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cover photograph by Michael LaGuardia

SITTING POEM

Unless
we become
the Presences of Love,
brother
and sister,
to each other,
we will
disappear

James Magner, Jr.

carroll quarterly

1987

The CARROLL QUARTERLY is a literary magazine produced by an undergraduate staff. Submissions should follow conventional manuscript form, and include a short biographical note. Address all correspondence to:

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THIS IS POETRY

all you cloistered types
get off your bar-stool pulpits
you with the cigar stop kidding yourself
tilt that pinball game and kill the tv
sit down and listen up
This is poetry

hey mr partial post lover
rip up that smelly letter
trash your versicons those greenish
notebooks you used to write your rimes in
the girls out there dont give a damn
im telling you — This is poetry

forget the plastic card shopping-mall queen
better start slimming for judgment day
theyll ask what youve been reading
and fashion magazines wont cut it lady
time for the potato sacks and sandals
this is the coming vogue . . . This is poetry

hey you death-shift zombies it's resurrection time
there aint no future worth saving for
and weve got lots of room on the stairwell
it might not seem anything new
but im telling you two weeks is way overdue
forget those skimpy paychecks . . . This is poetry

you college morons stop wasting your lives
what they got aint worth listening to
mankind has no room for humanity
and career opportunity no rewards
youve run enough circles theres places to be
so get out your notebooks . . . This is poetry

all you stay-at-homers and straight thinkers
better bolt the doors and get under those pillows
we'll storm the town and paint it anapestic
because theres something beyond the front yard
and we're bringing it for you to see
the dark age is over — now This is poetry

silvered curls
leap
downward,
you crash, ever-rolled
onto me, and my eye
static as a Renaissance
blue sky (all the truth
of roundness) blinks/winks to shut
away
with a click —
that image
(Opens)
the sting
of salted rain.

Jeanne Poduska



THE TIME GAME

So the ex old-lady has geraniums
on her doorstep. So what.
I have several ex old-ladies

in my head-house, haunting me.
Some, like flowers, grow;
some, like flowers, die.

What taunts is the acrid
lace of Queen Anne,
which is the death-shroud

of summer. A weed
I feel in the green
face of the past —

as the blizzard of my life
blows hard in my brain,
and I take in my pots.

Alfred Cahen

YOUR FIRST TWO-WHEELER
(TO JEAN)

You inherited it from your older brother
 (it was weeks too late
 before anyone thought to object
 to you riding a boy's bike).
You bought a new inner tube
 and patched an old one
 and scraped
 and painted
 and learned to put the chain back on,
 the slots neatly catching
 and releasing the teeth of the sprocket
 with a gentle clicking.
Later, you washed the grime from your hands
 without complaint.

Now, your first two-wheeler is discarded
 in favor of first three- then five- then ten-speeds
 and finally a succession of identical automobiles.
Somewhere,
 tireless again,
 yet weary with time and rust and erosion,
it decays in quiet obscurity,
and it's okay,
 remembering the moment
 the two of you first found your balance
 and were free.

James R. Pipik

OLD STORY

I ride a limping train back there
and again noone else gets off.
There, where I know a city stood,
just two pale buildings rise
above the rot of brick collapsed
on cottony lumber, clotted dust.
There is a tunnel of old doors and plywood
leading from the station to what's left
of the heart of things. Arteries
that once were flooded
now drip little oxygen.
The air is fatty, flatulent
with what decays: a city's life.

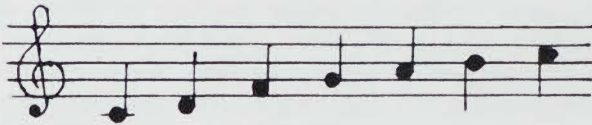
It made promises to me.
The shining downtown stores, the old hotels,
the universities, the hopes, the feet
that filled the stony avenues,
those didn't wait for me.
I know all this, but I don't remember
until I arrive. I know
that in the square no buses wait
to spin their net of routes
along the complicated streets.
Beneath it wait no long haul trains
that only paused at that pulsing place,
yet stitched it to every other.
On the benches sit no mill worn men,
no secretaries with outfits to compare
as the night comes on. And I
keep returning to be disappointed.
Life here has long ago moved on,
leaving me with my refusals
in a place that isn't there.



OCTAVE

by

Laura M. Simon



“My wife and I have never written each other love letters,” I said quickly, glancing at Dr. Michael Schiller who was glancing quickly at his watch. I wanted to cajole time into motion for him. I empathized with the man, the father, and my well-compensated, captive counselor exhausted from a night long vigil for Michael Jr., a moody, restless adolescent on the verge of Schillerworld destruction by chemical warfare. He had been my piano student ten years ago when Michael Sr. decided that the seven-year-old would be a child prodigy; I remember with shame and disappointment my impatience with the little boy who wanted to know why the “music alpabit” stopped at the letter G even though there were eighty-eight keys on the piano. I wondered now myself for a few penitential seconds until a fierce and sudden anger broke through: thirty minutes down and thirty to go, Michael Sr., and at forty dollars for thirty minutes, you owe me at least seventy dollars worth of psychoanalysis in the next twenty-nine minutes and thirty-two seconds.

"You and Ginny have never written each other love letters?" he questioned parrot-like, smiling his reassuring, professional smile.

I felt tension bred by mutual dissatisfaction separate us. "I wish I could be the case that established your career and made you a Freud, a Skinner, a Jung, Mike. Wife-beater, bigamist, child abuser, fiend. I won't. I'm not. I'm label-less. All I'm looking for is some historical, emotional data." I looked out the window at cloudiness and fogginess and remembered that I was walking home.

"Historical, emotional data," he repeated, slightly personalizing his smile. "That's all?" At that moment I believed that I could wheedle paralyzed moments into dance.

"Be the lexicographer of human experience, Mike. Tell me what I am."

He forgave me; I basked in the warmth of absolution. "By now you know most of the answers, Ed. You know all of the questions. You could easily personify a psychiatric dictionary without much effort at all."

"Personification could be fun, like charades, if we could remember that we were playing. When Ginny was nineteen she tried to kill herself because her vocal coach told her she could never be the personification of Mozart's Magic Flute."

"And you saved her life, Ed. Twice."

"It was nothing. She let me. Twice. She'd let you do it, too."

He smiled but the distance between us grew; he was lost somewhere in seventeen years of fatherhood, trapped in a day that could not move backward, would not move forward. Maybe he was picking Michael Jr. up from piano lessons, listening to him tell me how lucky I was because I could spell my first name with music letters, paying me with my own money. I looked back out the window at the swollen clouds, the premenstrual sky. "I should be going now, Mike. It looks like rain and I'm walking home."

He looked outside. He understood. He appreciated. And at that moment I could have transcended or destroyed professional boundaries by inviting him out to lunch tomorrow or dinner next week, but I hesitated, nodded and smiled, and left the office his client.

Outside the air was thick and heavy; I could feel its frustrated saturation, the utter impotence of humidity. Back at home Ginny would be giving her last voice lesson of the day, preparing herself for a long night ahead with me. Maybe she found my diary today. I left it out conspicuously on the kitchen table this morning, lightly dusted with talcum powder. If she read the contents of the diary, I'm sure I wouldn't need any sign of handling at all. Still, I needed to know how close she came to it, if she touched it.

"Dear God," I prayed as I approached the house, "even if she hasn't found the diary yet, it's still not too late. We still have at least forty-five

seconds left.”

I entered the house through the kitchen. The diary was gone; no sign of Ginny. Time forged ahead for me. I'll call Michael; he can save her: “How many did you swallow? What color were they?” smiling compassionately all the while. But just as I was about to suggest a quick and painless divorce as she lay in a hospital bed, wearing her blue bed jacket monogrammed with a G, looking much, much better today than she did yesterday, she landed.

“Edward!”

She was alive; she was speaking in that voice, a cross between a shrieking whisper and a whispering shriek, flute-like when she's calm. It's been at least five years since she's known calmness, however, and my unconscious response has become immunity by psychic deafness. I'm convinced that she's deafened herself, too.

“I want to talk to you, Edward.” Her eyes flamed with a dispassionate fury so cold that my thin-skinned defenses clung to it; when I tried to escape, they were torn right off of me.

“So be it, Virginia, whatever it is.” And I recoiled.

“You're going to thank me. I can't imagine what might have happened to your future at the conservatory if this had gone public.”

“Public?” I questioned in a Schilleresque tone, imagining my diary serialized in a tabloid, trying to remember what was in it that would make it salable.

Her small body shook excitedly. “Maggie Corrigan, one of my sopranos, will be singing one of the arias you composed for St. Anthony's dedication next month.” I tried in vain to remember not only Maggie Corrigan but also my contribution to the dedication's oratorio. “Well, she brought this aria to her lesson this morning and I told her we could begin to work on her performance only after the composer finished writing it.”

She threw a critically mutilated copy of the aria on the table. “You could have avoided this humiliation with the singer if you had only let me see, or God forbid *hear* this before you submitted it.”

I picked up my barely recognizable work; underneath all of the inky scars and scabs my wounded child cried out to me.

“What have you done with this, Ginny? What?” I shouted knowing no questions or answers, only words upon words. “All this song needs is a nurturing singer to wrap her voice around it and bring it to life, to breathe her human spirit into it.”

She paced the length of the small room twice and signed. “Do I have to explain harmonics to you?” The whisper overpowered the shriek, indicating sincerity. “Why about synchrony? Accept it Edward: you have three days to make an aria out of this travesty. Maggie needs time to practice to her satisfaction.”

"I've written to my satisfaction."

"A technical disaster."

"A musical adventure."

"A travesty."

I paid Michael far too much money today to play this game. I remembered my dusty diary.

"Where's the book I left on the table this morning?"

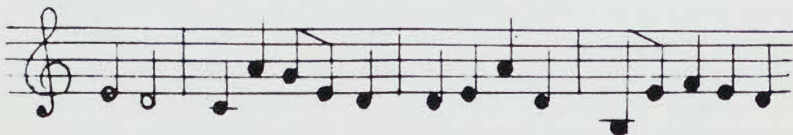
She was unphased; I was disappointedly glad. "Everything you left strewn all over the house is on your desk in the study. I also returned all of your overdue library books this afternoon. You owe me \$7.70."

Visions of blushing librarians voraciously reading my uneventful life ran through my mind. And I let her talk because I couldn't hear. I imagined them hiding it for years, publishing it posthumously, of course. And I knew that after an hour or two she would decide that she needed a nap. They'd add something compelling to it and become upwardly mobile. And she did.

I returned to my study to find my barely-smudged, powdery book waiting for me. I tossed the aria on the desk next to it and let them both stare at me in forsaken disbelief.

I spent the rest of the evening re-reading past diary entries and making new ones. I thought about poison and I thought about packing. I thought about Michael, a man who should have been my brother; I thought about talking to him, listening to him, buying his friendship. In ten years, neither one of us had ever liberated that friendship. I thought about Michael Jr. lying in his bed tonight, punished into sobriety, maybe wondering how he, too could buy his father for an hour. I wanted to give his father to him tonight as much as I used to want Ginny to give herself to me for an hour, freely for just one hour.

I was sweating; at least I thought it was sweat, salty and moist on my face. Something in me was being preserved, albeit while thawing, acting almost in spite of Ginny's preference for deep-freeze. I looked at the clock: 11:47 p.m. I thought of taking a midnight walk but I heard thunder. I looked at some blank music sheets with their hungry, naked bars and spaces and was inspired to compose truly primitive, diatonic musical poetry.



I stapled my masterpiece, my penance, my pride to Ginny's lesson plan for the next morning and walked out umbrellaless into midnight.



IT'S ABOUT ALFIE

If you ask, "What is it?",
I shall dare to say: "Merely look, Dear."

A white-sand beach cluttered
with dixie cups, shovel-shards,
remnant wings of gulls.
Like oysters,
patient human forms, greased,
nuzzle in sand-beds —
squinting eyes,
knobbed knees and toes,
arms that lie about transistor radios,
epicenters of insidious commotion.

The child, Lazarus, shouts "Hey!", points,
and pins all eyes upon the shining pate,
the half-gone peach.
Who could know him from the other crazies
unless he stood thus apart
waving in disarray
to sleek dolphins swimming seaward?

What fool was this?
What Polonius garbed in gabardine, sandals,
holding a wooden spoon,
angora cat leashed
at ankles downed with sooty spume?

He is old. He is goddamned old.

As he raises arching fist
to sun and swimming fish,
a crowd forms he does not see:
men with Zen bellies;
women of pocked thighs
daring him to ease the
boredom from their eyes;
ragged infants scuttling sideways in the sand.

Who salutes a dolphin with a kiss
is nucleus for all of us.

From the growing mob, a snicker.
He relaxes, takes on grace.
And dives.

If you ask: "Would it be worth while
to save the cat?", I shall only smile.
"Let us go, Love. You missed the point.
Let us go in nonchalance."

Seaward, the gay dolphins weave and dance.

David M. LaGuardia



I am that fool —
who would choose not to love you.
Amidst fanfare and tranquility,
there is something more.
But —
stopping here.
No steep houses would be built.
Only safe havens.
With no excitements for
you and me.

Paul Debolt

If prayer is what goes up,
meditation comes down.

A mute tree prays
for nine months,
then delivers
leaf speech.

In a cold
time it
rests

.

Alfred Cahen

And language
mattered not
as we walked
along
strange rivers
on a wet
foreign night,
me — dancing
in a drab
army slicker
while your
purple-
knitted sweater
lighted
our way.

Jeanne Poduska

GESU

I enter under sunset's stain,
and kneel. Regurgitate my pain.

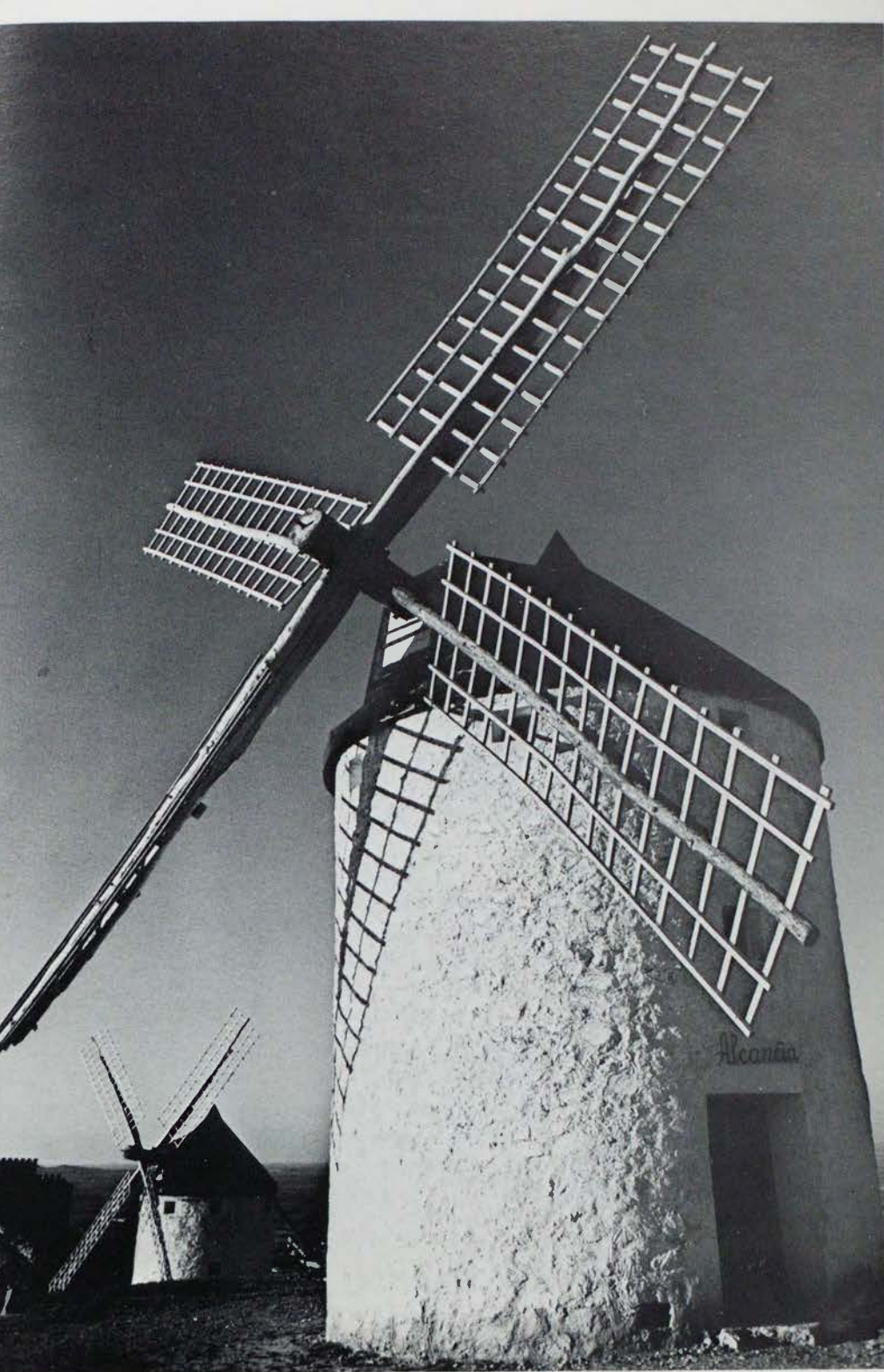
I think (a sin): today's the whore
to what will come and was before.

There, boxed, lies tempting eucharist,
blood and body I never kissed.

Christ, a pendulum on his cross,
comes to rest and cuts my loss.

Nails me. I leave the chapel high,
red light of Jesus in my eye.

Alfred Cahen



AT THE ANNUAL STAFF DINNER-DANCE

Saturdays, alone in the house,
We wrapped our feet and ankles with hair ribbons,
Put on our Easter slippers and danced the *Nutcracker*.
The instruments choreographed: "Sugar Plum Fairies"
Limping pizzicato strings
And Tinkerbelle celesta,
The "Arabian's" moody woodwinds,
The waltzing strings whirling us
From the floor to the couch to the stairs.
We'd never seen a ballet;
Our *prima* was Elaine Czerwinski,
Who was nine and wore sequins and rouge:
She took tap.

At twelve we loved "Sweet Lelani, Heavenly
Fla-how-wer," strapless bras
Of fabric scraps, and crepe-peper leis.
We'd sit on the windowsill to cool off
And look at the moon on the album cover.

I was the "quick" one, so I got Czerny and Hanon.
They gave up on my sister with violin,
So she got the shiny black shoes with the grosgrain ties,
And I grew sick of her clickety-clack, sa-lap ball-change.
She stopped stuttering too.

Twenty, I signed with Arthur Murray
And rented Mr. Esposito, who led
From assertive hips, three hours a week.
His palms were always dry. Between lessons
I practiced the rumba, walking as if
I were climbing stairs.

When David was three I studied the girls
On *American Bandstand*: how their hips
And shoulders moved, where they put
Their feet. Since he and I played hide-and-seek
Together, he could watch me.

Last year he took a course in Jazz,
Learned how black music has greyed,
Tells me why you'd never dance
To Billie Holiday.

These days, alone on the freeway, I switch
From classical to rock, watch
Myself in the mirror: there I'd do this,
Make that move, yeah! But now, though I'm keeping

Time with my foot, I couldn't really — oh
Please don't be gallant — Thank you, no, I
Don't dance.

Sally Joranko

SACRARIUM

To what outreach of land or space or time
can I escape the memory of your grace?
How far the place of worship at your shrine
extends to bring me close to be encased.
An echo of your voice, an offered sign,
Philosophy that ends in nothingness.
No discourse can prevail upon my mind,
a waived happiness — a move at chess.
No servant of your palace will I be,
Obeisance no, nor curry favor I —
never to live by rules you set for me.
No fortune told, but this I prophesy:
An endless riddle leaves me but a rhyme,
by fate more bound am I than by design.

Helen Barna



THE RED BALLOON

Red bud shot with red flame,
Bursts into crimson flower,
Beckons us
To share its life.

We unfold our fear, break
To pack its woven pod
Like Moses, bound in a basket of faith,
Tossed on capricious currents,
Running with the wind.

We caress rounds of tree crowns,
Salute people in land patches,
Boxed limits of earth,
Scan the curved horizon
And setting sun.

We skim the water of inland lake,
Are whisked up again, laughing,
By spirit's breath
In towers of silent air.

We descend to the gold of new sweet hay.
Clutched by earth's fat fingers,
Our blossom collapsed,
We are five seeds blown, inspired
To begin a new life.

Mary K. Sweeny

RITUAL OF THE GREEN

(For Stanley Kunitz)

I can see you now
in the green labyrinth of your years,
become, again, the ancient child of earth.
For to there, beneath the sea of voices,
communing eyes and tongues,
of all your yesterdays
is where your heart has cried to be
— even through evening and unfolding love
of words with sons at table,
even through blood-filled diaphany,
resonance of audience and students,
communicants with your sacred orchestration,
it all has moved
as a river of your heart's flow,
to where you are now
with your coiled and braided friends of Eden
and the culminating Green
of your sacrament of Life,
beneath the stars,
become one, now, with the sun
and the spirit of the gentle dead
that are always ours
in dying into heart
beyond the mind
— one song, now, one triumph, one rest
in green lips, now, lispings light
— O Resolution
of all dissonance and the dark,
the miracle and communion,
the bright and single life, now,
of son become the father
and of the farthest, most intimate
regions of the heart
in the deft, most gentle, touch
of fingers to the innocent and staring earth.

James Magner, Jr.

Now there is no sunset, red
like an orange, violent as
a rose
over the Pincio:
the children play
no games in the park.
Movement is known
(and never more at
this time) by that
lying, comfortable
spiral of steam
(what is that woman in two skirts
and a brown cardigan cooking for lunch
by the bench?).
The mustachioed
men on matched greys
imagine
their short legs lengthened as they ride
over her.
The laughter of youth
returns to the skies.

Jeanne Poduska



HOME IN THE COUNTRY

by

James R. Pipik

The roof dropped a sharp clean line of shadow across the porch. The two men sat with their chests and faces in darkness, their arms and legs stretched out, silvered and bleached, into the moonlight. They drank in short wincing sips the first of the fall's vintage of cider, already a day or two hardened toward vinegar.

"What was she doing there?" Milton asked.

"I don't really know," Simon answered, rubbing his stubbled chin with his palm. "Some folks say she went up to cast her coin into the well, like the old legend says."

"I don't think I know that one yet."

"Well, it's more an old wives' tale than anything else. Superstition and gossip, you know the kind of thing you run into out here. The story goes — no one really believes it nowadays, of course — but the story goes that a girl goes up there night of the full moon — harvest moon, some say, but I don't know all the particulars — well, she goes up and casts her coin, any coin, into the moon's reflection — when the moon is above the well, you understand — and then she's supposed to see her future husband's face in the well. Lot of hogwash, of course, but I suppose there's some still believe it."

"I see," Milton said, thinking, *Eve of St. Agnes sans fruit*.

"No one really knows why she went. Lots of talk. Some say she went up to meet a secret lover or to reminisce about some lover she used to meet there or she went on a dare or something like that. Like as not she was taking a walk on a fall evening, looking at the moon. You know: girls."

"Do you know her?"

"Might. Don't know for sure. Never found out her name. Don't print that in the paper, thank the Lord. Bad enough, what she's been through without the whole county knowing. Of course, lots of folks know who she is. My wife does, or least says she does. But I told her I didn't want to hear none of it, not one darn word. Bad enough, that's what I say, without her name getting dragged into it."

"Yes. Yes, I agree. Bad enough."

"That such a thing could happen here," Simon said, drinking the last of his cider, grimacing. "And twice."

After a moment, Milton spoke. "That's why I left the city, really. It was getting so I was afraid to go out nights, let alone Jane or the girls. So we moved out here. Jane knew I was afraid. As a matter of fact, I was verging on paranoia: keeping lights on all hours, double-locking doors, installing glass block. That may have been the last straw, the glass block. All those twisted distorted shapes writhing outside the windows. Jane must have known how near the brink I was.

"She was never afraid. Maybe she had to ignore it, put even the possibility out of her mind, just to be functional. Maybe she's just braver than I am. And kinder, too. One night last winter she came to me — she came to me — and said, 'Milt, what about my folks' old place?' And here we are.

"It means an hour ride to work instead of twenty minutes — closer to an hour and a half, but don't tell Janie — but it's worth it, feeling safe again. And now this."

"Old news," said Simon. "You would've heard sure, had you asked."

"Yes. I never thought to ask. It hardly seemed likely."

"That such a thing could happen here," Simon said, his large close-cropped head shaking ponderously. "And twice."

• • •

The ground leveled off and trees thinned out and Milton came to the edge of a clearing. The dusty dry grass was washed white by the full moon. In the middle of the clearing stood a single tree, its moonlight-silver leaves clinging to the lower branches, its top completely shorn, like the head of a balding man, his hairs dropping one by one into the autumn wind. Beneath this withered countenance sat the well, the sole remnant of the long-departed Mennonites who had dug it, set and mortared its stones in careful order, and then abandoned it and their settlement for reasons now forgotten. They left behind them the unyielding soil, the local prejudices, and the well. Now over one hundred years old, delapidated by decades of weather and neglect, it still stood as if held

together by the ancient convictions of its makers or the tales its new neighbors told of it.

Milton entered the clearing cautiously. This is where it had happened last fall on the night of the full moon, one year ago. The wind died and all was still. A leaf dropped from the great old tree and fell gently into the well.

Something moved in the trees behind him, and, turning, Milton just glimpsed the dark shape hurtling toward him from the shadows before it drove into him, pounding him to the ground. The two grappled, struggling in one another's arms, rolling in the dust, and Milton felt a desperate animal breath hot against his cheek as he tried to free himself from the dark embrace. Something hard drove into Milton's jaw, snapping his head back, ripping into his lip, and for a moment it all went black, and then he could taste his own blood in his mouth. Spread open beneath the weight of the assault, Milton lay stunned and unstruggling, a heavy knee against his chest holding him immobile as the shadow pulled itself erect, eclipsing the moon, a rigid arm thrusting down at him. Only then did he see the gun.

He felt his broken lips contorting silently, trying to form some plea or prayer, gaping unresisting into the darkness looming above him, harsh and rigid against the distant silver arc of the moon, and the ground itself collapsed beneath the weight of the darkness dropping onto and into him.

“What happened?” Milton asked, sitting with his back against the wall of the well.

“You passed out,” said the man kneeling beside him, his broad square face and thin white hair dappled with patches of moonlight dropping between the branches of the old tree.

“Bryan?” Milton asked. “Bryan Madison? What are you doing here? God, my head hurts.” He fingered his lip gingerly. “I’m bleeding.”

“Does it hurt much?” Madison asked.

“Look,” Milton said, holding out his arms and examining himself. “I’m all dirty.” And as if this were somehow the single fact that made the whole attack unbearable, he dropped his head between his knees and began to sob in great heaves, wrapping himself in his arms and shaking. “Oh God,” he said to himself over and over. “Oh God the dirt . . .”

Madison reached out a hand. “I’m sorry, Milton, I —”

“Don’t touch me!” Milton said, suddenly reeling sideways away from Madison in a flurry of scrambling arms and legs. “Just stay away!” He remained crouched a few yards from Madison, staring with wild eyes. He wiped the tears from his cheeks with his dirty sleeve, smearing dirt and blood across his face like war paint. He reached up to the rim of the well and pulled himself to his feet.

Madison said, “Here, let me give —”

“Stay away!”

"Look, I didn't know it was you."

"Who the hell did you think it was?" Milton said, braced against the cool stone of the wall with both hands, leaning out over the well. "Did you think it was some defenseless girl —" He stopped short.

"Maybe you ought —"

"You thought I was *him*, didn't you?" Milton's voice caught an echo deep in the well.

Madison moved a few steps away from the well into the full moonlight, his head down, his back to Milton.

"That's why you're here," Milton said almost to himself. "That's why you have that gun. You're waiting for him. That explains it all." Milton trailed off into silence, still in the shadow of the tree, still bracing himself on the wall, still leaning out over the well, the cool breath of subterranean water lifting up into his face, stinging his lip.

"Wait," Milton said. "Just wait. Why do you think he'll be back? Is it a pattern? The criminal returning to the scene of the crime every fall on the night of the full moon, is that it?"

"It's none of your damn business."

"Like hell," Milton said, his voice rising shrill. "You attack me, point a gun in my face, smear me in the mud — God you might have killed me, and you say it's none of my business? What the hell is it to you? A story for your bloody newspaper? Or you want to play the hero, is that it? Well? Is it?"

Madison did not answer.

"Is it? Madison?"

Bryan Madison stood monolithic, like a druid stone in the moonlight, his shadow running down his back like the blood of sacrifice to pool, dark and turgid, on the ground beneath him.

• • •

The sunlight shining between the venetian blinds painted broad light and dark stripes across Bryan Madison's white shirt. He stood facing the window. Milton sat in front of the office desk staring down at his hands, thinking that they hadn't moved at all, not really, since last night.

Madison sighed and said, "Okay." He turned and sat down behind the desk. He looked at Milton a moment, the shadows falling on his face in sharp parallel lines, and then looked again toward the window, the chair groaning under his shifting weight.

"Okay, here it is," he said. "I've never told this to anyone else. I don't want to tell you, but I will. I don't know, maybe I just feel bad for hitting you. Maybe it'll feel good to tell somebody. Maybe I think you need to hear it. It doesn't matter. I can tell you, but the words won't work. They never go the way you intend. They turn astray and miss the mark. Words are usually a mistake, and they're probably a mistake now, but I'm going to tell you. It won't be my first mistake.

"It starts two years ago. Two years ago this fall a girl was raped up by the old Quaker well. You heard about it. Just a kid, fifteen years old. The paper ran the story. Our public duty, I was the editor, we ran the story. It was a hell of a shock for everybody. We held town meetings, ran editorials, gave lectures at the high schools, everything. It hit us all hard. Out here you get to feeling . . . protected, safe, like nothing can touch you.

"So, when all this happened we rallied together. We worked to insure the safety of our community. Within days we set up a network that made sure that no woman or girl in the area went anywhere without a man with her. I bet that whole winter there wasn't a female in fifteen miles without an escort everywhere she went. And it worked. We had no more trouble."

Madison ran a hand through his thin pale hair, setting it all awry. The loose hairs caught the sun like the fragile filaments of a poor man's halo.

"But people forget," he continued. "People get lazy. Come spring they began to ignore the network. The crisis is over, they thought. They weathered the storm. By summer the whole thing was over and everybody was safe again. But I knew better.

"At the end of August I began running a series of editorials warning them. You're not as safe as you think, I said. The escort network is still needed. Don't neglect it. And sure enough a second girl was raped at the well in September. The network was put back in place. I was right and everybody said so.

"And then I got this." Madison took a piece of paper from his desk and handed it to Milton. Milton read the neatly typed note.

To the Editor,

Thank you for calling to my attention the fact that the escort network has fallen into disuse in your fine city. If not for your editorials, I might never have known that women were once again wandering the area unaccompanied. You certainly have made my job much easier.

Gratefully yours,
The Rapist

Milton looked up at Madison. The stark bands of sun and shadow had faded to a flat homogenized grey. Madison seemed nothing so much as alone, alone and weary. Milton started, "Bryan . . ."

"I never knew who sent it. It doesn't matter. Whoever he was, he was right. Oh, I had the best of motives. I wanted to see the people of this town — my people — safe again. But I never stopped to consider that in calling attention to the failure of the safety system I was as much as waving a red flag to any potential rapist and yelling at the top of my lungs, 'Vulnerable women! Come and get it!'

"I tried. I tried appealing to people's common sense. I don't know, maybe people don't have any. But I won't make that mistake again."

"Bryan," Milton said. "You can't —"

"Yes. Yes, I can. I'm responsible. I'm responsible and so is this whole

damn town and the whole damn attitude that we are somehow immune and protected while the rest of the world is falling apart, that being a little ways into the sticks is a vaccination against evil. But it's here now, in and with us, and I know it and you know it. I am responsible. And you are. And they are.

"They told themselves they were safe. They told themselves they were protected. They believed in those words and the words failed them. I told them no one was safe, no one was immune, and I believed what I said, and the words failed me, too. Well, no more words now."

"But Bryan."

"No. That's all."

...

From the stairs Jane could just make out Milton sitting in the dark living room facing the window. The drapes were pulled almost shut. Through the light fabric the dim naked branches outside looked like long arthritic fingers.

"What are you doing down here in the dark?" Jane asked. "Aren't you coming to bed?"

"Did you know that you can't even see the reflection of the moon in that old well? It's right under that tree. You can't see anything at all."

"What are you talking about?"

"Nothing, nothing. I'll be up in a minute."

"Milton . . ."

"In a minute, Janie."

Her footsteps receded slowly up the stairs, the old country house marking her passage with creaking floorboards. Then Milton was alone in the dark living room. Through the window he could see the grey smudge in the sky that was the full moon rising behind the clouds.

He knew Madison was out there again tonight, the only believer in the curse stalking werewolves with a gun full of silver bullets. Milton touched his swollen lower lip and thought about going out to see Madison, just to see how it was going.

Outside a north wind chased some dried leaves around the car port and rattled at the storm windows. Milton rose from his chair and went slowly around the house, carefully checking the latch of each window, the lock of every door.



SHULAMITH

O — your sweet mouth taught me
Too much about ecstasy!
Already I feel Gabriel's lips
Burning on my heart . . .
And the cloud of night drinks
My deep cedar-dream.
O, how your life beckons me!
And I slip away
With heart-song blooming
And dissolve into space,
Into time,
Into Eternity,
And my soul glows radiant
In the evening light of Jerusalem.

Else Lasker-Schüler
(from *Hebräische Balladen*)
translated by Martin Chase, S.J.



sign of the new moon

a smirking statue sleeps in the woods tonight
his chipped stone fingers point
toward a hill where only strangers go
while encircling mists rise and recede

failing stars guide saints of oblivion
along the summit's broken path
to harvest the scattered dry autumn leaves
and gaze at a blackened pit in the sky

smoldering clouds surround hill and heaven
eggshell eyes roll backwards
as the whites run together

for tonight an idol has fallen
and solemn watchers gather in the forest
under the shadow of a burned out moon

George Kanieski

INJUNCTION ON THE THOUGHT
OF WOMAN EVEN AFTER HAVING BEEN
UP FOR ONE AND ONE HALF DAYS

Don't let me sleep while the sanguine world
goes on its half-hearted and full-throated
and full-hearted and half-throated way.
Don't let me sink to the level of the beasts
all unconscious of munificence, decay.
Resist, resist, I tell myself. Within the
living of the present meaning lies curled.

The Polish woman in her striped shirt hoes
the Ivy League plot of her urban garden
and the Budapest businesswoman ties the Dane
of protection to her clothesline. The boundaries
of freedom extend the length of a moving chain.
A children's game of shuttlecock and racket
follows the sun. Then finally, slowly, it goes.

Chopin at intermission of "Bosoms and Neglect"
orchestrates a keyboard of lives — how many
laughs at infidelity resonate from within
and how much loneliness seated together, how
much shock when the chemise falls, bodies begin
and how many lives reflect themselves in
analysis — quoting Forster. Not Stephen. Only connect.

The supermarket of leggy wonders, tennis dresses,
tents to fairly and tanned and never-ending poles
wandering amid apples and tangerines, succulent pears
forever luscious in themselves: this is how the sleep
comes. Knowing the rhythm of the world forever dares
to stand against and then move through the blithe
inert, everywhere proclaiming this, everywhere confesses.

Stephen Schlabach

CATS

when the mountain of family had collapsed
beneath the weight of midnight
i lay awake and listened
to the sounds of cats

gregorian chanters
monastic stalkers
contemplative carnivores
gathering at the altar of the moon

against white picket communion rail
howling ancient canticles
repeating ancient rituals
in the shivering rubric shadows

crying under the branches
of taller sterner monks
with green cowls and moss
on the north sides of their trunks

Walt Campbell

THE POEMS OF RICHARD WILBUR

His poems
are like women
one falls in love with
in their splendorous forms
or a crystal vase
that through its cut and light
intoxicates
the sight
but, more,
they are
a tower of the heart,
a tower to the heart
to us, sparrows,
who revel in their beauty,
swoop in their light,
and grow strong
in their orchestration
returning to us
the world
in consummate splendor,
inhabited always
by their lovely Progenitor,
that "Loveliness that does not deceive,"
and to whom we stare
as look-outs
of alterior isolation,
homeward bound
to the light-filled arms
of Night.

James Magner, Jr.



THE CLIFFHANGER

1

The boy wakes up with sunlight and his thoughts
are fishing rods and match safes, golf balls,
maps, worms and dew soaked shoes.
These form roots for him like those
that spill the grass onto their lawn;
his still surface is that green, that mown,
that raked and shining in the early light.
It is where he lives after the dreams
that swam, spilled, faded to faint bruises
there beneath his eyes. His dreams
are crowded out by light and games.
Their small but urgent tree is overgrown.
Alone after dinner their taste returns
as an athletic urgency that runs him
to the empty street. He throws into the dark
a football. He runs to where it is
to reappear out of the night,
but there is nothing there.
His hands stretch empty towards the streetlight:
the lost toy that is all that he knows he knows
flies up from him in the dark and is
gone

2

The boys stands in white socks
on the gleaming floor
where music fills the gym
with its water that has risen
to his waist where it starts him
staring at that girl, his friend
back in the chaste lagoon of 4th grade.
The clear and pounding music
conducts a surge between them:
it is simplicity, sweetness,
a jolt, a touch in a space
he backs away from, a betrayal
as instinctive as the step back
into the herd. He looks away.
He acts stupid, rolling one sleeve up
the other down, talking to the guys
about the game just finished on
this floor. It was life itself to him
once, when he was pure
and had no heart to hide from girls.

3

Two boys race bikes down paths lined with
ten foot weeds that make a narrow aisle.
It is humid August and the shouts of the two
muffle as the boys tear our of sight.
They reappear as each survives a slicing
turn down to the slick clay that lines
a muddy stream. They skid and turn uphill
where back among the weeds and on the level
one boy hits a puddle, shouts but holds
the angel of his passage as the other
skids, is sent careening through
a green wall of ragweed
where he disappears.
Laughing, the first boy
pedals on. This always happens.
But the second boy does not reappear.
He knew that someday this would happen,
just not how. The lost boy
sees what is pushing up out of
the mud of Illinois. Even caterpillars
are climbing the stalks of summer,
leaving his bike behind. He begins
to rise from the dirt where he was
thrown. With little tearing sounds
his arms pull loose from earth
where already little roots have formed.
Not this way, not this way,
he thinks, but he heads deeper in,
out of the weedy field and among
the trees. Behind him someone else
is circling back, looking for him,
but he is in another place, uncurling
with an oak tree into sky.

Kip Zegers



BOOK OF DANIEL

These days will all come.
Those that have stood before us
like the price of being among the living,
the birth days and elections and holidays
and those meetings and those plans
and those places to go—the vacation
that once seemed a dream in the eye
of routine, the appointment at that
bistro with an agent of destiny—
these, all in their way, come to pass.

But those days—those days . . . those
days will all come too.

No individual too small
to strike a note on the chords of the day.

No event too large
but that the least of them will have
some say.

Nothing will be separate
and all that is will somehow be
in reach.

Time will have come standstill
and mankind running, barefoot,
on the beach.

Stephen Schlabach

RUTH

And you peer at me through the lattices.
I hear the sigh of your footsteps
And my eyes are heavy dark drops.

Your glances bloom in my soul
And grow full,
While my eyes wander in sleep.

By the wellspring of my homeland
Stands an angel,
Who sings the song of my love,
Who sings the song of Ruth.

Else Lasker-Schüler
(from Hebräische Balladen)
translated by Martin Chase, S.J.



ON THE (RE)
OPENING
OF THE ARABICA

A close shave
is what the regulars
called the closing.
A close shave
(with near
apologies
to Samuel
Barber).
Suddenly, days
before Xmas,
locked doors and
Closed for Remodeling
over frosted
windows very
unlike the season.
Closed for remodeling!
You knew
they were lying
but then
Closed For Good
would have been
worse; a black
Xmas. This, even
with ground
white, was gray;
uncertain hope
(not to be
redundant).
But what
was a neighbor-
hood without
the means
of neighboring
(place, coffee,
newspapers: the latter
Hegel claimed
was modern man's
morning prayers,
which would make
closing for good
very bad indeed)?

There had to
be a refuge
— refugees all,
a congenial
place
of exile:

good

coffee
like safe haven
nothing to be
sneezed
at, nor into.

Let all manner
of well
disposed drinker
and nibbler
of cakes
and newsprint
make their way
again
to where
in the words
of the Wittenburg
posting
they can do
no other.

Stephen Schlabach



Joseph
'85

Tuesday, 7:30 P.M. Harry & Jeri's poetry workshop for poetry
that is "basically supportive"

IF PERSONAL PAIN IS NOT FIT
SUBJECT FOR POETRY,

Could one say Christmas morning, '59,
Was one call-light glowing
At the east end of the ward,
The bowel obstruction in 604, found
Safe in the john, liver-colored tube
Taped to his nose, one lean buttock
Triumphantly raised to prove
Sure delivery of Christmas Eve's
Carmine capsule?
Was carmined water cheered
Before flushing,
His clasping my hands as he made
His holiday joke "Oh, Jesus,
nurse — red shit for Christmas!"
Was thawed fear running
Shamelessly down his cheeks?
Was the gift of his grin
Shaming my selfless vigil?

Sally Joranko

JACK IN THE PULPIT

My Mom's not one
for potted plants;
she points me toward the columbine
growing not in her garden
but next to the gravel drive.

She lays her path
with river stones;
her flowers need shade not light;
dark earth holds the jack she plants
whose hood covers
the king's purple night.

Brushing leaves off ivy
uncovering, unfolding
I look for mother's prince
found in April
 after a rain;
I rise to slip on river stones.

Marilyn Sommer

HOGGIES SALOON 1-23-87

Friday factory hard core
Paycheck cashing long shadowed
Orange stucco walls arch over
A black laminated bar
Populated by long haired
Motorcycle types,
Machine oil perfumed women,
And good ol boys,
Rubber band bouncing
Their frosted mugs
With piston precision.

Backwalled pinball machines
Pick loose change
From permanently soiled
Cintas trousers with synthesised taunts.
A jukebox corner sharing bowling machine
Squats ready to wrestle all comers.
State of the art L.E.D. eyes static stare
With cool electric calm
But,
The balls are right.
Balls.
Perfect round brown and white swirled
Softball swollen slag marbles
Left behind by some forgotten race of giants.

I pick one up,
And I am a six year old
With a pizza burger
And a pocket full
Of grandpa's change,
Saturday morning
Zeke's Bar E. 156th and Waterloo.
Cleveland.
It's not there anymore
And a year ago tonight
Neither was my grandfather.
I can beat anyone
On this machine.

FISHING FOR CATS

On the morning after, I feel the world pull away
til I am left alone in the center
of a large room, in the chairs
the ghost shapes of guests and friends from years,
gone home,
and the cat sits in the window, looking out.

Love, it seems, begins here, at this still point
where the world retracts,
when even Fall jays flashing
in the cat's studied gaze are silent, remote,
and the mind, with its fresh fears,
considers elemental choice: to stand stone still,
or move.

I should know by now that love's silent moment
follows love's noise: after the clash of unlikely parts
as when two unaccustomed hearts converge
and thrill to discovery or defiance—
then love's clatter fades
to a blue commotion of quiet wings
outside a window.

How easily a boy will tease a string
along a sill, fishing for cats.
I should know by now the world returns:
from this hushed beating of the possible
the day will fill again with what love took away
to know itself alone.

David M. LaGuardia



CROSSING THE MANHATTAN BRIDGE

In winter light
the train climbs up the aged bridge
above the tide.
People talk in twos,
read or drowse in tightened anonymity.
They sleep, chins inside the collars
of their coats, slumped against glass
that shows a spired city half in shadow
half ablaze against a chilly sky.

We rub against each other like steel wool.
We watch for an opening,
sit and stare at the man reciting
his innocent name. We hope
that's all he'll do. What I do
is take the poem everywhere.
I lay an empty page across
the hard stone of the morning. I rub
and an impression rises
on that whiteness: a word
appears, a face whose chin
is cold, then the smeared
and paint botched walls, all
signs of our passage. They show us
what we didn't notice from behind
the newsprint of our routine.

A chilly sky, an aged bridge remain
when I am gone. This page remains
in other hands, yours that ride tomorrow,
in a year or many years to come.
What you hold is as solid as
what it found in the world:
what bears our weight yet cannot
be checked or held in place;
what waits for you in your going,
what waited for me as well.

contributors

Doug Aylsworth is a native Clevelander who is in the process of developing a career in photography.

Helen Barna cannot be explained in one line.

Alfred Cahen, a painter and a writer of essays, poetry and drama, teaches for *Living Room Learning*, an adult education program of Case Western Reserve University.

Walt Campbell graduated from John Carroll in 1969. He lives in Cleveland with his wife and two children. He has been writing and performing poetry and music for about 24 years.

Fr. Emmanuel Carreira, a professor of physics at John Carroll University, captures the beauty of the earth and heavens through photography.

Martin Chase, after two years as Jesuit Fellow and Assistant Professor of English, will leave John Carroll in May to pursue studies in Theology.

Paul Debolt is an '86 graduate of John Carroll. He is currently attending law school at Ohio State University.

Kris Fazio is a 1984 Euclid Senior High School graduate, currently attending Lakeland Community College. Photography is her main ambition.

Ina Forbes is a philosophy major and an English minor who will finally graduate in August after a decade of incredible persistence, hopefully going on to graduate school in English. Ina is a mother of three children and lifelong companion to Gene. She is owner of La Vie Boutique in Chesterland. Lastly, she is generally your basic over-achiever in all aspects of life.

Sally Joranko - my one and only short poem was rejected, but I am allowed to make it a matter of record that I wrote *one* short poem.

George Kanieski is currently a sophomore at John Carroll University who is pursuing a degree in both English and General Chemistry.

contributors

David M. LaGuardia is a Professor of English in John Carroll's English Department.

Michael LaGuardia, a junior at the University of Michigan, with a major in Asian studies, will spend next year studying in Japan. In the meantime, he hopes to achieve international fame when his original musical score wins Bloom County's Billy & the Boingers contest.

James Magner, Jr. is a Professor of English at John Carroll University and is the author of numerous books of poetry. In 1981, Dr. Magner was named Ohio Poet of the Year.

James R. Pipik: Class of '86, now works for the Eastern Region CYO in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. His employers do not know the kind of trash he writes, so please don't tell them.

Jeanne Poduska is a student at John Carroll. . . .

Fr. Joe Sabik is an administrator and a graduate student in the Human Services Program at John Carroll. He is interested in the area where art, spiritual direction and psychology come together.

Michael Salinger - don't succumb to the fallacy of form.

Stephen Schlabach is a poet and a lover of good coffee.

Laura Simon was a 1986 graduate of John Carroll University and is currently attending Cleveland Marshall Law School.

Marilyn Sommer is a senior English major, who will be graduated from John Carroll University in May.

Mary K. Sweeny, a reference librarian in Grasselli Library, recently received an M.A. in English from John Carroll University.

Kip Zegers, The Beaudry Award Winner from the class of 1965, teaches English to high school students in Manhattan. He has published several books of poetry, including *Collected Poems* in 1986.



