

Spring 1986

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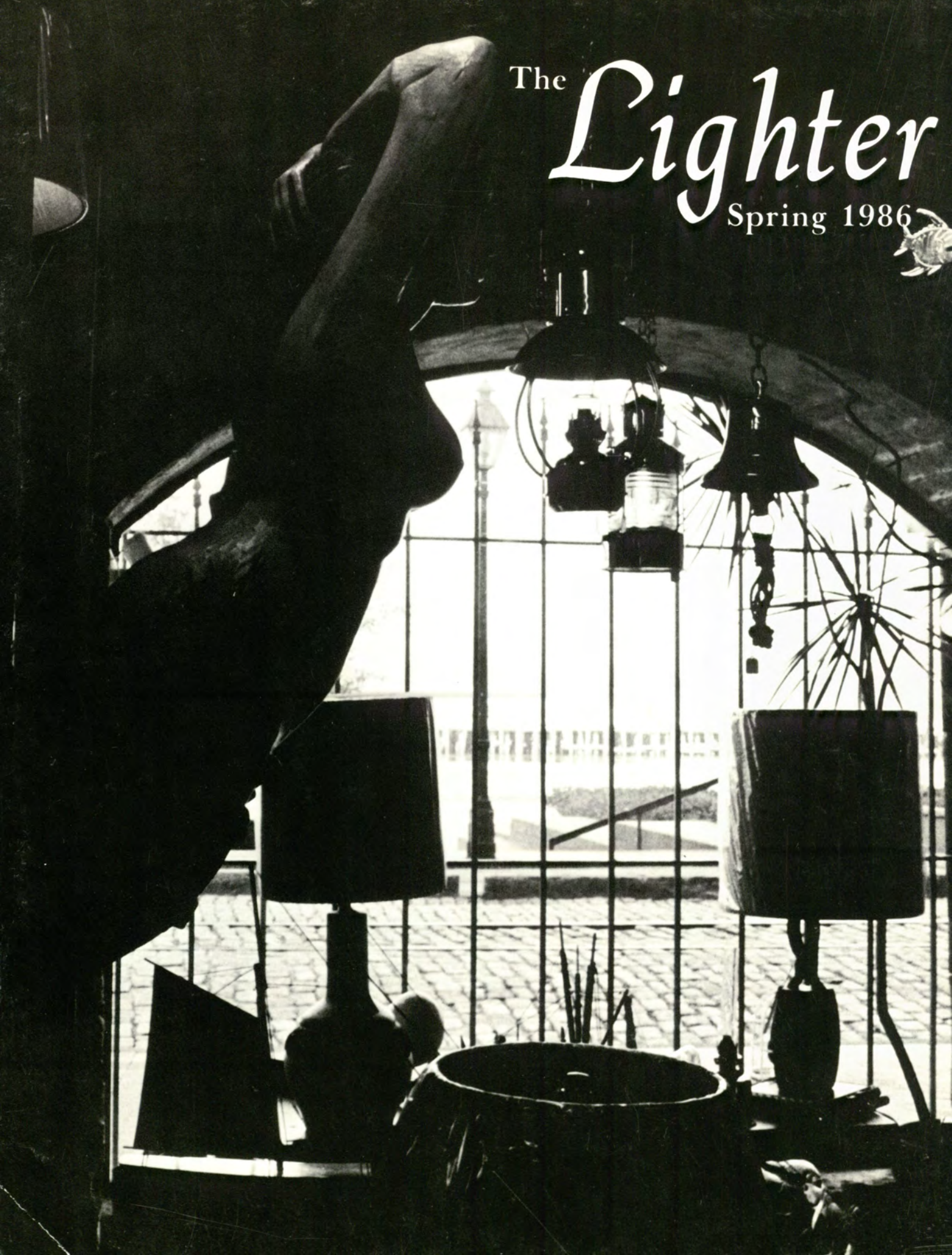
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The *Lighter*
Spring 1986



The Lighter, Volume 31, Spring 1986

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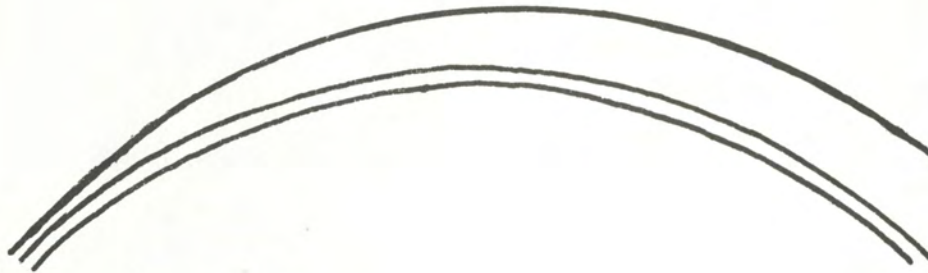
The Lighter encourages any criticism concerning the content or appearance of the magazine. Please address all comments to the editors.

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Kathrin Eimer



From the Top

News flash:

The squeeze has finally hit the top, and heaven's doors are shut.
Economics have made providing everyone with eternal joy unfeasible.
If you haven't already subscribed, don't bother: the rolls are full.
However, there is an alternative plan for you latecomers.
Ten minutes of your life in reruns.
It's the best we can do, and you only see them once.
Make your selection soon.

Patrick Burnette

**Winter Season, Leaving the
Glass Factory, Caracas**

Our last day in Caracas and, again,
on our way to the bus
rainclouds hum.
It's a good 30 miles to port
Esrondo says.
The thin busdriver
chews the bones of his lunch;
we tighten the strings on our packages.
Liz tells a man from Lima, Ohio,
about her ancestors from Naples.
I know she's Irish.
Margie, the banker's wife from Birmingham,
shows me the blue bud vase
she bought for her daughter's hope chest.
Bill sings
"She'll be comin' round the mountain"
loud and low.
I hum the second part of the round,
turning to the window.
Homes are melting
like wax on the streets,
tar-paper shrugged off like
one more hot summer.
If it rains they'll sink
nearer the mouth of the mountain.
Inside, we continue to sing,
these mountains rise and fall
like voices around us;
wipers crease the windshield.
Worn by a tense city,
I tilt my head on the window,
feeling this strange land
vibrate under the wheels.
Through these valleys,
all I can see is green,
up and down both sides,
till I think that
water stains even my breath green.



Terri Muth



Martha & Libby

Tammy Tideswell

Prodigal

Michael Caldwell

The already warm sun glistened off Kenny's baked face that seemed too dark for his clear blue eyes. He shrugged under the dual realization that noon was a long way off and that he had already taken off his musty, damp shirt. Pap marched quietly ahead of him, bare-headed in the moist warmth that engulfed them both. He never sweats, thought Kenny. He remembered days when they had worked for hours to lift a post into a hole, and, like a well-trained horse, Pap had plodded along, working and straining patiently till they had finished. Then he had taken his red bandanna (just as he was doing now while he broke his pace to set his package down), and wiped his head and neck, neither of which were wet.

Kenny didn't complain. He knew from experience that Pap rarely paused to catch his breath. When they buried her under the roof of the small house she had loved so much, he didn't rest until the job was done and the twelve miles to the boys' home traversed. Pap had left him there quietly in the dark. Then, as abruptly as he had left that night, he showed up this morning, woke Kenny and wordlessly beckoned him to follow. Kenny had dressed in the stillness of the early morning dusk, amazed at how little Pap had changed. The thin, dark hair still struggled for dominance on that hard forehead with the close-knit brows. The bright blue eyes still glowed in their sockets, and when they commanded, in spite of all his resolutions against the man who had abandoned him, Kenny followed. Then interrupting Kenny's reverie, Pap cleared his throat (not to speak, of that Kenny was positive) and snapped Kenny back to attention. The boy shifted his load in his arms, and they returned to the rhythmic pounding of the sun.

Kenny watched that head bob up and down. People said he bounded along just like his father. Kenny had always appreciated such comments. It especially pleased him to be told he looked like Pap or had his eyes. He walked just that much taller when this morning he had entered town at Pap's side. As they marched silently along the street, turning heads flickered in the corner of Kenny's eye. They strode up to the hardware store,

where Pap motioned him to wait outside while he went in. Then, with as much dignity as when they entered town, Kenny and his father strode out carrying their packages, looking for all the world like Paul and Silas shaking the unbelievers' dust off their feet. Then the sun had been up for but an hour. Now though, it beat down, smiting any creature with sense back into the shade of the woods which lined either side of the dirt road.

The sharp glare of the sun on the top of Kenny's head reopened the wounds that dripped the stinging water into his eyes. The red glare mingled with the sweat to blind Kenny. He looked up to see Pap's head blur and sway against the yellow-brown ground of the road. Kenny believed for a moment that he was watching Pap stride away from him at the home again, but he reminded himself that it was only sweat in his eyes this time.

Mercifully, Pap turned off the road at an obscure path leading into a clump of trees. The ground here gave beneath their feet and silently sucked at their boots, unlike the road which rasped with every step. In the cool shade of the intertwining branches, they both dropped their loads and sat down. Pap pulled off a grimy boot and began to clean the mud out of the grooves with a twig. Kenny wondered about this task for a moment, then asked Pap what was in the packages. Pap ignored the question, glancing up long enough from his boot to look at his boy, then going back to his boot. Kenny peered at the boxes. He would never dare open them. Once he had opened some of Pap's shiny envelopes with pennies inside them. He had gingerly fingered each one, then returned it to its wrapper. Pap had discovered his crime and had thrashed him, yelling something about mint conditions and irreplaceability.

She was the only one who had ever been able to soothe Pap when he became infuriated. It must have been in her blood, Kenny reasoned. It was something about her patient Indian heritage that knew when to speak and when to keep silent. From what he had

heard, she had been beautiful. He remembered she had taught him how to count and add when he was very young. She had had books. Once she had tried to teach him to read, and he had started well enough, but Pap was opposed to children surpassing him in any way, so he had made her stop. Still, she managed to find time to read him Bible stories. His favorite was the one where Jacob's sons deceive him with the bloody coat of many colors.

Once again, Pap picked up his box, and once again the boy followed. Now they traveled through the trees, keeping to the narrow, near-invisible track. The dark trunks and thin green boughs slapping his face reminded Kenny of another time. She had lain on the bed, moaning and turning. Pap had ordered him out into the rain to find help. Kenny had known as well as Pap had, that there were no doctors for miles. But the boy, obedient as always, had slogged off in the wet night. He had never really looked, just slinked through the trees while the wind, lashed into fury by the storm, sent branches his way. When he had tramped about for long enough, Kenny had returned to the small cabin by the foundations for the new house. As another branch just missed his head, he remembered opening the door and seeing Pap staring out the grimy window, arms hanging useless. She was lying on the bed, her peaceful face contrasting with the white sheets browned cold with blood. As Pap's arm idly released another branch which caught Kenny in the shoulder, he realized that they were headed back to that home they had both left (one willingly, the other forced) in the clearing by the river bottom.

When they stopped again, they were outside the house. The walls sagged as if burdened by a terrible secret. They pried open the door to the creak of hinges rusted solid. Kenny thought back to how Pap had taken everything out and burned it — furniture, bed and even floorboards. Then he and Pap had dug out a shallow grave, stacking her in it with her books, and covered it; thus forming out of the small cottage she was so fond of, a mausoleum. The room lay exactly as

they had left it, though now the windows were too dusty to see through. Pap walked outside, wiped his bandanna over his eyes once, then began to open the boxes with his knife. Kenny's curiosity made him forget the room, and he joined Pap outside.

Inside each box lay four one-gallon buckets of paint. Pap patiently opened every bucket, his stern head bent to the task. They were of all the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. Pap erected himself in silence and carried the first bucket to the house. As small beads formed on his forehead, he thoughtfully sized up the house, then, rearing back like a snake, threw paint in a smooth arc onto the house. Throwing the bucket into the woods, he took the next bucket and repeated the ritual. Kenny stood watching and said nothing for the duration. His eyes had the thoughtful understanding that comes without having to say anything. When all the paint had been exhausted, the old man sagged to one knee, used his bandanna to wipe off the sweat christening his brow, and then walked off through the trees. Kenny followed him, leaving behind the house dripping with color. He searched out his father, meeting him as for the first time. There was no need to talk. Speaking would make the moment small. Pap's blue eyes, lined at the edges, carried all his words of sorrow and apology. And, handing Kenny his old, worn bandanna, he looked back towards the house. Starting back together, they admired the house, where the setting sun was already performing, on the dissonant colors, the dual miracles of melting and uniting.



Deborah Petersen

Banning State Park: Trillium Alley Trail

Green wax with a blue kicker,
Soave Bolla in a goatskin
and we're ready to go.
The movement is rhythm
which makes its appearance
as stagnated puffs of breath.
We ski on paths where hours before
deer breakfasted on buds,
and where, in April,
trilliums will summon up spring.

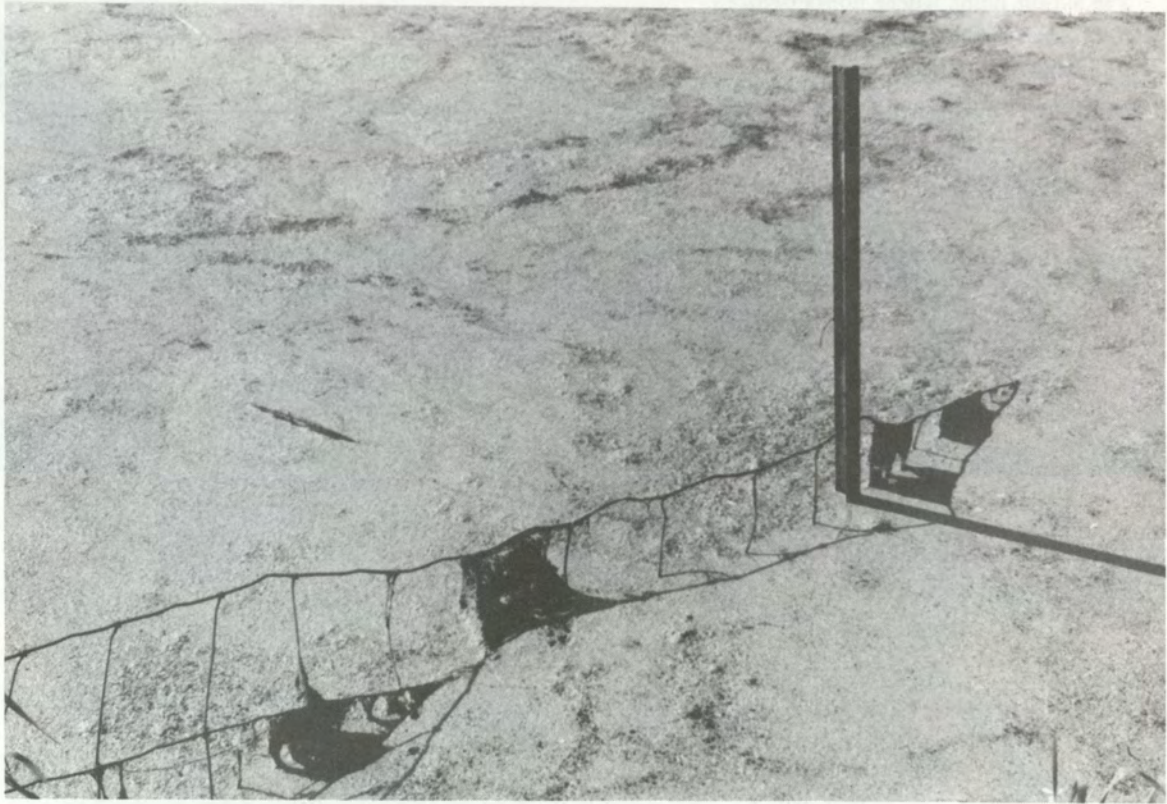
Mary M. Maronde



Glyph

The hieroglyphics of a weed
Are far too subtle signs
For one unused to ciphering
A close Creator's plans;
Yet, intimate revealing comes
All unexpected, sure,
And knowledge of His fingerwork
Endures, and shall endure.

Kathleen Mullen



Fence

Linda Starr

To Peter from Corvallis, Oregon

Bill Rohde

Pete,

It's the same way every year. Starts getting colder and rains all the time. The flies slow down enough to get killed and I know it's almost Christmas. Corvallis in December is just gray. Appleton looks real good right now. Like home did on the way back from basketball. We'd trudge across the soccer field and schoolyard, flagpole rope clanging in the wind that bit our ass. Everything cold crusty white or so black it made you lonely—everything except home with that yellow glow from the front room window. The whole house would smell like supper when you opened the door. Dad would be sitting there like Ward, reading the paper and watching stock market numbers roll across the blue muzak screen. Mom always kissed us. God, it was good. I'd be dead from Dicker's practice, but my cheeks would start warming up and Snubby'd come over, butt-wiggling happy we were home.

What the hell happened?

Three years later, and when I think of home now, it's your apartment and last summer, not Mom and Dad. They seemed so far away, even if it was only five minutes. I still can't believe they let me live with you.

All we worried about was making it to work on time. Your alarm was so damn loud for seven a.m. We'd brown-nose customers for eight hours and get home by 5:30. Wash down some chili and chips with a few long necks and get to Big Daddy's by eight. Have a couple a pitchers with the regulars glued to their stools, watching the high school kids with fake i.d.'s kick in off the sticky streets. Pat's Tap by ten. You cracking peanut shells with your teeth—I never did learn how. Laugh at the punkers who smoked in nervous packs, waiting for the old red-eyed crew cut at the end of the bar to swear at them. A basket of empty shells and we'd be back to the car and to Skyline by midnight. Tommy'd be sitting at that table by the dance floor, chewing on a straw and laughing with whatever girl he was with that night. I'd see one of those guys from high school, like Schaefer or Kitch, who'll work in a mill or a gas station all his life, and talk to him till you'd pat me on the back and point out Toni. I'd try to hit on her and it never worked, but she'd always dance with me anyway. That sympathetic smile. And then she'd ride with us for tacos. After, we'd go to drop her off and I'd try to kiss her with my Mexican shitbreath. She'd shake her head, smiling again, and bounce off toward a porch light and unlocked door. You'd laugh all the way back to the apartment, and we'd crawl in, swearing about seven o'clock and your alarm. I can't imagine you in there by yourself. Can't imagine you married in a month and moved to Cleveland or wherever Sears wants you. Shit, at least we got Christmas. Chill the Miller.

Love, Bill



On Bath

it's beginning to gel now —
in my impending pseudo-isolation,
sitting on stools in the kitchen
with people I might know
but standing instead
on a hill above Bath at night,
(Aquae Sulis)
and staring
at a sea of lights, my
breath condensing in a cloud
and drifting on the breeze
as I listened to the
cascading clangor of distant church bells;
the Abbey picked out in floodlights —
an ice sculpture
floating among gold and white fairy lights
set in an indigo valley —
minute red and green Christmas lights
turned on amidst crowd in the shopping district;
I standing
on the fringes with a backpack,
having heard the carols,
not knowing what was happening,
turning to leave,
and suddenly
noticing that the lights had been
turned on —

I had missed it,
my back turned,
like so many other things
I had chosen to forego —
and now, cinnamon scenting the air,
wobbling back and forth on an uneven stool
in the kitchen,
listening,
listening,
not regretting my cubicle of space,
but knowing that I had not
gotten inside the Abbey,
nor the Roman Baths.

Eric Appleton



St. Placide

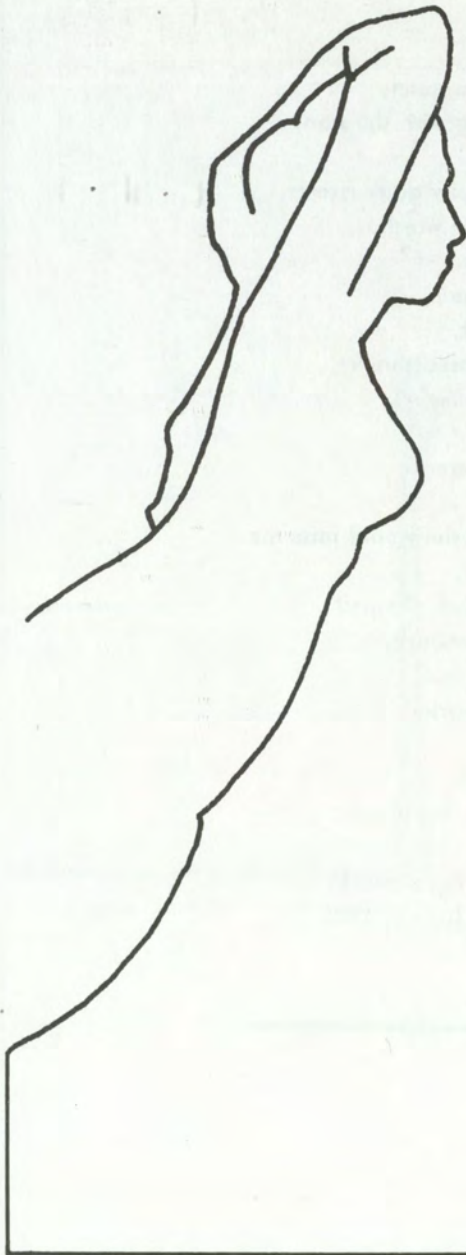
whispered words in French and broken English
in a run-down room
and rain softly falling
on a black iron balcony,
an ironic name for a hotel, not so quiet,
with sounds and memories falling with the rain,
“*j’ai envie de toi*” she said,
and the words echoed down happily quiet streets,
“*j’ai faim de toi*” she said, and the words
echoed down happily quiet roads.
the thin walls could not stop sounds
from the Italian couple next door,
and we eventually met in our shared shower,
so little sleep and so much *vin ordinaire*
and Chianti we had that night,
until the streetcleaners washing streets
far below woke us, and we left.
she whispered through tears that she would miss me
and if the words had been louder,
they would have echoed down Blvd. Raspail
and around the Jardin du Luxembourg,
but quieted by tears and old old rain,
they sound now only in my memories
of the city of iron and lace
and grew dim even that same day
swirling in my cup in that lonely lonely cafe.

Paris and Pella,
June 6, 1985

Stuart Selthun

Yelcho Expedition, 1909-1910

“We had come to that white place
on the map, that void, and there
we flew and sang like sparrows.”



The pole has driven off men,
their footprints still rising
from the ice like fossils.
So we wonder why we let this wind
taste us,
at times, with the whole of
our bones.
Even so, we become sparrows here,
dipping, peeling all color
with our wings,
naming the peaks,
“Bolivar’s Big Nose,”
“The Cloudmaker,” “Whose Toe?”
or “Our Lady of the Southern Cross.”
Those places we sweep through go unmarked.
We even bear children in canvas skirts.
“Rosita del Sur” we called
the first child, born of
the altiplano; 20 hours
howling at our feet and hands.
We wondered if the ice would take her,
a bedsheet two miles thick;
even the pisco we saved for
Christmas morning cocoa had frozen.
We have survived at the bottom of this world,
where everything we have is ourselves.
Under 7 suns, in the ridge of
Barrier ice from Ross Sea,
we have drunk tea from bowls of snow.
The void has become our face,
scalding our features,
has broken our lips,
still blistering with the
first seed of snow.

Terri Muth



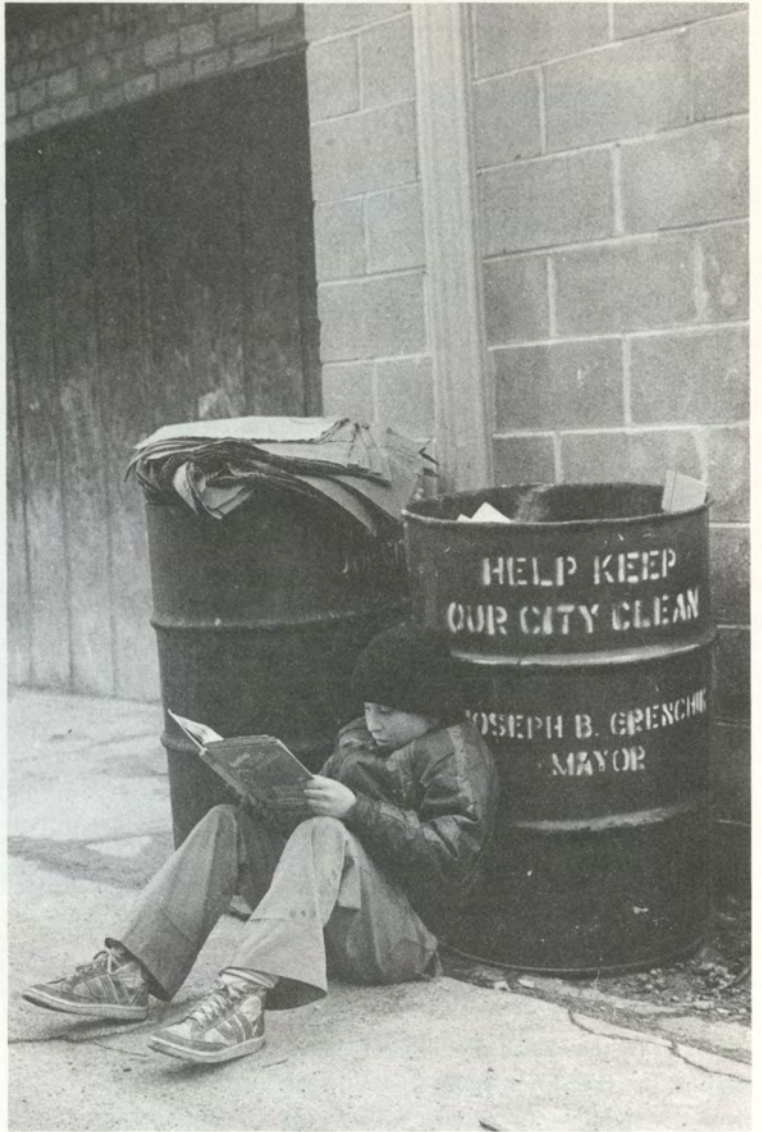
Amy Richter

Harbour

Boats draw their dark profiles
against the sky. Emptied,
almost weightless, they touch
in the drift, the thump of wood
against wood. In early evening
the call of a gull follows
the shadows; your words fall
like small coins into the water.
Finding a blue stone washed ashore
reminds you how an old boyfriend loved
to sail, silent, not thinking;
for hours, not even mouthing your name.

Fish, colored like the inside
of a body, slip through
coral near the bottom of the tide
marker. Overnight, the ocean smooths over the broken
bottles and shells, tamps down the sand;
it offers remnants worn smaller, polished.

Rene Steinke



Sunday 6:47 A.M.

In the morning we lie
naked on the warming carpet sunshine, half-filled
wine glasses rest on the stereo.
Blackbirds in a tree across the street
call out the morning.
I look at the cracked ceiling, lick
the roof of my mouth, crawl
to the bookshelf, and shuffle
dusty pictures of when
I was a kid.
Outside, an empty
milk carton blows by
with a grainy image
of someone's missing son or daughter.

Bill Rohde

Sherry LaMorticella

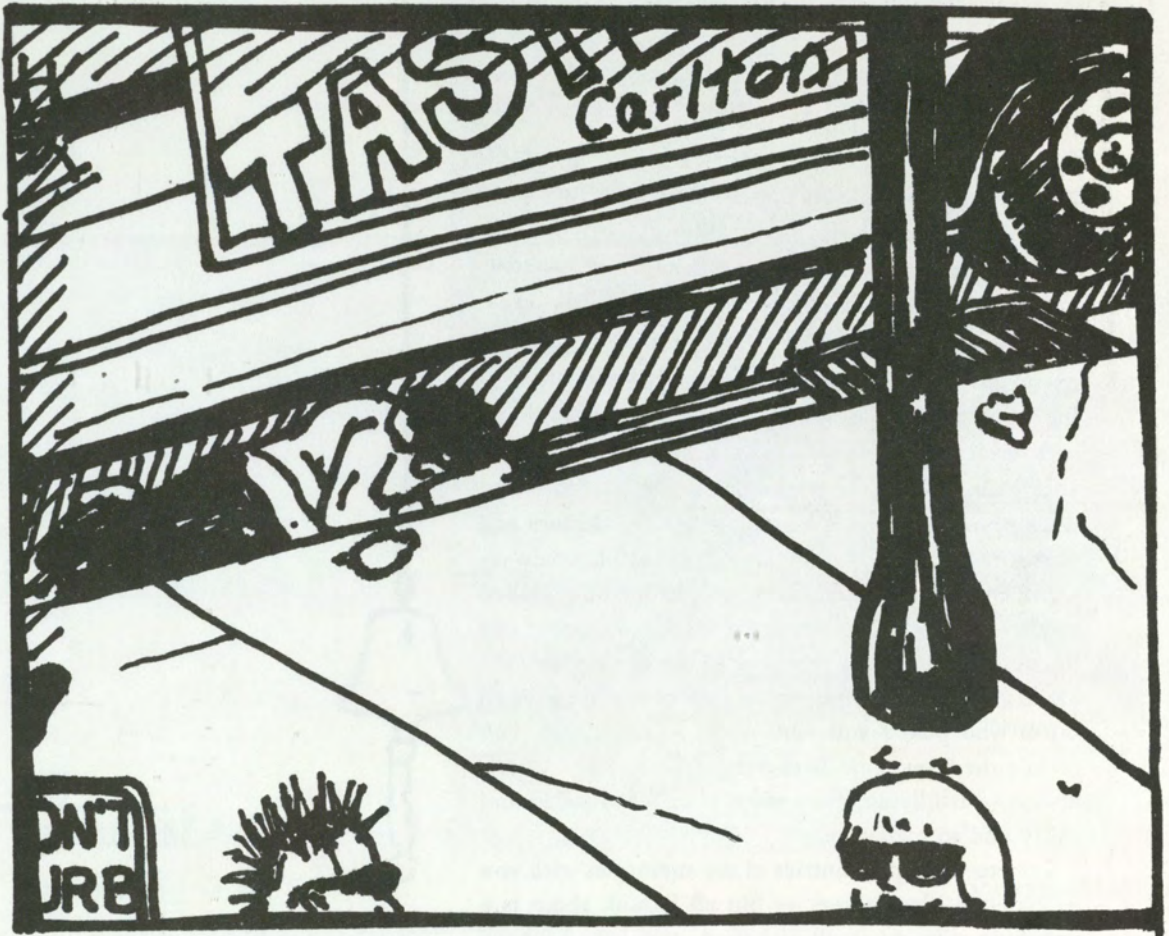
Christmas 1985

I swear God's laughing as he watches us die. Where's the dignity of an old man slowly dying inside out — the smell of piss from the hallway and a tiny black man so brittle he breaks his fingers off and gives them to me — a token. I stand there and know I don't belong in your solid white pastel yellow living death mausoleum, where the only relief comes from memories that you don't quite grasp and a plastic bag full of shit that hangs at your side — a reminder that life, no matter how corrupt, is "still worth living." I didn't buy it for a second that Christmas morning with piped-in music and the sad old smile of a half-naked corpse in the wheel chair. You on the bed didn't realize that I had flown 3,000 miles and 5 years to see you. I held your hand and the yellow stained fingers couldn't even see me, my new suit. I wanted to kill the doctors and nurses who smiled blandly and said that life is always worth extending. You fuckers, you dirty white-washed mother-fucking robots, you give us life, you extend our life then send us away when we're too tired to die. If I had a gun — right between the eyes of that slack-faced nurse who poked you with sticks to make sure you hadn't died yet. Life is dignity. Life is love. Life is always worth living, even when your life is soiled and shitty and so pathetic...

I try to write pleasantries of my memories with you — baseball, firecrackers — but all I think about is a tiny little man, so small and tired, and I try to make sense of all that is right, but I can't think, can't think of any reason for you to live. I don't want a piss-stained, stinking memory, and I don't want you to die an old man. It's when it's cold and grey and I think of you that I doubt God exists and I doubt man's dignity and all that crap. To you I can only say that I'm sorry and, yes, it's not fair and I'll try to remember the good times — but all I can do is cry late at night and curse.

Brian McGovern





Tracy Long

Who's There?

Everyone stood and looked
at the clock.
I guess it was funny 'cause it was
some kind of art deco.
Some things are more bullshit than others.

The snow crunched; I pretended
I was walking on drugs.
In some places, the PCP had melted, and I almost slipped.
I ass-tailed it home in order to get off the world.
Half of the world is like K-Mart, only my shoes
were never tied together.

I went to my desk; it's over by the work clothes.
The whole place smelled
like that damn caramel corn.
Enough of this bullshit, I started to scribble.
What a joke, passed out drunk,
next to the domestics.

Tracy Long

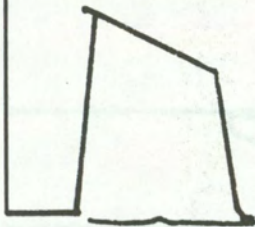


I felt my body
today
this morning
in the fading
darkness of night
as the car door slammed and
I saw my face
suddenly
in the rearview mirror
my back pressed into the vinyl
as my knuckles whitened on the wheel
and in that quiet moment
such a fragile balance
shivered in my ears
but silence is not enough
and I leaned forward to
turn the ignition key

Lately my bed cannot hold
the weight
of my dreams
my blood sings
an expectant nation
that marches out from the sheltering forest
fearfully to the beach now
the ocean is so demanding
like rain
great mists of oxygen
sift down
from the trees and
flow among the ferns
and vines that rise
about my fallen bones
reaching up from
the forest
floor of sleep

so silently the trees of my life
on this empty beach
because the ocean is so demanding

Thomas Gehring



During the Day She is Cold

Ah, but to be there in the evening,
when before a remorseless mirror
and in the quiet of a solitude so complete
that you can hear the swish of bare feet
on a warm wooden floor worn shiny by use,
she finally removes the veil
and lets the various airs and attitudes fall
like so many clothes
shed at the end of a long day.

Michael Caldwell



Jody L. Arnholz

Rude Prose

Patrick Burnette

How would it feel to be one of the beautiful people?

LONELINESS is a function of impotence. Not the physical kind, of course. Twenty is too young for those kinds of worries: youth and ignorance still shield the noisy decay that will drip louder and louder and insufferably louder as the years rot by. Social impotence. Twenty-year-olds aren't worried about balling this night's catch—they've seen the movies read the books know that youthful enthusiasm and boiling hormones will take the place of experience and if the night's catch gets bruised a little or caught with a Thanksgiving goose for a Spring surprise it's all in an evening's vagueries and what's she got to complain about does she want fourteen-year-old little sister back home showing her up with midnight tales of conquests in the bedroom she still has to share with the damned brat? Instead, twenty-year-olds (brief pause for further definition: the socially impotent ones of course) are worried about talking to, understanding, impressing, in a word catching this night's catch. Quite rightly. They never do. And they know who's responsible. Anybody but them. Guilt is also a function of impotence, and endurance a function of youth, but some things are too much to bear. THE SUPERIOR MIND is of course (I will say of course a lot as the self-evident is my best subject) more a curse than a blessing. So I've been told. The superior mind peers into the chasms that the masses' unquestioned beliefs are suspended over by a thread of misinformation and shudders at what it sees. It walks away unable to take sustenance from its culture but often finds itself lacking in the resolve to leave it. Sometimes. Then again it's not always so bad sometimes it does brilliant things that point out the contradictions, clean the corners, light the darkness, and reflect back into the face of the superior mind the cold clear light of acknowledged genius. Normally, it is egocentric enough to overlook the fact that its brilliant accomplishments do less than shit for the foolish and only show the mediocre their tenuous position in an even more unflattering light. FORCE THE SOCIALLY IMPOTENT into an encounter with the brilliant mind. Several brilliant minds. A whole parcel of men (sometimes women but not as often as the militant never-shave-my-legs fuck-men feminists would like to think) to completely wrench the socially impotent from his tiny circle of insecurity

to show him that he should stop worrying about dying alone at seventy-two in a well-furnished but perennially unshared apartment with a feeling that he not only missed the boat but sunk it and start worrying about bigger questions. Eternal life. Marxism. The injustice of life and the Cubs always screwing up. You get the picture. Call it college.

SO WHERE DO YOU (the socially impotent: the burden of third person weighs heavy I'm tired and would fain rest) go for relief? Call it Fantasyland. An offshoot of Disney World but more sophisticated—a world of your own imagination. Here there are no spilled beers for you to slip on no stupid mass-produced music that only a sloshed nineteen-year-old going on forty with false eyelashes breasts and butt sorority girl would dance to, no boys wearing Greek letters who will call up their buddies every ten years or so and compare cars wives kids mistresses. It's a well lit place with post-Neanderthal rhythms twining through an only mildly marijuanic atmosphere and loads of people who know nearly every word in your vocabulary and even your first name though they probably only think of it when they see you and never when you're gone. Fantasyland?? All right then, they do think of it when you're gone. There are no real ghosts in the Haunted House likewise keep the closet of your personal paranoid locked up or you might as well go back to reality. Sorry. New thesis on loneliness, all right? All right asshole, but I have my eye on you.

LONELINESS is a decision made from the top, a policy as logical as it is just though sometimes hard to take. Stooping is as good as failing, and you only fail when you overlook that one phrase misjudgment reference to bourgeois simplicity and try to fit in anyway. The smooth-talking smile-at-the-right-timing gladhanding types have vanquished loneliness but they've folded and you're standing tall waiting for that voice out of thousands that will tell you you're in port battered down found the one who will support sustain and complement your existence. She, of course, will turn up in Fantasyland.

CONFIDENT strides across the room towards her easy smile very steady voice. Hello I love you instantly but I'm far too cool to say so outright so we'll talk politics music art and people while I work the peculiar magic that is only mine only in Fantasyland.

Two hours later we have completely ignored everybody for a long time and people might be talking but we don't care and I think I've made it to port and tonight the battening down really begins and in a few minutes we'll go to my room hoist the mainsail and celebrate the mutual discovery of someone who never tires always intrigues and eliminates loneliness like an atom bomb solves the dandelion problem in the front yard.

ABOUT THIS TIME the lock on the closet of paranoias (borrowed concept I know but so much is and what is reality anyway and how about that for a good distraction) in a word reality, breaks, as it inevitably does. Back to the class cafeteria empty room or sleepless bed. Back to theory one (remember social impotence?). The acid bitterness returns in a typically powerful wave, and the knowledge that dreams cannot forge redemption crawls in front and center in my fevered brain. But I wander and by this time bitchiness brought on by missing periods commas and concepts has surely caught up with you. Dear well-adjusted reader *How does it feel to be one of the beautiful people* and come up and see me some time. On a whim not an invitation. I'm too damned embarrassed to ask you.



Amy Richter



Christus '85

Tammy Tideswell

From the Congregation

Comprehend, since
time is money,
flocks today
want brevity:

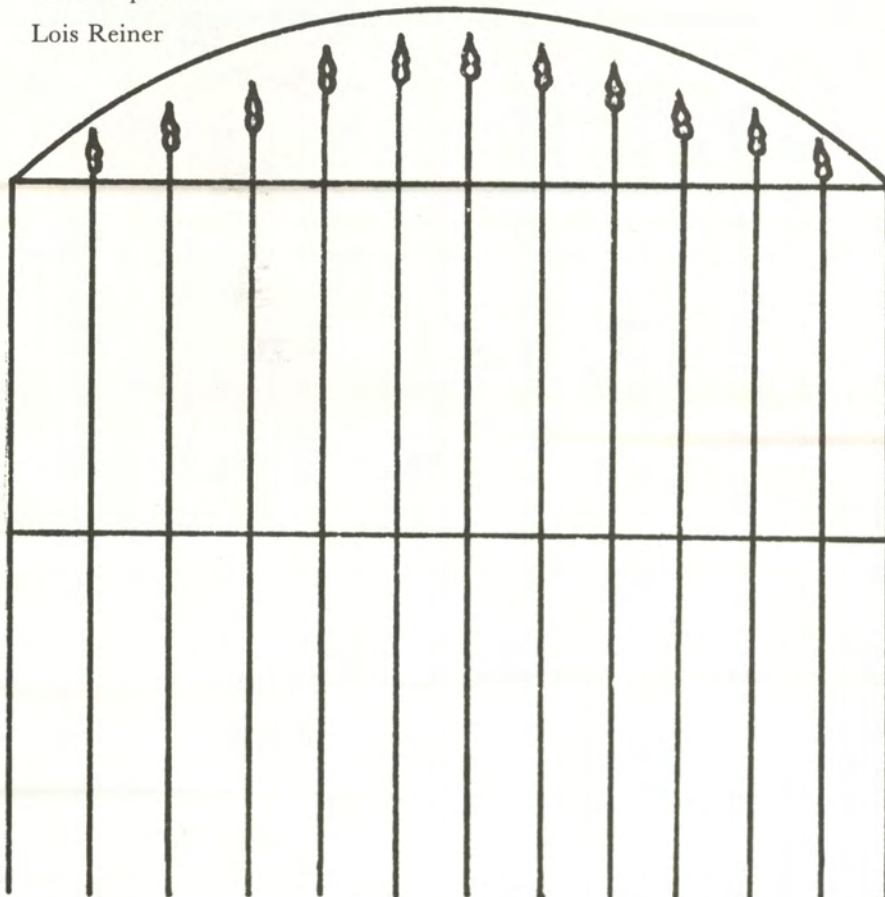
gospel fleshed;
law condensed;
hymns, verse first
(add last if happy);
liturgy reduced
to snappy; and
efficient intercessions
(also known as
quick petitions).

For that matter
how-to's/answers
for us harried
in-not-of-its.

Response:

Then we skim the
when-in-prison?

Lois Reiner

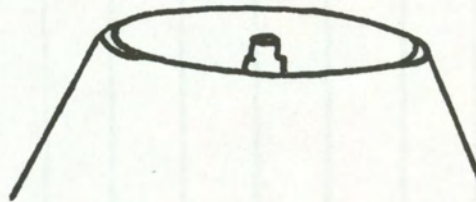


Wasting Time in Sister Maureen's 7th Grade Math Class

One thing Dolores and I liked to do
was to dab some
Elmer's Glue
in the palm of our hands
and spread it around real thin
with our fingers.
Then we'd let it dry until it was clear
and our palms were pulled taut,
and then we would carefully peel it off
so we had patches of dried glue
that resembled skin grafts.
Sometimes we would study them,
marveling at all the tiny lines and cracks of a palm print.
Dolores used to put a whole bunch
in Jeannie B.'s purse
because she was mad at her.
I used to save some of mine
and show them to 4th graders
telling them I had leprosy, or some other exotic disease.

It was all in good fun,
and it certainly never hurt Sister Maureen,
droning on about percents and decimals,
who thought we were so nice and quiet,
and attentive.

Patty Ward





The Human Element

Rachel Steinbrueck

From the Diaries of Saint Borodin

Eric Appleton

The story thus far:

Having received communication from the Goot Herr Doktor George Frumbacher, psychoanalyst of the century, and Joe, his live-in patient, the Saint, Amelia Bloomfeldt, and Lawrence Piddleston, neophyte Marxist, journey to revolutionary Paris to free them from La Force Prison.

Attempting to find the nearest metro station upon their arrival in Paris, our heroes find themselves caught up in an ugly revolutionary mob. Suddenly, however, they are offered a chance for escape.

“Zees,” the impressionist said, whipping out an easel and a box of paints. “Pleez, pleez!” he yelled to the mob. “I moost captoor zees mom ente — do naut mauve!” The crowd froze in place as the painter frantically began to cover his canvas. “Now ees your chance,” he whispered to me. “Escape!”

Lawrence, Amelia, and myself made good our opportunity and headed for the metro station on the other side of the stilled crowd.

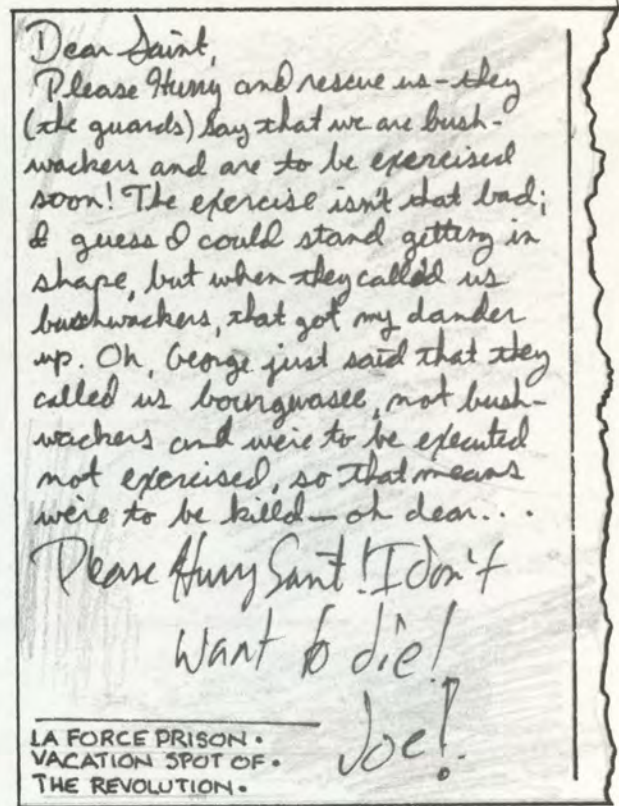
We flung ourselves into the station, barring the doors behind us. The woman at the ticket window glared suspiciously at us, but as it was in French, we paid no heed. “Who vas dat vunnerful man, ach Zaint?” Amelia whispered into my ear. I pulled her off of me.

“An impressionist,” I said.

“But what is an impressionist doing here in the French Revolution?” Lawrence asked, scratching his head. I averted my eyes.

“Never question the beneficence of most holy Bob,” I said. “Now, quickly, the map!” Lawrence gave me the metro map and I glanced over it. “Here!” I cried, and ran up to the ticket window. “Three tickets to La Force Prison!” The ticket woman stared at me, not comprehending. “Zree tickeets to La Foorce Preezon!” I cried again. There was a loud noise as the mob threw itself against the bolted doors.

“Ah!” the ticket woman said and gave me the tickets. I paid her and we dashed down to the platforms just as the doors gave way. We lept onto the waiting train, and the doors hissed closed behind us as the first of our pursuers tumbled down the stairs. We sat back, relieved, as the train pulled away.



RELEVANT END OF THE LAST POSTCARD JOE sent us. Note how frenzied his handwriting becomes when he learns about the execution. Interesting psychological effect, isn't it? He probably bought this himself at the prism gift shop.

“Gee sir, that was a close call,” Lawrence said. “But how will we get into the prison?”

“I — we have contacts,” I said. “Contacts that will get us into La Force.”

“Ach, Zaint,” Amelia cooed. “Vat muzt zey be go-ink trough. Eet muzt be horribles.”

“Prison is never pleasant,” Lawrence said with great conviction. I raised an eyebrow at him.

“And how would you —” I started, but then noticed someone at my side. I looked over — no one — then down. A very short man with a full beard was standing next to me.

“My name ees Toulouse,” he said. “I am your con tacte.”

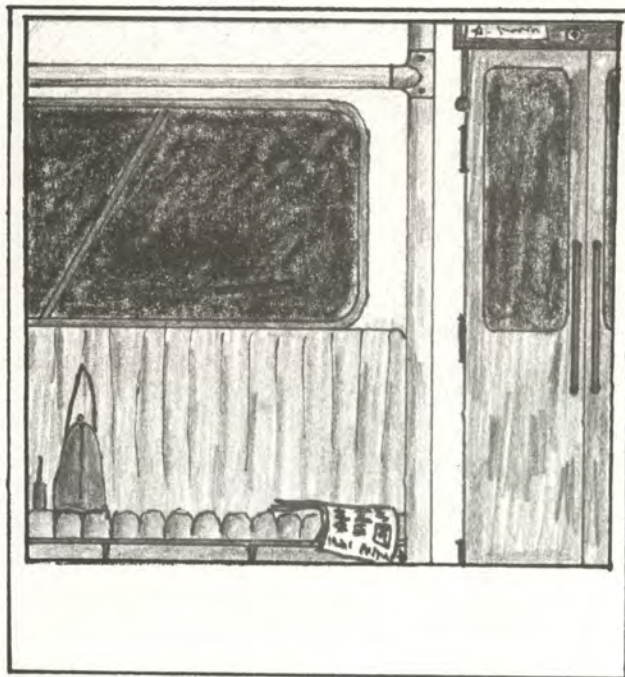
As Toulouse led us from doorway to doorway and finally into a narrow alleyway, I asked how the artists’ underground had come about.

“Ach Zaint, I jzst zo love artiztz!” Amelia breathed into my ear. Lawrence looked away, disgusted by Amelia’s antics. They had been getting on each other’s nerves lately, I had noticed. “It’s a revolution!” the boy cried out once. “How can you be so, so carnal?”

Amelia had just shrugged her shoulders and wanly smiled. “Eet iz my nature,” she had cooed.

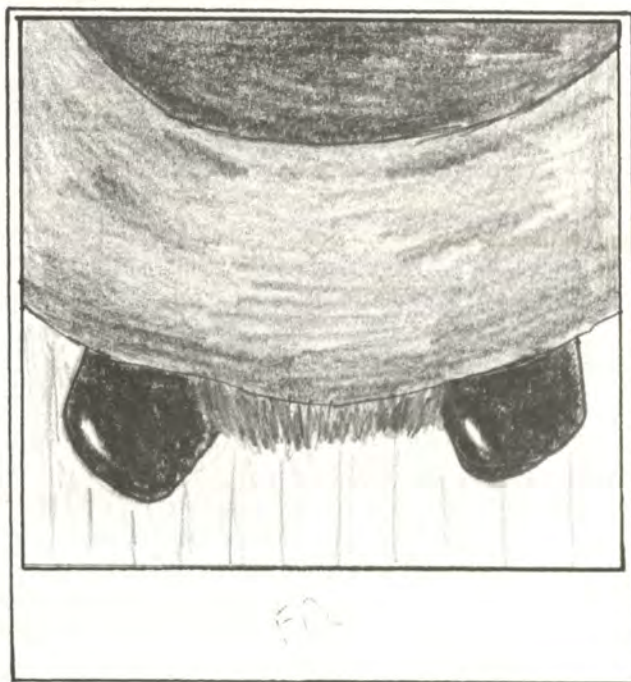
“Weoll,” Toulouse began. “You ze, eef sere ese a revolucione, sere can be nou Salon. Nou Salon means we do naut exhibite our paintings. We are sere-fourre unnable to change ze trends ouf art in France. We moust make paint, naut war!” he cried patriotically, and saluted.

“Very commendable,” I said, then asked how the Goot Herr Doktor and Joe



THE PARIS METRO

There was a very young woman going down the aisle selling various things — cigarettes, candy, cameras — so we bought a camera to document the journey. A photojournalism thing, I guess. Amelia’s off to the left; the viewfinder was a bit off, I think. Unfortunately, it was black and white film, so you get none of the local color of the Paris Metro, or the sensuous purple of Amelia’s handbag for that matter.



A TOP VIEW OF TOULOUSE-LAUTREC
I never realized that he was that short. I mean, I knew he was short, but that short?

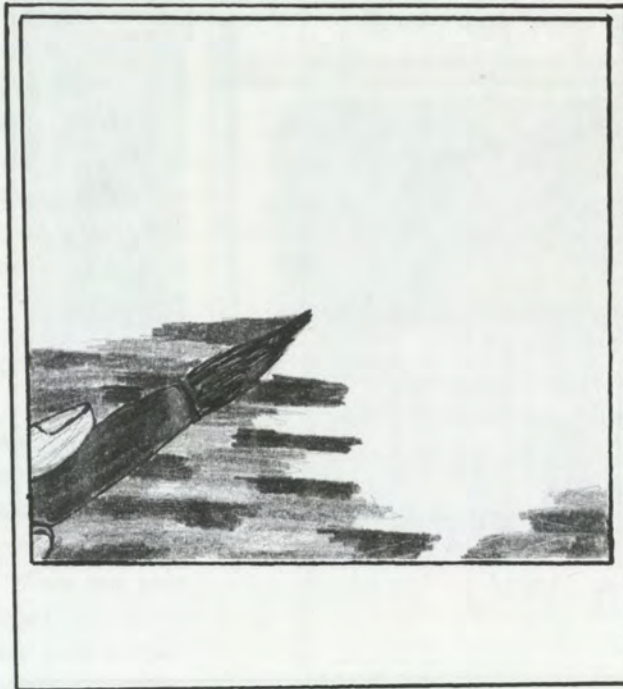
had become embroiled in the Revolution.

"Eet ese a loung storee," he said. "About a year agou, sere was a conference — Ze Symposium de Love; ze Gaut Herre Dokter and Zjoe attended. Sere were sereafter a series of wilde plotte tweests, and sey land-ed een ze Prison La Force."

"I see," I muttered. I had heard about this Symposium of Love. It had long been reputed to be a gathering of several avant-garde minds, all convening to define the term eros, year after year. Last I heard, they had finally isolated the idea of Love, and were planning on acting upon this revelation. The powers controlling France must have felt that to reveal the true nature of Love would have undermined their slogan of Fraternity, Equality and Society, or whatever it was that year. They had raided the Symposium and the Dokter and Joe had been thrown into prison as subversives. Alas and alack.

We went through winding passages, deeper into the heart of a labyrinth of buildings. The smell of linseed oil grew stronger as we proceeded. Finally, we came to a sunny garden, where many of the great artists of the time were working at their easels.

"And seese ese our



RENOIR WORKING ON A CANVAS
'just had to get a photo of this great artist at his brushes, though I believe I focussed a little ~~too~~ close on something like that. The black and white film just doesn't do justice to the vibrant blurs and purples in this canvas. Really, it doesn't.

leadere," Toulouse said, as a man in a toga came forward.

"Aristotle!" I gasped.

"Friendship, my dear Saint," Aristotle said as we walked through the garden a day later. "That is how we plan to get them out of La Force."

As we spent time among the artists, I had begun to have more and more respect, even awe, for the task they had taken upon themselves. Just last night a contingent had set out to storm the Bastille. Renoir, Monet, Morisot and Pissaro had gone to cover the walls of the prison with impressionist scenes so as to enrage the reactionary mob into attacking the Bastille over this

brazen display of degenerate art.

"How are you going to use friendship to release them?" I asked.

"Well, you see, the ethical implications of what is perceived as the good, and how man goes about obtaining what he perceives as the good, considering that which is Good, and not what seems good, can be utilized..." he began, and continued for several hours. I sat in rapt attention, and when he had finished, I was not only hungry, but thoroughly enlightened on the matter of friendship, and indeed, Love. Amelia breezed up with a bowl of fruit.

"Ach Zaint," she breathed. "I zought you might be

ze hungry. Ach, Mr. Totle," she oozed, turning. "Did ze Zaint tell you I vas zo, zo enflamed for der philozophy?"

Aristotle looked slightly perturbed as Amelia settled into his lap. "No I don't believe he has," he said, and stopped as she began to whisper into his ear. His eyes grew quite large, and I was reaching to separate them when Lawrence burst in on the scene.

"Saint, Saint!" he cried. "The Bastille has fallen, the proletariat is rising, the city is in chaos!" He began belting out the "Internationale."

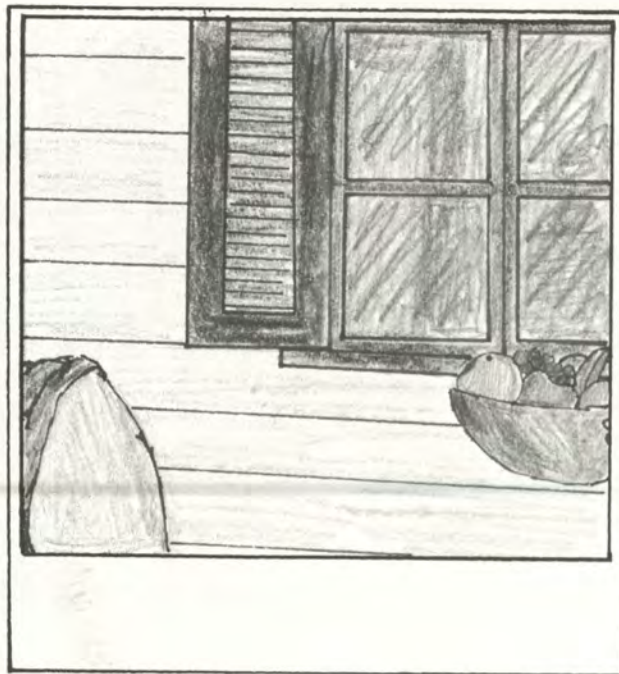
Aristotle jumped to his feet. Amelia fell to the ground with a dainty bump. "It's time to act!" the philosopher cried, running to the bell pull.

"Oh, I can just feel the revolutionary tendencies roiling inside me," Lawrence chortled gleefully.

"It's probably just your stomach," I said. "Sit down and take a few deep breaths."

As the bells pealed, artists began filling the garden, clutching their paints and brushes with a fierce militarism.

"To La Force!" Aristotle commanded, music swelling behind him and his toga streaming gloriously around him. I covered Amelia's

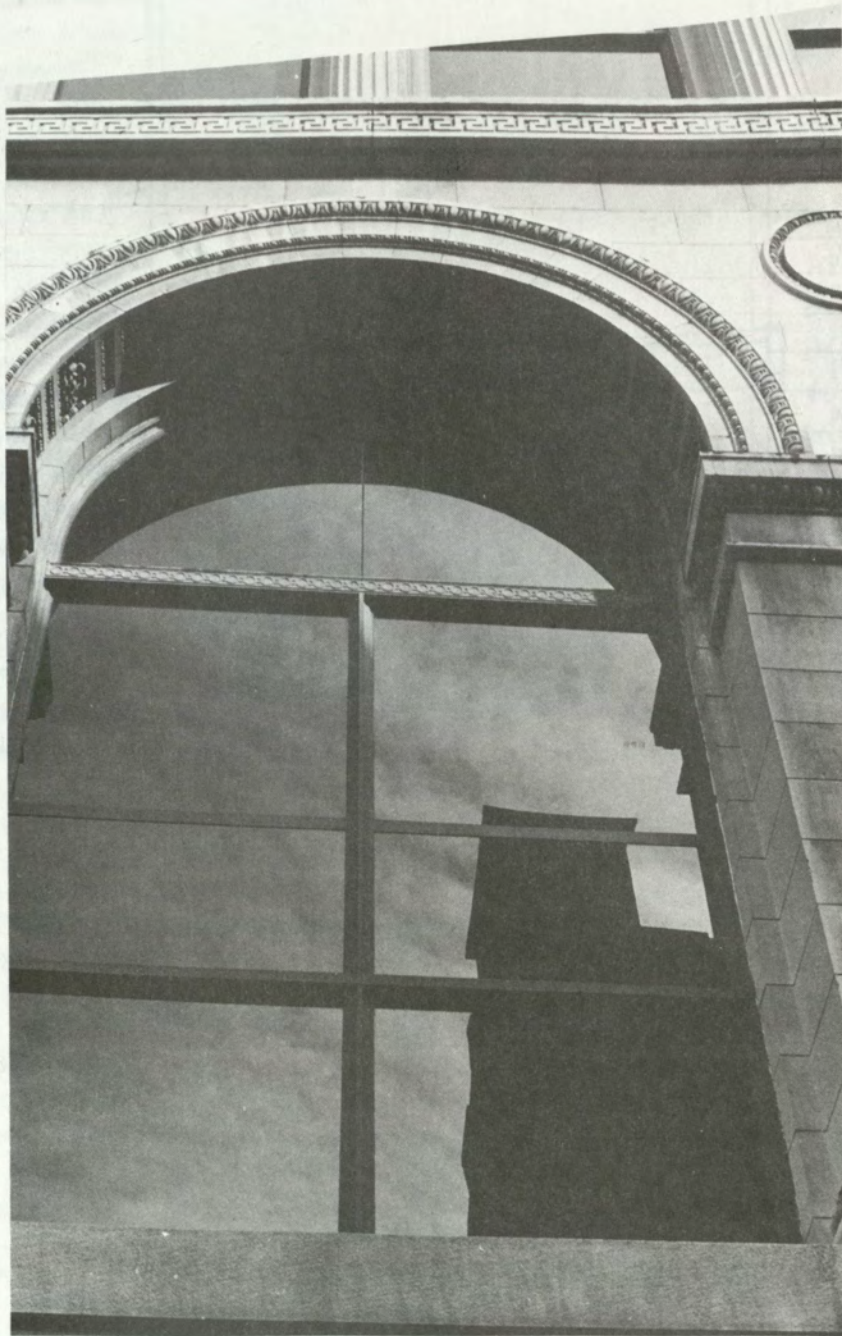


ARISTOTLE'S SHOULDER
(sort of like Adam's rib,
I guess, but more philosophical)
That's Amelia and her
bowl of fruit on the side.
I have the feeling I
should have stepped
further back to get
all of both of them
in the photo.

eyes.

The artists strode from the garden, Aristotle at their head.

It had begun!



Robert L. Wehmeier

The Chapel in Florence

On the steps lovers spend their afternoons folded
together; men shelled in crusty coats drink Chianti
in the faint yellow light
of late afternoon. Tired,
weighted with worries of an idle day, I walk
to this place. Inside, a chord of emptiness swells;
silence and darkness carve out years
still living. The past falls in splinters
of incense and dust moving in window light.
Whispers melt in the shrinking wick of a candle,
wilting in the flame. The vesper bell throws
a weightless stone into the air, a circle of sound
that grows and ripples in the city. Sometimes I hear
my father's voice like that, straining
weaker as it spreads over a decade. A memory, formless
as water, arranges itself in the way I wander
streets seamed with cracks that bend
in every direction, in the way I came here
for stillness. When the parishioners arrive for mass
I lean into the heavy door,
stirring the breath of early night.

Rene Steinke



To Darc from Mops

Samantha Arnold

Dear Christine,

When I ran into you last summer in that restaurant booth, I started thinking back, third grade maybe, when you were the shy girl and never said a word. Even now I swear you had a white streak in your hair like a witch—seriously—but not bad, just mysterious. You were there, somewhere, when I got all that shit on the playground, wherever I went. When they were around you wouldn't talk to me, but if we were alone you would answer my "Hi." Don't worry, everyone else did that too. I had to wait so long for you to grow up—not that you were immature or anything like that, but so you wouldn't be afraid to talk to me. Remember when you walked home with me one time from jr. high and you were shocked to see how I defended myself? Now nothing I say or do shocks you. It's really weird, some of the shittiest times of my life include you somehow, and so do some of the best.

"Samantha germs no returns"

no returns

no returns

Sometimes it fucking echos in my skull!
Have you heard it? Probably not. I don't even remember you saying it. Where were you when I hid from the playground and cried between cars?
Were you hiding too?

Looking back at it now I guess
I'm glad you know so much about me.
Children are really cruel animals—I bet adults aren't much different. But at least now I know where you stand; we've made it this far, the rest should be easy.

Mandy



Snow flies, desert sand
stinging
my wine-numbed body.
I trudge home conscious
only of what is

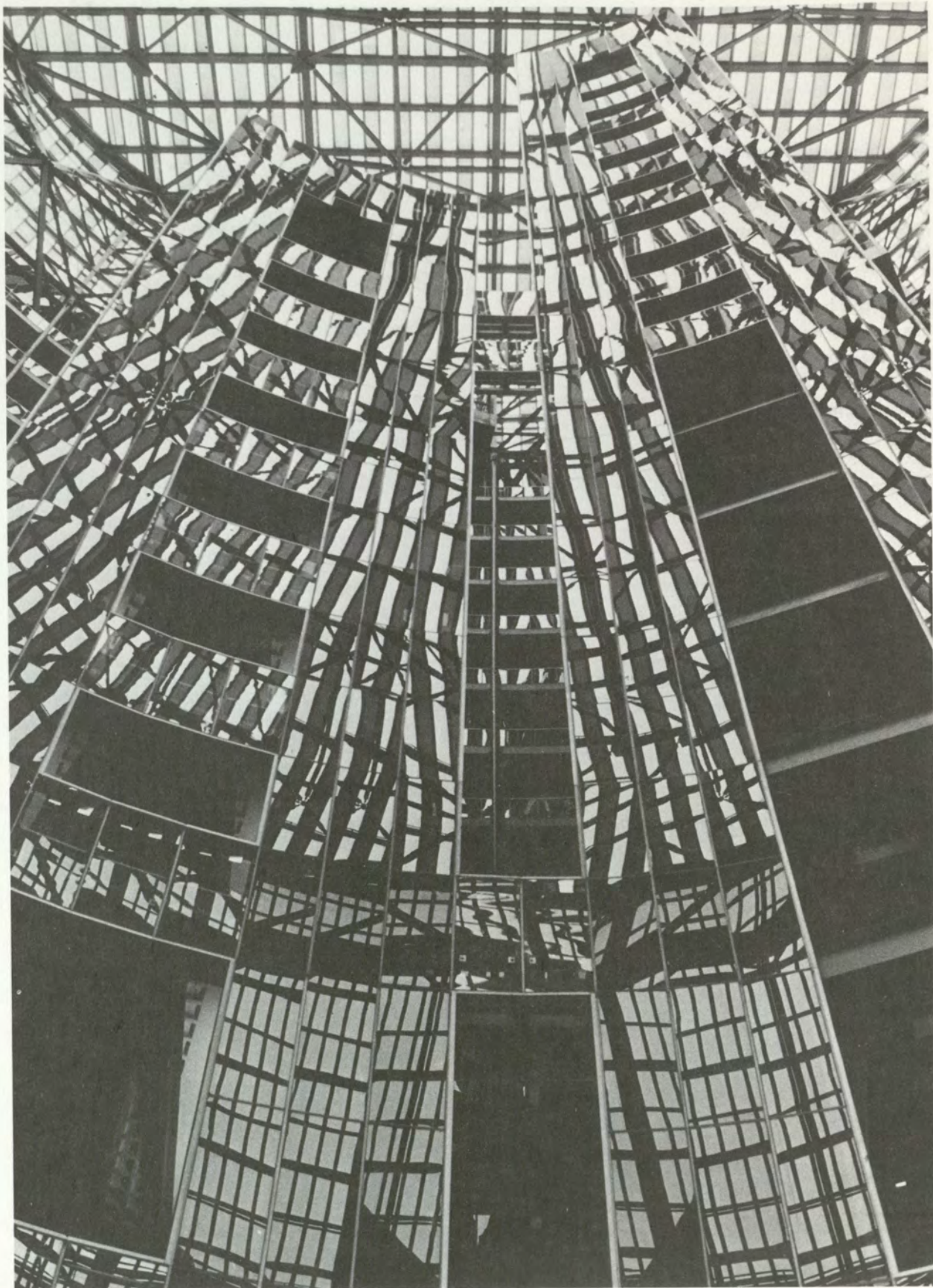
inside. My head
tilts to catch water
from the fountain. I see
my eyes catch themselves
in the wet metal,
blurry.

Melissa Heermann



Andi By the Pool

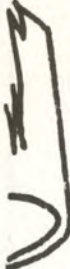
Barb Gade



Robert L. Wehmeier

Reviews

1. Midway



You swung the carnival around our ears
walking the midway, flamboyant,
assured. The barkers called you
and you outdid them all:
your penny pitched, magnetic, to the dollar every time,
your fishing pole winning, always, the biggest panda.
Even the scary gypsy told you good fortune:
long life, good loves.
We went home laughing,
lugging our sweet treasures,
singing "Midway,
midway..."

2. Merry-Go-Round

You sold the tickets for the
merry-go-round, cranked up
the music, made the horses fly; and
I came again and again to try —
riding sidesaddle, daredevil, on my wooden steed,
my fingers stretching toward your tricky ring.

3. Ferris Wheel

With my father it was different.
He'd sit between us, Patty and me,
and we'd squinch our eyes and scream
and grab on hard when the car
stopped, rocking, at the very top.
You never came, or even promised to,
just said, "You buy your ticket with tears."
Now I make the bright circle,
time after time,
clutching my fear in the empty car,
learning to open my eyes.

4. Crazy House

I went in once to the one
at home, with a boy who's somewhere
in the high school yearbook now.
It was the kind with mirrors
before the dark part, so you saw yourself
a hundred times, coming and going,
before you lost yourself in blackness.
Then it was sheer touch,
if you wanted to make it through the fabricated terrors
into day again.
You know, I'd go with you now.
We've found our way through mirrors before,
the dark, the other terrors,
touching.

Kathleen Mullen

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