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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

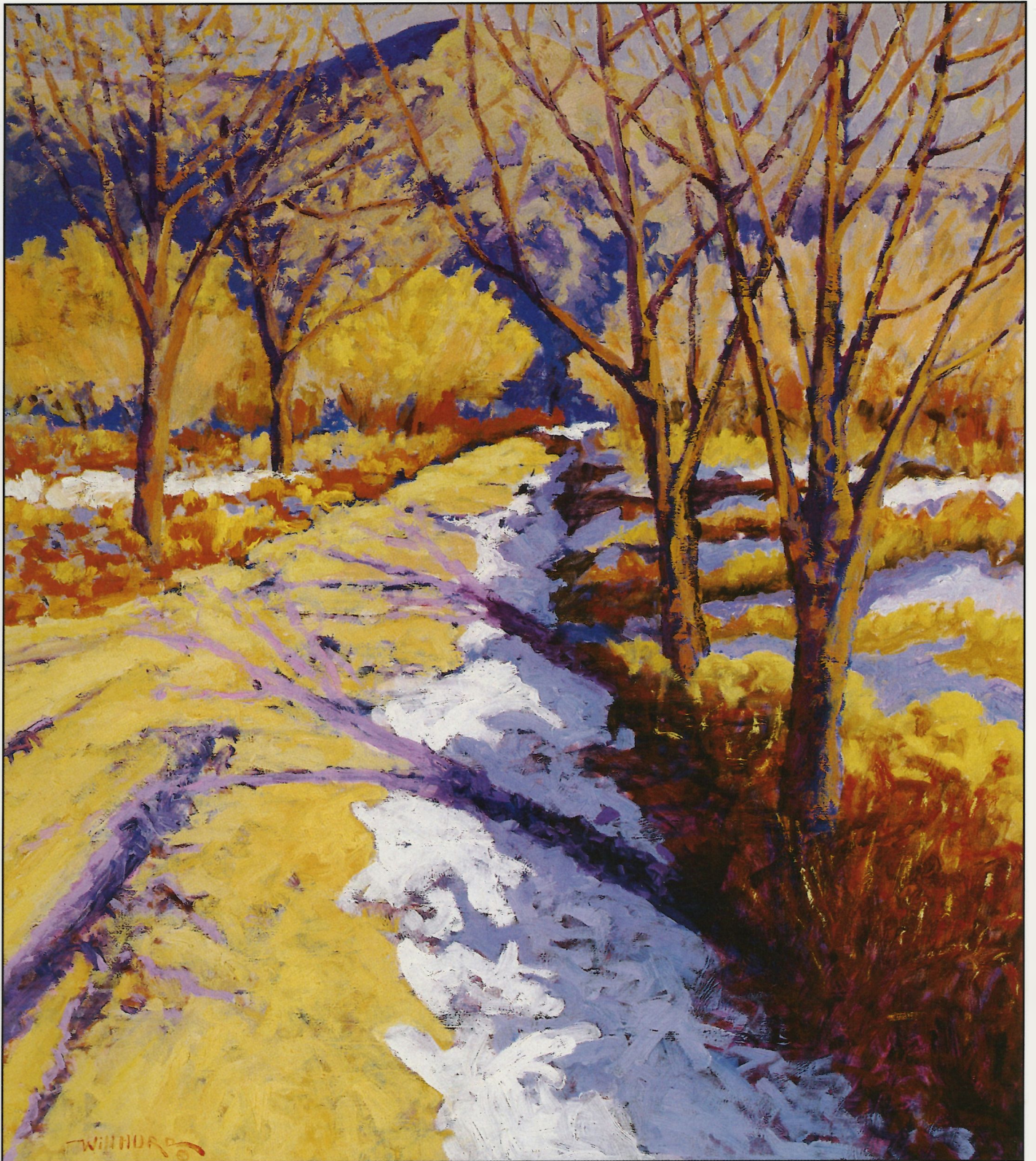
# WESTVIEW

VOLUME 20

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FALL/WINTER 2000

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A J o u r n a l O f W e s t e r n O k l a h o m a

W E S T V I E W

Volume 20

Number 1

Fall/Winter 2000



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### Stylesheet

1. Submissions should be typed on 8.5" x 11" white paper; prose should be double spaced. Include a SASE.
2. Submitted artwork should be suitable for black and white reproduction. Work should be no larger than 8.5" x 14". However, photographs or slides of larger work may be submitted. Submitted artwork with a SASE will be returned.
3. We accept and enjoy formal verse, free verse, and prose poems.
4. Include a brief biographical sketch for our contributor's notes.
5. We welcome submissions on a 3.5" disk formatted for IBM or Macintosh. Please include a hard copy of your submission.
6. Submissions and correspondence may be sent to:  
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or by electronic e-mail to [Westview@swosu.edu](mailto:Westview@swosu.edu) with the word Submission in the subject line. Please visit our website at <http://www.swosu.edu/sayre/mckinnm/westview/>

*Cover photograph, "Taos Backroad" by Will Hurd*

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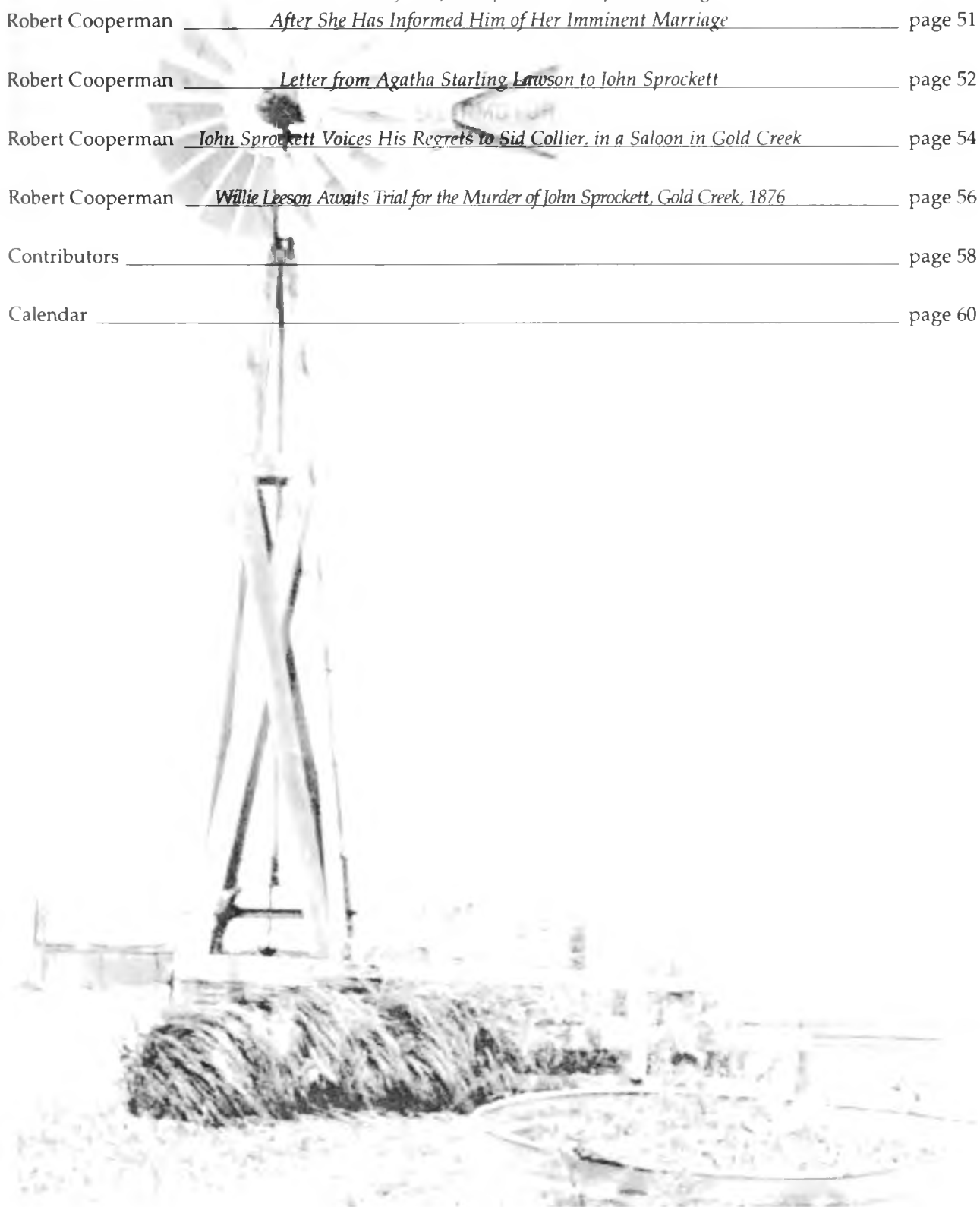
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# William Greenway's *Simmer Dim*

by Nicole Ross

Like Pablo Neruda, who asks in *Residence on Earth* what the “upsurge of doves,/ that exists between night and time, like a moist ravine” are made of, William Greenway shapes landscape from memory, often rendering it richer than it could ever have appeared otherwise. In *Simmer Dim*, Greenway’s formal and free verse poems travel through European and American landscapes—Italy, France, Greece, Scotland, England and Ireland, the swamps of Georgia—taking root in Wales, where Greenway lived for a year, discovering his poetic and familial identity. This collection explores the dilemma of how to leave familiar landscapes and to find new places that feel like home.

The son of a strict Baptist preacher, Greenway shuttles primarily among Southern swamps and the British Isles, attempting to trace his evolution, as poet. He writes of leaving the South—a place thick with memories: childhood Thanksgivings, family vacations, his mother and father’s deaths, his wife’s near-death from an aneurysm—to explore a country with an alternate past. He explains this desire: “We’re living here this year/ five time zones away/ from all we thought,/ and if we miss something,/ we’ve learned to let it go.” Themes of aging, losing family and remaining in love complicate Greenway’s struggle to define his present self, placing it in landscapes transformed by memory.

In the first two sections, Greenway retraverses worn paths of family history: the often painful relationships with his Welsh grandfather and father. In “Teeth Will Be Provided,” he recalls the paternal legacy of men who would “*hwyl* hellfire” from pulpits, from the heads of dinner tables. Walking in the hills of Wales, Greenway remembers his jazzy teenage Southern nights of cards, liquor, dancing belly to belly, and sex. He juxtaposes this with his Welsh grandfather’s “chapel gloom that hangs/ and falls like night in

the winter by four” and his father’s “coal-dust darkness/ of the Sabbath parlor or the leather strop/ of a Bible cover.” In Wales, he tries to identify with his grandfather’s religion, nearly succeeding, but pulling back, preferring to remember his grandfather as one who “passed down *no’s/* to my father who put them in me/ where I carry them into middle age.” Though cool, craggy Wales differs from the thick, low-hanging heat of swampy Georgia, Greenway associates both with a constraining religion that attracts and repulses him.

“Power in the Blood” illustrates how his father taught him to resent “heathens,” those who’d watch Ed Sullivan, go to bars, or write poetry on Sunday nights. Now a poet, Greenway describes “how far I’ve come from chapel,” but still experiences guilt, and perhaps self-loathing, for being a writer—a life he identifies as lonely, unattached:

Even now, I’m contemptuous  
of those who try to make their own religion,  
hate Sunday nights, the lonely, straying  
ones who end alone and childless  
in furnished, rented rooms writing  
letters to the editor, or poems,  
peculiar, faithless souls who sing  
late into the night the drunken hymns  
of childhood.

Greenway recognizes that he no longer worships his father’s God, but careens outside the confines of Christian religion where he worships “not a God of light/ but yearning itself.” He finds comfort in wandering through the Welsh countryside, but feels lonely. He searches for his family name in cemeteries, tries to imagine the lives of those beneath the stones, and places himself in Wales.

Greenway identifies further with Wales as he constructs fanciful lives for local villagers like Lucky Leg the Butcher and Rhys the Deep, born



of "fairy folk on Rhys, an island/ made invisible by an herb." He even imagines himself as a contented seventh-century Celt living separate on a bare hill, becoming the village's mythic figure. Greenway also rejoices in the poet's solitary life as he takes stock of his own. In "Troutbeck," he recalls walking alone along a trout river where Wordsworth walked, and then returns to his hotel through a green-stained world to write.

Greenway casts a Wales from memory, blending familiar nostalgia and a newcomer's awe. In memory, the Welsh landscape transforms to a painted near-idyll, a world of blurred colors, where Greenway traipses, like Frost, through a countryside that continually surprises: "They say there's a valley near/ no frost has ever touched/ and though we have no map./ why should that stop us now?" He details a cold, bright countryside populated by mines and steel mills, fairies and ghosts, castles and ruined cathedrals, farmers and butchers, graveyards and shipyards, sheep and bagpipes. Many of the poems set in Wales offer long descriptions of the natural landscape Greenway encounters reminiscent of the visceral poetry of Dylan Thomas and Theodore Roethke. In "Pwll Du," Greenway uses, as he does in many other poems, rhymed tercets to describe the harmonizing of natural elements:

Through caves of oak and beech, I walk a mile  
above the stream that sinks and wanders  
underground through limestone for a while...

However, Greenway's writing risks mixing an American's oversentimental romance with mythic Wales and an Anglo-Saxon poet's Ubi sunt lament of "Where are they now?" The first two sections, "The Once and Future Wales" and "Bread from Heaven," often lapse into such bardic romanticizing, causing readers to question Greenway's seriousness about the function of memory. For example, "At Arthur's Stone" rhapsodizes about touching the grave of a king for luck on a moonlit

night:

The moon comes up behind a pony white  
as a unicorn, the sun goes down  
and pinks the sky and bay before the night  
recalls this postcard from the past.

Yet Greenway's musings about memory are not all maudlin, and the poetry in the final three sections, "The Vines," "Depth of Field," and "The Last Holiday," mark the steps in Greenway's journey toward identity and where, if anywhere, he roots himself.

Greenway explores what memories he can trust, and which he creates nostalgically to believe life was better in the past. In the poem "The Last Holiday," Greenway recognizes how his changing body signifies age, and on the lemon-yellow Greek beach, he longs for the comfortable Southern summers of memory: "We ache for what we know." However, these summers, we learn later, abound with constant battles between stern father and rebellious son. Yet, Greenway realizes that moments lodged in memory exist as quick, negative images of the past that he's transformed to assuage past griefs: the loss of his best friend to a drunk-driving accident, that he loved his father best at his funeral, that he didn't visit his mother in the home before she died.

"The Vines," the book's third section, turns to fancy as Greenway elaborately retells Welsh myths and fairy tales, placing his year in Wales in the context of a fairy tale. He tells of Blodeuedd, whose wizard-father turns her into a "flowerface, the owl./ doomed to fly with chrysanthemum eyes/ alone at night and shunned/ by the other birds" and of the fairy folk of Rhys. He also describes Vines Cottage, the stone house in the woods he and his wife inhabited during their year in Wales; he compares their growing apart and subsequent return to each other with the Hansel and Gretel story.

By placing himself in the context of a tale that ends somewhat happily, perhaps his painful





that ends somewhat happily, perhaps his painful memories will coalesce into an assurance that indeed, things will work out for him. The countryside in "The Vines" appears alternately idyllic, then menacing and darkened, mirroring the changing nuances of memory. For the poet, both imaginary and real stories become embedded in the same landscape, and he, the storyteller, becomes part of the constructed story.

In the title poem, "Simmer Dim," Greenway celebrates the longest night of the year with his wife, as they drink and make love in a tent on Skye's plains. Here, Greenway becomes confident in memory, realizing that even as he writes the poem, "Not only is this Skye not gone/...it never left." He now knows that when he recounts a memory, he possesses the ending even before it has begun, and he recognizes the foolishness of questioning memory; whatever he remembers is how it was and who he was.

In this buoyant poem, language jigs and pirouettes along, assuring us that landscape, whether bleak or lush, lives in memory as tangibly as at the moment of experience. Greenway finally understands that "The thing about being here/ is being everywhere." "Here" is the present, the "now" that one writes from; the present self tinges all experiences occurring previously. The present self matters; the stories we construct from our memories manifest who we have finally become. As poet searching for identity in landscape, he locates himself in many places, always holding his memories, yet letting them simmer to something new, something more real:

[It's] mad for me to lie,  
and simmer, summer in her arms, to pour  
her honey on the grain and dry  
the peat that smokes the taste of stout  
and whisky malt, to shake the day  
till lads and lasses tumble out,  
to wake the squalling music up. to play...

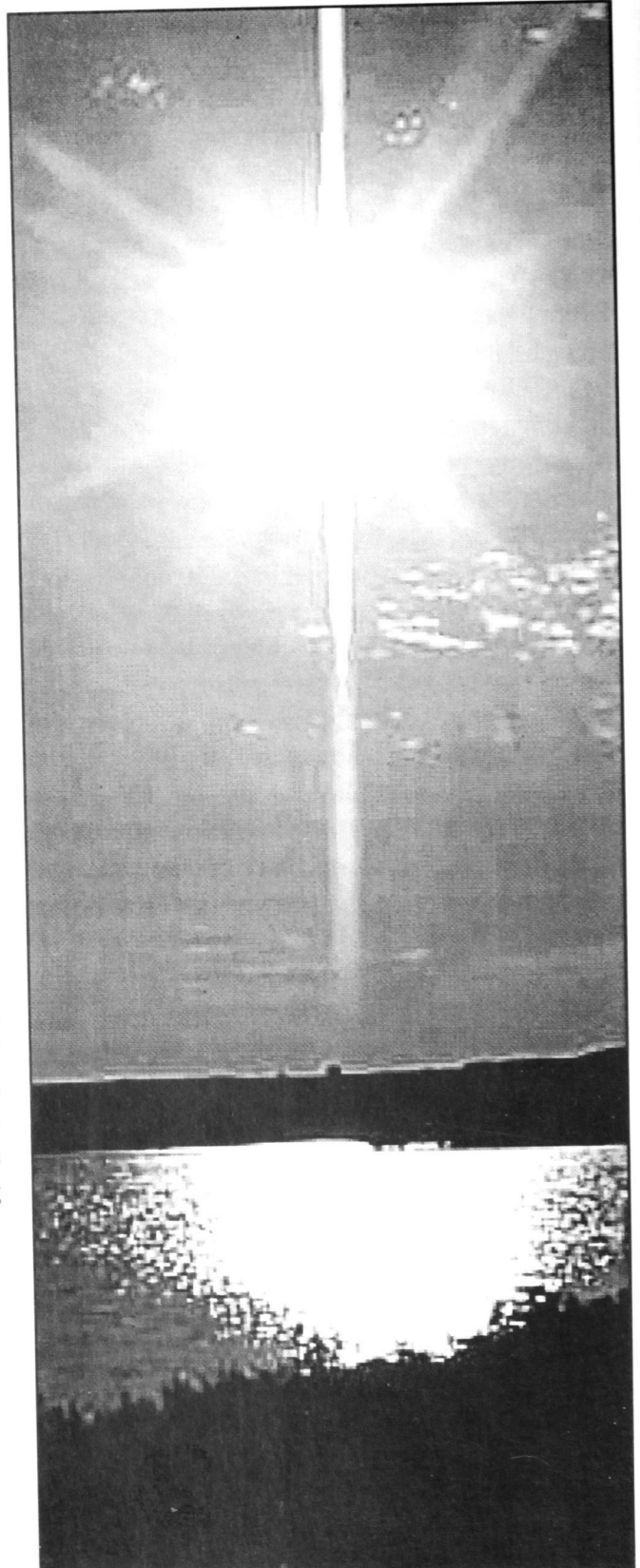


Photo by Beca Barker



# Serum

by Anne Silver

I hear my parents asleep  
in the next room  
spoons in love.  
That's a lie.  
They're dead  
and have no graves.  
That's a lie.  
My heart is their tomb.  
I sleep, hear nothing.  
That's a lie.  
I'm awake every night.  
That's a lie.  
I sleep in quick chapters  
a child again,  
listen to my parents sleep  
across the hall  
switchblades in twin beds.  
That's a lie.  
My body is in flames.  
I don't nap.  
Lie.  
The medicine boils  
then pitches  
me through the night.  
I stay awake  
guarding my ponytail  
from my brother's blade.  
Lie.  
I have no hair,  
not even a lash.



# Born Again Truck

by Jane McClellan

Rusted spots patched, cab and bed painted,  
new tires, engine overhauled by hand:  
a Born Again truck  
the old man baptized and polished  
with Turtle Wax.

He's a drive-by mower: scouts out  
some widow who needs to be saved  
from an ocean of cresting grass  
and whale-sized shrubs  
threatening to swallow her house.  
Her widow's mite,  
a home-cooked meal.

When the truck revvs its last hallelujah,  
he'll pray Amen and tow it to the dump,  
sure as his own salvation  
that only its body is being trashed.



*Photo by J. Stoffers*





# Lines Composed in Line at the DMV

by Richard Campbell

## I. Obligatory Turgid Introduction

Even the trenches along the Somme  
those hell-pits of mud, lice, and death  
had their Wilfred Owen, who managed to  
render barbed-wire and gas attacks beautiful,  
before an artillery shell shredded his muse.

Where is the Tennyson of tedium,  
the Elliot of ennui, who will speak for us?  
Who will tell our footsore tale?

## II. So Real, You'll Feel as Though You Were There!

This particular child, a little girl with one earring  
and a red cap on, lies sweating in the stroller, gumming a crustless sandwich.  
She is not crying, which makes her,  
a bit unusual, the only one, in fact,  
among the 5 or 6 children  
in my immediate vicinity  
not currently wailing, working up to it,  
or in the winding-down, hiccupy stage,  
as we, sad denizens of the driver's license line,  
shift from foot to foot, or rock onto our toes, then back on the heels,  
then over to the sides. We wind across  
the molten asphalt of the parking lot,  
until we can lean against the squat building itself.  
We are a simmering, misshapen, multicultural stew,  
not some smoothly melted cheese fondue, and the child's mother,  
dressed in a fishnet top with  
CAMEL written across her breast,  
with no apparent memory of her own childhood,  
berates the toddler for God knows what  
(not crying like the other children?) in shrill Spanish,  
while in front of me, a group of Southeast Asians  
chatter in a language that, to my ears, sounds like birdcalls.  
A car alarm starts in the parking lot,  
one that cycles through a series of a dozen  
or so sirens, shrieks, whistles, ricochets,  
repeating each sound once,  
like some hideous techno-mockingbird.



### III. The Unbearable Dreariness of Waiting

We finally inch into the comparative cool of the inside,  
in this, the Space Mountain of  
bureaucracy, but instead of  
a thrill ride through the dark, our reward is to amuse ourselves watching  
the employees, inside their rectangular glass habitat,  
as they go about their characteristic, soporific motions.  
A white man in a short-sleeved white shirt,  
with a thin tie and thick mustache, clearly in charge,  
stands in the middle of the exhibit,  
staring vacantly into space. Once in a while,  
he saunters to a new location,  
careful to make  
no sudden movements,  
and there resumes his tireless vigil  
of doing nothing, setting a  
masterly example for the others.

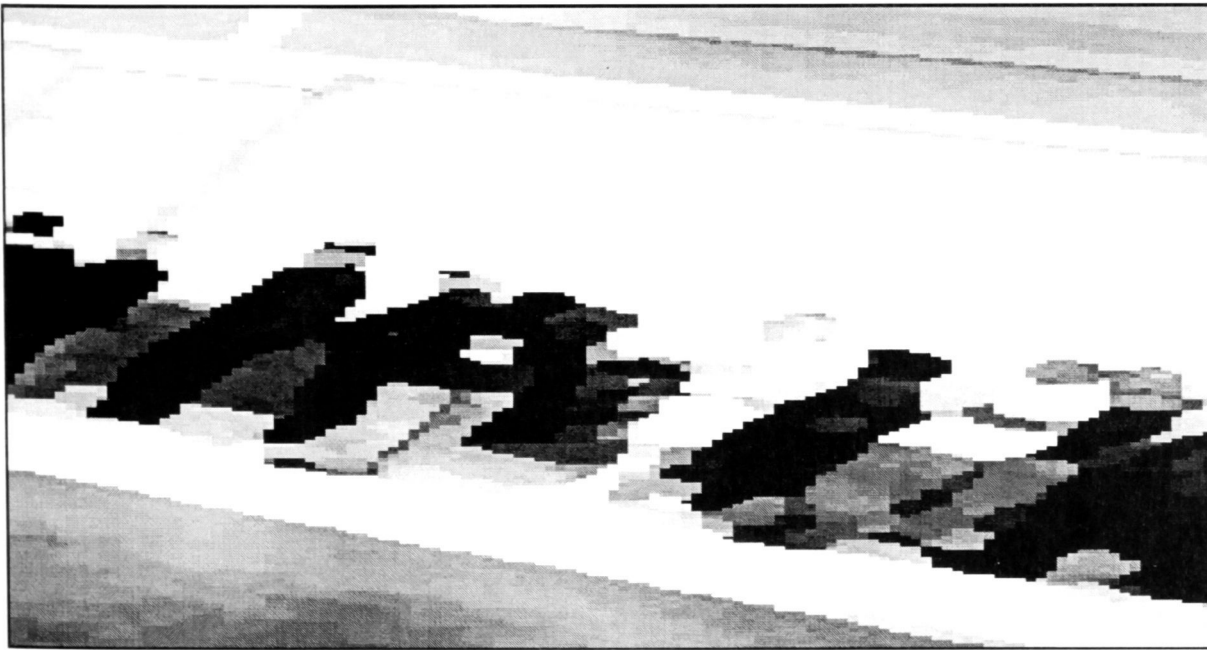
### IV. Your Narrator Breaks the Monotony with Rapier-like Wit!

I finally make it to the front, but the woman  
working the window, with exquisite timing,  
chooses this moment to get up,  
and as though moving through heavy brine,  
makes her way toward a rear door.  
“For God’s sakes, slow down, you’re going to hurt somebody!”  
I mock shout, to the amusement of the guy  
behind me, a tall black man  
wearing a thigh-length Bugs Bunny T-shirt.  
“That’s where they keep the Quaaludes,” I  
knowingly explain to my English-speaking linemates,  
with whom I have formed, over these hours,  
a certain bond of sympathy and solidarity,  
having survived, together, the long ordeal.



**V. True Wisdom is Vouchshafed!**

For two and one half hours, I have lived  
and breathed this tale, minutely observed  
my surroundings, eavesdropped on snippets  
of conversation in several languages, and  
made such connections  
as my poetic sensibilities would permit.  
I have jotted notes furiously in a spiral steno pad,  
and edited them into this piece.  
You have laughed, I trust, and perhaps  
a few of you, dear readers, will admit to  
having wiped a tear or two away;  
but when all is said and done, the big sad truth is:  
There is no poetry to be found at the DMV.



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*



# To the Pilgrim Bard, in Gratitude

by Kathleen Johnson

I often see you wandering  
past buffalo wallows, across  
black-willow swales,  
camped under cottonwoods

on creek banks,  
your mule-cart full of  
bleached bones, the air alive  
with whippoorwill calls,

the ticking whir of rattlesnakes,  
wings of wild turkeys  
rustling in river thickets.  
I imagine you writing verse

on stripped tree bark, crystalized gypsum,  
and smooth stones, by fitful  
campfire light, alone in canyons,  
on mesa tops, or huddled

in your dugout as a blizzard howls  
over—your weathered hands grip  
pen and paper under the pale wavering  
of a kerosene lamp.

In 1871, the Civil War still rattling  
in your ears, a photographer's  
magnesium flare caught that westward slant  
in your eye, wide hat-brim circling

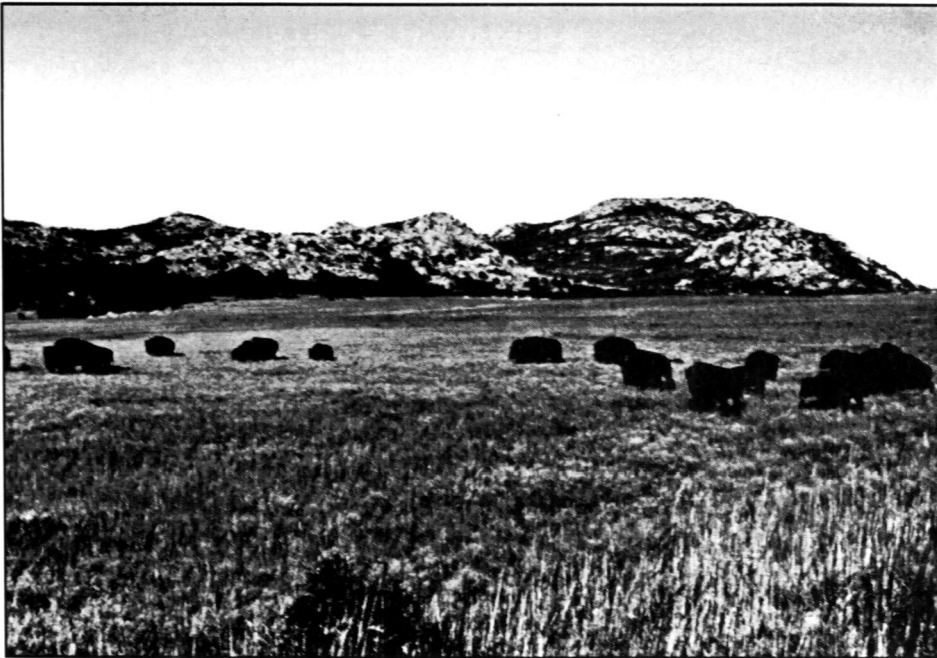
above long scout-style curls.  
Still, your writing captured more.  
Poems about buffalo herds,  
Indian chiefs, cowboys, Irish ancestors

and sodbusters lie buried  
deep in your descendents, colorful  
as the Oklahoma Gyp Hills  
where you finally settled.



Fires, floods, family feuds—so much  
gets lost. But because we have  
your words, nothing, not even  
prairie cyclones, can whisk it all away.

The wonder holds.



*Photo by J. Stoffers*



# Leaving Sixty

by Walt McDonald

Bring back the days of waves slapping the shore,  
gulls and rowboats bobbing on the bay.  
Rocking at night, we talk, amazed  
we're so old, clouds drifting south in gusts,  
barometer falling. Nights, we go away  
by writing love notes in the dust

on night stands. Coronado crossed these plains  
out of breath, cursing, his polished armor  
strapped to horses, offering crosses for grain,  
hoping to reach the Gulf before he starved.  
His soldiers threatened the Indians for rain,  
for gold. What if he didn't return to Mexico  
broke, but found the gold and sailed to Spain,

loaded with spice and bracelets? How long  
would he curse his luck and sulk, how old  
before these distant cactus plains  
were what he missed, these dusty fields we own,  
swapping all for armor rusting in the hall  
and a galleon anchored in the bay?





# Ma Mora

by H. Bruce McEver

*for Wallace Lanahan*

A lazy bunch of buzzards gyre  
jasmine Jamaican sky.  
They've been hanging out up there since sunrise,  
when one draped his wings to warm  
from Ma Mora's tiki roof.

This is Wallace's hilltop heaven  
built around an azure pool with a view  
commanding Tryall's greens and sand traps  
to Montego Bay.

The gardener, John, machete-trims  
its bougainvillea-lined drive  
while Joyce strings pole beans  
outside the kitchen door  
humming a gospel tune.

Her mango-stuffed chicken roasts  
for Ma Mora's renters to return from a day of golf.  
David, the butler, sets the dinner table  
and fusses napkins into birds-of-paradise.  
Wallace loved this place  
bought for a tropic gambit  
when black tie was *de rigueur*  
for drinks at the Great House.

He keeps a watercolor of it  
over his bed in Ruxton and awakens confused  
thinking he can see his beautiful Betty  
on the 10th tee overlooking the blue-green bay  
where, in a bobbing red dugout  
an old lobster man checks his traps.  
He's toothless now, but steeled lean as a rail  
and still brings his fish Fridays  
to ask after Mr. Lan-ham.



## Papalotes/Kites

by Virgil Suarez

Next door to El Volcan *bodega*  
run by El Chino Chan, my father  
bought the kites made by Chan's  
brother, a man without a name,

without a country, who made kites  
by the hundreds and hung them  
from the rafters of the ceiling  
of his kite shop. Rumor had it,

the man fled China young  
to avoid Mao's Communism.  
He supposedly was a great painter  
back in his country, but here

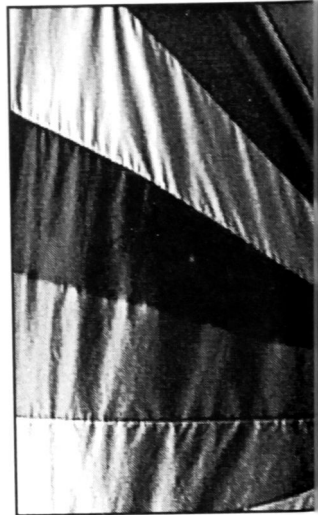
in Havana, he made kites,  
these hexagonal shaped kites  
made of rice paper, which cost  
up to five pesos, or higher

depending on the size, color,  
shape, and front painting.  
I visited the shop a couple  
of times with my father

who sometimes didn't want  
to spend the money  
on the *papalotes* I chose.  
I chose them fast, because

they were all fine, amazing  
rather, breathtaking in color.  
I liked the ones with the dragon  
heads painted on them,

fire-breathing, wide-eyed,  
gold- and silver-scaled,  
but what I liked best  
was to be able to inch my way



closer to the table where Chan's  
brother worked, surrounded  
by the paints, inks, ribbons,  
thin colored papers he cut out

from, the smell of the starch  
glue he kept warm by the table,  
the spools of string, everything  
there. Chan's brother kept

his distance, didn't appreciate  
the scrutiny. If you got too close,  
he tapped you on the head with a ruler.  
He drank tea, the steam rose into

his chestnut-colored eyes  
and made them look sad, moist  
as though he was always crying.  
His hair was always combed

and oiled. He sat at his table  
and drew these continuous lines:  
egrets by a river's edge, a tiger  
about to leap, a fighting rooster.



*Photo by Nance Parker*



Then, one day the shop closed  
and never reopened. Chan's  
brother disappeared. Who  
knew what happened? Chan

couldn't say. For days it is said  
Chan didn't speak, and when  
he did it was only to complain  
of his slow and nosey customers.

Rumor had it Chan's brother  
had left for the United States.  
You could still see all the kites,  
everything where the man left them.

Me, I had a couple of magnificent  
kites, ones called *generales*  
& *comandantes*. Big, tall,  
the kind that when you flew

them tugged at you  
much like a current,  
a hard undertow  
like this memory now

of Chan's brother  
and his wonderful kites.



# Such Small Expressions of Forgiveness

by W.K. Donaldson

It had already been a significant day. Mary and her two graduate assistants had spent the entire morning and much of the heat-dancing afternoon clearing a good twelve degrees of arc and outlining the fire ring's projected circumference. This was all nearly old hat and helmet to Mary by this time—her third ring, her umpteenth dig—yet the scientifically tempered lust that sparkled in her assistants' eyes and questions had infected even her. Yes, this was the largest, without question, Kirabutu ring yet discovered. No, far too little strata consistency in these parts to even hazard a guess. Let's just keep our pants on and wait for the carbon-14 results. True, in other tribes a hearth feature this size and depth would signify a certain permanence, but the Kirabutu have always been classified as a nomadic people. Well, of course, it is certainly possible . . . .

She was back at camp overseeing the packaging of their two-gram sliver of silicate for the dating lab when Denobo arrived. Danny Boy, as one of her assistants had dubbed him, was their agent of good fortune and goodwill and good grassland sense, their part-time connection to the outer world, a one-quarter Kirabutu who showed his lineage in his eye set, his jaw line, his palm spread. Cradled there in his gigantic, pink palm was a telegram for her. Instantly, she knew, it was one of two things. The flimsy slip confirmed this. Her father was dead.

Quitman, Louisiana. The tiny tail end of a journey that began that following day and that took her to Denobo's village on the back of his aged Vespa, then on to Dewsbury Town in the village's ambulance, of sorts. After a twenty-six hour lay-over there, she caught a convection-tossed ride in a four-seater to Johannesburg, barely making her connection for an overnight to London and a sun-racing pre-dawn to Miami, all of which was followed by a tedious hop to Memphis, a commuter

skip to Shreveport, and a rental car jump to her father's house some six miles outside of the Quitman corporate limits. In truth she could not help but think of it as her grandparents' house. In her handful of visits there in her twenty-nine years, only on the last occasion had it really been her father's. As she suspected, he had let the place run down, wearing away what happy memories she had of the place along with paint and floorboards. Winter weeds sprouted in the gravel drive. Red dirt had collected along baseboards and sills, in corners. Yellowed linoleum curled here and cracked there, a jagged gash running the length of the kitchen.

So much for his attempts to scare up a lost America.

She built a fire in the stove and upon discovering a stray bag of pekoe on a high dusty shelf, heated water for a cup of tea and drank it while standing at the kitchen sink. Gazing out through the uneven glaze of the facing window, she played games with the distortions, worried over her students' capacities to excavate the ring intact, wondered if perhaps the tea bag had once been handled by her grandmother's crooked fingers. It tasted old to her, full of dust and sorrow.

The master bedroom had been taken over by her father and she felt as if she had no choice but to sleep in the guest room down the hall, the room that had once housed her visits as well as her father's childhood. The room, the nightstand, the sheets, all smelled just as she remembered them, one note of kindness for every dozen or so of age. She slipped beneath the chilled sheets and wrapped her arms about herself to gather in her own warmth against the January damp. This, she realized, was the only home to which she had returned throughout her life, yet this was only her fourth, perhaps fifth, visit. And now it was most likely hers.

Once, on a trip east from San Francisco to visit



friends homesteading in Colorado, her father had named her co-pilot for the trip. She couldn't have been more than three or four years old. He began to seek her advice about when to merge, when to regain the lane after passing. After several training runs, her father had ceased to double check her judgment, leaving it all up to her. But her mother had refused to play along, pleading, always craning her neck at the last minute.

"Edward, stop it. This is just too much. It's just not safe."

He, too, had pleaded that her mother, just once, not turn around. With every pass his tone had increased in desperation, eventually rising to anger. Soon he was ordering Mary to climb into the back seat, telling her that if her mother did not like the rules of the game then they would just not play the goddamn thing at all. She obeyed without a word and in the gathering twilight slipped beneath the blankets there and watched as the powerlines dipped and rose in a constant rhythm somewhere between the open window and the darkening orange sky.

D. Clinton Thompson, the lawyer who had sent the wire, had been charged with handling her father's affairs in the event of his death. That following morning she had found his office on the town square and found out that indeed the house, along with the pick-up, a three-thousand-dollar bank account and five thousand dollars worth of E-series savings bonds, had been left to her.

"There was no life insurance policy," he informed her, pursing his lips and sighing through his nose as if to apologize. "Unfortunately, having hired out independently as a roofer and with no witnesses to his fall, no other claims may be made against his death."

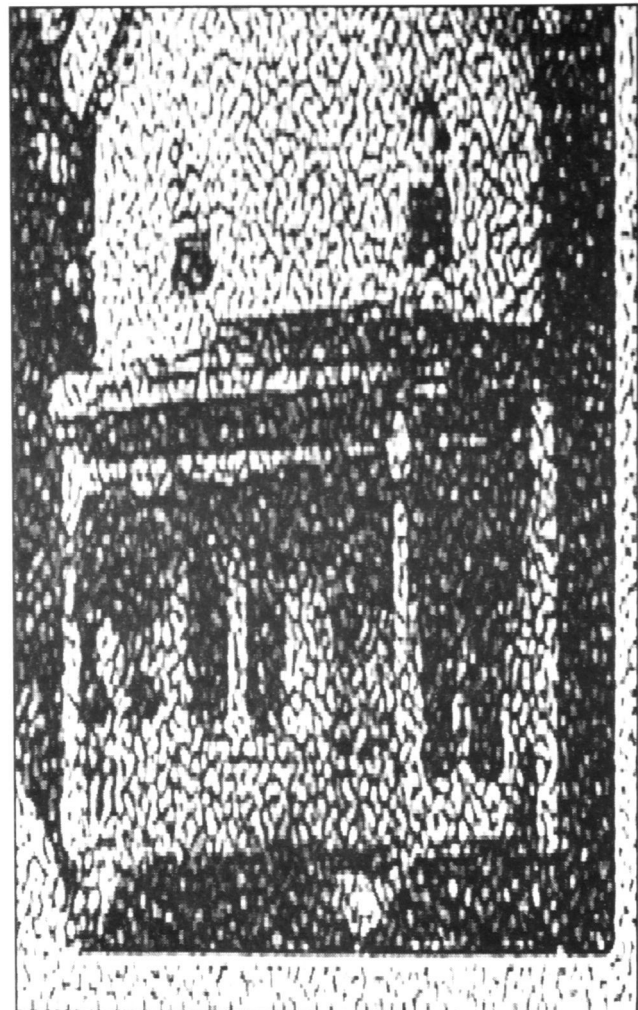
Mary nodded that she understood, dizzied at the very idea of a lawsuit.

"Nobody is trying to pull anything over on you," he assured her. "The sheriff and his people were out to survey the scene, and it appears certain that the building was up to code and that his

death was purely accidental, a simple misstep on his part. I'm sorry."

With those items of business finished, he drove her to the funeral home. Her father, dressed out in a simple casket, looked very thin, far older than the calculations her memory had allowed her to predict. He had taken to trimming his beard—or had that been the home's doing?—yet his hair was still quite long. Full and graying, it had been brushed out down the champagne-colored pillow his head rested upon and well on to his shoulders. She thought about asking someone to pull it behind his head in the manner he had always worn it, but soon dismissed the idea.

She found Mr. Thompson in the waiting room.



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*





He seemed surprised at first that her stay had lasted only a matter of minutes. On the way home she thought she caught him scrutinizing her eyes for a tell-tale trace of redness, a glint of salt in the morning sun. Upon arriving back at his office she assured him that the funeral arrangements as outlined by the home suited her and that she would see him the following day at noon.

She recalled very little of her parents' breakup. Six years old at the time, she was simply aware of an unvoiced urgency around her, a sudden wobble in the even spin of her world. Most of her impressions of their troubles, she realized long ago, were actually those of her mother's own wistful bitterness. "He was this radical idealist," she used to tell her, "that just couldn't say no to a cause, any cause. And, of course, at the time, it was just impossible for me not to fall in love with him. But, honey, what you just don't understand was that he just couldn't let go of any of that, not for anybody. I thought that I'd learned to accept that part of him, but when you came along, and I saw that even *you* would not alter his course, well, that was just too much. I remember driving across the country for this thing or that when you were no more than four months old, less than a hundred dollars to our names, and word reaching us through friends along the way that the FBI had come around our place wanting to ask your father a few questions. It was just too much."

Somehow, however, it had not actually proven to be too much until some five or six years later. By happy coincidence, just as the already well-established too muchness of it all was reaching new heights, Roger came along. Roger, along with his real estate makeovers and money sense. Mary suspected, had served as the powerful silent partner, backing the dissolution in spirit if not in deed. Her father, it seems, had done his best to embrace Roger—at first because he had simply failed to see, then finally, to hear her mother tell it, in a guerrilla war of guilt.

Back at home—would she ever grow comfortable with that term and this place?—She took stock of her surroundings. Her father had put up a small metal shed alongside the old, parallelogramming barn which appeared as if it might come down upon itself at any time. The paths that led down from the back of the lot to the pond below had become overgrown, far less well-defined. After a good twenty minutes of disentanglements and double-backs, she finally came upon the pond. Given both her memory and the dry rim she stood upon, the pond seemed merely a third of its former self. She turned and began to make her way back up the rise, this time making her way back right through the thick of things, pausing from time to time to study the steadily gathering clouds overhead through what she had to keep reminding herself were now *her* trees which stood, however indifferently, upon *her* land. As she topped the hill, she came upon the grassy clearing that had once served as her grandmother's vegetable garden. There, in the center, a darker, denser rectangle of nearly a quarter acre stood out against the pale grass, signifying the garden proper. Her grandmother had once shown her the spot along one of the longer fencelines where, after losing most of the tip of his index finger in a child's knife game and the rest to a doctor's blade, her young Edward had buried the tiny fragment of himself in an empty aspirin tin.

"So much has been lost," her father had once told her on one of the yearly visits he had made to the numerous cities to which Roger had been forever moving her. He had been looking out the window, surveying the suburban landscape as he drove, unable to meet her eyes. She was herself but nine or ten. Wichita, right? No, it must have been the summer she had turned eight then. She remembered, embarrassed now, that she could only think in terms of his missing fingertip, the one feature of her father that this particular visit and her particular age had conspired to leave her acutely aware of.



She made herself a dinner of canned stew and refrigerator biscuits from her father's supplies and ate them cross-legged in front of the stove. Again, she worried about the excavation. Every part of the historical mosaic had to be filled in properly. A chink or gap in any of the data might prove to damn her some years down the road. She wondered what her father would have thought about the Kirabutu, the people, it seemed, she knew best. They were a broad-shouldered, tall-standing people who had managed to successfully perpetuate themselves across the centuries unchanged, until this one, with its steady influxes of religion and rayon, had brought an end to their way of life. One of her father's recurring rants had centered on Americans' ridiculous fetish for "how," ridiculous especially in light of their contempt for "why." The Kirabutu, no matter how simply, still faithfully adhered to the latter. If a laborer stubbed his toe against a rock while plowing the reclaimed fields which they were now forced to farm, he knew that a tally of his most recent transgressions had just been accounted for. For every thunderhead that cracked, for every infant lowered into the ground, the reasoning rode tandem. Yes, her father would have admired them. Yet unlike her and her preoccupation with the range and patterns of their long-forgotten tribal movements, he would have thought only of their future and the circling mass of carrion birds that darkened the skies above their heads.

The weather had refused to harmonize. An unseasonably balmy wind had blown through the cemetery and sunglasses had been a matter of practicality. Mr. Thompson, Johnny Sumpter (a part-time roofing partner), Mr. Evers (a neighbor to the north), Mr. Blasingale (a neighbor to the south) along with two attendants supplied by the funeral home had served as pallbearers. A Father Keegan—odd, a priest—had delivered the brief service there alongside the gravesite. There had been a smattering of condolences afterwards, the graying Father Keegan's promise to drop by the following day seemingly the most

heartfelt. She took care to thank them all and, in what she assumed was correct form, had her driver wait until the tiny procession had cleared the gates before requesting her and the ever-attendant Mr. Thompson's leave.

Another matter of form confronted her. While in the States she should no doubt fly to Cincinnati to visit her mother and Roger. But how does one approach the news that one's ex-husband, very nearly a household unmentionable for some twenty-three years now, has passed away? She loathed the image of her scotch-slurping mother receiving the news: the arc of one plucked eyebrow, the cock of her head, the long and thoughtful life-must-go-on exhalation of cigarette smoke. But to call with the news would mean that she would have several days to marshal her forces, several days to review, edit and embellish the whole army of in-crowd anecdotes that she seemed to enjoy trotting past Roger whenever Mary visited, reminders that he was ever and always nothing more than a well-heeled provider, while she, on the other hand, had lived the best of two worlds.

"You remember, honey," she would say, making sure that Roger was hovering somewhere nearby, "it was Mickey Hart's birthday, back when they still called themselves Warlocks. You held on to Kesey's fingers and he danced you around on his toes the entire evening. He positively adored you."

Mary was never quite sure if she remembered or not. Perhaps the re-telling of such stories throughout her life had merely given them a certain visual force in her memory. She couldn't be sure. In either case, she had always longed to hear her father's version of the times, yet he had generally refused. When she had pressed the issue one evening six years ago, he had told her about the time he and a political science student from Berkeley had forged a set of press passes and gained entrance to a forum which was being held on campus, a supposed "debate" regarding America's po-



sition on the ABM question. Posing as photographers, they were both permitted to sit in the very front, beyond the area roped off to the public. Just as Edward Teller had begun the preamble to his position, they had pulled cream pies from their camera bags, rushed the stage, and scored two direct hits upon his sagging face. They exited through a backstage door and after following a carefully prearranged escape route they had made, except for a dab of meringue on her father's best pair of pants, a clean getaway. Mary smiled at the thought of this and with the sudden realization that Roger got everything that he deserved in this life, be it tax audits or heart trouble, she picked up the phone and dialed her mother.

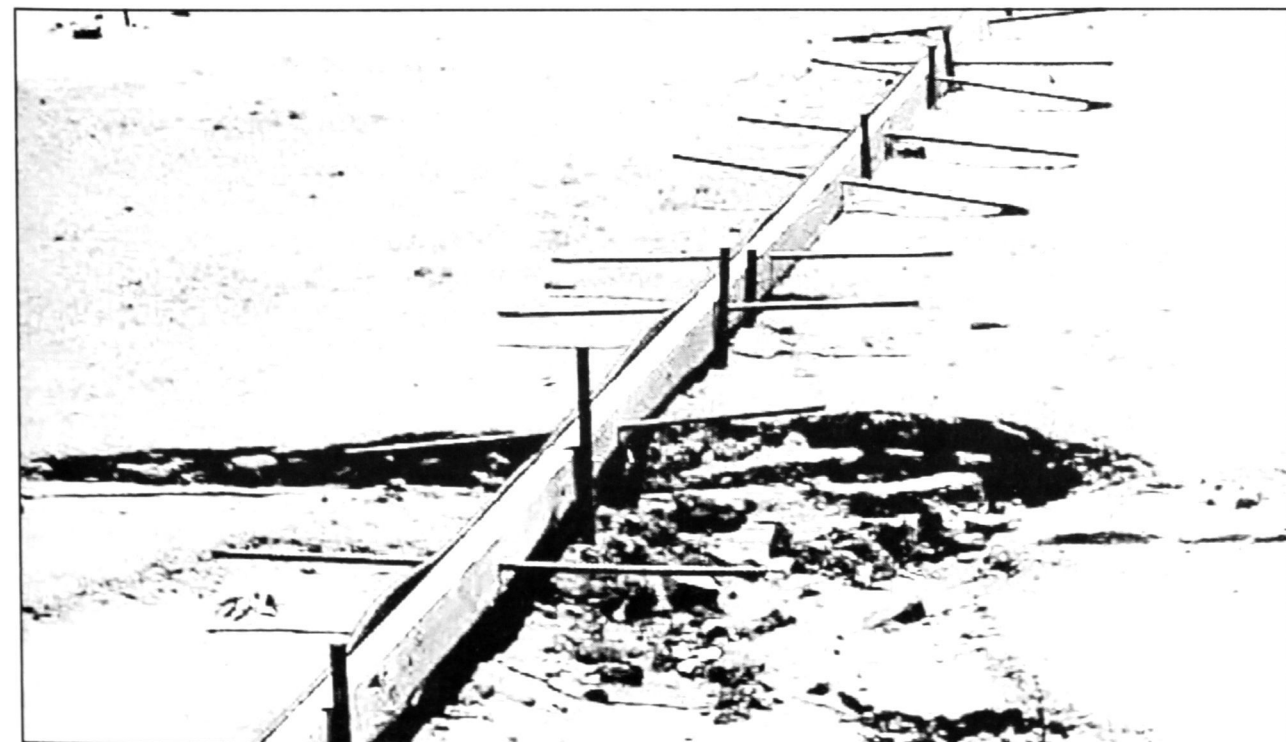
The next morning she and Mr. Thompson went about the business of transferring the account and bonds into her name. After explaining to him the urgency of her work abroad and the fact that she had yet to see her mother before she returned, she managed to convince him to take on the task of

finding a caretaker for the place, someone to keep the lot trimmed and the brush cleared for the next year or so. She wrote him a check for 750 dollars and explained that, after expenses, the rest was his. In the end he seemed wholly agreeable to the arrangement, even offering to check up on the place himself several times throughout the course of the year.

Back at home, she was busy cleaning out the refrigerator when someone knocked lightly at the front door. She answered it and found Father Keegan there on the porch, out of his clerical garb and into khaki pants and a loose fitting flannel shirt. She invited him in and offered him first a seat and then coffee.

"That would be wonderful," he replied, plopping down into his seat in a rather un-priestly manner.

Mary moved to re-heat the morning's coffee, placing it atop the center of the wood stove. "This is something we call shepherd's coffee back in Africa. We just boil the grounds," she said, stok-



*Photo by Charity Kohout*

ing the fire, smiling as she discovered her pun.

"How thoughtful of you," he replied, smiling himself now, crossing his legs and letting the joke fade naturally in the air between them before adding: "When do you leave to go back?"

"I have to fly up to Cincinnati and visit my mother for a day or so before I return. There's a 9:17 out of Shreveport tomorrow morning."

Father Keegan nodded as if he was completely aware of the situation, her mother, the various airline schedules. Uncrossing his legs, he sat up higher in his chair

"Your father and I had grown quite close over the past few years," he said, pulling his ankle to his knee now. "We were active in several of the same organizations, and had taken a couple of trips together."

"Honduras?"

"Yes, exactly. He had written you?"

"Once that he had been, another time that he was planning on returning, that was all. Unfortunately, that last trip was during my last visit state-side two and a half years ago."

Father Keegan seemed saddened by this.

"I'm sorry. I know it all sounds rather shadowy—several of my superiors in the parish certainly said as much—but we were simply there in a capacity similar to that of the Peace Corps. We helped to grade roads, frame houses, build runways."

"Runways?" The coffee pot had begun to hiss and strain.

"Oh yes," he said, a thin smile tightening his lips. "Although it is a fairly tiny nation, there are many parts of that country that are still quite remote. We stayed nearly two months on both occasions, living right alongside the hill people in some of the most intolerable conditions imaginable." His smile had faded completely. "I'm sure through your work you've encountered much of the same."

Mary nodded that she had and rose to tend to the coffee.

"One never gets used to seeing pregnant

women eating dirt for its iron content," he spoke into her back. Mary felt her jaw tightening, her face flushing with heat from the stove as she poured his coffee.

"Sugar or cream?" she asked just beyond her shoulder.

"Black is fine."

She handed him his mug and took a careful sip from her own. It could have stood a few more minutes on the stove.

"The point is," he continued, letting his cool on the table beside him, "that when we were finished there we considered it nothing but their business how they might choose to use their improvements. It was up to them to decide with whom they made arrangements for food and medical supplies, what other outside interests they might allow to land on their runways or share in their housing. Do you understand?"

Mary nodded that she did.

"As I said earlier, there were certain parties that did not see things quite so clearly, among them the CIA. They were able to put pressure on me through the church and were doing their best to dig up something from your father's well-documented past." Here his smile returned, and he paused to take a sip of coffee. "Your father always kept one eye on the extreme right by subscribing to various newsletters that the groups such as the Klan and the American Nazi Party publish. I would imagine that he was on the mailing list of no less than twenty such organizations. At any rate, while we were waiting for all of this CIA business to run its course, somebody had vandalized a cemetery in what is probably the only Jewish community in all of northern Louisiana. Apparently aware of your father's subscriptions, the sheriff and a fellow from the FBI had come around to find out what your father may have known about it." He was very nearly laughing now, his eyes twinkling. "Your father took great pride in being what he figured to be one of the few people to ever be investigated as both an agent of the right and the left simulta-



neously.”

Again he paused to let his laughter and Mary’s smile run their course.

“I tell you all of this only in the event that any of this should rear its head again.” He had set his coffee down and was looking Mary square in the eye. “You should know that compared to the likes of me he was really almost apolitical, uncluttered with theories of any sort and concerned only with a sense of fair play. He was a good man whose sole regret in life was that the two of you had not been closer.”

Mary swallowed hard at this and brought her cup to her lips. She warmed his cup, then hers, avoiding, when she could, his gaze.

He stayed on for another forty minutes or so while they traded stories, mostly about their work and travels, an odd one here and there about her father. As he rose to leave, he had taken her hand and squeezed it firmly in his for several seconds, firmly, silently, in heartfelt consolation. She walked with him out onto the slightly sunken porch and sat there on the steps until long after he was gone, at first watching the nameless cat patiently track the pair of jays that flitted in the tree above him, then doubled over with her face against her legs and her arms around her shins, her knees digging hard against tightly closed eyes.

The last time she had seen her father had been the summer she had finished work on her master’s. She had stayed for five days, and it had been their longest single visit together since her parents’ divorce, unbroken by trips to motel rooms, school days and swim lessons as his visits to her had always been. They had worked in the tiny garden he had started by the house, drank beer, played several games of haphazard chess, cleared brush, cooked elaborate dinners.

One evening after a meatless lasagna and a game of chess which had dwindled to a king and one rook each, they discovered *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to be the late night movie. They opened fresh beers and settled in in front of the

television, a rare occurrence for her father.

“Your mother and I, had we stayed together,” he had said at one point, gesturing towards the set. Even with his daughter full grown, Mary realized, he still insisted in a certain even-handedness towards her mother, implying a complicity on his part she had just recently grown to doubt.

At one point, during a commercial break hawk-ing fingernail extensions to pre-teens, Mary had noticed his eyes glistening in the quick-edit light.

“This is absurd,” he said, indicating the television with a wave of a near empty beer can. “It’s bad enough those little chips of plastic cost less than a penny a piece to extrude and they sell ten of them to you for a buck and a half. But then they have managed to persuade several sets of parents to allow their twelve-year-old daughters to whore themselves all across the nation, showing their asses to the camera, saying, ‘Come on, you can be like us. Sell us your childhood, too.’” He had found his rhythm now, his voice strident and sing-song. “And then the worst part of it all is that someone has decided it would be a good idea to run the thing at 1:30 in the morning, no matter that the intended audience is asleep, simply because air time is cheaper now. So in essence, someone is spending vast sums of money in an effort to sell next to nothing to nobody.”

“You want to know what’s wrong with America? That’s what’s wrong with America. It’s absurd.”

He rose to get another beer, leaving Mary alone with a spinning head, a racing heart and Richard Burton, drunk and about to embark upon a rant of his own.

Mary felt along the gapped wall of the barn for the lantern she knew hung somewhere nearby. Her right hand soon found it, oily and dirty and pitted, several steps into the darkness. To her slight surprise, she found the base was heavy with fuel. She lit the lamp and went to pick through a stack of scrap lumber that lay piled in one corner. Soon she had found two roughly cut four-foot lengths of two-



by-four that were close enough in size that they may at one time have been intended as mates of some sort. Standing in the corner, because it would not have neatly fit the pile, was a slightly longer section which she laid across two horses and sawed, simply by sense, in half.

Once in two, she nailed the four sections together to form a frame, unbothered by the three or four inches of overhang on one corner or the fact that it was out of square. Next she sheared a length of chicken wire from the rusty roll that hung above the workbench, and, after folding it back upon itself, careful to off-set the pattern, she nailed it to one side of the frame. Finished, she carried it, along with the lantern and a shovel, down to the field below.

As she recalled it, her grandmother had shown her a spot somewhere along the garden's western edge. She began at the north and removed strip of topsoil nearly a foot wide, assured that she was on the right track by the knots of barbed-wire she had to pull up along the way. With the entire edge cleared, she propped the corners of the frame on four like-sized rocks she had found along the tree line and began to dig up a section of the border some three to four feet long and ten inches deep, piling dirt on the frame as she went. When she had accumulated a sufficient mound, she paused to run the earth through the screen, at first straddling the frame and rocking it roughly from side to side, then kneeling to urge the more stubborn clumps through beneath her lightly circling palms. Unsuccessful, she moved the entire operation a few steps further down the line and began again.

An hour and a half later, as she knelt before her eleventh pile of earth, her hands beginning to warm with the sharp glow of blisters and the earth running cool beneath them, she discovered the tin, rusted but intact. She removed her jacket and spread it out over the ground. After moving the lantern closer, she knelt over her coat and began to pry at the seal with her pocket knife, first along the edges, then at the corners.

Inside she found it, not much bigger than the lab sample she had sent off some few days earlier. It had been picked clean by a host of microorganisms, and after she let it slip from her fingers, it stood out like a single star against the dark navy field of her jacket lining.

After the airplane had broken through the clouds, it made a gentle banking maneuver and leveled off on its north-east course. Mary peered out beyond the wing for several minutes, then lowered the sun-shade and her seat-back.

She knew she would not sell the house. Soon, she knew, she would want to return. Even the Kirabutu, for all their wandering, had had certain sites to which they had often returned. Why should she be any different? The endless succession of fellowships and digs she had long envisioned as her life had recently begun to lose their glamour. Now that they were no longer a matter of necessity, she wondered how it was that she had ever found them attractive in the first place.

Mary reached into her jacket and fingered the hinges of the tin from within her pocket, causing little bits of rust to escape and gather in the nylon seam below. Closing her eyes, she recalled that the day before she was to move to Lamonia, Iowa, she and a boy she had only recently met had been playing in the shallow creek that ran behind their subdivision. He, the young warrior, had found a smooth, tiny stone with a hole worn directly through its center. She, Pocahontas, had admired its magic qualities, and with the game over, the boy had given it to her as a going away present. She had gone home that afternoon and threaded the stone onto a piece of string, telling her mother and Roger that they were making a big mistake in taking the daughter of the glorious chief captive. She had worn it around her neck well into the third month in her new home before giving it up, as the string had rotted through and the chief had failed to show.

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# Toby's Sonnet

by Mary MacGowan

Toby's leg jerks as she sleeps by the fire.  
Chasing or being chased, she's breathing hard,  
a good dream for a dog who seldom leaves her yard.  
Sometimes the measure of the days conspire  
against a little dog who needs to run.  
Still, the fire we gaze at has a pattern  
too complex for us humans to discern,  
placed here on the third planet from the sun.  
Toby watches us coming and going,  
hears things no worthy watchdog can ignore,  
barks with all her heart when a stranger's at the door.  
But now we're all home, the wood is glowing;  
this is the best time for a dog to doze.  
Even our dreams sleep, and the front door's closed.



*Photo by J. Stoffers*



# Every Living Thing

by John Michael Cummings

The windstorm, sneaking into town after dinner and blindsiding century-old oaks and elms and maples, both upset and exhilarated Anne Thompson and her husband. Its torrid August bluster had miraculously spared the skinny white poplars stuck in the corners of their yard, but the uprooted and defoliated dogwoods around them became an impressive ring of wreckage, bringing TV vans and cameras into their neighborhood. Except for pieces of bayberry shrubs, blown to the edge of the grass and tinted with a silvery afterglow of life, their property had altogether missed damage from a waterless thunderstorm now balling itself into a mini hurricane just south of Cape Cod. Parents and siblings and friends had called, excited to chat with the celebrities in the Parkwood Hills neighborhood, the hardest hit, mentioned on every channel.

They had bought their rich blue cross-gabled Craftsman house last year in time for the July family reunion (headquartered at her mother's but broken into excursions to wherever daughters and sons had made their lives). So the house, unhurt by the storm, gained another notch of family standing; it proved invincible, a true Thompson. At the reunion, Uncle Gary, barely recognizable from private grief befallen him by his latest divorce, had rocked on the porch swing most of the evening, saying the view down the street of sharp-shadowed Victorians reminded him of Jean's hometown in upper Vermont. Luckily, the swing, while tossed like a dinghy during the storm, had not gouged the recent coat of Mediterranean blue.

"... but we're fine," Anne and Michael gaily informed their callers, the evening of the storm rounding midnight, flavored with the salubrious tang of a holiday weekend.

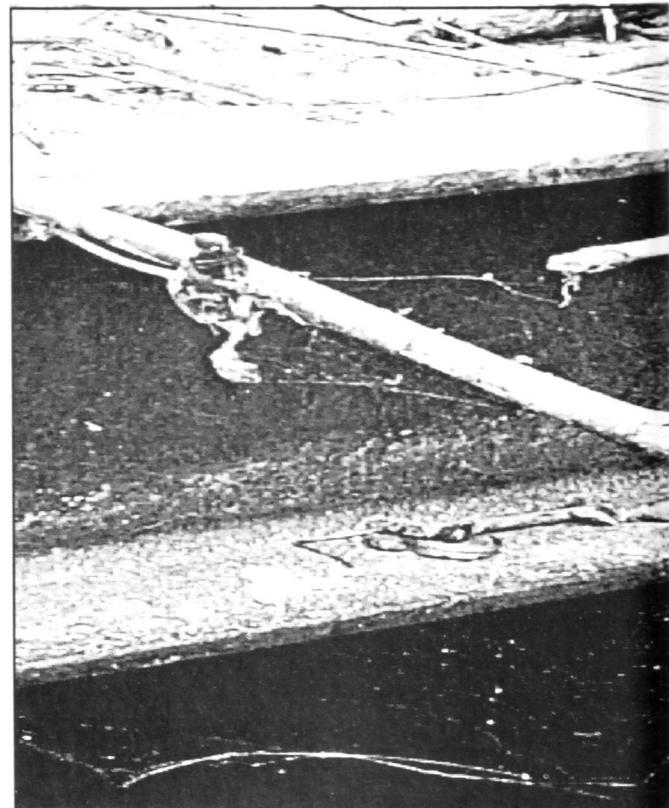
After work the next day—eight hours passing so quickly with the distraction of excited wind-swept coworkers and clients—the couple went walking through the neighborhood to survey the

downed trees, still being limbed and sectioned and hauled along the side streets.

"Oh, look at that one," Anne moaned, her voice rising with a hint of girlish thrill. "What a shame."

In a grove of patchy evergreens along the unlined road ahead of them, a tall slender pine stood broken at its center, its upper half resting trustingly against the shouldering tree nearby; the arrangement, to her alerted feminine faculties, resembled someone catching an ailing friend, so that this vignette of the aftermath gave the storm a ruthless and indiscriminate nature—striking randomly, leaving a senseless and untraceable path of dying trees.

"It was the tallest of them," her husband consoled, his face lifted to the sky. The opened wood at the break flashed as a fresh blazing wound, shiny and smooth and colored like wheat glossed by



wind. As they walked closer, around dusty orange pylons and backhoes parked for the night, he pointed to where the halved tree, while falling, had sheered a ladder of sizeable branches from the shouldering tree, the force of friction raking away strips of bark. "It'll probably die, too," he announced with grim fascination.

The skinned bark had bunched in the notch, where the upper half of the broken tree had wedged itself, and the late evening sunlight penetrated the fibrous dangling sheaths, as pink as steamed skin.

"You think so," his wife chimed, aroused by his lustrous tone promising death. "What a shame."

On the street paralleling theirs lay a dusting of green leaves, some lying faceup, as almond-shaped spots of dark jade, others prone, the undersides tinted with a silvery-lemon hue—the phosphorous pulse of death—so that the street looked like a papery green mosaic. Anne wondered if someone would sweep the street or if the mess would rot there for months, into winter. But at the end of the

street, where the view of houses on the perpendicular avenue widened and brightened, her discovering the enormous elm lying like a dinosaur between two snobbish stately Tudors filled her with the stimulating shivers of deep satisfaction, of benefiting from the misfortune of others—these prominent old-timers on this street, so rich and dainty and distant. Since moving here she had envied them; now she snickered at their misfortune. The pipeline-sized body of the elm rested thunderously on the soft lawn, the flung branches impaling the treated earth, the limbs and leaves scattered yards away, a fresh jagged fissure of bright wood at the base, the ground cluttered with shredded and flaky debris from when the trunk had obliterated under strain. Like a rock wall, the hard textural body of the elm had embedded itself into the ground—tons of hardwood landing!

"Wow!" they said more than once, timidly approaching the disaster area, eyeing the monstrous reptile slain between the homes.



*Photo by Candace Vogt*



"That's terrible," she continued. "How will they ever get it out?" The tip of the elm, its limbs retracted like those on a wrapped Christmas tree, had reached a picket fence on the far side of the upper lawn, and as they moseyed toward another side street, she hoped this gigantic slug of a tree had crushed the so-precious so-elegant fence, rolling across the lawn of the estate. "They're lucky it didn't hit their house," she added.

Their curiosity pulled them into town, past the hospital, the library, the police station, and each intersecting street served as a channel in a maze where they followed the thrilling displays of destruction—the felled oaks taking with them a stone wall laid a century or two ago; the savagely up-lifted beeches, removed from the ground below the roots and leaving gaping holes in yards; and the smaller limbs stacked alongside the road, amputated in the high winds. Bright sores from where the storm had dismembered limbs dotted the high trees, a few left with sharp curled splinters for arms. Cleanup had begun in places, exposing sides of buildings and views of yards the way a close haircut deceptively alters the proportions of a face. But the damage had mortalized and injured what had loomed for decades as organic statues thinning and filling every other season. The trees around them had been quietly alive.

Walking faster than he, she earnestly absorbed

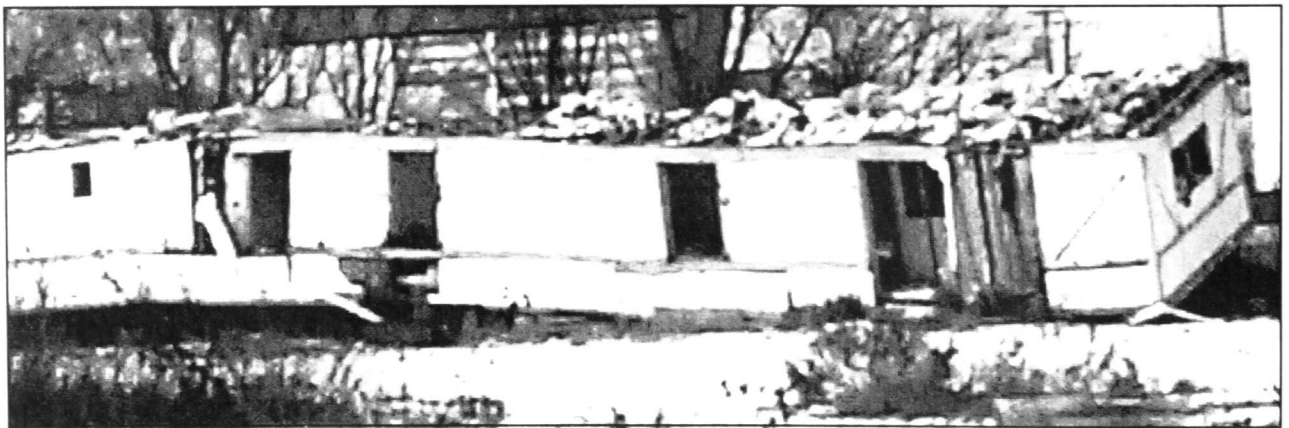
the degrees of harm, guessing in thousand-dollar increments the compensation each conquered tree had caused—one clipping as it fell a span of molded cornice on an apartment house, knocking away several dentils like a fist against teeth. But the thrills were subsiding, both in ravage and in number, and her feet, landing in shallow sailing sneakers, hurt. The streets, like an escapist movie, grated their eyes with a systematic visual pounding. So when they happened upon the town park, thinned of foliage as in winter, the large sawed-off trunk stubbed before them like a fantasyland mushroom revived her awe of this kind of death.

"That poor old tree!" she cried, running toward the moist gleaming disc, the size of tractor tire. The surgical surface captivated her; she stroked the pattern of concentric white rings, her index finger tracing the bands inward, her face lit with marvel. "Smell that?" she inquired, breathing in the fragrance smoking invisibly from the wound. Her hand cupped, she swept handfuls of sawdust onto the grass—grass masked in places with a bone-white paste of wood chips spewed from a chain saw yesterday and made doughy overnight by dew.

Her dim-eyed husband looked tired, bored, reluctant, slowed by his weight, ready to go home.

"Yeah, that's too bad."

"I don't remember this tree, do you?" she suddenly posed, more to herself than to him, looking



*Photo by Joel Kendall*



up as if expecting to recall what had occupied this space in the sky. She extended her arm across the top of the trunk, the distance from her shoulder to her fingertips not quite its radius; hers became a pictorial limb, pliable and motorized, placed upon the stump in a gesture of contrived arrogance, as if she expected to compare lives.

Three days later, after the last few piles of logs and limbs had been hauled from the streets, the Thompsons learned Uncle Gary had died overnight in his bed, from what doctors concluded was a failed heart even though his EKG, taken not quite ten days earlier, had proved normal.

"He was on his way downhill for a long time," Anne's mother concluded grimly, though with a zesty hint in her voice of a private glory for her having flown to Columbus to help her older sisters with the funeral, after which they all stayed an extra week to sort through his house, cleaning sinks and rooms, boxing whatever the three sisters agreed to take. He had been drinking a lot in recent months, neglecting his poodle, Fritz, whom his last wife had left with him, and ignoring the bills, as well as the garden in the backyard he had lovingly tended in early summer. Marge picked a box of tomatoes, precisely ripe upon her arrival, "for the kids." Anne and Michael, she told her sisters, who watched quietly appalled with her tidy and thrifty conduct at such a time.

News of his death alarmed Anne of course. "Oh, it's so terrible," the niece responded, reminding herself as her mother detailed what she knew to ask if anyone had heard from Jean. But her mother, not her, had become the celebrity this time, so any insinuation of someone's profiting from the death would come only from her. She, rather than her daughter, was receiving a flurry of eager calls from distant friends—from old Mr. Sullivan, nearly dead himself, who had served with Gary in Korea; from a school friend whom Marge had not heard

from in years, saying she had noticed the family name in the paper and thought she ought to call; and from a local circle of acquaintances, some Marge could hardly picture, each blindly claiming Gary as a fine man, his passing such a shame.

Anne offered to help in whatever way; she sought to involve herself in this disaster, happening without her in another neighborhood. Hearing of Uncle Gary's demise infused her with a morbid quest to see how others closer to him were reacting, to know how they suffered—a quest as ardent as when she and Michael had hiked nearly every street in town to see which houses had lost trees during the windstorm. Talking to her mother, she fought to restrain the excitement seeping into her voice, to sound fashionably glum, but his death had induced in her a grisly vigor to piece his entire life into an amount of compensation he had owed others, but escaped the duty of repaying.

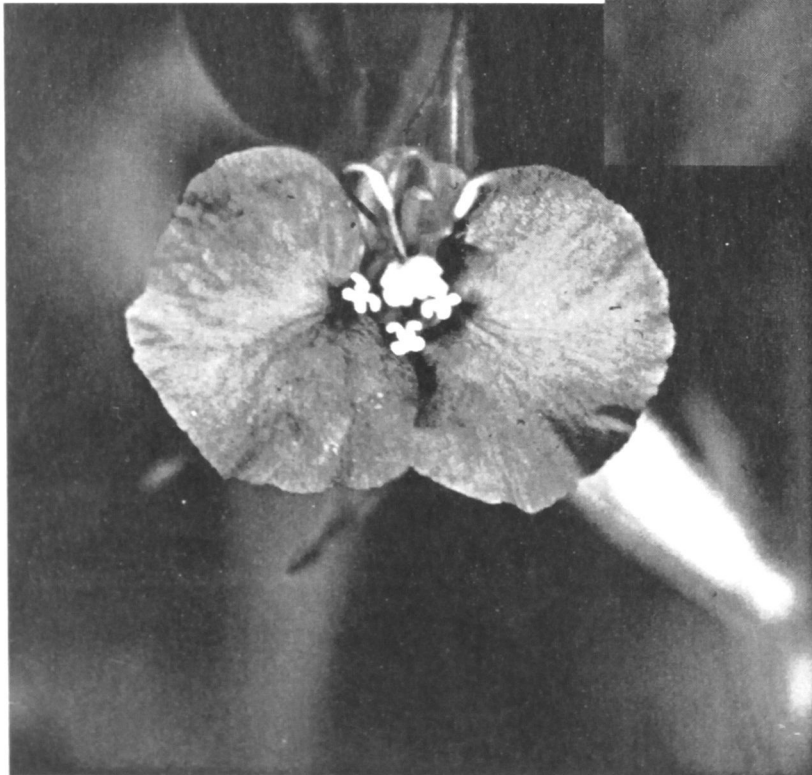
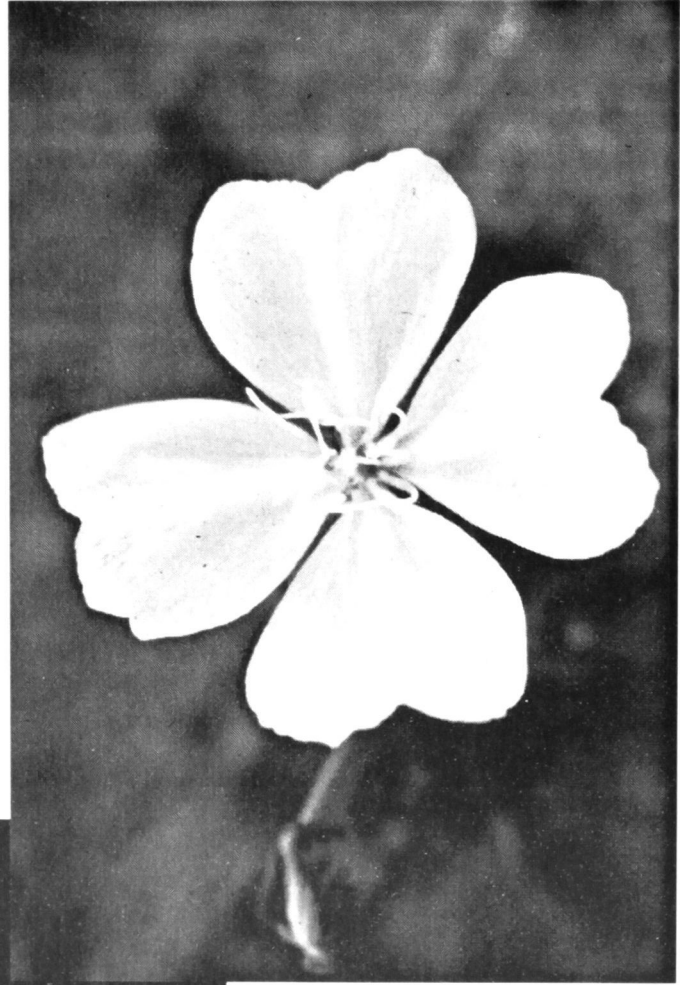
"What a shame," she found herself saying to her husband, whose legs still ached from the walk. "He really wasn't that old."

"It is too bad," he managed to offer.

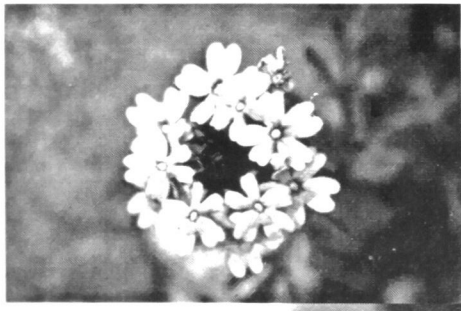
"I never really knew him," she admitted, her husband not listening. She felt not personal loss but gain, for a space in the world had opened, and even if the movement of property and valuables and of those staking claims would exclude her altogether, the line leading there had still shortened.

At the edge of the yard she spotted a leftover limb, its leaves no longer silvery as if glowing and living, but curled and brown and wrinkled, quite dead. Uncle Gary's existence had transpired as a blurry landing, as indeterminate and unclassifiable as the different trees she had navigated the last few days in her unscratched car. But like the massive tree trunk in the park, his death left behind him the unfamiliar space his life had occupied, and this boundless area took only a day or two to fill and forget.









*Photos by C.  
Michael  
McKinney*



# Shivaree

by Maggie Aldridge Smith

This took place April of 1917 in Seminole Nation, Oklahoma. The dark-headed, blue-eyed groom was twenty-two years old and his bride of like coloring was sixteen-and-a-half, shyly dressed all in white with black patent leather slippers.

The wedding took place on the dog-trot of the bride's parents' home. She was my oldest sister, and we were not sure we wanted her getting in that new buggy to go home with Melvin Mitchess, even if his grandpa did own the store that had all the candy!

Melvin Mitchess was popular with all the young men of the area and knew all about Shivarees. He planned what he would do—but so did the youth that were carrying out a “goodie” for Melvin.

Melvin had already rented an Indian Lease farm that had a small house on it. They had invited all the area to come there for a celebration. The families were invited an hour earlier than the friends were invited.

It was while the family was enjoying the freezer ice cream and cakes, brought by parents and grandparents, that Melvin told his bride where to meet him, near the plum thicket by the barn. That plum thicket was fragrant with ghostly-white blossoms.

Soon as he saw her leave the house he stepped forward, covered her with a dark cloak and drew her with him behind the barn.

The pasture was ankle-tickling high in grass as he told her they were going to hide in the drain-

age ditch above the pond. From his own past experience of grooms trying to hide from the pond-dumping group, he knew buildings would not be safe. So he chose a spot literally in the open, but with dark cloaks about them they would be at-one with surroundings.

It was cool enough so the coats felt good, and they had hardly decided where to stand before they heard a whoop-holler and a spilling of light out the back door of their new home. The ditch was almost breast-deep in the stony sand dirt of their pasture. Not only could they see the house, they could hear the planning.

“You search the barn!” A lantern was lighted. “There's the chicken house, don't forget that!” “We will go see if they're hiding behind the dam!” Here they came right toward the ditch where Melvin and Alma stood watching them.

Melvin whispered to Alma, “Cover your head with your collar, now let's get as low to the ground as we can.” Two round rocks they must have looked against the bottom of that ditch. Footsteps jumped the ditch over their heads more than once. Alma could feel Melvin shaking with laughter as they came so near.

They were not discovered and it remains a tale told and retold down through the years, but how to hide from the Shivaree crowd is easy after you have been one of the hunting party before.



# Girls Like Me

by Teresa Burns Murphy

I knew my mother had been watching me, but until she spoke I didn't realize she was searching for just the right words to prepare me for what an evening with the Lebrayasons might be like.

"You going out with Jeremy tonight?"

I looked up and saw her leaning against the doorway that led into my room. The gold chain she wore around her neck glimmered in the afternoon sun, and I noticed that today a unicorn pendant had replaced her signature rose.

"Yeah. We're going to have supper with his parents."

My mother walked over to the bed and looked at the sleeveless black dress I'd laid out.

"That what you're going to wear?"

I looked down at the dress and said, "Yeah. They're real classy people, Mom. I thought this would be right."

"You know, honey, it's just a few weeks until you graduate. And then you'll be going off to college. You'll make new friends. It'll be like a fresh start."

I kept my eyes on the dress. I knew what my mother was thinking. I'd dated other boys from so-called good families before, and it had always turned out the same. I didn't inherit my mother's shapely figure, but I had gotten her breasts, which looked misplaced on my otherwise slender body. My breasts always got me in trouble with the boys I dated, most recently Rodney Grayson. He had wanted to touch them, caress them, claim them. When I refused, he pulled away from me.

"Jeremy's different, Mom. His parents aren't even from Arkansas. They're not like other people. His mom's an artist."

The familiar smell of my mother's honeysuckle perfume saturated the air.

"I think that dress is real nice, honey. You have a good time. I'll be over at Troy's if you need anything."

When I heard the storm door slam, I looked out my bedroom window. I watched my mother back out of the driveway, already wishing the conversation we'd just had could have been different and wondering what someone like me would have to say to the Lebrayasons.

"Secular parents," Jeremy had called them one afternoon when we were studying for one of Ms. Neill's killer English tests. He described them as loose, but I knew Jeremy wasn't talking about the kind of loose my mother was. Tom and Melissa Lebrayason were free-spirited. Accepting.

I slipped into my dress, then laced my ears with sparkling studs and shiny rings.

For the bottom holes, I chose a pair of dangly silver earrings that jangled when I moved my head ever so slightly. Picking up my tiny black purse, I mulled over my choice of shoes. For a second I considered going barefoot. None of my shoes seemed right for an evening with the Lebrayasons. Instead, I put on last year's black sandals even though the right sole was worn all the way through. I'd keep my feet on the floor, hoping they wouldn't notice my shoes.

Jeremy picked me up at 6:15. Supper, or dinner, as Jeremy called it would be at 7:00. He drove an orange Kharmann Ghia that had been his mother's car when she was in high school. On the outside, the car was as shiny as a licked lollipop, but inside, the upholstery was worn and the clear scent of Jeremy seemed to intensify the odor of cigarettes smoked a long time ago. As we pulled out of the driveway, I avoided looking at my house. The air conditioner was jutting from our living room window, still braced for winter in its visquine wrapper. No arty wind chimes graced the front porch, only a couple of aluminum lawn chairs with thread-bare backs.

I'd seen Jeremy's house on the days I left school at 2:00 and walked downtown to my job as a wait-



ress at the Moonflower Cafe. It was an old stucco house that had been fixed up and painted a light teal. A screened-in front porch stretched all the way across it. One day, as I was passing by, I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Lebrayason sitting on the porch in a wicker rocking chair with her face turned toward an easel.

I looked over at Jeremy. His eyes were fixed on the street ahead, and he gripped the steering wheel as if he were afraid of letting go.

I said, "Have you thought about what you're going to do this summer?"

"I guess I'll read as many of the books as I can on that reading list Ms. Neill gave us. And I'll go with my parents up to Connecticut to see my grandmother Lebrayason and to Rhode Island to see my mom's parents. Brown's orientation is in mid-July, so I'll probably just stay on for that and then fly back down to Arkansas when it's over. How about you?"

"I'll probably work as much as I can. And read."

We both laughed. How much we read had become a standing joke and was what brought us together. We both wanted to major in English and eventually become college professors, but Jeremy was going to Brown University, a school I'd never heard of until I met him. After he told me about it, I looked it up in the encyclopedia. It took me a long time to tell him I was going to Arkansas State.

When we got to Jeremy's house, Mrs. Lebrayason was in the front yard cutting flowers and putting them in a basket. She was wearing pearl gray sandals and a backless dress the color and texture of weathered clothespins. As we approached her, she stood up and turned toward us. It's funny how before you meet someone, you fashion them in your mind to look a certain way. I'd thought about Mrs. Lebrayason for weeks, and she was nothing like my vision of her. Her face, framed with blunt cut hair, looked as if someone had pushed hard on her cheeks and skull, leaving too little space for her eyes. After Jeremy introduced us, she held out a slender-fingered white hand to

me. I knew from last year's stay at Governor's School that sophisticated women shook hands with each other, so I eased my damp hand in her direction.

She gripped my hand and said, "Nice to meet you." She had a northern accent, but it wasn't the nasal variety I had often heard on TV sitcoms. It came from her chest, almost soothing, except that her eyes seemed to constrict when she spoke to me.

"Nice to meet you too," I said.

Mrs. Lebrayason released my hand, then picked up the basket she was using to collect her flowers. "Let's go around and see if we can find Tom. I think I have enough flowers for a decent arrangement."

Jeremy and I followed her down a stone walkway. I tried hard to catch his eye, but he was looking away from me. As soon as we got inside the gate, I saw Jeremy's father standing beside a fancy fish pool. He was holding an empty wine glass.

"Ah, you're here," he called, beginning to walk in our direction.

"Tom Lebrayason," he said, extending his hand to me. "You must be Danita. Jeremy has told us so much about you."

I shook hands with Mr. Lebrayason and said, "Nice to meet you."

Mrs. Lebrayason brushed past her husband and said, "I'll be getting things set up." She took off toward a picnic table draped with a pale yellow cloth. We watched as she set down her basket of flowers and began snipping off their stems.

Mr. Lebrayason shoved his hands in the pockets of his loose-fitting shorts and shifted his eyes from Mrs. Lebrayason to me. His head was bald to a shine, and he wore what hair remained in a pig-



Photo (detail) by Alanna Bradley



tail. A tiny diamond stud was stuck in the lobe of his right ear and a gold ring dangled from his left. I couldn't help thinking that with a little more make-up, Mrs. Lebrayason could have passed for one of the unconventional country club set, but Mr. Lebrayason looked like he belonged elsewhere.

Mr. Lebrayason cleared his throat and said in a voice that seemed to startle him, "Are you guys about ready to eat? I think we just about have everything set."

"Sure."

"Great."

Jeremy's voice collided with mine, and Mr. Lebrayason looked at us for a second as if he were trying to decide who said what.

"I'll just run inside and get the entree."

Jeremy and I walked over to the picnic table. It was spread with wooden bowls, iron stone platters, china plates, and silver utensils.

"I hope you like eating alfresco," Mrs. Lebrayason said.

"Yes, I love it," I said, trying not to reveal my uncertainty as to what exactly it was that I was going to eat.

About that time Mr. Lebrayason came back out of the house carrying a large platter of pasta covered with vegetables in a sauce and topped off with something bright green.

Jeremy said, "I also hope you like vegetables. Mel and Tom are vegetarians."

I smiled and said something about vegetables being great. The colorful salad nestled in a shiny wooden bowl and the platter Mr. Lebrayason was passing to me made me think how different these vegetables looked from the fried okra and purple hull peas swimming in salt pork grease my mother fixed.

"Eggplant Fettuccine Marsala. My specialty," Mr. Lebrayason announced as I took the platter from his hands.

"Looks delicious," I said, spooning some of the vegetables onto my plate and praying that nobody had noticed that I hadn't taken any of the pasta.

"Jeremy tells us you're planning to major in English," Mr. Lebrayason said.

"Yes. I really enjoy reading. I'm trying to read all the books on the list Ms. Neill gave us before school starts this fall."

Mrs. Lebrayason lifted her fork and held it posed while she said, "You must have found a list like that invaluable in your preparation for college."

"Oh yes. Ms. Neill has really helped me a lot." Then I noticed that both Jeremy and Mr. Lebrayason were looking at each other, their eyes locked as if to protect some family secret.

"Oh, Jeremy," Mrs. Lebrayason said, "Did I tell you Sylvia Brennick's daughter, Julianna, is working in admissions at Brown now?"

"No." Jeremy said, returning his attention to the food he was eating.

"Maybe you two can get together this summer during orientation." Not waiting for Jeremy to respond, Mrs. Lebrayason turned to me and said, "And where are you going to school this fall, Danita?"

I'd just taken a bite of bread, and while I was chewing it, Jeremy said, "She's going to school here in Arkansas, Mel."

"Oh," said Mrs. Lebrayason, "Your parents must be very proud."

Before I could say anything, Jeremy asked me what I was reading right now. When I said *Jude the Obscure*, Jeremy and Mr. Lebrayason seemed to compete with each other to see who could ask the most questions about it. I tried to sprinkle my answers with details I thought the Lebrayasons would find impressive. But everything I said seemed phony and unimportant.

After dessert, Mr. Lebrayason said, "Jeremy, why don't you take Danita up and show her the art studio. Let her see some of the things you've been working on. Mel and I didn't make too much of a mess in the kitchen, so it shouldn't take us long to clean up."

Already getting up from her seat, Mrs. Lebrayason looked at her husband and said, "I'll go with them. I didn't realize Danita was inter-



ested in art.”

“I don’t know that much about it, but I’d love to see yours and Jeremy’s work.”

“Mom’s really good,” Jeremy said, and I caught a trace of my own unease in his voice.

I thanked Mr. Lebrayason for the meal, then folded my napkin and laid it on the bench where I’d been sitting, just as the etiquette book I’d checked out of the library said was proper. I followed Jeremy and his mother up some wooden steps and inside a door that led us into a small sitting room enclosed in glass all the way across the back. I looked around at the fat slip-covered chairs and couch. There were shelves filled with books on one wall, and magazines and books were spread out across the marble-top tables that were next to the chairs and couch. The walls were painted a light chocolate and handhooked rugs were scattered across the hardwood floors.

We passed from this room into a well-lit kitchen cluttered with mixing bowls and pots and fragrant with olive oil and garlic. A dimly lit hallway led to a flight of steep stairs carpeted with a plum-colored stair runner. When we got to the top of the stairs, there were more shelves filled with books and another hallway with three possible doors. Mrs. Lebrayason led us to a room that looked out over the front lawn. There were four long windows across one wall and two more windows on each side so that even though it was almost dusk, light streamed into the room.

Mrs. Lebrayason pointed to a series of canvases lined up against the wall. Painted on each of them was a small-breasted, wide-hipped woman with straight black hair reclining on a couch. “I’ve been working on nudes for the last six months, but I decided to paint a portrait of Jeremy this spring, sort of as a graduation present to Tom and me. So we don’t forget what he looks like when he goes off to college.”

Jeremy laughed nervously and glanced at me as if to apologize for the pictures spread out along the wall. I felt sure Mrs. Lebrayason was purposefully drawing attention to the paintings in an at-

tempt to embarrass me, and I smiled hard, trying not to give her that satisfaction.

“Here it is,” Mrs. Lebrayason said, and I realized she was inviting me to look at the painting.

I stepped around to take a look, feeling relieved when I saw that Jeremy was fully clothed. He was dressed in a white shirt I’d never seen him wear, and I noticed that Mrs. Lebrayason had brushed away Jeremy’s acne and tamed his curly black hair. Nice things to do, but I didn’t like the painting.

I said, “Oh, this is so good.”

“Thank you. We’re thinking of hanging it in the living room over the fireplace.”

Jeremy showed me some of the things he’d painted. Most were black and white sketches that reminded me of designs I’d seen in art appreciation class on pictures of Egyptian urns. I complimented them, and we were about to go back downstairs when I saw a painting of an angel with brilliant yellow hair and rainbow-colored wings arched gracefully over her milky robe.

“I really like this one.”

Before Jeremy could respond, his mother said, “I think Jeremy has talent if he’d just give it a chance to blossom.”

“Thanks,” Jeremy said, “I don’t think I’m that good really. I just mainly use painting as a catharsis.”

“Well,” Mrs. Lebrayason said, “I guess I’d better go down and see if I can help Tom.”

“Okay,” Jeremy said, sounding as relieved as I felt. “I thought we’d go down and listen to some music.”

We followed Mrs. Lebrayason back down the stairs. She disappeared into the kitchen, and we went into a part of the house I had not yet seen. As we walked through a doorway, Jeremy switched on a light revealing a long room filled with shelves that reached from the floor to the ceiling, packed with albums. There were dozens of boxes, crates, and baskets filled with CDs and tapes scattered around the room.

“Wow! You weren’t kidding when you said your dad was into music.”



“Yeah. He has a really huge collection. So, what do you feel like listening to?”

“It’s so overwhelming.” I flipped through a basket of CDs before picking one up. “How about this? I love The Grateful Dead, especially that song “A Touch of Gray.” Isn’t it on this CD?”

“Yeah, I think so. I’ll put it on. My dad’s really into the Dead. I didn’t think he was going to survive Jerry Garcia’s death. Have a seat.”

I sank down into an overstuffed loveseat. If I were lucky, all I would have to do is say something nice to the Lebrayasons when I left. Jeremy slid the CD into the player, then sat down beside me.

When the music began, Jeremy moved a little closer to me. He slid his arm around my shoulder, and his hand brushed against my breast. I wanted to believe that Jeremy hadn’t meant to do this, but I couldn’t keep my heart from beating so fast or my hands from trembling.

“Is there a restroom nearby? I just need to freshen up a little.”

“Sure. Second door on the left.”

I walked out into the narrow hallway, still feeling nervous about what had just happened with Jeremy. For a second, I wasn’t sure where I was. The Lebrayason’s house was rambling and there were lots of doors that were closed. Then I located the bathroom. It was pretty close to the kitchen, and I could hear Jeremy’s parents banging pots and pans and talking. I wasn’t really trying to hear what they were saying, but just as I was about to put my hand on the door knob, I heard Mrs. Lebrayason say, “Well, what do you think of Danita?” Her voice went high-pitched with a mock Spanish inflection when she said *Danita*.

“I like her. She seems like a nice girl.”

“Do you really?”

“Yeah.”

“You don’t think Jeremy really likes her, do you?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did I ever tell you what Janne Grayson said about her when she was dating Rodney?”

“Oh come on, Mel.”

“I don’t know, Tom. You know how innocent Jeremy is. Rodney told his mother some pretty unflattering things about Danita. In fact, it finally got so bad that he had to break up with her. And I don’t doubt it when you look at Danita’s mother. I’ve never actually seen her, but everybody talks about her. Even people who have always lived here don’t really know who Danita’s father is. She seems nice enough, but girls like her can be trouble for boys like Jeremy.”

I didn’t wait to hear what Mr. Lebrayason was going to say. Tears burned the rims of my eyes and I was afraid I would sob out loud. I opened the bathroom door and stepped inside. When I could stand it, I turned on the light. The first thing I saw was a more finished painting of the nude woman from upstairs, obviously Mrs. Lebrayason’s work. The painting was leaning against the wall as if it had been completed recently. I looked at the woman in the painting, observing the long dark hair, the small breasts, the wide hips. Her eyes were wistful as if she were looking at an object she could not reach.

Turning away from the painting, I caught a glimpse of myself in the full-length mirror that hung on the opposite wall. I pushed my frizzy blond bangs away from my eyes and took a long look. Then piece by piece, I imagined removing my clothes until I could see myself standing in front of the mirror naked. I glanced back at the nude woman, realizing how different we looked. The only likeness we seemed to possess was an expression of sadness.

I dropped to the floor, unsure of what I was going to do. As I lay there, I wished for my mother to brush my hair from my face and tell me that everything would work out. I even envisioned getting up and going into the kitchen to confront Mrs. Lebrayason. “You have no right to talk about my mother like that,” I’d say. “She has problems. Just like everybody else.” But how could I explain something I didn’t fully understand myself? How could I explain my grandmother who lived just a





few miles away from me but had never even acknowledged that I had been born? How could I explain to Mrs. Lebrayason in one evening all the things it had taken me years to sort out? Things I was just beginning to put together about how my mother had come to be the person she was. I knew my mother reached out to men as a sort of self-preservation born out of a lifetime of receiving too little love.

When I finally stopped crying, I stood up and looked at my face in the mirror. I took my compact out of my purse and covered the red blotches on my face with powder, then pulled out a tube of maroon lipstick and spread color over my lips. As I reached for the light switch, I turned for one last look at the woman in the painting. A desire to touch her in some comforting way came over me. I walked over to the painting, leaned down and kissed her lips, widening them and changing their color from lavender to scarlet. The impulse to blot the imprint away was so strong, I hurried from the room and joined Jeremy.

He was playing another CD, music I was unfamiliar with. Before he could say anything, I told him I felt a little sick and needed to go home.

"What's wrong?" Jeremy asked.

"My stomach is just a little upset. I'll be okay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. I just need to go home and lie down for a while."

"Okay. Let me go tell Mel and Tom we're going."

In my mind, I formed the words I would say to the Lebrayasons, "Thank you so much for the wonderful evening."

I followed Jeremy into the room where his parents were. Mrs. Lebrayason was sitting in a chair with her feet pulled underneath her, and Mr. Lebrayason was stretched out on the couch. As soon as he became aware of our presence, he sat up.

"Danita's not feeling well. I'm just going to

run her home."

"I'm sorry," Mr. Lebrayason said. "I hope it wasn't the food."

"No," I said. "The food was good."

Mrs. Lebrayason marked her place in the book she was reading and said, "I hope you feel better, Danita. We're glad you came for dinner."

I felt as if I were going to start crying again before I could get out of the house. Then a tear trickled down my cheek. I guess I was narrowing my eyes, preparing myself for what I needed to say to Mrs. Lebrayason if I could just get the words to come.

"I heard what you said about my mother, Mrs. Lebrayason. You can say anything you want about me. I don't care. Oh, I came here caring, but not anymore. You may not think much of my mother, but deep down, she's a good person. At least she's not a hypocrite."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't realize you could hear what I said. I shouldn't have said it. I'm sorry."

Mr. Lebrayason stood up and said, "I'm sure it was all a misunderstanding."

"I just need to go home now," I said and started walking, not even noticing that Jeremy was behind me until we got outside.

"I'm sorry, Danita. My mother just says things without thinking."

Jeremy wanted to drive me home, but he seemed to understand when I told him I needed to walk.

When my house came in view, I saw that the light in my mother's bedroom was on. I knew she would be inside waiting up for me.

As soon as she heard the door open, my mother called to me, "In here, sweetheart."

Moving toward the sound of her voice, I wasn't worrying about Jeremy or even about what Mrs. Lebrayason might say when she saw what I'd done to her painting. I was wondering how I was going to tell my mother all the things I needed to say.

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# Interims

by Maximilian S. Werner

The sky looks its age tonight.  
The air's heavy with pine sap and diesel.  
Darkbound trains rumble by.

I glimpse a few, last passengers  
dozing over papers and rocking  
in the dead light toward Baltimore. And for a moment

I wonder about their lives.  
But it is early spring,  
and I too am through with waiting.

Bone-throated croaks lead me down  
to heron, those stock-still hunters,  
deadly ghosts haunting the bog.

At my feet, half a century of leaves blacken  
the ground, nests of gold grass  
drape the stunted maples

like lanterns hung for no one.  
Peeper frogs sound their first  
runic pipings.

I'm dim all over.

Then I see the blues of a rotting jay's feathers  
like the shadows above  
a young girl's eyes. . .

and these lives of ours.  
These cold blessings.



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*



# The Gravestone

by Nina Nyhart

Everything casts a shadow

except a shadow

Trying to get your hands on it  
doesn't work—

it doesn't feel our touch  
and it remains

I'm looking for a lesson here

When tides disturb the still  
life of boats and pier

the painter grows irritable

Things we can do nothing about

are often gray or shifting  
or permanent



*Photo by Kelley Logan*



# Family Tree

by Fredrick Zydek

This tree's roots spread out  
in all directions. They are spun  
from the same sacred stuff  
that keeps its branches  
preoccupied with blooming.

Each leaf knows the songs  
that were spun when the first  
root sprouted from its seed  
and began its long journey  
into rock and into air.

Now this tree spreads out  
in so many directions,  
some of its branches bear  
fruits not everyone can name.  
It is high place and ancient roost,

tree of life, tree of good and evil,  
forest maker, sun breaker,  
anchor and road map that leads  
back to our small beginnings  
and into what waits to bloom here.



# Band of Gold

by Ruth Latta

I needed it. All the others were married and would be dripping with jewelry. Rings on their fingers and bells on their toes. Diamonds nestling in the crevices of their throats or dangling from their earlobes.

I deserved it. I was as married as any of them.

The importance of a wedding ring didn't dawn on me until I was sitting in the Fairview Mall, killing time until changing into my good dress. Then I would find a taxi and ride over to Todhunter Crescent, to Mary Lynn's, for the reunion of the girls from our old dorm floor.

I'd felt ready to meet the gang again. My new outfit was in a bag in a locker over near the mall washrooms. Jasper said he could take on my role as Domestic Goddess for the day. I had even arranged a free ride for myself with the mailman from the farm to the Greyhound stop.

Then, on a mall bench, I fell into temptation. Expensive scents from the perfume counter of a department store wafted out and tickled my nostrils. *Topaz. White Vanilla. Black Pearls.* I knew their names from TV. The other women at the reunion, Mary Lynn, Muffy, Caroline, Courtney, *et al*, would float in on a cloud of delicate scent.

Caroline, who inhabited the residence cell next to mine over thirty years ago, always smelled of lily of the valley, or "Muguet," as she called it. She had learned French in her expensive private high school. Her white angora sweaters and pale grey skirts made me think of lilies. That fall, Caroline befriended me when my ski jacket disintegrated in the washer. She came back from Thanksgiving bringing me her sister's outgrown duffle coat. Smelling faintly of *Joie*, it was the best garment I owned.

Leaving the house for the reunion, I'd smelled of Ivory soap, but sweat from menopause and travel had pretty well extinguished that clean scent. Maybe I should go in and use one of the tester

bottles. Yes. Then I would smell as good as any of them.

I ventured in and sprayed myself with an atomizer on the counter. The bored clerk chatted with a colleague, scarcely noticing me there. Why would anyone notice me, in my tan sweat shirt, with the hood up to cover the curlers in my hair, and my faded jeans and running shoes? I might have been cleaning staff.

Once inside the store, I was hypnotized, like a jackdaw sighting the glint of metal. The jewelry counter was close by. Gems winked at me from a display case. Leaning on the counter, just at the opening where the sales staff passed through, I looked down into little velvet boxes of diamonds and wedding bands. Some were in matched sets, some just gold bands alone.

I didn't own either.

The blond clerk, in pale pink sweater and matching tweed skirt, had her back turned to me.

Something came over me. I stepped up to the door in the counter. Reaching over, I easily found the latch and opened it. In a twinkling I was on the other side. My hand went under the counter, into the display case. My fingers seized a plain circle of gold. No alarm sounded. No security guard spotted me. The sales clerk didn't move or turn.

Quickly I was out, dropping the ring down into my bra. Casually I strolled through the store, pausing at the scarves. The leopard print was tempting, but I didn't want to push my luck.

Outside the store, the spell which had me in its thrall carried me to the locker, then the ladies' room. With my curlers out and my Value Village dress on, I slipped the ring on my finger. Just my size. It belonged there. I was appropriately dressed, right down to the chunky shoes I'd had for thirty years—finally back in style. Since I was still early, I decided to save cab fare and take a city bus out to Todhunter Crescent, where Mary Lynn lived.



Todhunter Crescent was not exactly my milieu, so why was I making this trek into the land of snobbery? For love. I no longer believed, as in the hippie-dippy sixties, “that love is all you need,” but I knew the emotion well, and I still felt it for Jasper. I had a motherly love for the refugees from the urban jungle who share our eighty acre farm in Timberline Township. Jasper and I once dreamed of changing the world in a big way. Now, in middle age, we are content to do what we can for a few former street kids—and try not to expect too much.

Back in the 1960s, when we met, Jasper and I considered marriage a bourgeois institution. We only did it because his parents would have cut off his allowance if we had lived in what was then called “sin.” We complied with a no-frills ceremony with no rings.

He worked with draft resistors; I taught kids in an inner-city school. It was easier for me to live frugally than for him because I was accustomed to poverty. The scholarship which had taken me to university was a comet in my former world of low expectations.

Was it Watergate that made Jasper decide that politics and organizing were futile, or was it Reagan in power? Whatever the precise event, we were both fed up with the crumbling city core, and longed for some fresh air and peace. That run-down farm left to Jasper by his uncle began to beckon. We moved there, gratefully, then started the new project, the farm as a refuge for the life-battered. A back-to-basics life appealed to me. I do supply teaching at the school but my real work is mothering the brood of twenty people. My days in the kitchen, looking out over rolling hills, are not all toil. Talking to people and listening to their needs can be draining emotionally, though. Ours is a life set back in time, like the fictional *Waltons* on TNN, but the residents seem to thrive in this “created” or “intentional” family.

Farming and wood cutting are not lucrative, and there have been large-scale cutbacks to the social welfare system. My former classmates and

their husbands are well off. I intended to speak of the worthy work Jasper and I are doing at Timberline Farm. Perhaps they would be generous, especially as it was tax deductible.

Wearing a wedding ring would make me a more convincing representative of our worthy endeavour. At least, that’s what I told myself as I went out of the mall to the area where the city buses stopped, to find the one to Todhunter Meadows.

Soon I was rolling through lush suburbia, with stately homes on verdant lawns. No sidewalks. No one ever walked here. Why ruin those Italian shoes when there were four wheel drive vehicles and low-slung sports cars to take you where you wanted to go?

Should I have chosen a different life? Normally, I would have said “No,” but that day I wasn’t sure. I imagined leather sofas, not threadbare cloth ones with springs poking through. Gleaming tables, not scarred and pitted ones with initials carved into the wood. Satin sheets, not flannelette ones.

“Where’s the lady who wanted Todhunter Crescent?” The driver’s voice burst through my musings. I lurched to my feet. 2:00 p.m. Time to meet the girls of yesteryear.

It was easy.

Easy to sit on soft-cushioned wicker chairs on the deck, enjoying Indian summer and sipping Earl Grey. The biscuits Mary Lynn served melted in my mouth. It was simple enough to smile and be gracious when Muffy seemed so glad to see me, or at least, to see all the girls on our floor together again.

“Remember the night of the party raid?”

“Remember when Alison first wore jeans to class? How times have changed!”

“Would you believe I’m a grandmother? It’s too soon. The little one calls me ‘Gaga.’”

It didn’t take much to smile at these offerings, though I dreaded the moment when Mary Lynn would turn to me and say, “Now, Laurie, tell us what’s happening in your life.” Then I would make my appeal, play upon their liberal guilt, tell the grim and grisly experiences of some of the people



on our farm. I'd tug at their heart and purse strings.

"Yes indeed, we take cheques," I would say. "Make them to the Timberline Farm Foundation." I did it well, but beforehand I got butterflies.

I was telling them about a former drug-addict, clean for a year, who loved our greenhouse and garden, when the doorbell rang. The maid responded on the first musical note, but Mary Lynn rose and tiptoed back through the house to meet the newcomer.

"Here's my *cheque*," Courtney dropped a personalized peach-coloured slip of paper on my lap. "It's best we do this now, before Caroline arrives." The other women nodded.

"Why?" I asked.

"Haven't you heard? Ever since Hugh passed on—if that's the right phrase—Caroline has had a hard time. Shh."

Mary Lynn came through the door with her arm around a woman who looked vaguely familiar, as well she should have, since we used to live at such proximity. She wore a pink twin set, a tweed skirt, and looked washed out beneath her ash blonde hair. I had seen her recently, very recently. Then, as if a pail of cold water had been poured over me, I remembered where. Earlier that day, in the department store, it had been her back that was turned when I crept behind the counter and ripped off the ring.

Oh God! Mary Lynn was bringing her over to me.

"Laurie was telling about the wonderful work she and Jasper are doing with troubled street people," she explained.

Caroline still smelled of lily of the valley.

"Sorry I'm late," she breathed, "but I had a terrible morning at the store."

"Caroline works in jewelry," Muffy chipped in. "She has a natural gift for it." One would have thought Caroline was a silversmith; Muffy made it sound like play.

"I was working on inventory when someone made off with an expensive ring, under my nose."

Caroline's pink lips trembled. "If it doesn't turn up I'll have to pay for it."

The others clucked sympathetically. Maybe it was just mislaid. Surely there was a surveillance tape that would reveal the thief's identity. Where was security? The robber should have been apprehended on leaving the store.

Quivering, I reminded myself that the shoplifter had been wearing nondescript clothes. I was wearing an uncrushable black dress, chic black shoes, grandmother's antique brooch, with my hair all in curls. No similarity.

Poor Caroline's teacup rattled in her hands. She took a sip. When Mary Lynn announced a showing of old home movies downstairs in the entertainment room, I was the first to spring up and step



Photo (detail) by J. Stoffers



smartly after her. I sat well away from Caroline.

My image on the screen surprised me. I had always imagined myself the plainest of them all. I was the first to dispense with leg-shaving and make-up, which led to a few raised eyebrows and a few snide remarks from pastel-coated lips. Yet I looked young, pretty, natural, and not all that different, except for grey in my hair.

As shrieks and laughter rippled through the room, I peered around for Caroline. Just then a prom shot came on screen. She was on Hugh's arm. She found a tissue and dabbed her eyes. After the video ended, we toured the rest of the house. Talk of decorators, fabrics, choices in tile, wafted around me until I lagged behind, hoping for a respite. In the main foyer, I sat on a bench and leaned back, whispering: "mission accomplished." Somehow, my left hand seemed heavy. A frisson of pain ran from the third finger up my arm. Oh-oh. Wasn't that a warning sign of a heart attack? Women my age died every day of heart problems. Everyone would say what a noble, self-sacrificing person I had been. My conscience pinched, as if encircled by a metal band.

The smell of *lily* floated past me, preceding Caroline into the entry hall.

"Oh, I didn't realize anyone was here." She had her tissue out and ready, obviously hoping for a few moments to come to terms with her emotions.

"I hadn't heard about Hugh. I'm so sorry."

She sniffed. "Thanks. It has been a year but I'm still trying to figure it out. Businesses fail every day, I told him. It's not the end of the world. I would have been glad to live more simply, and it would have been good for the children. But he ended his life, and left me all alone."

I motioned her to join me, and put my arm around her. The ring seemed to blaze on my rough hand. I was sure she would spot it, but her eyes were swimming.

Listening was my strong suit. It's my role at

the farm. Lately I felt inundated with others' needs. Where is the friend to lend me an ear? Jasper tries, but the only privacy we get is alone in our bedroom at night, and after his day of hard work he falls asleep the moment his head touches the pillow.

"I hated to lose the cottage," Caroline was saying. "I loved the fields, the trees, the lake. I would have been content to live there and sell the house. As it turned out, I had to sell both. Oh, sometimes I grieve for Hugh and other times I could kill him if he wasn't already dead. And now I may lose my job."

I opened my mouth. The words that came out were an invitation to our farm. I described the place.

"You can always get away from people for a quiet walk," I told her. "It's about time I had an old friend to visit. The kids never imagine that I had a life apart from them."

"Thank you, Laurie." Her eyes shone.

When she offered to drive me back to the mall where I would catch the Greyhound, I accepted. The goodbyes were noisy, tearful, and, I think, sincere. My thanks was waved away. Several mentioned coming to the farm on Visitors' Day.

"You're welcome any time," I told Caroline as we said goodbye at the mall entrance.

On our drive, I thought of slipping off the ring and leaving it on her car seat, but decided against it.

The mall had a stationery store and a postal outlet. I bought stamps, then in the washroom sealed the ring into a small padded envelope. I mailed it in the letter box outside. I didn't want any postal clerk pointing out that the jewelry store to which the packet was addressed was just down the mall.

Later, as the Greyhound purred down the highway toward Jasper and our "family," I leaned back in the seat. Looking out at a barn silhouetted against a pink and purple sky, I finally dared to exhale.





# Cut Loose

by Earl Coleman

Landlubber, marooned again on this familiar  
Strand—I look alee and sight you graceful  
Taking leave of me, under hands  
Sea-knowing, seasoned, mine no use  
For any but the lower chores:  
Some mess, but that prepared inexpertly,  
Or pumping up the bilge (but sadly  
Never could dispose of it).

Accommodating

To your luff and tack took depths of sea-lore  
Far beyond my ken, my raw and bleeding palms  
Are testimony only to my lack of craft  
At keeping bowlines tight, not letting slip  
The sheet in fear you'd catch a vagrant draft  
Such as the one that's taken you away.  
I raise my glass to magnify this passage  
From my life, and yet resolved to lose  
My sea-legs, seek a mooring, Jeep, Land Rover,  
Trailer, better fitted for my stewardship.



# Trying to Understand Bad Luck

by Ryan G. Van Cleave

Think of all luck  
As a gap-toothed grandpa  
Whose skin is two sizes too big  
Both eyes little more than cataracts  
And he's throwing a game of darts

Bullseyes are terribly scarce  
And numbers too low to matter  
Are all he can usually manage  
But the occasional double twenty  
Or triple sixteen still get hit

So when every little thing  
Seems destined to go against you  
Just imagine that the dart tips  
Are too blunt to stick any longer

Listen—you can hear him fumbling  
For a sharpening stone



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*



# Letter from John Sprockett to Sophia Starling, Early 1876

by Robert Cooperman

Dear Miss Starling,  
Now that you're marrying a doctor  
I can't call you Sophie.  
By the time you get this,  
you'll be vowed and kissed  
and maybe a bun in your belly.  
If your high-minded physician  
ever mistreats you, just send word  
and there'll be one less  
gentleman-bully in the world.  
But I suspect you can handle him,  
like you soothed me when the need  
for a drink crawled like a scorpion  
and only your lullabies—  
about England's green meadows  
that I still can't believe in,  
knowing only mountain, plain, and desert—  
could pry that stinging devil loose.

Should I ever get far enough ahead,  
I'll see for myself if you sang true.  
Don't fret, I won't descend  
like a buzzard in buckskins.  
Anyway, I wish you only good.  
Here's a gift to prove it,  
and if he ever offers you trouble,  
remember what I said about a favor  
from an old friend.  
I remain true and trustworthy,  
believing you to be the one blessing  
in my life of rot-gut and six-guns.



# Second Letter from John Sprockett to Sophia Starling, After She Has Informed Him of Her Imminent Marriage

by Robert Cooperman

Miss Starling,  
I've read your letter  
a hundred times now, if once,  
and have something to add:  
I may be a murderer and a drunk,  
but I'm no fool—  
underneath all your pretty,  
sad words of farewell  
is shame for a dirty killer  
who could spout poetry,  
and so, surprised you  
that I wasn't a screaming savage  
who danced on my victims  
and swallowed their hearts whole;

Shame for loving the rough things  
we did in places you'd never set  
a dainty foot in again;  
shame that people who love  
to stir trouble like a pot of beans  
will scotch your easy life  
of kissing clean, pretty kids;  
shame for still wanting me  
but afraid to think of yourself  
as a brute's woman  
and that you'll have to mourn me  
sooner than late,  
dead in a dirty street  
or saw-dusted saloon—

To leave you grief-wild  
and knowing that love  
can't help you forget  
and be magically swept off  
to a soft English gentleman  
who'd make you feel safe  
when you yawned boredom,  
who'd not ask embarrassing questions  
about your tearful dreams.



# Letter from Agatha Starling Lawson to John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

Sir,  
I must insist that you cease  
all correspondence with my sister.  
Her imminent wedding must end  
all social intercourse between you.  
Her fiance—a physician dedicated  
to the poor and abused—  
is a man of principles,  
something you could never grasp,  
living, as Sophia has informed me,  
by trapping harmless creatures  
as well as by the greater sin of murder.

That you and my sister spent  
several months traveling together  
was a mere accident of chance:  
she, your employer; you, her porter—  
intimacy merely a quirk of propinquity,  
my sister sentimental about wild beasts,  
never seeing their treachery  
until they bite or scratch.



*Painting by Gary Wolgamott*



She spoke of you as a natural gentleman.  
You can perhaps prove that hyperbole  
by silently acknowledging  
you have no place in her world,  
just as she found yours unfit  
for a civilised English lady:  
a world of dirt and unspeakable horrors  
in no way picturesque when she recounted  
her travels on peaks heathen gods inhabit.  
Our Lord dwells in solid churches;  
our missionaries are driving pagan idols  
from the swamps of Africa and the Orient.  
A pity we've not hollowed out your Rockies,  
that lair converted to Christian cathedrals.

I trust you will mention nothing  
of this letter to my sister,  
already giddy to the point of collapse  
by the joyous prospect of her marriage.  
Your disappearance will serve as the best gift  
you can bestow upon the blessed couple.



# John Sprockett Voices His Regrets to Sid Collier, in a Saloon in Gold Creek

by Robert Cooperman

From all the sap I've tapped  
into whores' buckets, I still don't know  
if any fermented into a tyke.  
Maybe that Ute squaw bore a papoose.  
Last time I saw her, though, she was deciding  
whether to bury another knife in me,  
the one hilt-deep in my shoulder making her face  
film-over like a wild-fire in dry tinder—  
for my having killed her brother and kinsman  
when they tried to murder me for courting her.

Sooner or late, a young gun or sneaky-pete's  
going to send me to Hell; I'd like  
to see some good work of mine take root  
before I get shoveled under and forgot.  
Not so much to pass on my worthless name,  
just to bounce a baby on my knee  
and not have it scream at my face:  
looking like a branding-iron was singed  
into the wrong end of a calf or foal.  
Something small and helpless, to smile at,  
unlike my Pa, hard as his Bible's binding,  
always a harness to beat his Lord into me,  
Ma wringing her hands and reciting poetry  
to take my mind off scorched hide.





*Painting by Gary Wolgamott*

When she passed from cholera—  
Pa and me spared that Devil's black water—  
I swore if he touched me again  
I'd smash his Book across his face.  
Reeling and bleeding, he cursed me, cast me out.  
He wouldn't be able to shout, "Marked by the Lord!"  
if he could've seen I had a sweet angel-girl,  
her face soft as a rabbit's belly-fur,  
eyes to melt even the Old Testament Bellower  
Pa prayed to morning and night—  
pleading for two slabs off His marble hardness,  
to slap me toward the path of piety,  
a place Miss Starling could've led me to  
if she'd stayed. The child we might've made!





# Willie Leeson Awaits Trial for the Murder of John Sprockett, Gold Creek, 1876

by Robert Cooperman

I done it, and not even jerking on a rope  
like spider over a flaring hearth  
can keep men from saying I killed Sprockett!  
If he hadn't've slapped me in full view  
of snickering saloon whores  
and told me to "leave gunplay to grown men,"  
I wouldn't be waiting trial,  
so I got to thank his discourtesy  
for making me famous.

"Not that we're not grateful to you,"  
Sheriff Casey spat a scorpion of chaw,  
"for getting rid of that murdering horror.  
But we can't have boys killing white men  
over a cuff on the jaw and a good joke."

I'd waited for Sprockett in Smith's Livery.  
My first shot winged him. More from surprise,  
he called, "You'll have to do better, friend."  
I spun him like a tumbleweed with my next,  
sent him down like a calf resigned to the iron,  
his head buried in straw and horse shit,  
heaving like a mare in a breach-birth.  
I put four more right into his chest.



Still, he took Satan's own time to die.  
If I hadn't been curious to make sure  
I would've heard Casey, drawn by the shots.  
But he had his .44 to my head,  
my Colt arm in a hammer-lock.  
"See that Sprockett gets a decent burial," I smiled.  
"And reserve a nice fat plot for yourself."  
Casey cold-cocked me, the joke on him,  
having to haul me on his jellied shoulders.

Time drags like sleeping lizards  
while I wait for drunk Judge Delaney,  
but one dime novelist's already took  
my life story. I thanked him,  
pocketed his cigar for politeness.

My boy," he sang friendly as an angel,  
"Thank you!"

**To be continued in future issues.**

The poems that comprise *The Badman and the Lady* are part of *IN THE COLORADO GOLD FEVER MOUNTAINS*.  
Purchase information may be obtained from Western Reflections Inc., P.O. Box 410, Ouray, CO 81427.



## Contributors

**Richard Campbell** was born in Sacramento, California in 1952. He attended the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He has participated in numerous writers' workshops and poetry readings in the Los Angeles area. His work has been published or is forthcoming in *Atlanta Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *Plainsongs*, *Poem*, *Thin Air*, and *Wisconsin Review*. He has two teenage sons, Byron and Spencer, and lives with his wife Jessamine in Redondo Beach, California, where they both are pursuing writing careers.

**Earl Coleman** is the author of "Cut Loose." He now writes poetry and prose full-time and has been published widely since leaving a publishing career eight years ago. He was nominated for Pushcart XXIII for one of his stories.

**Robert Cooperman's** second collection, *The Badman and the Lady*, is part of *In the Colorado Gold Fever Mountains* from Western Reflections, Inc., P.O. Box 410, Ouray, CO 81427. His work has appeared in *The Centennial Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*. His first book, *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was published by the University Press of Florida.

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**W.K. Donaldson** lives in Lafayette, Louisiana where he teaches English at the University of Louisiana. He is married to a lovely woman, has two troublesome cats, and displays a penchant for movies of the late-sixties and early seventies. If only because he finds the short story form to be far more difficult, he is inclined to write novel-length fictions, and he has a surrogate in New York that is presently doing her best to find his latest effort a proper home. "Such Small Expressions of Forgiveness" is his first published story.

**Kathleen Johnson** is currently putting together a collection of poetry titled *Just West of Freedom*, based on familial ties to the Gyp Hills region of Kansas and Oklahoma. She's originally from Oklahoma, but currently is living in Baldwin City, Kansas. She was the recipient of the Langston Hughes Poetry Award, a Kansas Arts Commission Mini-Fellowship, and a Kansas Voices

Award for poetry. She's had work published in *The Midwest Quarterly*, *West Branch*, *Concho River Review*, *Kansas Women Writers*, and other magazines.

**Ruth Latta's** over 200 published stories have appeared in North American magazines, including *The Fiddlehead*, *The Storyteller*, and *White Wall Review*; two have appeared in the British publication *Quality Fiction for Women*. Recently, her fiction has appeared in *Lime Green Bulldozers* (TX), *Rural Roads* (MN), and *Vintage* (WA). This past spring, three of her stories were among the eight winners of the Ottawa Valley Writer's Guild fiction contest, and will appear in December in their annual, *The Grist Mill*. Latta is the author of two books: *Life Writing; Autobiographers and their Craft*, and *A Wild Streak* (short stories), both published by General Store. She has compiled and edited two others: *The Memory of All That: Canadian Women Remember World War II*, and *Life Music* (short stories).

**Mary MacGowan** has her M.A. in Arts and Letters from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, where she lives with her husband and three children. MacGowan has had poems published in *Array*, *Art Times*, *Black Buzzard Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Cimarron Review*, *Eureka Literary Review*, *Fugue*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Half Jones to Jubilee Light: A Poetry Review*, *Licking River Review*, *Palo Alto Review*, *Piedmont Literary Review*, *Running Deer Press*, and *Troubadour*. Her poem, "Does Anyone Know?" was accepted for publication in the 1998 ICARUS Literary Competition chapbook. She was official runner-up in the Sheila-Na Gig chapbook contest for 1998.

**Jane McClellan** is a retired teacher/professor of English with a doctorate from the Florida State University. Her poems have recently appeared in *Fox Cry*, *RE.AL*, *The West Wind Review*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Callaloo*, and *Poet Lore*.

**Walt McDonald's** latest book is *Counting Survivors* (University of Massachusetts Press). Two other books are *After the Noise of Saigon* (University of Massachusetts Press) and *Night Landings* (HarperCollins). He has published fifteen collections of poems and one book of fiction for presses such as University of Pittsburgh Press, University of North Texas Press, University of Massachusetts Press, Ohio State University Press, Spoon River Poetry Press, and Texas Tech University Press. He has



*After the Noise of Saigon* (University of Massachusetts Press) and *Night Landings* (HarperCollins). He has published fifteen collections of poems and one book of fiction for presses such as University of Pittsburgh Press, University of North Texas Press, University of Massachusetts Press, Ohio State University Press, Spoon River Poetry Press, and Texas Tech University Press. He has published more than 1,600 poems in journals and collections, including *American Poetry Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Nation*, *New England Review*, *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Westview*. His awards include three National Cowboy Hall of Fame's Western Heritage Awards, two National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships, and four Texas Institute of Letters Awards.

**H. Bruce McEver's** poetry has been published in *Ploughshares*, *Berkshire Review*, and *Connecticut River Review*. He has taken poetry workshops at Sarah Lawrence College with Tom Lux and Kevin Pilkington and in New York City with Brooks Haxton, J.D. McClatchy, Kathia Pollit, and Pearl London. During the day, McEver is the president of an investment-banking firm, and he and his wife live on a farm in Salisbury, Connecticut.

**Teresa Burns Murphy's** latest short story is entitled "Girls Like Me." She is currently an assistant professor of education at Lyon College. Recently, she has had work accepted for publication in *Sistersong*, and she won the WORDS (Arkansas Literary Society) Award for fiction in 1996.

**Nina Nyhart** is the author of two collections of poems published by Alice James Books: *Openers* and *French for Soldiers*, and is co-author of *The Poetry Connection*, a classroom text from Teachers and Writers. Her poems have appeared in *Field*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Ohio Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *Shenandoah*, *Sojourner*, *Tampa Review*, and in many other journals and anthologies.

**Nicole Ross** is a second-year MFA candidate in poetry at Penn State University. Her poetry has been published in *Lucid Moon*, *Poetry Motel* and *The Blind Man's Rainbow*.

**Anne Silver** is originally from Detroit, and attended Pasadena City College where she studied with Ron Koertge. She

received a M.A. from the Instituto de Allende in Mexico where I was published in the local little literary, *Xalli* ("Sand"). Her humorous book on handwriting analysis, *Instant People Reading through Handwriting*, was published by Sterling and Newcastle, respectively. Silver was one of the winners of the Chester A. Jones foundation in 1997, and has been published or has work forthcoming in *Nimrod*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Bridges*, *California Quarterly*, *Caprice*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Futures*, *Half Tones To Jubilee*, *Home Planet News*, *Licking River Review*, *Libido*, *New Laurel Review*, *Ohr Ha Torah*, *Plainsongs*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Third Lung Review*, *Thresholds Quarterly*, *Wild Word*, and *Writing For Our Lives*. She has been studying with Peter Levitt since 1994 and has taken workshops with Diane DePrima, Robert Creeley and Eavan Boland. Silver has breast cancer, and she states that she is using this segment of her life as an opportunity for growth — both for herself and her readers. "Serum" will be part of a hundred poems in a book which she hopes will encourage those who suffer to still assess life with gratitude.

**Maggie Aldridge Smith** is 86 years young and is a native of Seminole and Caddo County Oklahoma. She is a retired school teacher as was her mother. She was born in Benton County, Arkansas. Her late husband, Melvin Smith, was born in a dugout on the banks of the Washita River near Mountain View, Oklahoma, and was a railway mail clerk and a disabled veteran of WWI. She has authored twelve books of history-genealogy and has also written thirteen poetry books; these are offered by Siloan Springs Museum toward its upkeep.

**Virgil Suarez's** first book of poetry, *You Come Singing*, is due out this fall from Tia Chucha Press/Northwestern University. He has earned fellowships from the Florida State Arts Council, and has won an award for the best poem from *The Caribbean Review*. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Blue Mesa Review*, *The Charlton Review*, *Sow's Ear Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Crazy Horse*, and *Puerto del Sol*. He teaches creative writing at Florida State University and lives with his family in Tallahassee. In his spare time he breeds and shows canaries.

**Ryan G. Van Cleave** is a freelance photographer originally from Chicago and his poetry has appeared in recent issues of *Slant*, *Willow Review*, *Oxford Magazine*, and *Poems & Plays*; new poems are forthcoming in *Maryland Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. He is a poetry editor for *Sundog: The Southeast Review* and also serves as coordinator for the annual "World's Best Short Story" competition.



**Maximilian S. Werner** has published an interview with Robert Hass and has had poems appear in such journals as *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* and *Hayden's Ferry Review*. His work has appeared recently in *Poem*, *Willow Review*, *Sierra Nevada College Review* and *Puerto del Sol*. He has work forthcoming in *The Wolf Head Quarterly* and is also an Academy of American Poets prize winner.

**Fredrick Zydek** taught creative writing and theology for many years before deciding to write full-time. He first taught at UNO and later at the College of Saint Mary. He has published

four collections of poetry. *Ending the Fast*, his third, included a quartet titled *Songs from the Quinault Valley*, which was awarded the Sarah Foley O'Loughlen Award for the editors of America. *The Conception Abbey Poems*, his fourth collection has just gone into a second expanded edition. His work has appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *New England Review*, *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Yankee*, and others. Most recently he has accepted the post of editor for the Lone Willow Press chapbook series. He has in excess of 800 publishing credits which include personal essays, fiction, academic articles, plays, poems, and an occasional review.

### Illustrations

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## An Invitation

# Westview Writers' Festival

7 p.m. Thursday, March 22, 2001

Southwestern Oklahoma State University Conference Center

Featuring: *Robert Cooperman*

Cooperman's second collection, *The Badman and the Lady*, is part of *In the Colorado Gold Fever Mountains* from Western Reflections, Inc. His work has appeared in *The Centennial Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*. His first book, *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was published by the University Press of Florida.

This event is free and open to the public.  
For further information, call Fred Alsberg  
at (580) 774-3168.



W E S T V I E W



# Arts Calendar

## Fall/Winter 2000-2001

Music, Theater, Art, and Literary Events

All events are on the campus of Southwestern Oklahoma State University  
unless otherwise noted. Panorama events are free.

### November

- 14 Panorama Event-Dr. Bernard Harris, Astronaut—  
Biological Researcher-  
Fine Arts Center-7:30 pm
- 16-19 *It's All in the Timing*, directed by Darryl Rodriquez,  
7:30, Old Science Auditorium
- 30 *Wonka 2000: The Real Story*, directed by Jeff  
Gentry

### February

- 5 Panorama Event-Donna Cox, Lyric Soprano-Fine Arts  
Center-7:30 pm
- 8-9 Southwestern Jazz Festival---Fine Arts Center

### March

- 6 Panorama Event-2 X 4 Productions, Contemporary  
Theatre-Fine Arts Center, 7:30 pm
- 8 SWOSU 2001 Centennial Celebration Begins
- 22 Westview Writers' Festival with Robert Cooperman,  
7:00 p.m. SWOSU Conference Center
- 28-Apr. 1 *Tartuffe*, directed by Steve Strickler, 7:30 Old  
Science Auditorium

### April

- 1 Panorama Event-Oklahoma City Philharmonic-Fine  
Arts Center-3:00 pm
- 25-27 Student-directed one-act plays





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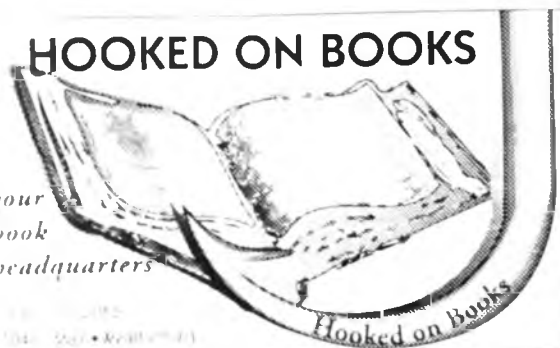
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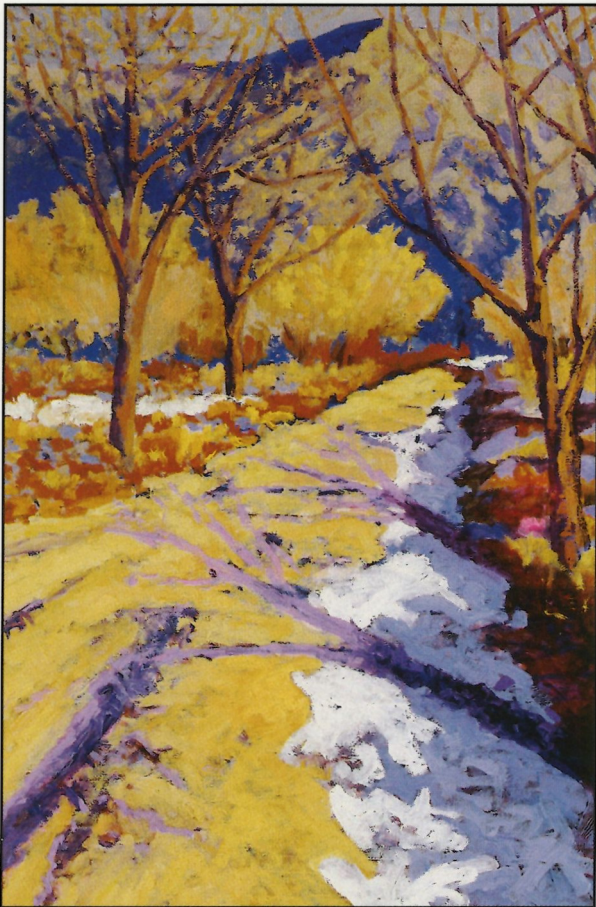
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# W E S T V I E W

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