Fantasy Camp

The Sugar River surged out of the low eastern mountains and flowed past the textile mills down to the flood plain where it formed a perfect ninety degree angle defining the outfield of the Newport baseball diamond. Jimmy Campbell, in tattered tan sweatshirt, flannel baseball pants, and steel-cleated shoes, sweated his twelve-year-old's sweat as he stood on the pitcher's mound and glared down at the batter.

It was the City League. It was a time before Little League. It was a game of men, some forty years old, some twelve. It was the time of Ted Williams, and Johnny Mize, and the New York Yankees, and the Real Bosox. It was a game played across the country in old parks with old-looking men and baggy uniforms.

It was the eighth inning and Jimmy Campbell had a no-hitter.

"I had a no-hitter in the eighth," Jimmy, 57, was telling the boys who gathered around the meat counter at the general store. "And I got 'em. All three. Oh, of course, I hit one. Hit four in the game all told. Scared the hell out of the next fella. Took three swings and left. No-hitter."

Winter squeezes at the crotch of New England and leaves it shriveled and inactive. Winter leaves men to escape into their minds, to bask in yesterdays, and dream green dreams of tomorrow.

Jimmy was sipping at his coffee. The talk turned to winter and then died, the bitching done. "I bet I can still throw a few innings," Jimmy said. Behind the meat counter the saw was whining as Jake cut pork chops. He looked at Jimmy. "Then, why the hell don't you play and stop talking about it every winter."

"Where'd I play? Who'd I play?"

"Drive."

"Says here, in the Boston Globe, that they got a camp in Florida for them still want to play ball. Two weeks, uniforms, everything. Says Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr, Elston Howard, and a bunch of them will be there."

"Florida." Jimmy waved Jake off. "How'd I get there?"

"Drive."
“Dammit, Jake, you know I don’t fly!”
“Alright then, train ... out of Boston.”
“How am I supposed to get to Boston?”

Jimmy stroked his old Rawling Lommy Frey Model baseball glove as the train pulled out of South Station. It hummed west toward Springfield before turning south to Hartford and New Haven and New York City.

From the windows of the train the landscape changed from trees and open fields to junkyards and tired neighborhoods with surfaced buildings and flat sagging warehouses with the art of angled fields on their walls. The buildings, the walls, the wasted yards suddenly eclipsed as the train dove under South Station.

“You’ll change trains at Penn,” the conductor said. “Go to track 24.” There were no big signs saying “Track 24.” Jimmy left the train and alighted on the platform. He stood, bag in one hand, Lommy Frey glove in the other, when a small black man approached him.

He took Jimmy’s glove.

“Let me help you. Changing trains?”

“Hey, where you going with my glove?”

“Ah, man,” the black man said, “I just helping you. Where you going?”

“Florida.”

“Shit, man, no. What track?”

“24.” Jimmy was now running behind the black man as they crossed the main floor of Penn Station.

“24, there you are.” The black man pointed up to a sign. It said 24. He held Jimmy’s glove. “You got a dollar for me, man!”

“What?”

“I helped you. Give me the dollar.”

“Didn’t need no help. Leave me alone.”

“Shit. I carried this glove all the way across the station. I helped your sorry ass find this track, and you can’t help me with one lousy fucking dollar.”

The dollar was no sooner out of Jimmy’s pocket than the man had it and was running.

“Hey,” Jimmy hollered.

The man turned back.

“Remember. You carried Jimmy Campbell’s glove.”

The man looked interested. “Was you somebody?”

“I am somebody.”

“Yeah, but you an old somebody,” Jimmy watched him continue across the floor and disappear into the crowd.

Somewhere between Washington, D.C. and the North Carolina border winter ceased to be white and, instead, turned bleak-brown with shorn fields mazed and unmated. But then, the South purled up warm and sensual, poking palm trees at the border, white egrets in the fields.

Jimmy Campbell missed the tobacco fields and the peach trees and the Vidalia onions as the train raced across the south. He slept and then awoke to white sun, scrub pine and a sign outside his window that said, WINTER HAVEN.

Other men with old-soft gloves gathered under the hot Florida sun. They boarded a van for Baseball Camp. And finally, for Jimmy, from the winter of New England, here it was. Acres of baseball diamonds. Infields pruned to perfection. The hard red clay raked and corned, pebble-free, bad-turf-free. Leather-colored men with Red Sox uniforms prowled the grass with ancient grace.

“Uniforms in the clubhouse!” someone shouted. So they lined up, those eager men for the trapings of the grand old game.

“Here y’go hat. Here y’go pants. Here y’go pants.”

Jimmy stood there. “What size?”

“Pants, 34.”

“Yeah. Well they got elastic bands: One star fit-a-em-al.”

“Ain’t funny,” Jimmy said.

They spread out on the field. Young men with gold chains, old men with gold teeth. All men with golden dreams.

They worked all day under the sun. They divided by position: pitchers, infielders, outfielders. Later they ate catfish and okra and hushpuppies. They slurped at wilted turnip greens and rubbed their eyes and then around the knob of the baseball glove they hung the winter ceased to be.

“In a fenced-in section toward left field, Jimmy sat in the bullpen waiting to be called. It was his turn to pitch.

An old man leaned on the fence. He watched the field for a long time. Then he looked at Jimmy.

“Hi, Jimmy, remember me?”

Jimmy saw an old man with sun skin and sunken eyes. He saw gnarled hands and a tired back shrunk into an orange and black windbreaker that said, Tigers.

“I’m Robert Yetman. I caught you in high school.”

“You can’t be.” Jimmy seemed confused. “I mean, well, you’re so old.”

“You ain’t so young, Jimmy.”

“I can still pitch. Well, maybe an inning or two.”

“You never had nothing but a fastball and you never knew where it was going.”

Late afternoon in Florida hung forever, before finally sinking into the pinks and purples of twilight. At the bar, the two men clinked their glasses.

“You never should have hit Williams,” Yetman said.

“Didn’t mean to,” Jimmy answered.

“And Doerr.”

“I got Doerr and Pesky.”

“Doerr didn’t want to get banned and Pesky’s seventy years old.”

“But I got ‘em.”

“You get ‘em.”

“If no-hit ‘em,” Jimmy looked at his catcher. “We ain’t so old are we, Bobbie, we ain’t so old.”

---

Don Watson
Hallowell
40 and 65

Just think, in thirty years you will be seventy and experiencing mood swings; I will be ninety-five and tranquil as an old stone.

Nicholas Snow
Spruce Head, paintings & Lobster

50

50 yrs old & on the boat
to starboard

Two big words on transom
“Courtship” and “Destiny”
in the center

“Echo” rocking gently in the falling tide and
to port

weathered pilings
hung with sea moss barnacles, kelp

a white pigeon
under there
freezing sleepily
and the darkness beyond

Sylvester Poller
East Holden
Teaches Art at UMFK

Pigeon

We string minutes one by one on a string of uncertain length...

At Leicester Square I take your arm
You disregard it after half a block.
We thread through crowds on parallel tracks or single file.
We meet at the end of the block or at the cinema
as if by chance. We take bigger risks,
put countries, oceans, friends and family in our path.
We do not plan the route from yesterday to tomorrow.

At Heathrow you hug me briefly before I board the plane.
Already you are practicing detachment.
I look back to see you wave before I move beyond your line of vision.

From the kitchen window in Brooklyn I can
watch a row of pigeons on a nearby roof.
He waves a flag on a long pole to lead the flock in enchancing circles.
Little by little they learn to trace a curve that
swings always wider, always back to him.

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent
Teaches Art at UMFK

Gone

Dark closes over water
like a steady hand,
water breaks against hidden rocks.
When I turn to speak
my words fall into empty hours.

My heart learns to collect:
your lost plane scraped in the sink,
a film of dust your fingertips felt,
she still warm in dimming sun—
there I gather against the quiet.
Stray hairs in the comb I save,
and your voice, the shape of your shadow,
the sense of you, sleeping,
in another room.

Leslie E. Palmer
Gunnison, CO
is a UMFK graduate

An Associate Professor Speaks of Love

He had lectured on the ironies of love, as he had for many semesters before.
But today he had surprised himself with an exceptional verve. His finger had
seemed to lift the words from his faded notes like flights of doves. It had been a
triumph, he felt sure. Even the row of lacrosse players in back had sat up in
attention throughout.

For the last several weeks he had felt sluggish, acutely aware of the contrasting
energy of his students, who were now as old as his children. The collar of his shirt
had seemed ill-fitting, too large. Yet at the same time his neck seemed somehow
more corpulent. He had complained to his wife that they should change
laundries.

But today he had felt as crisp as the morning air, his muscles taut and slightly
sore, as if he had been running again.

He spoke with great eloquence of love’s delusions and its traps, drawing
analogies from contemporary literature and film. This morning he had noticed
how his wife’s ankles had thickened, the skin there lumpy and veined. He had
been riveted to this image as she bent down to give water to the poodle. That
scene stayed in the very front of his mind and seemed to fire his speech with
sermonic urgency.

To the older woman student he would eventually invite to lunch, he lectured
propelled something new, a wave of surprising passion ingrained with wisdom.
Her story, he had known, was not exceptional. An accumulation of distaste had
driven her from marriage. Though unremarkable as he truly was, he possessed
a buyer’s shrewd ability to note the unused portions of another’s soul.

For her part, she had understood in an entirely new way how childish and
superficial had been her own expectations of love. The last months of his talk
she had not at all, but shifted in her desk as restless as a bear who has scoured
a honeycomb nearby.

Now they sit at a small table, having pushed aside the plates of a lunch lighter
than either would have eaten alone. He has settled into a mode of
modesty, as though the knowing and articulate voice of his lecture had gone into
another room to put on something more comfortable. Though listening, she is
hardly in her chair as she leans across the table. It must be the air before her that
sparks his offhand gesture; while speaking, he swiftly draws his fingers from the
corner of his eye across his nose into the rust and silver brushes of his beard.

David J. Adams
Trumansburg, NY
Teaches technical writing at Cornell,
& taught at UMFK, UMF, & Unity
Reeny's Mom

My friend Reeny and I spent that whole summer in raccoon swimsuits and Red Tag Levi's, and we jumped off Coombs' what four or five times a day just to cool off. Sometimes we'd remember and leave our jeans accordioned like sloughed skins on the wharf; sometimes we'd forget and jump in with them on.

It was one of those rare seventh summers there on the coast, that one summer in every decade when the July fogs forgot to come in. It was hot, deliciously hot, and the air carried the smells of baked seapines and low tide in waves, like an oven. Reeny and I hurled briefly through that fragrant air before landing in the frigid water with a huge plash and millions of deafening underwater bubbles. The harbor water tasted like Greek olives, fiercely salty and slightly nasty, as if one could taste all the fish swimming in the sea.

"How's your Mom?" I asked Reeny one day, gusting and streaming seawater; I'd forgotten to take my jeans off again.

Reeny shrugged, busy gazing at her next leap. She didn't look at me. "I dunno. She's my Mom, like always." "How's her hair?" "Comin' back," Reeny said, and launched herself into the air.

It seemed that no one in Finch's Harbor would be nice to Reeny's Mom any more, and I didn't know why. Reeny professed not to know, either, but she seemed unwilling to pass over it for long. She blamed her immeasurable brothers, who were all hellions and scallawags of one sort or another. The last time Reeny's Mom had gone up to Teddy's to have her hair done they'd cooked her perm too long, surely on purpose. A lot of her fine, ash-gray hair had broken right off, and what was left drifted about her head like sad clown fuzz. Reeny said it was because her brother Wayne had knocked up one of the hairdressers there and then skipped out, but I never heard that from anyone else. Handsome Wayne still courted and up and down the road in his red and silver pickup, smiling with white teeth. Reeny's Mom hardly ever went out any more.

Reeny hunkered herself up onto the wharf's hot gray planks and lay there, steamy and puddling like melting ice. "Let's walk up to Strimen's store for an ice cream," she gasped.

"Okay," I said. I could put it on my Dad's tab.

We wonced our way off the burning wharf and crossed the crater-filled parking lot to the road, our pantcuffs collecting glittering quartz grit.

The Harbor road was a 13-mile stretch of steeply-crowned asphalt that ran the length of the neck, through pine woods and lodge, past saltwater farms and bungalows with heaps of lobster traps in their front yards. The road wound a little and dipped up and down, but ultimately it descended a brief hill and ended there,

though, the road was a hot, peaceful pathway. It seemed that no one in Finch's Harbor would be nice to Reeny's Mom any more, and I didn't know why. Reeny professed not to know, either, but she seemed unwilling to pass over it for long. She blamed her immeasurable brothers, who were all hellions and scallawags of one sort or another. The last time Reeny's Mom had gone up to Teddy's to have her hair done they'd cooked her perm too long, surely on purpose. A lot of her fine, ash-gray hair had broken right off, and what was left drifted about her head like sad clown fuzz. Reeny said it was because her brother Wayne had knocked up one of the hairdressers there and then skipped out, but I never heard that from anyone else. Handsome Wayne still courted and up and down the road in his red and silver pickup, smiling with white teeth. Reeny's Mom hardly ever went out any more.

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When the tide came in, thick, jade-green water, still as glass, welled up in the little lagoon. It looked then like any fine pond. I always expected frogs tooting in the depths of the marsh grass there; I looked for them to leap out from the bank, put into the silty water and scull away as I passed on the road. But of course the lagoon was barren, a foul green trench at low tide and briny when full, too difficult a home for anything. A decaying boat, shadowed by trees, had lain on its side at the far edge of the lagoon for as long as we could remember; its history obscure. At high tide the long sweeping bulb seemed to incline itself toward the water, studying its own image gravely, intently.

Reeny and I saw the boy sitting on the rotten boat at the same moment, and probably with the same kick of surprise; no one ever went into the lagoon. The marshy ground was treacherous, and those reeds, tall as a man and creased with stiff-bristled manes, could cut like blades. There was nothing in the lagoon to risk passage for. Even if there was something there, no one would want to meet it—not in the opaque, confining screen of the marsh.

We stood in the middle of the road, staring at the boy, our wet jeans to stiffen and itch. He sat on the boat's tilted deck near the bow, squatting like a monkey, his ropy arms clasping his knees. I couldn't tell if he was looking at us, too, but he was sitting very still.

"Let's go talk to him," Reeny said, and she started down the road's stony shoulder without looking to see if I would follow.

"But Reeny—" I called, hearing my voice come out high and tight.

"No, come on," she hollered back, disappearing into the reeds. "I gotta talk to this kid.

So I followed, because Reeny and I did everything together that summer, and because she was my great good friend.

The reeds encircled us, crowding close and unwelcome, as Reeny wove unerringly toward the obscured boat. They cracked and tangled as we passed, and I worried briefly that their noisy might alert something fierce and hidden, some great marsh spider holding the reeds delicately in its many arms, waiting for movement. Midges rose up in clouds and pursued us, and the ground, squatty and uneven, full of invisible hummocks and drowned marsh stubble, hindered our progress. Ahead of me, partially obscured but bright as a flag, went Reeny's determined back, her swimsuit cleverly harnessing her freckled shoulderblades. I followed her grimly, faithfully.

The boy was waiting for us. He had climbed to the other side of the tilted wreck, and now he squatted there above us like some sour-faced little king, his chin on his scarred knees, separated from us by a short moat of green water.

"Troy," Reeny said in a voice I had never heard before, "what are you doing here?"

The kid inclined his head slowly and studied us. His eyes were strange, yellow and slit-pupilled like a goat's. "None of your friggin' business," he said.

Reeny's face was flushed and intent. She stood stillly in the muck, quivering, frozen like a good hunting dog.

"What kid?" she asked him. "You see me, too?"

"Well, sure," I said loudly. "You're right there, aren't you?"

He grinned at some secret joke, his gaze an illegible yellow scrawl between us. "I guess I am, aren't I?"

Reeny just stared.

I nudged her. "Who is this kid, Reeny?"

"He's my brother," she said, staring at the boy who sat folded like a jackknife on the rotten hulk. "He's my brother Troy.

Reeny had a lot of brothers, enough to be their own softball team at all the local fairs, but I knew all her brothers by sight. They came and went from the big grey family house at all hours, all of them blond and dangerously handsome, rooting up and down the Harbor road in their pickups. I'd never seen this kid before.

Reeny's brothers were all older than her, too, some much older, with the beginnings of crow's feet and greying hair. But this boy wasn't any older than Reeny or me.

Well, I thought, what's he doing here?

I dunno," said Reeny, shielding her eyes from the sun, which had parked just behind the boy's left eye. "He's supposed to be dead."

"Dead?"

"Yeah."

And with that, Reeny seemed to make a decision. I'm going to pet Mom," she announced. She lifted her sunken feet from the mud with a brisk treading motion, still watching the boy. On a sudden thought, she narrowed her eyes, scowling fiercely. "Are you gonna stay here?" she asked him.

The kid unfolded himself, swinging his thin legs over the side of the boat, settling himself more comfortably. He smiled, slow and chilly, like summer fog.

I said, "You better, Reeny, or I'll pound you."

The kid tittered and thumped his feet against the rotten hull, but Reeny ignored him. His tennis shoes, I saw, were stupid Red Ball Jets, the kind we wouldn't be caught dead in, and they were unnaturally clean.

But the lagoon had grown featureless, its waters and shadows darker in spite of the white sun, the hot blue sky. I wasn't going to stay there alone, not with Reeny's dead brother.

"No way, Reeny," I said. "I'm coming with you."

"Watch from the road, then," she said, and struck off through the reeds, back the way we had come, without looking to see if I followed. But I pursued that bright-strapped back as if my life depended on it.

"How do you know he's your brother, Reeny?" I bellowed, splashing and struggling, hoping to slow her down a little. The tide had risen since our first passage; I couldn't tell where I was putting my feet.

"I've seen his picture," Reeny called back. She wove expertly through the marsh, stepping high, black freckles of mud dotting her bare back. "I was just a baby then."

"What happened to him?"

"Dunno." Reeny negotiated a tangle of debris from some ancient storm, her voice muffled. "There was an accident."

Suddenly, I wanted to go home. It had to be lunchtime. "Well," I shouted, "how do you know it's really him? He must have changed a lot since you were a baby."

Reeny stopped abruptly and swung around to face me. A cloud of midges settled over her shoulders like a shawl. "No, stupid," she said, blinking grits from her eyes. "He looks just like he does in his picture. He hasn't grown up at all since..."
When we finally reached the bright, hot comfort of the Harbor Road, Reeny headed up the hill toward her house without a word, dripping thick lagoon water.

The kid had moved around to his original place on the wreck, and now he sat there, perfectly still, as if he had never moved, as if we had never entered the marish to talk to him. I stood there on the side of the softening road and watched him, and he watched me. At least I think he did; I know that I grew increasingly anxious in the face of his terrible stillness, even at that distance. It was so unlike a boy his age. I was glad when Mr. Hatch's big old Buick came slowly down the hill, weaving slightly.

Mr. Hatch had bought his Buick long ago, with the money he'd made from installing the Harbor's first gas pump down on his lobster wharf. I walked out into the road to meet him on the driver's side, and the tinted window slid down soundlessly. Mr. Hatch's old eyes were blue and restless as the harbor itself.

"I don't know, Mr. Hatch," I said. "Some kid Reeny knows. I couldn't very well have told him that it was Reeny's dead brother.

"Well, he needs to come off there. That hulk's not safe. We don't need another accident out there." "There was one already?"

Mr. Hatch watched a loaded dragger, pursued by a cloud of screaming gulls, wallow down the harbor toward the wharf. "It was a while ago, I guess. But such a terrible business."

"What happened?"

"Oh, some local boy climbed onto that hulk for a lark and somehow cut himself real bad. He walked all the way home, but then bled to death on the kitchen floor. Nobody was home. His Mom was out somewhere."

Mr. Hatch shook his head. "Awful. Shouldn't have happened."

He put the Buick in gear, and the kid watched me. At least he watched me. At least I think he did; I know that I grew increasingly anxious in the face of his terrible stillness, even at that distance. It was so unlike a boy his age. I was glad when Mr. Hatch's big old Buick came slowly down the hill, weaving slightly.

Reeny finally appeared, her Mom reeling stiffly down the hill beside her like an old lady. Reeny danced about her, under her feet, tugging her arm and losing momentum, still staring out into the lagoon, shading her eyes from the sun.

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"You tell that boy to get off there, you hear?" he said. But I could tell that he was thinking about his cancer again, about closing the flick window over the distant sounds of marine diesel and crying birds and gliding down the road in quiet.

"Okay," I said, and stepped back. The tinted window slid up, and the Buick rolled away, its tires sticking a little to the melting road. Out in the lagoon, Reeny's dead brother sat immobile on the derelict boat.

Reeny finally appeared, her Mom trotting stiffly down the hill beside her like an old lady. Reeny danced about her, under her feet, tugging her arm and gesturing. Her Mom ignored her; she was looking over toward the lagoon, her thin neck stretched as if her eyes were reaching to see. The faint, bawdy waft walloomed down the harbor toward the wharf. "Awful. SHouldn't have told him that it was Reeny's dead brother."

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Reeny's Mom reached the bottom of the hill. She drifted toward me uncertainly, losing momentum, still staring out into the lagoon, shading her eyes from the sun. When she reached me she stopped, as if I were a marker, a stake driven into the ground.

"Reeny!" she said sharply, still watching the lagoon. "Where?"

"He's right there, Mom!" Reeny wailed, pointing and pointing. "Right there on the boat!"

Reeny's Mom stared hard, squinting, one thin arm flung to block the sun, but I saw that her eyes were skipping. The kid was grinning hugely, bright as metal under the lunchtime sun, his fists punched into his skinny hips. "Hey, Mom!" he called, his voice skimming shrill and clear over the dead lagoon. "Mom! Watch this!"

And incredibly, he began a grotesque dance out there on the shalted, awk, leaping up and touching low, bobbing and twirling, shouting song from his high voice, crying things we would never let an adult hear come out of our mouths.

"I don't see anything, Reeny," her Mom said, her voice hard.

But Reeny wasn't hearing thunderstruck, inredo, re, she gaped at the kid's morose antics.

"Do you see him?" she asked me breathlessly, her eyes never leaving the boat.

"Did you hear what he said?"

Reeny's Mom turned away from the lagoon and fixed Reeny with a terrible glare. "This isn't funny," she said. "I don't think this is funny at all." Behind her, the kid sang something unbelievably vulgar.

Reeny clapped a hand over her mouth, stopping her own shriek of laughter.

"But Mom," she gasped, her hands still cupped in front of her mouth as if her laughter were vomit, "Can't you see him? He's dancing! He's right there on the boat, dancing and singing crossings!" Eagerly, she turned to me. "You heard him, didn't you? Didn't you? You can see him out there, too, right?"

But I couldn't nod; I couldn't say yes. Reeny's Mom stood there, anxious, yearning, suspicious, aching, tugging her ratty cardigan over her narrow chest, seeing nothing. Her hands were shaking. But Reeny didn't seem to notice. She waved one stiff arm, windmill-like, toward me. "She can see him, too!" she cried gaily. "We can both see him!"

Reeny's Mom turned her uncertain gaze on me. I could see her trying to remember who I was. Beyond her, the kid leaped and kicked and jigged, singing tuneless obscurities at the top of his lungs. "Shame on you," Reeny's Mom said to me with terrible dignity. "Shame on you. You don't know anything about this."

I looked for Reeny to help, but she had stopped listening again. She was staring out into the lagoon, pointing, her eyes wide, her mouth opening and closing on nothing. Out there on the tipped, broken boat, the kid had begun wiggling his skinny bottom out over the green water, flapping his long arms and hooting. "Look, look!" Reeny cried. "Look what he's doing! We stood for an instant, appalled, thrilled, watching the kid's distant, narrow backside bounce and bouncy. Reeny's Mom scanned the lagoon and its reeds wildly, seeing nothing.

"What?" she cried, sounding angry and frightened and hopeful all at once.

"What's he doing?"

And suddenly Reeny rounded on her, as if her blindness were her own fault. "He's laughing at you, Mom!" she shrieked, beginning to laugh herself, pointing at her white-faced mother. "He's laughing and shaking his bun at you! He's going like this—"

And Reeny whirled around there on the edge of the Harbor road and did her dead brother's dance, waggling her mud-splattered rear, lifting and stomping her bare feet, her drooping jeans scuffing the road.

Without a sound, Reeny's Mom fetched her dancing daughter an awful clout to the head, a regular haymaker that sent Reeny sprawling onto the hot road. Reeny's Mom stopped right over her dazed and weeping daughter and strode away over the crest of the hill without looking back, her fists still clenched.

I sat there in the road with Reeny until she stopped crying, careful not to say anything. When I finally thought to look back at the boat, the kid was sitting again, crouched like a monkey, immobile, as if he had never moved at all.

I don't think Reeny's Mom ever forgave her for what she thought had been a cruel hoax, a flagrant dance. For as long as I knew Reeny, until I grew up and left Finch's Harbor, Reeny and her Mom were carefully civil to each other, like strangers sharing a train compartment on a long trip, sharing no intimacies.

But then, the folks of Finch's Harbor never forgave Reeny's Mom either, and neither did Troy. When I left Finch's Harbor the last time, many years later, a thin, late winter snow was falling. The reeds of the lagoon were bone-colored, crushed and trampled by winter storms, and the lagoon itself was filled with jumbled chunks of filthy, salt-rotten ice. But the boy was still there, crouched on that snow-shrouded wreck at the far edge of the frozen lagoon, in his shorts and stupid Red Ball Jets, visible to everyone—except Reeny's Mom.

Margaret Bishop

Sicily, Italy

is a ME resident stationed overseas
Ghosts

My wife’s sister once saw
the man who built this house.
Canoeing in the bay
she looked back—
he stared out
of our bedroom window

a century dead, tall as a
doorway, hair
a rough clump of salt hay,
back must-straight,
windowframe-square shoulders.

* 

Tears run down the chimney.

Rain. He weeps
for the roof’s need
of repair. Like a tree
in wind wrings useless hands.
But guide my hands—I saw a slit
with no skill I own, cut
claws as a coyote bites the
head off a pet cat.

And the stove lights for me
like the belly of the woman
who knew his attentions, warmed
him with her easily
kindled passion,
glow within which
he found home
when out in the world ice
varnished twigs
and each grass blade
stood in attention
in its uniform
of frost.

* 

Houseproud she was, is, her
paintwork white as
appleblossom, eyes
busy as pondskaters.

Frets at the cobwebs
like armpit hair in
the corners, her hands
quick hummingbirds
sweeping away dust
with feather agitation.

Whispers “just look
at the flies gathered in
blueberry clusters on windows!”

Tsk tsk. Ant-swarms of crumbs
on the kitchen table!”

Teas buzzing in her
head like الو.

* 

Life was
lean.
Sweetness
honey salvaged from
scavenging bears.

* 

We keep turning them up—
mouthful of rusty nails,
chins earlobe—

echotape from drawers,
mutiny afternoon,
sepsis photographs.

They touch our lives
like the oak leaf caught
between window and screen.

its wrinkled fingers
shivering as I
try to hold it.

* 

Her dust, and his, still
filters down out of the eaves
with ours shed nightly
while we dream,

shivered litter of life,
the unstable
passage
of time, as we too age

following the common
human grain,
pushing on the years
like rings.

Mark Rutter

Surry

is a transplant from England
Thoreau and Martin Manor

It was during my second year of teaching at Schwartzbottom College the summer of 1947 that I decided to take the Maine trip. It was not use for my wife to object that the children could not be properly cared for in the wilderness, no use for my mother to remind me of my weakness in the face of fear; my mind was made up. Besides, a certain amount of writing was expected from a man in my position, and my work in hand, a treatise on the probable effects on Thoreau's digestion of his trip into the Maine woods, was not progressing so rapidly as it should. The publishers were not clamoring, but the head of the English department had developed a way of asking more and more pointedly the present status of my work. He usually did not remember exactly what the nature of the work was, and frequently confused it with the work that Carl Streeter said he was doing on Frenau. I felt that I could get closer to my subject and gain new inspiration by going to Maine and taking the same trip that Thoreau took. When I had talked about it with my colleagues, Thaddeus Martin, he had, with a candid grace, offered us the use of a house in Maine which I could use as headquarters.

To be sure, Thaddeus had said, we should not find the house so comfortable as a home in Schwartzbottomtown, not even so comfortable as our three and three-quarters room apartment in the Biddletown Acres development; but it would, he assured us, be better than actually camping on the cold ground in some secluded forest dell, where north and mosquito both corrupt and axes break through and steal, as Thaddeus put it. (Tad is a real joke, with a real Yankee sense of humor.)

I did not know at the time how it happened that Thaddeus had the house in Maine. I knew that he hadn't been there for a long time, although he had once told me that he had been and raised in Maine. Later it came out that he had been there for many years, and that the house was the very one where the Martin family had lived for generations. It was Thaddeus's ancestral hall, in a manner of speaking. I have always had a weakness for ancestral halls of any sort, and although I was not related to the Martins in any way, I felt that I was adopting this old place, and thrusting down the old shadow for a thick frame of my own. I was convinced that Thaddeus had built the house, as I ran my hand over the white surface, my hand became sticky. When I mentioned this phenomenon to Thaddeus, he seemed disinquieted for a moment but finally explained, after averring me to secrecy, that the log began to sweat, as he put it, every spring; and although he ordinarily laughed at superstitions, he really believed there must be something in the thing, which his old grandads had told him of this being the very log against which his great-grandgrandfather Pierrepointinmamowa had been throtled and scalped by an Indian on the 20th of May (a balmy evening, he said it was, about seven-thirty) in the year 1678.

After the log cabin had served the family for many years, the Martins had reached a state of sufficient affluence to build a house. This was the very dwelling which he was now offering to Gladys and me for the summer, rent free. It stood, he said, on the shores of Frenchman's Bay, in the little town of Passagassawakeag, within easy reach by canoe of Bangor, and Old Town, where Thoreau had employed his Indian guide. Thaddeus had inherited it from his father, who had always lived in California, and had inherited it from his father. Tad was the last of the line, and while he had been meaning to return to Maine and Martin Manor, as he liked to call it, he had always had some work in hand that prevented him each summer from realizing his dream. "I shall experience it by proxy," he said, "if you and Gladys go up there, Muskmilian, my boy." I reminded him that my friends all call me Maxim, and left his office in a state of high enthusiasm, eager to get home and announce the news of our good fortune to Gladys.

When I arrived, Gladys was basting our twin sons, Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom we call Jackie, and George Bernard Shaw, whom we call George. "Sweetiekins," I said, "what do you think? We can really go to Maine and I can write my book on the spot, in the solitude of the Maine wilderness." Gladys dropped the wet cloth with which she had been bathing George Bernard Shaw and it landed with a disgusting "spit" on his head, which caused the little door to indulge in what seemed to be an infinite evaporation. "But, Max," she said, "why do you need to be on the spot?" It all goes to support my belief, which I expressed in an article last May, published by the Schwartzbottom Tales, that women by nature do not have the scholarly instinct.

"Why, Precious," I expostulated, "don't you see the benefits of writing a book on Thoreau's digestion while revisiting the Maine woods? I can really experiment. I'll make my book scientific as well as literary. I'll test Thoreau's digestion by mine."

"How do you know that Thoreau's pancreas was the same as yours?" Gladys asked.

"That is a minor point," I said. But my heart was not in the remark, for even then there was dawning in my mind the idea: "Look, Gladys," I said, "we can live like Thoreau this summer! We'll make two experiments. We'll make Martin Manor our Walden."

Thaddeus didn't have a G.B. Shaw and J. J. Rousseau, Gladys said, which only goes to show how unimaginative and mundane even the best of women can be. But then Gladys reminded me that she didn't know what or where Martin Manor was, and I proceeded to tell her the whole story in all its lovely details. It was late in June when we finally headed north in our old Kaisser, proudly carrying the key to Martin Manor. When I asked Thaddeus for the key, he said, "What I thought was a funny thing. He had said, "Shut, Maxim, you probably won't need a key. The chipmunks and woodchucks will probably be running in and out and you can run with them. But here's the key anyway." It was a huge rusty old key. When I told Gladys about this she didn't laugh so much as I thought she would. She just asked me if I knew anything about shooting woodchucks. I had told her that I didn't, but that I would learn if need be, for I certainly didn't want any woodchucks interfering with my writing on Thoreau. Students were bad enough, but woodchucks! Thaddeus had also given me a map and detailed instructions for getting to the farm. "Of course," he added when I was leaving, "it's been thirty years since I was there, so things may have changed." I had that map in my pocket as we rolled along Route 1.

Now, there are many people who will tell you that they have seen Maine when they have only been to Portland; but the truth is that when you have reached Portland you have only begun to fight, in a manner of speaking. Of course we were not going to these tourists, but we had picked up some tourist folders anyway. It was so hot all through Massachusetts that we kept remembering the happy phrases about cool sea breezes and the pictures of stunning bays dotted with hundreds of islands. When we reached Portland, we had passed through miles of flat, monotonous country, caught two fleeting glimpses of water, and the temperature was ninety-two. It was late afternoon, and George and Jackie were beginning to protest. "Let's find a place to stay for the night," Gladys said. "It's too hot to travel any further." But I reminded her that we were in Maine and that surely we would strike cooler regions if we pushed just a bit further north. I pointed out to her what I had never known before: that all the Maine license plates are marked "Vacationland." I made a mental note that the Martins are not so backward as we had supposed.

We finally stopped for the night at a group of tourist cabins thirty or forty miles north of Portland. There was the most amusing thing against my modest-looking bungalow, a sign that read Far View Cables, surrounded by woods and alder swamp and Route 1. Right underneath the sign was "Your home away from home," which I thought was delightful and original. The woods and the swamp with Route 1 piercing through it made quite an impression on me and I tried to think of a fitting simile for it. All I could think of was a boxer going through corn, but Gladys had been brought up in Iowa and she said she didn't think it was very appropriate.
When and she began to chuck George Bernard clearly defined highway that goes right up the coast, between two walls of about dog sleds and that sort of thing in Maine are only joking. Route 1 is a very Maples were threatened by the onslaught of other smaller trees whose genus I suggested that she get out some of the Coke from the cooler that we had in the morning and by noon we had still not reached Teuton. We didn't mind already have been changed since the town was established, for although the sign on the wire house for family at New Vista Cabins and set out. It was not the Walden experience that I had originally intended to write about, but since fate had thrown me into a situation that demanded parallel action, I decided to take notes on my feelings and reactions as I went along. Thus equipped with my borrowed ax and a notebook I started. I had decided to walk to make the parallel closer, but Gladys was extremely impatient about this and insisted that, since it was eighteen miles, I would get there only in time to come back. I compromised and took the car.

I felt that first things should come first, so I began by cutting down some of the small trees that had choked the fields so that I could plant a garden. I doubted that George and Jackie could live on corn meal mush, but Gladys and I could have the experience at least. I found, however, that this took longer than I had expected. Apparently Thoreau did not include all the details of land clearing in Walden. It was ten-thirty by the time I had cut three trees. I could hardly believe that, but there it was, and my watch was a seventeen jewel Swiss and never wrong. Knowing that I could not maintain Gladys and the twins at the New Vista Cabins forever, I abandoned the garden project (Gladys later offered the consoling information that the corn would not have time to grow before September anyway) and turned my attention to the Manor itself.

It was uneventfully a rather long process. First I uncovered all the doors and windows and found that there were seven windows totally without sashes, four more needed new glass, and two were perfectly all right—except that they were shaky when pushed up or down. I got into the car and went back to Frenchville and got the windows. These I installed with some difficulty, and most of them fitted tolerably. The next day I began on the inside of the house. It seemed logical to begin with that heart of the home, the hearth, so I went into the kitchen. There was no electricity! I secured a larger piece of paper from my notebook and wrote:

"Hi there," I

Finally we got there and Gladys was extremely impatient about this and insisted that, since it was eighteen miles, I would get there only in time to come back. I compromised and took the car.

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There was nothing there but a rusty old iron sink, some empty cupboards, and a rusty wood-burning stove. It was not burning wood at the time, but I mean that it was meant to burn wood. Gladys knew that she would insist upon electric range, and I decided to make a list. The windows had cost nearly half of what I had with me. I suddenly seemed expedient to make a list of what I would need and the approximate cost. I surmised that I could get a sink; refrigerator, and stove second hand, I began to imagine where I should place them in the room. Think of my embarrassment and frustration when the realization came over me that there was no electricity! I secured a larger piece of paper from my notebook and began again. The list was finished by late afternoon of the next day. Gladys helped me with some items, and the entire report looked like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen equipment</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiring house for electricity and cost of light fixtures</td>
<td>$400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dripping a well</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of a bathroom</td>
<td>$1000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$3600.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Donald F. Mortland
Unity
M)enabsh English at Unity College

The camps were owned and operated by a genuine old-fashioned Maine lady. I expected. Apparently Thoreau did not include all the details of land clearing in Walden. It was ten-thirty by the time I had cut three trees. I could hardly believe this, but there it was, and my watch was a seventeen jewel Swiss and never wrong. Knowing that I could not maintain Gladys and the twins at the New Vista Cabins forever, I abandoned the garden project (Gladys later offered the consoling information that the corn would not have time to grow before September anyway) and turned my attention to the Manor itself.

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The Worms of Walden

It started simply with ordering red worms for the compost heap. When they arrived, stamped on the white plastic containers in bold black letters, were the words, Concord, Massachusetts. The night they arrived was moonlit, damp and warm, so I left the three containers outside near the compost pile which their occupants would eventually call home.

Around eleven o'clock I heard something inside of me go off like an alarm clock telling me to go outside, which I promptly did, and there they were—the Concord red worms—escaping out of the breathing holes in their plastic containers.

I could hear those worms singing a jovial song of civil disobedience. I knew right away that this was possibly going to be a difficult compost pile. Probably the compost would be drilled by these worms to recall its nutrients from the aid of the plants and I would have a general revolution going on in the garden.

Anyway, as I began picking the worms up and putting them back into the white containers with the holes in the top, I heard them talking about their past home which was beside Walden Pond. It was then that the penny dropped and I realized that these were not ordinary worms—these were Thoreau worms.

I had heard once from a woman who lived near Walden that Thoreau had spent a great deal of his two years at the pond talking with the animals and other creatures. Today, this would be taken as sure sign that the person had lost it, but, back then, this was considered reasonable normal behavior.

First of all, I should tell those of you who have no concept of this sort of thing, that nature hears and communicates everything as a sort of humming vibration—similar to the sound of your refrigerator—but lower. Some Tibetans understand this and, less developed minds, have named it telepathic communication. Through this medium we can communicate with everything in the universe, and, conversely, everything in the universe can communicate with us. I won't spend any time telling you of experiments with plants in Scotland but, for those of you who are interested, you should read more on the subject of Finnholm.

Anyway, as I was saying, once I realized that these worms were from Walden, I became more interested in their conversation and, after putting them back into their containers and placing the three containers in a large, deeper container, I sat down to listen.

After their general complaints about the failed escape and debates over who was talking too loudly (everything in nature thinks everything is listening all of the time). I asked them about their lives at Walden and, in particular, if their ancestors had any connection with Henry David Thoreau. At this, the worms became quite excited and promised to tell me an interesting story if I would grant them four requests which were:

1. To only use a fork to turn the compost pile and, then, only after 24 hr. advance notice.
2. To be fed with a mixture of table scraps to include fruit and vegetables at least once a week.
3. To be given a gallon of pond water during the months of July and August.
4. To listen to the pile once each month for any special requests.

Naturally, I agreed to their requests and sat down on the steps to listen to their story.

It seems, according to the worms, that Thoreau was a constant hummer. He used to sit on his door stoop for hours and hum. Sometimes he hummed popular tunes of the day but, more often than not, he would hum his own compositions. It was one of these original compositions that so impressed the ancestors of the Worms of Walden that they requested Thoreau to teach them the melody. He hesitantly obliged because he did not think that his tune, that nature hears and communicates everything as a sort of humming vibration—similar to the sound of your refrigerator—but lower, was going to be listened to by anyone but his immediate family.

Anyway, the tune sparked images (as many old, good tunes do) and the images were of a world where everything lived in harmony with itself and nothing, especially humans, took more or gave more to the earth than was their weightshare. The tune had a disobedient air that was, at the same time, passively conveyed through a simple, natural, arrangement of notes. After the worms had finished, all we could do was to be silent. It was as though nature in its entirety was answering with a deep, silent, but definite, "YES!" This tune was an affirmation of life on the deepest level and it was so lovely, so endearing, that, unfortunately, it seemed totally out of place here in the year 1991.

As a matter of fact, my mind, through its cynical inbreeding due to years of harassment from modern monsters such as the Central Intelligence Agency (a misnomer if there ever was one) almost rejected the idealism and the purity expressed in the tune and the faithful rendition by these loyal American worms. I was saved only by a thin lingering shred of hope—the last threads of my patriotism.

What happened to me in the following hours until dawn broke I can only describe as a miracle in the truest sense. Years of bitterness and pain over CIA assassinations; phone taps; Central American death squads; FBI terrorism; the greed and corruption of public officials; the mafia; the injustice of war; the sale of weapons to countries where the poorest of the poor live and, the present growing disquiet over the stark similarity between Maine and Massachusetts (replete with political hoodlums)—all of this melted away and left me a changed man. It was possibly the closest thing to being "born again" that I am likely to ever experience in my lifetime.

At dawn I thanked the Worms of Walden from the bottom of my heart and came into the house, where the light was starting to shine through open windows, to relate this story to you.

The Worms are living happily in my compost pile and, on many evenings since the humming of Thoreau's tune, I have bundled up and sat there beside the pile listening to the most amusing stories, handed down through the Worms of Walden, that have succeeded in introducing me to a different history of America.

One such story involved a particular ancestor who, after hearing that there was a human organization named the "Daughters of the American Revolution", decided that she had the right to address that austere group because her grandmother had received the inside scoop from several participants in the Revolution.

The experience of this matriarch had supported the prevailing belief among her community that the revolutionaries were essentially all the same—trees and noses, tongues and cheeks.

Anyway, that's another story.

Louis Sinclair
Waterville.
“I love a life whose plot is simple, 
And does not thicken with every pimple.”

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 42

How to Talk to Thoreau

Squat down on your haunches, and pick up a twig
with care and with breathing.

If you have seen something in the dirt
a holy stream
or a bloody war
tell it.

If you’ve seen nothing but your shoes
dead meat
lick them
and roll
in the dust.

Virginia Nees-Hatlen
Bangor

Teacles (Selnick)

Woodshed on the Moon:

Thoreau Poems/Robert M. Chute

Nightshade Press (PO Box 76, Troy, ME 04987), $9.95, 1991

Review

It isn’t the back-to-the-boondocks theme in Thoreau, nor his several journeys
here resulting in The Maine Woods, that most attracts Maine writers to him with
such astonishing frequency. It’s something sweeter in his soul. I can think of a dozen
Mainers from Eliot Porter to William Carpenter who have turned to H.D. (“High
Detergent,” one calls him) as a subject, a source, to render homage, or to come
to lovers’ terms with. Odd power for one who lived only 44 years. And now,
Robert Chute checks in, not with a passing nod at the god from Concord, but
with an entire book of 34 wry, imaginative poems from his “time-transcendent
friendship with the great journalist.”

In his tightly-written, moving Introduction, Chute says that 29 years ago, in
1963, he opened Thoreau’s Journal and the first entry he read had Thoreau
asking, “What are you doing now? Do you keep a journal?” Chute began one
immediately, and the poems piled up, the “friendship” deepened. The “Woodshed”
of his title refers to how he accumulated poems, akin to Thoreau’s account in
Walden of how he gathered materials to build his cabin. Chute quotes Thoreau
as he transforms them into spiritual facts and prepares to go transcendental: “The
youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a palace
or temple on the earth, and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a
woodshed with them.” A semi-retired biology professor from Bates, Chute reflects
on nearly three decades as a Thoreauvian, and concludes, “It is time to build my
woodshed.”

The image for what he has done is perfect—an overarching canopy, the
theme, makes a tight roof; the poems, themselves often airy, sometimes gnarled,
lay loosely together and let the drying breezes blow through the book. The poems
often take off from a passage or idea in Walden, or A Week on the Concord and
Merimack Rivers, or the Journal, or a letter by or to H.D., or Chute’s own
pilgrimage to Walden Pond after which he stops at a Burger King. Aware of the
irony, he drinks coffee in a “white plastic cup” and “bristles apologies to Henry.”

Typically, most of the seminal passages have Thoreau’s transcendental sass. Chute
implies that Henry may not accept the apology.

Sometimes Chute speaks in H.D.’s voice, sometimes in his own. Sometimes
he recreates for himself events Thoreau describes. Sometimes it is unclear which
of the two is speaking, descriptive or depopularizer. The effect is wondrous. One feels
the merging is necessary to Chute, as he suggests in describing a bus trip to New
Jersey: those moments of “the past” which impinge on the present he calls “ghosts
of dreamless nights, the catarracts of sense that slowly cloud the eye with mist . . .”

And yet, he seems half-afraid of too-complete an identification: “. . . when we’ve
seen enough! I think we will be blind and die.” But the experience is not new to
Chute, the learning another’s life, then the identification with it, then the “entering into”
is—and most scary and exhilarating, letting the dead hero enter into his own—for he did something similar a few years ago in his volume of poems on
the coastal explorer, Samuel Sewall. But Thoreau seems closer to him. He
dedicates this book not to relatives or friends, but “for Henry,” as if (alas!) to himself of the last three decades. The “obituary” he is writing, he says in the
Introduction, “is tendering when the corpse chooses reincarnation over oblivion.”

H.D. just won’t go away. After this fine meditative book, lit by wit, it seems as if
Chute is saying “Don’t go, Thoreau” when he concludes, “I realize I have only
begun the work.”

T.P.

A Note to Thoreau

Thoreau, stranger, unknown friend,
I followed, at last, the new ridge-path
to your old house site,
the site of wisdom I at sixty-three
have yet to reach. The
path was covered with leaves
and hard to follow. It did not, like your mind
to your contemporaries, reveal
its turns in the clutter of nature’s facts
for it was just December
and the season was closed,
like Emerson’s, Alcott’s, and Hawthorne’s houses.

Your house is closed to visitors
although open to the air.
There are several signs
pointing to where you had been once.
When you were there eyes looked away
and could not see where you pointed.
For a long time we could not see
where you pointed, if indeed we do see even yet.
We carry burdens that blind us
and look away from your pages.
It’s odd, Henry,
but it was harder stumbling back
than getting to where you were,
back to this heavy century.

Your leaves betrayed my way,
as well you know.

Richard Lyons Gardner

Is a professor emeritus,
No. Dakota State U.

Woodshed on the Moon:

Thoreau Poems/Robert M. Chute

Nightshade Press (PO Box 76, Troy, ME 04987), $9.95, 1991
"What is it, what is it,
But a direction out there,
And the bare possibility
Of going somewhere"

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 17

"Clothes paid for, and no rent
In your shoes—. . . ."

Thoreau, Collected Poems, 166

"I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in the morning, when nobody calls. . . I am naturally no hermit, but might possibly sit out the aus-terest frequenter of the bar-room, if my business called me thither. I had three chairs in my house: one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society. . . ."

Thoreau, Walden (NY: Houghton-Mifflin, 95)

"The cold is merely superficial; it is summer still at the core, far, far within."

Thoreau, Journal, 1/12/1855

"Thoreau discovered . . . that a heaven of wildness is necessary for the health of the human spirit. . . ."

Eliot Porter, from In Wildness is the Preservation of the World (Sierra Books), photos by Porter, text by Thoreau.

E.B. White on Thoreau

(EBW wrote two essays on Thoreau, both in One Man's Meat. He kept a copy of Walden in his glove compartment and his suitcase.)

... I remembered something (probably the oddest comment on Thoreau ever made) that a Cornell prof told me twenty-five years ago. He said that Thoreau was "all right, but I wish he had more get up and go." I treasure that remark, and when the pain in my neck is bad I comfort myself with it, and go around muttering "The god damn son of a bitch had no get-up-and-go."

EBW, Letter to brother Stanley, 7/11/55, p. 168

Henry Thoreau has probably been more wildly misconstrued than any other person of comparable literary stature. He got a reputation for being a naturalist, and he was not much of a naturalist. He got a reputation for being a hermit, and he was no hermit. He was a writer, is what he was.

EBW, NYer, 5/7/49, q. Elledge blog, 314

Walden is the only book I own... It is not the best book I ever encountered, perhaps, but it is for me the handiest, and I keep it about me in much the same way one carries a handkerchief—for relief in moments of depression or despair.

EBW, NYer, 5/23/53, q. Elledge blog, 313

Ed. Note: An excerpt from an essay by E.B. White follows. Although there are many "Maine dialects" and EBW was most familiar with downtown Brooklin and the Belgrade Lakes region, it is amazing in a time of rapid linguistic change how accurate his observations remain after 52 years. For the full delight, seek out One Man's Meat: A Personal Record of Life on a Maine Coast Salt Water Farm (NY: Harper & Row).

Maine Speech (1940)

I find that, whether I will or no, my speech is gradually changing, to conform to the language of the country. The tongue spoken here in Maine is as different from the tongue spoken in New York as Dutch is from German. Part of this difference is in the meaning of words, part in the pronunciation, part in the grammar. But the difference is very great. Sometimes when a child is talking it is all one can do to translate until one has mastered the language. Our boy came home from school the first day and said the school was peachy but he couldn't understand what anybody was saying. This lasted only a couple of days.

For the word "all" you use the phrase "the whole of." You ask, "Is that the whole of it?" And whole is pronounced hull. Is that the hull of it? It sounds as though you might mean a ship.

For life, the word is left. He left a thing to see how much it weights. When you are holding a wedge for somebody to tap with a hammer, you say: "Tunk it a little." I've never heard the word tap used. It is always tunk.

Baster (pronounced bayster) is a popular word with boys. All the kids use it. He's an old baster, they say, when they pull a nail out of an old trap. It probably derives from bastard, but it sounds quite proper and innocent when you hear it, and rather descriptive. I regard lots of things now (and some people) as old bastards.

A person who is sensitive to cold is aspleeney. We have never put a heater in our car, for fear we might get spleeny. When a pasture is sparse and isn't providing enough food for the stock, you say the pasture is pretty snug. And a man who walks and talks slowly or lastly is called mod-rate. He's a powerful mod-rate man, you say.

People get born, but lambs and calves get dropped. This is literally true of course. The lamb actually does get dropped. (It doesn't hurt any—or at any rate it never complains.) When a sow has little ones, she "pigs." Mine pigged on a Sunday morning, the ol' baster.

The word dear is pronounced dee-ah. Yet the word deer is pronounced deer. All children are called deeh-ah, by men and women alike.

The final "y" of a word becomes "ay." Our boy used to call our dog Freddie. Now he calls him Freddy. Sometimes he calls him Fredday-deeh-ah; other times he calls him Freddy you ol' baster.

E.B. White

(Ed. Note: Each year KENNEBEC reviews a Maine writer from an earlier generation. Previous subjects include Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Wibert Snow, E.A. Robinson, Longfellow, and Millay.)
One Man's White

My favorite New Yorker cartoon shows a mother and child at dinner. The child glowers at the plate. The mother says, "It's broccoli, dear." The child responds, "I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it." E.B. White wrote those lines. Over a fifty-year association with the magazine, he wrote a great deal more that was wittily, irreverent, urbane and insightful that went unsigned in the "Talk of the Town" and "Notes and Comment" sections, in captions for cartoons, in obituaries, and in the howlingly funny one-liners that comment on short pieces of botched prose from the nation's newspapers and magazines that the NYer used as filler. One account, undeniably true, has such material passed around the water cooler, and stuffies, H.D., in one hand, pencil in the other, trying to write in the crumpled caption or column.

He shared a tiny office with increasingly alcoholic and increasingly blind James Thurber, "a sort of elongated closet." In a building off Times Square, Dorothy Parker shared a similar office with her buddy Robert Benchley: "an inch smaller," she quipped, "and it would have been adultery." Nonetheless, EBW's friendship with the famous Thurber flourished and they became tight friends. Thurber says he learned "discipline" from EBW and his "precision and clarity...slow me down from the dog trot of newspaper tempo and made me realize a writer turns on his mind, not a faucet...everybody has in a sense imitated him." (Elledge, 133)

So have two generations of college students, required to read The Elements of Style in English 101. That brief book, a 1957 rewrite of a pamphlet of tips distributed in 1919 by his Cornell professor William Strunk, perfectly describes in theory and example White's own spare, civilised, elegant prose that leaves readers who would be writers gaping in admiration. But Strunk's influence has been exaggerated, most notably by EBW himself, who wished to pay homage to the man as well as to sell the book. Until he started the project, he didn't even own Strunk's pamphlet. EBW's touch is self-taught, almost instinctive. Writing "is something that raises up on you like a welt" (NYer, 12/20/30). His style seems to be part of the man himself, to flow effortlessly from some innate gentility in the person, from a reservoir of difference, deftness, mild irony, amusement, what his contemporaries used to call savoir faire. Of Hemingway, who received a Nobel for his style, reviewers said, "the style is the man;" later, they said, "the style is the subject." One sometimes feels this with EBW, especially when he turns to insubstantial subjects. Perhaps compact prose is best written in a compact office.

EBW makes it look easy. So silent is his syntax, so free of signs of strain, so gossamer his grammar, his diction diaphanous, one does not "read" him, one inhabits him. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter told him, "If angels can write, they do not wield a better pen than you do." (Elledge, 272). But his effortless was not without enormous effort. Of his hero Thoreau, EBW wrote that he was "a writer trying not to act like a writer." That's exactly EBW's effect. Behind it, a lot of trying. Red Smith, who with EBW's own stepson, baseball writer Roger Angell, was one of America's greatest writers about sports, once said, "Writing? Writing is easy. You just sit down at a typewriter and open a vein." (Sportswriters and writers-about-sports are not the same. For the former, emphasize the first syllable.) Perhaps "opening a vein" isn't at all dramatic and romantic to describe classically severe EBW, but he frequently suffered attacks of nerves, losses of confidence when his abilities seemed to flow away from him like a tide going out. Pondering which was worse, writing or being unable to write, he concluded, "Both are bad" (Letters, 432). But his nerve always returned, his sense of the fun in the doing of it, his mock-shy mock-firm persona restored itself, allowing him to tear down the "barriers of silence and distance" between himself and his readers. A writer could experience, as he put it in a letter (5/19/50), "the exquisite thrill of putting his finger on a little capsule of truth and bearing it give the faint squawk of mortality under his pressure—an antic sound."

EBW gives the lie to the familiar admonition to "find your own voice"—reading him, you want to find his voice. Some writers are so good you imitate them at your peril, but can hardly help but do so. Just writing about White is embarrassing—as I am finding out and as I am sure his biographer Scott Elledge found out—because prose plunked down next to his plods. Maybe that is why Elledge quotes him so frequently and at such length. His prose doesn't paraphrase. If his subjects aren't said the way he says them, they evaporate. So why isn't he a "major American writer?" Partly because of the relatively low esteem in which the essay form is held, as opposed to fiction, poetry and drama. The first has characters and plot; the second rhythm and imagery; and drama dialogue, tension, depth and denouement. The Essay feels flatter, shorter—"minor." As Philip Lopate, a NY Times essayist writing on the genre says, "Nobody much cares. Commercially, essay volumes rank even lower than poetry.

We also worry because Journalism is Essay's mistress. They climb out of the same bed every morning, and we're not always sure that when the Essayist slips into his tuxedo, replete in soup-and-fish, that he's not all that differently attired than the tattered sax and Charlie Chaplin bowler of that "little ramp" Journalism. We want them to be different, but sometimes we're not sure they're not the same. Gertrude Stein, advising Hemingway in Paris, said "Ernest, remarks are not literature." To journalists, we want to say (with Lloyd Bentsen), "I know Francis Bacon, sir, and you are no
Francis Bacon. Bombastic, you're no Baldwin. Tom Wolfe. Barbara Ehrenreich, no Edmund Wilson. Russell Baker? Buchwald bracing, but not um. Dave Barry, X weekly, welcome enough, but no Bacon. It's the difference between a columnist and an essayist. But White is White. As Lopate says, EBW "is in a class of his own." True, he sits among the motley, in this cross-over context, true, like them he \"wrote short\" and worried about meeting weekly deadlines, but most of the time when his keys rese and struck ribbon, essays came out. They last. Within a paragraph you know you can trust the words to be around tomorrow, year next, after the newpaper yellow and eats more journalists.

Arguably, he was the best. One of his obituarists says, \"He made his voice carry without raising it.\" William Shaw, who followed Harold Ross as NYer editor, mentions his \"gift of inspiring affection in the reader.\" He is amusing, not funny like his friend Thurber. He is cosmopolitan, not comic like his fine but unread contemporary S.I. Perelman, who wrote Marx Brothers scripts and the broad satire on 1950s life and its favorite downer drug, The Road to Middle, or Under the Spreading Atrophy. EBW's forte was finesses, not farce. He had \"touch.\" Unlike EBW, Dorothy Parker wrote light verse and heavy fiction; she never seemed to know who she was supposed to be, as the title of a recent biography of her suggests: What Fresh Hell Is This? EBW knew from the beginning what he wanted to be—himself. That sureness comes through on every page. Perhaps that is why we trust him to take us into real literature, even though he is writing about pigs or trailer parks or combat. Addisn and Peter Matthiessen, these we trust. Steele and Pauline Kael, we trust them too. Montaigne and Maier and McPhee, we are usually okay.

The form was born in Greece and Rome. But about 1580 in French \"father\" Montaigne finally ran it esse, or \"little attempt.\" In English, Bacon birthed it, then in the 17thc. Burron burned it on a spot paina. With the emergence of the magazine in the 18thc. the form found its natural home, and in The Spectator and The Tatler was fitted to a new level of levity and urbanity by Addison and Steele, who found thousands of readers in the new coffee-house culture of London. The real giants lumbered forward in the 19thc. with longer, discursive \"attempts\" that could be warm and homely (Charles Lamb) or rheological (Newman) or aesthetic (Ruskin, Pater) or cultural (Arnold). Macaulay wrote the History of England, Carlyle The French Revolution, and John Stuart Mill On Liberty. See against hunters of major meat like these, EBW looks as little as Stuart Little, working his subjects like country living, dog training, and raising chickens. Late in life he quipped, \"One more barnyard story from me and the magazine will have to change its name to the Rural New Yorker.\" (Letters, 623).

While Arnold also saw himself as poet too, most thought themselves first and foremost essayists. EBW, usually playful, once wrote Katharine: \"The latest Reader\'s Digest says that people should actually express their love for one another, otherwise it withers. So I will just mention that I love you.\" Always do everything the Digest tells me to do?\" (245). And in the same tone, he sent to the hands-off, keep-his-distance Ross this complaint and compliment: \"Last week De Witt Wallace sent me a great hunk of dough and a small proof sheet of a Harper\'s paragraph he said he had scheduled for his next issue, but I found where his digestive stuff had chopped off one of my sentences and fidgeted around in their curious manner, so I sent everything back and said that unlike a vanilla bean I did not wish to be extracted. Hell, some day I may toss off a really good sentence or two, and wouldn\'t want a hair of its hand touched. The truth about the Digest is that they approach every manuscript with the hope of gaining a line of type before reaching the middle of the third sentence. That is no way to approach a manuscript. (The way to approach a manuscript is on all fours, in utter amazement.)\" (242).

EBW did not read much great literature, felt he was poorly educated, and that he wasted his time in college. \"I majored in English partly because I didn\'t know what else to do\" (Letters, 510). To a college student, he wrote, \"If you have no deep feeling for literature, and no burning desire to express yourself in writing, you are probably in the same boat with about seventy-five percent of all the English majors in America, so I wouldn\'t bet it worry you too much\" (510). But it would be wrong to leave the impression that EBW spent his life tinkering with the trivial or placed himself apart from politics. He fought loyalty oaths and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Amazingly, One Man\'s Meat was banned by the Army and Navy. \"I am beginning to feel a little more like a novelist now that I have had a book banned. The literary life, in this country, begins in jail.\" (235). His two great crusades were for freedom of speech, and for a world government—no mean themes, and comparable to the subjects of the great Victorians. To explain to the nation what we were fighting WWII for, President Roosevelt asked EBW to write on freedom of expression, one of the four sections of a pamphlet called The Four Freedoms. Reinhold Niebuhr contributed on freedom of religion, Max Lerner on freedom from fear, and Malcolm Cowley on freedom from want. White revised and edited the entire project. Yet he was not a nationalist, but an internationalist. During the war he used his NYer column to crusade for World Government, and supported the founding of the United Nations, eventually publishing a serious book on the subject, The Wild Flag. He was distressed, however, when member nations decreed that the UN flag was to be hung under, not above, their own nations\' flags. \"Apparantly, if you believe in world government, you stand on your head to salute it.\"

Critics noted, and EBW agreed, his true subject was himself, especially in his informal encounters with daily life. Yet the reader, skimming along his surfaces, found himself wondering just look at his roughs and mangled early typescripts. To him, editing was something painful you do to yourself. If you are a professional. \"An editor is a person who knows more about writing than writers do but has escaped the terrible desire to write,\" he noted generously. Then added, \"I have been writing since 1906 and it is high time I got over it.\" (391).

It follows that he deplored the acsions-and-asnation carston typical of The Reader\'s Digest and its editor, DeWitt Wallace. \"I regard each chapter of a book as a composition not to be disturbed in the classic design of the Reader\'s Digest, where sometimes the first four words of Sentence One are joined up with the last ten words of Sentence Twelve, omitting everything that came between. This may be great for a publisher, but for a writing man it is sudden death\" (376). EBW might have appreciated an awful but irresistible joke making the rounds in the 1990s. A ravenous bear encounters in a campsite two people, one reading a book, the other writing in a journal. Which one does the bear eat? Answer: the reader. \"Writer\'s cramp, but Reader\'s Digest.\" EBW, usually playful, once wrote Katharine: \"The latest Reader\'s Digest says that people should actually express their love for one another, otherwise it withers. So I will just mention that I love you.\" Always do everything the Digest tells me to do?\" (245). And in the same tone, he sent to the hands-off, keep-his-distance Ross this complaint and compliment: \"Last week De Witt Wallace sent me a great hunk of dough and a small proof sheet of a Harper\'s paragraph he said he had scheduled for his next issue, but I found where his digestive stuff had chopped off one of my sentences and fidgeted around in their curious manner, so I sent everything back and said that unlike a vanilla bean I did not wish to be extracted. Hell, some day I may toss off a really good sentence or two, and wouldn\'t want a hair of its hand touched. The truth about the Digest is that they approach every manuscript with the hope of gaining a line of type before reaching the middle of the third sentence. That is no way to approach a manuscript. (The way to approach a manuscript is on all fours, in utter amazement.)\" (242).

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All poets who, when reading from their own works, experience a choked feeling, are major. For that matter, all poets who read from their own works are major, whether they choke or not.

EBW, "How to tell a major poet from a minor poet"

E.B. White

seldom senses the "real" EBW. What you get is the "real" writer. It does not feel fake in any way, it feels natural. Scrupulous about the self he sold to the world, and wonderfully funny about every word, caring about every comma, EBW sometimes worried whether he contained enough depth to go on writing. In 1954, he said, "At my age...a writer repeats like an onion." What readers relish, yet what remains maddeningly tantalizing, is that he does not approach the Self like a Romantic poet, all roiled and moiled. During his childhood, college days, and twenties he seemed distressingly normal for one who would be a writer; later, this same "normality" allowed him to function, meeting tough deadlines for fifty years. Profundity, in the Germanic, French or Irish sense of the word, seemed to escape both Whites. They resist plumbing their depths, at least in public. Elledge, his biographer, can't get at it; Linda Davis, hers, doesn't either. The Whites were fake in any way, it was shocking. They were wonderful about every word, caring about every

This reviewer turned to the Letters for clues, hoping to find in the rough and shag of the unprepared, the first-and-only-draft, what might be going on behind the scenes. No surprise. He wrote a hand letter, polished by his nature rather than being polished—quick, witty, saucy, the same voice heard in his essays, "little attempts" to "break down the wall," as he said earlier—in short, the same person. Material—more personal, surely; presentation, the same. Essayist and epistolariest, consistent.

EBW admits his discomfort at the project to collect and publish his letters; in 1975 he wrote, "A man who publishes his letters becomes a nudist—nothing shields him from the world's gaze except his bare skin. A writer writing away, can't say, 'I'll bedeadanyway.'" EBW jumped the rails recurrently from mid-life on. Getting off a train in Sarasota in 1963, he suffered a nervous collapse...what in happier days we used to call a nervous breakdown. EBW would say, "You'd never find both of them sick at the same time. If one was down, the other was up. In this, as in other areas of their life together, each needed both space and support, and magically, they managed to offer both to each other—at the same time.

Nonetheless, behind his pose, possibly because of it and its demands on him, EBW could never find both of them sick at the same time. If one was down, the other was up. In this, as in other areas of their life together, each needed both space and support, and magically, they managed to offer both to each other—at the same time.

Many authors write autobiographies, controlling to an extent what the world will think of them, or at least throwing up barriers to be dismantled, or creating out-de-saac to be avoided. One thinks of Henry James burning his letters, editing his Notebooks, rewriting his Prefaces. To EBW, it must have been flattering, and yet an agony, to have his own biography prepared and published by another person during his lifetime. One can't say, "oh, well hell with it, I'll bedead anyway." There, impeccable and decent, always counted. To a friend he wrote, "My uneasiness about modern writing is not because of its being experimental but because of its abandonment of the responsibility of good taste and its acceptance of the inevitability of disclosure. [italics mine] This I find worrisome. When freedom of expression is abused, and things become disgusting, then freedom of expression is endangered. People will stand just so much, then they want the clampdown put down. I think we are getting perilously close to the clampdown..." (552).

When most people strike a pose, it is more outrageous, sour or flamboyant than the sensitivity, insecurity or secret it masks. EBW thought a lot about poses. He posed up, not away-from, up to an ideal, of conduct, performance, civility. It helped him live up to, or at least grow toward, his highest conception of himself. I am convinced that in his attention to pose he was having nothing about him, however romantic or voyeuristic it might be to wish that he was. In this sense, his biographer showed admirable restraint, refusing to suggest weaknesses and evasions that probably were not there. (Contrast Arrianna Stassinopoulou's disgusting recent biography of Picasso.) Nonetheless, EBW wrote wittily to Scott Elledge, "I was interested in your remarks about the writer as poseur, because of course, all writing is both a mask and an unveiling, and the question of honesty is uppermost, particularly in the case of the essayist, who must take his troubles off without showing his genitals." (yet my training in the upper berth of Pullman cars long ago)" (516). His two great influences were H.L. Mencken, clearly a poseur, and Sinclair Lewis, more an expositor. Beyond both, he revered Thoreau, writing two essays on the Concord fox. But not how he approaches Thoreau in a third piece in the NYer (5/7/49): "He was a writer, is what he was. Many regarded him as a poseur. He was a poseur, all right, but the pose was not stuck for other people to study but for him to study—a brave and ingenious device for a creative person to adopt." Here EBW practically describes himself. "Thoreau posed for himself and was both artist and model, examining his own position in relation to nature and society with the most patient and appreciative care." In his early days in Greenwich Village EBW kept clear of the radical ferment of his famous neighbors, the revolution in arts and politics and manners going on just around the corner. He was neither bohemian nor public man. He wanted to be known as the voice heard in his prose, not as a public speaker, a "personality," a man with the megaphone. Years later he would write of his childhood, "I never dreamed of getting in touch with [an author]...The book is the thing, not the man behind the book. I'm not at all sure that this separation of author and reader isn't a sound idea..." (121). However, White examining his pose is neither a whitout nor a whitewash. It is a man watching a man who is trying to be more definite than he fears he is able to.

John Updike, a slyprodigy-pup in his twenties wandering the halls of the NYer, recalls how EBW had much more "fun" than others—"Not loud or obvious fun, but contained, untrumful fun, shaped like a main spring" (p. Elledge, 130). Sometimes the main spring spring. He and Katharine were certifiable hypochondriacs, as well as sufferers from diagnosed organic ailments. Katharine's biographer writes, after talking with her son Roger Angell, that they "engaged in an unconscious contest as to which of them was the more ill" (Davis, 194). Another relative spoke for others: "You'd never find both of them sick at the same time. If one was down, the other was up." In this, as in other areas of their life together, each needed both space and support, and magically, they managed to offer both to each other—at the same time.

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E.B. White
nervous breakdown." (Letters, 495-8). Years earlier, "I am recovering from a nervous crackup...." (246). The Letters are dotted with similar remarks, and indicate his pain, but refuse to dramatize it. The remarkable thing, the characteristic thing, is the peculiarity with which he talks about the vague but real problem: he had "a kite caught in the branches somewhere" (250). To brother Stanley: "I had two things the matter with me—mice in the subconscious and spurs in the cervical spine. Of the two the spine trouble was less bothersome. It took me eighteen months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions. The whole key to the neurotic life is simple; in fact the simplicity of it is the greatest hurdle, because it tends to make eight months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions. The whole key to the neurotic life is simple; in fact the simplicity of it is the greatest hurdle, because it tends to make..." (261-2).

It would appear that he is attributing "complex natures" to others, and to himself the opposite. Indeed, in his Introduction to the letters he makes the point, "If an unhappy childhood is indispensable for a writer, I am ill-equipped. I missed out on all that and was neither deprived nor unloved." (1). In a way, our dealing with all of this, kites and mice, is a maddening dive to the surface. The Whites were invisible Victorians. Like Thoreau, EBW said he was "keeping the minutes of his own meeting."

Katharine hated and distrusted psychoanalysts. Nevertheless, EBW consulted them. In 1943, to a friend, he remained typically witty, keeping his trouble at arm's length: "I am recovering from a nervous crack-up which visited me last summer and which has given me trouble with suitably devious devices and cures" (246-7). In 1953, he wrote his shrink in NYC: "I sound about as good in German as I feel in English. But there are no wax left in the grooves." (494). This attitude comes through in the prose, this understated stylish gibing jauntiness in the face of trouble makes us love him. As he put it in 1954—resigned, still whimsical—"A writer...writes as long as he lives. It is the same as breathing except that it is bad for one's health" (391).

During his final years EBW had underlined his gloom, "I'm 90 I'll be sound as a dollar, and the dollar will be completely gone to pieces" (374). We're watching a tougher, prouder, kind of American. Where is our generation's whining breakdown?" (Letters, 495-8). Years earlier, "I am recovering from a nervous crackup...." (246). The Letters are dotted with similar remarks, and indicate his pain, but refuse to dramatize it. The remarkable thing, the characteristic thing, is the peculiarity with which he talks about the vague but real problem: he had "a kite caught in the branches somewhere" (250). To brother Stanley: "I had two things the matter with me—mice in the subconscious and spurs in the cervical spine. Of the two the spine trouble was less bothersome. It took me eighteen months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions. The whole key to the neurotic life is simple; in fact the simplicity of it is the greatest hurdle, because it tends to make eight months to find out how you get rid of mice and if you ever need to know I'll be glad to give you the instructions. The whole key to the neurotic life is simple; in fact the simplicity of it is the greatest hurdle, because it tends to make..." (261-2).

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Some Books By and About the Whites:


1880  Marriage of Samuel Tilly White to Jessie Hart.
1881-95  Samuel becomes general manager and VP of the Horace Waters Piano Co. Family moves to Mount Vernon, NY.
1899  Birth of Elwyn (En) Brooks White (later, "Andy"), last of six children.
1905  Family spends August on Great Pond, Belgrade, ME. They return to Belgrade every August but one, until 1916. Samuel is sued by heirs of Horace Waters.
1907  En keeps Journal, continues for next 20 years.
1909-12  Wins price for a poem about a mouse, and two medals for prose pieces.
1911  Supreme Court dismisses suit against Samuel.
1913-17  Attends Mount Vernon (NY) HS. Publishes poems, short stories and essays in school's Oracle. Becomes assistant editor senior year.
1917  Graduates, two scholarships. America enters WW I. Enrolls at Cornell, alma mater of his two brothers. Editorial board of the Cornell Daily Sun, one of two college dailies in USA. Nicknamed "Andy," after Andrew D. White, Cornell's first president.
1918  Registers "with 13 million other Americans" for draft. Enlists in Student Army Training Corps.
1919  Takes English 8 with Professor William Strunk.
1920  Summer: works as counselor at Camp Otter in Dorset, Ontario. Fall: elected editor-in-chief of Daily Sun and president of his fraternity.
1921  Graduates from Cornell. Returns to work at Camp Otter. Fall: Mount Vernon, NY, lives with parents. Works briefly at U.P., hates job. Writes two satirical poems about cheap journalism, which are printed in Christopher Morley's column, "The Bowling Green," in NY Evening Post.
1925  February: first issue of The New Yorker appears on the stands. Nine weeks later, magazine publishes EBW's first piece, a short essay on the coming of spring. Summer: EBW quits Frank Seaman agency. Moves into the Village with three Cornell friends, and for 18 months is "comparatively unemployed." Enjoys the "only genuinely creative period" in his life. October: lands part-time job writing copy for J.L. Newmark agency. Writes eight pieces, NYer. The last issue of 1925 contains "Child's Play: How I turned a glass of Buttermilk into a personal triumph." Charlie Chaplin called it "one of the best humor things" he had read.
1926  Early summer: K. suggests to Ross that he offer EBW a job as staff writer. July: EBW and roommate Bob Adams, who works for the Cunard Line, receive free passage on a tour of Europe in exchange for writing advertising. August begins writing "newsbreaks" for NYer, a task he will perform until 1932.
1927  James Thurber joins NYer and shares tiny office with EBW. Both write "Talk of Town" pieces, "Notes and Comments," and cartoon captions. EBW also writes light verse, theater reviews, and advertisement parodies.
1928  K., now Head of Fiction, becomes John O'Hara's editor. Both are credited with having developed "the NYer short story style." Summer: K., Ernest and children sail for France. EBW and friend Gus Lobrano also sail for France. K. and EBW meet in Paris and travel together to Corseca and S. Tropez. Agree not to see each other once back in NYC.
1929  January: EBW leaves on trip to Maine. February: K. and Ernest have a fight. K. moves in with the Thurberrs. Later, she settles in Sneden. Children remain with Ernest. May: The Lady is Cold, poems by EBW. K. moves to Reno, Nevada for three months to get a divorce. EBW finds K. apartment in the Village. Summer: EBW returns to Camp Otter, acquires an interest in the camp. Returns to NYC
K. undergoes spinal fusion operation, after fall on ice in 1943. Wears aluminum brace for eight months.

1948

July: Whites return to NYC, and are unhappy. He manages only to get to Maine, where he moons about, often melancholy, always hypochondriac.

1949

EBW resigns as head of fiction once more. The first of K.'s reviews of garden seed catalogues appears in NYer, "Onward and Upward in the Garden."

December: 21 Joel McCoun White is born, K.'s collected catalogue appears in NYer. E.B. White, honorary degrees from Colby and Harvard.

1950

EBW begins writing frequently about WWII. Anne Morrow Lindbergh's The Wave of the Future presents case against America's entry into the war. EBW writes devastating review, urging entry.

1951

EBW begins writing about a mouse. Reports for NYer on the San Francisco Conference, which gives birth to the United Nations.

1952

K. becomes full-time editor of NYer Staff writer again. Severely depressed, consults psychiatrist about "a mouse in my head." K. mistrusts analysts. EBW begins championing World Government ideas. For next four years a third of his work contains at least a paragraph on the issue. Later collected in The Wild Flag (1946).

1953

E.B. White undergoes spinal fusion operation, after fall on ice in 1943. Wears aluminum brace for eight months.

1954

EBW writes devastating review, urging America to join the war. "Call Me Lhamael, or, How I Feel About Being Married to a Bryn Mawr Graduate.

1955

EBW writes about taking off, to Maine. EBW's Quo Vadimus? is huge success, going through 11 printings.

1956

K. begins working on long detailed will, continues for next 10 years.

1957

EBW receives special Pulitzer Prize for the body of his work.

1958

EBW receives special Pulitzer Prize for the body of his work. EBW and Thurber each wrote half of Facts and Figures, to present case against militarism. The first of K.'s reviews of children's books for NYer, "One Man's Meat" is huge success, going through 11 printings.

1959

EBW's book is huge success, going through 11 printings. EBW begins to get to Maine, where he moons about, often melancholy, always hypochondriac.

1960

EBW receives special Pulitzer Prize for the body of his work. EBW and Thurber each wrote half of Facts and Figures, to present case against militarism. The first of K.'s reviews of children's books for NYer, "One Man's Meat" is huge success, going through 11 printings.

1961

EBW begins writing a series of essays (1960-1961) on the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1962

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1963

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1964

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1965

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1966

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1974

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1981

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1982

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1983

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1984

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.

1985

EBW begins writing essays about the state of the country. The Elements of Style.
KSW: A Formidable Lady

In the summer of 1925, a 32-year-old mother of two was hired as a part-time reader of manuscripts by Harold Ross, founding editor of a fledgling magazine called The New Yorker. By fall, this gal had been promoted to assistant editor. By the time she died, 52 years later, she had been called "the best women editor in the world" and was recognized as having "exerted a profoundly creative influence on contemporary American fiction."

Mining Maine's literary past brings up more than a few surprises. Who would have thought that Maine had much to do with the urbane New Yorker? Yet here it is. Not only did contributors such as Jean Stafford and Mary McCarthy call the state home at some point of their lives but, for magazine tires more importantly, the Whites, Katharine and E.B., took up residency. Most of us are familiar with E.B. Fewer may know that most of his work appeared in the NYer. Fewer, yet, might be aware that his wife is an important literary figure in her own right. Katharine Sergeant White's literary output is slight: a few stories, written in college; a couple of articles; some inconsequential light verse; a series of children's books reviews written between 1933 and 1948 for the NYer; and 14 garden seed catalogue reviews, written for the same magazine between 1958 and 1970. Only the latter are easily accessible. They were collected, after her death, in Onward and Upward in the Garden. One would be hard pressed to say she was prolific. Yet, it is amazing that she managed to get that much in print. To her, writing was pure agony. Unlike her husband, who once wrote: "I always write a thing first and think about it afterward, which is not a bad procedure because the easy way to have consecutive thoughts is to put them down," (Letters, 255), Katharine fought her thoughts all the way. "She would write eight or ten words," E.B. said, "then draw her gun and shoot them down. This made for slow and torturous going" (Onward, viii). Writing was so difficult for her, at least in formal form for she was a formidable letter writer, that near the end of her career it took her nearly a year to complete one essay. A year filled with despair at her inability to compose worthwhile prose. When one reads the pieces, so painfully written, one is impressed with the seemingly confident ease with which they are written. No blood stains the pages, no awkward turn of phrase mars the pace. One gets the sense that these informal, informative essays were dashed off, between tea and martini, by one's favorite crotchety aunt who just happens to be a perfect grammarian.

"As I write, snow is falling outside my Maine window, and indoors all around me half a hundred garden catalogues are in bloom. I am an addict of this form of literature and a student of the strange personalities of the authors who lead me on. Gentle and friendly, eccentric or wildly wild, occasionally contentious and even angry, every one of them can persuade me, because he knows what he is saying and says it with enthusiasm. Reading this literature is unlike any other reading experience. Too much goes on at once. I read for news, for driblets of knowledge, for aesthetic pleasure, and at the same time I am planning the future, and I read in dream." (Onward, 21)

Why would a woman who could write so well have such a hell of a time putting words down on paper?

E.B. W. In his introduction to Katharine's book, blames her difficulties not on ordinary writer's block (she always knew what she wanted to say) but on the fact that "by temperament and profession" she was an editor. "The editor in her fought the writer every inch of the way... It was simply warfare: the editor ready to nip the writer before she could commit all the sins and errors the editor cleverly foresaw" (viii, ix). She persevered in battling both sides of the brain because she strongly felt that every editor should know first-hand the pain of creation. Her battles, which "were felt all through the house," were not in vain: not only did she produce some delightfully quirky essays, but her understanding of the creative process made her a much-admired editor. Her editing was maternal, and her blue pencil struck light. She "coddled" her writers who clung to her like opossums. She protected them against the NYer fact-finding department, at times overzealous in checking and rechecking facts in fiction. She became, in the words of May Sarton, "the mother superior," and, in the eyes of Edmund Wilson, "the least interfering" of the magazine's editors. She seems to have expended her editor's fury on self-expression and taken the battered writer's soul with her to the office where it ran interference, nurtured and counseled, the other unfortunate.

"Lifting lives out of their generational fabric in order to highlight individual achievements is always a hazardous task. One tends to look for agency, for attributable results, for clear cut statements of fact: "He did, then she said..." Satisfying the singular usually stirs up a homer's nest of countershouts: "You're wrong! She did, and then he said... that's how that went." Few of us live in such a way as to create biographical clarity. Even if we did, that would not end controversy. Truth would still be in the eye of the beholder. Record keepers and readers do not necessarily agree.

Thinking about Katharine and her EBW has made me acutely aware of biographical difficulties. 48 years of married life tends to erode the individuality of each's achievement. Did EBW begin to write children's books because his wife reviewed up to 50 often twice yearly for 15 years and the house was strewed with kids lit? (Hey, I can do that!) Did Katharine feel compelled to write even when illness made it nearly impossible to stay "even" with EBW? What role did Katharine's love for precise prose, punctuation and Fowler's Usage play in EBW's decision to write a revision of Strunk? Who knows! Too much gets borrowed over coffee, shared with matins, and lost in midnight talks to ever be able to retrieve with certainty whose passions were whose.

Much has been written about the early years at the NYer. All articles and books stirred controversy. As with right-knit families, how difficult to ascertain who thought of what when, or whose job was more influential. Memories, though shared, are selective and singular. Every memoir exposes comb-waves and opens up a can of worms. Thurber's The Years with Ross spelled the end of his friendship with the Whites. Katharine, especially, was upset about the "malicious" depiction of Ross (He was not an illiterate boor) and the "unfaithful" account of who did what when. Later, Brendan Gill's Here at the New Yorker made her think of suing. When finally persuaded not to, Katharine spent years annotating the offending book, quitting only when E.B. (concerned for her health) hid it away. She was hurt by Gill's description of her as being "as stubborn—and sometimes, as humorless—in pushing for her opinions as some weighty glacier working its way down a narrow Alpine pass" (223), and the suggestion that she used EBW, who was nearly indispensable, to gain advantage over other editors. She was furious at the rumor, almost certainly untrue, that she had been ready to lead a police revolution against Ross and was concerned that "thousands of people I don't know will be pitying Andy for having such a horrifying, glacial and power hungry wife" (Davis, 238, 9). What a pity that her version of Gill's book never appeared in print. Between the anger, the desire to shine and to protect Andy, her editor's passion for facts and precision, we certainly would have learned a valuable piece of NYer truth.

Katharine joined the magazine soon after its inception. She and Ross, the founding editor, worked well together. Thurber said Ross told him "She knows the Bible and literature, and foreign languages and she has taste" (Years, 38). She had all Ross lacked, just as he complemented her. Ross: loud, gregarious, energetic, a genius who had the good sense and humility to recognize brilliance, slightly awkward with strangers, a bit insecure about his lack of formal education and a snob at heart. Katharine: supremely self-confident, calm and reticent, well educated (4th in her class at Bryn Mawr) and willing to do dirty work, that is to say. Ross frequently assigned her the unenviable task of working with the most difficult contributors and of firing writers. They were intensely loyal to each other and shared a love for Fowler's English Usage and Webster's. Ross and Katharine: both perfectionists. Missing in NYer lore is a good description of their relationship. Why did these opposites get along so well? EBW once said, "they met at one point (they both found the same things funny), and the collision at this point sent up sparks" (Davis, 136). It may be as simple as that: humor and respect do make for great workmates.

As an editor of one of the most important magazines printing fiction, Katharine's influence was great. How great is difficult to assess. Elledge, EBW's biographer, states that "in the course of development of 20th century American Literature, Katharine may have exercised more influence than any other editor of a literary magazine" (102). That may be open to debate. However, a list of "her" writers, even a partial one, is impressive indeed: O'Hara, Woolcott, Wilson, Nabokov, Stafford, McCarthy, Flannery, Bishop, Sarton, Updike, the list...
Katharine was six when her mother died of undiagnosed appendicitis. Her lifelong obsession with ill-health, of which she had her share, can probably be traced to that traumatic event, even though it was fanned by Andy who, when they were married, well along the hypochondriac’s highway himself. Her self-assurance, the touch of hauteur, were a natural outgrowth of her well-heeled childhood: a sprawling house in Brookline, MA., prestigious Miss Winsor’s school in Boston, father (a railroad executive) mentioned in the Boston Blue and, later, became strong female role models. Two, upon graduating from as though an artist who at the age of 51 for four years at Bl-yn Book—hers a Brahmin upbringing. Always she remained her mother’s guilt blanketing the past? 

Emotionally guarded, K., brought up by Aunt Crully in the best of Victorian England, who distrusted “passionately dedicated to the achievement of clear, precise and grammatical prose” (Davis, 61), an idea K. did not share. Unhappy and unfilial she cared about for a career, then, a neighbor suggested she see Ross about a job on his new humorous magazine.

Ross, like K., was 32 years old. He had been a journalist since the age of 15, quitting high school to support himself. When he founded The New Yorker he already had a great deal of professional experience: managing editor of Stars and Stripes during WWI, and later, editor on three different publications. He was a fascinating man. Most accounts of Ross, such as Thurber’s, exaggerate his quirks and appearance (his first wife thought that he was the homeliest man she had ever met) (Elledge, 116) so that he appears as a caricature. He was a man with so many contradictions that he is difficult to capture. He was a perfectionist, “passionately dedicated to the achievement of clear, precise and grammatical English prose” (Davis, 61), and an idealist who dreamed of publishing a magazine that was good, funny and fair and succeeded, with incredible energy, in doing so (Elledge, 119). He was self-assured about his professional abilities yet insecure about his lack of formal education. Even though he “spent all his life reading to catch up...” and was “a natural literary man” (117), he often exasperated his ignorance of literature. He was impatient with people—yet kind and loyal; had a terrible temper—but hated confrontations. Ross had a great sense of humor and a generosity of spirit which allowed him to recognize talent and give it a chance to develop, showing “complete respect for the work and ideas and opinions of others” (117). He was a man’s man who loved to play poker and drink and used profane language. He was ill-at-ease with women whom he did not like very much (116). Yet, when K. inquired about a job he hired her on the spot. In an interview with Elledge, she said, “Ross and I got on perfectly from the very start but it’s true that he did, in moments of frustration, put his hands over his head and say: ‘I’m surrounded by women and children.’ I was the woman. I’m sure. Ross was furious that I was a woman but he soon came to depend on and accept me” (117).

Ross taught her the ropes of magazine publishing: from pencil-editing to make-up, from art selection to advertising, and then began to delegate work. K. was a quick study, a “born editor.” She had “good sense, good taste and good will” (119) and a remarkable ability to, “click well with writers too, according to EBW, she merched her like a ‘biddy hen’ (118). She was not afraid of Ross nor offended by his profligacies. (“From Ross I picked up the habit of swearing occasionally. He...”)
used profanities and I do this day—ones that are unsuitable for a proper New England old lady," she said in a 1970 interview with Eldge). She argued freely with him about literary points and soon became, in the words of Gill, his "intellectual conscience" (Here, 289).

Shortly after she began working at the NYer, Katharine wrote two essays which catch the tenor of her life. The first appeared anonymously in the 12/25 issue of Harper's. "Living on the Ragged edge: Family Income vs. Family Expenses" describes the financial difficulties she and Ernest (Tom in the essay) were having and the strain it placed on their marriage. Though both worked, their salaries did not quite cover their needs; a nurse for the children, a housekeeper, good clothes, a spot to get away from it all, and an occasional night out. (Sound familiar?) The second essay, "Home and Office," appeared six months later under her own name in Survey magazine. It describes her life as a working mother and wife. She admits that it is not always easy to juggle the demands but sounds optimistic and satisfied: "I live a very full family life, and I hold an editorial position that is exacting a full-time job as any I see about me" (Elledge, 112).

Davis uses these essays to take Katharine to task. She criticizes her "opulent" lifestyle, her predilection for quality clothes, and her reliance on nannies and servants ("she simply disliked housework") and was "nearly incapable in the kitchen"). Davis views her decision to work as selfish and dismisses her "attempts at self-justification" as "self-delusory." Even if K. had not loved above her means and had a happy marriage she still would have found a way to go to work. Worse, Davis claims "Katharine was essentially maternal; paradoxically she was unable to mother her own children" (the kids might not agree) while she expended her "abundant warmth and generosity" mainly at work. These censorious notes are jarring. They tempt one to take K.'s side, to protect her against her biographer, ask, as Updike did in his review, "So what? Nothing gets obtained for nothing" (NYer, 8/10/87). Working for the NYer was something indeed.

EBW began sending light verse and sketches to the NYer within weeks after the birth of the twins. K. admired his work. His essays were what she liked in fiction: precise, short and "without the burden of plot." She suggested Ross offer him a job. When EBW took up the invitation to stop by the office he was met by Katharine Angell. K., by all accounts and photographs, was a striking lady: short (five feet), regal bearing, her waist-length dark hair (never cut and professionally cared for) tied in a bun which rested at the nape of her neck, thus off-setting her Roman profile and giving full play to her large, discerning eyes. She was poised, humorous, intelligent and she treated every writer as important as she had feelings for any other, even thought they were young and inexperienced (Davis, 161). Andy, a boyish-looking shy young man, felt at ease with her, and, though he did not immediately jump at the offer of a job as staff writer, eventually agreed to join the NYer and thus K. became "his boss" (Elledge, 113).

It is impossible to ascertain the precise moment they fell in love but, by the summer of 1928, they made a date to meet in France. Ernest was off to see an old mistress when Katharine and Andy had their romantic holiday. At the end of their stay they decided that, once the twins were old enough, they would return for an extended stay in France, dissatisfied with the limited scope the NYer gave him. They had a vacation paid for by a contract for 20 serious contributions to the magazine (Bruccoli: The O'Hara Concern, 64-65). Formidable K. insisted on trust, and EBW took her devotion to her writers in delighted stride.

Joëd was born in December of 1930 after an emergency caesarean. He was fine. But K. contracted pelvic inflammation and required weeks of rest. In 1931, the Whites spent their first summer Down East. Both had strong Maine ties: her mother was born in Naples, Andy had spent 11 summers on Belgrade Lakes. In 1933, they bought a salt-water farm in North Brooklin. Andy dreamed. Restless in New York, dissatisfied with the limited scope the NYer's format allowed his talents, his unease showed itself in various illnesses for which no one could discover a source. Pressure built. His parents died, K. miscarried and he found it difficult to write. He looked for a way out and found it in 1937: claiming "a year of his own," a year to do whatever came to mind. K. was unhappy, but he could not help himself. His "year" lasted 5 months. It was a disaster. He grew depressed, ill. In the spring of 1938, they decided to leave the city and move permanently to Maine.

Gill asserts that K. was reluctant to leave "the best job held by any woman in America" (Here, 199). She always denied it. I suspect Gill was right. It cannot have been easy to give up the job she helped create on the magazine she helped launch. She loved her work and poured herself into her writers' lives who, on the whole, returned her devotion. Flanner was flabbergasted: "Something as true?" (Davis, 219). At K.'s urging, they began to publish serious poetry as well as light verse. Their reputation soared. Katharine, by now "Head of Fiction," had all the "literary writers" under her wing as well as all the difficult ones. Ross delegated to her Alexander Woollcott, the "Gila Monster," and she handled this prickly bear with firm, humorous ease. "Her" writers were already beginning to depend on her for more than just her editorial eye. O'Hara once called and asked that she send the best lung specialist in town to his house because he was hemorrhaging to death. Not exactly your normal editorial request. She complied, and had dispatched a doctor who found that O'Hara had wounded so much from a hangover that he ruptured blood vessels in his stomach and throat (Matthew). Brucoli: The O'Hara Concern, 64-65. Formidable K. inspired trust, and EBW took her devotion to her writers in delighted stride.

Katharine Seegmuller Whaz Davis, 219). At K.'s urging, they began to publish serious poetry as well as light verse. Their reputation soared. Katharine, by now "Head of Fiction," had all the "literary writers" under her wing as well as all the difficult ones. Ross delegated to her Alexander Woollcott, the "Gila Monster," and she handled this prickly bear with firm, humorous ease. "Her" writers were already beginning to depend on her for more than just her editorial eye. O'Hara once called and asked that she send the best lung specialist in town to his house because he was hemorrhaging to death. Not exactly your normal editorial request. She complied, and had dispatched a doctor who found that O'Hara had wounded so much from a hangover that he ruptured blood vessels in his stomach and throat (Matthew).
animals, whimsical children and condescending adults" (105). EBW concurred: "Much of our adult morality, in books and out of them, has a stiffness unworthy of childhood," and echoes her: "A large amount of published material is dull, prosy stuff, by writers who mistake oddity for fantasy..." (Meat, 24-25). K.'s books, which were piled up all through the house, gave EBW the idea that "...it must be a lot of fun to write for children—reasonably easy work, perhaps even important work" (21-22). Some years later, EBW tried his hand at "juveniles" (as they are called in the trade) and produced Smurf Little.

Besides editing NYer manuscripts, writing her reviews, and turning to gardening, K. helped EBW edit A Subtreasury of American Humor: a personal selection from 200 years of humorous writing. Many NYer writers were richly represented, which is no surprise because K. had already gone once for their stuff. EBW wrote the introductory essays, K. blue-pencilled them. This was the only time Andy actually asked his wife to edit him. Usually he refused to show her his work until it was ready to appear in print. He hated being edited, especially by her, for though she would try to remain silent, her demeanor would show what she thought, which then would send him back to the drawing board. He was more amenable to having her take care of his career. In Maine she became his agent and protectress (Davis, 140). One senses that K. accustomed to working under deadlines, found life in Maine too quiet too soon. EBW himself seemed to have found semi-retirement a bit too much to handle. He got depressed.

In the spring of 1943, K. had a hysterectomy. It was war time. The NYer was struggling: lack of paper, loss of writers and a diminished editorial staff. Ross begged the Whites to return. They did.

Things had changed at the NYer at least for K. She was no longer "Head of Fiction." Gus Lobrano retained that job. As she later said, it was "a difficult, sticky situation calling for tact on both our parts. I had trained Lobrano to be an editor and now he was my boss" (142). Unusually they worked well together but Gill asserts that "Lobrano would eventually come to tremble with rage at the very mention of her name...and [that] he suffered under the considerable shadow she cast" (291-292). K., though just one of the editors, still had Ross' trust and ear and soon she had again all the "literary writers" under her wing.

In this second part of her career, K. became the editor to a new generation of writers. She bought the first NYer pieces by Vladimir Nabokov and became the only editor from whom he would take "occasional emendations." In 1948, when K. had just undergone a spinal fusion operation and was wearing an aluminum brace, Jean Stafford (herself in pain: she about to divorce Lowell) became one of "hers" and remained a friend throughout life. By 1954, John Updike, then 22 years old, was added to the fold. During the years they worked together, K. bought more than a hundred of his poems and stories and argued frequently about his punctuation. Davis prints a fascinating exchange between the two about the finer points of Fowler's Usage (164-166). In his review of K.'s biography, Updike states: "The attentive editor shapes, or at least pats, the writer" (NYer, 8/10/87). He should know.

In 1951 Ross died. The end of an era. Both Whites lost a very good friend. Both were indebted to him for their careers, especially K. She called him "one of the few really great men I have known" (Davis, 159). Andy wrote the NYer obituary, and said to J.D. Salinger, "I felt worried, as well as sick, attempting to say anything about Ross in his own magazine (Letters, 347). To another, "I was damned glad to get your letter as my 'beautiful piece' about Ross didn't seem beautiful at all to me after the third reading and I was quite worried about it" (348). Then both got ill. Andy had "head trouble," K. contracted infectious hepatitis.

The years following were not much kinder. Rosamond died. Then Aunt Ccully, whom K. cared for during her final months. K. got the mumps, Andy broke a toe and had shingles. In 1955, they traveled to England: a dismal failure, they cut it short. In Europe, K. decided to retire. She was tried, more importantly so was EBW who stopped contributing sketches. Back in NY he wrote all "her" writers of her plans; she would give up editing but retain some advisory capacity. The reactions were strong. Mary McCarthy wrote "You will leave the fiction department with this contributor's love firmly attached to you?" Nabokov: "Your kindness, your gentleness and understanding have always meant so much to me," and the literary agent Bernice Baumgarten: "I know that it is itself to register the emptiness of your loss already. From how I loved you", which then was an understatement.

K. did not retire. At the end of the year, Gus Lobrano fell seriously ill. He died a short time later. K. was asked to become "Head of Fiction" once more until someone could be found to replace her. She stayed 18 months. During this time, Andy was ill a lot, she overworked. In may of 1957 the Whites moved back to Maine: for good. Still, ties were not totally cut. EBW contributed funny phrases, K. read (as a 1/3 editor) manuscripts.

Once back in North Brooklin, EBW wrote "K. has reduced her job on the magazine to a six-months-a-year stint. . . . Her flower gardening life is at a high pitch now, and our perennial borders are a work of art—cars slow down as they go by, to see the wonders Katherine has wrought. We need to employ one man on the place, but now that K. has learned the Latin names of plants, it takes three. But it is a nice way to go broke, surrounded by such beauty" (Letters, 470). She also began reading garden seed catalogues—who in Maine's mid-winter hasn't marvelled at the gardener's gorgeous recollections. The first in 1958 surprised everyone, including EBW.

Retirement from editing came on 1/1/61. The next day, K. had her first "mini stroke." Her illness was misdiagnosed as a brain tumor. Months later, she underwent an operation for a blockage in the carotid artery. The months in between left her feeling mortal. She began keeping her "Victorian will"—keeping being the operative word. Andy suffered as well. Thurber died. K. wrote, "we are crumbling badly" (Davis, 208). She was almost 70. For that birthday Andy wrote "A compass for Katharine: I turn to the East, I turn to the West/I turn to the one that I love best" (208). In spite of their problems and increasing age the Whites' gamble still paid.

1964 was an awful year: K. developed a rare disease called subcorneal pustular dermatosis. She would suffer terribly from this, and its medications, to the end of her life. K. spent nine weeks in the hospital unable to wear clothes, she lost her molars and a lot of hair, which (still never cut) had always been a source of pride. She also lost her belief in her ability to write anything, let alone "worth while" prose. A year before, EBW wrote Roger, "Both of us, of course are suffering from the onset of professional inactivity, or inadequacy, or both, and in her case it is greatly aggravated by her almost lost dream of writing another garden piece or two, so as to put a book together... She hasn't quite given up, but her spirit is badly cracked, and it is the saddest thing I have ever had to live with, to see her this way, after having done so much for so many, and now unable to do a thing for herself. I sometimes think I would give everything I own for one garden piece, one book, one restored lady" (Letters, 499).

K. rebounded. She wrote eight more garden pieces and entered a period of relative good health. Andy blossomed. Then, in 1969, a return of the dermatosis, followed by a diagnosis of osteopetrosis, a diabetic condition, and congenital heart failure. K. was in an invalid now, she required round-the-clock care. Andy was ill a lot, she had the mumps, aluminum brace, Jean Stafford (herself in pain: she about to divorce Lowell) became one of "hers" and remained a friend throughout life. By 1954, John Updike, then 22 years old, was added to the fold. During the years they worked together, K. bought more than a hundred of his poems and stories and argued frequently about his punctuation. Davis prints a fascinating exchange between the two about the finer points of Fowler's Usage (164-166). In his review of K.'s biography, Updike states: "The attentive editor shapes, or at least pats, the writer" (NYer, 8/10/87). He should know. . . .
The Elements of Taste: a demurrer

E.B. White's succinct manual, The Elements of Style, is justly praised, and remains useful today. However (ah, EBW admits against beginning sentences with "however"), given that it was written 35 years ago in 1957, and based on William Strunk Jr.'s pamphlet of 1918, it is up for de-canonizing. Both EBW and his editor wife Katharine learned their language when it was comparatively stable, before immigration swelled again and the population exploded. They saw their role as holding the line, fighting the good fight, beating back the barbarians. To be sure, by 1958 EBW grasped that he was out-of-step with modern linguists, who, in their words, sought to "describe, not prescribe." He wrote of "maybe even selling some copies to English Departments that collect oddities and curios" (Letters, 453). He mistook linguists' views for those typical of faculties of universitv English departments, who labor for the same lucid prose he espoused, and who soon began selling his book for him by the millions.

Against the winds of change—some of them Gale Force Nine, some not—he wrapped himself in the cloak of Virtue, and told his editor who had suggested a little modernizing, "I have never been edited for wind direction, and will not be now." He expressed contempt for the "Happiness Boys, or as you like to call them, the descriptivists." EBW located the enemy as "the modern liberal of the English Department, the anything-goes fellow. . . . I am against him, temperamentally and because I have seen the work of his disciples, and I say the hell with him." EBW confused those who taught writing with those who advised publishers of dictionaries. Not that he was stuffy. Listen to George Bernard Shaw reduce to rubbish the "rule" prohibiting a preposition at the end of a sentence, "That is a proposition up with which I will not put." Now listen to EBW ending one with five: a father, intent on reading to his son in bed, brings the wrong book. The boy says, "What did you bring that book that I don't want to be read to out of up for?" (Letters, 492). EBW tolerated the modern tendency to cut "that" from a sentence, and advised using one's ear. However, in showing when to keep that he seems willful, or pretend-dumb. Example: "He felt that the girl had not played fairly." Omit that, says EBW, and you're left with: "He felt the girl." Oh no, you're not, as the rest of the sentence makes perfectly clear.

EBW's impact has been so powerful that, when combined with Hemingway's example, a lot of American prose has become anoxic, its near-starvation point seen in Minimalist fiction writers of the last fifteen years like Anne

Example:

"English usage is too much of mere taste, judgement and education—sometimes it's sheer luck, like getting across the street."

(EBW, "English Usage," from The Second Tree from the Corner)

The next grammar book I bring out I want to tell how to end a sentence with five prepositions. A father of a little boy goes upstairs after supper to read to his son, but he brings the wrong book. The boy says, "What did you bring that book that I don't want to be read to out of up for?"

EBW, Letters, 492

too, to discern the ever-finer discriminations being made. EBW's bias devalues the Germanic tradition, and its rolling "periods." Imagine a meeting of EBW and Thomas Mann. Or Herman Hesse. Elements, and EBW's own style, if taken as the only models, narrow taste rather than open it up. The Southern prose of Faulkner, or Robert Penn Warren, or Thomas Wolfe would be "overwritten," in EBW's view. Consider the fine opening to Look Homeward, Angel: "A destiny that leads the English to the Dutch is strange enough, but one that leads from Episcopal Pennsylvania, and thence into the hills that shut in Altamont over the proud coral cry of the cock, and the soft stone smile of an angel, is touched by that dark miracle of chance which makes new magic in a dusty world.

Each of us is all the sums he has not counted: subtract us into nakedness and night again and you shall see begin in Crece four thousand years ago the love that ended yesterday in Texas. "Overdone? Or a writer reaching for the lyrical? By what starvation of culture, by what New England severity, can this come to appear prolix?

Some of the distinctions EBW fought to maintain have been blurred, others eclipsed entirely. You can still get a sneer to (gone), farther: farther. I've even seen inflamable. (I've even seen —). Kind of and sort of both now sub for rather.

When it comes to his diet, let's reconsider. I too prefer the active voice, but do find the passive useful at times. I see no reason to always "put statements in positive form," and have no qualms about using nouns as verbs. To "place emphatic words of a sentence at the end" seems unnecessarily rigid, and underestimates the reader. When he says "do not affect a breezy manner," his examples work, but we have entered a deeply subjective area. "Avoid fancy words" strikes me as anti-intellectual (and again subjective), as does "avoid foreign languages" (down-home N.E. populism!). I don't want my students to be told to "use figures of speech sparingly." Oh, for a figure of speech! And two suggestions near the very end make me simply witt: "Do not inject opinion," and "Prefer the standard to the offbeat." Oh, at this dreary late-date in our civilization, what I would give for a clear opinion, any opinion, the off-beat preferred. Fortunately, in at least these two respects, EBW ignored his own advice.

T.P.
Friendships and a Talking Pig

February in Maine has its ups and downs, sunnier days seduce feelings of spring but flu season can extinguish any desire for outside activity. Two years ago during winter vacation all four of my children and myself had the flu—one would improve just as another one or two would get sick. On one of my trips to the store for more soda and tylenol I picked up the video of Charlotte’s Web. I thought it would entertain them—it did much more.

The Maine I knew was a child was rural, farm country, two-room school houses, we lived near places like Zuckerman’s. But my children are almost urban-living in a “neighborhood” on acre plots within shouting distance of their friends. As new parents we all want to give our children what we never had. After the second or third child comes along, we realize that we can only give them a sense of where we came from. Sharing Charlotte’s Web brought that into our lives.

There are many profound things to say about reading classics such as E.B. White’s children’s stories to your own kids. My fourth grade teacher read us the book and my children have read or have had all three of White’s books read to them by the fifth grade. When listening to their reactions and critical analysis I am amazed at their sophistication. The fascination of combining two worlds together never ends with each advancing generation. Kids see the magic lessons to be learned but all I recall of Charlotte’s Web was an icky spider and a rotten egg.

White’s stories bring back the country to children who are more informed than their parents were at their ages. The characters and plots never change but my children remember more of the finer points than I ever did. My daughter Mariah who is now ten reminds me that, after all, “Fern had to grow up too.” Charlotte’s Web is about letting go and learning to go on despite all the “stuff” that is in between.

Flat coated, we watched the animals in Wilbur’s barnyard come to life. “Templeton’s so funny,” they say. “Charlotte’s too busy.” Then: “So’s the goose.” Amid the enchantment all too soon they noticed Wilbur’s loneliness and the other animals’ snobbishness. Even as young as four, children at their best identify with isolation as much as they do jubilation. Ignoring the big words like “salutations,” they focus on the interactions within the story. In each story they see an element of faith and hope in the unlikely places—a pig sty, a ripsy canoe, a spider’s heart.

Some children are born with the ability to communicate with animals as Fern could. Call it imagination, maybe, but when you live with such a child, White’s characters do not seem unreal. For my youngest, Charlotte was a teacher, Wilbur a friend, and the mother goose a nag. At four, when she first saw the video, she believed animals could talk. She probably still does. And I may be inclined to believe it too. The magic of White’s stories not only brings animals alive, they bring us from. Sharing Charlotte’s Web that is why E.B. White’s stories have such great appeal to everyone. The right mixture makes classics.

Peggy Clark Contreras
E. Winthrop
is a UMA English major

“Anyone who writes for children successfully is probably writing for one child—namely ‘the child that is himself.’”

Reviewer of Charlotte’s Web, quoted in Elledge biography, 300.

Letters, 614, 1/12/1, to Gene Deitch, Filmmaker of CW.

EBW, Letters, 615

I have encountered two tawons. One was death, the other was monotony. In “Charlotte’s Web,” the spider dies. My editor at Harper’s was not very enthusiastic about this development. Apparently, children are not supposed to be exposed to death, but I did not pay any attention to this. In “ Stuart Little” an American family has a two inch mouse. This is highly questionable and would be, I guess, bad if it were stated in any other than a matter-of-fact way. A librarian read “ Stuart Little” in proof before it was published and strongly urged me not to have it published but I did not pay any attention to this, either.

EBW, Letters, 531/2

With a few exceptions, the critics of children’s books are remarkably lenient souls. They seem to regard books for children with the same tolerant tenderness with which nearly any adult regards a child. Most of us assume there is something good in every child; the critics go on from this to assume there is something good in every book written for a child. It is not a sound theory.

K. S. W.
(Edward and Upward, 105)
Excerpt from a letter by a Maine haikuist . . .

... At the turn of the century, Japanese poets began eliminating the traditional obligatory "season" (spring/fall/etc.) word from haiku as well as breaking up their familiar 5/7/5 meter. And even now, @ century's close, the debate still continues between the two camps. Same stances. (Also, English doesn't lend itself easily to 5/7/5.) Haiku is still considered more "poetic," more refined (hence, more respected, if you will) than the more confrontational senryu form. This is certainly true on both sides of the Pacific. Japanese artists of every stripe seem preoccupied with the element of time in their works and it does seem to deepen the verse. The Time element is less frequently employed in Senryu.

It appears that in the early part of the 20th c., the soon-to-be-political, Mexican novelist, Romero, also experimented with Senryu:

Looking for eggs
In the barn
I found the breasts of my cousin.

The difference between senryu and, say, today's stand-up comic is that the poet has experienced something, and been duly moved by it somehow and passes on his flash of enlightenment to us. True, the "Steven Wrights" also see things, but, more often than not, they dream up a situation to help shape their gag. Their time honored calling is to entertain us, to make us laugh, to keep their Nelson Ratings up. In fact, by his own admission, Wright's work is surreal. Senryu trots the tragicomic tightrope of "life as it is."

By contrast, Basho's sense of humor tinted and enhanced the image as part of the everyday life, he then, and we now, may and do experience.

With every gust of wind
the butterfly changes its place
on the willow.

The much later senryu is more spare and far less delicate about presenting its point of view.

Regards,
Arizona Zipper

Old Man Martin's Farm
7s
05 AM

Cows chase an old Ford
Over vast fields of dried dung
to feast on pumpkins

Christian Bousquet
Orono
Is a Student at UMO.

Haiku

too cold to sleep,
the frogs stare at the stars
spring rainbow;
postman whistling house to house

the bungee jumper
eats a big breakfast
after the jump

wildflower in the lawn
the widow mows around it
in the yellow leaves
black holes
and a wet woodpecker

Mapplethorpe exhibit;
the lady in fur's didn't stop
at the fist-fucking phone
woodshred;
a stall
Gives me the fish eyes

riding shotgun tonight
he blows away
da deer crossing sign
candlelit cave;
voces rise and fall
below the bats

she high diver
hangs up her coat
in the stars

Arizona Zipper
Fryeburg
is a painter/poet

a fistful of brown
maricopa leaves, dun mosh wings
tenacious on trees

waves of marcelled snow
beneath an argusine moon
abundance slept underground

Briefcase woman strikes
past mothers in the sandbox,
Children, bosses, play.

Lisa Holbrook
Ann Arbor, MI
graduated from Bowdoin,
studying for MFA.
What does
the speedy river
Have to do with the war?
Deadly singing subway nails
Reaching deep below
Like a child screaming.
Cut my finger on quartz
Drops of dark blood
On pure crusted snow.
A flock of crows passes overhead,
I hear strong wings
Beating against plump bodies.
Open ice.
Black waters slipping beneath white blankets.
Roasted coffee pot
Resting on cold granite.
Soaked ashes.

Jonathan Lindsay
Hallowell
Works at State's

Suet Ball Earrings
She was a jewelry designer
Who loved birds

Silence
(for John Cage)
The conductor carried a razor

Voices of whales
Ancient premonitions
Of land, sea, and air

Origami
Losing lottery ticket folded
Six different ways
Looks like a frog

Meditation
Cats close their eyes
More than sleep

Pat Murphy
So. Portland
Operates Yest Books

The orange sun
Passes at mountains' rim
One final look
At the day

They stand in quiet vigil
Gathered around a fallen friend
Recalling how they stood together

A leaf falls
From its home of height
To visit the lovely ferns
Never to return

A bird sings a solo song of praise
To the broken branches on forest floor
For a resting place remembered

The sun spot climbs slowly
Up the forest hill
Weakening in afternoon weariness

The smoke from the hearth one candle
Even reaches where I sit
Halfway out the church

With the sun overhead
And my feet along the earth
I am free, walking
In its berth
The boat groans with rising tide
Restless for the open sea

W.F. Halpin
Camden
Consults Cara and Learning


Writing Haiku has become popular throughout the US, and Maine is no exception. A late 1991 call for haiku by Richard Lederer elicited a large number of submissions and the subsequent publication of selections by sixteen Maine haikuists in his Maine Sunday Telegram column.

We should not be surprised, then, to find Maine well represented in the recently reissued and widely respected Haiku Anthology. The editor, Cor Van Den Heuvel, himself an accomplished haikuist, was born in Biddeford, and three other poets included in the book have Maine connections. Marjory Bates Pratt was born in Waterville, Gary Hotham comes from Presque Isle, and Arizona Zipper lives in Faye and. They join a cast that reads almost like a hall of fame of American and Canadian haikuists. The editor has chosen well.

Some haiku magazines cram a multitude of haiku onto a single page, but Cor Van Den Heuvel, recognizing the importance of white space, gives the reader time to reflect on each haiku. The haiku, of course, are the heart of this book, but there is a lot more: prefaces to the first and second editions, published in 1974 and 1986, offering valuable information on the growth in popularity of English-language haiku; appendices that include a selection of haiku-related poems, definitions of terms, and biographical notes; and a helpful bibliography of books on haiku. The Haiku Anthology is an excellent introduction to haiku, but it also is sure to please veteran readers of haiku, who will find selections by many of their favorite haiku poets.

Edward J. Rielly
Westbrook
Teaches at St. Joseph's College

Gary Hotham

Sister Thaddeus
The dog's toenails click against the linoleum
Night comes -
Picking up your shoes, still warm

Sun & moon
In the same sky
The small hand of my wife

Jonathan Lindsay
Hallowell
Works at State's
Leaching Pond

At his interview fifteen years ago, Mr. Ashby marveled how the new consolidated high school had been intentionally secluded beside a beaver pond. The superintendent laughed and said what Virgil had seen was a leaching pond, a man-made basin in which waste water is somehow filtered into the ground. "They say the water in it's fit to drink," Rockwell chuckled beneath his cigar smoke. "Don't know I'd try it though." Last year, a second heart attack forced Frank to retire, and the news this morning in the teacher's room is that he died last night at the age of fifty-six. Mr. Ashby has eighteen more years.

He stands hunched over a colander that's beginning to look like a jungle of mildewed hearts. Although beige cinderblocks limit much of his view, he can still see beyond the school parking lot to the leaching pond, glittering in the May morning sun. He sighs, turns away, and inspects C-10 before the onset of Period 3. Usually Mr. Ashby is proud of his classroom for he knows this is the room the principal shows visitors, but as he checks the new bulletin board he prepared last weekend, the yellow rectangles of construction paper look like flypaper, and the poems he worked so hard to find and copy lie dead bugs. He knows that behind him, sixty-four British authors look down on his mediocrity, so instead of turning to them, he turns again to the window, to Buster riding his lawn mower, his skin bronzing in the sunshine, and over his shoulder the mysterious flicker of water, first gold then blue then gold... . Work without end. Amen.

His lips feel chilled. In the teacher's lounge this morning, his pipe clogged, turning the room into a steam bath of acrid tobacco. He pulls the pipe from the inside pocket of his sport coat and imagines heaving the damn thing through the plate glass, but he knows better. He bought this pipe on his honeymoon, and although after eighteen years, both marriage and pipe have sounded and cracked, any thought of life without either makes him nervous, so he contents himself with slamming the bowl against the heel of his hand until pain shoots up his arm. There: he's punished.

He walks to the old metal door of his classroom, swings the door open, and confronts the empty corridor to the water fountain. The English wing, but there is nothing about it to suggest flight, only a hard, gray series of squares—floor tiles, lockers, signs, and more metal doors—behind which soft but foreboding rumbles go together, but he feels mismatched. His wife is right: his head is too small and in his chest and rises. He tries to comb his hair, but as usual all he does is slick and gently polishes oxblood wing-tips. He straightens and looks into the cold clarity of the mirror. Anything... .

The bell rings. Mr. Ashby corrals the class, lines up bodies, and sends them down over the hill toward the brick school building, he remembers less than fifteen minutes ago standing at the windows of his room, beguiled by the beauty of the pond in the morning sun. He sighs, turns away, and inspects C-11.

**enter enthusiastically, center stage**: "We need some inspiration. Let's go outside."

**Electric current passes through the class. Snaps eyes, clears a horn leads for a nut**: "Well, all right, Mr. Ashby!"

He smiles paternally at Allan who knows Mr. Ashby does not often take classes out of doors. Before they can get too loose, he sets the ground rules in his best speak-softly-but-carry-the-gradebook voice. They will walk around the leaching pond. When they return, they will write a poem. They will bring notebooks and jot down details of sight, sound, touch, smell, and even taste. 

(Shoots line): "They say that the water's fit to drink. (Pause.) Don't know I'd try it though. (Through the motions): Seriously, no excessive talking. Anyone fooling around will have to answer to me. Don't disturb other classes. Let's try to have fun in a responsible manner."

Students stampede out the door into a world which, as he stands in the doorway, seems encased in a rubber egg. The newly mown grass smells sweet, like his great-grandfather's barn. Like innocence. He stumbles down the steps into the sunlight. While his eyes adjust and students shake their heads like colts, he listens to the radio and voices from the shop area of the school. Paul Charron throws open his doors at the first sign of warm weather and as the sun rises higher in the sky, more and more students bring their projects beneath it. Being in the outside world is no big deal for a shop teacher; it's the faculty meetings he avoids, as if the rest of the staff were termites.

Mr. Ashby corrals the class, lines up bodies, and sends them down over the hill in front of the parking lot toward the leaching pond. He is last. Since he will not be able to teach. And if he can't teach them, at least he can surprise them. He slams Pixie's door, seems encased in a robin's egg. The newly mown grass smells sweet, like his great-grandfather's barn. Like innocence. He stumbles down the steps into the sunlight. While his eyes adjust and students shake their heads like colts, he listens to the radio and voices from the shop area of the school. Paul Charron throws open his doors at the first sign of warm weather and as the sun rises higher in the sky, more and more students bring their projects beneath it. Being in the outside world is no big deal for a shop teacher; it's the faculty meetings he avoids, as if the rest of the staff were termites.

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his feet; he remembers the care he took earlier with his shoes. What are these skinny trees all along here with limbs that look like bones? He thinks they may be gray brush, but he really doesn't know. All he wants is to go back to his room.

Allan's voice cuts through the sunshine in alarm. "Something has killed a little bird—Oh, Yuck!" Mr. Ashby has completely forgotten about his students. They have scattered around the pond, and moosed as tombsrones, they, like him, are subdued, depressed by what they are seeing. But he isn't sure; again, he is encased in glass, one of those old desk paper weights, but instead of snow, yellow pollen has settled on the algae that grows in vomit patches along the water's edge. He waits for other comments, but pulp remains frozen in the heat. The only flies buzz.

The path becomes a narrow brink between illusion and reality, between safety and disaster. From his window the water appeared blue; here it is melanoma brown, except for where slime and pollen have created a peat soup. Water bag attack an empty bag of Bachman's Taco Chips bobbing defenselessly near his feet. Just ahead, off the path, a skeleton of log lies gray and pockmarked in the muck. At encased in glass, one of those old desk paperweights, but instead of snow, yellow it's head, like some kind of half-eaten brain, red, white, and blue paint spiral into have scattered around the pond, and motionless as tombstones, they, like him, his glasses keep sliding down his nose. Is the day really that warm? A wave-Oh, skinny trees all straight and true toward bottom.

Vincent raises in recognition that his mother has always been a place, not a person, a place in his perpetually dark and musty cellar next to the washboard. He feels as if he is suffocating. He feels his mother to go back to school, become more active in the church, do more charity work. Instead, she's joined some singing group which ends its meetings by drinking beer at the local pizza parlor. On weekends she travels with a couple of blue-haired friends to tacky resorts. The last time he visited, she was planning to ask some old geezer to the VFW dance. And what is her hair color now? Has she lost weight again?

Virgil rises in recognition that his mother has always been a place, not a person, a place in his perpetually dark and musty cellar next to the washboard, a place where you can't stand up straight for fear of hurting your head. Again the vision: back to him, bent forward, her launchess big and beautiful and heart-shaped, his mother slides away from him through the opening in the grime to the clothesline which hangs in the back yard between two apple trees, trees that he knows are in blossom this time of year.

He turns to confront the gray cement steps leading to the gray metal door encased in the brick wall before him. He kicks at the cement and watches mud fall away from his sudden foot, like pieces of eggshell from some emerging dung-colored bird. He leaves one arm on the iron rail running up the solid cement, and kicks... kicks again... kicks harder... desperately trying to break open his own sturdy office to freedom.

Richard Wile
Yarmouth
teacher at Brunswick H.S.
Serial Wife

I'm a rag of memory
A base returned from pain
I walk, to the mirror in a dirge
Waiting for her lines to erode beneath my skin
Filling me with her presence
Changing me into her vision
We fight across time.

Waging war with ghosts
Is an unholy occupation

Her letters still arrive
Her music plays beside me at night
And I read and listen
Waiting to become her.

Ellen A. Endter
North Yarmouth
is a freelance writer

Sick in an Unfamiliar City

The blank back of this hospital room emanates from the sanitized
whiteness of the sheets.
I am being bleached with antriment,
antisepsic quiet that reduces everything
to tasteless white, even leaching pigment
from my lips and fingers. It wears on,
whitening whole days into vaguely aching absences
of something I would see to

brush away some of the vapors
falling like hot snow
obscuring the floor,
the bed, and muffling my body
in drifts of anesthesia.

Each fading shape is one less feature
I see of an anonymous city
in a landscape that is dissolving
in the whiteness of the sheets.

Stephen Paling
Portland

Chicken House

We feel the old
excitement
as we cipher, sketch
and reckon
bound feet, pitch of roof
to allow the snow
to slide.
We're building again,
and, of an evening,
we study catalogs—dreams
of glittering tails and flimsy
combs, the sift of winter,
suff of beans.
It's time to invest
in chickens,
in their chuck and huddle,
their fierce preoccupation
with perch and pecking
order—
and their perfect Emily
yellow-polked from ranging,
rich with fruit of the earth.

Later we fell the cedars,
strip their bark to affix,
we notch and plate,
frame dreams and plumb them.
In the long light of
Maine mornings—
our hammers sing nitals home.

Carolyn Page Troy
in a book illustrator &
co-editor of Potato Eyes

Outlaw Mothers

In our family it's always the women,
first to recognize the character
of our peril, who chant strange verbs and finger
rosary after wooden rosary.

"Blessed art thou among women," we pray,
"And blessed be the fruit of thy womb," yet
ours is mere human life, unsacralized
except by epithets and sometimes blows,
brises, welts and words like bitch, slut or whore.

From our children, from whom we attempt
to keep the bloody secrets of their births
and the deaths of other things, are not our
own but communal, the order and place
of conception sealed like the lips of the long dead.
We pass them hand to hand, love them,
try not to live too close, for fear of loss.
We never let them know who their parents
are, expecting them to hold against us
the sins of their fathers, whose spiritual
integrity is now nonexistent.

But more, a question of surrendering,
a fear of exposure keeps us hidden
from each other, women who are familial:
we share no sense of continuity.
We know things that feel so comfortable are
often the things that are most dangerous.
We don't molest each others' eyes, or our own.

Anne Brittting Oleson
Dixmont

Matreshka

Silly doll with your bright, dead eyes,
The others shut inside you,
Each painted smile, pullee cheek;
Red doll—sad masks,
Dead trodels of wood;
How many live inside
Dazed and hollow?

I twist off my head to see
Arms, legs reversed,
Faces floating free,
Then touch the next doll a spin
And touch the just blooded mouth,
Blood grin at the sin
of losing oneself

Until out I crowd,
The last tiny one
Simple and clean,
Gloss red and green,
Black spots for eyes,
A lifeless mirth—
No top to pop off

And me at the core,
A thin sheath of wood
Wound round a soul
Maimed and smooth,
The last little doll
small and mute and free,
Changing into me.

Sheri Foley Allen
South Portland
is an English teacher
Reunion on a Porch

As lilacs whiten and purple, Sarah's two old friends wonder at her silence, why she keeps her eyes fixed on knitting in her lap, something for a child, in black or midnight blue. Talk turns to the silence of fathers. Julie Ann, camouflaged in pastel deference and grace, confesses her father ruined his life drinking undermining mountains for Anaconda. When he died, she felt nothing. Xavaria, who cannot bear to smile, whose father read her Lucretius at bedtime, defends such nothingness as deep inside the nature of things; and monks, she notes, sit zazen days on end to grasp: "Loss and gain make one game."

At this, Sarah, lips royal, skin pale, breaks silence, announcing it's a sweater she's knitting for the child who quickened before her lover took his tip of Sauvignon and said, "No more talk about this child."

She turns to Xavaria to say, "I've bled and wept three weeks. If loss is an illusion, then I am; and you are watching no one knit the sweater no one will wear."

Peter Harris
Waterville
Teaches at Colby College

To Jen: Turning Sixteen

"A noiseless patient spider . . .
launched forth filaments, filaments, filaments out of itself . . . ."

Walt Whitman

The princess
I made you out to be
for all these years
was merely a father's playful fantasy
for which
I do not apologize
Yet celebrating you
on this day—
new rider on the rhythm
of the moon—
I must also mourn
my own passing
before your eyes
And take what little comfort
I can
as a father
and as a man
trapped in this bittersweet
dance
of you spinning out
the gossamer threads
of a woman becoming
the light
in another man's eyes

The Exchange

You carried your death
closer to the heart
than most of us do
(I've been told)
so I guess it wasn't much of a surprise to some
when they finally collided
But it was to me
And then a card
from your wife
she wrote
how the poem
to my daughter
made you cry
how you sent it off
to your own Elizabeth
And I thought
I've got to meet this guy
And then you died
So now I am left with this:
I imagine
your daughter reading
my poem aloud
the moment
of your last breath
knowing
through my words
what a father's love
can mean
And you
in exchange
sent forth
filaments of your own
exploding heart
deep into my daughter's dreams
fashioning them
into a vision
of my death
so intense
that she came downstairs
the next morning
to offer me a smile;
the first we've shared
in days.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon
Teaches at UMF
The Day We Shot Us Out of the Sky

(From a memoir)

All we had to do that day was hop on a Huey, fly up "Happy Valley," "spec out" a village for an air assault the next morning, and come home. Piece of cake. The weather was perfect, too—clear skies as far as you could see. It was hot as hell, but if you're flying, who cares? I grabbed my rifle, helmet, web gear, and map, and hustled to the perimeter line to catch our flight. As soon as I reached the perimeter, I turned right, heading south, and spotted our Company Commander, Captain Joel Saghtin, a couple hundred meters down the line. He was standing in the open, talking on the radio, with Denny Wilson (his radioman), the First Sergeant, and our four platoon leaders clustered around him.

You could do that on the perimeter—stand around in a group. You didn't have to worry about a sniper taking a pot shot at you, or a burst of machine gun fire sending you scuttling behind a rock. The perimeter line was our turf, carefully cleared and mined and criss-crossed with barbed wire, and if any Victor Charlie was dumb enough to take a shot at us, we'd have his boney little ass in a sling.

We had artillery concentrations pre-registered around the perimeter, and watchtowers with M-60 machine guns every two or three hundred meters along the line, and during the day, I would venture to guess that our perimeter line was about as safe a place as you could find in Vietnam.

I was half-way to the group when a 105 round KARRRUMPED! into the jungle on the far side of the wire. I ducked, as usual, but kept walking. We were either registering additional defensive fire, I thought, or keeping the tree-line clear of Charlie.

When I joined the group, the Captain was still on the horn. Denny Wilson looked exhausted, but he didn't have to go with us this trip. Jim Kelly, nicknamed "Lurch" because he looked like Frankenstein, and the First Sergeant, who reminded me of a bumbling Rupstin, were talking together quietly. Gordo Grove was stretched out on his back now, his hands clasped behind his head, his eyes blissfully closed. Jack Hibbard, our mortar man, was staring morosely over the wire. And Sergeant Espadrilfe, his bleary eyes bloodshot, as usual, was smoking, and I wondered fleetingy if his canteen was really filled with vodka and orange juice, as everyone suspected, or just plain water. Still, there wasn't a better field man in the battalion.

I nodded to Lurch, who smiled, and the First Sergeant, who grunted a "Sir."

"Chopper's on the way," the Captain said.

Gordo sat bolt upright, his eyes wide open now, his hands clutching his rifle. Sergeants Espadrilfe took one more drag on his cigarette and flacked it into the boulders behind us. I watched it arc high in the air, bounce off a rock, scatter sparks down its side, and then land, still smoking, in the dirt.

"Where's Hank?" I asked. Hank was our Forward Observer. He usually traveled with us wherever we went, especially on a leader's recon.

"Up there," Joel said, pointing to a lone chopper circling overhead. "Registering perimeter fire.

As I flew the point, another 105 round KARRRUMPED! into the tree-line, a hundred yards away. I ducked again, involuntarily. We all did. I looked up and saw a thin gray wisp of smoke drifting lazily from the jungle past the wire.

I glanced at Lurch. He was fine. So was the First Sergeant. It's funny how you get used to it—the artillery rounds crashing around you. If you've been "in country" awhile, you don't think about it much. Only the new guys were embarrassed when they flinched. After awhile, the guy used to it, too. Sometimes, though, when a round went off nearby, you might glance at a friend, and you'd both know, deep inside, that it was getting a little too close, and you'd shake your head, or crack a joke, or say something stupid, just to let the fear out. But you never said anything about it—the fear, that is—especially to a new guy. They were edgey enough as it was, and they'd get used to it without saying anything. They'd get used to it all, sooner or later—the headaches, the dry mouth, the shakes at night, the wondering when your turn was coming that you stilred every minute of every day, just so you could handle another mission.

"You'd think they could wait for us to get off the Goddam perimeter," Jack Hibbard said. He wasn't smiling, either.

Suddenly a lone Huey came thuddering around the hillcrest to our right, heading in our direction, about a hundred feet off the ground.

"That's our baby," the captain said.

"Taxi!" Gordo shouted as he scrambled to his feet. Good old Gordo. Always groping for a laugh. God knows, we needed one.

As the Huey roared in and flacked its nose for a landing, Joel started jogging towards the ship. I turned, flashed a thumbs up at the First Sergeant, and followed.

The Huey leveled heading due north, back up the line from where I'd come. The pilot and co-pilot were talking to each other. The crew-chief was straining in his jump seat behind the cargo bay, his face deadpan, his door-gun pointing downward into the dust.

We scrambled aboard and settled in on the Huey's staved floor—Gordo, Joel, and Espadrilfe up front, with their backs to the cockpit; Hibbard, me and Lurch in back, facing forward. We'd boarded choppers hundreds of times, and this was just a reconnaissance flight, so we were wise-cracking and joking with each other, not worried about much of anything. As the chopper's turbines picked up torque, and the bird began to rise, I glanced out the open bay. Wilson and the First Sergeant were already striding back to Battalion. Another day, another dollar.

I turned back and glanced at my companions, feeling the cool air whoosh through the bay as the chopper lifted off and gathered speed. I always liked lift-offs, rising from the ground in a great whirling roar, the chopper's engine thrumming with the strain. As we rose above the trees, I looked out the door again, at our base camp falling away beneath us, and beyond it, the Division's giant helped—the "Golf Course" as we called it. A dozen Chinooks—big-cargo ships—were nestled in the grass like sleeping hippos. Two long rows of unmanned Hueys sat waiting for the word to crunk up. And farther away, on the repair line, a jumble of sweaty mechanics labored over their busted aircraft, patching them up so they could fly into battle once again.

We gained altitude slowly, heading north to clear the wire and pick up speed. I didn't know how far we'd gone, or how high we'd climbed, when the ship made a gentle 180-degree turn to the right, a "lazy 180," and headed back along the wire towards where we'd started. As we roused past the road from the perimeter back to Battalion, I could see Wilson and the First Sergeant far below us. They stopped for a moment and waved.

"KABOOM!"

Something bounced us high in the air. The chopper veered wildly to the right, then back to the left, and we began shuddering and shivering and losing altitude fast, and right away I knew something awful had happened. The ship was careening so crazily I had to grab hold of the cargo bay pole in back of Lurch. He'd grabbed it, too. The ship was bucking now like a machine gone away, and we were dropping even faster. The turbines seemed to be screaming in agony, not at all like they normally sounded, and I suddenly realized we were going to crash.

I looked at Joel. His eyes were wide with shock and disbelief. Everyone was wild-eyed, frozen in their seats, but nobody said a word. God knows what was going on in their minds, because I don't remember anything that was going on in mine, except a kaleidoscope of confusion and fear, and a sudden rush of sadness that this was the way it was going to end for us after all these months together, and how ironic it was after what we'd been through. I still couldn't believe how badly the chopper was careening around in the sky, with its turbines shrieking, and the ground racing up at us. There was no way in Hell we were going to walk away from this one.

Joel swivelled around towards the cockpit. I could see the pilot struggling with the controls. His back and neck were rigid. The ship began to rattle and shake and groan so hard I was sure it was going to break up in the air, and the ground was coming up fast. I could see the roils of triple concertina wire, and the barbed wire stakes, and the same rocky outcrop where Sergeant Espadrilfe had flacked his cigarette. We were dropping fast. Much too fast. We were "goners."
News from Home, 1991

"Dear Aunt Lois and Uncle George, Thank you for the book about the galaxy and the hermit recipe. Here, the news of the war is sad. Yet, there are bright green apples in the pale brown bowl on a yellow cloth. There is new snow. The sun is out. The children wore sliding and I made cookies. We look forward to your visit. Love."

"Dear Ellen and Howard, The snow is deep here and we went skiing, the dark green pines on the wood road cast long blue shadows over the snow. We watched the war news at dinner. Do you remember the march to Bomb? We were young; it all seemed so clear. The children are fine. Love to Hildi-dog."

"Dear Mom, The news of the war is frightening. Do you remember when he was in Viet Nam? How you saw him on the evening news, staring blankly from a truck next to a rice paddie seller a hot yellow sky? You sat like a stone for hours. I remember. Anyhow, the children send love; it is bitterly cold today. Much love."

"Dear Craig, Robert is flying over there now. I know. How are you and the children getting along? I got the pictures; Nick is tall now! I made soup the way Mom makes it: garlic instead of onions and lots of carrots in the golden broth. I wish you were closer so that I could bring you dinner and help you with the kids. Maybe it will be over soon; he'll come home. Love to all." 

"Dear Monica, How is Craig? do you know? I often know. I know how busy with the children; the nights must be so long with fear and worry. I think of her there in that grey rain and mist against the wet sienna mountians and the smell of encyclopaedias everywhere. How are you, anyhow? How is the new job and what's up with you and Joe? The news is on... go to go. Love."

"Dear Dad, The children made a snow fort and came in, soaking wet and cold; I put them in the tub so hot! We were happy and giggling in the warm, steamy bathroom with tub toys and soft towels. Their bellies are perfect: smooth and healthy; isn't human life a wonder? It is hard to believe that people's children are dying. I know you are up by the war, too. Hey! I take your pills, remember? Love and stuff."
### The Limits of Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Channels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ON/OFF</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;is bolted to the bedside stand in this I-95 motel room 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PLAY</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;its tasks &amp; no more.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REC</strong>&lt;br&gt;DORD</td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;or call back from oblivion</td>
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<td><strong>REWIND</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;rubber-like &amp; bolted for the great outdoors</td>
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<td><strong>FAST FORWARD</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt; &amp; bolted for the great outdoors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PAUSE</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;be the key to nothing but itself</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SLOW</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;&amp; no fire to warm me</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STOP</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt; or comfort me</td>
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**Mark Melnicove**<br>Dresden<br>is editor-in-chief at Tilbury House Publishers, Gardiner

**J. James Daly**<br>Springfield<br>enjoys bees and computers

### Fallout

High is the closet of my brother’s room Is a mask. I like to put it on. 
Eye goggles. I like to wear them to see the darkness 
To stare straight at the naked bulb And see a pin prick. 
Just a tiny dot of a pin prick Of light.

My father tells me When he wore those out in Nevada And the bomb went off Everything seemed like a bright summer day The kind for the beach and your best tanning lotion.

My mother says I probably shouldn’t play with those goggles Who knows what power that dark rubber strap That wraps round my head might carry To send shooting stars though my skull forever.

But my father says goggles are for protection . And with them the human eye stays safe Free to always expand and contract While the desert’s grains of sand Melt into newly made glass That slips in the spaces between your toes.

**Liz Wright**<br>West Buxton<br>is PhD student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Cloudburst in Göttingen

It was as if that other Germany were sending over yet another abomination. Not only were the rivers dirty that flowed across the border into the Bundesrepublik, but the air stank. And now thunderheads, thick and dark, were boiling into Göttingen.

This is what struck Frau Spitzweg as she made her way down the Croner Straße, her rocking motion encouraged by the counterweighting effect of the two bulging shopping bags that hung from her hands. "Schmutzig," she said to herself as she watched the clouds. The experts said they were dark merely because they were so full of water, but she would have none of it. "Schmutzig!"

Despite the warmth of the late spring afternoon, Frau Spitzweg had a fear of drafts and was wearing her wool overcoat which flared out below her knees, making her look rather bell-like. She tried to walk more quickly, but the street was so crowded. With every second her rhythmic leg, the left one, ached, reconfirming, again and again, the imminence of heavy rains. As she passed Herr Kleck's bakery she did no more than shift her eyes. Herr Kleck must have sentido the proximity of one of his steady customers, for he looked up from the crowd of women bustling before his counter just long enough to meet Frau Spitzweg's glance. Herr Kleck's eyebrows took flight, as if anticipating the four eye Brotchen and leaf of white bread that was Frau Spitzweg's regular wont. But Frau Spitzweg passed on, fearful of being caught in the rain.

Thunder sounded. It must have been very near, for it made the pavement rumble beneath Frau Spitzweg's feet. She looked up for a moment but nobody else seemed to notice. "Warm esbitte," she said to herself. Then there they'll notice."

Frau Spitzweg turned from the crowded Croner Straße onto the Kurze Geismar Straße, where there was more room to maneuver. As soon as she did she spotted Frau Huhn out on the sidewalk in front of the building she cleaned, washing a vacuum cleaner. The whole thing was in pieces, and Frau Huhn was furiously scrubbing each one with a hard bristle brush, warping up lathers that obscured her flabby hands.

It occurred to Frau Spitzweg that Frau Huhn would never get the vacuum cleaner back together before the storm. And then the first drops of rain began to fall. Frau Spitzweg greeted her friend, who looked up from her work, the talk of her babushka bobbing like antlers. Her face was still keened with the delirium of her labor, but upon seeing Frau Spitzweg her expression brightened to one of recognition.

"A cloudburst is coming," said Frau Spitzweg as she scanned the skies, still holding her shopping bags, the preliminary drops of rain tapping at the still-dry paper. She realized that it was now too late to make it home before the storm.

Frau Huhn immediately perceived her friend's look of supplication. "Let's go into the vestibule," she said. "Until it passes."

Frau Huhn's consciousness that a storm was indeed about to break upon them gave Frau Spitzweg a sense of vindication. She felt purged, as if a fever had broken.

Frau Huhn fell to her knees and began to gather up the still-wet pieces of the vacuum cleaner in her cleaning apron. Then the two old women fished themselves into the shallow vestibule of Frau Huhn's building at the rain began to fall in earnest.

Thunder sounded. The two women looked at one another and nodded. Then they looked at thePosterity on their ways home from work and shook their heads. They were so separate, no match for the storms, each scurrying along his or her own particular route. Frau Huhn, who had been born and raised in Silsinia before the war, giggled like a schoolgirl at their flight. But Frau Spitzweg only smiled benignly, flexing her fingers at her sides to alleviate the muscle fatigue induced by the heavy bags.

Frau Spitzweg began to recollect water disasters, from the biblical deluge to the time before the war when the little Leine of Göttingen had overflowed its banks, swept over the flood plain, and torn to street level, until children were chasing ducklings from their dooryards. Frau Spitzweg's rheumy eyes had forewarned her that time, too, but nobody had listened. In any case, she had been high and dry in her little house up on the Berg, looking down upon the ribbonlike torrents which had carved the city into islands, cutting people apart from one another.

Frau Spitzweg paid close attention to her friend's recollections and nodded aggressively, although she had borne witness to more of these events. "Es stimmt," said Frau Spitzweg darkly, as if Frau Huhn's understanding required prodding.

Lightning flickered, outlining the various strata of clouds. It flickered again, and trees stepped out in front of hills. The pedestrians stepped livelier, their little white bundles of warm Britchen tucked tightly under their arms. Now they were beginning to panic, and some powerful a force water is, thought Frau Spitzweg.

And then, all of a sudden, it was as if the fabric of the heavens had been rent. The drops fell like dark slugs, bursting against pavement and buildings. The two women stood and watched as the gray curtain of rain swept between them and the world.

Two well-dressed men seeking shelter said Bitte and quickly stepped into the vestibule. Frau Spitzweg smiled politely, dropping her shopping bags out of the way. By the time she had released them a young mother and her small child had entered the vestibule. The little boy was fairly soaked, his blond hair plastered down upon his head like a cap.

Thunder rolled. Lightning flashed and the boy curled himself against his mother. The two men looked at their watches. The rain fell with tremendous vigor, washing down the streets in twisting rivers, rising against the curbs. Suddenly, Frau Spitzweg felt as if these were her people in the vestibule. If only she had stepped at Herr Kleck's bakery, she would have had some bread to share with them. But as it was she only stood fast while her shoes back with every thunderclap. She watched as the boy stared out at the city of water with enormous blue eyes. The torrents began to lift over the curbs.

Frau Spitzweg stood in the vestibule with her hands folded in front of herself, realizing that it was good simply to understand something so completely that verbalizations were wasteful and unnecessary. She wasn't exactly hoping that the water would continue to rise; but for a moment her mind left go and there entered a vision of it lifting them, all of them in that vestibule, up, up, until the tremendous volume of water had swelled above and beyond the border, covering both Germany, obscuring mere geography, uniting rather than dividing. And she was at the crest of that wave, leaning out, like a figurehead, her wool overcoat opened to the wind.

Frau Spitzweg felt herself being pushed aside as a thickset, smoking man squeezed past her from somewhere deeper inside the building. Her first impulse was to reach out to him, to restrain him from going out into the storm which had fallen upon them like a sledgehammer from the socialists west. The men paused on the threshold and then flicked his cigarette out into the current. It darkened immediately and was swept away towards the Bachtal. As soon as he stepped down upon the pavement Frau Spitzweg realized that the rain had let up. Her group began to loosen and one-by-one they broke away, their faces raised toward the clearing sky. With every less Frau Spitzweg felt slightly harried, until both the vestibule and she were emptied. "Verdammt," pronounced Frau Huhn as she stepped down on the sidewalk and spread her vacuum cleaner parts out again.

Frau Spitzweg moved onto the threshold and inhaled deeply. She had forgotten how clean things smelled after a good rain. How quiet a city could become before getting on its feet again. She decided that it was a moment she could enjoy, for it was sometimes hard to tell whether such a storm was really over. And so, stepping down from the threshold like a fielding, she took up her shopping bags and replaced her steps to Herr Kleck's bakery. She wanted to have bread, in case it should rain again.

Robert Klose
Manger
mother ecology at University College

Over the Chasm

To follow with shorted breath
the impulsion,
hunting felt coarse threads wind to rope,
twist my hand back over
across the chasm,
dizzy and exhilarated,
knowing the rope's thickness
but not how it is anchored.

Shirley Glubka
Stockton Springs
Sponging with Marian

The mercilessly long line of coarse grain shore is like our friendship. We pad across seaweed, our feet all leatherned.

Today we are sponging again, with Marian insisting that the best are to be found around the next bend. "Don't pick those up. They stink. Those really stink."

I hold the nearly rancid sponge at the furthestmost tips of my hand. If I release the little dead creature, then Marian will win. In keeping it, means she will be disgusted with me and for the entire day will rant that they stink and we should wait until we go around the bend. And so she will win then, too.

Out on shore the bends come one after another, distinguished only by a rock or grassy clumps. The bend looks near but our steps seem far.

The sponges do stink. The vile whiffs from them hit like rotten flesh. They are rotting flesh of course.

I put the sponge into my net bag.

Coral twigs litter the blackish strip of sand between water and seaweed line. I want to collect them all. But there is no profit in coral twigs.

Marian is confident, as always, that she will find the best sponges today, I see it in her stance. Like any good opponent she preps me psychologically for failure. She believes the superlatives of her language and declares herself the champion.

But we are very, very good friends and the contest has just begun.

"I don't want to walk that far today, Marian. They stink here, they stink there," I wish she would listen to me today. Today was important. I've decided today I will have my own way.

I have collected five little sponges. Rusty green and brown with irregular knobs and bumps. They need a good bleaching. Marian has one sponge about the size of my five together. The sponges tumble up on shore, clinging to the seaweed humped there.

We watch the same piece of shoreline. I try to walk ahead or fall behind. More efficient, I think, cover more sand, collect more sponges. But we continue to walk the same strip. Within a foot or two. Within Marian's peripheral vision.

She dismisses my sponges, "Those stink."

We stop to reapply suntan lotion. Marian takes her glob first. It melts over her face and neck, then balloons her arms. The mole on Marian's chin bothers me today. It looks like a tiny sponge budding on her face.

"Look. Oh, look," she scoops, reaching right behind my feet, in the first few inches of ocean. That tropical aqua ocean, washing its harvest of perished animals into Marian's hands.

This time it's a perfectly regular, fluffy, clean specimen that will fetch $25 retail at Captain Nemo's market. We will each get about $4 for it, if we split today. I think we should always split. Marian will not decide until we are nearly done if we are to sell separately or together. She asks me what we should do, then she decides.

The sponge looks something like I think Marian's brain might, if it were stiffer. And laying on a bed of seaweed.

Miniscule sand flies would light on the brain-sponge. It would poke it with my toe. It would roll over on the incline of the sand.

"Stinks," I would declare. I might find a stick and impale the brain-sponge there for a while or I might dismiss it and look for better brain-sponges. It would be up to me. I could look around the bend. I could do anything I wanted. Marian's brain-sponge was on the beach. It might try to speak to me.

"Put me back in my skull," the brain calls.

"I don't know where your stupid skull is."

"It's around the bend. Take me around the next bend to find it."

"No, you stink brain."

"Please," begs the brain, "I'll do anything you say."

"I'm collecting coral twigs today, I don't like brains."

If you help me find my skull, I'll always split," it replies.

I pick up the brain-sponge with the outermost tips of my thumbnail and forefinger and place it in my net bag. Then with a slow start the bag is swung around at arms' length. The centrifugal force gathers and soon the net bag with the brain and other little sponges is whizzing in an elliptical pink blur. When the spin winds down and the bag hangs limp, the brain is quiet.

I walk around the next bend to what we call Coconut Grove Point. There, lying in the sand just inches from the shade of the grove, is Marian's body.

The plumpness of her body is starting to dry up. She has been without a brain for a long time. The head is bent to one side and the mouth hangs open. The skull is hinged Mummy Python style and hangs open too. Bones in the face are starting to show through. The heat pulls the flesh back making the head look like a conch. I would like a conch head for my shelf at home. But this one would have to rot a lot more before it looked right. There's no time to wait for that. Marian's brain has started to moan. It sees its skull.

All the freedom in the world is mine now. All every sponge on the beach. I could walk to Martello Island sponging or stay here and wait for them to come to me. All the power in the world is mine now. I can give Marian back her brain or sell it with my sponges. I might get $3 for the brain if Rodrico, the sponge buyer, doesn't look too closely at it. I never had this much control before. I'm not sure what to do.

"I don't want to be a sponge any more Marian brain," I say, and the brain moans. "Maybe I should pick something else for a while. Go up north and pick oranges. Or way, way up north and pick apples. Apples don't stink. Maybe when I sell these sponges today I'll buy a bus ticket. Sponging with Marian isn't all I can do."

The coconut grove shade is stretching farther from us. It is time to decide. The brain's murmur can hardly be heard. The sea is close by and the coconut grove shade is stretching farther from us. It is time to decide. The brain's murmurs can hardly be heard. The sea is close by and I take the net bag to the water to dip it in.

"Just like saline solution, just like brain juice. You'll feel better in no time," I empty the sloshing brain into the conch head. A couple of little sponges slide in too, but I don't bother to pick them out. I don't like poking around in peoples' brains.

The beach feels cool and we hurry to get back to the road before the sun goes down. We need to get a ride to market before Rodrico leaves at seven o'clock.

The sand always feels coarser on the way back, even to our leathered soles.

"I didn't want to walk that far today, Marian. We found plenty of sponges anyway. This is plenty of sponges for one day. We're going to split, right Marian?"

"I don't know. I didn't think about it yet. Let's decide when we get around the next bend," she says.

I squat at my friend as we walk along in the low light of the setting sun. The mole on her chin looks like a sponge is growing there. It is taking over her whole face.

Mary H. Lawrence

Sorrento

(From Andrea Vaccari, Le Herminier, Copyright Gallerie du Monumentale, Courtesy of the Roma National Museum. Photograph by Massimo Cosandey)
I shriveled, became illegible; A Large Man And A Small Woman. The woman's smile softened. "Will you take me instead of the boots?" she asked. Gigling like children, they left the store. Behind them, the store manager aged visibly. The embroidery on his shirtfront shrivelled, became illegible, like lettering on a deflating balloon. My sinuses are stuffed, and there's a fog in my brain. Oh, how I wish the aspirin would work, and my cavities drain.

Blinking Motel Sign
Pull down the shades On to the ice machine in the hall Try to remember her name, the girl in the room When did you marry her? Was it 14 years ago in San Diego or was it 14 hours ago in Reno? Or was that her, the one standing alone there under the blinking motel sign?

A Large Man And A Small Woman
A large man walked into a small store. "I need a new pair of boots," he announced to anyone who would listen. A smallish, frizzy-haired woman, perhaps in her thirties, confronted the large man. "Why do you need a new pair of boots?" she asked. "The ones you're wearing seem quite sufficient to me."

The large man retreated. He grew smaller as he backed away. "But I need them, too," the man said. "These are too hot in the summer, and they hurt my feet when I wear them all day."

The woman sneered again. "And you need them, too!" She drew closer and larger.

At this point, the man and the woman were approximately the same size. Nearby, a balloonish man in a white shirt and a bow-tie, obviously the store manager, watched in dismay.

"I want them and I need them," said the man. He was pouting, and he stamped his foot.

The woman began to laugh. She had shrunk considerably, but so had the man. They were the size of children, a little larger, perhaps.

"I need something," said the man softly. "I want something."

The woman's smile softened. "Will you take me instead of the boots?" she asked.

Gigling like children, they left the store. Behind them, the store manager aged visibly. The embroidery on his shirtfront shrivelled, became illegible, like lettering on a deflating balloon.

New Year's Eve, Augusta, ME
My sinuses are stuffed, and there's a fog in my brain.
Oh, how I wish the aspirin would work, and my cavities drain.

Josh Nadel
Augusta
teacher at UMA

Balloon Stories

A Large Policeman, A Small Boy, And A Very Large Woman
A small boy stood on a streetcorner. A large policeman approached. "You're loitering," said the policeman. "I'm sorry, but you'll have to move along." "But I'm waiting for my Mommy," said the small boy.

"I'm sorry..." said the policeman.

The boy gazed up at him. "If I had a daddy," he said, "I wouldn't want him to be like you."

The policeman grew smaller. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I'd want my daddy to be nice," said the boy.

By this point, the boy and the policeman were approximately the same size. A beautiful woman approached. The policeman gazed up at her.

"I love you," said the policeman to the beautiful woman. "I want to marry you and be a nice father to this little boy."

"Fuck you, kid," said the beautiful woman to the policeman. She was ten feet tall, but skinny. She took the little boy's hand and hauled him away down the street.

By the end of the year, the policeman had grown back to about half his original size. He never saw the little boy or the beautiful woman again.

Hans Krichels
Ellsworth
is ten feet tall but skinny

J.F. Knowles
Kittery
Works in a bookstore and on a novel

Reformed
My neighbors called me lazy when I wouldn't cut my grass but environmental consciousness put me in vogue, at last.

Richard Peck
Washington
is a truck driver and journalist

A Large Policeman, A Small Boy, And A Very Large Woman
A man going to sleep is pinning on his false eye lids for the night. They are prescription eyelids for his nightmares.

He can stare into them at night and have pleasant dreams.

This night they are westerns.

He is a cowboy.

The desert is pavements and the cacti are made of red jello.

There is a band of Indians surrounding him.

He barks and they scurry away.

He walks next to his horse through this place because the sky is low.

A mile back he hits his head on a cloud.

There is no sunset.

J.F. Knowles
Kittery
Works in a bookstore and on a novel

Reformed
My neighbors called me lazy when I wouldn't cut my grass but environmental consciousness put me in vogue, at last.

Richard Peck
Washington
is a truck driver and journalist

Light Verse

New Year's Eve, Augusta, ME
My sinuses are stuffed, and there's a fog in my brain.
Oh, how I wish the aspirin would work, and my cavities drain.

Josh Nadel
Augusta
teacher at UMA
Raised on Margarine

At Sacred Heart School, lunch was served in the basement, in a dim cafeteria with long tables and wooden benches, in a room that smelled like canned green beans and sour milk. As the nuns patrolled the lunch room, the children either waited in line or sat hunched over their lunches, eating and talking in low voices to each other.

Janine and Shannon were usually first in line. Since they brought their own lunches, all they had to do was buy milk.

"What do you have for lunch today?" Shannon asked as they sat down.

Janine opened her blue lunch box, pulled out her sandwich, and peeked inside. Then she sighed. "Spam."

"Me, too," Shannon said.

Every day it was the same thing. Spam. With margarine. Whenever Janine would complain, her mother would say, "And what's wrong with Spam? It's cheap, it tastes good, and it's neat."

But Janine didn't think it tasted good. To her, it was all salt and gristle.

"Would you rather have Vienna Sausages?" her father would ask. "Or Kippered Smoked?"

"No," Janine would answer, shuddering at the thought of eating those stinking little hoagies and that smelly fish. "No."

And so Spam it was, with an occasional peanut butter and fluff, but mostly Spam. With a shrap, both girls took out their sandwiches and began to eat.

"We could get hot lunch," Shannon said but then Eddie Bourgoin sat down next to them and they looked at his tray.

"Dried fish sticks," Janine said later.

"Rubbery carrots," Shannon added.

"And watery chocolate pudding," Janine shook her head.

"I guess we better stick with Spam. At least we get chocolate chip cookies once in awhile."

Across the table from them, Linda Davidson, the new girl in their class, sat down and opened her lunch box. The sandwich she took out didn't look like anything Janine had ever seen.

The bread was brown with little dark flecks. There was a slice of creamy, white cheese. "And not American cheese," Janine would say later. "That cheese had holes." And some kind of thing, reddish meat. Janine and Shannon just stared.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"What kind of sandwich is that?" Janine asked.

"Pastrami and cheese on rye. Why?"

"I was just wondering," Janine answered, not having an idea what either pastrami or rye were.

"Want a bite?" Linda smiled, holding out the sandwich. She was not a pretty girl. Her brown hair was too thin and straight and she had too many freckles, but she had blue eyes and a nice smile.

Janine shrugged. "O.K."

She took a small bite and the spices from the meat and bread tingled her tongue in a way it had never been tingled before. She reluctantly passed the sandwich back to Linda.

"Do you like it?" Linda asked.

"Yes," Janine answered. "It's good."

"How about you?" Linda asked Shannon. "Do you want a bite?"

Shannon shook her head. "No, thanks."

"She's a picky eater," Janine explained and Linda nodded. "Would you like to play with us at recess?"

Linda smiled. "Sure."

That afternoon, when Janine came home from school, her mother was scrubbing the woodwork. "I like to do it once a week," she would say. "I want a clean house. You never know when Memere Bourque is going to come over."

Memere Bourque lived just next door, in a grey ranch that was even smaller than their house. Her hair was snowy white and her nose was long and aquiline and she always wore wrinkled stockings and her glasses on the tip of her nose. Janine's mother said, although Memere always said it was for coffee. Whenever Janine looked out the window and saw Memere, stout and small, coming across the lawn, she would yell, "Memere's coming!" And Janine's mother would rush around the house, for a last minute check, to make sure it was clean enough for Memere Bourque.

It always was, but just barely and her mother spent most of her days polishing, scrubbing and dusting. "You don't have to keep up with my mother," Janine's father would say, stepping carefully across a newly waxed floor.

"Oh, yes I do!" her mother would answer. "Just think what she'd say if the house was dirty. My God, she's clean." And that, Janine knew, was the highest compliment her mother could give.

"Mom!" Janine called as she came into the house. The television in the living room was on and the volume was loud, so that her mother could hear "As The World Turns," even if she couldn't always see it from where she was cleaning.

"What?" her mother was scrubbing the woodwork by the bathroom. Janine came over to her. "The next time you go shopping could you buy some pastrami and rye?"

"What the hell is that?" her mother asked.

"It's a kind of sandwich. Linda Davidson had one. She let me have a bite and it was so good. Janine jigged up and down. "Please!"

"We'll see," her mother said. But Janine knew in Vielleux's Market didn't even have that stuff. And who is Linda Davidson?"

"She's the new kid in class. She played with us at recess and it worked out great. Before it was Shannon and Debbie and me and somebody always felt left out."

"Well, three is a crowd."

Janine nodded. "What are we having for supper tonight?"

"A caserole."

"What kind?"

"Noodles, Veg-all and ham," her mother answered.

"Oh."

Her mother stopped scrubbing to frown at her. "And what's wrong with that?"

"Nothing," Janine said quickly. Her mother was touchy about her cooking and Janine didn't want to start an argument. She went into her room, trying to imagine what someone who had pastrami and rye for lunch would have for supper.

"Where does this Linda Davidson live?" her mother called from the hallway.

"I don't know," Janine answered.

"14 Roosevelt Avenue," Linda said. "The next day at recess, when Janine asked her, they were waiting in line to jump rope. That's a pretty street," Janine said, thinking of the elm trees and the large, brick houses. "What church do you go to, Sacred Heart or Saint Francis?"

"I don't go to either one," Linda said. "I'm not Catholic."

"Not Catholic?" Janine heard herself say and Shannon, who was in front of Linda, turned and stared at her. "Not Catholic?" Janine said again. She couldn't imagine it. Everyone she knew was Catholic.

"Nope," Linda answered. "We're Protestants. We go to the Congregational Church."

"Well, why are you coming here?" Shannon asked.

"Because Daddy thinks it's the best school in town," Linda answered, looking from Shannon to Janine. "And he should know, he's a professor at Colby College."

"Come on, Shannon!" Debbie yelled. "It's your turn to jump." Shannon bounded away. Linda smiled at Janine and Janine tried to smile back.

"Poor thing," Janine said to Shannon as they walked home from school. "Imagine not being Catholic."

"I can't," Shannon answered and for the rest of the way home, they talked about Linda Davidson.

"Mom!" Janine called as she bust through the door. Then she stopped short. Her mother and Memere Bourque were sitting at the kitchen table. "What's the matter?" Janine asked.

"What?" her mother answered.

"Linda Davidson is a Protestant!"

"Who's Linda Davidson?"

"Memere Bourque asked, digging a piece of doughnut into her coffee."

"A new kid in my class."

Memere dropped her doughnut and coffee splattered onto the grey Formica table. "Ah, bh, n't dikt!" she said. "They're letting them into Sacred Heart, now!"

Janine's mother lit a cigarette. "Memere, it's 1965. With Pope John, things are changing."

"And why does this Linda Davidson go to Sacred Heart?"

"Because her father said it's the best school in town," Janine answered. "And he should know, he's a professor at Colby College."

"Lo," Memere sniffed. "He may be a Protestant but at least he has good taste."

Now, come here and give Memere a kiss. She held out her arms and Janine crawled into Memere's small, wide lap. As Memere kissed her cheeks, once, twice, three times, making a loud smacking sound after each kiss, Janine thought about Linda Davidson who ate pastrami and rye in a Protestant church.

"She's the most interesting person I know," Janine said solemnly to her father as he tucked her into bed that night.

"She sounds like quite a kid," her father agreed, stroking her cheek with an oil-stained finger.
“Do Protestants go to heaven or do they wind up in limbo, like the little pagan babies?”

“Oh, they go to heaven, too.”

With a frown, Janine sat up in bed and her father sat down next to her. “I wonder what it’s like to be a Protestant?” Janine asked.

Her father just shook his head. “I don’t know. But I do know that it’s time for you to go to sleep.” He kissed her forehead. “Good-night, Janine.”

“Goodnight,” she answered.

Janine’s father left, leaving the door open wide enough so that the light from the hall shined into her room. As Janine fell asleep, she snuggled up to her brown teddy bear and thought about Linda Davidson.

As the weeks went by, Linda brought different sandwiches to school, sometimes roast beef on a Kaiser roll with sesame seeds, sometimes smoked turkey with cranberry sauce, and once even something she called pâté. “But I don’t like it very much,” she said. “My mother made it for a dinner party and there was tons left over.”

Janine liked them all, even the pâté, and she started so longingly at Linda’s sandwiches that it wasn’t long before Linda was sharing her sandwiches with Janine. In return, Janine would give Linda half of her sandwich, even though she knew it wasn’t a fair trade and that Linda didn’t even like Spam and margarine sandwiches. But Linda would just shrug and say, “We’re friends.”

“Friends with a Protestant,” Memere Bourque said, shaking her head. She was in her usual seat at the head of the table. “When I was young, I wasn’t even allowed to talk to one.”

“It’s all right,” Janine’s mother said, rubbing Janine on the back. “In the new church group that Father Bolduc started, we’ve been going to different churches, attending their services, and they’re coming to ours. Next week, we’re even going to the Synagogue.”

“Well,” Memere said, helping herself to another cookie. “I’ll be careful, Alphonsine, if I was you. The next thing you know, she’ll be marrying one.”

“Oh, Memere!” Janine said and Memere winked at her. But one thing Janine’s mother didn’t like about her friendship with Linda Davidson was the way Janine just picked at her food. “I don’t care if she plays with a Protestant but I won’t have her turning her nose up at my food! I work hard to fix a good meal. It’s like a slap in the face when she just pushes it around her plate.” She shook her finger at Janine. “No more trading with Linda!”

Janine’s head came up with a snap. “But mom!”

“No, butt!”

“No!”

Janine gripped the edge of the table. “Maybe Linda’s mother could teach you how to cook.” The words burst out before she could stop them and, “Do to your room,” her mother shushed.

“Thanks a lot,” Janine said to Shannon as they walked to school the next day. She almost didn’t walk with her but deep down, she knew Shannon didn’t mean to get her in trouble, and in the end, decided she would.

“For what?”

“Tell your mom that Linda and I trade sandwiches. Your mom told my mom and now I can’t anymore.”

Shannon stopped and traffic roared past them. “Janine, I never knew that your mother would do that. Honest!”

“My mother cooks such lousy meals,” Janine said bitterly as they started walking again.

“They’re not that bad,” Shannon said.

“They’re terrible!”

As they turned the corner, and went past Mister Donut, they could see Linda and Shannon sitting on the edge of the play ground. She was jumping up and down waving to them.

“Janine!” she called. “Shannon!” Janine and Shannon ran to meet her. “Guess what? Mummy said I could have you guys over for dinner. You this Friday,” she said to Janine. “And you next Friday.” This was to Shannon. “I don’t think my Mom will let me go,” Janine said in a low voice. “Why not?”

“Because she’s mad that I like your food better than hers.”

“Maybe you should stop eating Linda Davidson’s fancy sandwiches.”

“Maybe Janine should stop eating Linda Davidson’s fancy sandwiches.” Her mother lit a cigarette and closed the lighter with a snap. Janine just stared at her. “You didn’t think I knew, did you? Well, for one thing you’ve always going on and on about how much you like Linda’s sandwiches. For another, Shannon told her mother that Linda gives you half of her sandwich and you give her half of yours.”

Janine thought. That little snitch, Shannon thought.

“Anyway, if you don’t start eating better at supper, I’ll have you take hot lunch. Not even Linda would trade you for what the school serves. And just keep in mind that Linda’s father is a College Professor and your father is a mechanic.”

Janine could not see what her father’s job had to do with food, but her mother’s voice was sharp and shrill. Janine felt her eyes sting and she looked down at her plate as a tear slid down her cheek.

“Now, Alphonseine,” her father said. “You’re making too much of this.”

“Alphonsine,” her mother said, stubbing out her cigarette in the ashtray. “I don’t care if she plays with a Protestant but I don’t have her turning her nose up at my food! I work hard to fix a good meal. It’s like a slap in the face when she just pushes it around her plate.” She shook her finger at Janine. “No more trading with Linda!”

“Humph!” Memere said.

“Please can I go? I asked softly.”

“No!” Janine’s mother said. “No!”

“Yes, Janine thought as she trudged to her room and scuffed the shiny floor with her shoes. “Yes!”

“You’re coming!” Linda said, the next day at school. “That’s great! Maybe you can ride home on the bus with me.”

“No!” Janine said quickly. “I have to go home first. But I’ll be over later. What time do you eat?”

“Oh, around 6:30 or 7:00. But I was hoping you could come over earlier, so we could just play.”

“T’ll be over as soon as I can, on Friday,” Janine said, even though she wasn’t sure how she was going to manage it.

But on Thursday, Janine’s mother said, “Our church group is having a pot luck supper tomorrow and your father and I are going. I’m making a molded Jello with fruit cocktail in it.”

-Ugh, Janine thought.

“You’ll have to eat with Memere Bourque,” her mother said. “That should
please you. You'll get a night off from my cooking."
Janine didn't dare say anything, she just nodded. She did like Memere Bourque's cooking. The food was plain, but somehow it tasted better than her mother's.

"We'll be out late, so you'll have to spend the night there."
"Tomorrow's Friday, isn't it?" Janine asked suddenly.

"It is," her mother answered.
Janine looked away from her mother and smiled.

"Shannon, wouldn't you like to have me over for supper tonight?" Janine asked, as they sat on the stools at Mister Donut. On Fridays, their mothers gave them doughnut money and they always left a little earlier, so they'd have plenty of time to eat their doughnuts.

"Sure, but you're going to Linda's." But Janine was listening. She knew she was listening.

"But if I wasn't, you wouldn't like to?" Janine persisted.

"What are you planning?" Shannon asked. There was sugar around her mouth and a spot of jelly on her nose.

"I'm planning on going to Linda's house for dinner," Janine said. "And I was wondering if you would call me at Memere's house at five."

"Just remember whatever happened the last time you tried to trick your mother. Your hair turned orange."

"Nothing is going to happen to my hair this time," Janine said. "And besides, I'm going to trick my memere, not my mother. Will you?"

Shannon sighed. "All right."

That afternoon, as Janine sat in her memere's small, shining kitchen, the phone rang. Memere jumped. "Now who could that be?"

She answered the phone and turned to Janine. "Lo, it's Shannon from just the street," she said, as though Janine didn't know where Shannon lived. "She wants to talk to you."

Janine picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"Hi," Shannon said. "I'm calling just like I said I would. I hope you're happy."

Even though Memere was standing by the stove stirring soup, Janine knew she was listening. "Yes," Janine said. "And thank-you. I'll call you if I can't come. Okay?"

Janine hung up the phone. "Shannon would like to have me over for supper tonight."

Memere frowned. "But I was looking forward to eating with you."

Janine cocked her head to one side and barred her eyes. "Please, Memere! I'll still be spending the night." The frown on Memere's face gave way to a smile, as Janine knew it would. "All right. You. Come give me a kiss. Will somebody bring you home? It's just up the street but I don't want you walking home in the dark."

Janine kissed her Memere. "Oh, yes," she said, even though she wasn't sure who it would be.

Janine slipped out of her memere's house. The sun was setting and there was a low bank of dark clouds on the horizon. The air was cold and as Janine ran up the side walk, fall leaves swished beneath her feet. Roosevelt Avenue was about two miles from her house, and if she hurried, she could make it there before dark.

Janine ran up the street, past Shannon's house and around the corner, she began to feel guilty. Poor Memere had been too easy to trick. But I didn't tell any lies, Janine thought somewhat desperately. She had been careful about that. But, she had deliberately mislead Memere, and Janine was sure that must be a sin. "Mortal or venial?" Janine wondered. "Big sin or small?"

Although she felt guilty, she didn't feel guilty enough to turn around. They'll never know, Janine thought.

But God will, a voice said.

Why would God care if I eat at the Davidson's? He doesn't care about that, the voice said. He cares about you disobeying your mother.

"Shut-up," Janine said crossly and the voice went away.

It was starting to get dark, and Janine cut through backyards, dodging stiff laundry, picnic tables, and dog poop. By the time she reached Roosevelt Avenue, her hands were cold and she was out of breath, but she managed up number 14, a large brick house, and rang the door bell.

Linda's mother answered the door. For a moment she just stared at Janine.

"Well, my goodness," she finally said. "We had just about given up on you. Linda's been calling your house but there's no answer."

"My parents are out," Janine answered. "I was at my memere's."

Linda's mother stepped aside. "Come in. You look cold. Did you walk all that way?"

"Yes," Janine said and then added quickly. "But I like to walk. I walk all the time."

Linda's mother raised an eyebrow.

Janine shifted from one foot to the other. "Linda's sandwiches are so good. I just had to come over and see what supper was like." Linda's mother shook her head and laughed. "Well, come this way. Linda's in the kitchen helping me get things ready. We'll make you some hot cocoa to warm you up."

As Janine followed Linda's mother through the living room and into the kitchen, she could see right away that this was not what her mother would call a "clean house." There were books and newspapers everywhere, in book cases, on the floor, on coffee tables. Linda's shoes and book bag lay in a heap by the door and Janine had to step over them. -Mom would have lit it if I left mine like that, Janine thought.

Coffee cups and glasses, some still half full, sat on top of the papers and a large black dog lay on the couch. He thumped his tail at Janine as she went by.

The kitchen was even worse, with a sink full of dirty dishes and pots and bowls from one end of the counter to the other. In the middle of this mess, on a stool, stood Linda, calmly tearing lettuce into a bowl.


"Sorry the place is such a mess," Linda's mother said. "But I've been cooking all day. I write cook books and I'm always testing some crazy recipe. My poor family! The things they've had to eat," Linda and her mother laughed. "Now, I'll make you some hot cocoa and you can help Linda with the salad."

And the next thing Janine knew, she was standing on the stool beside Linda and chopping vegetables for the salad. At home, Janine was never allowed to help in the kitchen. Her mother was afraid she'd make a mess. Even if it didn't matter. Linda dropped a whole tomato on the floor and her mother didn't say word. She just stood by the stove and stirred the hot cocoa as Linda scooped the tomato up with a paper towel.


"Sure," Linda answered.

"How's the salad coming?"

"Almost done." Linda's mother brought them each a steaming mug of cocoa. It was richer and smoother than anything Janine had ever tasted. "It's the Dutch chocolate," Linda's mother said. Janine just sipped it and sighed.

Dinner was even better than Janine had imagined it would be. She hadn't really known what to expect and nothing in her eating experience at home could have prepared her for crusty french bread, still warm, a mushroom quiche, thick with cream and cheese, a salad with a home made vinaigrette, and for dessert chocolate mousse and crisp butter cookies.

Janine had never had quiche or mousse or french bread. She had never even had butter. "Would you please pass the margarine?" she asked, reaching for a piece of bread.

"Butter," Linda corrected.


Linda's mother smiled at Janine. "Butter or margarine. It doesn't really matter what you call it."

But Janine knew it didn't matter, especially since before tonight, she hadn't known there was anything else. Margarine was what they ate at home, on their Wonder bread, on their pop tarts, on their Spam sandwiches. Janine spread the butter thick on her bread. Whom knows when I'll get butter again, Janine thought. Probably not until I come over here again. Or I leave home.

Linda ate and ate and ate. She had seconds on everything, even dessert.

"Someone likes your cooking," Linda's father said.

"Maybe I should have you over more often," Linda's mother said, with her elbows on the table as she sipped her coffee. "You could help test my new recipes."

"That would be great!" Janine said. "My mother never cooks anything like this. All we ever get is a disgusting casserole or a dried piece of meat. I wish my mom could cook like you do!"

Linda's mother and father looked at each other. "Well," Linda's mother said. "Not everybody is in to cooking the way I am. Which is probably just as well. I never seem to get anything done around the house."


"Speaking of cleaning," Linda's mother said. "I've got to clean up the kitchen. Do you two want to play for a bit before it's time for Janine to go?"

Both girls nodded and Linda said, "Come on, I'll show you my room."

Janine would have had fun, if her stomach hadn't felt so full and heavy. Linda's
room had a canopy bed, a window seat, and book shelves crammed with books. She had Barbie, Midge, Skipper and Ken and a complete kitchen set for them. As Linda and Janine had Barbie and Ken cook supper, Janine's stomach felt worse and worse.

When, from the bottom of the stairs, Linda's mother finally called them, Janine was almost relieved. Although she liked playing with Linda, all she really wanted was to lie down.

"Why did I eat so much?" Janine thought as she sat in the back seat with Linda. She had one hand pressed to her head and one hand on her stomach.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"I don't feel good," Janine whispered.

She pressed her warm cheek against the cool window and could just barely tell Linda's mother where her Memere's house was when they turned onto her street.

"Thank you," Janine said weakly, getting out of the car. "Supper was wonderful."


As the car pulled out of the drive way, Janine looked toward her memere's house and she could see a familiar face peering out the window at her. -Well, Janine thought, -What am I going to say to her?

"Did Shannon's mother drive you home?" Memere asked as soon as Janine was in the house. "Lo, they lie just down the street."

"No," Janine said, swallowing. Her mouth had an odd, sour taste. "Shannon's mother didn't drive me home."

Memere put her hands on her hips. "Well, who did then?"

Janine opened her mouth, but instead of answering, her stomach retched and she was sick, gloriously sick, all over her memere's shining floor.

"Mon Dieu!" Memere shrieked as vomit hit the floor and splattered her apron, the cup boards, and the refrigerator.

With a gasp, Janine gripped the table. Her throat burned, her eyes watered, and her nose was running.

In a flash, Memere had her out of the kitchen and into the bathroom. Memere's stomach was forgotten. Memere washed Janine's hands and face and helped her into her pajamas. She tucked Janine into the bed in the spare bedroom and put a bucket by her side.

"Poor babe," Memere said, stroking Janine's clammy forehead. "Call me if you need me."

Janine just nodded. She was too weak to talk. Memere left and Janine lay in the dark room. As Janine fell into a queasy sleep, she could hear the sound of running water and of her memere scrubbing the kitchen. -Poor Memere, Janine thought.

Janine closed her eyes and tried to sleep but couldn't. All she could hear was the sound of Memere scrubbing. She opened her eyes and shivering, climbed out of bed. She tip-toed through the small living room and into the kitchen.

"Memere?" Janine called. "Memere!" Janine called again, this time louder.

Memere jumped and turned her head. "What are you doing out of bed?"

"I have to tell you something."

"Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"No," Janine said. "It can't!"

"All right. All right." She grunted as she struggled to her feet. "Mon Dieu! I'm not getting any younger."

She hobbled to the couch in the living room and sat down, patting the spot beside her. Janine sat down next to her and snuggled against her warm side.

"Memere?" she said. "I've been bad."

"Aside from throwing up all over my kitchen, what have you done?"

"I went to Linda Davidson's for supper."

"Linda Davidson the Protestant? How come? Especially since your mother told you not to."

"I just had to see what they ate for supper. Linda's sandwiches are so good."

"And was supper good?"

"It was wonderful. But I ate too much. That's why I was sick."

"And Linda's mother brought you home afterwards," Janine nodded. "I see. It begins to make sense now. And you tricked me into thinking you were going over to Shannon's house for dinner. That wasn't very nice, was it?"

Janine shook her head, pressed her face against her memere's soft arm, and began to cry. "There, there. Beau babe. Don't cry. Memere's not mad at you. But what you did was not good."

Janine gulped. "I know."

"On the other hand," Memere said. "Your mother, she is not such a good cook. She keeps a clean house. But her cooking! Mon Dieu! Memere shuddered.

"Who can blame you for liking Linda's sandwiches?"

"Are you going to tell Mamie and Daddy?" Janine asked.

Memere shook her head. "No. This one is between you, me and God."

By the couch, there was a small table with a drawer. Memere opened the drawer, pulled out a black case and opened it. Janine saw the glisten of crystal as Memere lifted out her best rosary, the one with the sterling silver cross.

"Here," Memere said, handing her the rosary. "You go to bed and say this, all the way through. And no falling asleep until you're done!"

Janine nodded, carefully holding the rosary in cupped hands. As she rose slowly from the couch, Memere patted her back.

"When you're done, put the rosary on the night stand by the bed. I wouldn't want anything to happen to that rosary."

"Yes, Memere." Janine was taking small baby steps across the living room floor.

"And Janine?" Memere said, Janine stopped and turned her head slightly.

"Next time, don't eat so much."

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The Fairest of Them All

Laurie Graves
Winthrop
212 Market Street
no, 2052

I didn't mean to cause trouble
but it's a little boring
just hanging on the wall day after day,
people coming up and peering into you
but all they ever see is themselves
—get the picture?

And that woman, honest!
She used to glare so hard at herself
I thought it would make me crack.

So finally, I had to say something—
she was asking for it, wasn't she?
I didn't mean any harm, really,
this is the truth, my function after all,
or that's what she insisted on believing.
I don't exactly remember how Snow White came into the picture. Well, if it hadn't been her,
it would have been someone else,
and things turned out all right in the end,
didn't they? It was an adventure for her,
all of those nights in the woods
with seven tiny white-bearded men.

They adored her, and she was so sweet!

Doesn't it give you the creeps?

As for the apple, everyone tried to warn her,
but you know the old story—
she one about innocence and apples!
It's clear that I'm blamless.
Who am I to change a myth?

But the bit about the kiss at the end,
the prince pulling the golden piece
of fruit right from her mouth
with his lips—Don't try it myself.

And I'm just a mirror after all.

My reflections only go skin deep.

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Nancy Devine
Waldoboro
Waldoboro Adult Ed. courses
Rapture

And there were bears,  
Angry bears  
that missed MacDonald's—  
Hungry bears  
who watched the dumps run dry—  
Puzzled bears  
who walked the streets of Bangor  
and the orange jackets and the firesticks had gone.

They started walking down the highways,  
Never saw a brother  
that mangled and splattered on the roadside anywhere.

Soon they broke out windows,  
entered houses,  
licked clean the bones  
they found therein.

The world was theirs.  
They marched on Portland  
No one stopped them.

They invaded Boston,  
didn't like it,  
ambled down the Pike,  
met a gang who'd wandered northward  
ever scaring up a hiker  
all along the Appalachian Trail.

They held a council  
(without fire), decided that,  
together, they could take Detroit.  
Sitting in the silent darkness,  
they thanked the Bear Lord,  
for answering prayers  
of their grandfathers' moons and moons ago.

Erleen J. Christensen  
S. Unity  
is building a house

Shaman's Love Song

you're a  
deer  
when you're bear

Sylvester Pollet  
E. Holden  
edit & teaches at UMO

We've had it with these aggressive women. That's why we've formed this men's group, URSUS, and rented this leaping field.

For 25 years, the Earth Mother had us fooled. We sat around castrating ourselves with these neat little Swiss Army knives:

a scissors, tweezers, magnifying glass, everything you need.  
We did this until this bear came by, whose tongue was on fire  
with real masculine poems and the legend of Iron Dick, who recovered his lost testicle from the bottom of the lake.

We're not ashamed of our penises, large or small!  
What the huck! Whatever they say is just sour grapes.

Maybe our bodies are imperfect, but we join our hands in the great chant of self-forgiveness, the joy of being male among men.

Often our only problem is just finding a bear.  
Sometimes we'll sit around chanting, and the bear will arrive,  
shuffling, out of the forest and we can begin. If not,  
one of our elders, Robert from Minnesota, a poet,  
will put on the beardskin over his street clothes.  
As the light fades into evening, and he starts a story,  
and we're passing the jug of whiskey from the deep hairy source, who'd ever guess it wasn't the real thing!

William Carpenter  
Stockton Springs  
teaches at College of the Atlantic
The Light on the Porch

"... the door to men's feelings is grief..."

Robert Bly

[1]
Was it the black labrador whose eye
budded from the socket,
that I lifted from the icy road
in front of our house,
his limp body draped over my arms
blood from his gaping mouth
leaving, when I returned the next morning
a thick trail on the road where I carried him?
The traffic of emotions
had slowed or veered down other lanes
on other days in my middle age life.
Finally this one vehicle
accelerated on an unmarked road
when he leapt, as he always did,
off the embankment to cross the road
as he always did and trot up to the light
on the porch. He heard tires muted
by snow and felt his sure nails
slip on ice and trow to loop, one foot
after another, from the tires.
He had time to leap. We all do. We quick ones
are seen in his high beams.
This is the way we go.
The way we always go.
Home to our family.

[II]
I placed the still warm body in the wheelbarrow.
break were the children,
with the killer, a teenager,
who likes the feel of speed in the dark.
We told the drider,
"It is all right. There was nothing you could do. He was a runner. We let him run."
In an hour I went out again,
hunted and scavred from sub zero winds,
to put him in a box
for protection its greasy remains
from the raw light of day. His bloody skull
frost to the metal. I kicked him off.
He scattered still fuscid, into the box,
only his head and legs stiff and protruding.
I shoved them down, his crushed skull,
but he kept propping up as if
there was still life in the bones.
Desperate, I wanted him down and dead.

[III]
It was then
I felt the hand press
of the high school coach, Duchem's
hand on my helmet tilting.
"Come on, come on, Spong. Try. Try and hit me..."
Each time I bounced on him, my face flinched
and dinked into dirt. I tasted it on my lips.
He laughed, "Come on, come on, you stinky get up... ..." Slowed down I would catch up
as if by instinct to the older man's hand
until I was so trained as a hitter
that in a big game I steered my huge frame
toward a fleet back and slammed,
full bodied, into him, straight on,
my helmet crushed into his chest.
He laid immobile, struggle to lift his head,
beneath me. I prayed to myself
a prayer of a linebacker

"Do not, God, let him get up."
Duchem rested his large palm
on my shoulder paid
when I jogged back to the bench to rest.
"Nice job. Nice job."
The lovely runner never
ran in that game again.
He was carried off
the field, draped in the open arms
of two older men. I can now feel
his slack skin in my arn.
I am one
of those older men who rests him gently
on the ground. His eyes are on mine.
My face is bloodless... Cold.
He tells me, "My legs are stone."
I touch them. They are warm.
"No. I treasure him, "they are fine muscular,
lean and sinewy, the legs of a runner
who will run again."
He informs me, "My heart has stopped."
I put my hand on his chest. His heart
a drum on, although it cannot hear
with his helmet on. I remove
his helmet and brush back his thick
black hair. "What have you done?"
He asks me. The sweaty fingers
of my closed lips crack.
Who am I? The linebacker who hit him?

The stranger who comes to
the door to confess, "I have
killed something!" I admit.
"I broke you in your fall stride."
He smiled and put his hand
which was young and warm
on my cold face and
wiped away the blood
which is his blood.
The muscles of his ancient
arm go slack in my hands.
He wants to run the length of the field.
I let him go. He is a runner.
He must run.

[IV]
We carried the body with the body
to a dug hole and buried it,
covered it with earth and snow,
leaving no stone to mark the spot
because we know where it lies
and know where to find
the bones and blood. Grief
has its own map, its own soil.

Bruce Spang
Readfield
works in the Gardiner
School system

Mincemeat

One fat deer
hangs by the hoofs
from a beam
in Nana's barn,
its eyes wide open
and dull like marbles.
Dad stalks proudly
next to it,
he grins as
Grumpy takes a picture.
Nana wipes her hands
on her apron
and they push me
next to the carcass,
but I can't smile,
it stinks
and blood drips
near my feet.
Dad knaps and
tells of his skills,
and Nana plans
her mincemeat pies.

Michael Gregg Michaud
Los Angeles, CA
.is an Augusta native

In The Ditch

On Sunday morning a jogger paced
and jumped puddles on his back route.
On the side of the road car trucks
pressed into what was left of ice crust
and sand (in quick in and out, Saturday's
parking place). In the ditch reckless
pitched into the mud, snow, and new water—
three books, the remainder of last night's
teenage lists. Patty's Partyline, a pretty
production vamped 500 numbers over eyes
that energizes. Another title unreadable.

The third — Group Grope — froze him
hard like envy. "Animals! What do they know?"
But curiosity of the groins gets to the best.
He listened, no cars.
Looked around, only himself and those eyes!
He tucked the books into his front pocket
and jogged on.

Peggy Clark Contreras
East Winthrop
.is a jogger-pig

In My Mind

I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
Sure I tell you?
I had an antler in my eye
And there in the bushes
Where I thought I saw it
I fired at his creamy ass.
Two munitions flittered up,
Dreamy and white.
I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
I begged her not to die.

Glenn Frankenberg
E. Wilton
is a writer.
Stompt

I haven't got a thing against poets. Live and let live has always been my way of looking at life. Poets can rhyme and recite all they want as long as I go about my own business in peace. But when one of them walks up your driveway with a knapsack on his back, and he's your wife's only nephew, it becomes the kind of rotten luck that shouldn't happen to anyone.

After the hitchhiker had been fed enough to calm a colony of starving terpines and he was safely upstairs streaming in the tub and using all of Betty's bubble bath, I let her know that I wasn't planning on selling my cement contractor's business and opening a boardinghouse.

"You can fuss all you want, Virgil Harrison," Betty replied, "but Jonathan can stay as long as he likes!"

I make most of the decisions in our marriage, and Betty prefers it this way since she can never make up her own mind about things, but it's an entirely different matter when it comes to her relatives. The trouble with Betty is that she can never do enough for them.

"If he decides how long to stay," I said, "It will be until the food runs out."

"Since when have we begrudged a little hospitality to friends and family?" asked Betty with her bright button of a smile. "You can be so amusing when you're being a grously grump!"

She was just trying to get me off balance and to shut me up. You live long enough with a woman like Betty and all that female maneuvering is better understood.

"I haven't a thing against June's son," I told her, "even if he is a thirty-two-year-old phony without a penny and has a matted beard and ties that long pigtail of his with bits of ribbon."

Betty didn't mind my mentioning the beard and pigtail, but the word phony really set her on fire.

"You don't have to worry your head about him eating you out of house and home," she said trying to keep her voice down. "Four days from now he's got the first of several important poetry readings at leading universities!"

I've nothing against people showing off and letting others know that one is home," I admitted. "But if they're showing off for the wrong reasons, that's a different story."

"How many Harrisons do you know who have spent a weekend with the Robert Creeleys and once shared the same platform reading poems with Robert Duncan?"

"I can't think of one," I admitted. "As a rule, we Harrisons are careful about the company we keep."

"You're just jealous because of all the national attention Jonathan is getting and because he is twenty years younger than you."

Betty was being unfair and she knew it. My cement contracting had paid our bills for more than thirty years, not to mention two vacations in Hawaii and several business conventions around the country.

"I don't mind whiskers and a pigtail and the Robert Creeleys to measure success in this life."

"It's Creeley. The Robert Creeleys."

"That too," I told her.

"Then I tried to make her see things as they were right up front."

"The fact remains, Betty, your nephew, Jonathan Stompt, American poet and freeloader, gobbled half of what we had in the refrigerator, and he arrived only two hours ago!"

"And it won't hurt your waistline one little bit," replied Betty.

"When you took him upstairs, did he say how long is long when it comes to staying? Tell me fair and square."

"Unfortunately, only two days and three nights. Because of the poetry readings," she replied.

"At leading universities," I added.

With the exception of when I had my hemorrhoid operation, those next three nights and two days were the longest of my life. I'm out of the house much of the time during the daylight hours, but this was the week my crew of four was laying a sidewalk on the other side of town, and there was no need for me to supervise the job. I had four estimates to get out for possible contracts, and I figured it would be best if I also caught up on a backlog of paperwork.

My office is a desk and a couple of filing cabinets in a corner of the dining room. The dining area is located between the kitchen and living room, so I not only caught the traffic of Betty and young Stompt traipsing back and forth but I overhead and saw much of what went on.

But Betty belongs to a literary club called, "The Two O'clock Authors." It's really nothing but a bunch of old hens who meet and read to each other every third Thursday of the month in one of the homes of the twelve or fourteen members.

Betty writes weird things she calls poems, and sometimes she puts together a·nd writes strange stories that make no sense to me. If we had had kids, Betty probably would have found something else to do; something more sensible to use up her spare time.

"I wish you would read some of these new poems you were telling me about," I heard Betty say from the living room.

I could see them out of the corner of my eye as I tried to make the adding machine chatter more of its own crazy sounds.

"I suppose you mean my new sequence," said Stompt coming out of his long-legged sprawl on the sofa. "I feel these are technically closer to what I have been trying to achieve within line structure."

"Knowing your genius for line," gushed Betty, "I'm sure these poems are terribly innovative!"

Stompt made a sound somewhere between a chuckle and a sigh.

I don't pretend to know much about poetry, but when I heard him say sequence I knew in my bones that I was in for the long haul.

"These are closer to the central concerns of good old WCW," said Stompt.

I glanced up and saw Betty's puzzled look.

"William Carlos Williams," I said the nephew with the patience of a grandparent telling a child how the shoelace is tied.

"It's a Bob called Cal, Betty," juniotted Betty. "And Stompt's blond beard would tremble a few times to show his surprise. "Why Robert Lowell, of course," he would explain. "All his friends called him Cal."

I didn't once let myself fall into that trap. If Timothy was a stranger to me, it was no great loss. I said nothing as I looked through Stompt as he went on talking. The bored look on my face stayed stuck enough to suggest that I thought Timothy was better forgotten than mentioned.

"Betty was too much under her nephew's spell not to get sucked in whenever he spoke of his poet friends. She must have asked the same kind of question a hundred times during the visit until a whole crate of Dicks, John, Boes, Vals and Peters was unpacked."

I don't know if Stompt read poems the way other poets do, and I'm not going to waste time finding out, but it kind of puzzled me how he acted just before he started in.

He would cock his head to one side, lick his lips, tug at his beard, and finally his shaggy blond head would slope down between his rounded shoulders as he looked down at his lap. Then he would frown, like someone who had been given a bad quote on a concrete job, before slowly looking up. At that moment, his eyebrows seemed to get mixed up with several important blinks of his half-closed eyelids. Betty was impressed, but I wasn't being taken in by these acrobatics one iota.

His poems were a lot like Betty's-they made no sense and seemed to wander all over the place. If I've got to hear poems, I want something solid and understandable like Kipling's "If" or a Robert Service poem about men lustying for gold. Betty's poem about dewdrops on the sunflowers in our garden and two from Stompt's sequence about some smoky mirror in a fun house in San Francisco and a fat lady who died in Poughkeepsie, New York, are as boring to me as the fine print in a purchase agreement for a cement mixer.

Listening to Stompt read his poems wasn't the ordnel idea I thought it would be. Of course it was no outing with a loaded picnic hamper, but I was able to keep the adding machine running. Stompt read his poems slowly and he never raised or lowered his voice. They came out in the same monotone way from beginning to end. It was a lot like hearing a woman with a tired voice reading names from the yellow pages of a telephone book.

"That was wonderful!" cried Betty when he was finally through.

"Did you really like them?" asked Stompt, trying to milk another squeal of delight from her audience of one.

"Oh yes, Jockethen!" she replied. "Ç'est à vrai voi de force!"
Betty is always poking a few French expressions into people's faces when she doesn't understand what is going on or being said.

"Gary was the first to suggest that I develop the sequence," I had only to wait two or three moments before Betty asked her question.

"Gary!"

"Why Snyder," replied Stompt. "And Allen was terribly thrilled when he heard I had completed them!"

Then for some reason, perhaps out of pity, he spared his aunt from asking.

"Of course," said Stompt, "I meant Ginsburg."

I didn't say much to our American poet that first day, and I was mercifully called away just before supper when one of the generation turned transmembrane on our sidewalk job. By the time the machine was repaired and I returned home to view Old Mother Hubbard's refrigerator and the remnants of a meal, Stompt was meditating on the floor of the living room and making a hellish hum that would encourage the howling dogs of any neighborhood.

The two of us didn't get around to exchanging ideas until the next morning and breakfast. I had several early telephone calls to make, and by the time I got to theransacked table young Stompt was probing his yellow bicuspids with a toothpick and finishing the last of the cocoa and mantimellows.

"Well, Uncle Virgil," said the poet in a tone of voice that suggested it was time I was given a place in the sun, "what's new in the world of sidewalks?"

I ignored the professional dig and grabbed my eggs over and bacon that Betty handed me.

"Don't call me uncle," I told him. "I'm Virgil to you, or V.H. if you prefer. I never did cotton to the idea of unclehood; and I'd rather not begin this morning."

Stompt giggled like I had just told a smutty story to the boys down at Slow Mama's Cafe.

"I hope you are aware of the significance of the name Virgil," he said after the fun was over. "It isn't everyone who is so honored."

I don't like it when people get personal. Friends and my Monday night poker pals can tease me all they want and ask questions of a private nature. But to put distance between us, I said the first outrageous thing that entered my head.

"I was named after my mother's brother, Virgil," I told him. "He eventually ran off with a young chambermaid from the local hotel and left Aunt Ida with five kids and a social disease."

"Virgil!" said Betty.

Uncle Virgil and Aunt Ida had only one child, George, and clap and running away was unlikely as my uncle was a stuffy Methodist minister all his poor adult life.

Like most self-centered people, Stompt was no exception—say anything to him and he would believe it from the ground up.

"My yes!" he said shaking his head and swaying the pigtails. "What would we humans be without our dalliances?"

I didn't say anything as I nibbled some bacon.

"Yes Virgil," Stompt began all over, "it might amaze you to know that your name comes from the great Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro."

I wasn't amused or interested.

"How can you possibly remember such details?" asked Betty proudly from the direction of the stove.

"70 B.C. to 19 B.C."

"Truly amazing!" said Betty.

"You should have been a teacher," I smiled, "instead of dropping out of Reed College after only two semesters."

"Academia deadens the voice," he replied.

"And boys groceries," I reminded him.

"Stompt isn't everything," said Betty, repeating her favorite expression and defending her nephew at the same time. I ignored her and turned back to Stompt.

"You may be right," I admitted. "Like most jobs, teaching probably has its limitations, though the thought of becoming an educator did cross my mind the year I graduated from Princeton."

I said it in the same la-di-da way some people do when they sip tea and stick out their little fingers while holding the cups.

Stompt's mouth fell open as his eyes widened.

But my success was short-lived.

Leave it to Betty to spill every bean in the pot. She never did have appreciation for joking.

"Virgil grew up in Princeton, Maine, and graduated from their grammar school."

The surprise went out of Stompt's eyes, and he was once again himself. He immediately launched into stories about literary people.

After my bacon and eggs, toast and extra gulp of coffee, I left them. They didn't notice me leaving the kitchen, and they probably didn't hear the telephone ringing when I went to the bathroom to rinse my dentures. By the time I got to the dining room, the caller was off the line, but Stompt was still gossiping. He was pulling another poet from his crate, and Betty was saying "oh yes, of course, why naturally"—as if she knew what her nephew was talking about.

I had lunch with my crew at Slow Mama's because it was near our sidewalk construction site. Eating out was my idea. When I called Betty, I lied and said we had just mixed a bad load of cement and to go ahead without me. To tell the truth, Stompt was really getting on my nerves by this time, more than my even disposition could handle, and for Betty's sake I was making myself as scarce as possible.

As the saying goes, I had one of those big cards up the frayed cuff of my shirt-sleeve. My favorite poker pal, Ed Sharpe, and his wife, Laura, were scheduled to have dinner with us that night. Betty had forgotten about the engagement because of Stompt's visit, and she wanted me to call it off. I can't do that!" I shouted into the telephone. This followed after I had lied about the cement. "It's too late!"

Laura always cooks like a demon before coming to our house for dinner. She's one of those plump, giggling housewives with a genius for remembering recipes. A good soul but squeaky as the hinges of hell.

"I suppose you're right," said Betty sadly. "Only this is Jonathan's last night with us."

I had all I could do to keep my voice steady, joy has always been hard for me to suppress.

"Just try to make the best of it," I replied with sweetness and understanding.

"I had a vision of big Laura Sharpe cornering young Stompt and reciting her encyclopedia of recipes from apple strudel to zucchini.

Ed behaved the way I expected Ed to behave when coming face to face with the likes of a poet. He reached out and held Stompt's limp hand for a moment before pulling his own back for keeps. Ed was more amused than disgusted that a grown man should have a pigtail with more ribbons than a winning pickle maker at a county fair.

While our two wives brought in a smorgasbord of goodies prepared in Laura's kitchen, Stompt held the door open for the girls. I could tell by the smile on his face that he thought he had another good thing going like when he unloaded his Virgil trivis on me.

After the platters had been set up in the kitchen, buffet style, we all went into the living room and I served cocktails.

Ed and I talked shop—cement for me, he wire fencing. I was spared most of Stompt's big bash of words about poets and their drinking problems. He dragged a dozen of his own kind through the mud while Betty sobbed and Laura giggled.

Stompt had a mind that was rigged for only one direction. If he saw a bird, he would quote a poem; if someone yawned, he might tell a story about some slumber party after a poetry reading; even a toilet swinging into his line of vision would remind him of poets suffering from stomach disorders.

I saws look on Betty's face that I didn't much fancy. She was holding a folder.
of Stompt’s poems and waiting for a full in the conversation.

“Come on everybody,” I shouted as I exploded from my chair, “let’s get after Laura’s grub!”

Betty was furious with me, and I knew she would squirm away some choice words for later.

Let Rome burn, I thought, as I heard Laura giggle and say that Betty was one of the cooks too.

I knew Ed wanted to talk more about wire fencing, but he also liked the sound of a dinner bell.

If people were cattle and frightened into eating, the fastest steer in the stampede would be Stompt. He was well into the dining area with arms pumping and pigtail bouncing before the others were out of their chairs.

“Sweepen your drink,” I told Ed, “and bring it along.”

Buffet style at our house is loose. We sit where we like, and we eat what we want. I don’t play host among friends; we all dish in and say little until we’re full. I was wrong about Stompt’s mind. Stick food in front of him and the poetry is forgotten. He ate as if tomorrow was going to be busted. From dish to dish he gulps and chews was a hum, much lower in tone than the ungodly drone I heard from the living room the night before, but rather like a magento about to break down.

Sweating and full, we got up and filed back into the living room and collapsed in our chairs. Betty is a good cook, but add an inspired one like Laura, and the Refunds and Tams renew start dancing in the streets.

“You girls are something else,” said Ed.

“I must have that mushroom recipe,” said Betty to Laura.

This was a mistake, and I knew Betty realized it the moment she closed her mouth.

Laura immediately listed all the ingredients, the twists and turns of opening Stompt’s poems and waiting for a lull in the conversation.

(With apologies to Robert Frost.)

I sighed.

Then Ed cooched his head, puzzled.

“What on earth is that!”

“What?” I said.

“That noise.”

From the kitchen came the depressing sound of more rats ruining the plaster.

“You’ve got rodents,” said Ed.

“No,” I replied. “It’s only our visiting poet.”

Betty suddenly lost all her sluggishness and couldn’t say enough to Laura about her nephew’s new poems.

“You must be so proud,” Laura added.

An insane rodent was now scurrying and chomping its way through some casserole or meat dish.

“He’s going to bust a gut,” Ed commented.

“No such luck,” I replied.

Betty didn’t hear me. She was now telling Laura what a tragedy it was for The Two O’clock Authors that Stompt didn’t have time to read his poems locally. Because of commitments at leading universities.

Ed and I knew the evening was over about the same time.

“It’s been great V.H.,” said Ed.

All my poker friends call me that.

“Early to bed, etc.,” I said getting to my feet.

Betty and Laura went into the kitchen to clear the table. I could hear Stompt negotiating with Laura for leftovers and Betty stacking the dirty dishes.

“Gosh, V.H.,” said Ed, “where do they ever come from?”

I knew what he meant.

“Poets aren’t born,” I told him. “People who don’t like people lift stones and find them.”

Laura’s got a few weird ones in her family too,” grinned Ed, “but nothing like that!”

The three came into the hallway where Ed and I were standing. The women were carrying Laura’s dishes.

“Here you go, Ed,” said Betty balancing a half dozen platters.

Stompt opened the door and led them down the walkway to their car. The women were carrying Laura’s dishes.

“I’m sorry about that Titanic incident
But I wasn’t sure where to put my iceberg
And the North Atlantic seemed as good a place
As any other. I didn’t mean to level Tokyo
But my pet Godzilla got out of his cage
And there was just no stopping him.

My sincere apologies for the San Francisco Earthquake but when I taught the Jolly Green Giant clog dancing I didn’t realize that the results would be so disastrous.

C.J. Stevens
Weld
prospects for gold on Maine rivers

Playing Bridge
on a Stormy Evening

(With apologies to Robert Frost.)

Playing Bridge on a Stormy Evening

Whose face is this I think I know
Her husband’s in Chicago though;
And I can’t see me passing here
To “footsie” her toes like this below.

My partner sure must think it queer
I’ve missed my bid with it so near;
And trumped a trick that he should take
This longest evening of the year.

She gives her head a little shake
And smiles as if she’s on the make.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of falling cards with a three heart stake.

Light Verse

Clam Dig Paradox

With feet splashed-out and set for strength,
With clernhoe held in steady hand,
I place the prongs at full arm’s length,
To start my first search in the sand.

Once a hole, about two-foot wide,
Is dug in about two-foot deep,
I slice more off the forward side,
To look for juice to upward seep.

For clams dig-in with quicks alert;
And filled with their last taste of brine,
So, when they sense my hoe, they squint,
Which seen, allow them to be mine.

Bob Bartlett
Biddeford
Is a part-time philosophy
major at USM

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Gavin Healy
Bangor
is a writer and a student

Woman Killed by White Tornado

“Clears like a white tornado.”

—Mr. Clean ad

Her kitchen was impeccably clean.
The murderer had left the scene.
Wind can drive straw through steel girder.

Twists the mop handle that skewered her.

Arnold Perrin
Union
works at the State Prison

Douglas Woodsum
Ann Arbor, MI & Cape Elizabeth
In working on an MFA

Great prospects for gold on Maine rivers
Sin-tax: what writers know about love

Grammar is sexy. Words! Love's language, it's true, the formations, the positioning, the body speaks right up. Try love without prepositions—no in and out, no on, under, above. Alone, we'd each be without. 

Attractive, spelling? Or and a colloquial way, and how they make us sweaty: Ooh, what the direc t object of your love may complement you indirectly. The conditional could be frustrating, Think of the future and all it will bring. There's a correct way to use the tongue, give it action, description, and time. Choose a verb, a copulative one, many, few are stimulating. Relax, don't tense. Certain moments expressed in love translate well into time. Think of the future and all it will bring. The conditional could be frustrating, for you would if you could if she'd let you, yet the present progressive is pure enjoyment: Ooh, what you're doing!, then I'm coming, where're you going? The mood at that moment is indicative of pleasure, not subjunctive, perhaps, if it be true, maybe. At times, commands become imperative: Don't stop!, Turn over! Move a little to the right. Verbs denote action, motion, feeling. If it's gotta be in the past, use used as . . . It's imperfect, but repeated and continuous. The direct object of your love may complement you indirectly. You may utter ejaculations: Alas, alack! or Omguid! In your Billet-doux, penmanship will woo. Punctuation—a dash of rhythm, make parts parallel. Spelling? (Well, you need to spell yourself.) An adjective is like a woman—usually followed by something solid you didn't expect. Of all the parts of speech, the most abreast of them all is the Supple Adverb. Slowly, harder. Go lower, baby, quickly! The b-way makes an action better. Again and again and again. Grammar is a tool for sweeter interactions: Our relationship is so conditional—don't be so interrogative around my colon. You might respond, You're a semi-colon! And she: You're the half-ass, you fool. Let me italicize it for you, I'm leaving, period. And you will stammer: loc. cit., i.e., e.g.? Grammar! downright sexy Until you're left alone, as these lips say, in your own ellipses . . .
Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb

Several months after I’d met Richard Dandoosn on the road between Rabat and Tangier, I still find myself puzzling over our encounter and his dreams. You see, Richard had experienced a dream that he was beginning to believe. And I became a part of that dream from the moment our paths had crossed in Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb.

We were both trying to reach Tangier. I’d been hitchhiking rides from Rabat the entire morning. He’d been traveling by thumb and foot for months—originally from Tunisia, more recently from Algeria. We each had been having a tough time. No one seemed to be heading for Tangier. That is, when there was anyone on the road at all. And as soon as I saw Richard I got mad. One person could always hitch a ride easier than two. Besides, he looked so awful. Who would stop for someone looking that way? His long, blonde hair was oily and stringy and, well, he was just dirty. Not that I was any perjurer. But I’d had a chance to clean up in Rabat after my foray down the Marrakesh. Then I noticed even though his clothes were filthy, they were expensive. A brown suede jacket, well-made leather boots. I spotted him for a so-called hippie immediately; the kind who came to North Africa, then in the late 1960s, to look about and smoke qaf.

My ride dumped me at Richard’s feet, so I had no choice but to say hello and get with a fellow hitcher—particularly since he spoke English. He was tall and lean, so much so that his bones seemed to protrude at his elbows and knees, nearly peeping through the rich material of his fanny jacket and tan, corduroy jams. As we talked, I observed that his face was puck-marked and yellow—yellow around the eyes, a wanted look about him.

We exchanged the usual traveler’s remarks. Names, countries, where coming from and where going. He was Dutch, ultimate destination Sweden. When I revealed that I was returning to Spain and had been living there temporarily, his expression became sour and disgusted.

“All you women are crazy for the Spanishiards, yes?” he asked but intoned his question as if stating a historical fact.

I laughed and, not wanting to argue with someone when I might have to rely on within the next few hours, answered, “It depends. Right now I have no choice but to be in Spain. Personally, I prefer the Irish.”

He grinned and asked if I’d had difficulties hitching in Morocco.

“Yeah, especially this morning. Eight rides to get me here.”

“You’re lucky,” he advised. “I’ve been on the road, it seems years. The cars are so few. And I scare most people who stop to give me a ride. You think it’s hair?”

I could not keep from laughing, and he began to laugh too.

“You should have seen what those Moroccan police in Tangier did to me because of my hair,” he continued without laughing any more but in a voice of utter amazement.

“They would not let me in the country. My hair was too long and dirty, they said. Back to Spain they sent me. So I had to take a ferry to Melilla. There I try to hell with Morocco and go to Tunisia. But now look, here I am right back in that damn country.”

We had been chatting by the roadside for almost 15 minutes. No car had passed. The sky was blackening to the southwest, and the wind had picked up. The village, a place with a name bigger than itself, remained quite lifeless. But, after all, its name, Souk-El Arba-du-Rharb, meant Wednesday’s market, and it was Thursday.

“Maybe we get lucky, and a car comes before it rains,” said Richard generalizing toward the sky. “Maybe we walk to Tangier, eh? Not too bad. You know, I walked half the way here. Those mountains near the Algerian border—listen, I tell you...”

And Richard began to talk rapidly, one word falling after another, rushing as if he might never speak again. His eyes glared, and he waved his arms. He paced, stood still, paced. At times his voice seemed self-hypnotic, calming him and then whipping him into a frenzy. I road away, feet growing as fast as my fingers could propel my car in to appear. But then my curiosity overcame my fear, and I edged closer to hear.

He was describing his journey across northern Algeria: from the coast, over the foothills and finally into the Tlemcen Mountains near the Algerian-Moroccan border.

“So tired,” he explained, “I was moving in a drizzle. Keep falling asleep or thinking I was asleep. But you see, I couldn’t sleep. Someone was following me. Ever since I’d stepped in that village. Then I thought I heard dogs barking—hounds—bloodhounds. But I decided that I must have been so tired I was hallucinating. Whenever I stopped for a rest, I’d sleep or pretend to sleep, then wake up quickly in a cold sweat. I started to run. I couldn’t remember anything, what I’d done the day before. In that village I’d smoked some qaf, always smoke qaf when I get in. That’s all. Remembering nothing more. Going nowhere. Stopped. Sleep. But I woke no voices. Those voices and the dogs, always the dogs barking.”

“Richard, Richard,” I tried to interject. But he looked at me with a vacant stare and said, “You must listen, you must come with me.”

I said nothing. And I quickly decided that I’d remain silent until he finished speaking or a reason.

He continued about the voices.

They were getting closer, they were all around. And I was running. Slowly, Jerky, at first. Then faster. But the voices kept telling me to run faster and faster, to fly, to soar. They made fun of me, going on about wings, how some way I might get wings to fly. If I could get wings, they promised, in 10 minutes, I could get out of the mountains near Trigassa and into Oujda where I could hide and no one could find me anymore.

They kept going back to the wings, insisting that someone had always given me wings to fly away, to escape. Saying that I wasn’t moving as quick as I should.

“I kept tripping. Mountains wouldn’t leave, their rocks kept hitting my shoes, puncturing my knees. Trees grew very high night. Wind lashed me across my face. I tell them they call my hair. Only 20 kilometers to the border and then not much further to Oujda. But I couldn’t dump those voices. They were getting louder and louder.”

“A car pulled up beside us. Where were we going? No good. They were headed for Tenes. Richard never noticed. He paced back and forth talking to himself, his face contorted into an agony that I knew was beyond my imagination. I stepped back toward him. He suddenly realized that I’d not been there, seemed perplexed for a moment, but then continued his story, at times, in a bizarrely lyrical fashion.

“The mountains cold was failing harder, covering me, deep down grapping my lungs and pressing them together so they burned back up through my throat, and I fell to the ground coughing—coughing up blood until I knew the pack heard me, smelled me better than ever. But I wouldn’t move. I couldn’t move. I wanted the cold to wrap around me, twist my lungs and parry my face. Then let them come and rip my flesh and tear my eyeballs. I’d never know. How could I! Everything would be gone, and they’d all be mad. No good for them because the blood would not be hot and the screams no more than ideas.”

Still, those blasted voices came tight back and told me every. That I couldn’t sit there and wait. They were softer and almost coaxing, explaining that they wanted to help. The border is only 10 kilometers now, Richard, they persisted, and since you started it, you’ve got to finish it.

“Now that night that no moon, darkness blacker for its self-spinning clouds. I knew I’d done something awful at that café in Mermir. Then I was running again.

“Yeah, sick, sick. All I could think, all I could feel. Don’t know why. Enjoyed it, maybe? Sometimes it fit, sometimes not. I’d been sick in Holland but I’d been sicker since I’d left. They were angry in Mermir, reel pissed. I’d forgotten all about Ramadan, the Moors holy month. Hell, I could get well in Sweden, and that’s where I was going. But the voices didn’t agree, and they came at me swirling that I wasn’t sick, just stupid. See, they said, see you are not running again. If you were so sick, you couldn’t run, and your pursuers would have been upon you long ago with their beautiful shredding fury. Please run, Richard, they urged. Don’t think about the wings. We should have never mentioned them. Don’t think about anything except your legs. Move them, one, then the other. Caut the with them. Mold the ground with them.

“But the grueling loudness was gaining, and the platinum-stoked cold was slicing my lungs, ripping my bowels. Then the voices pushed nearer, were hovering just above and yelling how stupid I was. Stupid, Richard, they corpsed, you screw up. Just a bowl of soup and a pipe. Thick, brown, cumin-flavored soup and one qaf filled pipe. The first sacred, the other forbidden. And they kept repeating it all over and over so many times that it began to seem that the voices were me muddling my own ears.

“From somewhere the wind blew the sky clear. I saw a star and for some reason made a wish. I felt the border must be near. The voices had failed, yet I could still hear them whispering at me, hissing that my enemies were moving faster than I was and if I had time to turn around, I could see their speckled faces, long monos and yellow eyes.

“I didn’t turn around, not at all, and then I spotted the border sign. Oujda—that way—five kilometers.”

And that was all. Richard became silent. Not a sound anywhere except the wind which was blowing even stronger and carrying a light mist from the ocean.

I started to speak, to ask Richard about the voices, but something about him, no way to say, made mecery.

He had begun shuffling his feet, shifting his weight from one foot to another. There was a glow to his eyes now, bright and burning like the eyes of a cat on the prowl.

Now had passed since the one offering a ride to Tenes. We were completely alone as he stood there shuffling. I began to feel like screaming. But instead I said, “I’m going to start walking, Richard. There’s nothing else to do.”

“No,” he said. “Don’t.”

“Why?”

“I want you to stay with me.”

“Richard, I have to be in Tangier by this evening.”

“Don’t go—I’m warning you!”

I began backing away from him. He did not move. The guy had freaked out. That journey through the mountains, plus the qaf, had blasted his brain. He needed help, someone to stay with him, to make sure that he didn’t harm himself for anyone else. But just then, I was not the helping kind. I was having too many problems with myself, and that came first. Altruism had never been one of my attributes. Yes, in a way, I felt a
common bond with him. I very well could have been in his place. But I wasn't.
So, I took a deep breath, swung my pack to my back and began to walk toward
Tangier.
"Come back you yellow, howling dog," he bellowed after me.
I kept walking.
"Come back, or I'll come get you!"
I turned around. He was standing in the same place, still shuffling his feet.
Walking. Quiet. Then rain. Hard rain finally
When the steam
in the
to

h e tend s

The Cousin
No One Can Touch
And so the rubella baby
wants forty, still
in the room where
his mother lay him at two
with telescope eyes.
When the cancer marched
through her, he stood
at the door in his own
private night, watched her
let go of the air
he moves in his hands.
Now he tends to the cows
in the cold, wrapped
in wool, breaking hay
over the herd, watches
the steam rise in its
own fermented magic.

Charles Safford
Atlanta, GA
was a long-time resident
of Falmouth.

The Big Blue Cheese Breakup
My lover moved out after almost a decade of love and on hell and happiness.
I stay up now to watch late night horror movies,
evoking every pickup murderer making swiss cheese out of his face.
I eat all his favorite foods, too.
White cheddar "cheesy" popcorn with grilled cheese sandwiches,
Planters' cheese balls and broccoli with cheese sauce.
I must experience his cheesiness, daydream revenge.
I picture myself deathly ill, he's at an I.G.A. buying Velveeta
and notices newspaper headlines screaming:
"Randolph Woman Remains in Cheese Coma."
Or maybe he'd feel guilty if I was raped by a madman named Monterey Jack.
A hospital spokesperson might state:
"Doctors are puzzled by hair, semen, and cheese samples taken from the victim."
Perhaps he'll call up and beg to come back.
I like to think I'd tell him to go to cheese fetish hell,
but I'd probably be cute and say, "Cheesecake lane—at your disposal,"
then shower the cheddar out of my hair, rinse mozzarella out of my mouth
and make pretzels sprinkled with parmesan.

Gretchen L. Patrick
Randolph

Crow
Black wings grasp the air.
The crow descends,
painting his silhouette
on the snow.

His prize:
A soft gray mouse,
discarded by the cat
at the end of the game.

Watching from the top of the food chain,
I ask who are we
that at the end
we flood the veins with formaldehyde,
lock the body in a strongbox,
hide it in the earth,
leaving only a stone marker
for the cross.

Miles Robinson
Thomaston
is a retired electronics engineer

Odds and Ends
Already burntish
a ceremonial bronze,
the tawny oak leaf,
cried by the gale’s
exulting rattle, abandons
its roots to spiral
one last whimsical
heavenward tack until,
succumbing to gravity,
returns its mite

to the teeming
debris below.

Farrell Davison
Bar Harbor

Death's Season
Maple blood on evergreen
drops
leaf
by
leaf

to mosey ground,
as mothers lay children
in graves once more.

Year after year,
we mourn their passing,
grateful we cannot
foresee death
in the spring
of life.

Carolyn Locke
Troy

Majo Koreshan

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Maple blood on evergreen
drops
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by
leaf

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Carolyn Locke
Troy

Majo Koreshan
Grandpa Scarecrow

I raced grandpa in the back of his blue pickup.

Me and my wife Molly had covered him with his favorite gray wool blanket, the one he always wrapped around his knees Sunday nights when we'd sit by the Philco and listen to Jack Benny.

Molly stretched up a new pillow for him and put it under his head. With his white, bushy hair spread out over it, she said it reminded her of the angel hair we wound around our Christmas tree each year. Molly was awful good to my Grandpa.

Funny, but when he showed up at our place in Pittston, Maine over nineteen years ago, Molly said he couldn't stay but a little while. We was waiting for our first baby then, but Molly lost her.

Seems Grandma Effie'd kicked Grandpa out of the farmhouse they'd lived in for thirty-seven years. Told him she didn't want him to share her bed any more. Just like that. Grandpa told me he was brushing his teeth with baking soda when she said it, and that he just up and left. Grabbed his knapsack, jumped into his pickup and drove straight from Caribou to our place in Pittston in his nightshirt. Said he didn't have no place else to go.

Effie'd sent him clothes a week later. We was packed in torn up boxes. Work clothes, mostly. Plus his one good black suit, all shiny and rolled up. And the plaid shirt me and Molly'd bought him years before at L.L. Bean. The twin Effie'd used on the boxes was unravelled and all knotted up. Looked like she'd packed in a hurry.

Grandpa stayed on. Helped Molly with the heavy chores when I was on the road selling and later, when I went off to Europe to fight the war. He grew a big garden out back of the house and in the summers ran a farm stand. Turned every cent it took in over to Molly. Said a man had to earn his keep.

Anyhow, there was Grandpa in his pickup. Been dead since morning. Molly was the one found him lying these peaceful-like in bed, the gray wool blanket folded nice over his rocker like he knew he wasn't going to use it anymore.

It'd taken Grandpa longer and longer to get up his last few years, so Molly'd bring him his breakfast on a tray with a flower propped up in one of her jelly jars. She'd walk into his room and Grandpa would pull the blanket up to his chin, look to the ceiling and say, "Lord? You placed this sweet woman on earth to tend an old man? Seems to me you could've found better for her to do." Molly would shake her head and smile and tell Grandpa she thought the Lord knew exactly what He was doing.

When Molly found him dead, she noticed a small metal box sticking out from under his bed. She opened it. The twin Effie'd used nineteen years before to box up his clothes was inside. All the knots'd been smoothed out.

Molly wanted to call Reverend Bush right off, but I wouldn't let her. Wasn't ready to have Grandpa taken from us and buried beside our babies. Molly was riled, but something kept niggling at me. Wanted to make things right for Grandpa. We was sitting at the kitchen table when the thought struck. Didn't what He was doing.

The younger of the two boys sidled over. He looked to be about seven. "Grandpa told me he was going to Effie's bed. Didn't you know where it come from, but I heard myself say like in the distance, "It's a scarecrow." He stood up. "Sure looks real," he said slow. I couldn't say nothing. Just nodded. He left Effie's bed." Molly stiffened when I told her what we was going to do. Said God and Rev would come and get him.

Effie'd sent him his clothes folded nice over his rocker like he knew he wasn't going to use it anymore. When I got up and limped toward the boy. Too late. He'd already reached down and lifted the blanket. He jerked back and stared up at me, his eyes big and wide. Then he looked quick back to Grandpa.

"What's that, Mister?" he asked.

I swear I don't know where it come from, but I heard myself say like in the distance, "It's a scarecrow."

Molly was shook when I told her what we was going to do. Told him she was sorry for what he'd done. "I figured we'd get to Caribou around seven. It'd be dark by then. Molly put her head back and dozed off after a while. I began to chew on how we was going to get Grandpa into Effie's bed. Wasn't sure if that woman still lived in Caribou, but figured she must. She would've let Grandpa know if she'd moved so she could collect what little money he still sent her. She was there five years ago when I'd stopped by on a selling trip up north. Greeted me at the door at three in the afternoon wearing a dirty bathrobe crawling with embroidered butterflies. Looked like a fat blowfly that'd just had its full.

I asked her how she was. "I could use some money," she whined. "Your Grandpa don't send me enough."

"Grandpa don't have much," I said. Bit my tongue to stop from telling her how miserable he'd been all those years. Couldn't resist one parting shot, though. "You ever find anyone else to share your bed, Effie?" I asked. "A few," she smiled, and then slammed the door.

Never did tell Grandpa about the visit. Waited a month, then sent Effie twenty dollars. Figured Grandpa would've if he'd had it.

We got into Caribou at seven. I left the main road that went out by the farm and took the cut off to a narrow, dirt road that climbed up and around the back. Molly woke up soon's she felt the bumps.

Took ten minutes to reach the farm. Molly wouldn't talk to me. Just kept plucking at the wool of her skirt.

Cought sight of Grandpa's farm below us. I dosed the lights and coasted a couple hundred feet till we was over looking the back. There was a bright spotlight on front. Stone like a beacon over the leaves hidden high on the lawn. What used to be bile paint chipped dingy gray of the house. A couple of tires hung from the corner porch rail, and a cracked slab with claw feet leaned on its side in front. Glad Grandpa couldn't see it.

Molly was talking to him like he was still alive. Told him she was sorry for what we was doing. Said, "You know your grandson, Grandpa. Nfuse trying to change his mind."

I didn't say nothing. Told Molly the dead ain't for talking to. I decided to go down and take a look-see. Stuck to the side and peeked through a streaked living room window. Hard as it was to see, couldn't miss Effie's butterfly bathrobe. She sat slumped on the couch, her head rolled back and her mouth open. Heard radio music. All of a sudden, her body jerked like she was having a bad dream. Heard her moan after that.

I run back up the slope to Molly. "Now!" I whispered. I moved some crates and pulled Grandpa out. Molly grabbed onto his ankles. I held him under the arms. It was harder'n I thought it'd be, getting him down the winding path that led to
the back of the house. The gray wool blanket kept slipping off, and we had to put him down twice to fetch it. Molly was breathing real heavy. She stumbled over some brush and muttered a swear word. Surprised me.

We finally reached the bottom and went around front. Stopped and listened at the corner and heard Effie's snores. Could've heard 'em in the next county. We snuck 'round to the porch. Figured Effie hadn't locked the door. People in Carlou don't.

We had trouble carrying Grandpa up the steps without making noise. The screen door creaked when I opened it. We stopped where we was. Molly looked ablaze. dirt road without any lights.

"You bother us no more tonight, you hear?" He made it into first gear and took off. Faster'n we got back. When we carried Grandpa out under the spotlight, I was sure Effie was shaking. The bedroom door wasajar and opened easy when I pushed it with my knee.

"Who's there?" Effie shouted from downstairs.

Me and Molly stood stock-still. Seemed like a long time 'fore we heard Effie snore again.

We carried Grandpa into the bedroom and placed him on the unrumpled side of the bed. Had to move some of Effie's clothes off to the other side. Molly took the gray wool blanket off Grandpa and folded it under her arm. I slid him under the sheet. Molly pulled a spread up over him from the foot of the bed.

I wiped the sweat off my forehead with my jacket sleeve. Molly was calm. She bent down, kissed Grandpa and smoothed out his white hair, being careful to pull the spread up over him again.

We snuck out of the bedroom. I looked back and whispered, "This one's for you, Grandpa."

"Thought you didn't talk to the door," Molly muttered.

We skittered downstairs and tiptoed past the living room. Heard the Lone Ranger shooting 'em up on the radio. We run back to the pickup and waited.

A half hour later, the spotlight went off in front. Then silence.

Effie's screams sure sounded quiet in the night just kept coming and coming like a broker alarm.

The spotlight come on. Effie burst from the house and barred off the side of the porch. Jumped into an old Chevy that was missing its back bumper. Ground when I pushed it with my knee.

Effie was the first to see the headlights below us. Effie's Chevy shimmied and shook. Rocks flew up from under the tires. Behind her was a sheriff's car, its lights ablaze.

I pulled off the road and stopped. Me and Molly got out and run back up the side of the road to the farm and crouched behind some bushes.

Effie run up the porch steps in front of the deputy. I recognized him when he passed under the glare of the spotlight. Orville Marsh. A mean old wessle my Pa'd tangled with when he was growing up in Carlou.

Marsh ran huffing and puffing after Effie, carrying his bulk like a sack of Maine potatoes. They dashed into the house. Took the screen door right off its hinges. Marsh's gun was drawn. Be a miracle, I thought, if the old coot didn't shoot himself. Heard them stomping up the front stairs.

In a few minutes, Marsh exploded out the front like a cannon ball, Effie right behind him screaming, "But he was there, I tell you! He was in my bed, Marsh, and I'm not going back in. Not till you check out the place."

Marsh made a run for his car and dove in. Effie latched onto his door handle and wouldn't let go for no account. Marsh beat on her hands with his fists. Effie hopped up and down, the butterflies jumping with her.

"Listen here, Effie," Marsh yelled. "There ain't no one in your bed! And don't you bother us no more tonight, you hear?" He made a U-turn and roared off.

Effie hollered after him, "Marsh! Marsh! You ain't heard the last of me yet, till he was out of sight.

Effie waddled over to the Chevy and squeezed in. Me and Molly heard two sets of keys.

"You didn't call me sooner, Joe?" he asked. My mouth opened and closed like a fresh caught fish. Then Molly, who to my knowledge ain't never told a lie or stretched a truth, looked Reverend Bush hold in the face and said, "Well, Reverend, it's like this. We been gone. Joe had to deliver a scarecrow up north and it took us a bit longer than we expected. Grandpa was dead when we got back."

Marsh lowered his head, offered him a cup of coffee, and took him into the kitchen.

We was saying our goodbyes when the Reverend turned to me and said, "By the way, Joe. Did the scarecrow work?"

"Sure did, Reverend," I said. "Sure did. Scared an old crow half to death."

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**Waking**

We loved most of all hide and seek.

I would go first and you would seek me.

You hardly ever found me. My favorite hiding place was an empty garbage can. I would lower the lid to just a crack and wait and watch for you. You would walk up and down the street, peering into alley ways, looking where to find me.

You would shout, "I'm closing my eyes, come out!"

I would run to another spot and approach you, jumping and laughing.

Now it was your turn to hide — an alley way, a car, someone's hallway. But that one time, at the funeral home, in Smith and Smith's garage, you hid in a coffin in storage.

The floor was painted glossy grey and there were big, black cars clean and shiny like the floor. It was quiet, nothing moved. Everything was clean. Against the back wall was a coffin, kid across work horses, silver-grey.

I was not thinking of you. It was no longer quiet, but silent.

When I lifted the lid and you smoothly rolled out, smiling with your soft face and large eyes, I screamed and wet myself.

Your body moved like warm air.

You smiled at me as though it was natural for me to lift that lid, as though we prearranged our meeting.

---

_Me and Molly made it back to Pittston at 3:30 in the morning. Waited till 6 A.M. to call Reverend Bush._

He rushed out to see us and didn't much like it when he saw Grandpa.

"Why didn't you call me sooner, Joe?" he asked. My mouth opened and closed like a fresh caught fish. Then Molly, who to my knowledge ain't never told a lie or stretched a truth, looked Reverend Bush hold in the face and said, "Well, Reverend, it's like this. We been gone. Joe had to deliver a scarecrow up north and it took us a bit longer than we expected. Grandpa was dead when we got back."

---

_Silvia Rike_  
So. Portland  
Is a secretary in a Portland law firm
Two Poses

The distant river flows beneath its bridge,
Making a pretty scene. The camera sees
The vista from a high point on a ridge.
A woman, surely in her seventies,
Stands in the foreground, stiffly, as if pain
Comes with each movement. Realize and severe,
She validates her presence, though a voix
Effort at ease is obvious. She can hear
The camera work, whining as it moves.
At once she wincs—what has been portrayed?
"I wasn't ready yet." As by design,
She changes for the photograph remake;
Her entire body droops; she's smiling; then,
She cocks her head and is a girl again.

Thomas Carper
Cornish
Teaches at USM

At the Lake

Everything changed underwater. Voices
the air, the sky
the horizon—its mountain silhouette
vanished
as soon as you ducked your head.
Gravity counted less.
Stones sank, but peaple could float.
Even short hair fanned out like a mermaid's.
Coming back up toward the light
after diving deep
was close to flying.
I swam mostly near shore, slowly
head tender, eyes open
in the small stretch of lake
between the shallows where minnows whisked in and out
deesns at once
and the dropoff this side of the raft.

Musselshells, twigs, lucky stones
on the lake's bottom
glowed
green as Os in the late July sun.
Frowning sunfish watched as I
paddled and drifted
one with Constone and the ocean floor
I touched a dead leaf and it rose in silence
so
unlike a sidewalk's dry leaves.
That underwater birch—when had its bark
last been papery?
At least it was firm underfoot.
At the lake's other end you could push an oar
down through weeds and mud to the hilt
and beyond
without even trying.

Deborah Nicklas
Falmouth

Delacroix’s Blood

Large drops of blood, bright and wet,
two horses shying from the scene, a hand
both painting and pulling back, perhaps
frightened by some overwhelming truth.
But above all the blood on the body hanging
on the cross.

A self-portrait, I imagine, this painting
of the Crucifixion. The painter feeling blood
in his veins bursting forth, the lance stirring
in himself, point searching his short life.

The horses know. They sense the awful
moment that has fallen. They pull, and,
off-canvas, snort and buck against
their riders. Their strong bodies feel
the frailty of muscle and of bone.

That hand bothers me. How at the moment
of identification, as in saying "That man
is dead!" the consequence has home.
It pulls back. Yes, I cannot see it withdrawing,
but I know. It is impossible to miss
that horror, and my hand clenches where
it hangs.

The painter's hand paints with power strokes,
his breath alive and weeping. It is all motion
and might. But he knows. The blood betrays
his secret. He knows what dies eventually.

Edward J. Rielly
Westbrook

in chm, of the English Department
at Saint Joseph's College

Delacroix, Christ on the Cross, courtesy The Walters Art Gallery
Lester

(In Memoriam: Larry Richardson)

At nine already he had a fixed look as if accustomed to being hunted;
a fox's face or rat's, nose swept to narrow lashless eyes the color of a muddy road.

His curly blonde hair hung down in clumps and his mouth pulled back like a trip,
showing teeth. Undersized and scrappy as a chicken wing, he wore the same plaid shirt everyday pulled outside scuffed up.
I was new in class; I didn't know his history or why the others and the teacher hated him. Her name was Miss Thornton; she was fat but very neat.

Her metal bracelets clang as she wrote across our papers, sharp nose sniffing everywhere,
black eyes excited as a terrier's. Miss Thornton was Superintendent of the Sunday School that I attended; one Sunday that same year, she gave out Bibles to all the fourth grade class.

I was very proud. Lester missed a lot of school and when he came, his nose was always running. "Lester! Use your handkerchief!" Miss Thornton knew even though we knew and Miss Thornton knew that she didn't have a handkerchief. Lester was in the slowest reading group so I never heard him read but sometimes Miss Thornton called on him in math or social studies, always so it seemed,

...the hardest questions. "Come on, Lester, think!" Miss Thornton said, and her voice was edged with something hidden, like a sharpened knife working toward the surface. The cold white walls of winter closed us in, and Lester, when he came to school, shuffled all the time. "Lester, "breathe your nose!" Miss Thornton said and Lester wiped his nose across his sleeve, flat eyes watching her, She called on him more frequently. "Lester, "you're not stupid, are you?" and the knife scraped closer to the surface. At home I began to dream about Lester and Miss Thornton. Once in class I raised my hand when Miss Thornton called on Lester even though I didn't know the answer but she ignored me and mostly I just pencilled endless circles on the desk top, glad that those bright eyes hadn't fixed on me. In the spring we heard that Lester hadn't passed, that he would repeat the year but when we gathered in the schoolyard the following September, Lester wasn't there.

I sometimes wondered later what became of him. When I was twelve, I saw the movie, Midnight Cowboy and thought that Rusty Rowe was Lester growing old but now I think that Lester grew up tall and thin and that when he was eighteen, he touched a little girl in places that he shouldn't have and went to jail and the prison doctors thought he might be suicidal so they put him in a cell that measured 6' by 8' in maximum security with a celmate who had beaten his retarded girlfriend with a hammer while another tortured her.

And I think that Lester and his celmate stayed together in that space of coffined steel nursery-three hours every day until the other prisoners heard what Lester did and began to call him skinhead and other names which echoed down the corridors while they beat against the bars, faces thrust into the narrow openings, clamoring, like terriers at a rat hole and that they tried him in accordance with their rules and sentenced him to die and for three nights they barked out their instructions while Lester's celmate smashed his head against the toilet and raped him with a toothbrush and kicked him in the scrotum until Lester was so black and blue down there that even his celmate couldn't bring himself to kick him anymore. And I think that on the fourth night Lester hung himself and that the guards who were kennelled thirty feet away and who checked the prisoners every hour each of those four nights, heard the shots.

The howling songs, the clanging on the bars, the yelps of pain, and backed their chairs against the wall and stared into white coffee cups and into one another's eyes, glad it wasn't them. Then the cries were quiet and silence crept along the cell block and pressed upon the steel plates of the floor and pushed against the bars and swelled against the cold gray walls and grew and grew until it bulged along the metal ceiling and bust upon the iron rieves of every tiny cell, silence beating like a giant sobbing heart that belonged to nobody.

K.J. MacLeod
Bethel recently returned home after 20 years in N.J.
Lost Souls

"There's someone coming over the way," said Mary Fagan to her husband James.

"And who might that be?" James Fagan asked, stubbing tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with his thumb.

"It might be just about anybody," Mary Fagan answered, "except someone we know.

"Well step back from the window then before you scare him off," James said.

"Hey," Mary said as the someone rapped at the door.

"Not much of a knocker then, is she?" James commented.

"Wash," Mary answered him and cracked the door. "Yes!" she said to the someone who was not much of a knocker. "What are you after?"

"It's a bit of a story," the young woman said through the cracked door. "Might I come in?"

Mary Fagan studied the young woman in the blue suit from her pointed patent leather toes to the red cap cocked over her right eye. "You might or you might not," Mary said, "once you tell me what you're about here."

"I'm Daniel Fagan's granddaughter, from America," the young woman said.

"I asked the postmistress in Rathpeacon the way to your farm," Mary closed the door. "She says she's Daniel Fagan's granddaughter," Mary whispered to James.

James waved his pipe and shook his head as if the weight of the two burdens might cause him to cave in with weariness. "Well then you'll have to let her in, I guess," he said and sighed.

Mary opened the door enough to admit Daniel Fagan's granddaughter but not further. "So you're Daniel Fagan's granddaughter?" she asked. When the woman nodded, Mary said, "Well, Daniel Fagan's granddaughter, come in then and sit you down."

Daniel Fagan's granddaughter walked into the room and hesitated. Only two straight-backed chairs furnished the common room, and the man, James Fagan, tilted back in one of them.

"Go on," Mary said, "sittin' down."

And Daniel Fagan's granddaughter obeyed, sitting down stiffly, directly across from James. She glanced quickly to her side as if she were looking for a spot to set down her purse, but, finding no table, she folded her hands over the patent leather clutch in her lap. "My name's Ruth," she introduced herself, "Mary Fagan.

Mary smoothed her white hair back from her temples. "Good morning to you, Ruth Fagan," she said. "That's James Fagan; he'd be your great-uncle, I guess. And I'm your Aunt Mary.

James pulled a long draw on his pipe and nodded in the direction of Ruth.

"I'm an exchange student," Ruth said. "From the States. We're on vacation.


"Is that so?" Mary said, "A college in England, James, did you hear?"

James nodded. The sunlight slanting into the dim room sparkled over Mary's blue eyes.

Ruth turned her glossy, black purse over in her lap and then said looking down as if addressing the purse, "I suppose you heard about Gramma's—Daniel's—passing on. It was about four years ago now.

"Christ be merciful, we did," said Mary.

"And Martin, and Joseph, and Charles," James said bumping the front legs of his chair down on the floor. Ruth smiled at the dump, knocking her clutch to the floor. James rose, and picked it up, dusting it off on his pants leg before handing it back to her. "Might I get you some whisky neat?" he asked. His tufted eyebrows lifted quizzically.

Ruth glanced at her wristwatch, then at Mary who averted her eyes. "Umm, whisky," Ruth said. "Yes, that would be nice."

Mary crossed to the cupboard for glasses, stepping aside so James could get the bottle. She watched his gaze shift, winding around the room like a cat in the shadows, green eyes prowling over the fireplace, the dump, whitewashed walls, smudged gray with peat smoke, the heavy work table, the scuffed floors, the laundry line sweeping down from the ceiling by the chimney, the picture of the sacred heart above the mantel, the tarnished bucket of kindling, the two chairs, the cupboard. The interior of the house matched that of any other house in Rathpeacon. Nothing else in the room to note except for James and Mary. Mary patted her worn apron down over her skirt. "That's the house, she said to Ruth, "except for the bedroom. Maybe later you'd like to step out and see the old farm?"

Ruth looked up quickly. "That would be very nice," she said.

James dragged the work table over between the two chairs and squinted at her poured two fingers of Jameson's into the juice glasses which Mary lined up for him, one by one. James raised his glass in a jaunty toast, then swallowed the whisky in a swig.
opening door. "You saw it then; did you?" he asked.

"Oh yes," Ruth said. "Thank you very much. It was lovely."

"Lovely," James repeated. "Well, help yourself to a tot."

Ruth lifted her filled glass carefully and again tossed the whisky off in a single shot. She smiled at James and then lowered herself into the second chair—giggling, deliberately, as if she were senting an invalid. If the room had been brighter, or if Mary had been nearer, she might have seen the gleeful gleam of drunkenness glinting over the green of Ruth's eyes. But the room was dark and Mary was busy glaring at James who was glaring back at her as she collected the empty glasses in an enamel basin. James fished two more stouts from the cupboard, the one shot. She smiled at James and then lowered deliberately, as if she studied the crumbs as if their sudden appearance in her lap were mysterious, a

opening door.

about eight years before he went over. He and Fagan family. Imagine. Could she said, then added, "Grandma didn't talk much about the past, about home, not like Uncle Charles did. Charles always wanted to come back for a visit, you know."

"Well he never did," James snapped. "Not one of them ever did."

"Do have another biscuit," Mary offered. But Ruth just looked at her dark reflection in the surface of her pane.

James drew on his pipe, then said, "Daniel never reproached me. I stayed as long as I could bear it, helping Daniel tend the roses. But the smell of the roses made me long for the old farm here in Cork. I took my earnings, and I bought my passage back, and Daniel never said a word." "Well," Mary said, "who's ready for a bit of nice, hot tea?"


"It's out the door and off to your left," Mary said crooking her thumb. "Outside!" Ruth asked, then giggled and said, "how quaint."

Mary sighed as Ruth stood, wobbling on her patent leather heels. "Will you need a hand, dear?" she asked.

"Oh no. I'm fine. Really I am," Ruth said and retreated off. Mary paused a moment and then scolded James in a whisper: "Aren't you the fine one offering the girl whisky at ten o'clock in the morning?"

James held a lit match to the bowl of his pipe. "The girl came for a bit of Irish. I'll be hospitable and give her a bit of Irish."

Ruth laughed. "You're a man who knows his business," he said, and Aunt Mary will fix you a nice, hot cup of tea.

Ruth slumped into the chair like a rag doll, flopping her legs up in the air. "So," she said.

James studied her from behind his screen of pipe smoke. "You don't much favor Daniel," he observed.

Ruth arraigned her purse in her lap and took a tea biscuit from the plate. "No," she said and crunched into the biscuit, sprinkling crumbs on the black purse. She studied the crumbs as if their sudden appearance in her lap were mysterious, a miraculous visitation requiring interpretation. She pushed the crumbs around with her fingers, rearranging them in random configurations as if they might, by accident, fall into a pattern, spell something out for her.

James watched her. "A bit in your cups, aren't you?" he asked.

Ruth snorted with laughter, dispersing the crumbs she'd been bending over so intently. "I'll say," she said. She brushed some crumbs from the lapel of her suit jacket.

James puffed on his pipe. Mary hopefully offered Ruth the plate of biscuits again, Ruth pepped one into her mouth and chewed the biscuit, her jaw working exaggeratedly up and down. James chewed his pipe stem.

"It was the one who came back," he said and looked at Ruth for a response. She looked at him blankly, her mouth full of biscuit, her red cap dipping over, almost obscuring, her right eye.

James took a deep breath. "Daniel was the first to go over, and he saved my money, and, one by one, he brought each of us brothers over. Every young Charles stayed on. He worked as a grocery clerk in Holyoke, Massachusetts, at a Stop and Shop, became a manager. Daniel worked his way up to gardener for the college in South Hadley. Joseph went to school and became an electrician. Martin joined the freemen. And I, I came back." Ruth looked questioningly at Mary, then at James. "I didn't know that," she said, then added, "Grandma didn't talk much about the past, about home, not like Uncle Charles did. Charles always wanted to come back for a visit, you know."

"Well he never did," James snapped. "Not one of them ever did."

"Do have another biscuit," Mary offered. But Ruth just looked at her dark reflection in the surface of her pane.

In the village of Rathpeacon an American woman climbed into her rented motor car. The car drove off into the Irish countryside. And the woman inside whisked to herself as she went trottling down the wrong side of the road.

Joan C. Connor
Chebeague Island
Is writing her first novel.
turtle god

He rides north on Chases Pond Road
The temperature pushes ninety-five,
but he bikes on
past Conrad Small's farm.

When there before him,
smack
he turns back.
He lays his bike down
on the gravely shoulder.

Stepping midroad
he grabs the little fella
by its sides.

It kicks and flails.
He sets it gently into
the roadside leaves.

Once righted
the turtle looks back
and nods
so that's what He looks like
I thought he'd be taller.

Dan Rothermel
York
teacher at Frisbee Middle School

What He Kept

records though he didn't have
a record player, his daughter's
paintings, his pottery,
the exquisiteness of a finger
(pillar and admoritory) in the living room,
rocks from Presidential birthplaces,
the painting of a seagull he found
at the dump, his great-great-grandfather's
epaulets and belt buckle from
the Civil War, a lump of low-fire
clay—"pure Maine clay," he called it—
that he had fired at stoneware
temperatures until the clay had melted
into an almost perfect hemisphere
and had glazed itself half-brown,
light-green, and fused into the kiln self
which he smashed and saved as well;
many woven baskets with leather handles,
a 1903 dictionary, two volumes,
heavy, leather-bound; the carcass
of a rat that had been mummified
into the foundation two hundred
years before, worn shoes the rats
had dragged behind the rafters,
homeade bodices, one for each house
he had lived in, a dead woman's
painted bedroom set, sleigh bells.

K.J. MacLeod
Bethel
recently returned home
after 20 yrs. exile in N.J.

Geist

I seem to be leaving the houses of friends and lovers these days
without saying anything; I just get up and walk out the door, that's it.
What used to irritate me was how much I talked, lingered over
goodbyes like the last mouthful of a particularly satisfying cup of coffee,
had to have—for inexplicable reasons—the final word in the
exchange. In exchange for? Now I turn the lock and slip away. Now I
put on my clothes and make outside another point on the linear
progression from bed to banister to foyer, completed in silence.
Now I turn my back on the gestures and the words usually in place
there, at the door, and go. And that do disturbs me.

Deborah Stiles
Enfield...is a grad student in history at UMO

Coin

sucked up by clouds
to glide down a pipe in the path
so we drink at six—
with a measure of bourbon,
the seat at our door.

Sometimes I wake, the Dipper pressing
against the silvered window.
Not yet, not yet:
we are bordering.

Frances Downing Vaughan
North Marshfield, MA
is a retired textbook editor
who summers on Monhegan

Stacking Wood

September, and the bite
of autumn. That air,
touched
by the smoke of any stranger's stove,
and I think of stacking wood.

I spend all day in the cellar, where
spiders spin white traps
and the stink of wet dark is
hearty as a lie.
And I love it, the way I love
being in a forest with the sun going down.

Sometimes I stand there
among the pulpy debris
and watch the pile swell
with every lichen-clogged
log tossed from the bulkhead above.

But I know the feel of gnarled,
knotsy wood, aged
and reckless as time, and it always
starts me stacking again.
Stacking, the weight of the chunks
putting a fine sweat on my brow.
Stacking, the smell of earth
forcing itself in and out of my lungs.
Stacking, and thinking
we are so much of this earth, and no matter
our attachment to it,
we can come down anytime
helpless as the tree
skidding down the cellar stairs in pieces.

Allison Childs Wells
Ithaca, NY
is a Woodstock native, UMF grad.
When Eben came into the library to return Flora's book, the first thing he noticed was the new librarian, Opal Teasdale. Eben's friend, Tommy White, had said that she was a "looker," but Eben had no idea how pretty she was until he saw her there in the library. Her blonde hair was piled on the top of her head in a beehive hairdo. She wore wire-framed glasses perched on the end of her long, straight nose. Her prominent teeth pushed her lips forward into a perpetual pucker.

Tommy White had been trying to take Opal out ever since she had come to town, but she wouldn't go with him. "I bet she'd go out with me if I wasn't married," Eben had said.

Despite his prominent nose and Adam's apple, his weak chin, his thin gray hair plastered to the top of his skull, Eben was under the illusion that he was an uncommonly good-looking fellow.

"Women can't hardly resist a good-looking man like me," he would say. And there he was, staring at Opal across her desk, and she looking back at him. As he told Tommy White later, "It was like something passed between us."

Eben knew right away that, despite his marriage vows, his heart had been pierced by Cupid's golden arrow.

Opal took the book that he handed her without looking at it. She never took her eyes from his face for a second.

"Can I help you find another book?" she asked.

Then she had to repeat her question. Eben was so intent on gazing into Opal's deep blue eyes that her question didn't register in his mind. He hadn't intended to get a book at all. He was merely returning Flora's book. But the words, inspired by the feelings in his freshly pierced heart, tumbled out unplanned.

"Ayuh," he said. "I'd like a book of poems, love poems."

"Ah," she smiled, displaying her buck teeth, "I could tell as soon as I saw you that you were a man of sensitivity."

She took him to the stacks of the almost deserted library, and he stood next to her while she searched the shelves for an appropriate book. She was standing so close that he could smell her hair. He could feel the warmth radiating from her body just a fraction of an inch from him.

Then she found the book, Poems for Lovers, and handed it to him. As he took the volume from her, her fingers touched briefly.

Two evenings later Flora was getting ready to watch "The Gathering Gloom" on TV. Eben said he was going to the library.

"How come you started going to the library all of a sudden?" Flora asked.

"You ain't never read anything but the Enquirer before in your life."

"That ain't so," Eben said. "I read lots of things. I always liked poems."

As he drove his old pick-up to the library, he thought about the differences between Flora and Opal. Opal was quiet and refined, where Flora was loud and crude. Opal was so thin that her bones were almost visible, whereas Flora was heavy. Opal seemed so gentle, but Flora was always complaining about something.

Even as he thought those things, Eben had no intention of starting anything with Opal. Yet, if he hadn't been married, he knew something would develop between them.

After he got to the library, he looked at Opal and felt that spark leap across the room between them. They were the only ones in the library, and in a few minutes they were in the stacks where the poetry books were shelved.

Opal pulled a book from the shelf and thumbed through it until she found the page she wanted.

"Here's a poem I've always loved," she said, and she started reading it aloud to Eben.

_When love swept in on bented wing, It touched my heart and made it sing. When I beheld thee that first time, I felt I'd drunk the sweetest wine. And when our souls began to twine, I knew our love would be so fine._

Opal's eyes as she read were not on the page. She knew the poem by heart, and she gazed into Eben's eyes as she spoke the words, oh so softly.

They moved closer together, the book of poetry the only thing that separated them now. She continued speaking the lines of the poem as she dropped the book to the floor.

_know with thee I'd taste delight. I waited breathless for the night..._
Why Artists Give Up

By the age of 29 Carol wanted to get her teeth fixed. "I'm buying my dentist a boat," she complained to a friend. The friend laughed and said that sounded like the first line of a song if ever there was one. So Carol wrote one, a spoof in Country & Western dialect that was swallowed whole at one bar on the south side of town. The rest of that winter she sang that song down there and the cowboy element of east central Pennsylvania took her to heart, all those grandsons of Lithuanian coal miners and German farmers. Carol began to fear that she might succeed as a country singer. Indeed it did change her life.

She hated country music; after her spoof that they didn't get, she had nothing but ballads and blues, a good sprinkling from old issues of Sing Out! and naturally her own stuff. A couple thousand she figured, but very very little Country. All night long they'd call out for one country number or another and she'd try to keep them satisfied with City of New Orleans, some Joni Mitchell, some Bonnie Raitt. It helped that she had her own following of friends—they helped set up her equipment, set up the sound board and adjusted it as the crowd grew. These would always gather around her in the front tables, fencing her away from the drunks—at least they always could, at the other clubs where she sang. She chewed on her upper lip. "You said you'd give me a hundred fifty a night?"

"I said if everything went right, you could make maybe that much."

"So you said it but you didn't say it."

"He sighed. "Listen," he said, "I want you in here because I want to build my business in a different direction. This country stuff.... I don't like the kind of people it attracts. I want to make it a little more like a coffee house, except you can't have a coffee house in Ashland. So I'll go to a better grade of entertainment."

"She didn't seem to take the compliment so he spoke more directly, "I'm saying I want you to play here, understand? You play ballads, blues; you're a good woman, a very good woman."

"On the other hand I'm not going to throw all the bucks away either. So I'm going to stay with the country rock bands on Saturday nights. If you make out on Thursdays I'll start giving you some Friday—and if we get the Friday crowd it's a hundred fifty for those nights. Other nights, there's not much business, seventy five or a hundred."

"I want Fridays. I'm not going to play Wednesday and Thursday."

"You have to play Thursday. I thought I told you that."

"I'll play Thursday but I want Friday too."

He hesitated a second. She does want replies here, he thought. "It's not a matter of whether I like you or not, you know, personally I like you. If people aren't in here though I can't pay you."

"In other words, I'm going to get a part of the door."

"In other words, your success is tied to how much business you can bring in."

He couldn't help smiling, in response to her directness, her toughness. He always found strength in a woman very attractive. As she considered his offer, he was looking into her eyes, those midnight eyes he had watched singing into her microphone. Those wonderful eyes sometimes closed and she would become transported, a soul singing out, angelic and completely beautiful.

"Now about the drunks—listen I understand your problem. I know that late at night in some guy is going to say anything, I mean," he added quietly, "not that you're not good-looking—you're up there on stage with lights on you and some guys, they have a few drinks, they think any woman looks great—I mean—they say things they regret later—I mean they say anything you know to make time—listen why the hell are you taking everything I say the wrong way?"

"I didn't say anything," she said innocently. "What in particular did you say that you feel you should apologize for?"

"Listen: If you don't want to work here say so. Let's stop the jerking around."

"I'm not playing games with you—she said.

"And one thing about why you're going to wear—what you have on now isn't going to get anybody across the street to hear you. You gave good looks so why the hell don't you just admit it. But if you want to dress like this, OK. Only I gotta say it wouldn't hurt anything to get your hair done."

She was cold now. "I had it done last week," she said.

She started playing the following Thursday. Gallagher spent $370 for four quarter-page ads in the newspaper, and she started with a big crowd. Some of them were her friends but Gallagher knew she didn't have that many friends. She was thirty minutes late to set up, and thirty minutes late the next night. Gallagher spoke sharply to her about it and took something from her pay; she accepted that placidly. The following week she was almost as late, but she started singing less than fifteen minutes behind schedule. Gallagher accepted this with equal calm. They had established a modus operandi.

Because people were coming to hear her, Gallagher got along well with her, liked her music and tolerated the way she handled the crowd. He saw men coming on to her and tried to put himself in her boots. It was a creepy feeling. A chance may come when you opened them and the door, the way she looked up. They shut glances off each other that dodged the other's eyes, passed awkward flickering smiles.

I understand you, he wanted to say. I understand being young, being alone, having ambition, struggling for higher achievement. I know the whole long business of fulfilling your dreams down to shapes that match reality. Living in this weird world of taxes and timetables every day yet having a much better world, where everything is truer than things that happen.

After three weeks he gave her the $150 a night on Fridays. People started asking when she would play again. "Next week, same time," he started answering without hesitation. She played steadily for eight weeks, Thursday and Friday. Late in April she had a crown done on a molar, root canal a few weeks later—before the end of May a different do for her hair.

The changes had taken place before he'd realized they really were changes.
The face in the middle of that row had looked better. Maybe it was just because he looked at her now, but he thought she got less waxy toward the crowd. Maybe she had had a constant toehack when he'd first encountered her, and now she was getting all the teeth fixed. Maybe she was getting a little more rest, now that she didn't have to chase so hard for money. He couldn't tell.

Then in the middle of June she showed up in a skirt that came down only to her knees. She wore a blouse instead of her booties, pumps instead of her leather boots—and the leg that showed looked like... leg. He raised his eyebrows and whistled deliberately at her.

She gave him a short smile, but he thought she liked it anyway. She started for the closet where she kept her amps and speakers.

"Have a drink," he said. The bar was sparsely populated and she was early.

"I gotta see up—"

"I'll help; I've helped you before haven't? It shouldn't take ten minutes."

She considered a second, then sat down.

Gallagher's heart skipped a beat. "What's the occasion?" he said, indicating her attire.

She fingered the top button of her blouse. "After it warms up a little I can unbutton right?" she said with a smile.

"No!"

"Relax, I'm just kidding. You know I'm not going to give em the tit."

He snorted at her humor. "I'm just saying you look nice. I like it."

"Thanks. I went right from work and then I gave a couple kids some music lessons. So I didn't have time to change."

She would be playing until two tonight—that would mean she was working what, sixteen hours today spread over eighteen or twenty hours of the day. If she was getting more rest now, Gallagher couldn't see how.

"You mean you always dress like this at work, then get into jeans to appearan-ce—onecatcall, two

That Gallagher's stomach tightened.

"Chasing her around the desk—from what?"

"That was something she'd said once about another job. The Neanderthal part of working in business.

"They didn't have the time—I only got the cute one making eyes at me. He was married naturally."

Gallagher gave her a right smile and sipped from his drink. Always this bullshit about male harassment.

"How'd you know he was married? Ring?"

"Yeah. But you can see them a mile off."

"Did they chase you around the desk?"

"Chasing her around the desk—that was something she'd said once about another job. The Neanderthal part of working in business.

"They didn't have the time—I only got the cute one making eyes at me. He was married naturally."

Gallagher gave her a right smile and sipped from his drink. Always this bullshit about male harassment.

"How'd you know he was married? Ring?"

"Yeah. But you can see them a mile off."

"Do you see me a mile off?"

"Yeah. Sure. You have this bar and it's starting to do good and you're getting all starry-eyed and horny."

He laughed. Honey—well yeah. "Hey, I know this isn't going to last," he said.

"If it goes on like this I'm going to sell. Bar business comes and goes; people get bored and start going somewhere else. Just for a change. Everybody wants something new." He shifted in his seat. It's the same way with sex, he was just about to say when she interrupted.

"Do you really think that? That people are going to stop coming?"

"We're really doing pretty well right now. If it lasts much past Labor Day I'd be really surprised. Of course we're the only country and western place in town—"

"Pat, stop calling me a country and western singer. I'm going to go home and stick my head in the oven if you keep that up. I mean you say that and I start looking for a bag to pull over my face.

"All right but face it. It's paying your rent. It's buttering your bread."

"I don't sing country and western."

"Call it what you want to call it. Call these people in here bozo s or whatever you like. Just answer me this: how well did your intellectual friends ever repay you."

She didn't reply. They finished their drinks as though they were thirsty, drinking them down in straight gulps.

She started to set up then, and he helped. They worked efficiently, Carol staying on stage, telling him what she wanted, where to place the speakers, how to train them. Gallagher felt discouraged, not by their differences of opinion—they had always been open and blunt with each other, and he thought that was healthy. What bothered him was the distance between them, which he couldn't overcome.

People started to come while Gallagher and Carol were still doing this. The doors opened and seemed not to shut for ten minutes. They came by twos and threes and small knots of single young men. Some wore black leather jackets, some wore cowboy hats, some flannel shirts and work shoes, some clean cut shirts with short hair and dress jeans—and there were enough good looking women to keep a hundred single men drinking all night. Gallagher's spirits spiraled up as he watched them walk in; he greeted them by name, struck up short conversations.

When he went back inside Carol was there at the mike trying to get people to listen to her. "Hey you there in the checkered shirt—hey somebody could you get the attention of these people at this table here. Yeah these listeners I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation but I want to share with everybody sort of a personal tragedy that happened to me recently."

Gallagher's stomach tightened. What?

She looked around the room. "Wow isn't this something, standing around in here tonight. Swaying. Gallagher winced. "But it's fun too." He couldn't tell if she believed that or not. "Um, I'm sorry I want to say ... I want to apologize for my appearance—one catcall, two whistles—but I came right from work so I didn't have time to go home and get filthy. Anyway I'll get straight to what I want to tell you. I was out at a shopping center last week and I left my guitar and my gym badge out there. Now in that bag I had notebooks stuffed with all the songs I've been collecting for ten years. Two of them were full of my own songs.

"Now I guess I'm still an idealist or something but I left my car unlocked and guess what. Right—when I came back out I'd been ripped off. That I can deal with. But guess what they took? The Martin? I'm playing here now!—obviously not. Did these creeps take the $300 bass guitar that was also there?—no."

She sighed. "They took the badge with all the music."

Nobody responded to that directly. A good part of the room was watching—mostly people continued their own lives the way they would no matter what. Small tragedy, volcanic eruption, war—the only way you could
ever be normal or sane or happy again. Just go on pretending it. Somewhat did.

"All right," Carol said. "Call me naive, call me a romantic—say I'm an asshole—"

"You're an asshole!" somebody shot from the middle of the room.

Carol recoiled a fraction of a second. "I asked for that didn't I," she said and carried on.

But Gallagher had seen her take the hit.

She stayed at the Lazy Gan another two months. Gallagher had started shopping around for another singer right after that night. Found one pretty quick, too, quicker than he'd expected. He planned to tell Carol he wanted to change things around a little, maybe have Carol do some Saturday nights if she'd just agree to do more blues, at least things people just this minute? Cause I'd interfere with good guy—but don't include me in any more of your plans."

"I'm not going to walk out and let you empty Pat you've been a pretty good guy—but don't include me in any more of your plans."

"I don't believe it! You, jealous of another performer?"

"It's not jealousy—well there's always that. But I wouldn't let jealousy interfere with playing."

"So what is it?"

She sighed. "I'm just tired. I've been thinking a lot. Just don't want to play here any more."

"So where are you going to play? Back where you used to! You can't move backwards—you know that."

"Yeah," she said, "I know that. You're right, I was thinking about going back there but no, I guess I can't."

"So! What then?"

"Maybe it's time for me to give it up. I'm tired."

"Oh come on Carol. What do you expect me to do—sit here and talk you out of it? You mean you're going to give up music? You can't!"

"I got an offer for a regular job."

"Secretary?" he scoffed.

"Manager," she corrected. "I have a friend with a couple music stores down in Philly and he wants me to manage one. I could still play. I wouldn't have to teach. It's something I could make a whole living at."

"So you'd be leaving town anyway."

She thought over it a few seconds and stood up. "Yep. I just decided, here and now."

"You crull!" he said as she turned away. "I want you here."

She turned back. "You know what I just picked up on—what made me decide just this minute? Cause I'd been thinking it over a couple of weeks—I got the offer a couple weeks ago."

"OK then I won't hire this other girl—"

"That wasn't it either." She turned fully toward him and leaned over slightly.

"Do you realize," she said, "that it never occurred to you for even a second that I might have had a better gig somewhere else? That's what did it."

And with that she walked slowly away, while Gallagher wordlessly watched.
Hand Stories

My brother taught me to shake hands.
Take a fistful of metacarpal
lock eyes like you shouldn’t
with strange dogs, then lightly crush.

I have been told never to walk
with my hands in my pockets.
I might need them for balance.
I might need them for defense.

My hand was a family
each finger a member:
Father, in the middle, stood tallest.
Grandfather, the thumrt, bent
low in a wheelchair.
Grandmother pointed between her husband and son,
and Momma wore the ring pressing in my side.

Who has’t, with a lover,
compared hand size
as an excuse for touching?

Once we traced our hands with crayons
to trace turkeys,
colored them like peacocks.
Each finger waved, a vibrant feather.

In kindergarten I cast my hands in plaster.
Today I press my hand
into that shape of childhood.
Fruit as a gloveful of fishbone,
my hand reaches out.

Lisa Holbrook
Ann Arbor, MI
grad. Brown, taught at UMF

Withdrawal

I pulled her off like shoes
left on far too long,
crumpled toes repulsing
at regimented freedom,
compressed flesh expanding
into liberated sponge.

my next step
the punishment
of treading broken glass.

Glen McKee
Waterville
walks, writes, cogitates

Winter Pearl

This earth, this pearl
in essence glazed around us, ice and snow,
sweep and scatter of wind, rattle of brittle twigs,
no sign of life, bare polish of moonlight—

In this vast iridescent shell of sky
are we the irritable speck of sand,
something to smooth over, to excuse,
to leave, rolling in a stranger’s hand?

Inkay of wintertime, chasing of silverflow
jeweler’s dream egg, pearl round,
mother-of-pearl earth,
iceland.

Catharine S. Baker
Spruce Head
In a freelance writer

Sex Education

My seventh grade sister
still wore a double A bra
when my fourth grade body
decided to announce itself
to family, friends and classmates.
I felt like an engaged invitation
that advertised desire in braille.
The A cup spelled out double D.
Demmed if I did; she support lifting me
unnatural heights
that angled this alien flesh
in the direction of everyone’s face.

In school I held my history book
straight up and slammed my shoulders
cupping the sacs that rested
on pages telling me for the first time
about Puritans and Salem Witch Trials.
I started Mrs. Blake’s passionate wrath
by refusing to sit beside Danny.
The dark hair outlining his supper lip
matched in sinful insight.
If he brushed my body
it might mean I liked it.

I was not like Lois
who had already kissed two boys.
Her breasts were in the fourth row
third seat from the front.
I religiously measured them each time
I passed to the pencil sharpener.
Did she notice mine the way I noticed hers?
We had brass in common, but that was all
except for our single mothers.
Hers slept around.
Mine had a sleep-over boyfriend.
I wanted to press my breasts back in
and be like everyone else.
Not like Lois.

At night I undressed quickly
in the room I shared with my sister.
We pretended to be asleep
as we listened to bedroom sounds
squeezing through our wall.
Sadness separated us
so I couldn’t ask
if she hated me.

Annie Cameron
Camden
teaches English

Socks

I awoke cold, my shirt
Damp, and I remember
You would wear socks
To bed, all cotton
And yellow, rolled down
From soft, porcelain
Calfes and a faire, blue vein,
Pure and eternal.
Like the sky in the eyes
Of Pra Angelico’s saints,
Rolled down over
Ankles. Then with covers,
Tight, you’d shed
Each sock in a bunch, at
The bottom of the bed.
Somehow, it’s always
The cold of night
That causes words
To rattle from sleep.
And conjure images,
Once warm

Silvia Rike

M.H. Walsh
Brunswick
Instructor at Lincoln Academy
Cross-Country
(excerpt from North-Country Blues)

The three of them were silent as the old copper Torino spool-sought through the
murky twilight; they hadn't had much to say since they'd grabbed their gear and
gave whoops to Maine.

Emily Hutchinson felt as though someone would have to pry her hands from
the steering wheel when they finally stopped. Once again, she thought about
throwing out the wide wedding band cutting into her finger. That would be
foolish, though, wasteful. She could always sell the ring if their money ran out, the
money she'd stolen from Murray's supposedly-secret poker stash.

Emily's attention snapped back to the present when Jalacy jammed another
caecophonous tape into the deck. Jalacy's long thin fingers with their black-
lacquered nails kept the beat, drumming soundlessly against her flattened
thighs. In the rearview mirror, Damon's profile was edged in flickering light. His
eyes were closed; his head moved in time as he played air guitar.

They'd been on the road a night and a day already. Fugitives. Emily had known
for some time she'd end up having to leave Murray, but she'd thought it would be
a simple matter, the ends tied up nice and neat by lawyers. Not this flight down
the eastern coast and across the whole country to Arizona, so far a distance for a
country mouse like herself that she wondered if the money would last. Or the car.
Or her determination.

They did have a good headstart, although they'd been in Boston before she
stopped panicking at every set of headlights looming in the rearview mirror. Was
Murray following them? Was he glad they were gone, or was he set on revenge?

Emily tried to focus on the road, but her mind kept wandering. Time to stop,
before she fell asleep or began hallucinating, had an accident. The couple hours
she'd spent dodging in the picnic area of I-95 somewhere in New York State hadn't
helped her all that much, and her speedy adrenaline light-or-flight energy was fading
tastefully.

The sign they passing said Virginia Beach was the largest resort area in
the world, so why not stop? There should be plenty of June tourists around,


Emily reached for her purse, then drew her hand back in sudden indecision.
Was it safe? "Take Damon with you."

Jalacy smiled, but the smile went down at one corner. "Emily, my father
couldn't possibly be here. Stop worrying. He's glad we're gone."

Emily shook her head, counted out a few bills. "Go."

What else could she do? They hadn't eaten since New Jersey, and that was
hours and hours ago. She'd already decided she was going to be organized, cool
and logical, on this journey. That was easy in the concept, but damned
difficult in execution. She'd hardly ever had to make important, deliberate
decisions. Only two. To marry Murray. To leave him.

Emily had seen the divorce lawyer for the first time the April day she
found out about the kids. Murray had been sitting at the kitchen table when she
went home, drinking Canadian Club and holding a letter covered with Starr's
curlicued handwriting. Starr Hutchinson. Painter, poet, sojourner of the world.
Murray's ex-wife.

"Kids're coming," said Murray, shifting his muscular shoulders. He'd
closed eyes gave no clues whether this was good news or bad. Once, he'd been
hot and passionate in any man she'd ever met. Now, most days when he finished
his papermaker's shift, he drank a pint of whiskey and switched off.

"For spring vacation, you mean?"

"No," he said. "Starr's going to some kind of Hindu retreat. She can't take
them, so she's putting them on a plane Saturday."

Emily hadn't seen Murray's children since her wedding five years before. She
had married at thirty not so much because she was in love as because she wanted
children, and time was ticking away. And still ticking. Jalacy had been twelve then, a small slender girl with serious grey eyes and ash-
blonde hair springing back from a perfect widow's peak. Damon had been ten,
rail-thin and lanky, so quiet he barely made a ripple.

Two strangers got off the Delta flight in Bangor that sunny April afternoon. Emily
recognized Jalacy's solemn eyes, kohl-rimmed now; the thick hair was
platinum, with two plum-colored streaks arcing back like curved lightning. In her
black leather motorcycle jacket, denim mini, and stiletto heels, she had more
than enough streetwise swagger for the whole state of Maine.

Damon she recognized only by his proximity to his sister. He was tall for fifteen,
taller than Murray, his straight sandy hair below his shoulders. His face was like
Jalacy's—like their mother's—but harder, leaner, nose jutting narrowly, chin
sharply angular. Now he looked arounded and bereft, like someone pulled into
the lifeboat just at the moment he was sure he was going to drown.

Here were her children; then, not the beautiful bright babies of her imaginings,
not the class vaudeville, not the Eagle Scout. Her instant family, tough and
urban; she felt a slight chill at the thought of their arrival in small coastal Perry,
where there wasn't even a Main Street.

Three more days put them in Clarksdale, Mississippi, birthplace of the Delta
blues. It was Damon's request they make the sidetrip. Jalacy had pretty much
read the maps thus far, Emily concentrating only on the forward progression, the
pace a little slower now, bad memories receding bit by bit.

In Clarksdale, Emily sold the wide wedding band, not because she needed the
money, because she didn't, just yet. When she saw the sign saying, "Gold
bought," it just felt like time, in the Birthplace of the Delta Blues, to sell the
symbol of a life that was over now.

She came out of the shop to find Damon staring in a window at a rack of
electric guitars. She touched his arm lightly, immediately drew her hand away.

"Sometime," he shrugged. "I know."

Maybe if there was enough left in their cash stash when they reached Arizona.

A goodby gift.

Jalacy reclined in the back seat with her Walkman when they backtracked
north to Memphis under a wide white sky. Damon lounged beside Emily and
stared at something beyond the horizon that she couldn't see at all.

"Where is this place, anyway?" Emily asked.

"Secola!" he said after awhile, when she'd given up hope of a response. "Near
Flagstaff. Some kind of New Age holy land, I guess."

"Well, I hope you like it there."

"Don't matter. Don't ever get a choice."

He stretched a pale, sinewy arm out the side window. "Look at what happened to Jalacy."

Emily thought of the drawings on the walls of Jalacy's room, pen-and-ink with
a watercolor wash, edgy architectural cityscapes and tortured portraits. She
remembered Jalacy in neon-shaded jeans, curled on the bed, saying, "Emily, it
was two months. Just nine weeks. If we'd stayed in Chicago, I woulda won the
Art League prize. A fat scholarship. But no. Not Mother. She couldn't wait."
Damon hunched closer to the black guitar and went on picking. Blood rose in Murray's stubby face, and one workbooted foot swung forward and crashed into the grill of the small Gorilla amp. Electronic feedback became cracking static became silence.

"You bastard," said Damon softly, cold as ice.
Murray turned. "What did you say, boy?"

Damon dropped the guitar on the bed and sprang at his father. Murray pushed him away with one muscular forearm. His other hand grabbed the guitar by its slender neck and brought it down against the cabinet of the raised amp. The sound of splitting wood rose in the air, and then the moan of strings like a creature in pain.

"The guitar descended again, and Damon with the strength of the berserk tore it from his father's hands. His chest rose and fell unevenly like a bastard, " said Damon softly, cold as ice.

She didn't care. She pushed open the front door, aware at once that something was wrong, some kind of cracking molevence in the still June air.

She ran up the stairs. Murray must be after Damon again, she thought, but he won't get away with it this time. I won't let him. But Damon's room was empty.

She pushed open the half-closed door to Jalacy's room, unprepared for the rush of images that greeted her. Murray, dark blood welling sluggishly from a line that ran down the left side of his face from cheekbone to jaw, was reaching with one hand for the old-fashioned straight razor Jalacy held at arm's length behind her. Her red satin camisole was ripped open; the fingers of Murray's other hand twisted deeply into the creamy flesh of one of her high young breasts.

"Cut me again, you little bitch," he said. Drops of blood spattered star-shaped against Jalacy's face as he spoke.

Jalacy stood motionless, taunt, her back arched like a bow, her knuckles white as she grasped the razor. "I'll fucking cut it off," she said, and Emily saw that Murray's jeans were undone. "This is the last time."

"Oh," cried Emily. Her voice sliced loud and sudden into the silent room. How many times had she wanted to scream. How many times? Murray and Jalacy turned towards her like a pair of sleepwalkers.

Murray pulled a handheld electric from his pocket, and held it to her cheek. His eyes widened at the dark blood that spread across the white cotton. "I'm gonna go get patched up," he said, hitching at his jeans. He grabbed Emily's wrist. "I'll explain what she did when I get back."

"This is the last time," she said, and Emily saw that Murray and Jalacy turned towards her like a pair of sleepwalkers.

She held the torn camisole right across her chest. Big kohl-tinted teardrops rolled down her cheeks and dripped on her hands like a slow rain.

Two more days brought Emily and Damon to Phoenix, where they took 17 north to Sedona. Since the departure of his sister, Damon had barely spoken; silence reigned down upon them like the Clarkdale blues. He had resurrected the broken guitar from its case in the trunk, and sat holding it in his lap, shifting its murriness.

Two days later found them in Austin, Texas. Emily was starting to feel hopeful; Arizona was getting close.

You're going to make it, you old country mouse, she was telling herself when Jalacy said, "Take the next exit."

She'd charged lanes automatically by the time the words sank in. "Where are we going?"

"It's a surprise," murmured Damon, but Jalacy didn't answer.

They made so many turns Emily was sure they'd never find their way back to the Interstate.

"Pull in here," said Jalacy, "and wait." She was up the apartment-house steps and gone in a flash.

"You going to tell me about this?" Emily asked Damon.

"We lived here once. Ma was with this grad assistant at the University. An art crowd. He shook his head. "It was good here. Just about the best."

Jalacy returned to the car with a small stocky man in a paint-smeared undershirt, and a tall woman with a silver-tipped bruntette pageboy. Before Emily could protest, Jalacy's duffle and her carpetbag and her two big black portfolios had disappeared up the narrow stairs, and the three of them stood face to face on the crumbling sidewalk.

"I know you hate goodbyes, little brother," said Jalacy, giving Damon a quick hug. "Write me. Mother won't. See you on TV, when we're famous."

He mumbled something, planted a quick kiss on her cheek, and retreated to the car.

"Well," said Emily.

"Well," said Jalacy. She touched Emily's shoulder. "You've been awful good to us. Thanks. I — I like you a lot."

"You'll be okay?"

Jalacy nodded. "Howie used to live with Mother. He's a good guy. Never touched me once."

"What will you do?"

"Go to the University. Howie's in the art department. Jill, too."

"Good luck," said Emily. What was she there to say to this girl who had already survived more chaos than Emily ever expected to face? They hugged each other, hard.

"Here," said Jalacy. "This'll take you back to 35. You look after Damon, okay?"

"Okay," Emily studied the pen-and-ink map. Clugging along the interstate was a tiny Torino with three outsted likenesses—hers, Jalacy's, and Damon's—leaping through the windows and wailing. And laughing. They were all laughing.

Emily had been fifteen minutes from home when she remembered she'd forgotten the brochures for the Friends of the Library June Fair and Tea. It was a hassle going back, but she was so proud of the drawings Jalacy had done that she didn't care. She pushed open the front door, aware at once that something was wrong, some kind of cracking molevence in the still June air.

She ran up the stairs. Murray must be after Damon again, she thought, but he won't get away with it this time. I won't let him. But Damon's room was empty.
**Buveur d'Ocean (Drinker of Ocean)**

*After an anonymous Indian painting*

Whereas the wise Agastya sits cross-legged on a deerskin, drinking up the water before him with his eyes closed like someone returning to the coast after a bad winter inland, who inhales the first lungful of sea air with no need to view the watery plain somewhere beyond a stone wall, a privet hedge; whereas the wise man shares his grassy lot with small deer, quail, a peacock and a few tall trees that stand out against the blue evening sky; whereas there's a second figure, to Agastya's right, who waits to have a word with wisdom itself, who watches the bearded figure take up the flourishing, linear grass into his thin body with no apparent toil or perturbation; whereas other oceans remain to be cleansed, I cling ever tighter to the notion of discarding calm.

For were I to settle on some promontory jutting out into the Atlantic, I couldn't appreciate the wide waters in the all-encompassing manner of Agastya, who obliges student or cousin or creditor to keep a watchful distance.

And even if it were my will to take up a contemplative position, to reduce my possessions to a hide, a string of beads and something to tie back my long hair—to turn inward, hauling in nature after me—I would not forsake a tiny daughter dressed in red breathing a soft whisper in her sleep, abandon the wiles and landmarks of my wife, not leave off my travels now, today, to become another beacon on some desolate point, helpful row and again, photogenic, yet no more in the end than a big eye whose beam glances off treacherous waters, doesn't take them in, and falls entirely before the fog.

**Carl Little**

*Mount Desert writes and edits on the Island*

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**Tenants Harbor**

*In the sunlight silence on the quiet sea only the clank, clack of the rigging measures the rocking irregular lift of waves on the flat water.***

**Richard Lyons**

Gardiner

is a professor emeritus, No. Dakota State U.

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**The Logger**

He steps into the store—hair and beard spotted with white flakes, wood snow from the chain saw. Shirts, layered plaid on green reveal rips in sleeves, smell of sawdust. Rolled jeans, knees worn expose brown, net-glued bark chips on once white leggings.

His thick tongue rolls between tobacco teeth, waiting to break French-English, "cigarettes." I reach for the carton of Pall Mall his dirt-packed fingernail twitches towards, from red socks he draws out Queen Elizabeth, but I shake my head and point to the sign, "American Only."

Brows creased, he searches breast, jean, coat pockets, drawing more crescent-stamped bills. Shaking a storm of white onto the wooden counter he turns for the screened door, I push the carton into calloused hands; he nods, lowers thick lashes.

The logging truck groans from the soft shoulder, slatted sides lurch from the shifting weight of naked trees. I watch dust clouds rise on the Rumford road; I can smell the mill, sick and egg-rotten, forty miles to the south. He'll be back later for food to stoke the factory.

**Stephanie M. Eleftheriou**

Bar Harbor

is a Senior at Smith...
The World Above the Sky

Even in death, Peter-Paul was mischievous. His ghost always appeared to Truman in the shape of a rabbit or as a Rock of ages in human form. Thirty years of life inside the bones and muscles of a man had been more than enough for Peter-Paul Berry.

When I died, his ghost told Truman, "I peeled off my skin like a corn husk."

"You always were an ugly bastard," his brother agreed.

Peter-Paul's nightly visits were preceded by a flurry of dead leaves from the maple tree which bent over his grave. Spectral winds blew the leaves three hundred and fifty miles from Lennox Island, Canada to Portland, Maine where they settled like a brittle blanket over his brother's sleeping body. Inevitably Peter-Paul arrived behind them, wrapped in some new peli, to whisper portents and dance at the edge of Truman's sleep.

At first Truman couldn't understand his words. They sounded so much like nonsense he assumed they belonged to an old Micmac dialect. He thought his brother had chosen than particular language as a reproach for leaving the reservation. As the years passed, however, Truman slowly began to recognize certain phrases until, one night, he understood that the reason he couldn't comprehend the language before was because it was the tongue of the dead which is universal among the departed but unknown among the living. He remembered an old man he had once met, another transient, who was so ancient he had forgotten human speech and could only talk the gibberish of ghosts. This was the first presentation Truman Berry had of his own death.

To stay warm in the cold March air, Shoebottom smoked cigarettes and drunk bottles of Wild Irish Rose which he stuffed, empty, behind a dumpster. He had made a nest in the alley out of newspapers and strips of insulation torn from a condemned church. On the wall beside the dumpster he kept a calendar using a piece of brick to scratch a line for each day of the week. "Twenty-five," Shoebottom said. "I'm going to retrieve them and when I return, she had locked the door."

He thought she might have a fried egg sandwich, a greasy chicken leg. Each night the woman seemed satisfied. She would never take his word. She imagined leading her down from her apartment, showing her the scars on her wall and saying, "See—this is what I have done for you." If she refused to come, he would drag her by the hair.

Shoebottom fantasized that some day Tracy would open her window and see his stared eyes glaring upwards. So far, the only person who had seen him was the old lady who lived in the downstairs apartment. From time to time he saw a pale forehead capped with mayonnaise. He asked her if there was an Irish reservation. "I wish we had one," she replied. "It is the home of the departed."

And could only talk the gibberish of ghosts. She wondered whether he was getting ready to shed it. He pictured himself entering the World Above the Sky, a naked ghost.

"Sometimes I wish I were a cricket," Shoebottom whispered to himself: "I am not dead."

Shoebottom had begun to drop hints that Truman was himself about to die. At first Truman refused to listen, but Peter-Paul turned himself into a cricket and crawled inside his brother's ear when he was asleep.

You will be killed tomorrow, Peter-Paul said.

Truman shook his head stubbornly. "That's what you said yesterday. And before."

I was right.

"Who will kill me then?"

"The hell should I know?"

"Get out of my ear," Truman said.

Except for the occasional trip to the Department of Human Services and the more frequent trips to the Variety store for cigarettes and wine, Shoebottom stayed in his nest, watching the upstairs window for signs of Tracy. She was rarely home. He suspected that she had taken a new boyfriend, a non-drinker probably.

When he thought of it, his nerves burned like frayed wires. Try as he might, he couldn't stop picturing Tracy on her back, legs up, and some bastard pronging her for hours on end. The image made him sick to stomach. He fought back by envisioning Tracy with two black eyes, a fat lip.

On the seventeenth night of his vigil, just after dark, a light appeared in the upstairs window. There were two shadows under the curtain, a tall one and a small one, and they were embracing. Shoebottom's heart seemed to stop. All at once he was seized by a desire to conceal himself. He wanted nothing better than to burrow under the newspapers and insulation and forever hide himself from human sight.

Instead Shoebottom booted from the alley.

At Buzzy's Supermarket, across from the cathedral, he spent his last dollars on wine. He bought a quart of Night Train and took it to a cemetery and drank it in five minutes. Immediately he felt as though he had put on a pair of strong glasses. In the cold his thoughts became diamonds. He saw the world as if for the first time. It was this way whenever he had a drink.

The wind had begun to blow off the harbor. Shoebottom surrendered to it and let the gusts pass through him.

"You're nothing but an animal," he remembered Tracy screaming. It was the night she flushed his bourbon down the toilet and threw his clothes into the alley.

He had gone to retrieve them and when he returned, she had locked the door.

The police arrived soon after, and he had weakened the next morning in a drunk tank with a knot on his head where the patrolman had hit him.

"I'm so lonely without my Calvin," Shoebottom said suddenly in the old woman's wheedling voice.

The alcohol had turned him philosophical. What did that old hag know about being alone? She couldn't even suspect what true aloneness was like. To be
without anyone and without God too; to listen in the dark and hear nothing, not even your own heartbeat; to watch people embracing and hate them so much it hurt—that was true aloneness. It was like a cancer that ate you from within. You could feel it devouring the walls of your stomach and you knew there was no cure.

Liquor helped, but not for long, and when you awoke it was always worse than before.

A metallic clatter brought Shoebottom back to the cemetery. Beyond the fence and across the street, a dog had gotten into a trash barrel. Shoebottom watched the wolfish-looking animal, which had deep furrows between its ribs, nose the garbage. It was trying to pin one edge of a paper bag beneath its paw so it could insert its muzzle and get at what was inside. The dog was making a pained, whining noise.

"Shut up," he said, "I'm thinking."

The dog paid no attention to him. It began to tear at the bag with its teeth. Shoebottom squeezed his hands into fists and rose. He began to advance on the dog.

"You hungry, doggy? You hungry, huh? I'll give you something. Come here you little bitch."

When he was a yard away and the dog still hadn't acknowledged him, Shoebottom lashed out with his boot. The blow caught the animal in the ribs. Again he kicked, but this time the dog skittered aside, and Shoebottom lost his balance. He fell hard on his back, knocking his skull on the pavement. In an instant the dog was upon him. It lunged, quick as a snake, and bit his palm when he raised it to protect his face. Shoebottom gave a howl of pain. He tried to jerk his hand away, but only aggravated the wound. The dog let go and ran.

Shoebottom lay for a long time with his eyes open, staring up into the blue-colored sky. When he rose finally, he saw the dog leaping off across the street, the bag in its teeth. He began to suck the blood from his hand.

"Great," he said. "Now I've got rabies."

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Truman was at the 24-Hour Club eating chicken à la king when the stranger appeared. He was a lean young man with navaged eyes and greasy strands of hair pasted across his forehead. He had not shaved in many days and there was a bloody rag knotted around his left hand.

He said: "I'm a hit you.

Truman had watched the young man confront the bums seated across the room. They had laughed or blown smoke at his slurred speech, and now the stranger had staggered down to Truman's end of the table. There was something, a violence, in his eyes that made Truman giddy. He became aware of the odor of burned coffee; the rustle and flutter of dead leaves. He raised it to protect his face. Shoebottom had watched as Truman, seated not more than five yards away, sank into the deepening darkness as if into a pit of tar. First his head vanished, then his chest, then his feet; finally all that was left was his voice, hoarse and strangely accented:

"What happened to your hand?"

"What?"

"Your hand.

Shoebottom looked down at the stained bandage. The hand lying in his lap seemed to belong to someone else; he could move the fingers, but they were not his.

"Dog bite," he said thickly.

"You got to find that dog," Truman said. "You got to find it and cut off its head and send it to Charlottetown for tests."

The earth shivered under Shoebottom's legs as a big truck lumbered over the bridge.

"Send it where?"

"We can't have a dog like that running loose on the island."

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about," Shoebottom said. He tried to take another drink from the wine bottle Truman had given him, but in his drunkenness he had forgotten it was empty. He hurled it across the ditch. It seemed a long time before the sound of breaking glass returned to him.

"You got another bottle or don't you?" he demanded.

Truman began to sing, in his sweetest, throat-cancer voice:

I walk the streets day in, day out
my thoughts working a one-track mind.
I'll stop and push up daisies
for the sake of wine, wine, wine—

"Are you going to shut up—or what?" Shoebottom said sharply.

"Do you think they'll print it?" Truman asked.

"Who?"

"The people who print poetry."

"I think it's dog-shit," Shoebottom said and laughed. Suddenly, in his mind,
he saw shirts flying out the window and heard Tracy screaming: You're nothing but an animal. He saw two shapes, one tall, one small, embracing upon a lighted curtain. It was all he could do to blink back the tears.

He had never felt more alone. The solitude before he met Tracy was nothing compared to his present solitude. She had ruined life for him forever. For a brief period she had fooled him into thinking there was such a thing as love. He had gotten it into his head that you could actually trust another person with your secret self. What a sick joke it was she played on him. By lifting him out of the abyss, Tracy had only made it seem all the blacker when she hurled him back in. Losing her was not like losing a horse or even a friend. It was like losing salvation.

When he thought of her, happy without him, his blood quickened. He pictured her with her new lover, laughing, embracing, and he clenched his fists until the fingernails dug into the skin. She had fooled him into thinking there was such a thing as love. He had wondered when you'd show up.

During the fight his bandage had come loose. There was blood on his hand, he didn't know whose.

The Color of My Language

"Mine alone is the country of my soul."  
Marc Chagall

Here in this country
where I seek a refuge,
I cannot name the flowers, birds, trees,
although they grow also in my homeland.

Your language is sweet to the tongue,
but I cannot produce even a street name.

I speak to you in my native tongue of color
and memory. And from this full soul,
I tell you of lovers and circuses,
icons and the star of David, roosters and scythes,
white lambs and blue goats, green faces,
and peasants dancing on rooftops.

My color is magic; forms defy gravity, and
some say I have no logic either.

Yes, I defy some laws
as I have seen your dancers do
in their elevations
at the Ballet of Paris. But my color stories
are more than fantasy, they speak
to you of the country of my soul
where anyone can carry
the lamb over the moon.

Bonny Barry Sanders
Scarborough

teaches Creative Writing at the
University of New England, Biddeford

The Right Voice

What follows is an excerpt from the novel of the same name. The Right Voice is also the name of a student journal published at Old Goreham College in Vermont. The editor is Junior, Jr., the Dean of Faculty is Frank Loess, nicknamed Total by everyone who knows him. Total Loess is here deeply involved in certain allegations set forth in 'The Right Voice' and in a tellable display of concern by some other students in the matter of safer sex.

There is, you know, an annual award for the college newspaper displaying the largest number and highest quality of typographical errors. It's the coveted Dipso Award, sponsored by an international conglomerate with interests in excesses systems, baby booties, lawn mikes, test tubes and turkey loaf. No one knows why they sponsor the Dipso Prize, no one in journalism and no one in the conglomerate, which seems to have inherited it as part of an acquisition with ties to the outfit producing those blow-in subscription forms that fall out of your magazines between the mailbox and the kitchen table. The emphasis is really on quality since the common garden variety of errors mounts to exponential proportions in even the worst of the entries, 'worst' meaning in this context the newspapers having the fewest errors. We've got inverse ratios in another way, which is that the techniques for producing and editing a newspaper have become so simple any fool could... well, no, let's measure our words here. Point is, all you have to do nowadays is look at your VDT and correct the damned thing before you pipe it along to the photo-offset guys for final grooming and pictures. If you can read, you can proofread and get it right.

Did we isolate the problem there? Possibly.

THE RIGHT VOICE has retired the Dipso trophy. It's in the Hall of Fame for Typos and ineligible for further competitions. We discover, preserved under a plexiglass case in the foyer of the library, a magnified reproduction of the line that catapulted them into this celebrity. In an article condemning the very fact of the Iran-Contra hearings, an article using such terms as "a victim of this animalistic behavior. She is reported to be in stable condition and resting comfortably after her ordeal. The nauseating details concern..."

Is it to wonder that VOICE swept away the competition, this in the category of in Typo Veritas? A veritable chateau of typos that or rare vintage one seeks longingly, thirstily, in the chateaux of Modesto, Bakersfield, Fresno... Junior, Jr., suspected a mole, a saboteur, an intentional "error" to make him and VOICE look bad, these suspicions part of the larger paranoia that encompassed, finally, much of the active life of the planet and a share of what appears—APPEARS—to be inert as well. Let their others have their celebration and raise the trophy high. Junior, Jr., hoped for more estimable accomplishments, journalistic 'beats' and important think pieces. He wanted to be the Woodstein of the Right.

So one understands why, when the VOICE exposed of sexual improprieties in FizzEd came out, Junior, Jr., was not thrilled with the headline, which read, in blazing caps: GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM. The casual reader might have wondered why, after a paragraph or two decrying the domination of Physical Education at Old Goreham by homosexuals and lesbians, there were no Toni-Lines, no thigh-slappers, no anecdotal hilarities. If there are so many guys up there, why aren't there any in the article, why... Omigod! They meant, they meant... GAYS! GAGS RAMPANT. GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM! And then, of course, once the typo was set right, there's room for plenty of guffaws about the binder intended, which has charm and stupidity enough to qualify for some other prize, the Dipso being out of reach.

But the article was, for sure, a hard-hitting piece of work, written by Junior, Jr., himself and naming names, you bet, and hinting pretty clearly about the body. Told him enough of it. Did not tell him how confused her own body. Of course, once the typo was set right, there's room for plenty of guffaws about the binder intended, which has charm and stupidity enough to qualify for some other prize, the Dipso being out of reach.

GAGS RAMPANT IN GYM

THE RIGHT VOICE has learned that the Physical Education Department of Old Goreham is a nest of practicing homosexuals. Through intense investigative work, RV can now disclose that women's basketball in particular has been taken over by lesbians. The two star forwards, Dan and Don, are known by many on campus to be conducting a depraved and unnatural relationship with one another. Not only are there lesbians among the players but Coach Spaidley herself is a banana lesbian preying on innocent young women who go out for the team. An RV reporter (whose anonymity will be protected) was a victim of this animalistic behavior. She is reported to be in stable condition and resting comfortably after her ordeal. The nauseating details concern...-

Now, the fact is, the circulation of THE RIGHT VOICE is so low, and the readership within THAT so much lower, the paradoxically published claim to want to keep the whole matter quiet might have had some credibility. One might have assumed that since hardly anybody read the thing, no one would take a fit or an umbrage or any of those things people often take when they have the smallest imaginable amount of information.

The problem for somebody like Frank Loess, Total Dean, however, is that he can't be dead certain for sure that there won't be at least one reader and that one reader right out of the bunch the article talks about: alumni, potential contributors—and then there are trustees, for heaven's sake, there are parents, some of whom read as well as their children, there are foundation and corporate executives, who can't, but never mind, their secretaries can. You don't need squads and battalions of readers. You only need one to push Total Loess in one of your acidic, corrosive, ulcerative states of mind. When comes such another? Pretty damned soon if some Mr. Big sees this poisonous stuff. Loess, of course, is not the head of the college. We've got us a president for that, and we haven't even met him yet, for a very acceptable reason having nothing to do with the fact that last week encountered on campus—sometimes during the nine years—he displayed all the personal magnetism of a mango. He's always off somewhere growling and swearing and writing about trying to get people to give money to the college. It's a wonderful line of work, full of honor and undignified behavior. Frank Dean, then, in the perpetual absence of the president, who has taken on the legendary status of an Odysseus in his ten-year journey back from the country clubs of Gross Point and who has been gone so long people have forgotten his name, his wife has reflected on his insurance, and a commemorative portrait has been commissioned, Frank it is who must anticipate, must peer a half-hour or so into the future. To get a move before the phone rings so he can say anything's under control, action is being taken, problem is being taken, on the way to resolution. Not to worry.
Old Goreham College has its valuer clear, sir, its head on straight, emphasis on the word 'straight'. No, sir, this place is just the way you remember it, sir. Still have to take a cold bath in the morning, oh yes. Dirt roads, hosing all about, a compulsory chapel, compulsory prayer in the chapel, required courses in The Bible and Business: The Real Story, pledge of allegiance under God, yes sir, and I agree with you, sir. It was only the most urgent need that saw girls admitted here. Barefoot and pregnant. Ah, ha ha ha, yes sir. And how is Mrs. Big? I see. Handicap what? Well well well. Barefoot and out on the links, then, eh? Ah, ha ha ha.

Mollifying everyone, that's what Frank must plan on. What are the moves he must make so that when called upon to explain the college, he may do it with only a modicum of unalloyed falsehood?

Frank Loess, Total Dean, leaned up from his swivel and put a thoughtful knuckle to his lips. He paced. He planned. He paused. He paused in front of the window looking out upon Central Quadrangle. He peered. And after the pacing and the planning and the peering, what should he behold but . . . penises, yes, penises a-building, a couple of them already a-built, in full rampancy across the street in front of his office. Big penises, peno homo sapiens, at least those that were completed. Two finished and five more being assembled from pre-fab sections while three women moved, dance-like, Maypole-like, around the first of the completed ones, applying strips of Strip-Wrap up and up and on-chewer the very glass of it so that when they finished putting down the wrapping, the penis, fully sheathed and thereby escaped from careless distribution of the life-giving sperm—impervious, too, to any impertinent microbes, be it friendly or bogey—glistered there in the October sunlight looking like, well, like it was supposed to look; Marty Moon's design, as flawless as her powers of observation, thus projecting in this dramatic way the inspirations of her organization, ACHCHO (Ad Hoc Committee Hoping to Overcome Ovulation), not affiliated with Planned Parenthood but hooked up for the current crisis with Gee-PERSS (Gay Persons Energetically Rallying for Safer Sex).

Tall and pink and glistering it stood there, ten feet of its wrapped and rigid presence like some embarrassed mushroom. (Think proportions, if unlike Total Loess you have a moment: such penises, spurn the size of rainbow trout; and on the attack, microbes like—oh, no, no! Soldier ants! Killer bees! Put a condom on the WORLD!) Now the three women, like the three graces, giggling off ice erecting what by all odds are the largest replications of anyone's secret existence of the scene now behind him but nevertheless began to experience fear, loathing, and on the attack, microbes, be it friendly or bogey-glistened there in the pianos. Frank heeled about quickly from this vision. He disbelieved in the existence of the scene now behind him but nevertheless began to experience symptoms ordinarily related to shock: accelerated pulse, a cold perspiration, dryness of mouth, a partial hard-on—but that went away as fast as it partially arose and we shouldn't think it medically significant. Symptoms of what? we want to ask. Why has Total Frank reacted this way? Well, sir, it falls out that was the expected poster. What then? He peeked out the window again. The mailman had been seen. Who? Who? How? How? Was there an appointment with a case of Guinness and a steak and kidney pie imported from a gourmet take-out in Keene. He had his priorities in hand.

Dean Loess had, it is true, addressed the student body assembled in the chapel, a building fallen into disuse and disrepair in the last decade and used only for rare gatherings and a couple of rock concerts that threatened the collapse of the bell tower. Total had spoken of the blessing of freedom of expression and illustrated his conviction by asserting that Adolph Hitler and Albert Schweitzer should be equally welcome to offer their views on a college campus, the students thus being enabled to consider the respective views and come to an educated judgement. Reluctantly, he had entertained questions from the floor after his remarks and the stubbly interested students wanted to fetch his response to such questions as: Did Dean Loess consider Buchenwald an exercise of Hitler's freedom of expression? Wouldn't he agree that knocking down shanties was as expressive as putting them up in the first place, especially as students sang and danced the while they were wielding the sledge hammers? Did he know that Albert Schweitzer had had a large organ? Was he aware that Hitler had had no organ at all but enjoyed tinkling on the piano? Did freedom of expression mean that a person could tinkle anywhere he or she wanted to?

When he had had as much of this as he felt his salary and benefits package demanded of him, Frank closed with a renewed plea for tolerance of everything and everybody and left.

But what was he to do with giant phalluses, apparently a revelation by spitfire students of the secret and in any event just inadvisably private sort of interest, hobby, avocation—God! What to CALL it! He didn't have enough to worry about with this RIGHT VOICE piece of garbage. Now people are putting up penises practically on the porch. For this job, I left a quiet little streamer of a teaching job at Muntz Military Academy, he lamented. All the goddamn saluting, though. Salute your f*cking arm off.

He reached for the telephone and punched Iris Knoedler's number. Both of these matters seemed appropriately addressed to the Dean of Students. These were students, after all, erecting penises on the quad and writing stories in newspapers about deviates in the locker room (GAAS! he said to himself and shook his head). His secretary said Iris was "away from her desk" just now; she'd return his call.

"Mmph!" Total grunted as he hung up the phone. Away from his desk sounded pretty good right now, about two continents away. He could count the years to retirement without taking off his shoes and socks. He did so now, breathing heavily.

Richard Flanagan
Fairfield

*teaches in Massachusetts, dives a lot*
Hortense Fiquet

(Mme. Paul Cezanne)

The roses dream that sunlight is the stone warmed by a yellow wash, a cream indifferent as her eyelashes' color that almost turns to clay, her black hair like a stocking-cap atop a statue as she poses, her hands folded, wearing silk fingerless gloves. The wall she leans against is like a frozen garden's everway, forever closed. Whatever though sung there is silent, whatever tone of light's too pure. The panic in her eyes, the little clutch of feeling in her mouth, have their own reason in this austere finality, composition. Aphrodite is after all a whore. Her eyes beg, "Make me respectable." All the more excited he stitches like a needle, that expression of her mouth, compresses her eyes with anxiety, sketches a haughty,lover, reveals a Venus classical and precocious, a modern woman. He is like a surgeon, better than human, excising the irrelevant, a bone devoted, the precise, perpetual stone. He paints her in rapture of dry sunlight, sketches her quickly and lingers on the colors—still as Giotto's figures—memorialized, forever waiting, forever to be teased, until his father says, "Marry her!" He turns to painting Mr. St. Victorien.

P.B. Newman
Charlotte N.C.

Branches at Queens College
Charlotte, N.C.

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**Recurring Dream**

Nearly once a week
I go at night
to the red house—
red like a tail light, a Nadir, a scar.
I can walk it eyes closed.
The chairs never move. Old, black dog
on a stained sheet never lifts his head.
Smell of chicken skin
and my own blood.
I fear every set of stairs,
unplug anything that makes noise.
There's no true time there.
Sometimes mom is young.
Sometimes dad isn't dead.
Sometimes sisters are fat.
Other times vanishing.
Always I am barefoot.
And always I run out the kitchen door into the mud yard, running so that
everything before doesn't matter, so that everything is gone and there is only
that place where the trees overhead part, that place where I can stand and see
eagles overhead, eagles slow circling lower and lower.

I fear waking with dirty feet.
For it will mean I've tracked my dream life
over into this life.
And then I won't really be sleeping
with you.
But if I have to lose you
I'd want it to be to the night.

KD Nelson
Portland
is a freelance writer & dreamer

I hate String Quartets, but they're long, so they play them a lot just to fill
up time. Maybe because they're so timeless they consider them neutral and
harmless. You turn on the radio to Classics and there it is—another String
Quartet. Who ever took the time to write so Many? They're so much the
same. They could just say "Number 5," and that would mean any String
Quartet in the whole world.

Like we do with things we say over and over at home. Instead of moaning
about how bad the Patriots are, we just say "Number 13." And if it's about
someone fooling with the remote all the time, instead of getting all bent out
shape, we just say "Number 6." When a LOT OF THINGS annoy us, we
sometimes forget what the numbers are—but THAT has its OWN number.
I forget what it is. When someone starts to tell a too-old joke (never funny
in the first place) we all mumble "Number 18."

It leaves people who come to our house thinking they should have
brought along a Bingo card because all we do is call out numbers. When
someone has a NEW thing to tell, or a NEW joke, it makes everyone in the
family uneasy—because of course it doesn't have a number yet.

When the same people keep calling on the phone and the phone rings,
everyone says "Number 80" or "Number 57" (pickle lover) or even up in the
100's, if it's a new caller. Remembering all this makes one forget the actual
NAMEs of these people, so at the dinner table it's "I saw 35 today and he sold
87 is going to the dance with 43, so call them about going along."

Of course by now, no one can look up anyone's phone number since they
don't have a name. Just a number.

Louise Pieper
Prout's Neck
is an Interior Designer
The Boy in the Forest

He read the half-page of hauntingly familiar scrabbling but rigidly linear handwriting for the third time. It was, he realized, her mother's handwriting now, not the daughter's. He folded Millicent's letter and returned it to the square blue envelope with its psychedelic swirling borders. So—he really was a grandfather, had been for ten years. He had known—known abstractly—because the father, an anonymous named Mike, had written: "Dear Professor, I thought you ought to know ..." Not a word from Millicent.

This letter, signed Millicent, was, ten years later, evidence. Now he knew, concretely, that the conceptual, imaginary grandchild was a real boy. He re-read the letter in his mind: "I would like him to visit you for a few weeks this summer. My therapist, really only an advisor on temporal affairs, [he appreciated that bit of considerate reassurance] feels Galen should know his origins, and so do I. He'll be little trouble but you should be forewarned. He is an old ten years and quite sophisticated by Maine standards."

"Maine standards!" What did she remember of Maine standards, and what right had she to assume her mad mother's version of her first four years in Maine correspondence to reality? He touched the postmark with his finger tip. Berkeley, CA. Well, it had been a long time, and a pretty lively time in Berkeley in the sixties, and a long way from Brunswick, ME, to Berkeley, CA—Berkeley—that would be pronounced "Barlky" in England. He reached for the 3rd volume of The Britannica from the shelf beside his desk—NO! He had to face the immediate problem of how to deal with the boy arriving tomorrow. No escape allowed into the warm, familiar world of book. He opened the volume.

The conversation during the first fifteen minutes of the ride from the airport had been halting and difficult: the usual questions about school, his family's health, and brief flat answers. The waitress at The Brookside Diner greeted them warmly. The professor frequently stopped here on trips between Brunswick and Portland to satisfy his secret sugar habit. Now she smiled and said, "Enjoy," as she sat down slabs of strawberry-rhubarb pie, the homemade french vanilla ice cream beginning to drizzle over the sides of the warm pie.

"Galen," the grandfather said, a gob of pie halfway to his mouth, "do you believe in an external reality?" Galen stared. "Well, take this table." The grandfather tapped it. "Is it here at night when no one is here to see it?"

The boy looked slightly embarrassed. "Sure it's here—unless—unless someone moved it?"

"But how do you know? Can you prove it?"

Galen became serious. "I could tie a long string to it and take the other end of the string with us—then pull on it."

"Good try! But suppose Janice here, he pointed to the waitress, "moved the string, tied it to something else?"

"Come on, Grandfather! I mean, of course it's here. It's real."

"But not so easy to prove. I agree with you, Galen, but I can't prove it. You see, it was Berkeley that got me thinking about this—that you come from Berkeley."

Galen waited, hoping for something more informative. "You know, Galen, the city of Berkeley is named after the Bishop Berkeley—Barkly is how they pronounce it in England—and Berkeley had this theory that things only exist when they are perceived, when someone can see, hear, feel, or smell them. So—when no one was here..."

Galen grinned. "Like the tree in the forest thing. I've heard Mike and Millicent talk about that."

"Exactly. Like the tree in the forest. I think there'd be sound waves there even if I wasn't, don't you?" Galen nodded, sucking the last of the pie juice from the edge of its fork. "So, Galen, I believed in you. I'd never seen you, or heard you, but I knew you were there—and I've loved you, and your mother, all these years." He was careful not to look directly at the boy. "The logic is pretty weak, I know, but that's the best I can do, without coffee."

Janice! The usual for me and hot chocolate for my friend."

"Now, enough of this mush: right Galen? Tell me, do you like football? What team do you root for? The Indians or the Trojans?"

"The Indians—but I like baseball better—the Cleveland Indians."

"Good. The Indians have always needed all the help they can get. Those Trojans... you know I don't think I'd like to play for a team named after a condom."

"Jeez, Grampa! You're gross!"

"Like you too, Galen. Now finish your chocolate and we'll go home. I've got an old canoe and if we vanish it this afternoon we can have it in the water tomorrow."

Robert M. Chute
Poland Spring
Teaches biology at Bates

The Movie of My Life

In the movie made of my life, working title Born on the 19th of June: A Poet in Maine, I'm played by Leslie Howard, but he can't be gotten—he's dead—so I'll have to be one of the crop of new sensitive actors, but which ones are they? In truth, there's nary a one could do justice to my powerful story.

Who could possibly capture the way in which I put my children to bed, sing as well as I do "My Little Buckaroo" over the crib railing? Who can portray the tormented writer shutting the cat out in the coyote night and staring for many minutes at the snow falling past his window?

Peter Sellers is dead, so is Gary Grant, but neither would really work in the role. Cary Cooper, may be rest in peace, doesn't have my savoir faire, and as much as I admired James Bond as a youth, I'm just too local and peace-loving for the likes of Sean Connery.

The opening scene, showing me as a lad in Carl Schurtz Park, making an extraordinarily long run on my sled, would need to be shot numerous times, from different angles, to truly bring out the exaltation and fear in my eyes. A decent boy actor would fit in just fine here—perhaps the young Jimmy Stewart, but I don't think he started acting till he was well into his teens, and he's a bad poet anyway.

My long-haired days call for a method man who knows the ins and outs of hormonal drives, and who wouldn't mind being called "timid teeth." Among the highly charged episodes will be my initiation to the opposite sex, played by a youthful Ingrid Bergman, "natch, but she's gone too, out of my life and into the next.

Casting for my family will be extra difficult. Ideally, Joan Fontaine and Gregory Peck could play my parents (they're both alive). The movie should have a happy ending, with maybe an aerial shot of Mr. Katahdin, which I've never climbed, but plan to.

Music by Ravel, Stepenwolf, Doc Watson and a host of others. Directed by Kubrick, but if he's not available, Kurosawa. Finding backing may not be that easy, but if they can earn an ounce for me, they'll come up with the dough.

Carl Little
Mt. Desert
wrote and wins on the island
**Sonata**

I have heard the argument for an early spring. The hummingbird, like an insect on lucid wings, shimmers its strike deep into the purple rhododendron's core. The chestnut tree holds out blossoms before its leaves, a many-handed acolyte.

A white-crowned sparrow calls from the scent of light of spruce, burnishing in the sun outside the door.

A swallow hangs into my window; struggles and flings a wing from a hollow shoulder and gains an edge of frail air on which it clings to vector above reflection and its pains.

Though after its collision, the swallow sings, its feathered imprint on the glass remains.

H.R. Coursen
Brunswick

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**Songs and Sonnets/H.R. Coursen.**

Magic Circle Press. 34 pp. $5.00, 1991.

Such Stuff as Dreams are Made on

The magical lines from The Tempest provide, for me, the best entry to this difficult and remarkable book of poems. These poems enumerate dreams and wishes—chief among them an understanding of what it means to love—that help define our existence and passage through the natural world. Prospero's words, laden with hope and caution, poignantly summarize our endless attempts to use love to define what is real. Daunting and noble work for any artist.

Herb Coursen has long been an extraordinarily eclectic poet; his work has touched subjects ranging from baseball to war memories, from childhood epiphanies to the daily tracks of nature across the human soul, and explorations of love's labyrinths.

By my count, Songs and Sonnets is Coursen's twelfth collection of poems. It seems by far his most focused: formal—most of these poems are sonnets—how odd for a Shakespearean scholar to write almost exclusively Petrarchan sonnets, dotted with "sprung rhythm"; anchored in the present; salted with images and portents of the natural world; and thematic—taken together these poems inscribe a tract upon romantic love. Yet it is a tract so spiked with thorns of mortality that it seems inside each sonnet is an elegy.

I had meant to say that, in these poems, the poet moves balanced between hope and despair, but that's not it exactly. I think it more accurate to say that he balances hope and despair with stunning grace and skill. Driving in the West Virginia hills, seeing the lives that fiercely cling to the steep inclines, thinking of his distant love: "Trees hum. Your voice, almost caught/ echoes in the vacant space of thought."

It seems no poet has attained the escape velocity to be free of love and its concerns, its relentless gravity. Its echoes are in the wind in traffic, the little streams of an ebbing tide, a single gull, a song that resurfaces the moment it is heard, the same tree lit by different seasons. All these are here to prick the heart's consciousness.

On the level of direct subject this collection is nearly halved between poems on the real object of the poet's love (in this case a woman) and those on the fragile possibility of love itself. In several poems—notably "December: Delivery 1990"—we find ominous images of the Gulf War, a man-made storm in the landscape of love.

The molten sand sends up a shield that blinds the soldier's eye, but not the screen that swells the target splash, or the seeking shell that finds the blood between the steel...

The love poems here are as indirect as light reflected on a wall. Usually a single image or sound is the key to revealing the woman who is loved and how she is loved. When it works, the effect can be enchanting, as in "Route 77 North: 9 November, '90","Mid-Winter, 1991"; even, especially, "#19 in A Minor: 5 May."

Within that arc of nature we both belong.

The window watched the moon define the trees below the gray-wash of April, and touched along your pillow-woven hair, moved on to ease an ocean from its work at shore...

Here the restraint builds to the power of a lightning strike. Sadly, in the love poems that work less well, the constraints of form and the effort of having wrought emotion into form sometimes produce a milky and diffuse effect, one that seems to miss its targets. Yet this is less weakness than the outcome of chances that a real poet takes and sometimes loses on.

The poems about love seem the most powerful in the book, serving as markers in which the images and portents of the natural world dance their meaning into the hearts of those who are open to understand. Here I single out "Skyline: After Rain"; "Going South: Route 79: 7 Dec '90," "23 March, 1991," and "Sonata," which I could not imagine being written any other way.

The collection closes with the poem "Elegy." It is written in the poet's own voice and seems the perfect epilogue to the book, recalling the music of love that has ended:

walking me at down
from the drift of dreaming,
keeping time with me
in the pale of the shower
as I restructed her face,
standing there before me
on the grey window.

One thinks of Lorca's Verde que te quiero verde. Songs and Sonnets may not repay casual reading. But those who spend time with these poems will learn a thing or three. As winner of the 1991 Percy Bysshe Shelley Lifetime Achievement Award, Herb Coursen might have it said about him, "The man hath seen some love, and should know."

David J. Adams
Trumansburg, NY

*I teach at Cornell. Thought at Unity, UMO & UMF*
The Horse Painter

Today in the field I saw
the hard, black spots of the appaloosas
and wanted to rope their necks
to capture them forever.
These are not your horses, drawn
with crayons and scraped aimlessly down
to expose the essence of the beast,
like love long dormant emerging again,
through centuries on a cave wall.

I stand apart from history,
from the body of lost correspondence
we inhabit, trying to describe
how you would begin with line
and then fill in the form with color
to reveal the underlying bodies,
like a man who has always known
there are no true lines in nature.

It startles me,
the swiftness of the horses

Kathleen Lignell
Backsport

Red Horses/ Kathleen Lignell

In this long-awaited first major collection of her poems, Kathleen Lignell chooses some from her Calamity Jane chapbook (1979) but mostly assembles material composed since that time. A stunning group, Red Horses refers to the painting by Franz Marc; illustrator Majo Keleshian’s striking cover shows two red horses against a white ground, their tails bent over the binding and flicking on

Robert Frost’s famous warning that writing free verse is “like playing tennis with the net down” does not apply to the poet of these 65 poems, as the five free of rhyme sit in strong syntax and are controlled by fresh rhythms. Two more are rhymed, and the remaining 58 constitute some of the strongest sonnets ever written in Maine, this side of Robinson and Millay. What Thomas Carper is, is a sororcerer. He writes them in all kinds of shapes, 4 + 4 + 4 + 2, seven 2s, but favors the 14-line block ending with a fresh coupler (odd: God, for example, or witty, amuse: krasous). A superb technician, Carper manages the demanding form with ease, a late-20th c. naturalness, that can cause a reader to forget that the flowing, witty experience he is enjoying is happening in a tight formal structure that dates from the late-Middle Ages. Carper rhymes exactly, usually in alternating lines (repe: correct), sometimes on two syllables (pist: stick), but best is his imaginative off-rhyming (boughs: house; hell: small; walls: shelves; last: cheat). A professor of literature at USM, he has been working on these poems for years, and his dedication shows: he knows when not to end-stop his lines with punctuation, releasing the reader directly into the next line. These sonnets flow, so well in fact that once inside the poem readers must slow themselves down to catch the comedy, feel the lightness, the pathos, the wit. The poet won’t do it for you, and that is the mark of his skill.

A major literary event, this book joins 15 others in the prestigious Johns Hopkins series. Dedicated to Carper’s wife Janet, who in their backyard photographed flowers that appear on the cover, she is also the subject of a moving nightwatch poem (see below). The title refers to a small street next to their house. In four sections, the book begins with “Beginnings,” cosmological poems about man’s place in time and the universe, then turns to poems about his father and coming to terms with childhood. “Observations” and domestic poems, “At Home,” conclude the book. Readers need to know a bit, recognize references, but nothing unusual: Narcissus, Treblinka, Basho, Babylyn, Daedalus, Aida, Dante. Carper doesn’t talk down. He talks clearly. Less successful are poems on art (Corot, Van Gogh, Barlach bronzes) as the reader should see the inspiration for full effect. But no matter, a tour de force. As poems mature (see review of H.R. Coxeon, printed here), some seize the sonnet, shake it up, and show that the tennis ball’s split Frost feared in free verse need not be heard. Peeling with form, yes. Carper is copacetic.

T.P.

Roses

Between an exhausted watchfulness and sleep,
I sat beside her fearlessly, in dismay
When her slow breathing would become so deep
It seemed that she might slip beyond recall.
Then I would touch her; then she would revive;
Then, when her eyelids opened and a small
Smile would greet me, hope would come alive.
With morning, the ordeal was over. Gone
Was every trace of illness. A soft rain
Had swept across the countryside at dawn,
So even our garden was made fresh again.
Then Janet went among our roses where
She and the roses shone in luminous air.

Thomas Carper
Cornish
Midsummer Passion & Other tales of Maine Cussedness
Erskine Caldwell

Introduction by Upton Sinclair
Edited by Charles G. Waugh & Martin Greenberg
Yankee Books, Camden, Maine ©1989, $11.95

Review

Her, misty mid-summer Maine. Katherine hurries across the wet grass and quietly enters the kitchen, closes the door and stands back against it. The old woman stumped at her with the heavy end of the crutch and cursed her. She pulled herself up and ran to the other side of the kitchen. The room was wet with mid-summer mist. There were little balls of water in the dusty, spider-web over the stove and a thin stream of water trickled down the table legs to the floor. "Go pick me some berries," the old woman cried at her. "GO PICK ME SOME BERRIES!" she shouted. "Do you hear me! You damned little neck! Bring me a pail of berries before I take this crutch and kill you!"

"All right," Katherine whimpered. "I'm going.

"Well, why don't you run! I'll break your head if you don't get out of here after those berries!"

I'd chosen "The Lonely Day" to commence my reading of this collection of Erskine Caldwell's Maine tales. The opening scene nailed me. Not that my melodeon, stockings, which for some reason excites him. He finds a nearly empty jug of hard cider under the steering wheel. While finishing it off he notices "a crump over the floor. "He couldn't figure out what it was, yet he knew it was something women wore pretty close to their hips. It was pinkish, silktish, pretty, and there was very little of it. Ben fingered the drawers, looks inside, smells them. Suddenly he realizes - "It's a female thing all right!"

Getting back on his hayrake he drives the two horses down the lane to the high road. He can think of nothing but the drawers and is filled with an urge to do something but can't figure out what. Passing his neighbor Williams place he sees Fred's wife bent over in her garden picking peas for supper. With one hand he reaches for the drawers Ben calls out to her. Where before Ben had wanted to kill something he now has an urge to do something else but still isn't quite sure what it is.

Leaving the hayrake, Ben circles Fred's wife, then dives on her. They struggle, tearing up most of the pea patch as Ben attempts to pull the drawers up over her feet, while at the same time worrying that Fred will come home and find the pea patch all torn up.

The struggle ends with Fred's wife and Ben sitting against a fence staring at one another. Fred's wife asks Ben what he was trying to do. Fred has no answer. Fred's wife pulls the drawers under her skirt and goes off, returning with a towel and a basin of water. "Good day," Ben says. "Good day," says Fred's wife.

Caldwell has trouble with the endings to several of these tales. Here Fred's wife's unique way of handling sexual harassment, taking over the story from Ben, seems forced.

Still, if all this could happen in a pea patch I wondered what Caldwell would have going on in "A Woman in the House." Here Max and Elam, two young farmers live alone on farms across the road from one another in an interval.

The situation is that Max is upset that Erskine has gone off to Lewiston without saying a word to him. This has happened before, in fact seems to happen several times a year and Max is furious. "Nobody but a plain fool would go to Lewiston and give a woman five-fifteen dollars for her bed."

Now they had talked this over before and Max did not approve. There was always the possibility Elam would not return alone. Max knew he could never get over Elam's bringing home somebody with him. It would upset Max's carefully planned living. Max can do nothing when Elam is away. He was used to seeing Elam about almost any time of day. Without Elam at home Max has difficulty continuing his work. He could never get over Elam's bringing home somebody with him.

Here Caldwell's problem is not only with an improbable ending but the subject of homosexuality itself. His attempt at humor goes away, ill-suited to his characters. It is in his attempt to present Maine characters that Caldwell falters.

Erskine Caldwell, his wife and two children, arrived in Maine in 1928. In his autobiography, "Maine stories," it is stated "...he felt the need to go as far away as possible in order to gain a revealing perspective of the scene and circumstances of life in the South." Mr. Vernon was chosen because of an offer of a free rent, a chance to grow their own food, cut their own wood, in exchange for custodial care.

So, on a Mr. Vernon farm for about five years Erskine Caldwell wrote the tales contained in Midsummer Passion. They offer valuable insight into the development of Caldwell's writing because it was during the same time that he wrote his two finest novels, Tobacco Road and God's Little Acre. These stories are seminal in every sense of the word.

I disagree with Upton Brady who in his introduction to Midsummer Passion writes of these as "Maine stories." Written in Maine, yes, but Caldwell came here for the perspective just quoted. He brought with him almost all the characters he less loose on a vaguely realized Maine landscape. Actually Caldwell doesn't concern himself much with landscapes. In one only story, "Country full of Swedes," do we get a real sense of place. Here we know "sure 'nuff" we ain't in the land of grits and boiled peanuts. Here it isn't the landscape but a group of Swedes on the isle from Lewiston after a year in the mills that provides the momentum for this hilarious classic.

Generally speaking, Caldwell's characters could come from anywhere, are merely lightly frosted with stereotyped Yankee characteristics. For example, Brady claims the denizens of Maine are noted for their right-handedness. I find little in these stories to support this. There is the character who lays his house and barn level with a bomb, rather than admit he shouldn't have started a grass fire on a windy day. In "The Windfall" a couple give away their inheritance to their hired girl so she can marry.

Upton Brady writes that there is "...little if any sex, either overt or..." the sort usually referred to as soft core." I find, counting the stories already described, nine of the twenty are overly sexual. Take, for example, "The Making...
Marjorie."

First, note Caldwell’s choice of mating rather than courtship in his title. The opening reveals Marjorie has been corresponding with Nels for some time. Nels has stated he wants a wife. Marjorie has sent him her picture. She is beautiful. Nels has sent his... "...lean muscles stretching over his face to his chin... filling her with passion for the man with whom she would mate. ...He would do with her as he pleased." Marjorie is twenty-four and ready for love. "Her lips were soft and her body firm." Nels is coming all the way from Minnesota to marry her. Marjorie spends hours preparing a room for him. Nels arrives on the noon train from Boston. Marjorie picks him up at the station and drives him home. They go for a walk. Nels enjoys the opening reveals Marjorie has been corresponding with Nels for some time. Nels with Marjorie." Nels has returned to Marjorie from Baltimore. The stories hint of Caldwell’s sense of the absurd in human existence and the comic voice with which to express it. It will be Erskine Caldwell’s ironic sense of humor by which he will be remembered.

G.B. Clark
Inverness, Fla.

Few realize that Erskine Caldwell wrote Tobacco Road and God’s Little Acre in Mt. Vernon, Maine

Ed. A Note: Caldwell’s autobiography, With All My Might, contains much interesting material about his years in Maine in the early 1930s (Peachtree Publishers, LTD, 494 Armour Circle, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30324, 1987). He cut his own wood, tried to grow his own food, and opened a bookstore on Longfellow Square in Portland that was run by his wife Helen. Excepts follow.

One of the principal reasons for favoring the state of Maine as a suitable place to live for several years was that I felt the need to go as far away as possible in order to gain a revealing perspective of the scenes and circumstances of life in the South. Other than obvious differences in social customs and economic traditions, there were certain to be more subtle contrasts to be found in family life and public affairs. Whatever I was to discover in the North, whether it would be of a startling nature or merely a tedious repetition of the commonplace, I was confident I could make good use of my findings.

Another reason, and it was an important one, for the decision to leave Georgia for Maine was the offer made to me to become the custodian and caretaker of the farm and buildings in Mount Vernon where, for our own use, I would be able to grow potatoes and rutabagas for food and to cut wood for warmth. At the time, being able to live free of rent and grow our own food was a highly opportune event in our lives when our only source of income was from the sale of a review copy of a book for twenty-five cents. (90-91)

My income from writing being so scanty as it was, and nonexistent in intervals, I was unable to provide means to keep the Longfellow Square Bookshop from closing its doors. The inevitable failure of the business was hastened by the actions of the Portland Police Department and the Cumberland County Attorney. Acting on a complaint of obscenity made by a citizen, it was ordered that sales of The Buxard were prohibited immediately and that all copies of the book were to be shipped out of the state of Maine within forty-eight hours. (131)
Repairs: Part II of a Long Poem

David Gordon
David Porter and His Time Machine

Repairs is the second book of a projected six-book poems: the reviewer approaches the task with the trepidation of a 17th century explorer setting sail for a circumnavigation or a hopeless search for a northwest passage. In his review to the first book of the series, Onward, one reviewer said "David Gordon's modest subject is merely 500 years of local history, inland exploration, sea trade, Indian conflicts… The Revolutionary War… Text sources for the second book are less limited. Repairs is framed by the use in the first and last segments of an Abenaki phrase, transliterated and translated as Netéskáwehena, "we sing in response to the song." Then we meet Captain David Porter of the U.S. Frigate Essex, one of several characters carried over from book one. Porter's ship is careened (for repairs) and text is drawn from his journal of a voyage to the South Pacific, published in 1822. I am pervasively reminded of the Dave Porter series of boy's books I read in my small town library fifty years ago. The one I recall most clearly, Dave Porter in the Frozen North, had a fine impression of a full-rigged ship embossed on the cover.

The next twenty pages present a Rashomon-like treatment of the trial of American seamen accused of killing a British officer while resisting a press-gang. Fourteen pages intervene before we learn the verdict: justifiable homicide. The intervening material contains reference to "nature's primary law" (survival, self-defense, struggle), "phyletic memory," as well as snippets in various languages, including ideograms. We begin to meet references to organic evolution, embryological development and popular cosmology, blended into the author's current experience.

The 35 pages of section II are an equally discursive excursion. There is an ambiguous episode with Old Limie, a carry-over from book one, an abortive drive in a Maine snow storm, interspersed with nine treatments of larval development of marine animals, in a prosy evolutionary sequence. There is an episode in the life of a girl, Felicite, time and place uncertain. Then we time-warp back to the age of August and Herod. The fourth and final section finds Carla in the laboratory, apparently learning about the immune system and the functions of white blood cells. Material drawn from popular treatments of animal behavior—fowl—and we are suddenly with General Custer, Paul Revere, and the Minute Men. The defeat of the British regulars and their route is combined with flashbacks (in bold face below) to the treatments of animal behavior and the immune system: the redcoats representing the invading pathogens/predators and the Minute Men the assailed animals or activated lymphocytes.

Parchm's shout opened fire—
saw friends fall—
draw whole clan: fired back.
News reached Worcester,
small lymphocytes,

thirty miles, overnight,
ride to combat.

What are we to make of this polymath performance with its polyglot inclusion of bits of French, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, (1), Arabic (1), this pastiche of poems, prose fragments, literary and historical references and allusions? In this entertaining BBC poetry broadcasts, Alan Bennett describes different types of obscurity in poetry. The obscurity in David Gordon's long poem is the type found in Pound's Cantos or Eliot's Waste Land: you know right away you're not going to understand because you don't have the references. Gordon does provide some notes to sources. Foreign words, he says in the notes, are usually translated in the phrase preceding or following (sense taking precedence over sound!). The reader must come to share the author's specific, diverse, linguistic, cultural and reading experience. The result is, in an odd way, a poem as personal as a confessional lyric.

What theme or themes might bind all this together? Clearly the struggle of human-kind (and unkind) for freedom from oppression is a major focus of the poem: opposition to a press-gang, the urge to explore, resistance of Jews in the Polish ghettos, Gandhi's campaign in India. The American Revolution. Apparently Gordon melds this human struggle to the forces of organic evolution and the processes of individual development: phylogeny and ontogeny. This is, for a Biologist, problematical, implying a prescriptive, purposely aspect, "nature's primary law" (a life force?), which I can not accept.

Robert Chute
Poland Spring

Review

Pick A Card/ Betsy Sholl

Winner of 1991 Maine Arts Commission's annual Chapbook Competition.
A Coyote/Bank Publication, available from MWPA, 17 Flettson St., Brunswick, ME 04011, $6.95

Pick A Card is not a light read, but a fast one. The 15 poems grab your attention and hold it—forcing you to go on, to submerge yourself in their dark urban universe. Angry, powerful, and painful, the poems search for, and expose the chaos which lies at the root of our late 20th c. life. They have "engagement" in the true meaning of the word. Sholl shows suffering in our faces, but with an ironic smile and a great sense of rhythm and style. She needles us, jar us out of complacency, makes us feel uncomfortable, yet manages to make us want to ask for more.

In an essay in The Eloquent Edge: 15 Maine Women Writers she relates how once, when she was reading a book of poetry, a murder occurred on her street. When the coroner declared died down, she returned to the volume and found it "trivial and self-abhorred." Since then she has been looking for "poetry that does not require us to block out the suffering of others in order to read of the poet’s." Her work achieves just that. She deftly travels from the intensely personal to the political and back. In the opening poem, "Real Faux Paris," she moves from childhood memory to her grandmother's life, to coal miners, "thin languid men, never as old as they look," back to her own present despair. In "Thinking of you, Hiroshima," her 40th birthday bash becomes an embrace of "a shadowy girl" born the same year whose "lids were fused to her eyes." A nightmare recalling rape (the title poem) ends at a community center where the poet plays with "the boy with the low IQ" who makes her "want everything inside me that’s been spearing on me / to slow down and fall away."

Sholl's subjects are not poetry: death, insanity, suicide, deformity, racial violence and fear, and the misfittings of families. Her treatment is honest—thus far from sentimental. Those looking for dainty ditties about nature, do well to pass these poems by. Those who expect par phrases about Politically Correct notions (see poem below) may be disappointed: this poet is her own guide. However, all who can stand a ticking of the teashy tender parts of the soul should read Sholl (but bring a magnifying glass—the poems are set in distressingly small type). They will probably agree with Donald Hall, the competition's judge—who said did NOT write as had been the custom a short essay elucidating his choice—that this is "a book of adult experience and strong feeling, in which the ironic examines and protects while narrative presents and corrodes."

C.S.

Drifting Through this Pious Town

Look at this sweet drooling young man,
his by no means idiot face at the soup kitchen
emitting the most beauteous smile
waiting to see what ring-strangled hand will lift a spoon
in his face—his face which he’ll nudge into your side
as a way of knowing since his arms don’t work.
I’m telling you, don’t fix him.

Myself, I don’t ask to be relieved
of the way things misfire, the way you have to go so fast
to get warm and it’s not as easy as it looks.
I do want to be loved, Lord, you know I do,
but if I wait this dyslexic kid
filling out forms and misread Dog for God,
I’d wait it up too
and stamp out before some divine infatuation
get into my clothes.

Everywhere I go,
from breakfast in the dark room under the sanctuary,
to the waitress if it’s nice,
or the library on bad days where they let you
stay between reference and fiction with a newspaper
spread over your face—I meet people who think they are right
about everything that’s wrong with the world.

Betsy Sholl
Portland
Anthologies:
The Most That Money Can Buy

Dear Terry,

When you asked me a few weeks ago to write an article about putting together an anthology, I hesitated only because I wasn't sure I'd have the time. After a year and a half of working on a revised edition of *Anthology of Maine Literature* (University of Maine Press, 1982), I had reached the final stages of getting the manuscript ready to go to press, and I don't have to tell you how precious every hour becomes at that point. Now, however, I have the time; it's the anthology I'm not sure of. The Press, inevitably affected by the State's financial woes, has put all of its projects on hold while its Board decides which of its projects to fund—and which not.

Of course, when I started all this, budgets were far from my mind. All I knew was that the 1982 edition of *Anthology of Maine Literature*, edited by Robert Lecker and Kathleen Brown, had really outlived its usefulness: in just the few years since Lecker and Brown had put together the first edition, Maine literature had grown exponentially.

During the year that I'd read hundreds and hundreds of pages of Maine prose and fiction for Maine Spokes, as a member of the Maine Literature Project, I'd begun to realize that *Anthology* had too many gaps to make it very valuable in the classroom: it included none of the new Maine fiction, overlooked some important new and old poems, and certainly didn't begin to reflect the diversity of Maine's people.

So when the University of Maine Press offered me a contract to do the revision, I hocked forward to working on a book that would be a kind of "Maine Speaks for Grownups." I spent the summer of '90 working in Fogler Library's Special Collections, arranging my work, setting up my position in between an open window and a large fan. For at least the first month, I was convinced I'd never be able even to take a look at all the material I'd have to consider; everywhere I turned, I saw a name I'd never seen before, a title I'd never heard of. And my list grew longer and longer.

Compared to most anthologies, though, I was lucky. I had something to start with. Much of the work that Lecker and Brown had done was good in '82, still good in '90, and will be good, I'm convinced, well into the next century are those scary words, Terry, or what? So although I decided to eliminate some stuff from the first table of contents, I was still left with a core of classic Maine literature.

The first edition, for example, included a segment of Foster's *Relation of Waymouth's Voyage*; Thoreau's description of climbing "Ktaadn"; an E.B. White essay; humor by Bill Nye and John Gould: "A White Heron" and a story by Edward M. Holmes; and poetry by your favorite, Longfellow, as well as people who had lived in Maine for relatively short periods, and then left—which means you'll find two poems by Denise Levertov in the table of contents. At the same time, I thought I'd like to include something of John McPhee's (in this case, an excerpt from "The Keel of Lake Dickey"), a Princeton writer who spends a good deal of time in Maine and has written about it extensively; in fact, one of his books, *The Survival of the Bark Canoe*, re-traces Thoreau's path in the Allagash. McPhee's work has been included by now in Maine Speaks and also in *The Maine Reader*; but for all that, some Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance told me recently that when they reviewed one of his books in Maine in Print, some purists screamed foul because, I don't know, maybe because he doesn't pay his taxes here (Thoreau would have loved it!).

Anyway, on with the selection process. I had known right from the beginning that the first edition just didn't accurately reflect the many cultures that co-exist, sometimes comfortably, sometimes not, in Maine. In fact, I was supported in my work as editor by a grant from UMaine's Women in the Curriculum Program and by a grant to pay for permissions from then-President Lick's office: both contributing to what they understood would be a book reflecting Maine's cultural diversity.

The '82 edition had no writing either by or about Maine's American Indians; the revised edition will fill in this gap, first with a tale told by Newell Lion and translated by Frank O. Speck: "Gluskabe Causes His Uncle, Turtle, to Lose His Member, and Recover it for Him." Aside from two essays by Robert P.T. Cohn that I included in this section, I filled in the rest with the work of two writers whose retold legends I think you'll find faithful to their originals, as well as extremely well-written: Joseph Bruchac and Howard Norman.

Several other of Maine's minorities are represented by a story of Denis Ledoux's, A. Poulin, Jr.'s essay "Poetry and the Landscape of Epiphany" and his poem "Figures in a Stranger's Dream"; Willis Johnson's "Sangro", about the Maine's Russian emigres; a story about the Finns by Rebecca Cummings; and poetry about the Irish and about the Jews, by Leo Connellan and Roberta Chester, respectively.

You may have noticed that I've been citing Maine's cultural, as opposed to ethnic, diversity; in fact, it's what I like best about living here. All states, of course, have different cultures within their borders, but in Maine we have different cultures often side by side on any rural road. Whereas most readers and most writers are middle-class folks, and have traditionally written about other middle-class folks, Maine has been right in the forefront of what Susan Kenney calls K-Mart Realism—a movement represented in the anthology by three of Maine's most famous contemporary writers, Caitléine Pellerin, Carolyn Chute, and Elaine
Feed. By the way, don't look for Chute's fiction: I decided on an essay instead, one that appeared originally in Minnesota.

So anyway, here I am in Special Collections reading, reading, reading. It got so that I'd dread every issue of Maine in Print, because it usually meant I'd have to take a look at another two or three books. But the revised table of contents was getting to look pretty good: it included my favorite Susan Hand Sherry Sherry essay, "The Shadow World off 'Isle Saincete Croix": essays by Mary Ellen Chasse, Virginia Chasse, and Alice Bloom; and the poetry of Ruth Moore (instead of a chapter or two from a novel—I hate taking bits out of big pieces). Abbie Huston Evans, May Santon, Mitchell Goodman, and a host of Maine's newer poets: Burton Hatlen, Sylvester Pellet, William Carpenter, Ken Rosen, Stephen Dobyns, Kathleen Lignell, David Walker, Lee Sharkey, Bariton Wormser, and Paul Corrigan. And last but not least your very own, "From the Knees Down."

And that's when the fun ended.

Now, all along, understand, I'd been learning that Art is Long and Money is Short. From the beginning, for example, we'd known that we couldn't afford a very big book, nor one replete with as many illustrations and graphics as we might have liked. But pennypinching started in earnest with the permissions.

Perhaps you've never had to cope with this end of putting a book together. One needs written permission to reprint anything copyrighted less than seventy-five years ago; in most cases, one applies directly to the publisher of the book or periodical from which one wants to make an excerpt. In some cases the writer himself or herself has to give permission; in some cases, no one quite knows who has that power. All told, I wrote about 100 letters and spent almost a year finally getting all the requisite signatures. But even though my letters had stated that the University of Maine Press is not-for-profit, that the book wouldn't sell for a great deal of money, and that our funds were limited, still the permission costs added up. And up.

The Press had allotted $3000 (really a very small amount, as any anthologist could tell you), and the President's office had contributed another $1500; when I finally added all the fees together, though, the total was almost $4000. At this point, one makes very difficult decisions—and they're likely to be decisions based not on the quality of the piece, nor on its reader-appeal, nor on its importance to any kind of canon; instead, one decides how to include the most literature for the least amount of money. Romantic, huh? Casting about for a new title for this revised edition, I've begun to think that An Anthology of All the Maine Literature We Could Afford would be most appropriate.

So what had to go? A chapter from Susan Kenney's book, Sailing, for example: a wonderful book by one of Maine's finest writers. But besides being a long chapter, it costs (according to Viking Penguin) $500, John McPhee's piece; by not including it, we can save $250. Lew Dietz, another very fine writer: $300. Most recently, I've received a permission form for an excerpt from Henry Beston's Northern Farm, included in the first edition: $300. So who goes in order for Beston to stay? Or does Beston go? One less poem by Louise Bogan, perhaps, or by Robert Lowell? Eliminate Mary Ellen Chasse's description of My Grandmother's Honeymoon—a shipwreck and all! A. Poulin Jr. shows up twice on the table of contents: should we make it once? Do we publish his important essay about growing up French in Biddeford, or dive off for his poem? It's not that I begrudge any of these writers, or their publishers, a single penny. They deserve it. It's just long enough. I may actually make some royalties from something myself. But I never thought as I sat between window and fan all summer long that something as prosaic as funding would end up shaping my book.

So that brings me to... right now. And right now, I'd take just about any table of contents at all, and be thankful. As the Governor and the legislature play growing up French in Biddeford, or do we opt for his poem? It's not starkness when the snow is not quite white and the trees are more brown than green... His cranberry pickers are dwarfed by the sweeping flats and overhead, the heavy grey clouds seem to threaten them with annihilation. It is as if Kent looked inside the soul of Maine to catch its spirit. And in this sense he is definitely a realist. No one has ever caught Maine better; which makes it all the sadder that Maine once rebuffed Rockwell Kent.

Not as well known about Kent is that he authored a number of books, inside and out of Maine. Perhaps to thwart prospective biographers, he double-tuned posterity with two lengthy volumes on himself.

All of his works are perfectly executed, and a little costly; they should be read with his immediate graphics in mind. In fact, they might be purchased more for their artwork than for their literary content. The neophiliad adventurer often rambles on about the three-hundred-ring circus of his life, much to the reader's expense. But even the severest of critics would admit that he had his moment more often than not.

Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska, a travelogue escapade written when Kent was in his mid-thirties, was hailed by London's New Statesman as the most remarkable book to come out of America since Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, in 1855. This is patently untrue; the memoir was likeable but amateurish, though such a dangerously positive review is indicative of theKent Cult which would follow him to hagiocacy, and way beyond. Despite this, it should be allowed that there were some terrific sentences: "These are the times in life—when nothing happens—but in quietness the soul expands." And young Rocky telling his father, "You know I want to be a sailor so I'll learn to be afraid." And Kent, snowbathing in the dawn, reflecting: "Out-of-doors to us is like another room."

Voyaging Southward from the Strait of Magellan is much more fascinating, as it recounts the farthest south launching of an American ship to that date (1922). Kent writes that wise men do not rely on the wind, and wonders: "Is bravery the cloak of cowardice?"

"Don't you suppose that God put the animals on Earth for man to eat?" said thelobsterman to the young vegeant Kent.

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That March day in 1971, when Rockwell Kent was about to die, of a stroke as he leaned over from his chair to seize imaginary flowers woven into the carpet, the ancient artist may have briefly thought he was once again in Cathedral Woods, on Monhegan Island, teased by the ferns and ladyslipers and white starflowers of that fairyscape.

So rockwell Kent, a pietist-bald patrician man with the constant silver flute once said: "It was I—a Maine resident winter and summer for many, many years—who established Monhegan as an important art community."

His claim is valid. Peter W. Cox, author and former Maine TimesEditor, wrote of him: "It is pertinent to talk about Kent as a Maine artist since he lived here all his life. And he understood the state. His Monhegan Island is lush in the glowing summer sunset.... He does not glorify Maine in the winter but captures its beautiful starkness when the snow is not quite white and the trees are more brown than green... His cranberry pickers are dwarfed by the sweeping flats and overhead, the heavy grey clouds seem to threaten them with annihilation. It is as if Kent looked inside the soul of Maine to catch its spirit. And in this sense he is definitely a realist. No one has ever caught Maine better; which makes it all the sadder that Maine once rebuffed Rockwell Kent."

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Frozen Mystic

Evoked

and perfect
cultural
classics
drives and
Rockwell
in
reverence
I pray:
God damn them
(Kent
summer of 1931
toward headlands and elfin woodland paths of Monhegan Island, the Farnsworth
days of his life, would have revealed. What we have however are chronologies in
is humdrum. It's obvious that Kent was growing
Green
nevertheless, the sum of the parts is somehow greater than the whole. As with
painter may
it is, Gentle Reader (he vainly addresses his public just a whisker short of nausea),
which Kent rambles, gests, tells stories, colors himself up, colors himself down,
from that palace of wood. "Greenland
Greenland, beginning with the dear frontispiece of his spinning fjord lover
valleys, leaped
And
of shipwrecked in the williwaw silver mist,

"Deeply
and from my heart, in utter reverence I pray: God damn them all."


Frozen Mystic
(Kent on Art and other Artists)

He had some absolute opinions. In a letter to New York Times Magazine he wrote:
"The current generally incomprehensible abstractions appear as the inevitable and perfect expression of a mind reared in the culture. Their acceptance by the patronage of our galleries and the masters of our press is less to be interpreted as a surrender to fashion than as further evidence of that renunciation of humanistic implication in our purpose and evidenced by our acts. Abstraction is the cultural counterpart of the atomic bomb."

In an obituary of his supposed own genre of painting, he said: "Realism, in the unreal post-war world, was hard to hold to its feet amid the disintegration of cultural standards which paralleled the general abandonment of long established

principles of life and government."

But was Kent, this thin soldier who squeezed out his colors beneath immense turquoise icebergs, who followed the course of the seas, who revelled in days when fog made mystery mysterious, ever a Realist in the first place?

Certainly his work is better associated with the designs of poet and engraver William Blake, a mystic in a category of his own. Kent the architectural genius must also have had more than a passing familiarity with the ancient and arcane Maconic drawings, and the symbols used to illustrate the secret order's books of rites. His decorative etchings are fraternal with those of the unknown early members. He thought any suggestion of mysticism in his work was nonsense, but the impression persists. He may not have been able to see himself clearly. About other artists, however, he was most precise:

"Marsden Hartley—"One of the most sensitive minds I have ever encountered... at times unimaginably sad."

Michelangelo BUonarroti—"Painting in terms of sculpture."

Anthony Von Dyck—"Worn out by overwork, he died at forty-two."

Leonardo da Vinci—"What splendid things have been said about Leonardo the painter, things we have had to doubt for lack of proof."

Peter Paul Rubens—"Loving life so, his brush cursed it."

Jan Vermeer—"His works, small in number, are as precious as jewels... No other painter has so beautifully and correctly organized color in terms of light."

Jean-Francois Miller—"Great dignity."

Paul Gérome—"He wanted to reduce form to simple and clear existence through the architectural use of color."

Auguste Renoir—"A born painter... Of him it may truly be said that he died painting."

Vincent Van Gogh—"Neither understanding the world, nor understood by it."

Pablo Picasso—"Silly, ivory-tower self-expressionism."

His views on Picasso may have moderated in later life. Kent, as a socialist, was denied a passport to exit the United States: Picasso, as a communist, was denied an entry visa. The two exchanged consoling telegrams.

Making Love on Ice
(Job 38:22, Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?)

"Artists' hearts are good," wrote Rockwell Kent in 1939. But it does not necessarily follow that they are always true. He was wedded three times: Kathleen Whiting (1908-1926), Frances Lee (1926-1940), Sally Johnstone (1940-1971). It's safe to say that the narrow freedom between his marriages indicated he could not tolerate loneliness. His lovemaking does not begin and end with them however; Kent—athlete, muscular painter, pacifist, vegetarian—could have been a savior to women. "I had been raised in the Romantic school," he once wrote. "I believed that love and life and dynamite could not be trifled with." He nevertheless does his hardest to test the sad mixture.

Nude females twirl brilliantly in his thoughts from an early age. At thirteen, while on a trip to Germany with his aunt, he wanders into a courtyard and surpises three young streetgirls, "one of whom had at that instant pulled her dress far above her waist. The impact of her lovely nakedness... sent me rushing past them in a state of wild confusion and furious desire." But he was to write in an autobiography: "I discovered sex late, and spent the rest of my life making up for lost time." Whatever, Kent had a full 88 years of mischief.

He met Kathleen on Monhegan in 1907. A singer: tall, plain, impulsive, sensitive. They were just friends, at the beginning. A year after he married Kathleen, Kent and Kathleen became lovers in the Cathedral Woods. By 1910, Kathleen was pregnant; that next year, Kent attempted to form a household with her and the infant and the newly-pregnant Kathleen, in New Hampshire. This scheme failed miserably. Kent wrote his sister: "I tried to do what. Shelley would have done." Kent and Kathleen eventually sold their home on Monhegan, to escape the scandal of Kent. The proceeds, as well as various stocks and bonds, went to the unwed mother. She later married a Portland dentist; the child (Karl) died at the age of four.

Kathleen, his first wife, was a mere eighteen: she was quiet, shy, perfect at the piano. She was his green cool arbor for the next two decades.

There was Hildegarde, a soft blonde blue-eyed dancer from the New York Folies, a woman who loved him on Monhegan in 1916. For her he wrote and illustrated a fable, which began: "Once upon a time when the world was young, when fairy godmothers sponsored all the babies, when Princesse was beautiful and good..."

Then there was an independent young madcap named Lydia for a while, when
Kent was in his mid-thirties and a constant patron of the New York speakeasies. One wet November afternoon, he was strolling with another man and her in the woods of a Long Island estate. "Only a witch," said the artist, "could lure two men to walk with her on a day like this. Is this an enchanted wood where you are leading us? What order do we have to face?" Upon arriving at a small body of water, Lydia announced: "I'm going to run around the pond. And whichever of you swims across to meet me on the other side, I will be his." Kent, stripped down to his underwear, won the remarkable Lydia (she presented him with a golden key to her apartment), but the relationship was stormy. His marriage with Kathleen, too, was foundering, and he soon sailed to Greenland to live with her in the kitchen:

"I didn't call her to me. She came to the lid open, turned and stood there looking over the blue ocean. 'Here I am,' I said, 'that I thought, 'and the ocean is the absolute. Therefore, here by the ocean, one could live forever and desire nothing more.' Then suddenly, in a depression of the land below me, I saw a tiny moving figure, bright vermilion. And I knew what that was. I forgot the sea and the mountains and the sunshine and the absolute and stood there watching how the little figure crept along. Then, all at once, it stopped. So far apart that they appeared to each other as the tiniest specks on the vast landscape, a woman and a man stood looking at each other. And both knew it. Then, at the very same moment, they moved a little bit; they waved their arms in greeting. We walked towards each other, sometimes in view, sometimes hidden in the hollows. Our meeting came as though unexpectedly, so near and sudden was our last emergence from the cover. Yet we were not embarrassed. We walked together to a sheltered spot where the sun was warm; there we sat down side by side, and she began to talk to me. I had little idea of what she said; but by such noddings and shakings of the head as I thought appropriate she came to believe that I understood her words. And soon we were laughing together. We kissed each other, and I made love to her. I saw her laughing face shadowed against the blue zenith. After a time I awoke. I opened my eyes and saw her there, sitting up straight beside me. Her hand rested affectionately on my knee; her eyes were on the horizon of the ocean—but as though not seeing it. And in a low, sweet voice she sang a song. I shall never know what the words of that song were."

Frances soon moved to Greenland, and she promptly put her husband's house in order, at least for a while. Of adultery, Kent wrote: "Law with us is coiffed and dressed in blue broadcloth and brass buttons. What we are not apt to realize is that such bedizened majesty of law is only a corrupted or perverted form of public opinion."

In a more reflective moment, Kent wrote: "If I may liken marriage to a piece of cabinet work, I was a stick of raw, unseasoned wood that had been built into it; and I had warped and cracked and sprung to such an extent that the piece was at last coming apart in its joints."

He was beginning to temper himself as Sally entered his life, in 1940. She was an English secretary, and by the time she finished typing his first autobiography she became his final wife. One of his favorite lines was from William Blake's "The Road of Excess Leads to the Palace of Wisdom." He was also fond of the Greenland tambourine-song which lamented:

"I began to long for women
In his most joyous illuminated mood, he once wrote: "Isn't it fortunate that no man or woman may ever have lived who has not for a time been loved by someone!"

Rockwell Kent was a solitary artist, though his bed, sometimes blue but never absolutely, was seldom unsRELATED. It can accurately be said that females were crucial to him, to a fault.

Frank Johnson
Tenants Harbor
is a free-lance writer
Rockwell Kent, 1882-1971

1882 Born June 21, in a house called Solitude in Tarrytown Heights, NY, to Rockwell Kent and Sara Holgate Kent.

1887 Father, a lawyer and a mining engineer, dies of typhoid.

1893 Attends various boarding schools in the Northeast, “seasonal orphanages” with a military framework and religious overtones.

1904 Studies in English, history and calligraphy; noted for illuminating Spencerian penmanship.

1907 Launches professional art career, selling sets of dinner cards to Tarrytown Woman’s Exchange, and produces family heraldry and pastoral china painting.

1900-02 Attends Columbia University, after graduating from Horace Mann preparatory school as the only student in his class not to receive recommendation for college. A high-spirited discipline problem, wants to become an artist or a carpenter or a conductor or a railway engineer. Studies art under reactionary William Merritt Chase, a Realist who has little patience with self-expression; paints one hundred oils every summer.

1903 At top of his class in architecture, gives up his degree in order to study painting at the NY School of Art, under progressive Robert Henri and Kenneth Hayes Miller; apprentices to eccentric colorist Abbott H. Thayer.

1904 Attends first Socialist party meeting in Pocantico Hills, NY, to support “full employment, child labor laws, the eight-hour day, the right to organize.” Sells first paintings, after exhibit at the National Academy.

1905 On advice of Robert Henri, moves to Monhegan Island, spends the better part of the next five years. “It was enough to start me off to such feverish activity in painting as I had ever known.” Also works as a well-driller, for one dollar per day, and a privy-cleaner ($10); often returns to architecture, as a draughtsman, to support himself.

1906 Builds own house on Horn’s Hill, Monhegan. Spends the next year constructing several other houses, painting nights.

1908 Marries Abbott Thayer’s niece, 18-year-old Kathleen Whiting. Five children: Rocky, Kathleen, Clara, Barbara, Gordon.

1910 With George Bellows, Walter Kuhn and Maurice Prendergast, takes part in the Exhibition of Independent Artists Show in NYC—a protest against the “sterile” National Academy, which Kent considered pandering and sentimental.Opens Monhegan Summer School of Art, with thirty students. Takes initial trip to Newfoundland, by train and steamer.

1911 Second NYC independent exhibit, along with Prendergast, Marsden Hartley and nine others. Kent shows fifteen paintings, mostly of Monhegan. On tour, one drawing (Men And Mountains) is banned in Columbus, Ohio, because of backside nudity. Kent and Kathleen move to New Hampshire, then to Greenwich Village.

1912 Moves to Winona, Minnesota, for architectural job: “twin Georgian mansions joined by an arcade.” In addition, hawks strawberries and vegetables from horse-drawn truck in working-class neighborhoods.

1913 Moves back to NYC; claiming: “Architecture is a waste of time, for me, a waste of life.”

1914 Sails to Newfoundland, finds dilapidated house on Conception Bay, sends for family. Paintings take on a dark tone, perhaps because of the War: Man The Abyss, Rain And Firmeay, Newfoundland Dirge, The House Of Dread, Man On A Mast.

1915 Accused of being a German spy, unconventional Kent is asked to leave Newfoundland. Moves to NYC, then New London, then to Staten Island. “Art is a hazardous career.” Does light illustrations for Vanity Fair and Pack.

1916-17 Sells paintings for $600, payable in monthly installments. Peddles humorous drawings, nouveau wallpaper, delicately executed decorations on mirrors.

1918 Moves with nine-year-old son Rocky to Fox Island, off the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska. Asks Kathleen to join them, she refuses.

1919 Sells Alaskan paintings; buys farm on the high southern spur of Mount Equinox, in Vermont.

1922-23 Sails to Tierra del Fuego. Writes Voyaging Southward From The Strait Of Magellan, which is issued in 1924 by Halcyon House.

1926 Divorce from Kathleen; meets Frances Lee in Manhasset; proposes immediately. They marry in April, move to the Adirondacks. Spends four months painting in Donegal, Ireland; back in the States, edits short-lived magazine called Creative Art.

1927 Cancels art exhibit at Worcester Museum, MA, in protest of the electric-chair executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two impoverished Italians he believes falsely accused of murder in a South Braintree heist. He and Frances buy a 300-acre farm in Au Sable Forks, NY.

1929 Shipwrecked off coast of Greenland. Lives in Godthab, gathers material for bluewater adventure, N By E.

1930 Reaches fame as illustrator: The Canterbury Tales, Beowulf, Moby Dick.

1931-33 Greenland again: paints with a thumbless mitten in the cold; lives with a young Eskimo widow, Salamina. Titles book after her, although it’s dedicated to his wife Frances.


1935-36 Revolutionary politics, from Alaska to Puerto Rico to Brazil. Returns to Greenland, with 11-year-old son Gordon.

1937 Lectures, Maine to Oregon. 49 speeches in 22 states. Receives National Academy of Design Award ($600), which he promptly transfers to the Spanish Republic, for medical aid during the Civil War.


1940 Divorce from Frances. Writes first autobiography, This Is My Own. Hires Sally Johnstone (26, English, Canadian educated) as secretary. She becomes his third and final wife.

1947 Repurchases original house on Monhegan Island, lives there off and on for next six years.

1948 Runs for Senate on the progressive American Labor Party ticket in New York; loses by a landslide. His paintings fall from fashion.


1953 June, McCarthy Hearings, 80 charges against Rockwell Kent. There are rumors he is broadcasting to Russia via a shortwave radio in his cellar, and that he is devil-worshiping Joseph Stalin in front of a handmade altar. Senate Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations Of The Committee Of Government Operations is primarily concerned about two of Kent’s books, Wilderness and N By E, appearing on the shelves of subversive libraries overseas. He attempts to make a statement for the record, but Senator McCarthy interrupts, “I’m not going to listen to a lecture from you.” Kent, before leaving the chambers, coolly replies: “You’re not going to get one. I get paid for my lectures.” His passport is revoked by the State Department, though the document is later reinstated in a landmark Supreme Court case. The Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, ME, declines to accept Kent Collection of oil paintings. Many of his books are burned, by order of the United States government.

1953-54 Finishes second autobiography, It’s Me O Lord, on Monhegan, then quits Maine. For the remainder of his life, his primary residence is the Adirondacks.

1958-60 Concerned that his art might “go up in smoke in America,” visits Soviet Union; donates 82 paintings, 800 drawings, and handwritten illustrated manuscripts of his books and journals to the people of Russia. He writes later: “It meant a great deal to me to get my work into a country where it would be safe.”

1962 Greenland Journal published by Ivan Obolensky, Inc.

1967 Awarded Lenin Peace Prize, the Russian equivalent to the Nobel. Donates nearly half the money for medical supplies to the citizens of Vietnam. “I have great pity for those poor people who are suffering from what we are doing to them.”

1971 Smoke in late winter. Dies eleven days afterward, March 13th, in Champlain Valley, NY.
“Vers à vendre” is the message on hand-painted signs seen fairly often in rural Quebec. Although my limited French left me wondering what these little signs meant, I conjectured that verses were being offered for sale at a lot of unusually poetic farm houses. Finally, I thought to look up the words in my French-English dictionary. “Vers,” it turned out, could mean “verse.” But it more likely is the plural of “ver,” which means “worm.” So the signs are probably nothing more than the equivalent of those humble placards seen in front of so many Maine homes, reading, “Worms for sale.”

Still, I wondered about the possibility that one of these homes might really have verses to sell. Would anyone stop to browse? Would anyone buy the yard-sale offerings of some desperate starving poet?

Having decided what the signs must mean, I remained curious. So on my way through St. Charlemagne Sud, one fine day, I stopped when I saw one of these notices posted in front of a small red house. Knocking on the front door, I was greeted by a charming older woman, her face wrinkled and tanned from working in the surrounding fields, her hair improbably red. I recalled my customary line: “Je ne parle pas très bien le Français.” Unfortunately, I’ve said this line so often that I have it down pretty well. People assume that I’m only being modest in saying that I don’t speak French very well. They immediately respond with a volley of rapid French—such as “Vous avez aussi des vers—les poèmes?” “Le man’s eyes, already bright and laughing, lit up even more. He brought me into his barn and switched on a light.

These folks apparently operated a sort of flea market. There were tables and bins overflowing with curious objects, all for sale and marked with price tags. I was absorbed in rummaging through some of this interesting collection when I realized that the owner was no longer by my side. He must not have understood my question, after all.

But then he returned. Carrying a large three-ring binder, he plunked it down on one of the tables and said, “Vers.”

Sure enough. Centered on each loose-leaf page was a complete poem, written in a bold hand with a black pencil. After shuffling through the album, I picked one of the shorter poems, pointed at it and asked, “Combien?”

“Douze pièces,” he answered as he ripped the page out of the binder and signed his name at the bottom.

I started to protest his signature, since I have just enough French to know that “Père Noël” is the French version of Santa Claus. He eventually got me to understand that while his name is really Pierre Tremblay, he is called Père Noël by everyone in St. Charlemagne Sud. It certainly fit his beard and twinkling eyes.

Père Noël’s poem now hangs in a cheap department store frame over my kitchen table. After puzzling over Noël’s handwriting for some time, I think that this is what he wrote:

Une femme charmante,
Qui en décorera.
Chaque pièce avec des fleurs
A pris mon coeur.

After furthe puzzling, I think that a loose translation into a kind of Haiku form could be:

A lovely woman,
Placing flowers in each room,
Occupies my heart.

Not bad for two bucks. And I know where there’s a fit notebook full of beautiful more “vers à vendre.”

— J.D. Aiguier

Jackman
la Disseoir Americain,
U.S. Custom Inspector at 78 R19

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing, Vol. XVI, 1992
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The Image of their Greatness

He Planted Carefully

Casting

You sit dreaming on an upstream rock;
I stand fishing in a downstream pool.

I cast to catch your smile;
The curves of my fly-line through the air are the curve on your face.

The red beard;
I’ve cast a nice one.

Jean Pincince
Tenants Harbor
is a landscape gardener.