

Fall 1979

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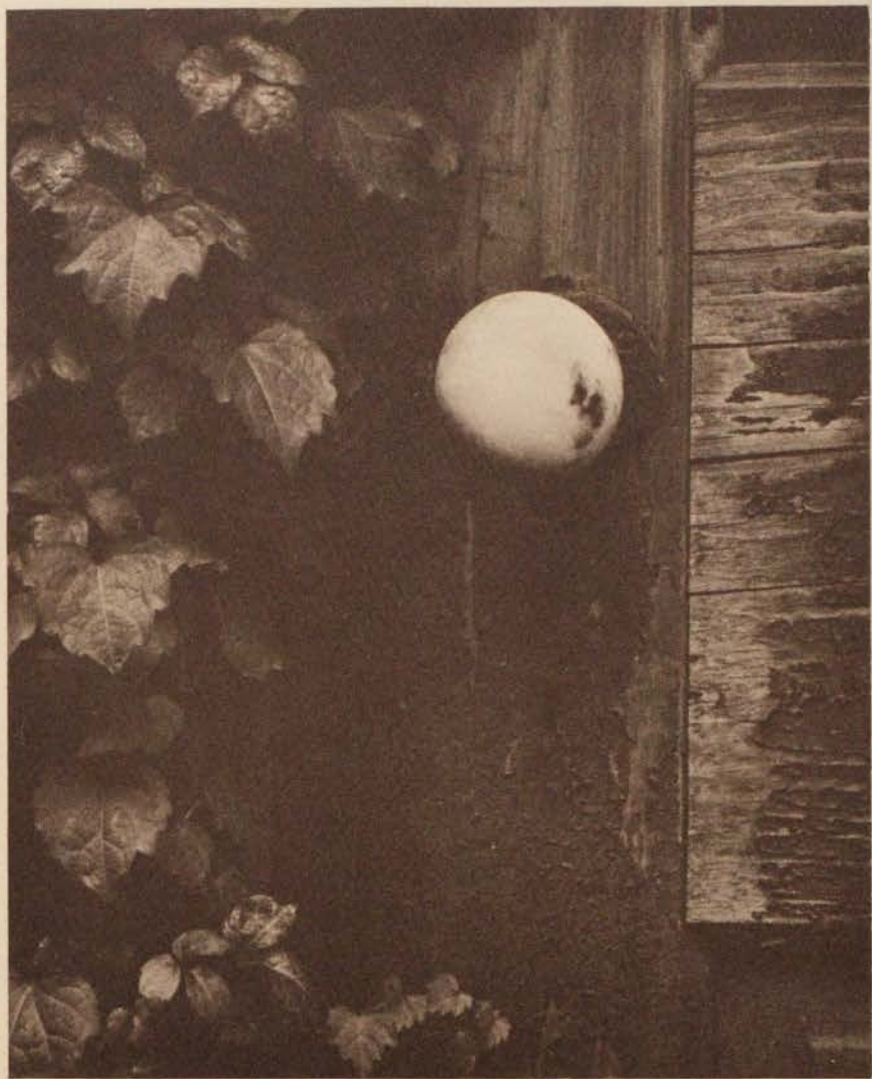
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STEPPING OUTSIDE

carroll quarterly

fall 1979

THE CARROLL QUARTERLY

FALL 1979

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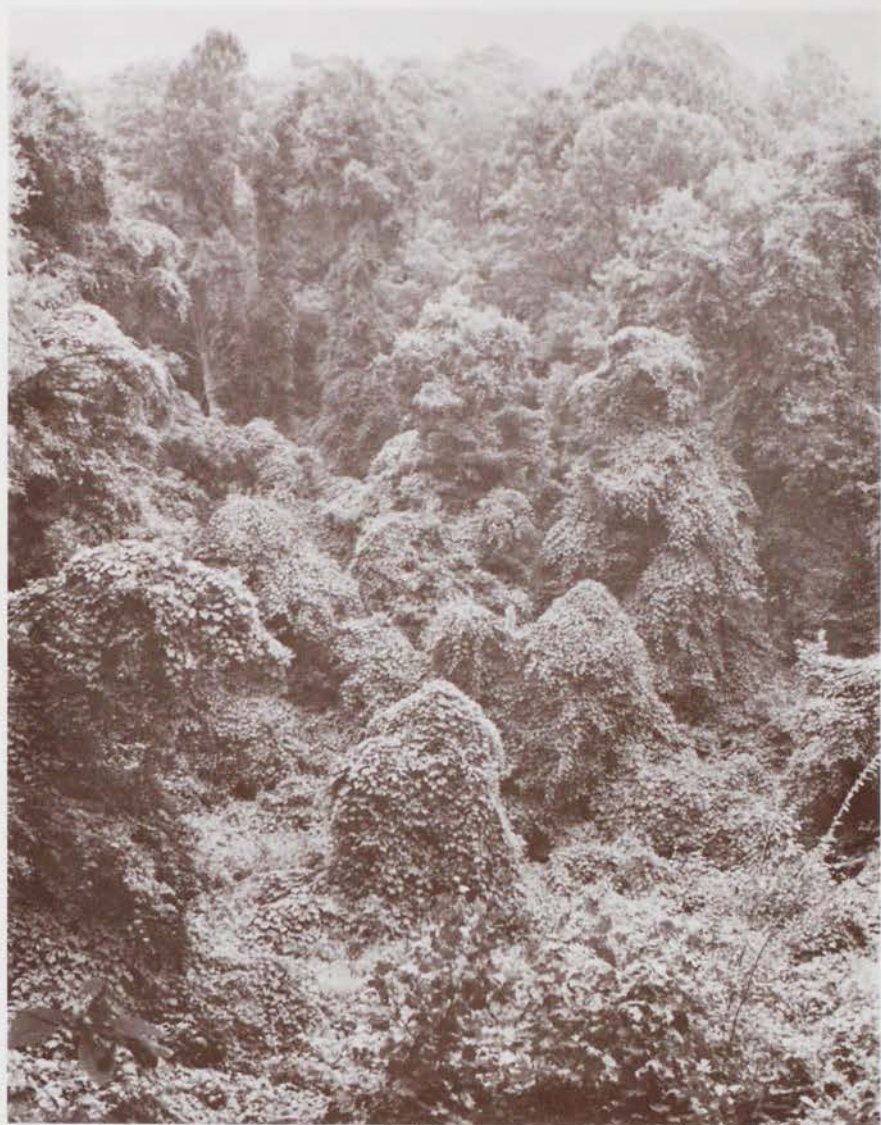
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THE POEM BIDS THE THINGS TO COME WHICH, THINGING,
BEAR WORLD.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

ON A FROST-COVERED AUTUMN MORNING

On a frost-covered autumn morning,
greeted by the crumbling leaves and dingy sky,
and after a night when dancing wind
made branches sway just out of reach,
I sensed the mystery of you
who, moving through continuous spring
leave me to the emptiness of winter.

You are the dance beyond
what motions I can comprehend,
music whose secret eludes the ear,
and a poem whose words are never mastered;
yet you remain a flame
to guide me through each night's delusions
and light my soul with hope of dancing stars.

UNGATHERED HARVEST

An ungathered harvest
tinges the air with the gentle scent
of something overripe;
fruit swelled past bursting
deflates within itself,
and seed is eaten by the sand.

Yet we find comfort in the rocks
and silent pools, in tiny streams
that claw their way downhill
then clog with leaves;
so now we draw our nurture
from the wounded mounds of earth,
as they lie heavy on our brows
and silence all our tongues.

I'D SEEK SOLITUDE IN STONES

When Moses dashed the Tablet
and blazen streams raged down to
gather in the belly of Sinai,
Raphael quelled the storm;

And I, hop brewed
in Adam, unblinkingly gaze
at the world beyond
from the tail of an age.

That draws from the groping lips
a bosom-muted cry
to warp the years.
Were I to choose,

Now the dawn of seven
and twenty turns, the world
of tribes is Ziggurat, and
the divers tongues within
are vapours, the head
ever evaporating.

And, O, of this dark abyss
Were the breathless head free!

And when the harmattan
of days has baked the throat
and skin, and sucked the heat-oppressed
head away,

Then the mighty chaos
descends, and flesh and bone
are razed. And had I a choice,
I'd cheat the worms
And seek solitude in stone.



NUDE MAMA, BLACK MAMA

Nude Mama, black Mama!
Clad in your colour that is life,
in your form that is beauty,
I have grown in your palmy shade;
the sweetness of your hands bound my eyes.
And now in the heart of summer and noon,
I discover you, promised earth from the tower
of your sun-scorched neck,
and your beauty smites me to the full of my heart
like the flash of an eagle.

Nude Mama, black Mama!
Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, dark raptures of palm wine,
mouth making lyric my mouth,
savanna of shear horizons,
quivering to the East wind's fervent caresses,
carved tom-tom, taut taooti snarling under Safohen's
fingers
your grave, contralto voice is the spiritual of the Beloved.

Nude Mama, black Mama!
Oil sweet and smooth on the athlete's flanks,
on the flanks of the princes of Ghana.
Heaven-leashed gazelle,
pearls are stars on the night of your skin.
Delight of the gods at play,
red-gold reflections on your shimmering skin.
In the shade of your hair, my anguish lightens
with the nearing suns of your eyes.

Nude Mama, black Mama!
I sing your passing beauty--
form that I fix in the eternal
before jealous destiny burns you to ashes
to nourish the roots of life.

WE ARE NOW SHADOWS

The moon has ascended between us
Between two pines
That bow to each other

Love with the moon has ascended
Has fed on our solitary stems

And we are now shadows
That cling to each other
But kiss the air only



WALPOLE ISLAND

Across the marsh and through the mist appear
The low lights of the river-dwellers.
Squat cottages of tarpaper and rusted trailers
Couch among tufts of spear grass,
As a pale moon ripples the backwash.

I can barely perceive the low murmur
Of the Indian voices: rich, laughing voices
Coming out of the night; a mere glimpse is all,
Through the vapors, revealing the bow
Of a planked boat, cast out of darkness
By the glow of a fly-and-moth specked lantern,
And two huddled figures further beyond.

Yet I know the pair: the man and wife
Who run catgut line through brown hands,
Easing it over the gunwale, intent on the water.
The flash of a match and the steady flicker of a pipe
As it catches flame, marks the lean features
Of the race and the leathery resilience
Of the trade among the reeds.

Somewhere in the marsh a gull screeches;
The freighter pushes upbound into the darkness.
From the stern I can no longer catch the voices,
A bowbend and the lights disappear:

A terrible loneliness is with me.

BLINDMAN, SWAMPER, AND SELF

Ageless, lightless, the blindman chants anthems
Beneath the flashes of alleyway neon,
Calling out to me his hopeless minglings
Of rhythmic prayer and pencil barter.
In swamp solitude I sought to escape
Blind pavement eyes--but mire and air spawn him:
The Grotesque, black-fly-weltd, in whose glare
I see my own brutal, miasmatic will.
Alone before a mirror I can trace
Lean features in the fading silver smear,
But not the shadow of moment and soil,
The inchoate, discursive heritage.
There is a burden which every man carries:
The mire and specter of his bitter soul.

HORIZON

The night once dyed in torment greyly fades,
And from its ashen cloak reveals
The peace of dawn; like azure seas
Your eyes now smile kindly towards this place,
The crease of night and day where lovers meet.

Evaporated terror stains the gilded mist
Where valiant rays spear nocturnal villains,
And you and I (my dear) embrace
Like fumbling hands in prayer
To bless this fruit of daybreak
To bless this sweet salvation.



A RINSE OF LIGHT
(for my wife)

That day at Hailey's Pond,
summer air and water
were so clear they merged
as in a collage--
fish drifted up in air,
birds flew down in water.

We stood on the shore,
too shy to speak or dive
and break the fragile spell.
Was it you, Michele,
I turned to touch,
or a rinse of light
which rose from the pond
and drenched me in pure delight?
It was dusk when we left
to join the others,
though I swear,
light still shimmered
in the cove where you swam.

Now, years later, too restless
some nights for sleep,
I wander this shadowy house
in penance for never
having loved deeply enough.
When the moon reaches our window,
I return and watch you breasting
the quilted water of sleep.
Though you do not speak,
your mouth shapes
the sound of rising light,
incandescent as summer air,
more vivid than memory.

POEM ON MARRIAGE
(for Michele)

We were 33 that year, our child 11.
Once, in the symmetry of such numbers,
we could calculate something mystical:
2 lovers embracing in a lighted field,
their souls chanting heaven's song.

Light faded, fields turned brown
with knowing. Substitution crowded us,
division increased faster than lies.
New mathematics we called it--
everything adds up, or nothing,
like the year I missed 5 months
of school and still passed to grade 7:
I was not ready.

The tongue is an awkward muscle.
It roots in the heart and voice box,
imperfect, inexact beginnings,
but enough sometimes to mean.
Now, in another year, and carrying,
we are neither too young nor too old
for figures of speech like love and you.

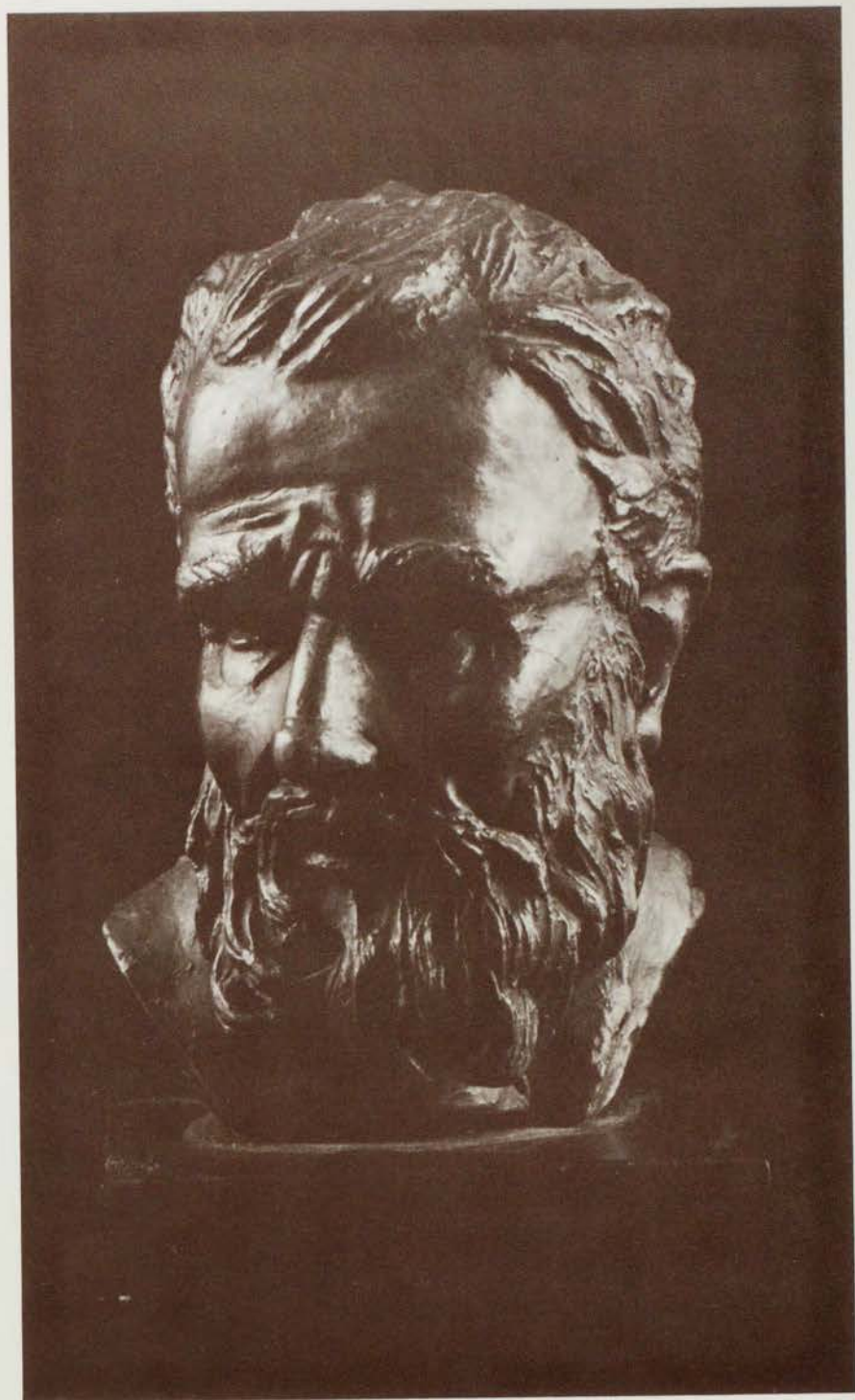
GARY'S LITTLE SCULPTURES

How you realize feelings
outside psyche's norms
in beautiful forms,
how they float and emerge
out of human depth into
your knowing hands,
how unutterable time-thwarted
truth you merge into
heat-hardened stones,
how out of the gravid piece
snugged in my hand,
a soul unfolds upward
to reach its original state;
how from metaphors of animals
emanate animals, all kinds,
all serene, and human faces
born in continuous motion
from gaped mouth, worn still
from the steep ascent unto
lightsome height; how you
reaffirm our eternal ties.

FAITHFUL UNTIL NIGHT

Friend to my heart
as Ruth
who came, unclaimed,
from another country
into untended folds of my fields
and asked the cover
of my cloak,
in how many fading hours,
vortexed glooms
have I sought
the simple nurture
of your gaze.

Be with me
in the fields of light
which your person, only,
signifies
and sows,
and I will be,
as Boaz,
faithful until night



DRIVING WET

Travelling in at high speeds,
Darkening, gathering; far over the fields,
Away from the town--a mounting tempest.
You can hear the harbinger swift wind inside,
It draws you to the other side of your walls,
Exposed, open to its strength.
The arid ground loses its long-parched surface
To twirls of dust, especially on worn-out paths.
Trees vivid with leaves are torn when they resist, but
Fleeing winds fight through; seeking cleared ways,
They move on to warn others.
Beaten after tedious, exhaustive battle,
Softened leaves curl and turn away from their branches.
Sullen air halts, sultry without its breezes;
A tint of yellow appears awaiting the incumbent darkness.
Covered sun is finished with this day, but will observe
Before it gives way to the night.
The theater is dark; all the power is out,
Outside, up in the air, within the clouds,
Where the explosion of thunder answers the heat
And the quick grins of electricity.
Wet, a slow drizzle into large drops; everything, wet.
Hard rains are short; the stolid storm adds hail and
Strikes those who remained unprotected and unheeding.
Highly probable, but nonetheless unpredictable.
Trackless and unlimited; slightly more intense and
It could have mustered into its full stroke of destruction.
Rains return soil and moisture to the ground; the
Flash burns of fallen trees feel the penetrating ointment.
Rains return motion and coolness to the air; but,
They take the daylight,
And leave darkness and night as a consort.

MY FATHER'S HANDS

Slivered fat-fingered hands,
grinder's hands that found
their way through the depression
picking coal out of the tracks
and felt their way through
the war trying to pick bombers
out of the blue,
zig-zagging somewhere in the Pacific.

Old navy hands that taught me the
fastball grip and how to put your dukes up
and where the fingers listen on the line
for fish. Hands that strapped my ass that
day I crossed the fast red brick street,
a three-year-old Magellan. Hands
that now quickly lose feeling in the cold.

His hands lie dark on his chest in the next room.
He goes to bed early now, and more and more--
there in the yard, under the car, with the heavy
snow--he looks for my hands; the way--
that first ride on big sister's bike, that first
shivering dive in the nine-feet, those green
hot seasons on the mound--the way I always
looked for him. Now, with every clumsy
touch, I am without
anchor.

THE BOAT PEOPLE

Nightmares stalk our dream of peace
Until the dream perishes on haunted seas
And dreamsong of the human family cease.

Flung upon the red sea's frothing tide,
Human pyres scream fire to the sky;
Flames mark watery graves of those who died

Upon wide seas of our orphaned souls.
Dream embryo staggers in dark coils
Of waves spewing catafalques upon shoals

Of parched and ceremented shores
And the world's broken moorings,
Where seized in the flaming horror

A child charred in strafe of fiery night
And his family's dying burns in wailing light
Of his dream consumed in riotous dying.

And we silent gaze
Transfixed, numbly feel the blaze
Take our dream of fruited shores laved

In the Gennesareth of a commingling world
And sear its splintered bone, skull and ashes hurled
Upon the wake of tided holocaust unfurled.

SONG AGAINST THE SEA

Like stones along the shoreline, we grow dumb:
The world's noise breaks upon our edges;
Its melody ebbs away.
Our tongues are quelled in their fossil shells
Which deaden our ears to the musical swellings.
Silent shells pitch upon pathways to the sea.

Poetry is Word amid the soundless din
Raising lime to pitch of eloquence,
Teeming shells obscured upon the shore.
It lifts its conch above the breaking crests,
Unfurls cornucopic song beyond the furious sea,
Beyond silent surrender.

Strands of song swelling in blended chorus
Rise, hailing glories of coral,
Rainbow coronas of whorling pearl,
Melodious deeps of the sounding coils,
In symphony of hosannas,
As the winding strains spire skyward in annunciation,
As orisons retrieve echoes of drowning voices
In our battle against final tumult of the sea
And silence.



A GRANDFATHER

From my uncle I learned
that the grandfather I never saw
disapproved of me he never knew
born Catholic and out of reach
of his failing hands.
He was the old Swede, a serf
fleeing armies who changed his name
became a Swedish Baptist preacher
strict as starch and full
of disapproval. Wrestling
with a hard city and a mission
to the dull poor Swedish
he grew frantically spiritual.
Nothing godless, no purely pleasure
came into their flat. So my uncle
told me in the cafeteria
beneath his dentist's chair
where I sat, a small boy aching
behind a glass of milk.
"Papa's favorite thing," my uncle
said, "was trains. He knew
whatever whistle passed
our kitchen, how many coaches
and for where." One day
the small boy named my uncle
said, "Papa, if we are to love
nothing godless, why do you
count the trains?" From that day on,
my uncle told me, trains
were never mentioned in that
house again. His eyes held mine
inside the steamy cafeteria.
Everything was banging
but his eyes; I remember them
watery blue and holding me
teaching who touches me
the old Swede damning us
even dead.

excerpts from SEASONS

*** 3

in those nights
your back was always
against my chest

you took it away
and left a dark
i clung to
out of oh so many reasons

*** 13

stay inside the poem
which is growing
she said
it's your frontier

*** 16

the facts are simple
i grow
the way a tree does

seeming not to

CONTRIBUTORS

VINCENT CASAREGOLA has a Masters in English from Carroll, and is currently teaching English at Benedictine High School in Cleveland.

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DAVID SCHULTZ is a skinny little boy from Cleveland who is amazed at finding himself published in the Quarterly after all these years of throwing up a poetic chin at the local literati and hating the skinny little magazine for always rejecting-rejecting-rejecting his lowbrow stuff.

KIP ZEGERS is in New York typing away at his novel. He has published a collection of his poetry under the title Backyard, and was distinguished as a Beaudry Award winner when he was a Carroll undergrad.



