

Spring 1992

Spring 1992

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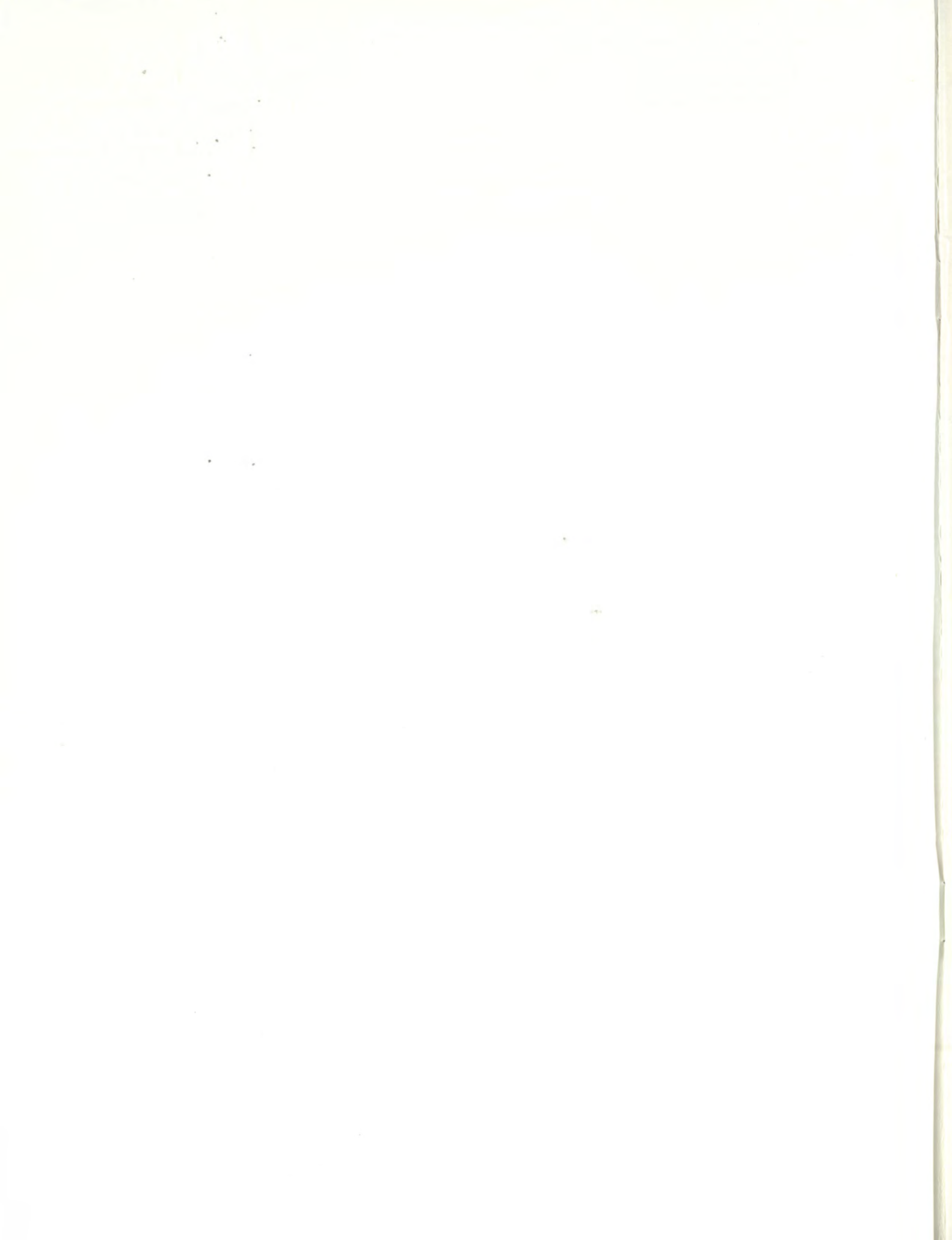
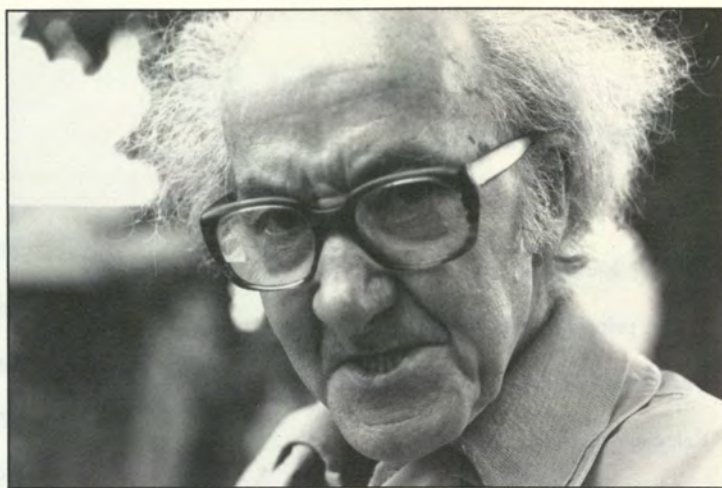


Table of Contents

Photo—Joe Jehner	2	Phallic Stage—Daniel A. Youngren	28
Plaster print—Jennifer Kempfert	3	As If I Was Homosexual—Keith Nipper	29
<i>The Cathedral</i> , Auguste Rodin—Christine Rueter	4	Les Gen D'Armes—Michael Chasar	30
Release—Michael Chasar	5	Wood Block Print—D'Linda Reitz	31
The Last 20 Seconds—Keith Nipper	6	Indiana St. Stories—Breland Family Photos—Gretchen Beck	32-35 32-35
Wood Block Print—Melina Weigmann	7	Afterlights—John Schaefer	36
The Fan—Marjorie Thomas	8	For Sharon—Andrew Gaertner	37
Dreamtrout Blue—John Schaefer	9	Summer Fields, 1979—Meridith Brand	38
Driftwood Dance (<i>for Lucy</i>)—Corey Baden	10	Approaching Winter Sunset, Conneticut Woods—Keith Nipper	39
Approaching Winter (<i>for my father</i>)—Meridith Brand	11	Plaster Print—Amy Sanford	40-41
Photo—Nicole Englebert	12	After Hearing That the <i>Aurora Borealis</i> Was Spotted Down South—Christine Rueter	42
Wood Block Print—Melina Weigmann	12-13	Secret—Marjorie Thomas	43
Wood Block Print—Heidi Nagel	13	Circles <i>for Seamus Haney</i> —Christine Rueter	44
Photo—Todd Wetzel	14	Lino Cut Print—Nate Gilbertson	45
Dormitory—Michael Chasar	15	Lino Cut Print—D'Linda Reitz	46
On the El Nighttimes—James Serpento	16	Epilogue	46
"I've never seen you"—A. Shepler	23	Contributors' Notes	47
Plaster Print—Melina Weigmann	24-25	End	48
Photo—Todd Wetzel	26	Evasion-The Thief—Melina Weigmann	Cover
Il Miglior Fabbro <i>for Chris</i> —Marjorie Thomas	27		

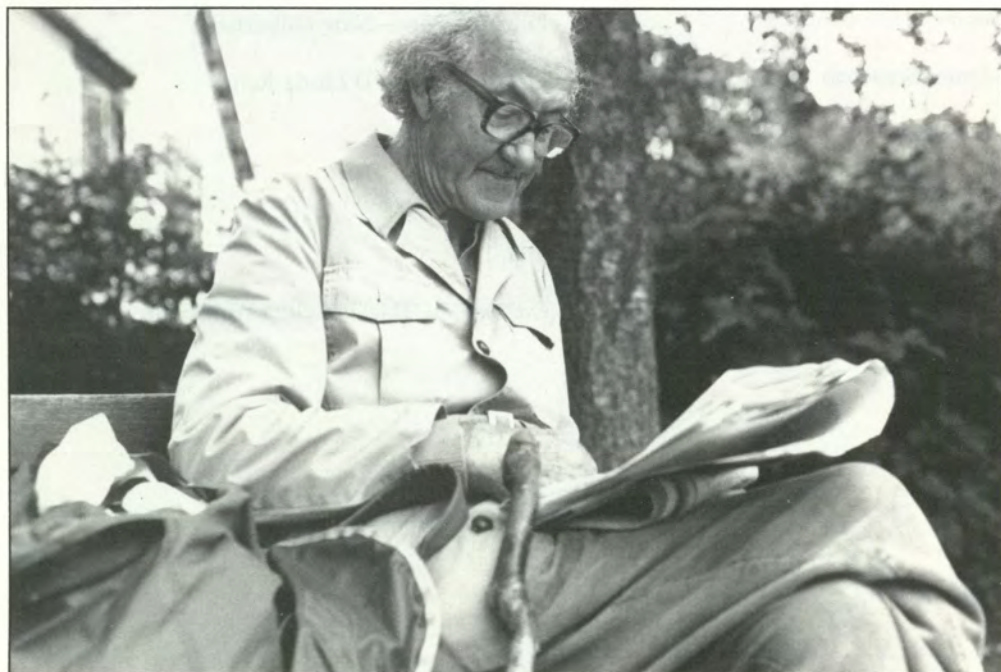


a conversation
in oxfordshire

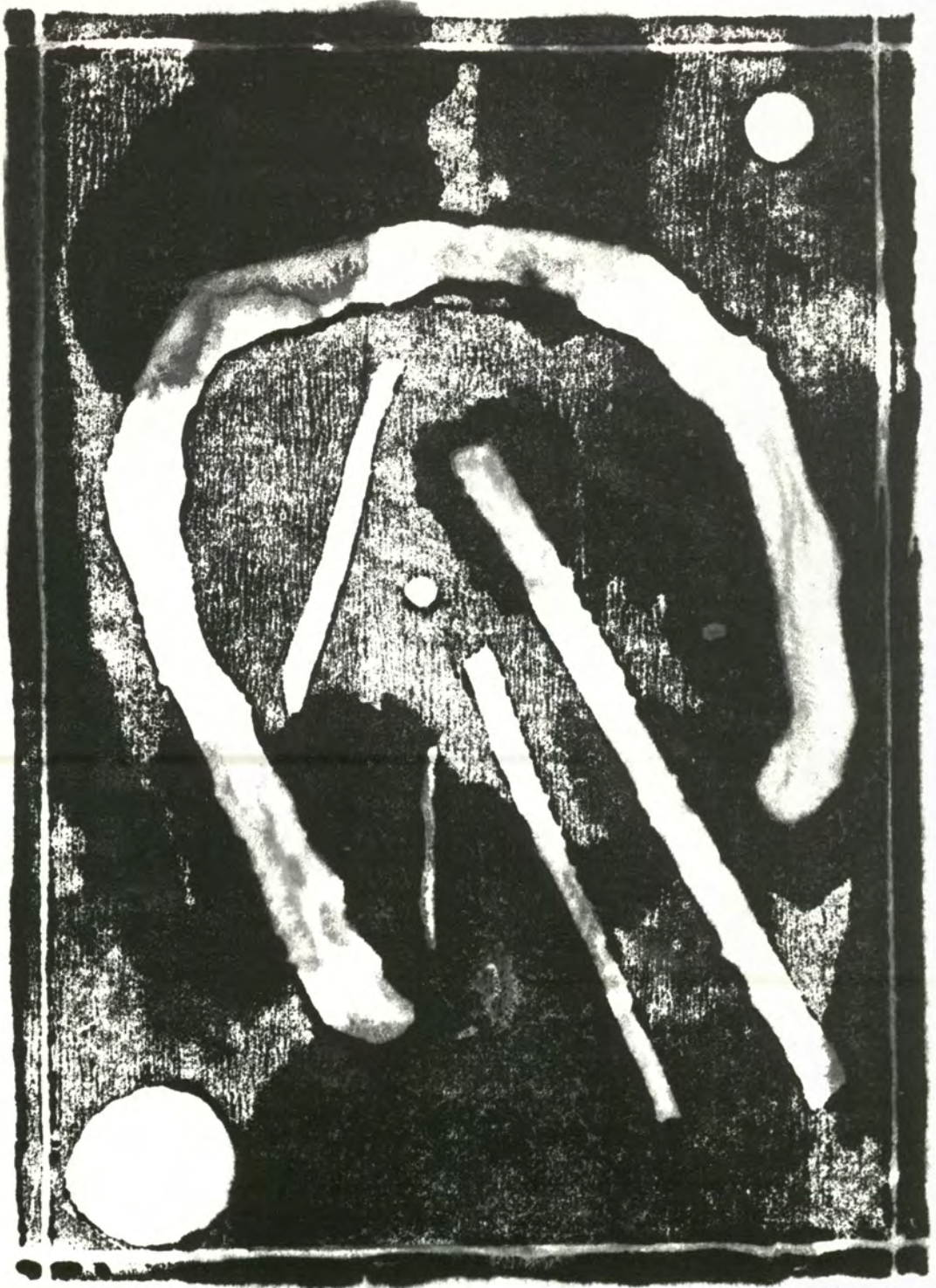


"do you see it, the old man's face in the hill?" he asked, pointing at one of the many livingscapes surrounding us.

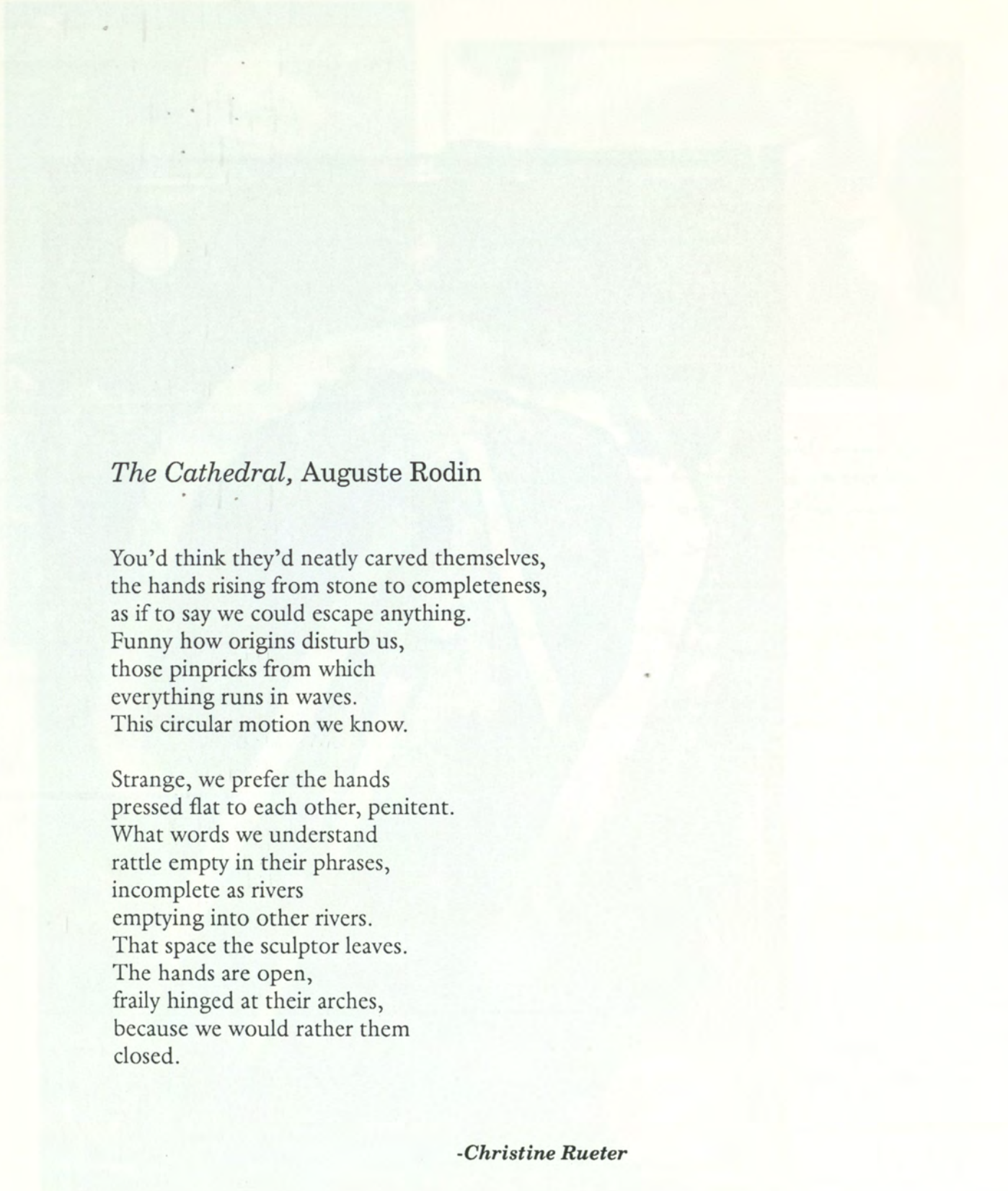
.... we wandered around england and america and history and other things, then i left the teacher and my olive branch, and boarded the bus.



-Joe Lehner



-Jennifer Kempfert



The Cathedral, Auguste Rodin

You'd think they'd neatly carved themselves,
the hands rising from stone to completeness,
as if to say we could escape anything.
Funny how origins disturb us,
those pinpricks from which
everything runs in waves.
This circular motion we know.

Strange, we prefer the hands
pressed flat to each other, penitent.
What words we understand
rattle empty in their phrases,
incomplete as rivers
emptying into other rivers.
That space the sculptor leaves.
The hands are open,
frailly hinged at their arches,
because we would rather them
closed.

-Christine Rueter

Release

Like propellers keeping beat
to some mechanical code,
the sculling crew responds
to orders rhythmmed out
by one beneath a parasol.
It's beautiful to watch
four men who move as one.
Muscles quiver in the sun
and goosebumps from the flying spray
gleam in the sweat that pours
from such religious work.

You almost wonder why
the men are training on a day of rest.
You almost wonder why
the men respond to shouts
from one beneath the parasol.
You almost wonder why
they don't stop to take a swim
to soothe their metal forms.
It's Sunday in the park,
and even on the lake,
the sailboats breathe
in Sabbath relaxation.

But then you catch the grins
of four determined men
who laugh as if each stroke
will lift them from the waves
and give them the power
to fly.

-Michael Chasar

The Last 20 Seconds

Wasted time. Quarterback falling
on the ball. When the players
walked across the field
with their heads down, the clock
was still ticking away. This time
is insignificant. It eludes us,
dances on our face,
and then slips
away quickly between our fingers.

-Keith Nipper



Three Men

-Melina Weigmann

The Fan

He used to see her in the cafe,
sliding between tables and chairs
stuffed with people,
wafting through the room
thick with swollen clouds
of assorted tobacco smokes,
while a guitar hummed in the background
and an amateur vocalist harped out a tune.
She would walk up to him
bravely, perhaps munching on a pear
or an apple in a seductive way,
sinking her teeth into the moist flesh,
letting the diluted nectar drip down her chin.

He was never impressed,
though he straightened
when she stood in front
of him, wanting to look down
at her up-turned face.
Enjoying the fact that everyone
could see them together,
confident that he would never
succumb, he allowed her chattering,
while his haughty shoulders laughed.

She always tied her hair up,
and her flowing skirts
covered her slim ankles
with too many colors.
Sometimes, she would ask him
about the music, if he
liked it, and whether or not
he thought he could do better.
Without saying so, he thought he could,
and the tilt of her head agreed.

When was it that he fell,
helpless, like a virgin skydiver
who cannot trust the parachute,
but fights terror and doom
in a gulping breath,
who begs forgiveness
for the pettiest of sins
in exchange for sound earth,
until that moment
when it finally opens
unexpectedly, after a tug on the cord
that had seemed so monumental
and doubt is washed
away by relief and joy and religion:
the sudden return to life.

She had been walking toward him
through the cafe, as usual,
but her hair was down—
a waterfall of autumn leaves—
and in that first breath,
he noticed the gentle curve
of her smile and the slight sway
in her hips.
Her face was at last noble,
no longer just pretty,
and her eyes were a color
he could not place.
As she moved,
his hands curled into hot fists,
though he wanted to reach
out and claim her as his own.
His heart hammered,
and he was sure it would never stop,
sure that the crowded floor
heard its hollow droning,
but assumed indifference.
He wished things
had been different,
that he had been kinder,
wished his heart
would still itself, wished desperately
that he could swallow
every silent cruelty
he had cast in her direction,
as she walked past him,
beyond him out the door,
on the arm of a man
he did not know.

-Marjorie Thomas

Dreamtrout blue

Open to the suggestions of the moon, I walked
the long wet streets that took me past your porch.
As I stood smoking from across the road I smiled
at the fish tank of your evening.

I entertained tapping the glass but reconsidered,
letting the smoke of my mouth encircle my face until
my light went out, as yours did, and I too
drifted off.

On down the way I huddled over a puddle that was
reflecting a street lamp. A tire swam through it,
and as it settled it strobed a foreign film.
I couldn't read the subtitles and so
I moved on.

A peculiar night to taste the air,
when the earth is cooling and the steam gives way
to newborn clouds.
When the trees leave whispers like waves on the shore,
washing up yesterday's catch.

"Can't sleep," I thought, paddling home,
and it seems I'm not alone
as a light wakes up in the fish tank
as I pass.

-John Schaefer

Driftwood Dance

(for Lucy)

I. On Lethe Wharf

Treading Beyond the Buoy,
Embroided
In a turning of
Turgid weightlessness,
It strikes me as rather ironic
As I see Mr. Klein take his tonic flask
From a large overcoat.
He empties the bottle and
Tosses
The remains over the side of his tiny open boat.
You see,
They all drink to forget
While I struggle to remember what it's like to be afloat.
Ashes to ashes and we all fall down
Like a bundle of plumb-bobs.

II. Castaways

Closing vessels become bashful,
Lest they dash their feet
On some strikingly sound Stones.
They heed the marred cavity of darkness
In the tooth
Of the scarred ivory tower,
Turn tail,
And skip the Stones
Of the aborted port
In the spiraling sound
Altogether.

As chance would have it,
Azar, the open Mar,
Has a warmer breast than the icy coast,
Whose feathered breath rises and falls,
Humming hopelessly.

As choice would have it,
The ships sail for Schicksal's sound,
A voice which severs the minor chords
Of Rocks and Scars and misty mirror breathing.
A Drift kisses the coast and lulls
the Lorelei,
Who lift hair and turn heads
Toward the ballad inexorable.

III. Piercing

The fisherman found
A heart on his sleeve
And brushed it to the sanguined sandpaper,
But like the artist that he was,
He dared not peek
Beneath the sheets of his canvas covered soles.
My Anger was the rock in my pocket,
And brushing past him I was pricked
By the sidelong slap of his overhead cast.
The Mar was sixty-two.

I passed the glass which probably pointed
Toward Atlantis or maybe Alcatraz,
But a dark mask limited the scope,
And a tragic mouth begged
A quarter for the peepshow.

A freak unnatural,
The black rock burned
My pocket and dropped
Like a heavy heart from my sleeve
To my sock, skipping like clockwork
Across the pierwood
(pok-a-tok)
Tickling the gull-dropped dock
And slapping sidelong
Into the sixty-two blue.

-Corey Baden

Approaching Winter *(for my father)*

It is Autumn. Not an easy time
for definitions, this slow slide
from summer-moist heat
to inevitable snow
that makes a blanket of the ground.

The beauty of the days
will soon be over,
but you've abandoned all
duty and enshrined yourself
in our basement. You resurrect
from the rubbish a cuckoo
that hasn't worked in fifteen years,
and spend your days hunched over
it in that tomb, vainly
trying to bring back life.

Friends call, but you're not answering
these days. You send no message
when I visit your brother. In silence
I study the slow rise
and fall of his chest
beneath the hospital gown.
You stay underground worrying
over the clock, won't stop
until it's on the wall, regularly
telling how much time you have.

Watching you, I think of the difficulty
with which the pines must resist
the annual fall of leaves, denying
winter in their determination
to remain with arms spread wide,

creating a cold, silent burden of snow.

-Meridith Brand



-Nicole Englebert



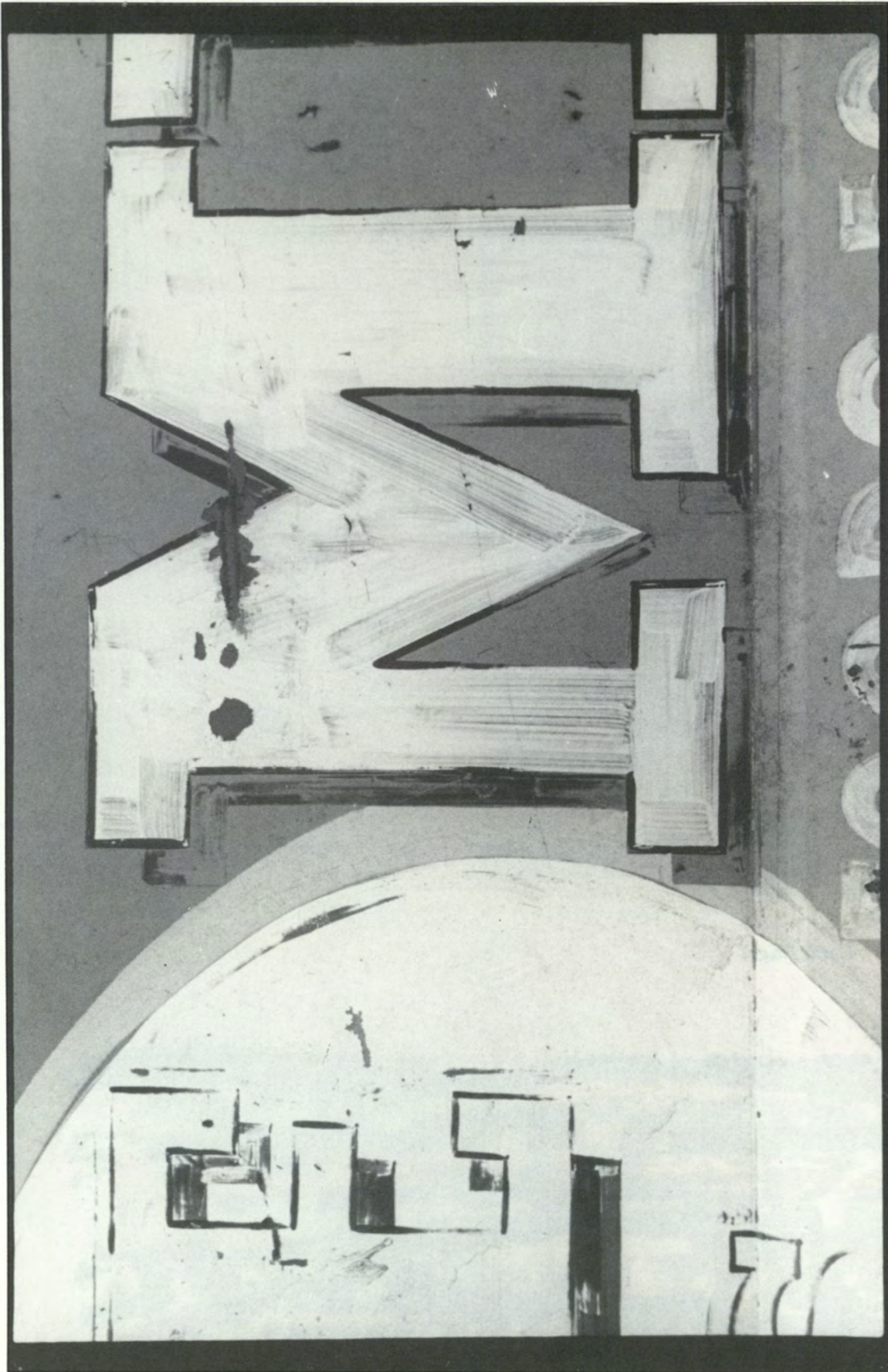
Creature



-Heidi Nagel



-Melina Weigmann



-Todd Wetzel

Dormitory

I must admit it was a funny room.
I always hated to open the door
and push against the piles of dirty clothes
that bumped across your oriental rug,
the carpet's mildewed corner
curling like a piece of parchment.
I remember the leaky sink,
the steady thwop of water drops
falling on a Converse tennis shoe.
The walls collected "No Smoking" signs
and laughed with bricks of irony
since you said you only smoked to hide
the rot of molding carpet.
Dusted in the greys of ash, the room
almost seemed to take on mourning,
scattered cigarette graveyards
pocking the shelves and dresser-tops.
Once exotic ferns, now dry and withered,
stretched their bony feathers,
seeking water from the drip-drop sink.
Candles, melted to the base,
overflowed their primitive stands
in suspended waterfalls of colored wax.
"It's an artist's room," you said,
but I never quite figured out
how the velvet scum on top
of an unfinished glass of juice
could produce your beautiful verse.
Despite my fear of disrepair,
I found that I kept coming back
to watch the movement in your little roost.
I'd listen to the songs of sculptured words
pushing through the dust of your lair.

-Michael Chasar

On The El Nighttimes

(Chairs in a configuration similar to that of an el car. Night. The BLACK: he sits for a long moment; shifts slightly, then is still again. Enter WHITE TWO, sitting in a seat directly in front of the BLACK. Silence. Enter WHITE ONE, with a bag.)

WHITE TWO

There you are.

(WHITE ONE sits in a seat some distance away, and reads. Silence. WHITE TWO moves to sit next to WHITE ONE. Silence.)

THE BLACK

That is a beautiful bag.

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

Walt. . .

WHITE ONE

Hm?
(Pause; looks up.) What?

WHITE TWO

Um. . .that gentleman. . .

WHITE ONE

Yes. What?

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

I was just saying. . .

(WHITE ONE yawns. Pause. WHITE TWO clears his throat. Pause. THE BLACK smiles. Pause.)

THE BLACK

I's jus sayin, thass a nice bag you got there.

WHITE TWO

(Pause.) Thank you.

THE BLACK

I seen those, you get those, like, in ah. . .what? Bloomingdale's?

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

Walt. . .

WHITE ONE

Hm?
(Pause; looks up.) What?

WHITE TWO

Where did you get the. . .

WHITE ONE *(to WHITE TWO)*

I bought it outside the state, actually.

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

Did that answer your. . . ?

THE BLACK

Mhmm.
(Pause.) It is a nice one.

WHITE TWO

Thank you again.

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

Now I jus gon *say* this. Jus gonna throw it out to you all, now you take it for. . .whatever, *you* know. An it's this: Some people might be tellin you shouldna oughtta be bringin a bag like that ont a the el nighttimes.

WHITE TWO

We're just travelin. We won't be on here for long.

THE BLACK

Well, it only take once, my man, know what I'm sayin to you?

WHITE TWO

Yes, well, I think. . .

WHITE ONE

Ignore him.

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

You say what?

WHITE ONE *(not looking up)*

We're ignoring him. Simple.

THE BLACK

I hear you.

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

So I ask you this: Mebbe you wan *give* that bag to me. . . what you gon say to that?

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

Walt. . .

WHITE ONE

Hm?
(Pause. Looks up.) What?

WHITE TWO

I think we're going to be robbed.

WHITE ONE

Nonsense.

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

You read that story bout that white man? Big ol lawyer *uptown*, got his very own heart shot right out his very own chest?
Forget what for.
You member how that happen?

WHITE TWO

I believe it was during a robbery.

THE BLACK

Mhm. You right on that. I member that now, it was a *robbery*. One a the brothers had him a gun. . .

WHITE TWO

Walt. . .

THE BLACK

. . . showed that gun aroun, that lawyer, he so fulla shit, he jus be lookin at the brother, talkin bout "Why that gun is not *real*, you n—" *(Pause.)* Now thass how I heard the story. What you suppose the moral to that story?

WHITE TWO

I would imagine it's. . . do, perhaps, as you're told.

THE BLACK

Thass right. You *do* as you muthafuckin told you got a *gun* on you.

WHITE TWO

My God. Walt?

WHITE ONE

Hm?
(Pause. Looks up.) What?

THE BLACK (*simultaneously with "What?"*)

It all diffren. Now, *you* know how that is. Am I tellin the truth? You go wait in that subway, everbody jus a lookin you up, down, ever which way, see which is got that nice jacket, maybe a *bag*, (*I don know*) who mebbe got that gun, or a nice little box cutter, slice you tonsil to tummybutton.
(Pause.) It all *diffren*.
(Pause.) Everbody *scared*.

WHITE ONE

Some are. Not all.

THE BLACK

You scared?

WHITE ONE

Not in the slightest. Does that disappoint you?

THE BLACK

I don't give a shit.

WHITE ONE

A comfort.

(Silence.)

THE BLACK

You scared, my man?

WHITE TWO

I. . . I'm. . .

THE BLACK

You can say it. Don be fraid to say it. You say, "I'm scared." you jus sayin you human.

WHITE TWO

Well, I'm human.

THE BLACK

Course you are. *I'm* human.

WHITE TWO

Are you scared?

THE BLACK

What I got to be scared for?

WHITE TWO

You said if you're human, you're scared.

THE BLACK

Thass not what I said, my man. I said, if you *scared*, you *human*, not the other way roun.

WHITE TWO

Then. . .I'm a little. . .what is it that you mean?

THE BLACK

Only what I *said*. It okay to be scared. You scared, you not *alone*. Not in *Chicago*.
(*Pause.*) Course, you the only one scared roun *here*.
You fren, he not scared. An I'm not scared.
(*Pause.*) You odd man out roun here.

WHITE TWO

I. . .I don't understand. . .

WHITE ONE (*not looking up*)

Then just stop being baited by him. Can't you see what he's doing? Must I draw you a picture?

THE BLACK

What am I doin, my man?

WHITE ONE

Just keep to yourself. I am neither amused nor frightened.

THE BLACK

Well, thass nice.
(*Pause.*) This train go all the way to Evanston?

WHITE TWO

Yes.

WHITE ONE

No.

WHITE TWO

No?

THE BLACK

Oh, thass right. I member that now. You get off at Howard Street, you got to wait on the other train.

WHITE TWO

We can get off?

THE BLACK

You *haf*to.

WHITE TWO

Well, that's a good. . .

THE BLACK

Whussat?

WHITE TWO

I mean. . .

THE BLACK

Whatchoo mean by that?

WHITE TWO

I didn't mean anything. . .

THE BLACK

It a good thing you offa the train wit the n—

WHITE TWO

No, no, don't say—

THE BLACK

Hm?

WHITE TWO

I didn't say—

THE BLACK

Pardon me, but thass what I thought I heard.

WHITE ONE (*not looking up*)

Then you heard wrong, didn't you. He said that's not what he meant.

THE BLACK

Oh.

(*Silence.*)

THE BLACK

Yessir, we all gotta get off.

WHITE TWO

What?

THE BLACK

I mean, we all gotta get offa the train.
(Pause.) I'll draw you a picture, my man.
(Pause.) You ain gon get rid a the—
(In a soft, sing-song falsetto.) —nig-ger.
Thass all I meant by that.

WHITE TWO

You know, I didn't say. . .of course, you. . .You Have
As Much Right As Anyone. . .

THE BLACK

. . .mmhm. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .To Ride Anywhere You Like. . .

THE BLACK

. . .li'l piece a you hopin I *live* on Howard Street. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .I. . .

THE BLACK

. . .li'l piece a you hopin it gonna be *me* . . .

WHITE TWO

. . .what. . .?

THE BLACK

. . .li'l piece a you hopin it gonna be *me* walkin home. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .no. . .

THE BLACK

. . .*alone* . . .

WHITE TWO

. . .no. . .

THE BLACK

. . .in the *dark* . . .

WHITE TWO

. . .no—

THE BLACK

DON'CHOO *LIE* TO ME, MUTHAFUCKA!

WHITE TWO

I'm not lying I swear to God In Heaven please don't kill me!

(THE BLACK roars with laughter. WHITE ONE looks at
WHITE TWO. Pause. WHITE ONE returns to his reading. THE
BLACK giggles and sighs. Silence.)

THE BLACK

Say now, my man, you hear that other story? Whatchoo do for you
livin?

WHITE TWO

I'm a male nurse.

WHITE ONE (overlapping)

Don't tell him. . .

THE BLACK

Now thass funny. This story bout a male nurse. Thass a huge
whatchamacallit.

WHITE TWO

Coincidence?

THE BLACK

No. Thass a huge lie. This story not bout no male nurse at all.

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

What. . .what story?

THE BLACK

How long you live in Chicago?

WHITE TWO

Jus. . .just moved.

THE BLACK

Oh, *thass* why you ain heard this one.

WHITE TWO

No. No, I haven't.

(Silence.)

WHITE TWO

What. . .one?

THE BLACK

Right up here. Howard Street Station. Man waitin on the train. Gon zip him on home to Evanston, he waitin on that Evanston train, gon zip him on home to his li'l partment wit warm lights. . .dig, an he jus bought a puppy dog home for his kids, he got that nice fat deadbolt keep all them niggers away. . .

WHITE TWO

I wish you wouldn't keep say. . .I never meant. . .

THE BLACK

. . .an he waitin there on that train, an it late, my man. It not as late as it is *now*, dig, but yes it late. An he *unprotected*. Ain no deadbolt on no train station. An whatchoo think happen? "

WHITE TWO

I don't know.

THE BLACK

Well, long come the brothers. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .the *brothers*. . .

THE BLACK

. . .maybe *five*. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .*six*. . .

THE BLACK

. . .*six* of em, mebbe more.

WHITE TWO (*simultaneously*)

. . .more.

THE BLACK

(*Pause.*) Whatchoo think they do?

WHITE TWO

They. . .they kill him.

THE BLACK

Why, thass right. But not right away. They *scare* him firs, just like...say now, my man, you wan sump'n wipe off under y'nose? Thass ugly. Anyway. They *talk* to him awhile, they talkin bout *honky*. . .

WHITE TWO

. . .honky, yes, I've heard that. . .

THE BLACK

. . .an *White Bread*, an then you know what one of em do?

WHITE TWO

They. . .they pull a knife.

THE BLACK

Thass right. An they put that ol knife an how *big* that knife be?

WHITE TWO

Big. Very very big.

THE BLACK

You right again. An they *put* that big ol muthafuckin knife right up gainst his neck they say "You tell us where you live." An whas the firs rule you learn here on this train tonight?

WHITE TWO

You do as you're told.

THE BLACK

Why, you right again. An he did what he was told. He told the brothers where he live, they say, you listen here: We goin to you home. Wit the warm lights, dig, and the puppy which jus bought home for you kids, an you nice fat deadbolt (which don really keep us niggers away at all) we gon fuck your ol lady.

(*Pause.*) What you think a that?

(*Pause.*) An that man, he say: Please oh please don do that to my ol lady, an the brothers, they say, Okay:

(*Pause.*) But only if you do sump'n for us.

(*Pause.*) An whas that rule again?

WHITE TWO

Do as you're told.

THE BLACK

Why, you *muthafuckin* right about that. An they say to him. . .say now, you know sump'n bout these trains?

WHITE TWO

Um. . .

THE BLACK

They *lectric*. They run on *lectricity*. An it a funny thing bout these tracks. Y'can walk on mebbe one a the rails or the other a the rails an you fine. But they's this *third* rail that you got to be watchin for, an you make connections on em, what you think gonna happen?

WHITE TWO

.. .lec lec lec. . .

THE BLACK

Lectrocute yo ass an thass no lie.

WHITE TWO

Lectrocute yo ass, yes.

THE BLACK

So the six a them push the one a him down in the trough where them tracks are. An they say. . .

WHITE TWO

Dance.

THE BLACK

.. .you *dance*, muthafucka, you *dance* you honky white-bread ass off. An they start throwin rocks at him, they edgin him aroun wit them rocks, makin him dance roun one rail, then they edgin him roun, make him dance roun the other rail, then they edgin, he dancin round em both, but: He never makin the connection. Then what you think happen?

WHITE TWO

Oh my God. The. . .the. . .

THE BLACK

Go on now, you *say* it. . .

WHITE TWO

.. .the. . .

THE BLACK

.. .you know you want to. . .

WHITE TWO

.. .the *train*. . .

(*WHITE TWO now begins to silently move his lips, more or less forming the words along with THE BLACK'S next speech.*)

THE BLACK

Thass *right*. The muthafuckin *train* comin, she be comin roun the mountain when she *come*. An jus at the las second, jus when that train gon wipe him offa the face a the earth, one a the brothers throws him a rock, an it catch him square in the muthafuckin *chest*, right where he *live*, my man. An it knock him cross them tracks, an very soon (quicker than even that, wink of a eye in fact) he be so black and burn to a crisp, that what you know? *He be one a the brothers too.*

(*Pause.*) An that train hit his ol black body, send it in a million pieces like the way black burn paper be floatin in the air when you burnin you trash.

(*Pause.*) An what you think about that?

(*Silence.*)

WHITE ONE

I think it is the most preposturous thing I have ever heard. I have lived here all of my life. I have never heard of a story like that.

(*Silence.*)

WHITE TWO

What?

(*THE BLACK sighs. Silence.*)

WHITE TWO

What? You. . .you *sat* there?
(*To THE BLACK.*) Is. . .is that right?

(*Silence.*)

WHITE TWO

Was that all just a story?

(*Silence.*)

WHITE TWO

I mean it! Is it?

(*Silence.*)

WHITE TWO

Why is this happening?
It's it's it's it's can't you *see*?
Is it any *wonder*?
Come in here (the *both* of you) decent people riding on a train together, come in here (the *both* of you) come here with your stories, your fucking *ghost stories*, I mean, what are we here, *children*?!

THE BLACK

And are you frightened?

WHITE TWO

Of course I'm frightened!

THE BLACK

And why are you frightened?

WHITE TWO

BECAUSE THAT COULD REALLY HAPPEN!!

(*Silence.*)

THE BLACK

Your friend there just told you that it did not happen.

WHITE TWO

That's right!

THE BLACK

So then, if you don't mind my asking, why then are you frightened?

WHITE TWO

I . . . I . . .

THE BLACK

A story. A child's story. Ah. Have we not left the boogeyman in the closet?

WHITE TWO

I . . . I . . .

THE BLACK

I am filled with a wonder. How may I, one of the lowly and (dare I give voice to the creature?) the *repellent*, wonder that I hold such *power*. . .such. . .ah.

(*Silence.*)

WHITE ONE

The train has stopped.

THE BLACK

Howard Street.

(*Pause.*) And now we must all get off the train.

(*Pause.*) Why, there's a lamp burnt out on the platform.

(*THE BLACK stands. Silence.*)

THE BLACK

Well. See you there.

(*Pause.*) Eh?

WHITE ONE

Yes.

(*THE BLACK exits.*)

WHITE TWO

All right. Now, what are we going to do?

WHITE ONE

Well, we have to get off the train.

WHITE TWO

Now?

WHITE ONE

Yes.

WHITE TWO

Yes, yes, yes but. . .but he's *out there*.

WHITE ONE

Who?

(*Silence.*)

WHITE ONE

Mm.

WHITE TWO

Do you think the story was true?

(*WHITE ONE smiles and shrugs.*)

WHITE TWO

There might be more of them.

WHITE ONE

Coming?

WHITE TWO

I . . . I . . . I . . .

(*Pause.*) I can't dance.

(*WHITE ONE looks at WHITE TWO. Pause. Blackout.*)

-James Serpento

I've never seen you
so afraid so afraid
to talk to me so afraid
of what I'll say
I've never heard your
voice quiver so much
just to say hello
on the phone to hear
what I won't say and
it's beautiful to flick
an ash when you ask
if you've been a dick
it's beautiful to laugh
like an ass when you ask
where am I today to
burn your shoes to walk
home to pay my own
way if I could I would
make you pay but
you're too afraid.

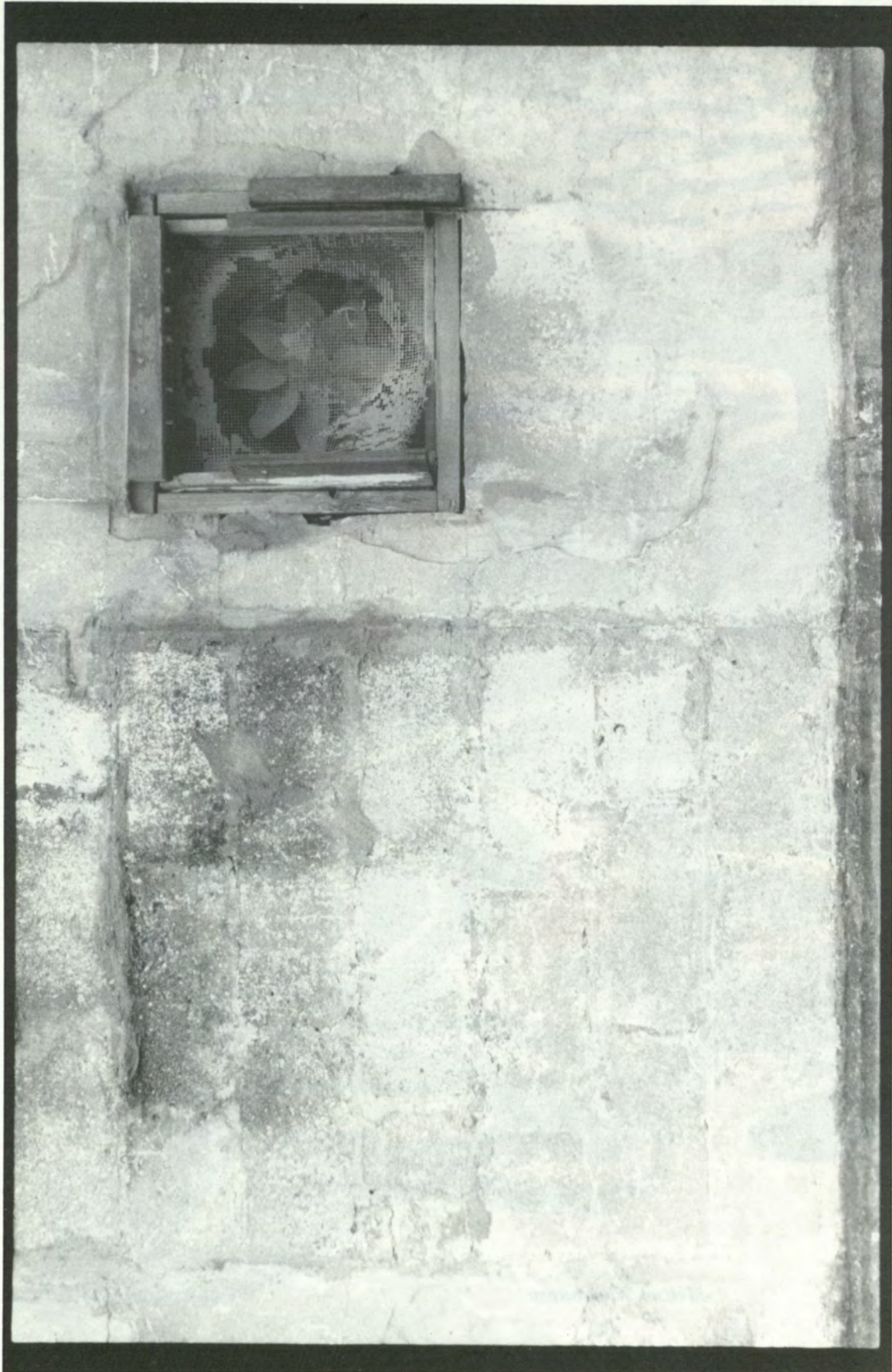
-A. Shepler





Icarus

Melina Wiegmann



-Todd Wetzel

Il Miglior Fabbro *for Chris*

What's funny
is that you think
you're no good, assume
second-rate status,
while ogling others—
names dropped
at faculty meetings, printed
in leather-bound anthologies. I've read
you closer, swallowed
whole the lines
you pencil
softly, afraid to chisel
words into the page, afraid
to face ill-chosen verbs
or flimsy images.
As I mark
characters en coitus
(a woman, raw back thrust
against a splintered wall, a man sliding
his palms under her linen dress,
feeding from her hard, open mouth),
you capture passion, harness
it in stanzas, amaze
with colors—a wash
of Autumn's leaves,
wind-weaved, the nakedness
of Winter's black boughs,
pink and white blossoms
for greener months giving
sweet red fruit.
Your fingers write
a dance for these, stilling
like a Middle Eastern girl,
her soft belly tracing
small, fast ovals.
Tonight, you whisper
art, shape Bellini's nude
and Dineson's lions
into oil and clay
of your own. I want
you to turn to The Slaves,
watch them pull
out of the rock *alive*.
I see them gray and heavy,
but in your words
they float light, free
from unfinished pain.
What's funny is the way
we differ: you believe
your work is no good—
to me, your poems
are the cherry trees
Spring has seduced.

Phallic Stage: The Heartbeat of America

Right now, in this shabby one room paneled apartment, whose walls could contain my dreams and whose carpet so often burns my knees, I wonder. I wonder how far, how long, how anxious I have to become, to quiet the stereos and T.V.s and thumping feet, in order to satisfy my thirst for ecstasy. Why ecstasy? I don't know. Maybe because I can dream it and sense it, but I can't tame it or taste it. What happens when the soul is liberated? What happens when my penis fills with blood to the point of explosion while watching two women play lovers on T.V.? Who do they pretend to be, and what caused them to get that way? Could I join them? No, I can't step from my white house into the shanties of the student quarter (Latin quarter) La Rive whatever the hell it is—in France where all of that sleazy shit happens. What lies in the heart of a manipulator—who never said, "I love you"—who never understood the words? I am afraid of passion, afraid of where it might take me—I'm curious though—like an angelic virgin wandering into the throws of a festival, with dangling breasts and whetted lips. I'm real in the sense that I can feel her heart beat. My heart beats and I hear children's voices outside the window. Children whose parents have sprung for tickets to see Rowdy Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan dance and hug in a ring. Their voices go up in cheers as the famed faggot dancers lumber into the stadium. Will their appetite for violence be quenched tonight? Flips and tumbles and I suddenly realize where I am. Why aren't I in there; what makes me better? I get thrills from lesbian sex, not large "pumped" males coarsely caressing before 3,000 fans. What do the children see? "Daddy and Mommy like it, I'd better too." I also hear 13, maybe 14 year old girls. What are they dressed up for, and what do they want? The eye shadow is too thick and their hearts are overpowered by an incredible curiosity to be touched by that greasy Seventeen-year-old Junior, with the thin black mustache, who drives a Camaro, and wears size 23 jeans.

-Daniel A. Youngren

As If I Was Homosexual

You, looking at me stare into my coffee
thinking to yourself
again how spineless I am.
You tell me I need to start sticking
up for myself,
and all I do is think

with anger. I can remain calm
though, focusing on your relaxed posture,
and considering why your clothes
always hang so loosely on you,
like the skin on a mad bulldog's face.

Yet I think of how I look up to you
with fear, so afraid to see myself
making love to your body,
caressing your small firm muscles
kissing my chest.

I ash my cigarette and decide not to say
anything for now. I focus on the rush
of people outside on the Manhattan street,
somehow finding beauty in their walk.
I manage to finally lose you
with the quiet rhythm of the morning.

-Keith Nipper

Les Gens D' Armes

Two twin soldiers
stand beneath the trees.
They've been standing like that
for quite some time now.
Like tombstones, you can never read
emotions on their faces.
I sometimes wonder if they know
it's Sunday Afternoon.

As if they're carved
from a single block of wood,
my soldiers seem ingrained
with a proper sense of duty.
Standing at attention, hands held
behind their backs for posture,
they police the Island of La Grande Jatte.

It's not that the park needs
to be policed. They're not
standing there for decoration,
however. It's just a Sunday thing,
a tradition started years ago;
nobody remembers why.
Some people simply sit and watch
their sculpted military shades
arc across the lawn
like shadows on a sundial.

-Michael Chasar



-D'Linda Reitz

I look at Kelvin now
 when I had Kelvin we had
 had when I had Tony we
 had running water. Then



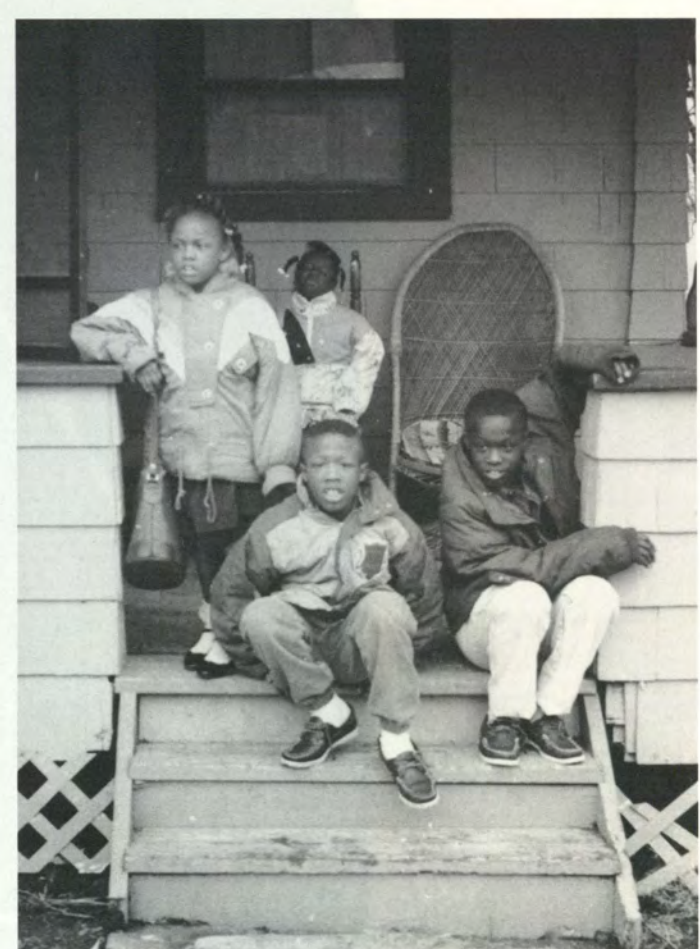
Thinking Back to S.C.
 a well in our back yard

Tabitha Come



Along and we had a pump
 then

Stephanie God blessed us with
 running water.
 To two born in the bed
 Tabitha born on the



Railroad ties.

My husband's was
 drivin real slow so

out Tabitha come. I ^{wanted} peanut butter
 and Kellogg's and I went back to bed and
 then Kelvin to come. I put him on my chest
 and hugged him. These are my kids



Mary
 love

I thing that thay should
have more Sesame
Street
on
TV.

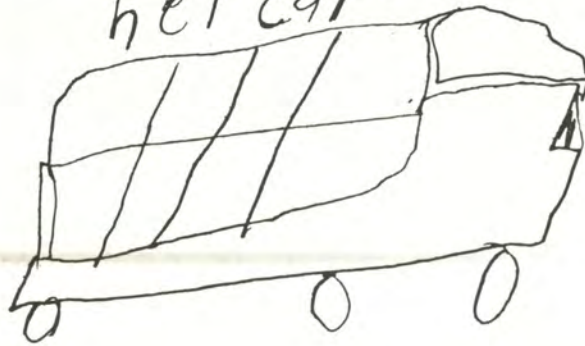


the white
people on
t.v. is rich

big bird
is my
favorite



her car



I like this kitchen



NO
ROCKES
live here

It feels like country real peaceful.
Indiana St. IS very Caring, But
aracist. One day I was cutting
the hedges and two boys thell pass by my house and call me and
my son niger.

if I was in S.C. I would
be in the tobacco field and my ^{kids} ~~kids~~
had to stay in the car. It was very

Hot and the tobacco rows were
long. I de hurry Ing up to check
on them, It was hard because some
stalks had a lot of tobacco and
some didnt. When it was 12:00 pm
we took out the pots and we built
~~and~~ Fire. And all the workers and
me and my ~~kids~~ ate rice and Beans
and we got finished I had to leave
to the kids again.



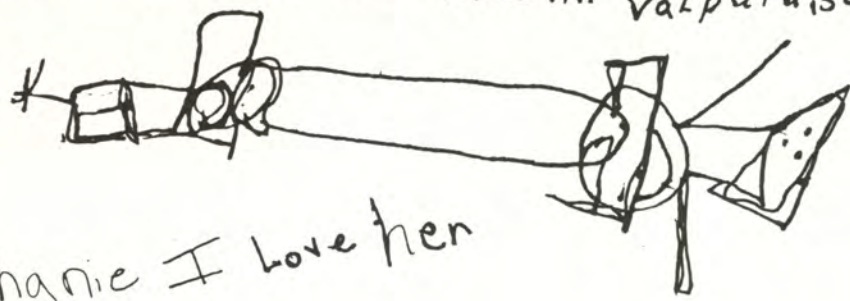
When my mom wher in
the tobacco fields I Look
at the clouds and ~~and~~ imagined
Where would I go when I died?

kelvin



once upon a time there was a momma named Mary
 she had four kids their names is Tabitha and
 Stephanie and Tony and Kelvin

I my thank fuld for the home in: Valparaiso.



Stephanie I love her



Momma

One day momma

Very much

ran qster kelvin
 she got a swite
 and she got a h
 a swite and he
 had a red
 red



Bootie



Whip
 that

Bootie look

at the
 Bootie



I wast walking to my
 neighdors house and got
 shot dy young white college
 doys.

Afterlights

On warm summer nights
when the cool blue moon
drops lazy rays into the countryside
and quiet ponds make occasional splashes
for no apparent reason,
people blush easier,
and grins polish up from the darkest of places.

Minds wander along paths in the woods
and strangers whistle tunes you thought
only you knew.

People close their eyes,
not to sleep, but to see
nothing, makes the stars shine brighter.
Makes it easier to mistake
a kind word for a
whisper of love...

but even the loneliest of creatures
shrug off love
on nights such as this.

-John Schaefer

For Sharon

I was clear mountain water,
recently melted by the warmth of your touch.
I dove off the highest waterfall
alone and falling until
the deep green pools in your eyes
accepted me. I sank,
only to emerge and tumble down
the sloping rapids of your continual kisses.
I followed that growing river later in dreams to a delta
where sleepy waters mingled with warm sands
and dolphins swam together as the sun rose
and sparkled on a never-stopping ocean.

-Andrew Gaertner

Summer Fields, 1979

You took me from the farmhouse
out into the fields where I would balance
all morning on the fence to watch you
work. With your shirt off, the noon sun
flashing on your slick, tanned back,
you harvested with deft movement.
That bright light gilded your sunned figure
and the golden stems that surrounded
you, so that as the hot wind blew in
from the fields to dry my eyes,
I could not discern the separation
of your fluid movements from those
of the gently rippling rows.

I stood beside you to help
a Jersey give birth, watching
in horrified wonder as the calf emerged
violently, only to rise a moment later
and stand tottering between us
in the stall. You taught me
to fire a gun to kill birds
around the silos, a small, hard weapon,
heavy in my hand. I learned secrets
of the hay lofts, ways of capturing
small creatures that invaded
the corn cribs at dawn. At nightfall
we would drive down into the fields

to watch deer. We would sit in the pick-up
without speaking as the world around faded
into inky darkness. You'd switch
on the headlights, and they'd flash ahead
of the truck, a sudden slash across the night.
The cricket's song would cease
abruptly. The vacuum of sound
prickled skin on the back of my neck.
Holding my breath, I'd watch where the light
touched woods at the field's edge. The deer,
venturing from the trees under cover of darkness,
shocked by the sudden bright, stunned
where they stood, would become frozen images
of what they had been. The slender delicacy
enchanted me, and on these nights I would long
study them from the truck, my hand squeezing
your much larger one. You told me

I could touch the deer if I wanted, moved
slowly and quietly, but though I wondered
at their cinnamon coats and liquid eyes,
I would not leave your side. I do not know
what I understood the deer to be, but saw
the grace they shared with you and felt
the surrender that was needed. Always,
finally, I would turn off the lights, releasing
my hold on the deer. Sometimes I could hear
crashing through the underbrush
as they bounded back among the trees.
Other times, there would be no sound
of flight. These were the times I waited
for, crouched on the tailgate as the night
slowly filled with noises. Although too dark
to see, I pictured the animals fanning
across the fields to graze. I was never sure

they were there after the lights went out.
I like to think they were there, to think
they were aware of my presence in the night,
in the wisdom that was shared in the summer fields.

-Meridith Brand

Approaching Winter Sunset, Connecticut Woods

It is a strange time for a sunset,
it is often missed in the late afternoon.
But here we are on time,
knowing that we need to talk.
You ask me about God,
but I cannot think of that. To me,
what is more important is how distant we
have become, and why this trip
was to be our salvation.
As you walk on ahead of me,
I catch the last shadow of you,
fading from this orange, sunlit woods,
shouting "My God, my God,"
while the trees whisper around us,
indifferent to the rustling leaves
beneath our feet.

-Keith Nipper

Summer Fields, 1979

You walk the fields the summer
as though the landscape is a vast
of memory and the sun is bright
and warm. With your hand
on the ground.

The grass is green
and the sky is blue
and the sun is bright
and warm. With your hand
on the ground.

The grass is green
and the sky is blue
and the sun is bright
and warm. With your hand
on the ground.

Summer fields, the sun is bright
and warm. With your hand
on the ground.





-Amy Sanford

After Hearing That the *Aurora Borealis* Was Spotted Down South

I.

I learned at eight
to pencil in the world's waistline,
a stroke simple as sectioning an orange.
From this I knew of
all things divided by lines.
On colorless circles
I drew indistinctions,
islands eroded at their coastlines,
continents formless as milk spills.
After it all,
a blue'so confidently covers
everything.
As if identity were a lie.

This is the wisdom of a child,
to hide imperfections
under the boldest greens.
As if they never existed there at all.

II.

That night, it was a thin fire
consuming the treeline.
The women who saw everything
believed nothing new.
Such colors are rare.

They whispered,
"Northern lights"
at the trees like a spell.
The language it grew out of
was defiant. Into the forest,
it poured its mythic dance.

What they celebrated was its weakness,
a magic lacking in the world.
The colors died into echoes,
indistinct and beautiful as islands.

-Christine Rueter

Secret

It seemed innocent
at first—a game
I thought you played
with all of us,
and I relished the attention.
But soon, it was clear
you were toying
with me, and though it
never bothered my peers,
they'd always tease
after class, smiling
slyly, after poking
with fat, childish fingers.
You would sing
whenever I handed
in a paper; your dark eyes,
hawk-like, pierced
to reach me.

I don't think you
meant to take it
as far as you did,
but after that day,
locked in the shadowed room
among the worn and dusty maps
hinting at uncovered treasure,
you made a promise—
nobody will ever know.

We shared few evenings,
only weekends
in an apartment you borrowed
from a friend.
I think you felt young
again, while I absorbed
your years, aging
as you watched, but never
noticed. Wanting to please,
I'd do anything
you asked,
sometimes catch
you fixing an easy meal
in the kitchen, not seeing
as I stared at your shirtless body,
lulled by the way
the sunlight from the corner
window massaged your shoulders.
I'd study your face,
the lines I loved,
those muddy eyes
that could hide
any truth, picture tricks
you could get me to do
without once questioning,
and disgust would ball
in my stomach, slowly rolling
to my throat, a choking
I could not escape.

It ended
because I had to have
something left.
You displayed your regret
by discarding a few tears,
but I felt no sorrow
for you, only my soul
I thought I could reclaim,
then found
you had taken that too—

there was no part of my life
you hadn't molded
or shaped or enjoyed,
no place
you hadn't felt
with your big searching hands.

-Marjorie Thomas

Circles

For Seamus Heaney

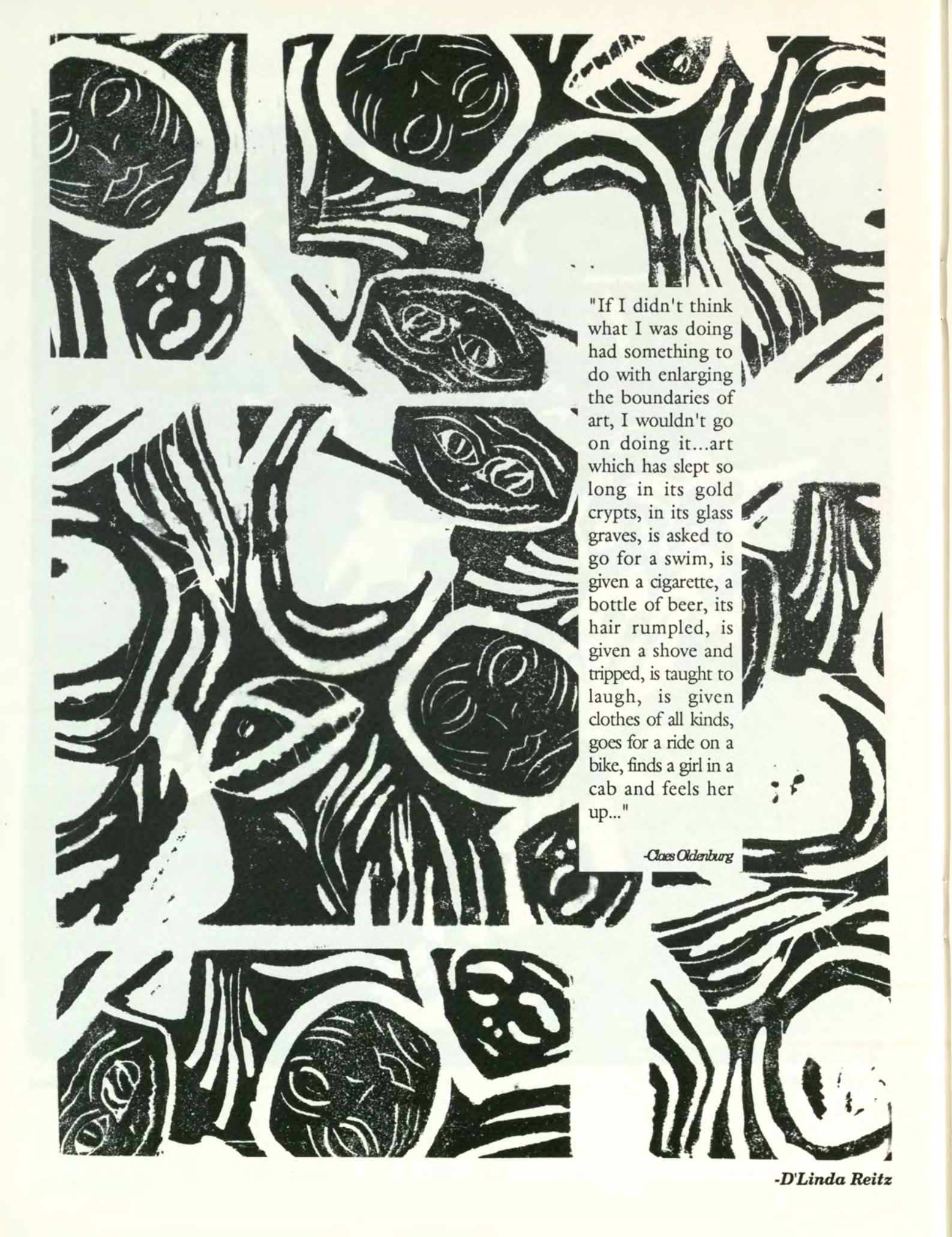
Circles are unlike us,
lineages folding back
against each other
because they cannot die.
This secret keeps its distance.
You offer me these words,
perfectly round.
Today and tomorrow,
they will oversee everything
like a curving sky.
I only know lines,
roads mounting over roads,
my elliptical womb
waiting to continue.
Around me
lie the broken circles,
pieces to hold on to.
Rarely, a circle floats in
knowing *me*.
It is hollow
and inside itself like words
withheld by the dying.

-Christine Rueter



Bing and Donald

-Nate Gilbertson



"If I didn't think what I was doing had something to do with enlarging the boundaries of art, I wouldn't go on doing it...art which has slept so long in its gold crypts, in its glass graves, is asked to go for a swim, is given a cigarette, a bottle of beer, its hair ruffled, is given a shove and tripped, is taught to laugh, is given clothes of all kinds, goes for a ride on a bike, finds a girl in a cab and feels her up..."

-Claes Oldenburg

Contributors' Notes

Heidi Nagel is a senior art major from Valparaiso, IN with the life long ambition to have more tatoos than Cher. A senior English major from Orange, CA, *Corey Baden* plans to spend the next two and a half years as a member of Overseas Volunteer Youth Ministry. His German ancestors, invited to Russia by Catherine the Great, were later sent to Siberia and had nothing to eat but the bark off trees. He has been published in *Spiritquest* and *The Lighter*. A past contributor of *The Lighter*, *Keith Nipper*--senior English and philosophy major from Merrillville, IN--likes to listen to Bach loud enough to make his neighbors complain and call the police. *Todd Wetzel* is a graduate student and works as Valparaiso University's Arts Coordinator. He lives in Valparaiso and believes Rhythm and Blues to be a cure for many ills. Senior English and Biology major *Christine Rueter* has published in *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Hickory Woman*, as well as *The Lighter*. From Hickory, NC, she has been quoted saying, "I get this feeling that plants are smarter than me. No matter how many times I shift them around, they always grow toward the sun." Though she is getting married in Salt Lake City, senior *Jen Kempfert's* dream is to tour with the B-52s. Until then, she will complete her advertising major here at VU; Jen is from Mundelein, IL. "Blowing bubbles is still cheaper," says *Joe Lehmer*, a junior English major from Rockford, IL. Junior meteorology major of Buffalo, NY *John Schaefer* has been published in several illustrious rags, most notably: the November 1977 issue of *Newsweek* with "Cheese: The Power of Dairy," *Better Homes & Gardens* October 1982 with "Pesticides, Lawn Homicides?" and the *Christian Science Monitor's* April 1987 edition with "If We Had More Sun We'd Be Twice As Hot (And Bright)." When asked for comment, he responded, "Hey, what can I say? I've been cut. I just don't bleed." If she graduates, senior *Marjorie Thomas* plans to use her English and writing majors to the fullest extent in Amsterdam and other far regions of the eastern hemisphere. Originally from Manhattan Beach, CA, she does not feel showers are as necessary as most folks believe they are. *Daniel Youngren*, a sophomore marketing/psychology major from West Dundee, IL, has been published in *The Lighter*, and quotes Sam Shephard from *Suicide in B-Flat* when he states, "I prescribe to no particular system of thought." Sophomore art history major *Nate Gilbertson* names Flathead Lake, MT as his home, claiming "I would rather be living out of a tent." With a BA in speech from Iowa State University and an MFA in acting from Indiana University, *James Serpento's* experience with the dramatic arts is extensive. He has written, directed, and acted in several plays, a number of which have been produced Off-Off Broadway, in Los Angeles, and in the Midwest, in addition to working as Assistant Professor of Theater and Television Arts at Valparaiso University. In the fall, he will return to Chicago, where he will continue to pursue his professional career. When asked about *On the El Nighttimes*, he said, "If the play simply gets people talking, I am content, because talking does a lot of things: in those with brotherhood in their hearts, it strengthens their resolve and increases their powers of articulation and so, in turn, of healing." *Nik Englebert* is a senior Central European Studies major from Liberty Corner, NJ. Sophomore exploratory major from Big Rapids, MI *Anne Shepler* has been published previously in *The Lighter*, and forwards the wisdom that the dog's influence on the development of the soul has been ignored. She also wants to remind everyone that "although fish all bathe together they do tend to eat one another." Overseas in China, junior English major, *Michael Chasar*, has been featured in *The Lighter* and has also won a number of poetry competitions, including last year's Wordfest Academy of American Poet's Prize. From Northfield, OH, his other writing endeavors include drama, essays, and news columns. An advocate of the word "pastiche" and a proficient creator of cheese and home-made paper, senior art major, *Gretchen Beck*, enthusiastically promotes the arts on campus. She readily admits to having a terrible case of cyberphobia. *Amy Sanford* is a senior from Valparaiso, IN; she has co-oped in D.C. and enjoys creating prolific prints. *Melina Weigmann* is "once again hunting for the perfect school." For now, she remains a sophomore art major from Seward, NE, while commenting, "I hope to graduate from the next one." A student overseas in Cambridge for the semester, *Meridith Brand*, a junior English major from Wheaton, IL was published in *The Lighter* last fall and has been involved with the Valparaiso University Theater. *D'Linda Reitz* is a senior art major from St. Louis, MO who wonders "when 'Ken and Barbie' will ever stop doing the 'WILD THING?'" While he anticipates being published in the *Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference on Undergraduate Research*, senior Biology major *Andrew Gaertner* has also published in past issues of *The Lighter*. He has been known to claim Memphis, TN as his home; however, after graduation, he plans to serve in the Peace Corp, but as of yet, he doesn't know where, so stop asking him.

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All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process and are chosen by an unbiased group of interested university students. Each semester, The Lighter welcomes contributors and members to its staff from all faculties of the university community regardless of race, creed, gender, or orientation.

If you have any questions or comments, or if you would like to become a part of the 1992-93 staff, please call The Lighter office at (219) 464-5058.

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