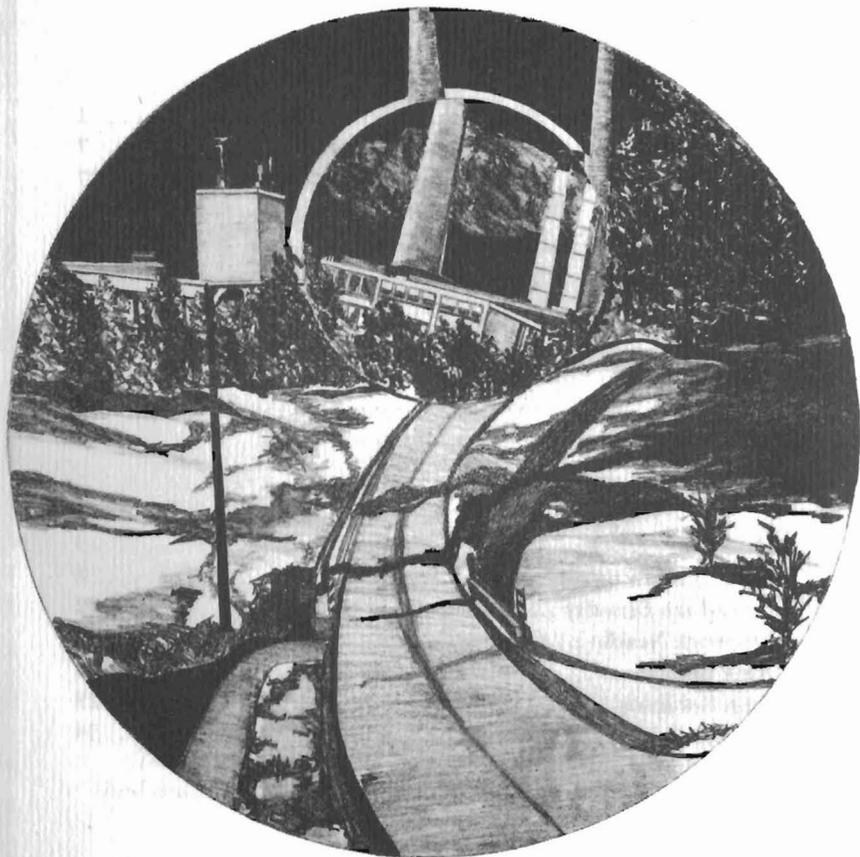




Great Lake Review



Untitled

18 x 18
Lithograph

Wendy Jenne

Zoo Blues

My street is going wild;
it's loud with summer's window open.
Children count into tree
trunks,
taking advantage of the time they have
till the streetlight comes on to clear them out.
And the grown ups take over,
congregating on different porches,
perfectly placed behind trimmed bushes;
smelling the end of the day,
rubbing shoulders,
gabbing --
about how the fence got bent,
about how at least the pool got put up,
jeez the breeze feels good,
and maybe a little gossip,
And a grey figure of a woman,
whines,
across a card table to a grey figure of a man,
about the miseries of her life. Asking for God's help
as the neighborhood hums out in answer.

Peg Maloney

Oolana Aleiana Lei-ow Mei Hanna

(a work in progress)

They say that Olana Han Leia can never get enough. They say that the glorious, spellbinding Lana Hai Meiana can never get enough. There she walks, her sultry woman's walk, while the evening is still purple, down along the same path between our bamboo houses. And here am I, like a fool, making a dent in my forehead from straining against the window. Still, a man can not ignore that which roars out within him. There she goes, pouting her swollen lips, her hair with a sheen black as a raven wing. Oh she is very fine. Oh her very presence is like a brown flower blooming on the island. But Oolana, my seraph, I am afraid of your eyes when you come stalking home and the sky is stiff and black. Aleiana, I fear the pallor of your moon-skin. There is always a big-mouth sailor on your arm or some father's boy. He wears your tuberoses tucked behind one ear and a smile on his unpleasant face. And then you slip like shadows into your house.

That is when I unroll the shutters. In my white bed I sink to the edge of sleep. Meilaya Hai Oolana, the notes of your names roll in my mouth. They mingle with the sounds of the oceans, changing with the currents or the whistling inland birds that dip and ascend the heavens.

This morning I sit in bed with the covers drawn up. Mrs. Karumba gives me bananas and a cafe au lait. She is looking at me with her rotten land-lady eye. She is sneering at me, I know. I'd like to reach over and carve a bracelet from her dentures. She knows of my mad love and so will not leave me rest in peace.

"Old fool," she says, rolling my shutters.

"Hm ha," I say. I delicately dip my finger in the cafe and then taste it.

"Dat's right," she says. She turns her barrel body towards me and shakes one hairy knuckle. "Dat girl. She got de demon. A man live in her stomach." Then she starts making the tick in her cheek which makes my skin crawl. She walks out slowly as a slug. I listen to her footsteps all down the hall.

"Go away," I say and bite my fruit.

Aleiana Meiana, how can you? Your eyes pass over my face like the hand of a blind boy. My dearheart, my loveday, now in sunshine your hair is drawn in scrolls, fastened with lilies. Why, young bird, do you wear the flower of corpses?

Ah, there she goes, swinging her arms like an actor, oh imitation of innocence! Can I resist? I am pulled like a man in an undertow. My friends waste their final days with bocce ball and sick jokes--I am considered one of the sickest. They're all degenerates, still what kind of a man am I that I admit--welcome with open arms--whimsy, raging senility? They see me leave in mid-tournament should just one finger of her fragrance curl about my head. Ah, there she goes, her long legs flashing in their satin wrapper, never aware of the pining monkey always ten paces behind.

Mei Hanna Lei-ow is drawn to the waters like a kissing fish. Every day down at dockside her face and breasts face the sun like blossoms. She can sit on the flat rock and wet her ankles while the other women lug crates on to the boats. Every day white men sail in and our women must carry boxes of tough, green bananas. But Hanna Oolana makes her living in the cool of the night, in the comfort of a mattress. No need to grow muscles like the other women with buttocks like cattle. What a sin that would be.

But is it possible, O laughing one, the cheekbone is too sharply defined, the darling breast too pointed? The teeth flash in your head like a bright animal's and I am afraid of you. Maybe you would bite me, claw my eyes, my old-man breasts. You look deadly when you laugh. Oolana Meihana, I could brighten your table, I could fatten you until your buttocks swayed and you smiled serenely.

Oh I know you, my baby's breath. I know the meaning of out cast. You laugh but I know how your throat tightens when the women stamp their feet and won't let you on dock with them. The children draw magical symbols in the dirt against you. Even among the other costly sirens I know how you meow and compete with each other. So in the day you must run over the rocks like a boy, aiming your pebbles at the gulls. Ah Meilana, I understand you. I know what to give you.

It came to me one night in a dream. It was two weeks after I had moved in across from your house, two weeks after I was hopelessly in love. In the dream I saw you as a mermaid reclining and changing shades in the turning water currents. Arms of seaweed billowed over your hair and at your fanning tail. All was blue and clear as a lute, cling to your skin in unearthly hues. Your eyes with no pupils were smooth as a child's blue marbles, they pulled at the very soul in my stomach. In the half-world I was being drawn, caught in the fingers of water sprites.

Ah what a fool I am, drowning in my own pillow. But I refused to wake. Rather I drifted closer; I could see the hard, blue nails, the great, blue fin rising from your back. And then, it was there, deep in the root of the eyes that I read the need of every mermaid.

Oolana Han Meiana, this old crow has what you need. Let me fill your cup. My mermaid, virgin of the sea, I can give you the pure love, the agape, that will make a soul. Do you cry at night dreaming of death, of dissolving away to ocean foam? Mailana, I cry to you, this heart has been closed like a fist for five decades; let me open its floodgates. Mine is the noble love that would make you one of God's creatures.

Is it an accident that a love such as mine should move in across from you? Is it pure chance that you leave your picture window unshuttered? When you are out I like to lean on my sill and study your room. I know you like a mother would. For one, I know you are superstitious. Rows of straw voodoo dolls line your shelves. They are all of women with little misshapen faces, needles poking from the neck or lip or private parts. There are women in this town who blame their every trifle, down to hang-nail, on you. How it makes my heart sink to see you sitting in bed sleepy as a school girl, twisting straw into a new doll. There is also the bag of roots in your closet, the monkey's paw grappling your doorknob. Dearest, I have a greater magic. I can love you like none of your other men. My emotion could shield you like a cape against the cackling hens.

I've learned to wake up an hour earlier every Friday when my pension money comes. Otherwise Karumba comes busting in here and slaps my face with the envelope.

This morning the light streams; it is charged with heat. I fan a sheet against my chest until I hear the fist on my door.

"Hello?" I call sweetly.

The door opens and Karumba points in my envelope, "Money," she says.

I take the envelope and inspect its contents: \$32 and 57c. Karumba's sweaty palm is still waiting, fingers wiggling with anticipation.

"For what you charge for this closet I too would be ashamed to show my face," I say, slipping her the seven bucks.

That was the wrong thing to say; in a twinkling both face and body are over my bed. "Tell dat witch to leave me in peace. Look at dis," she says, thrusting her elbow in my face. "A disgrace, I am outrage. Yesterday I stop de Bambon woman from throwin' stones at her. Today my elbow crack apart!"

I have no interest in her elbow. I lay down and pull the covers over my head and try to breathe quietly.

"What I do to her? Tell her I got Our Saviour Jesus Christ pointing a finger at her heart. You tell her I'll get my powers up. You tell her dat."

Whenever it suits her, Karumba divides the island people into demons and

saints--like herself--who have special connections with the Alpha and Omega. I can only hope this is, indeed, not the case. Meanwhile, I let her rant and foam; she soon leaves to go persecute the fruit-man.

I crawl out of bed and separate what remains of the money on my desk. One pile goes for food, one goes for "general welfare", the third goes into the artichoke jar behind my rubber plant. I have 93 dollar bills here. While all my friends save for their coffin, I am saving for admission to Oolana Leia's heart.

I happen to know that my Spicecake has laid down rows of fabulous gifts. Not only does she exact a dear cash payment but demands to be delighted by baubles. She has colored glass gems and dolphin teeth. She has a wind-up monkey that beats on a drum and a reed flute that warbles with eerie music.

So every Friday I go down to the wharf where the new freighter will be. The sailors show me skin creams and snazzy hats. Every time I almost buy, but always I end up keeping my money. My gift must be precious and extraordinary and it must be from America. Karumba tells me America is a place of immortals and landed gods and that's just what I'm looking for.

This morning the sky churns with grey heat and I walk nervously beneath. At such times I worry that the gods do not approve of my plans. But then I ask myself can a man ignore that which roars out within him? And I walk on.

It is the same sailors I saw a month ago from Canada. I remember one giant with white hair who said his name was Dude. He pounds my back and I would like to run. He calls me "hombre" which I take to mean "old sage." This time they have something special. It is a green box the length of half my finger.

"Hey hombre, we found you something, went way out of our way."

He hands it over and tells me to look in the hole. I do so with trembling fingers because the huge men have crouched around me with mouths like smiling dogs. I bring the glass up slowly to one eye. Then--my heart stops. Inside the box is a living, complete, naked woman!

I shriek. I clamp the box against my breast. My heart hammers like a mallet. The sailors all seem to be quite broken up, but white men are always frightening and insane.

"I must have it at any cost. It must be mine." I nearly crush it in my thrill.

"Well hey, if you want it that bad..." Mr. Dude says, smiling at me unpleasantly. "36 American scoots."

What a price! I hand it over and run like Lucifer before they change their minds.

What a find! What a glorious find! My legs carry me only as they once had years ago. My heart is a mad bird inside my chest. Surely Meilana will have to love me. I feel the sun and stars and firmament must wheel about my head. Oolana Han Meilaya, I come bearing gifts!

The Passion

Your view is veiled and gray through stained-glass light.
She enters, bows, close beside you. Smells
Of wood-burned charcoal incense drift and rim
Her nostrils. Smoky eyes of saints that float
On air and follow her. Stone accusing flesh
And bone. She lifts her head and folds her arms.

The porcelain Christ has jaundiced skin. His arms
And legs unfold upon the wall. They're light
As air and graze your limbs each night, the flesh
Of dreams. Your eyes uncloseth upon the night and smell
Of sacred blood--a sacrifice that floats
through years and fills your heart up to its rim.

She sees the love-light in your eyes. They rim
With amber glow, the hue that clothes your arms
In cotton. Hues that veil your bed and float
Through grays and golds of morning's shadow. Light
Of love that sears your prayers, burn and smell
Of burning lips. The words that scorch the flesh.

Inside the pew you kneel and sense her flesh
Beside you. Dry as bone, she folds her rim
Of knuckles into praying hands. You smell
Her breath, it's odorless and cool upon your arm.
Her words spill like tiny wires, light
And cold, they fall, too sharp to float.

In bed with her, your body's heat will float
A layer hot on her cold layer. Her flesh
Is cool as steel. Her steely eyes will light
Upon your arm, twin beams with frozen rims.
You try to press your heat through her. Your arms
Will squeeze but feel no warmth, no breath, no smell.

You fear someday your fire will eat you. Smell
Your mind's flaming smoke. It floats
To Heaven, curling taking legs and arms.
You fear the passion of the fire. Your flesh
Will cinder or stiffen solid in the rims
Of disbelief--its glaring, icy light.

You pray that someday you and she will waken with light
Streaming from your eyes. And, rising, smell
The earth and rain as Heaven folds you in its rims.

Diana Abu-Jaber

Somebody's Son, The Psychiatrist (in Arkansas)

I am a forty-year-old woman from Earle, Arkansas, who goes to a psychiatrist. One never goes to be analyzed in this part of the country. One has to flip out totally at least once; *then* one goes to have her craziness held in check.

The reasons why I flipped out:

Well, one reason was my husband, Ansel, being too lazy during the night to get up and spit. Having a problem with phlegm, he would just raise up in bed at night; there it would be in the morning all over the east wall and floor of our 8x10 bedroom.

I tried putting down newspaper but that seemed to invite him to do it more. Finally I got where I wouldn't clean it up in the morning. I would leave it, a tribute to our marriage. A suggestion to him that maybe he wasn't God's gift to women, that maybe I didn't like having intercourse with him. He was such a lady's man when he first dated me. How was I to know then that his love of cleanliness and beauty stopped as soon as it went past his own skin?

The second reason: When our children got older--well, in order to put my oldest son through college, in fact--I went to work in a shoe factory sewing. At night, with my oldest son gone and getting ulcers in his poor stomach because of guilt over my working and over his father being such a lazy, rotten man, with my daughter married because of a baby that got made in Ansel's and my bed while we were at prayer meetings so that Ansel could sing his solos, and with only the youngest at home whom I love perhaps the most but whom I do not understand, my feet would get burning hot. It sounds silly but it wasn't. It was, and still is, the best reason I know for going crazy.

The third reason, I suppose is the one that got Ansel sold on having me committed. Although I will never understand *how* he sold my three children on it. My children who have always loved me and begrudged him their affection. The reason that got Ansel in swing was this sixteen-year-old girl in our church and her baby. I got where I couldn't go to church. I got the idea it was Ansel's baby.

I was asked to be godmother to this born-out-of-wedlock baby. The morning I was supposed to stand up for it during the christening, I got sicker than I've ever been in my life. And, after that, I couldn't go to church at all. Ansel said that I was condemning a poor, pitiful girl which was unchristian of me. He tried that on me when I was invited to a baby shower for the girl.

I told Ansel, "I'll send a gift. I'm not well."

Ansel said, "You've always pampered yourself, Jolene."

When he got on to me about church, I said, joking because Ansel knows he has a good voice, "I'm tired of hearing your solos." He knew what I was tired of. I was tired of that sixteen-year-old whisking her skirts around him at the end of church, cooing over his white shirt that I'd ironed and the grease on his hair and his "purty" voice.

Ansel said, "It's for the glory of the Lord. Not for myself."

I thought he was going to add, "I don't need any more myself."

Then he said, "You should sing too, Jolene. That selfconsciousness of your is why you don't. You hold back what is the Lord's just to take care of your own pride."

I said, "I don't sing out of respect for the Lord. I don't want to advertise the fact he slipped up when He came to my vocal cords."

I think Ansel told the minister about that, saying he was concerned for the welfare of my soul. I think the minister just laughed. Ansel didn't sing for a whole two Sundays and so the minister in the end was kind of forced to agree with Ansel. I didn't blame the minister; after all, there was that spit on my bedroom wall and that semen on my sheets.

I always hoped Ansel would leave me, but that was not his way. Ansel would never walk off from cooked meals and well-ironed clothes. I was afraid to leave him. Of course, for years that idea never entered my head. But, when it finally did, I was afraid to leave, afraid that it would turn my children against me. And I knew this: Ansel would somehow get the house and everything else. I knew the courts protected women but he would manage. I knew Ansel. He is a charming man with strangers. Those days, I did not look so good myself. I haven't looked good for a long, long time.

You might ask, Who would ever think to practice psychiatry in Arkansas? I ask my analyst that every time. But he has never answered me. I think he will not answer out of shame. Yet he tells me I should not feel shame. About anything. Even about once being crazy.

The truth is I never thought I was crazy. But when Ansel committed me, and I found out he could and would do such a thing, I've never been so filled with terror in all my life. Then I *was* hysterical. They, in the end, gave me shock treatments, which leave one feeling strange. A man struck by lightning who lives afterwards is strange; how could he be the same as before?

Anyway, I would have had to have been a mad woman not to have been afraid. I sound formal. It comes from talking to my psychiatrist. He sounds that way. He makes it sound natural.

The shock treatments, yes. The other people there, yes. Scary and sad at the same time. But the inmates didn't spit on the walls. So the thing about it most was Andy's ulcers. And Sheila's baby. What was that baby going to think about having an asylum grandmother? And my own sixteen-year-old baby who didn't know how to cook his own breakfast.

Shame, though. I can't argue with Dr. Silver, my psychiatrist. But Ansel is the only human I've ever known who felt no shame. About anything. Is shame really such a bad thing? Isn't it what helps keep us decent?

Dr. Silver tried to get me to say "son of a bitch" one day. I couldn't say it. I didn't want to say it. I think Dr. Silver wanted me to say that about Ansel. In spite of everything between Ansel and me, I could never say that about my husband, about the father of my children. About any man, maybe. My father was a gentle man. He loved me. There aren't many men in the world like him, none that I've ever seen to date. But I have no right to *expect* any other man to be that good. That's expecting too much.

I don't live with Ansel anymore. I live in an apartment. I still work, waitressing now. When my feet burn, I can't think about anything but them. I told my

analyst that and he said, "*Why* do your feet burn? What do you think is the reason?"

I looked at him. I don't know why but I could tell what he wanted me to answer. I said, "So I won't have to think about anything else?"

He smiled. It was the first time for me to please him.

I know why my feet burn, though. Not for *that* reason. It is because there is something wrong inside my body. I tried to pretend all my marriage I did not have a crotch or hips or breasts, so that Ansel would leave me alone. But it didn't work. Whether it was the pretense or the fact that the pretense didn't work that caused my feet to rage against me, I don't know. But there is something bad wrong going on inside me. Inside my *body*. Not my mind. My mind likes to look at magazines, at my children, at the sky. My *mind* was always satisfied with Ansel, with my marriage, with my life. Even though I did wish better for my kids.

Last week my analyst said to me, "This session we're going to play games. We're going to make up cuss words. Those are the best kind. Made-up ones. I want you to think up something never said before. And then say it. When you say it, you must stamp your foot, make a fist and swing your fist like this."

"Will you do one then?" I asked. It occurred to me that I had played the fool alone too long.

He looked funny but then he said, "Well, okay. That'll be fun."

We had a thought-time and all I could remember were the bugs and everything on my windshield as I drove over.

Are you ready?" Dr. Silver said.

"No," I said.

"Come on," he said.

I stood up, stamped my foot, shot out a fist, and said, "Oh, bird pee!"

I sat down, not looking at him or his silence.

"Where did you get that?" he said.

"On my windshield," I said. "It's your turn."

He stood up, blushed, and said, "Oh, shoe shit."

I laughed, because I have lived on a farm. He looked pleased when I laughed.

"Now, let's analyze," he said.

"Of course," I said and laughed some more, although I'm not sure why.

"What is it about bird pee, now?"

"It's just one of those harmless, silly things in life."

"No. It is more than that. Mine was an earthbound experience. Shoe shit, that is."

"Okay, bird pee is always a surprise. It re-introduces us to the world. Bird pee comes out of the sky."

"No, bird pee comes out of a bird," he said.

"You can't be certain about that," I said. "You're just down here *guessing* about what goes on up there." I found I could argue with Dr. Silver in a way I could never argue with Ansel. I think it is because Dr. Silver knows about shame.

Today I go for my weekly visit. I'm going to go up to that receptionist who stares at my too long skirts and who looks a lot like that sixteen-year-old girl. I'm going to go up to her and say, "I want to talk to that man with which I'm carrying on a filthy friendship."

I'll even stand up for her baby if she wants me to.



Untitled

Etching

Jeanette Miller

October 8

The wind was silent against the windshield as the car crept down the hill. Sunlight danced over the car's metal, warmed now by the constant labor of the engine. Stretching ahead, the town lay motionless, with the dusty, glazed quality of a dead fly, suspended midair in a spider web. He had come to sell insurance.

Gazing across the trench-like valley, he surveyed the houses strung out next to one another in perfect straight lines. A wooden road sign, its paint peeling, caught his eye. Its worn, white block letters read: "WELCOME TO BLACKTON. POPULATION 1,277." To his right in the distance he saw the tall steel tower of a well. It loomed over the boxy brown houses, standing as a knife thrown against the earth. At the top of the tower shaft, a metal arm rose and fell with the rhythmical timing of a heartbeat. The sound penetrated the glass and metal of the car, reaching the driver's ears. He shook his head, trying to rid himself of it, but could not. The mechanized heartbeat of the community was still ringing in his ears as he pulled the car to the side of the road, parallel to a large gray stone building.

The hot rubber tires cried under the pressure of the brakes. Checking his appearance in the rearview mirror, he saw his own rounded face. His red cheeks, wet from the heat of the drive, were large like oranges, pinching off his cold blue-eyed stare with their fat. Turning the ignition key off, he felt the car sink with relief. His chubby fingers groped for the leather briefcase behind him. Stepping from the car, his red leather shoes struck the grit of the sidewalk. He pulled himself out with some reluctance, fearful that the heat might

overcome him. The gray stone building stood before him. A mudcaked sign in the building's stub-grassed yard read: "ST. JOE'S ZINC AND MINERAL CORPORATION." Looking to his left he saw a storefront block, empty with the exception of a hardware store and an open-doored laundromat.

The hardware store window held a display of dust-covered lanterns, behind which brown, cardboard cartons were stacked. The laundromat too had a large window; but unlike the undisturbed hardware window, the window of the laundromat was live with the buzzing of black houseflies. Two women, their shoulder length hair touching the edge of their raveled smock collars, sat facing each other on the ledge by the window, deep in animated discussion. The driver considered approaching them, but looking at them again hesitantly, his eyebrow arched with doubt. He saw them through the glass, but could only hear the push of the mine shaft and the swarming of the black flies. He shook his head; they were not the ones he was looking for.

Turning his attention from the women, the driver looked to his right. A gray clapboard meeting hall stood just back from the sidewalk. It looked to him like a building that had served many purposes over the years; its ornate wooden scroll boarded over with plankboard in places. He could see it had worn many shades, as the gray of the clapboard had worn through in spots. A narrow set of wooden stairs, broken and disheveled, led to the boarded-up door. Overhead, precariously hanging by one nail, hung the sign, "GRANGE 240." Slivered glass, crushed soda cans, and empty gum wrappers littered the steps. It was a meeting place of sorts, but that would be of little help to him.

Two more buildings lined the street. Across the road, a sandstone structure stood isolated in a gravel yard. A plastic sign, without question the most modern in town, read "RALPH DIER, REAL ESTATE." Beige ruffled curtains bordered the second-story window, suggesting that the proprietor lived above his place of business. The window was firmly closed, clouded by the dust of the yard. No light shone in the small house. He could knock, he thought, but no one would be home.

The only remaining building stood fifty yards beyond the sandstone real estate office. Facing it squarely, both feet firmly planted in his shoes, the driver squinted to survey the building more clearly. Brown, cafe curtains hung in the windows of the small brick structure. Perhaps it was a restaurant and a likely buyer could be found within. Anxious with expectation and with a gleam in his slitted eyes, the driver heaved his briefcase into his left hand, and once his tie had been straightened for one last time, proceeded to trot across the road as quickly as his tight leather shoes and enormous weight would allow. An aging bald eagle, wingspread above the door, its painted talons browned with age and dirt, was the only greeting the out of breath driver received. "AMERICAN HOUSE TAVERN" read the sign, "Closed for the Season."

Turning from the small closed tavern, the driver eyed his car with contempt. He felt the printed business cards in his jacket pocket clash against his thigh.

Moving toward the road, he began to pick up speed as he walked, straining the tight stitching of his shoes. A rusted '68 Rambler raced by, its occupants waving and laughing. It had come suddenly. Stepping back in surprise, the driver had lost his balance. His arms shot out in a hawklike position, effectively stabilizing his rotund body. Shaking himself to dispel the marshmallow-like feeling throughout his legs, he looked at his shoes. A flour fine dust of silica covered them. For the first time he noticed the loose threads and torn seams. "Fine place to try and sell anything," he muttered with an angry snort.

"So...you couldn't find who you were looking for, yeh?"

Spinning around in surprise, the driver searched for the voice behind him.

"Me either. I can sympathize." The voice continued with a chuckle.

After taking several steps forward, the driver stopped, cheeks reddening. "Where are you?" he bellowed, his embarrassment mounting with disgust. "Are you afraid of showing yourself?"

"Afraid," the voice snorted, "Afraid of you?" The words were choked with frenzied laughter. As the laughter subsided, the voice continued, "I just got back. Slaughtered lots of 'um. Why would I be scared of a fat old salesman?"

During the laughter the driver had spotted him. He sat hidden in the shadows on the worn steps of the mining office. From where he stood, the driver could see the faded pants and green army jacket of the young pale man.

"A man returns home," the young man said suddenly, "and to what? An empty town and a fat old traveling salesman. What do you sell anyway?"

Stiffening his jaw to regain the dignity he seemed to have lost, the driver replied, "Life insurance."

"Life insurance," the young man's mocking laughter echoed in the street. "You've come here to sell life insurance? You'd be luckier peddling it in 'Nam than trying to sell it in this town."

"I'll go then."

"No, please, don't leave just yet." The young man had moved on his last words and now stood twenty feet away, separated from the driver only by the shadow of the pumping mine shaft. "Why do you sell life insurance?"

"Look, I'm a busy man," retorted the driver, hastily dismissing his own growing curiosity. "I can't spend time with foolish questions."

"Why do you sell insurance?" the young man's voice shrieked out at him as he walked toward his car. "Why? Can you tell me? Do you know?"

The wind was silent against the windshield as the car mounted the hill. He drove along as if he had no destination to reach, moving at a steady pace between the sharp yellow lines of the pavement. Sunrays danced over the car. In the wind the driver heard an echo, reverberating with bullet-like clarity, "Why?"

God Made Man

(But He Used A Monkey To Do It)

“Hey, I’ll buy you a pizza,” Josh frolicked as his mind slid over memories of church picnics with a certain kind of girl. Big, brown eyes and long, slim legs, hidden by only ragged shorts. Maybe even freckles.

The warm images in his mind matched not at all the bleak classroom he felt trapped in. “To hell with Hemingway and Nietzsche and Goethe. The prison is here, in my mind, not the dry-rot of yours.” The strangled scream now emitted, Josh could well follow the whirlpool attraction of the lecture, basking in forgettable depths, unhindered.

Stumbling off on numb legs, Josh breathed the crisp morning air with as much interest as he had for the smoldering cigarette between his lips. He had no obligations for ten or fifteen minutes, and wished he had a joint.

“Ever consider yourself a moral monster?” Josh recalled with startling clarity that challenge layed in the lap of somebody in his class. “What about you, who drinks and drives?” It followed, and Josh remembered the hairs standing erect and wary on the back of his neck, and his hope that became a prayer, that the

professor’s acid stare wouldn’t choose him. He feared his composure would only dissolve into a hopeless tic, alive and independent of his whim, creating in his face hundreds of leper-like distortions.

He shrugged to himself in sudden disinterest, and strode off with a slight quickening of his pace.

“100 million people dead in the last 200 years, all at the hands of their fellow man...does that appall you? An awful lot of glory-gee, granted; but doesn’t that transcend college? You; your lives, when they, at 19, are already so dead?” The professor had an appealing tone in his voice, surely no accident, he does nothing by accident.

“So much a waste and only 19; that girl (oh, but with girls it’s so much more tragic) killed at the prime of life. By a fellow student.” The words stick in Josh’s throat, and when finally they’ve cleared, they leave the burning, puking sensation of bile, that only time can wear away.

In spite of the urgent need to stay stiffly focused on what line of thought was prevailing between teacher and class, Josh could feel the restraints holding his attention on the here-and-now slipping. When he was young, Josh drew rockets and space monsters when he felt disengaged, now he traces mental Picasso’s of slum life he’s never seen:

“Someone owns a scrawny, mongrel dog in the project,” he imagines; “they call it White Man. Every time he comes around looking for food, the boys kick at him. Women chase him with chair legs and metal rods. Some entice White Man close with garbage, then lash out with feet and fist while he cowers, then tries to run. No voice comes, but for the thump, thump, thud; no whimper or howl or bark.”

“One day some boys playing in an old burned building found White Man asleep, amid lifeless refuse at the bottom of an empty elevator shaft. They threw tin cans and chunks of cement; and White Man opened his eyes to stare stupidly. The boys set upon him with banister rods, poking him this way and that.”

“In disgust they left for more interesting fare on the street. And White Man moved no more.”

Mechanically, like all the others, he walked out of the classroom and the building, bound for the same daily commitment, arranged months before.

“Cup of coffee quick,” Josh rehearsed to himself, “and camp in between

stately, secure book shelves for a couple of hours. Cigarette and reconsider things. Is my head straight enough to rely on after exposure to that guy?

"What if? And what if I'm wrong and lost all the delight, so shortly mine and precious beyond description. What if I just...."

"I heard you graduated or joined the army or somethin' "--words of wisdom from this weirdo from Yonkers, who sometimes states on the cuff, that he's really from Venus. Shaped kind of like a bowling pin; unkempt, frizzed-out hair under the kind of grey wool hat that seems to be a glorification of a weekend fisherman's. Wears it, he does, like a prince.

"Not yet, Leon. Listen, can it and get lost, I'm busy."

Heaped gleefully before Josh, Leon only appeared as a target. Only appealed as a tackling dummy.

"No problem, buddy. I'm in the neighborhood tonight, I'll drop in." Waddling away, his ass worried Josh.

"Queer, nah. But shit, 'live every moment like you only have an hour to live...' Bob Kraft's brother, his brain shrinking till he died; why didn't he do something wild? Christ, I'd do some crazy shit."

"Me homo...nah, I could never do it, Leon's made of lard. And besides, gay? Fag? Queer? Nah, it's beat; they took such a magnificent word and gave it hideous complications."

Mindlessly walking down the hill from a night class in the famous "oldest building on campus." The leg from a broken chair, courtesy of the state, grasped hand. The plummet accented by only car-traffic alongside, and an old man carrying a jangling lunch pail; faltering in his steps just a few yards ahead.

Bearing down, thoughts of the just concluded lecture on "Paul's Case" --horrors of Industrial Revolution contrast with thermal nuclear, dissolve in the cold moment of calculation.

The old man's breath, short-gasping-jangling, nearly an arm's length ahead. Josh's leg within the arc of action.

"See the old man, " he mumbles, "nothing to call his own; let's give him something nobody can take away--multiple fractures...."

The arc swings, the bludgeon intent, the mark sure.

Smiling-happy-humming, the old man parts company to enter a side street, and is gone in the shadows between street lamps. The arc falls on deaf ears: Josh's forehead sweats and runs into an open mouth, a grin set at a ridiculous angle.

Head off on foot, for the nearest bar. Tommy Taco's has clams and the cheapest, honorable beer in town; the patrons generally are docile enough, if rather a cross section of past and present college hangers-on. Summer brings drunken softball teams and gayfully frenzied bikers, just waiting for the right glance to activate them.

This night, however, it's crowded with customarily surly hounds and heavy-coated fellows with the look of youth in their frames, and misplaced enthusiasm from ear to ear.

One, in Ginsberg beard and oily, capped head, holds a bible-like copy of *Writer's Market*, dog-eared, it so happens, for just this one event: "...this is what the world has been waiting for since God-Knows-When--the greatest thing since *Grapes of Wrath*."

Who cares?

Glancing around for solice, Josh's eyes catch a phrase, uttered in a deathly whisper from the previously unnoticed T.V. The gravity startled him, and for a moment his mind flowed, note for note, with an image of human urgency:

"...he thought of the men back at the camp and the lack of wind to hinder his advance through the snow. He felt a tug of panic working at his brain and decided to ignore it--after all, the human race is the most biologically advanced, endowed by the creator with inalienable rights, has walked on the moon. What then is there to fear from the night?"

"Why don't they turn that damn thing off? Every eye glued, and for what? Are we not men? ARE WE NOT MEN?!"

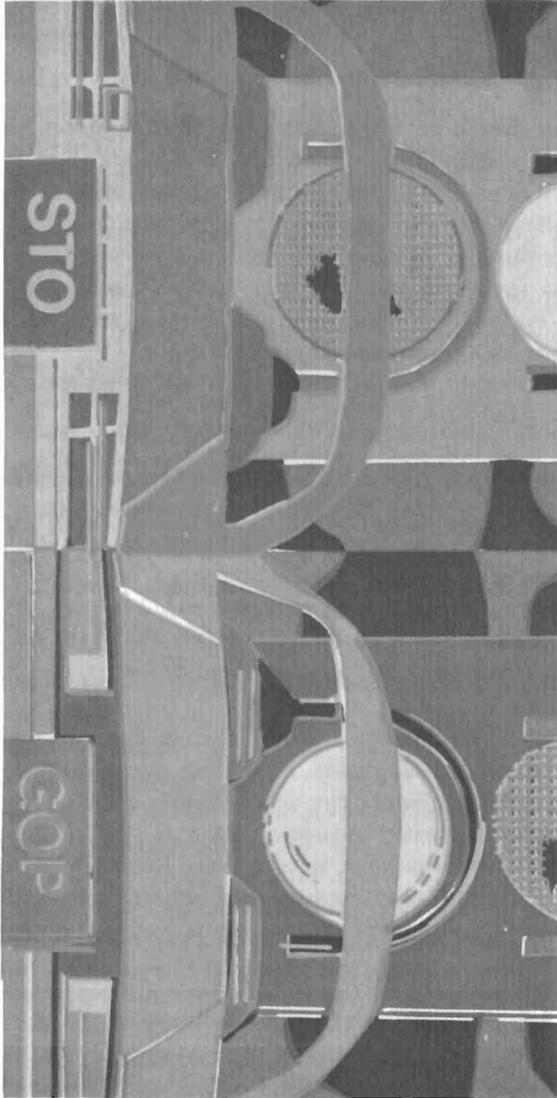
Just think: eleven little kids got blown away in two separate incidents within three days last week, the New York Times reported today. What made the whole thing unique was the fact that in both cases the children were playing with discarded military explosives; eight from a W.W.II land mine in Moscow, three from a common antipersonnel bomb in Lebanon.

Roofing nails and gravel and slivers of glass. Rock salt and bacon rinds. Bone splinters and torn flesh. And a cask of Amontillado.

It's strange sometimes when you're coming down from a week-long binge, you find yourself climbing stairs, or walking down a corridor somewhere, and seeing the sun shine hazily through a distant window that causes the most stupefying mist to obstruct your vision.

Thoughts creep into your mind slowly, like a frogman making his way arduously along the ocean bottom. And once they form, they seem to be of nothing but dark things--illness and death, and the internal workings of the human spleen.

And as if those thoughts that intrude from the people you talk to, and take lectures from, all week aren't enough, at least you can take comfort in waiting with the smell of irritated skin on a sweet summer's eve. Just your sweetie and you, lying prone on acres and acres of dewy lawn, staring at the mystic show in the upper atmosphere. And you can feel all warm and all, right down to the bone.



The Green Light Diphych

Scrigraph

Mark Lenartowicz

The Priest and the Son

Snow fell on the church across the street, melting quickly as it hit the roof. It fell on the tops of cars in the lot beside the church; it fell on the street lights and on the damp road. It fell like music with a constant beat, never rising, never changing. Snow fell on the top of her shop, though she couldn't see it as she stood inside.

She drew away from the large window, turning with her arms crossed. Her face was cold as were her hands and toes, and she felt the discomfort continually. She no longer rubbed her hands together or warmed them by wrapping them with a towel for the cold was now a special kind of feeling. She felt strange in warm rooms.

Resting her arms on the bare counter, she looked out at the plants. Her shop was the only shop in the village that sold such colorful flowers in the middle of winter. Tables with gray clay pots full of flowers stood in the middle of the room, while plants over on the other tables were pushed off to the side.

The shop walls were dim yellow, but now they seemed aged and somewhat grimy in spite of the fact that weekly she would clean them with the sponge

that was kept in the back bathroom. The wet sponge smelled like decay to her. The flowers rarely emitted any smell.

She was about to count the change in the register when she heard the tinkling of the two bells above the door. She felt the cold from the outside hit her suddenly, and the wind became louder than the bells. It was a boy. He quickly unwrapped the red scarf around his neck. His eyes were eager and alive. "Excuse me, Ma'am. Where are your roses?"

"Over in the center." She pointed to a glass case there.

He walked over and opened the case and studied the roses for what seemed a long time.

"It's four o'clock," she called to him. "I'll be closing."

"Okay!" He hurried to the counter holding three roses that sprang up from his fist like a banner. He laid them carefully on the counter, then reached in his front pocket. "These are for my mother, and it isn't even her birthday or anything!"

"How nice." She didn't take to his manner.

He handed her individual dollar bills with his two hands, bills that, though they were folded, looked like they came straight from the printing machine. She caught a glimpse of him eagerly looking up at her, as his two hands holding the money reached out. She took the money and rang up the price.

"It sure is cold out, Ma'am. It's even cold in here."

"Heating is expensive."

"Oh, I know. My mother keeps the thermostat down because it's so expensive." It was the second time he mentioned his mother. He was strange, not at all like her own son, Lenny.

"I suppose you'd like the roses wrapped up?"

"No, that's all right."

She began counting the money in the register, and caught him wrapping the roses in his scarf.

"So long!"

She locked the shop up not five minutes after the strange boy had left, and turned to the street. The wind hit her neck and below; it stung, but she welcomed it. Cars hurried by the street, and she waited patiently for the traffic light to turn red so she could cross. It was snowing harder now, and there was a

The Priest and the Son

quiet peace in the sky where it fell above the village. She crossed the street and waited for the bus on the curb by the church. It came always precisely at four fifteen, and she stood straight, almost defiantly against the wind. The bus came and pulled over next to her.

"Afternoon, Mrs. Marcy," George said from behind the wheel as she put her change in the slot.

"Good afternoon, George."

She sat directly behind him in a seat that faced the opposite window. The bus jolted, then was off.

She caught other faces at a glance, fixed faces that stared straight ahead or down in their laps. Some faces glanced back at her when she looked, and she turned to George.

"Gotta' go home and cook dinner," she told him.

"After a full day's work? Why doncha' get that son of yours to do it?"

She gave a quick laugh. "Lennie..."

"What's *he* up to now?"

She watched the windshield wipers fling snow away. "Same thing."

"Shoulda' gone to college. Woulda' done him good."

"Lennie and college don't mix."

The bus pulled over and a boy not more than twenty with an army coat on stepped on the bus. His hair was unwashed and his hands were bare. He sat too close next to her and began rubbing his hands. She placed her purse that was between them on her lap, staring straight ahead.

The bus pulled over to her stop, and she slipped her hands back into her tiny gloves.

"Good evening, George."

"You take care, Mrs. Marcy."

She stepped off and breathed deeply before she walked down the side street. The two best times of the day were when she walked up the street toward the bus stop that took her to her shop in the morning, and when she walked back down the street in the early evening. She didn't know her neighbors, but enjoyed looking in the windows, especially in winter when it was dark at this time and she could see inside better. She first passed the trailer, and the old

lady was of course seated inside watching her colored television, like last evening and all the evenings before. Her favorite house had a window that looked into a livingroom with many portraits of old men and paintings of ships. Some evening, she thought, she planned on stopping by the house to examine the paintings more closely.

Lennie had forgotten to leave the porch light on again. The house was dark, but she looked beyond the livingroom and saw that the light above the kitchen sink was on.

"Lennie?" She went in the livingroom, turned on the lamp, and went on into the kitchen. Lennie was seated at the kitchen table fixing an old radio that had been stored in his room. His father had owned it as a boy.

She ran cold water over her hands to cleanse them of sweat.

"It's not good to come home to a dark house."

"Sorry." She couldn't see him too well, as if he was in shadow.

"I've reminded you before." She wiped her hands on the dish towel.

"What are you doing with that thing?"

"Trying to fix it."

"How can you *see* without the overhead light?" She turned it on for him.

Lennie was twenty-two now, but looked seventeen. He held the wrench awkwardly in his hand, and drilled it inside the radio in a clumsy manner, like an adolescent boy.

"Hamburgers for dinner?" she asked.

"I don't care."

She stepped toward the freezer, and noticed a fern of some sort sticking out of a bucket full of dirt. It sat in the corner of the floor near him. The fern was placed in the bucket she used to mop the floor with.

"Lennie, what is *that*!"

"Oh!" Lennie jerked up. Her son's body look unproportional to her, with legs and arms being too thin, and his hands and head too large. His hands appeared to be connected lightly, like a loose hinge, to his small wrists. They were heavy hands with long fingers that seemed to be able to fall off, if the hinge became weak enough. It was his hands and head that had grown, without the rest of his body. He grabbed the dirt filled bucket which was heavy in his hold, and presented it to her. He seemed somewhat embarrassed, with lips pressed together and his eyes on the fern, not on her eyes. "Here. Happy anniversary."

"Anniversary?"

"Yeah. I dug these up over beyond the lot. You like plants, don't you?"

"Lennie, it's not our anniversary."

"It's January sixth. That's today."

"No. Your father's and my anniversary was in April."

"April..." He held the bucket firmly, looking down at it in his hands. His ears stuck out of his loose brown hair, and she was no longer puzzled, but a little touched. "I'm sorry. I thought it was today." He set it on the floor and seated himself before the radio, taking up the wrench. He tried to carry the incident off lightly. She gave a short laugh and went to him.

"Whatever made you think..." She placed her hand lightly on his head, and she felt him stiffen. She had wanted to stroke his hair, but now she drew her hand away, and watched him place his attention back to the wrench and radio. Next to him, the fern with its bristles dug into the air like claws. "It's such an ugly... plant" she whispered. His eyes went over the top of the radio and held there for a moment.

"I kind of like it."

"Well, if you had more money, a job, you could've bought..." He then slammed the wrench on the table with loud finality. "Lennie!" she said at the moment of his outburst.

He stared down at the wrench and lowered his eyes.

"You watch your manner with me."

"Maybe I should just get out," he said softly, then stood. He was taller than she was, yet still small for his age. The only thing he had inherited from her was her tininess. Other than that, he looked nothing like her. She had charcoal black hair with large brown eyes; he had soft brown hair and milky green eyes. His eyes were that of an old man's, with lines drawn already on the sides. All features but his eyes were youthful. He had a small child's nose that scooped up, and lips that protruded when he sulked.

"You always say that, but you never do."

"This time I might."

"Oh Lennie." She held his chin in her hand and made him face her, yet his eyes avoided hers, and he pushed her hand away, almost unconsciously.

"Lennie!"

"I'm going to work on this down in the basement!" She was going to stop him when someone knocked at the front door. She ran her palm over her hair and went to answer it.

Father Richards stood on the porch. He was a man in his thirties who slouched slightly when he walked, a man with a bent spine caused, she supposed, by too much sympathizing. He had eyes that slanted, a kind face. Since her brother and husband were killed together in a car accident four years ago, he would stop over about once every other month. Lately, his visits had been more spread out than that, so she valued the times when he came to call.

"Oh Father, do come in."

"I can stay only a moment." He stepped in the landing. "I'm sorry I don't have much time, but I came to see how you were getting along."

"Do come in and sit down. Would you like some coffee?"

"Oh no, no. I don't have the time, as much as I'd like to."

She led him in the livingroom, and felt an unfamiliar stirring inside her, something that reached her spine, and credited this to hunger or too much sleep. Lennie had left the newspaper scattered on one chair, but other than that, the room was in order.

"So how's the shop?"

"Oh, it's fine. Business picked up before Christmas."

"And do you go out at all, to clubs or parties?"

"No, Father. But I'm just as content to stay home with Lennie. I'm tired after work."

"How's Lennie doing?"

"Fine, just fine, always fixing things around the house...."

"Has he got a job yet?"

"He's still looking. It's hard, Father."

"I know," he said quietly, bowing his head. Always it was the same questions, and always he seemed saddened by her responses. He did not fit in with the rest of the room, with his crisp black clothing and stiff manner, and the room with its torn chairs and coffee stained tables; he was so distinctly in the room.

"Do take your coat off."

"I'm sorry, but I'll have to be going." He stood, and she felt the stirring as she looked up at him. This time, it frightened her.

"Oh, so soon?" She also stood, a bit bewildered.

"If you'd like, I can stop by later in the week when we have more time to talk."

"I'd like that very much."

"Good."

He began walking to the door, and she followed. He turned when he reached

the door. "Do you miss them terribly?" he said, and she looked at his collar.

"I... it's like it happened not even a year ago. Father, nothing's changed."

Slowly, she felt herself drawn to him, as if she were swaying without control. She broke out of the trance when she heard vague parade music, and at first thought of a marching band outside in the street. Her head cleared and she was herself again; Lennie had merely fixed the radio and was now back in the kitchen.

"Father, I'm fine. Honestly I am..."

Lennie suddenly gave a quick cry from the kitchen, which startled her and she quickly ran to him.

She stopped at the kitchen's entrance. Lennie was by the stove with his shirt sleeve on fire. He shook it vigorously, but the fire seemed only to grow on his flannel shirt. "Mom! Mom!" he yelled, but she stood, horrified, watching her son's arm on fire.

Father Richards pushed past her and grabbed Lennie by the shoulders, pulling him to the sink. Taking full control, he instantly had the water running and was holding her son's arm under it. "I, I was hungry. I lit the stove..."

"It's okay, son," Father Richards said.

He held Lennie firmly, as if it were natural for him to be holding her son. And Lennie stood still, not appearing to be self conscious at his touch. She went over to them by the sink and placed her hand on her son's shoulder. His muscles locked, and she lowered her hand.

"I'm okay, Mom. The fire hit my shirt mostly and not my skin, somehow. It just scared me a little." She looked down at the water flowing over Father Richards' fingers that were tightly wrapped around Lennie's wrist. The running water seemed to hold her in a trance, and she was a bit puzzled over why they didn't turn the water off if he was now all right. "Are you afraid, Mom?" She was confused as to whether he meant she was afraid about his skin being damaged or something else. She looked at his face. His eyes, watery, were so unlike her own or his father's.

"I'll cook the hamburgers, Lennie," she said, then lowered her eyes back to the running water. "Then I'll go to bed."

She had to be at the shop a little early the next morning to sweep and mop the floor.

One Body, Many Lives

A woman lies on a
paper-covered table,
open and fragile.
The only defense,
a closed mind.

Jerking at the feel of
cold metal she listens
to the encircling murmurs.
White-clothed people
giving bored comfort.

She retreats to
a summer warm kitchen,
preparing fruit salad,
a specialty.
Seeing her hands,
they are wet with juice
and mechanically scoop out
the insides of
a ripe cantalope.

Seeds promising new life
Find a home in the trash.

Rosemary Calderalo

The Don Fall

It was early spring and my first day on campus. I was a transfer student for the fall semester and was just kind of hanging around, getting to know people, seeing things. Joe, my new roommate, had just given me the full tour and had brought me back to the dorm. He had told some people to get together in a suite down the hall and had offered to introduce me.

I followed him down the hall toward an open door. He stopped there and turned to me.

"Hey," he said. "Come on in. I want you to meet the guys."

He walked into the room and I followed him kind of slowly, looking around as I went. There were a lot of guys standing around, kind of talking to one another, checking me out.

"Hey," Joe said, waving his hand back toward me. "This is Dave Bristol, everybody. He's from New York."

They all looked at me. Joe went on talking, pointing at guys.

"Dave, this is Mark and Josh, and Tahe, and Dean." He said a lot of their names and then pointed to a guy sitting on the floor under the window. He had funny looking hair; it stuck out like he had ahold of a hot wire or something. His eyes were open real wide too. He had glasses on.

"And that's Don," he said. "Don't talk to Don though. He's an asshole."

Everybody else laughed a little and looked at Don.

He made a funny face and said, "Ah come on you guys. Don't call me that."

It was funny, but he didn't seem too upset or anything and I wondered about that.

The guy called Tahe pointed at him and said, "Even you know you're an asshole, Don. Just tell Dave here what an asshole you are. Go ahead. Tell him. He'll understand."

"You're an asshole, Don," a few guys said together.

"Ah come on you guys," he said.

"Hey," Joe said. "He's right. You know that? He's not an asshole. He's a good guy, right?"

The guys looked at Joe in a funny way, I mean not getting the point.

"That's right," Joe said. "He's a good guy and good guys always go get beer for their buddies. Right fellas?"

"Right! Right!" everybody said together.

"Ah come on you guys," Don said. "I can't do the beer run *every* night."

"Don Boy," Tahe said. "Tell you what. You take somebody to get beer and we won't beat on you in your room tonight. How's that?"

Over there on the floor, Don looked like he was thinking that one over. I was wondering if they like really *did* beat on the guy.

He pulled himself up from the floor and brushed his pants off.

"O.K.," he said. "Who's going with me?"

No one said anything.

"I'll go," I said before thinking about it.

They all looked at me. Why had I gone and done that? It came to me that maybe all the guys would think I was an asshole too.

"Let's go," Don said, walking toward the door.

I went out after him and walked down the hall. I crossed the parking lot with Don, not talking. I didn't know what to say to him. I was feeling kind of funny about myself too. I just Goddamn knew those guys back in the room were talking about me.

We got in his car, a light blue Chevette, and he pulled out of the lot. It wasn't a bad car. I mean, not a *fine* car, but it was O.K. The funny thing was, it was clean. I don't mean clean the way a guy would keep it if he was really into his machine, but clean in the way your great aunt would keep her car. Neat and everything. We were driving down the main street. I could recognize it now. Don kept staring straight ahead. He blinked his eyes a lot and every once in a while would like throw his index finger up and bump his glasses back up on his nose. I was wondering if I should say something. He was a funny kind of guy. Maybe he *was* an asshole; I didn't really know. There was something about him though. Some kind of look to his eyes.

We got some Matts Beer and came back to the suite. Everybody got into a beer or two and started feeling right when Tahe said, "Hey Don, what are you going to do for us tonight? You gonna get weird, man?"

"What?" Don said, looking up over his glasses. He was sitting below the window again.

"Hey, Don boy," Joe said. "Come on and do something."

"Ah come on you guys," he said.

"Hey," Joe said, smiling funny. "You remember last time. Don boy asked us to hold him under the water in the tub for seven minutes. Said he was gonna do it. Seven minutes. Humanly impossible. A new world record."

"Yeah," someone said. "Or that time last semester. You tried to swim in Dean's fish tank. A fucking guppy man."

Everybody laughed.

Joe turned around and looked at me.

"See, Don's an asshole. Every time he gets drunk, he does something stupid."

"I don't get drunk," Don said. "I never drink more than two cans."

"That's right," Joe said. "Two cans and you're drunk and stupid."

"Not tonight," Don said. "Not tonight."

"Sure Don," Joe said.

I believed him. Later though he drank a few beers. Maybe it was only two. That's what they said. He got very funny and I couldn't decide if he really *was* drunk or crazy or just putting all of us on, but he started talking about the wall. He said if he tried, he could put his head right through it. He said he was going to ram his head into the wall and pull the telephone wires out with his teeth. It was very strange.

Don was standing there looking at the wall as if it was a movie or something and Tahe went over to him.

"All right, you asshole," he said. "This is one time you're gonna live up to what you say."

He grabbed Don by the back of the neck and brought him over to near where the place was. He pressed his forehead to the wall above the phone.

"Now do it," he said.

"I can," Don said. "I can do it. You guys will see."

Tahe let him go and stepped back. Everybody got quiet and just watched. Don took his glasses off and put them on the phone table. He spread his feet out square like and pressed his palms flat against the wall. He closed his eyes for a little while and took a deep breath and then in one quick jerky motion rammed his head smack into the wall. He fell to his knees and held his head, swaying back and forth. I thought he was going to pass out.

"I'm Okay," he said, rubbing his head. "Did I do much damage?" he asked. "To the wall I mean."

I looked up at the wall. It was unmarked.

"Not much I'm afraid," Tahe said. "In fact, nothing at all."

Everybody laughed.

"What an asshole," Joe said. "A real flaming asshole."

"Ah come on you guys," Don said, getting up.

We all got drunk after that. Nobody tried to put his head into the wall or anything though. That was really the start of my time here. Don left before that semester was over. I think about him a lot. Maybe he *is* an asshole, I don't know. Maybe I am. In any case, if there's any point to this story - and maybe there isn't - it's just that for a very funny moment there in the room, you know, when Don had his hands pressed against the wall and his eyes closed, I really thought he could do it. I was almost ready to believe that his head was going to go smashing through that plaster wall and then come back out. I still have a kind of mental picture of him, a mouth full of telephone wires and sparks jumping off his teeth and his crazy hair sticking out like some kind of scared porcupine.

Sleepwalking Solo

Where did your underwear wander
while your spirit unraveled from sheets,
floating off, earphones trailing their cord?
The hallways descend as quiet as an unplugged escalator . . .

Where are you going? I am going
to throw out the garbage. I am going
to put a nickel in the meter,

I am going to grandmother's cellar,
I am going to visit my old grade school,
I am going to the playground to run the bases,

I am going to row across the pond in the moonlight,
I am going to walk on the water, to levitate
just above clover-leafed highways, through graveyards
in billowing nightclothes, I am coming

to fuck you Sally Kunkelevski,
while protoplasm glides through the zodiac
between eyelids and eyes. Red lights

flash green as I step into expressways,
a breeze ripples pajama legs as I turn
like a remote-controlled robot at the edges of roofs,
I can stand for hours with one foot poised

over cataract oceans at the end of the dock.
*You're running naked among allies,
you shuffle unnoticed through crowds of insomniacs
faces pale under streetlights, someone buys you a beer,*

but nobody wakes you. Wake a somnambulist
and he loses his soul, his body
lies helpless, like an epileptic gagging on his tongue,
you have to care for him like a baby

or like a zombie he comes through the mirror
to strangle you. They part before your inevitable goose step,
your arms stiffened straight out before you,

Death watches you go by, dunking his donut
in the lukewarm coffee of all-night cafeterias,
and you have made it home once again, uncannily avoiding
soiling your houseslippers with dogshit.

Dawn breaks over crazy quilts, smothered
in plumped duck feathers the sleeper
thinks his life begins,

but an overcoat hangs all night in the closet
ready to go — somewhere down some street
the dreams all shut deserted
and there I once opened my eyes,

a wire wastebasket burned,
sparks of yesterday's newspapers
swirled up and floated off
like flaming snow.

S. Dybek

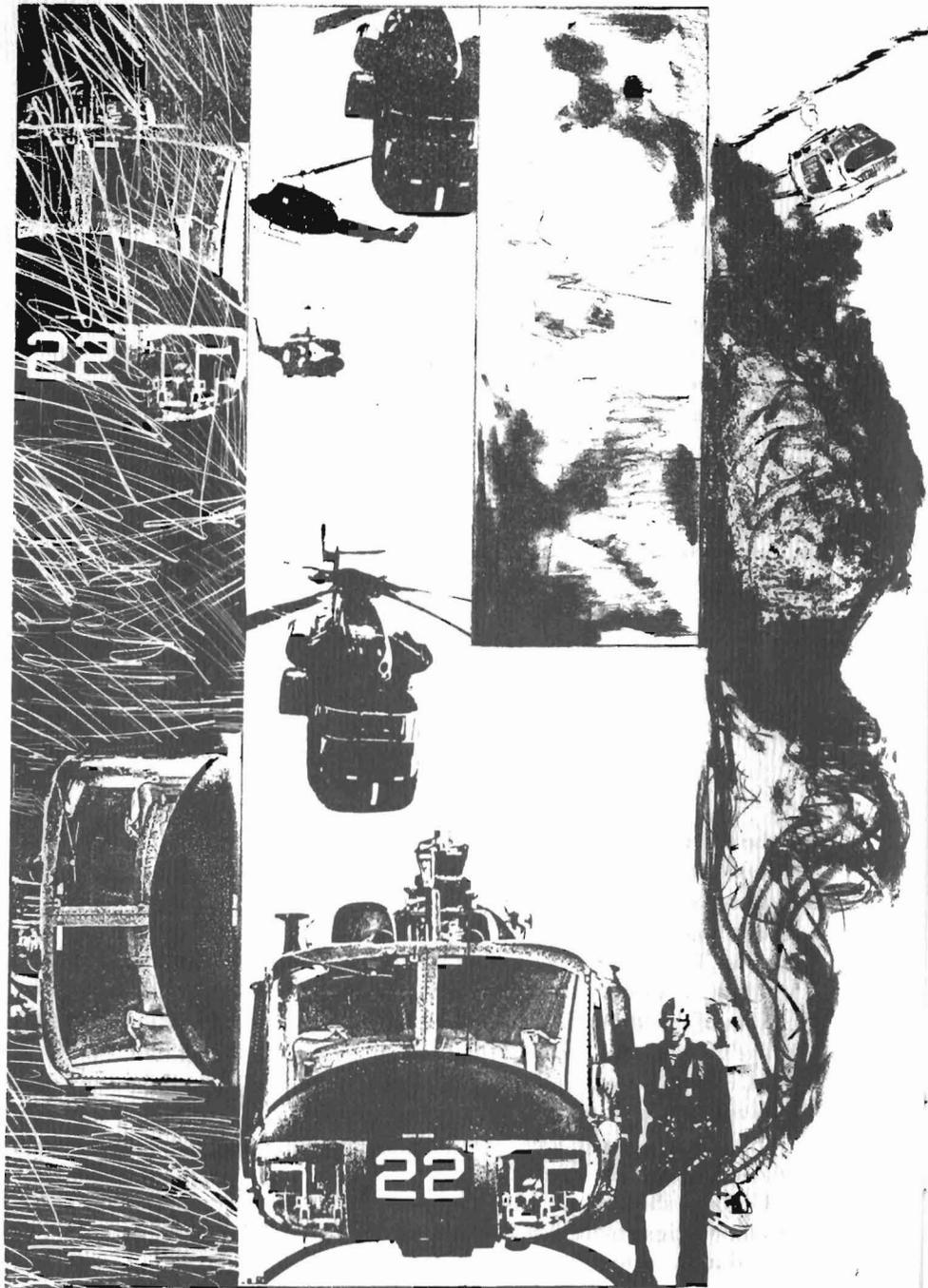
A Friend of the Family

The bride whirls by on spilled milk. An old man pulls silk
sheets from a violin. Another, her father, burns his shoes. This
is the wedding of a friend. I search for him through the crowd of
drunken guests, bumping hips with his maiden aunts and whorish
cousins. They know me only as a friend of the family. We smile.
It's dusk. They are sawing open an accordion — an old wedding
custom of the family. Inside sawdust and broken china, a rubber doll.
What's the prophecy, what's the toast? Everyone is waltzing. The
gift I've brought him is melting through its wrappings, but at his
own wedding he's nowhere to be found.

"Isn't that just like him," I tell his younger sister, the one
who loves him. She's been crying.

Upstairs, she says, she's left him alone before the mirror
smoking a cigarette and picking rice from his hair.

S. Dybek



Untitled

20 x 28 Lithograph

Gerald Christensen

At Least Ten Feet Tall

Linda Carson rolled over to look at her alarm clock. Ten o'clock! How could it be so late? She had planned to go to church that morning, but as usual turned over and fell back to sleep after shutting off the alarm. She had slept through the best part of the day. Now she lay on her back, not even a sheet covering her, staring at the ceiling. She felt as if there was something inside her urging her to pray, but she tried to find something else to focus her thoughts on. The feeling continued, and she became restless. Finally she sat up in the bed and slid her feet over the edge, accidentally putting them on the cat. She laughed long and easily as he ran out of the room with his back curved upward and his tail straight in the air.

She headed for the bathroom, just like she did the first thing every morning. She looked in the mirror at her messy hair and bloodshot eyes and thought about how crazy her whole summer was. She had come back to her small hometown after her first year away at college to find everything totally different, as if it were all a dream. While she was at school, her parents and younger sister had moved to a much smaller house about one hundred feet from the Hilltop, her father's bar. Being near the Hilltop was a lot different from living on their farm. She thought it would be fun to live so close to town, but not long after their move her parents had gotten a divorce and her father moved in with his girlfriend, just slightly older than Linda. So when the summer came and Linda had to leave school, she went to live with her mother in the small house one hundred feet from the Hilltop. Every day was just about the same. Linda would sleep until noon and go to work as a waitress from six to ten. On the week-end mornings she would clean the Hilltop.

About a month into the summer, Linda's mother decided to move in with her boyfriend. Neither Linda nor her younger sister wanted to move into the house of a man they disliked and distrusted, so the situation was discussed over again and again. Each time Linda felt as if her sister and she were captured territories in her parents' war of divorce. Finally a decision was made. Linda and her sister were declared independent, and the small house about one hundred feet from the Hilltop was theirs for the summer.

So it was a hot Sunday in August and Linda had to clean the bar. As she finished dressing, she thought about how lonely it was cleaning on Sunday morning. At least on Saturday she had Bugs Bunny and the Roadrunner to keep her company. She put the key into the back door lock and thought about how much she wanted to go back. Not back to bed but back to her childhood.

Soon she was into her regular cleaning routine. She liked to work fast to get the job done. She disliked being alone in this place. She blamed it for her parent's divorce. They had started having fights shortly after her father bought the Hilltop three years ago. She knew it was foolish though. Buildings don't break up marriages; people do. Still, she blamed the place.

As she cleaned off the tables, she thought about the people that came to the Hilltop. They were so predictable. They would come almost exactly at the same time every day, order the same drink and tell the same stories. At the beginning, she had enjoyed them. For the most part they were interesting, but a few interesting stories were all that existed, and the same ones were repeated over again and again. Then she thought about the people's homes. The Hilltop was always such a mess with cigarette butts, stale potato chips and spilled beer on the floor. Did they treat their homes like this? She felt sorry for them if they did.

She began to sweep up the only remains of Saturday night's crowd. The stench of stale beer was everywhere. She had opened all the windows, but the hot air just magnified the smell. She tried to concentrate just on her sweeping and nothing else. Someone knocked at the door. Could it be noon already? She pushed her hair out of her eyes to look up at the clock. No. So who was that at the door? She went to the door and opened it. From behind the screen a man asked, "Can I use the phone? My car broke down on the road." Without even thinking, she let him in. He stood much taller than she and was built like a mountain. As he talked on the phone, Linda continued to sweep. She was still trying to concentrate on her sweeping and paid little attention to the man on the phone. Then she looked up. There he was directly in front of her watching her sweep. She jumped and giggled nervously, but the man just kept his gaze on her. He was so big she thought he must be at least ten feet tall. He just stood there as if nothing could bother him. She began to feel uneasy. She felt as if she was this man and he was her. As if she was the stranger stranded in an unfamiliar town, and that he was the one who belonged. She had to break the tension. It was too quiet. As if starting a race, she began sweeping again. Only this time she paid little attention to the broom. He just watched. Finally she broke the silence. "Did you get who you needed on the phone?" She continued to sweep without looking up. The man simply said yes. Then he

walked over and looked out the window. Linda felt slightly relieved that he wasn't watching her anymore, but she still felt uneasy being there alone with him. She kept on sweeping. She didn't know what else she could do. Out of the corner of her eye she watched him. All at once the man turned to her and asked, "Does this place open up on Sundays?" Linda glanced up at the clock.

"Yes, it opens at noon. Would you like a drink?" She knew it was illegal to serve before noon, but she wouldn't charge him. It would be a drink of friendliness. "Nope, I never touch the stuff," was his reply. He began to look out the window again as if waiting for someone. Linda took a deep breath and tried to make conversation. "Is someone coming to pick you up?" Without turning from the window, he answered sharply, "Nope." Linda felt the broom slide in her hands as she swept. She tried, with little success, to wipe the sweat off on her pants. She glanced up at the clock again. It was only eleven-thirty. Why wasn't it closer to noon? Again she tried to be friendly. "Do you need a ride somewhere?" And again the man just stared out the window and said "Nope." Who was this man? she thought to herself. Where did he come from and why was he there? What right did he have to just come in there like that and scare her to death? If he was going to do something to her, what was he waiting for? If not, why didn't he leave? The more Linda thought, the angrier she got. She decided to forget about him. Let him stare out the window if he wanted. She had work to do. Finally Linda finished sweeping, but where was the dustpan? She had left it in the kitchen. She went into the kitchen and reached in behind the door for it. As she came back out into the bar, she glanced over at the man. He was gone. She turned quickly to look all around her. There was no sign of him anywhere. She could feel hot sweat forming in her palms and under her arms. She had been gone only a few seconds and hadn't heard any doors close. Why had she let him out of her sight? She looked outside, but one one was around. What could she do? She glanced up at the clock. Five minutes before twelve, but where was her father to open up? Of course he was late. He was always late. Linda jumped suddenly, breathing in quickly and sharply as the silence was broken by a distant thud. She stood completely still except for her constantly searching eyes. It was silent once more, but not for long. Nearby a board creaked, and she jerked her head toward the sound. The smallest noises drew her attention for what seemed to be like hours. Finally Linda decided to open up the Hilltop herself at three minutes to twelve. Quickly she swept the pile of dirt into the dustpan, while she constantly twisted and turned her head looking around her. Then she went outside and sat on the stoop waiting for someone to come.

(Untitled)

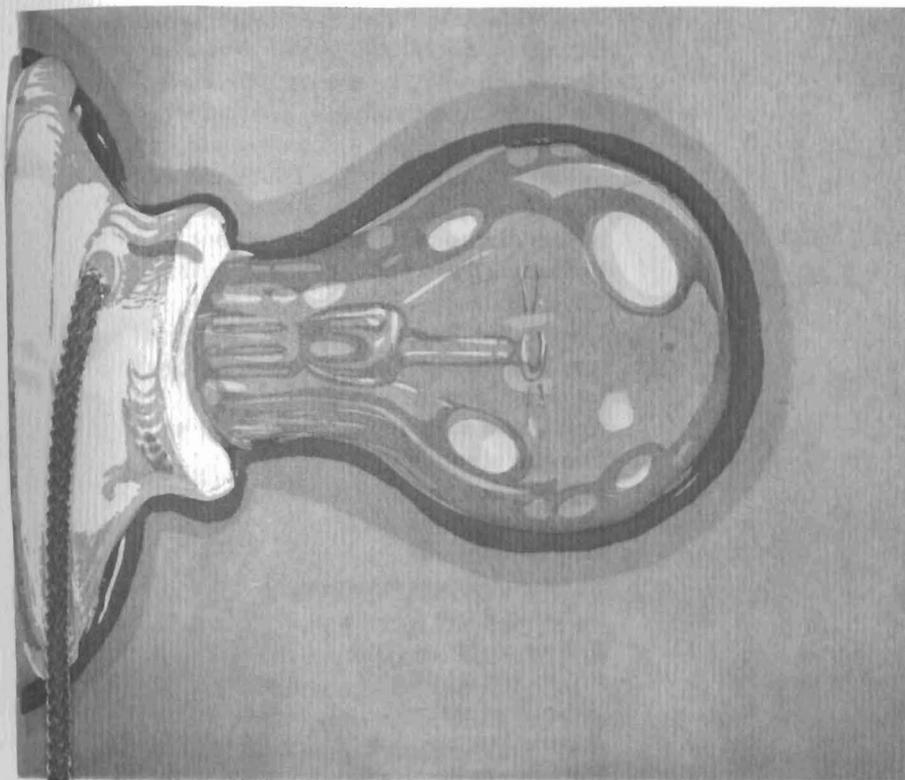
A new branch of pumping cow legs,
Stranded in a milk field.
A maggot wallows its way through,
Sour milk clung to a carton.
Pumping cow legs beat across the highway,
Radiation forms like cream on top of barrels,
Light radiates off floating hips,
Row of black macho men,
Bending to the white sissy puss.
Feminine mode standing.

Geraldine Rand

Europe

Stress pulls the operator
off his chair and sends him
running through rainy sidewalks
in Europe.
I want to stand on open eyelids
foaming at the mouth
churning butter.

Geraldine Rand



Untitled

Serigraph w/Collage

Catherine Bebout

Priest

You girls of spring
In your shorts and halters,
The Devil is breathing
Between your legs!
He cuddles inside
And tickles your wombs,
He slides out at night
To suck at your breasts!
You girls of spring
In your shorts and halters,
You laughed and brushed by me,
You kicked up a wind.
The wind was so foul
It weakened my soul,
It sickened my soul
And moved me to pray.
You girls of spring
In your shorts and halters,
I prayed and my words
Rang in my mind
Like the shoutings of someone
Staked down on a desert,
A desert as flat
And as vast as Judea!
You girls of spring
In your shorts and halters,
Once, long ago
On the sands of Judea,
Great stone phalluses
Stretched to the sky,
And the worship of Baal
Sent men sinking to Hell,
You girls of spring
In your shorts and halters!

Ken Frank

To A Dead Dog

That big black truck with its load of oil
Would not have stopped for anyone.
You froze beneath a green light.
When you heard the truck's horn
And saw its wide black wheels,
In its headlights your eyes
Never looked more human.
It is all over now.
That big black truck,
Still swollen with oil,
Kept speeding north
Past fields of snow.
The sun is hot on this cold morning.
Some men have stopped on their way to work
To scrape your blood from their shoes.

Ken Frank

Lust

I can get no rest in my stuffy room,
I have to touch another's skin.
My iron Christ on His iron cross
Can not save me from my sin.
I've rubbed His chest until it turned to rust.
My body burns with lust.
When I go outside and I see a girl,
My clothes burn off in a sudden fire.
When she turns away, I follow her.
My spine pulses like a red-hot wire.
God says I shouldn't, Satan says I must.
My body burns with lust.
Cold showers can't help me now.
The water turns to hissing steam.
I gallop naked through the park,
Children squeal, their mothers scream.
I bore into the earth's cool crust.
My body burns with lust.

Ken Frank