from the street into every gutter.  
The man who hoses these alleys will  
stop on Cale de Horteleza for breakfast tomorrow  
and smile at fate.

# Just for a moment

I was walking the other night.  
Just walking.  
I wasn't headed anywhere  
In particular,  
Just away,  
Just walking.  
It was beautiful out.  
There was a warm breeze  
Running freely through the night,  
As if just released  
From the tight grip of winter.  
Lightning rushed through a distant sky,  
Painting beautiful pictures  
Of natural light,  
And then erasing them,  
To quickly paint more.  
I heard creatures of nature  
Singing a beautiful song.  
A song of  
Beckoning.

But there were streetlights  
Casting chemical shadows  
Onto asphalt rivers.  
And hundreds of featureless houses  
Sheltering thousands of featureless people.  
I wished that the lights,  
The streets,  
The houses,  
Would all disappear.  
I wished that I could get away  
And be left with only the warmth,  
The distant flashes,  
And the song.

I walked down a hill to a lake.  
To where the small animals continued their song.  
And I noticed that the acidic light  
Did not follow.  
It was dark.  
I was glad.  
But I could still see houses  
Across the calm water.  
I stood motionless,  
Feeling the warm breeze slip gently by.  
Watching the distant lightning.  
Listening to the hypnotic music.  
Each hidden voice sang his own melody,  
Which blended with others,  
Harmoniously.  
When one would stop,  
Another would start,  
As if determined.  
Determined to keep the song alive.

And then,  
Just for a moment,  
I lost myself in their music.  
And my eyes could no longer see  
The houses packed tightly together.  
Only the distant artistry in the sky.  
My ears could no longer hear  
The thousands of angry people.  
Only the living music.  
And my heart was calm.  
Reluctantly, I turned and started climbing the hill,  
But stopped to take another look  
At the tranquility.  
And the small creatures of the night continued to sing,  
And the lightning continued to dance,  
And the warm breeze continued to run.

I climbed back up the hill,  
Back into the light.

## Restless

Storm clouds brood over a field of crisp, rustling corn.  
A rusty blue pick-up with fat wheel wells  
and worn running boards sputters down a gravel road.  
A farmer's son removes a red bandana from his back pocket,  
wipes his sweaty forehead, lick his dry, dusty lips, and sighs.

## Dachau and Dancing--Don't Forget

In pre-war Germany, anti-semitism started slowly. A rock broke the window of a Jewish shop—pretty soon “real Germans” did not shop there—then maybe the shop was closed, and then if the family did not disappear on their own, they were taken to camps to await the “Final Solution”. Men, women, even children were exterminated. And the exterminators could even quote Martin Luther to support their murder.

Now we all look back and say, “Yes, this is wrong, but it will never happen again.” But I am scared, because I am not convinced. Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” I saw that quote at Dachau—and now I have to think, remember, talk about it—or history will repeat itself.

It was a cloudy, cold, drizzly day as I got off the bus and headed toward Dachau concentration camp. I walked through the gate, past the barbed wire and watchtower, and into the museum.

The museums’s exhibits began with the Nazi’s rise to power and continued to the liberation of the concentration camps. The further I went, the slower I walked. In silence and sadness I saw the pictures of gaunt, starving, beaten men, living skeletons; children on their way to gas chambers; suicide in the barbed wire—I felt sick. Really sick, deep in the pit of my stomach—especially when I saw the children. Their eyes were either wide-open in terror or empty—empty of everything. I do not know which was worse.

The documentary film which is shown to visitors was more of the same—piles of corpses, suffering people, death statistics, and the joy of liberation. But no amount of joy could make up for the suffering involved. After this film I had seen it all. I knew the history, the agony, the killing. I set out to wander around the camp.

At the entrance gate my fingers traced the cold, metal letters of the camp’s motto, “Arbeit Macht Frei” (work makes you free). Some

joke—but not a funny one. “Death Macht Frei” would have been a heck of a lot closer to the truth, and then you could say something clever like, “Do you know that people are just dying to get out of there?”

I saw the barracks, the many memorials, including the one which contains the ashes of an unknown victim and reads, “Never again” in four languages, then headed to the crematory. I do not recall ever being so terrified or horrified in my life. There was not another person in sight when I walked into the building and saw the oven like a monster in front of me. The brick, the metal doors, the darkness of the building, the hold specially designed for the burning of a human body. I stared, almost paralyzed, except for a terrified shudder that could not be stilled. I could not even turn away to walk out—I backed out, retracing my earlier steps in.

Once outside, my hand instinctively reached out in search of the comfort of another hand, but there was no one. My hand grabbed empty air.

But this gesture did answer a question I had been wondering about—how had any of them survived? They had each other. That may not have been much, but I think that even while they were experiencing the very worst hatred of mankind, there among their fellow prisoners they had the comfort of human caring and brotherly love—essentials for survival.

It was getting late. I headed back toward the other end of the compound. My feet crunched over the gravel. I was staring at the ground, kind of looking for an appropriate rock for my collection, but mostly because whenever I looked up my eyes filled with tears.

But the ground was safe. I saw only stones—cold, hard, unfeeling, uncarving rocks. How could the guards at the camp have been so much like rocks. In another time, another place, they might have been borrowing a cup of sugar from one another; their children might have played together; they might have sat side-by-side cheering on a favorite soccer team.

But no—somehow, somewhere, something went wrong—something always seems to be going wrong, even now.

Today I was at the hospital, playing with two girls, one about thirteen years old, the other about seven. They asked me to speak English, so I did, teaching them a few words. Pretty soon they had me singing American songs (their favorite was “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy”). At one point we joined hands and were dancing to “Hava Nagila”, an old Jewish song.

Then it was their turn to perform. Oya and Hatma sang and danced to beautiful Turkish folksongs. It was delightful. I joined in with the dancing osme, but mostly I watched. As I sat entranced by the laughter and joy in their eyes, I thought about the Turks in Germany.

After World War II, because there were so few men left in the work force, the German government invited people from other countries to come and work in Germany. Many Turks came

and were welcomed as “Gastarbeiters” (guest workers). But through the years, the German population replenished itself, so that today there are too many people in the work force. Now a “Gastarbeiter” has become one of the nastier things you can call a person, and it usually pertains to the Turks. The government will pay them to leave the country. These are small incidents of hatred perhaps, but how far will they go? Let us not forget that Luther often wrote against the Turks as well. Have people learned? Will they remember? I hope so, because I like Turks.

Ayşe, my roommate, taught me that a pillow is a “yastik”, and that in Turkey they say “Sweet dreams in color”. Wouldn’t you rather dream in color than in black and white? She also told me that one time she tried to rent a room in town, but when the owner saw her, he would not rent to her, because she was a Turk, not a German.

I learned the most from the children, I think. So often they are the

most intelligent of all. To Oya and Hatma, it did not matter that we could not understand each others’ songs. We could laugh and clap and join hands to dance together. It made no difference that I was an American (Pershing IIs!!) and they were Turks (Gastarbeiters!!). What did matter was that we reached out to one another in friendship and shared a few hours of happiness. That is why I shall remain a child until the day I die; I want to join hands regardless of race, government, religion, or anything else. And if all people follow the example of the children, we need not worry. But beware, lest we forget that Dachau began with only a few small rocks.

My little Hatma and Oya, to see their eyes empty, empty of joy and laughter and feeling...it would be too horrible.

Buzz, said the red phone.  
Death, ticked the clock  
to the chair that sat on the puddle of a red rug  
to the window that stared out upon the leaves of grass.  
I am woven of the hairs of Jews, said the blood rug to the cross chair,  
of Jews who left scratches on the cement walls of guilty time.

Guilty, tock, spoke the clock,  
Guilty.

I held the fruit that fell to the grass, said the chair, and now they die.  
In my arms I hold the prints of guilty nails, and still they kill.

Fall to die, Whispered the grass.

A fiery sword has burned the fallen leaves, said the window,  
And the ashen memory still clouds my sight.  
Winter has washed the world in salt tears, said the rug,  
and shrouded our whitened bones beneath the grass.

We have grown strong by your blood, whispered the grass,  
We would be stronger still.

The time is coming, said the clock, the Time is close.

The Spring robin lies frozen on the grass, cried the window.  
Salvation will yet come from the Lord, yelled the rug.

The Lord of time, said the clock and chimed a death toll.

Another robin shall bring the Spring, said the rug.  
Another worm shall gnaw its bleeding breast, said the window.  
We will never see the sun with these eyes of dust.  
Or feel its warmth, cried the rug.  
And the nails will rust in the blood, creaked the chair,  
Making even the blood guilty.

The blood on the doorway will condemn us, said the rug.  
The bloody breast of the robin cries us guilty, whispered the grass.  
I see no salvation, said the window.

Guilty, cried the robin's blood.  
Guilty, tock, struck the clock. You shall die.

And the red phone screamed like a mushroom flame,  
"All Flesh is Grass!"

And the grass withered, the rug and chair burned, the window shattered.  
The clock was silent.

Only the robin sang.

## attic

I have known the desolation of a discarded dress dummy  
in an attic  
the emptiness of an old trunk,  
the restlessness of worn, yellowing clothing  
tucked neatly inside,  
and the dejection of a matted, eyeless teddy bear.

I have known the weariness of floor boards creaking under  
the weight of footsteps,  
sat in the loneliness of Grandma's  
broken rocker  
and peeked at my image, distorted  
in a cracked and peeling mirror,  
and felt the quietness of decaying 1952  
encyclopedias.

# Self - Hostage

Footstep creaks the wooden stair.

They're there

Outside the glass of an apartment's shattered window.

Outside the blood stained glass of pane now hollow

They stare,

And tread the nails

Outside these walls

of stone or flesh

and wait the final breath.

The windows of Oedipus bleed.

No heed

For the stained glass eyes that bleed to know the crime.

What Adam here, what serpent coiled around the dream?

They plead

For the mercy cross

For thy mercy Christ

a man or God

or hollow metal cold.

Gun presses the temple

Unmade by human hands

Who shall raise it up?

# Reality

As I stare out the window.

I see a man walking aimlessly

With head hung low;

He walks as if he has nowhere special to go.

Yet, he seems to be looking for something.

I turn away.

As night falls,

I look again and see

That the man is a reflection,

And the tears are my own.

# From the Font



## The Artist Earth

A Picture.  
What kind of picture?

Draw for me,  
A picture,  
Artist.

Just...a picture?

You know...  
A picture.  
You're the Artist,  
You decide.

But I don't know  
What to draw.  
I don't know  
What you want from me.

Is there  
"Just a picture?"  
I was told  
that artists draw their feelings.  
Draw for me  
Your feelings.  
Your hopes,  
Your dreams,  
Your desires.  
Isn't that  
What artists draw?

I want a piece of canvas  
that is what artists draw on, isn't it?  
That reflects the light  
Into life.  
Splashes and strokes of color  
That sing about  
You.  
Or even dark grey smears  
Of charcoal,  
That might mix  
With the sometimes  
Darkness and greyness  
Of my mind;  
That might make me cry.

## Hopeless Romantic

Thunder awakens me from fitful slumber,  
For a brief instant, I am frightened,  
caught between dreams and today.  
Rain, steadily softly caressing the roof  
soothes me into the morning  
Freshness, seeping through the cracked window  
whispers across my face  
opening my eyelids to the bright gray sky  
Lightning lightens the room  
my thoughts  
my ducks will be happy.

There was a time  
When I might have understood  
What it is you are saying.  
But I am old,  
And beaten.  
I have been laughed at  
And ridiculed.  
My work has been stepped on  
And burned  
By those who see  
"Just a picture,"  
Or by those who see  
Nothing at all.  
I am tired.  
And I just don't know  
What to draw  
Anymore.

Thanks...  
Thanks,  
For the picture.

## Anguish

Looking back on where I've been  
What troubles me the most  
Is knowing that someday soon  
I won't be able to recall  
The turmoil I am now in

Will it disappear with a flash of lightning,  
Under cover of the rain  
Or rather, like a forgotten fire  
And just fade into the night.  
Perhaps, when I no longer need to know,  
That is when I'll be old.

I am lonely, but I'm surrounded  
They say it's just growing up--  
Does it ever end...



The sunlight hit the roof  
 creating lines as deep and defined  
 as the lines that rivered the old man's face.  
 and he watched another day arrive.

The house was as old as he.  
 It had withstood, with almost human courage, years of  
 pain, wind, rain, snow, and...age.  
 but he had not been preserved so well  
 and he knew it as he watched  
 another day arrive, but differently.

He loved the way in which the sun  
 played with the house  
 and the hide-and-seek corners that  
 one moment were shadowed into oblivion  
 and the next, gloriously, conspicuously illuminated  
 as the sunlight leapt in.

His chair rocked, disturbing the omnipresent serenity  
 and in reverence to the day he  
 stopped.  
 Then, in the midst of his tribute,  
 the shadows lengthened,  
 the sunlight faded,  
 and the silence  
 crept in.

## Infinitum

And so  
 progress marches  
 forward  
 unhindered  
 its path visible in litter  
 lying forgotten  
 behind  
 litter  
 trash to some  
 life to others  
 disposable  
 but indestructible  
 lasting beyond the existence of society  
 its creator...  
 an outcast  
 yet an inescapable by-product.  
 And so  
 the story is told  
 by its existence  
 and form.

## District manager

Lined up straight in a row,  
All five  
Grouped together like a set in New Math  
As if trying to flatter each other with their conformity  
This is a Business Lunch.

“What will it be today--  
The usual?”  
District Manager down from the home office.  
Better have the veal instead of chicken.  
Business Lunch.  
Don't talk business though  
Too boring.

All five  
With their lips flapping all the time,  
Forks poised just at the edge of their emptiness,  
Like the alimentary canal of an earthworm.

## I am the grey

This is a cry from my head--a scream of  
words and images  
There are no flowers in my scream--  
no memories of lost loves or spring time  
ShitShitShitShitShit  
FuckFuckFuckFuckFuck  
You have dulled by senses with obscenities  
until fuck is just a four letter word and nothing else  
Why are you afraid of me?  
Why do you point me out and say  
“That's him, that's the freak”?  
Maybe because I think and feel  
things none of you can  
Maybe because I can't express myself  
any other way  
I am not a real person--but I'm  
more real than you--you with your  
button down morality and your black and white world  
I am the grey you won't see  
I will always be grey and I will always be here  
I don't call myself a poet or an artist or a man  
or a student  
I am the grey that you would never be.

## ravens

There is no printed music  
today,  
just  
multitudes of ravens  
swooping down  
from  
thin, black telephone wires,  
filling the overcast sky  
with  
staccato movements.

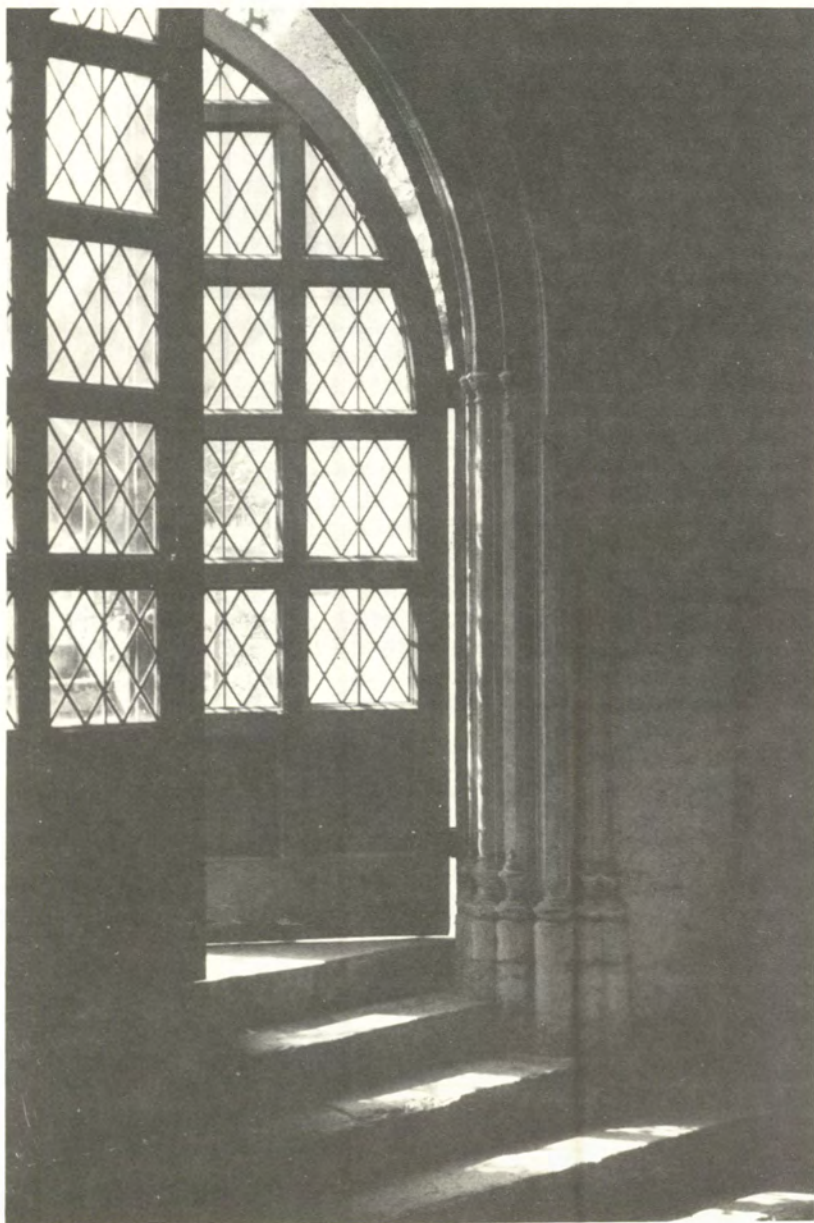
## Who Are They

I'm on a beach and trapped,  
Ahead the cliffs, behind the sea,  
And they're shooting,  
They're shooting at me.  
Bullets whizzing past my head  
Comrades around me falling dead  
Terror-stricken, can't still my hand  
Digging furiously, fists clench the sand  
Screams are smothered in the ground  
Another explosion, a frightful sound.  
Behind dark waters await my retreat  
To whirl me, gasping, into defeat  
In struggling nightmare tossed by the wave  
A third time under, no breath to save.  
And so, instead, I surge ahead  
And hit a rock wall, cold and hard  
Hit a rock wall, rough and marred  
Hit that stubborn, stubborn guard.  
Suddenly a shriek pierces the air  
An enemy falls from the cliffs up there  
Body hits sand with a bone crushing thud  
Sand turns red from the dead man's blood.  
All strength is now washed out of me  
My inner soul snaps when in terror I see  
The enemy looks exactly like me.

I'm on a beach and trapped,  
Ahead the cliffs, behind the bay,  
And they're shooting,  
But who are they?

## Prayer

Bring two things  
to the silent court near the well,  
where the shadow of the steeple  
is cast by the crescent moon at midnight:  
a cat's claw  
and a clove of garlic.  
I will place your tokens upon the earth,  
and lower a knee to each  
when I kneel to worship your pale gown's hem.  
Each white curve will close upon itself:  
a ring of white gold with a diamond,  
and a ring of alabaster with a pearl.  
I will rise to place them  
on both your wedding fingers.  
Will you reveal your name then?  
And drop your veil?  
I will bring two silver coins.  
May we drop them in the well  
to ripple the reflection of the moon?



## Gifts for a Purpose

Lord, that I had not eyes,  
but to see beauty;  
ears,  
but to hear song;  
a nose,  
but to smell the sweetness  
of life;  
a tongue,  
but to give praise;  
touch,  
but to feel love;  
life,  
but that I may live  
always to Your Glory.  
Amen.

## Sabbath Prayer

They tell me not to be scared  
 now that it's the 80's.  
 Hitler's dead and gone,  
 and his Nazi robot soldiers,  
 mechanically marching down the street,  
 can only be seen on channel 11 war documentaries;  
 and supposedly such atrocities  
 as six million murdered,  
 "could never be repeated in this civilized day and age."

But sometimes I can't help being frightened,  
 I can't ignore  
 synagogue bombings in France,  
 the NeoNazis in Chicago,  
 the white-hooded KKK making a nation-wide comeback,  
 or the people who are able to say  
 "Damn stingy kikes" as easy as they say "hello",  
 I can't pass it off,  
 and ignore it,  
 like some of my mother's cousins did.  
 I've never met them.  
 Their ashes lie scattered  
 in the remains of Dachau and Bergen-Belsen,  
 and chances are someone told them in 1940  
 not to worry.

It's 1985 now  
 but sometimes I feel like  
 The Star of David  
 is branded on my arm anyway,  
 and the ashes  
 of the six million dead,  
 shadow my face like a death mask of soot.  
 It is times like that  
 when I light the Sabbath candles  
 with trembling hands,  
 and I can't help but question:  
 If we are God's chosen people,  
 what exactly are we chosen for?



# The Prayer

Lord, can you hear me?  
Are you there?  
Sometimes I feel so alone  
And so very scared  
When I was younger I could feel  
your presence in my soul,  
But now I am left in the bitter cold.  
Oh Lord, I thought your love for me  
was never supposed to end  
But through the shuffle of adolescence,  
I seem to have lost your mighty presence.  
Was it I who first began to slip away,  
Or did my innocence of childhood just  
decay?  
Dear Lord help me to retrieve all I have  
lost to you these past few weeks,  
And let me try to prove again,  
That I am your daughter and always,  
loyal friend.

## Let's Go Hunting

Cartons of brown ducks, slick and intolerable, and the 'once a mere' hunter gazes down at his reflection.

They have hands like vice-grips.  
They get a hold on life and  
they wont let go.

Let's go hunting, take a  
real cheap shot...Let's  
go...get the lead out.

Deers move like statues, down the  
highways, silently cold. And the  
sportsman in his van picks his teeth  
with a fashionable Bowie knife.

Digital watches with duck calls...  
laser tracking systems...Where's  
the sport in that?

Let's go hunting...Let's  
go...Shop Retail.

## Splintering Prize

A splintering prize in the face  
of redemption  
We rise and feel our bodies  
creak as the lightning strikes.  
On a night when I'm alone  
my head filled with 1,000,000  
words that mean  
nothing  
until I've said them to you  
The thunder crashes--  
a promise of a splintering prize  
broken up for us to keep in  
our own separate  
worlds

The prize of splinters  
spear my body as I stare  
at a likeness of you  
which stares back but  
doesn't see me. Which hears  
every I love you and lie  
and says nothing, smiling  
with that sad smile  
as if hiding something I'll never forgive you for.  
The rain pours on my head  
and pours through my head  
Washing out every fear but leaving  
a memory of better days--not quite remembered-  
but never forgotten

When the sun rises and my body  
is pulled out of bed.  
I'll stop and stare at you  
And remember what you looked like  
sleeping with my splintered prize

## Sunday, February 26, 1984; on a Train From Nürnberg to München

Today I was propositioned for the first time in my life. He was a limping, grey-haired man in his mid 50s. He was next to me in the men's bathroom of the train station and was beside me as I went out through the door. He asked me for something in Frankish German which I couldn't understand and motioned for me to come over towards to wall next to a travel poster. I could tell by his whispery voice and the gleam in his eye that he wasn't just asking for directions, but the only words I understood were "Was machst du jetzt?" and "Kino". He was moderately well-dressed and I thought that maybe he was trying to sell me tickets to a movie or a trip to Barcelona, the place on the travel poster. I tried to tell him that I had better things to do, but it must have come out wrong because he smiled and asked me again about the movie theater. I decided silence was the best thing and walked slowly away, still trying, however, to think of something clever to say in response to his continuing questions and optimistic face.

I joined the crowd moving in the main hallway, found my train departure time, and, with forty-five minutes before by train would leave, I decided to look around Nurnberg a little more.

I left the train station suddenly realizing what the man from the bathroom was probably asking for, and I started to laugh, simultaneously noticing that the man was standing in the main hall looking around. Well, our eyes met before I could take the smile off my face, and when he smiled too, I didn't know what to do. With mixed feelings of surprise and disgust, I went straight out the front door.

I realized the foolishness of my grin and walked quickly until I came to a spot outside the old city wall where I could take a nice picture of the big, kind of Baroque train station. I was standing right next to a pedestrian underpass just looking around when, Yes, panting and limping up the stairs with a weak smile on his face came the man. I realized that I was still very much a part of this "funny story" and couldn't afford to laugh until I was

sure it was over. He asked me a question I didn't understand, and I, still hoping that he just wanted to sell me movie tickets or something, responded that I had a train to catch in half an hour. The humor of a possible misunderstanding ended when, in perfectly clear German, he said that that was enough time. Well, one learns from experience, and the sober truth was quite clear to me. I told him to go home, and, to his question, "So du hast kein Lust?", I quite clearly made my answer.

I left him standing at the top of the stairs, not really sure where to go myself. I wandered through the old streets for awhile and almost felt like going back just to talk with him. I tried to figure out a grammatically correct way of asking him about his life and about why he would hang around in train station bathrooms. When I found myself outside a museum, I thought about going in, but coming out were two American female students whom I had just met the night before. We walked together

to the train station, and, as they figured out a way to get to Konstanz, my train pulled in and I said goodbye. I didn't see the man at all in the train station and I left for Munchen without talking with him. For all I know, he's still standing by the underpass, outside the old city walls of Nurnberg.



## You Stand Alone

Your friends having gone  
No one has come to replace them  
Your only value comes in memories;  
Through Strength and Character you've stood.

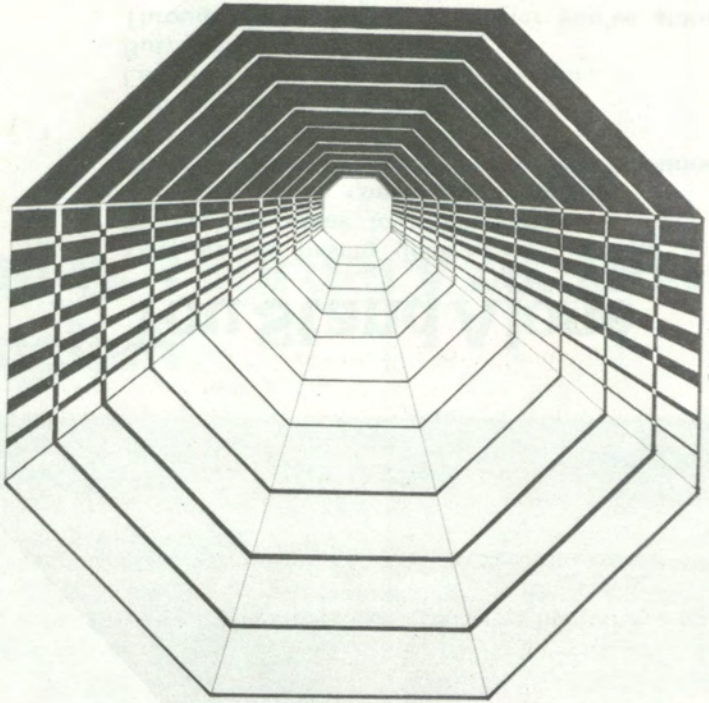
You always thought they'd be here  
Laughing, dancing, and having fun  
But they've gone;  
Through Strength and Character you've stood.

You stand alone  
You've weathered the disillusionment  
Of friends who have forgotten;  
Through Strength and Character you've stood.

The message is sent  
To those who can hear.  
Come, enjoy if you choose

But, I, can stand alone





A fleeting glimpse of the light  
 I reach out to touch it.  
 It evades me,  
 I run, stretching to capture,  
 Again,  
 It proves swifter.  
 A shadow of pain descends,  
 and it is captured.  
 I hold the glowing remains,  
 and tentatively,  
 I release my grip,  
 It struggles, and then,  
 Fanned by breeze,  
 Sensing freedom,  
 It glimmers again!  
 Darting out,  
 Caressing the earth,  
 before fleetingly,  
 Scampering off.

## Embracing Friendship

Looking across the table into your eyes...  
eyes of compassion that gently encouraged  
my stuttering words that weighted my life,  
I saw warmth.

You saw more than my words spoke, you saw a fragile,  
yet complex woman pleading to be held by understanding.

You held me with your outstretched arms of empathy and empowerment,  
arms that were already full and straining  
from the fatigue of your own pain,  
they were strong arms.

I gave you my fears, my hurts, my confusion, my pain, my isolation...  
and you held them,  
giving me back hope, healing and clarity.

Then you dare to ask will I hold you

Yes, I will hold you!  
My arms long to hold that fragile, yet complex friend,  
pleading to be held by understanding.

We must hold each other in a world that folds its arms  
and leaves us untouched and cold..

Please know that I will hold you anytime  
and for as long as you need arms to comfort your ache.

## My Mother/When the Work was Done

Every day she comes home, tired, worried,  
hoping to find some peace at home.  
Instead she finds work, chores to be done  
yet never complains as she struggles along.

Though I never complain, she's not really here.  
I miss her and wish there were more times  
to sit and laugh as we used to,  
sipping tea, when the work was done.

## El Picasso

The faces,  
chiseled in stone,  
are alive,  
telling stories

The bull,  
lying on paper,  
still moves,  
charging forth

The tears,  
unseen by eyes,  
flow free,  
beneath the paint

## Notes on Contributors

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