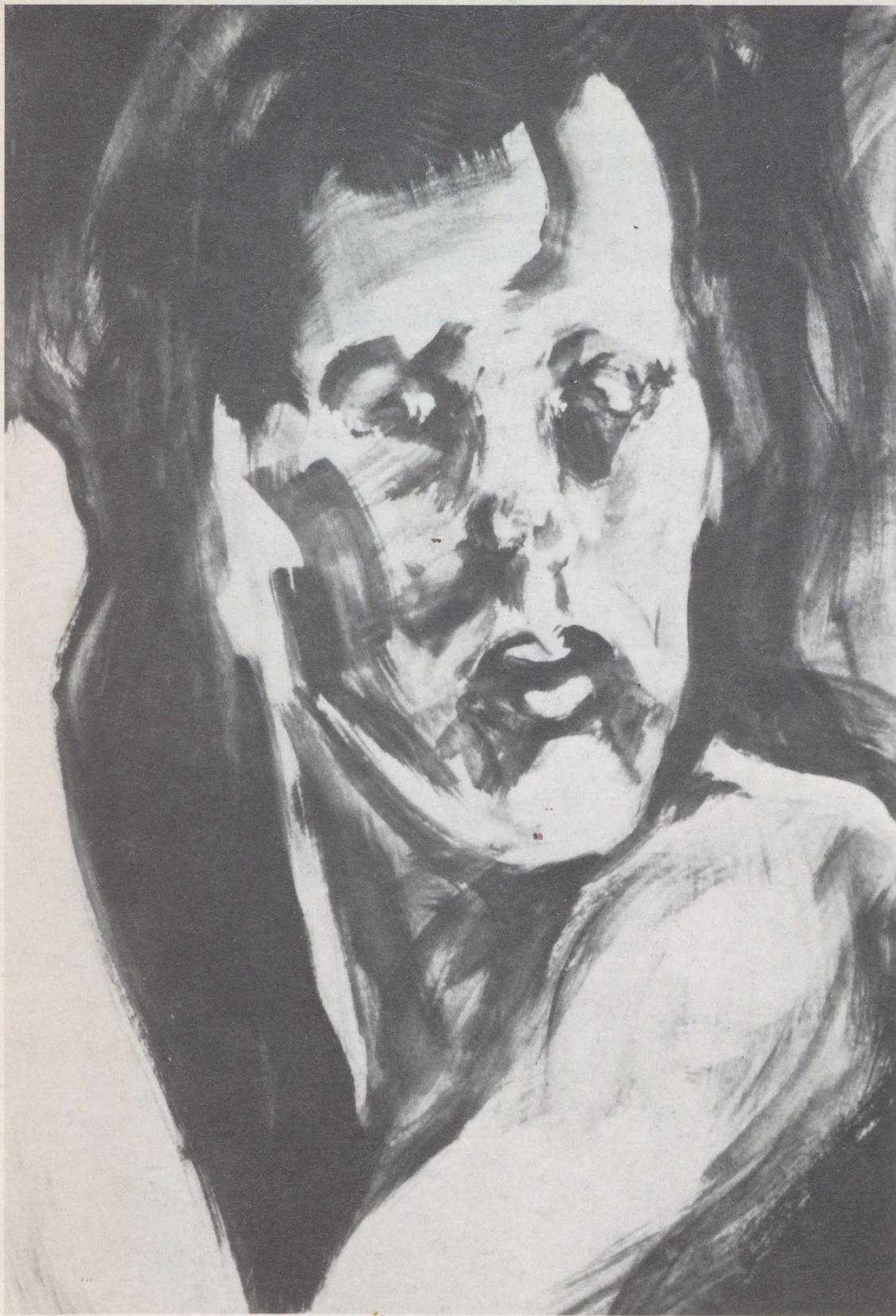


[Vol. 64]



TOWERS

The literary magazine of Northern Illinois University.

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Judge: James M. Mellard

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Voices

Ours is unnatural weather,
A sky too close, verging on
This place of molt
And absences.

In our minds one design
Moves like a pattern of leaves
Faltering between ceiling and wall,
Shuffling over the white moon,
A branch in the right place
To throw its figure through a gap.

There is some breach
Of language between us,
The mother, the daughter,
Waiting on this narrow
Ridge of mere sand,
Balancing our hips and knees.

The object is to meet this thing,
To be there when it passes.
We swim out,
Our mouths saturated, moulding
The surface to our reach.

We aren't like people anymore.
Your voice is gone and mine
Flags in a conchal state
Somewhere between our bodies,
Perhaps still in yours:
Mother, are we brave?

A swift rise in the current
And its plain bulk ruptures
The surface, a grey shudder,
A force in stone, alive
At the site and exhaling.
We need to touch this old back,
This vessel of language,
But it is passing, and sinking,
And now, through desire checked,
A simple animal,

In the abandoned air
My first thought speaks
Hard, names itself, and rinses
To its own gleam.

P. Austin



Scapeseries 2 *Jordan David Dauby*

Going West: The American Dream

Nothing smells so good as the desert after a rain,
you said. So when I drove through, I hoped it would rain.

Except for the road I saw hardly a thing I knew by name—
a barbed wire fence that ran the length of the road,

a creosote bush, vibrant with yellow flowers,
and those telephone poles with their network of fire.

Out there they looked abandoned—ruins of a lost civilization.
But the land didn't look like anything so great,

just large, worn down mounds of red dirt,
trails ripped through, from kids on dirt bikes,

like you'd said. From the sky the trails
must look like the lines on the palm of your hand,

chapped-red hand. I looked south, thought,
that's where you live. Behind those mounds

there's a house, a yard. As I drove into the city
night drove in with me. Mountains moved black

across a deep orange sky—the color of tiger lilies.
I stopped, cupped my hands, expected what was left

of the sun to fill them with whatever that color was made from,
or with you. I hoped it would rain. I wanted a time to come

that was like the time after a rain in the desert,
when nothing smells so good.

Michelle Parinni

The Eelworm

doubles up on itself
like the mobius strip

halving the globes
of dark buds—

if you cut it
it moves just the same

and expands like a noose
colorless—

the hydra beheaded, waiting
to fill its contorted center—

it flattens the fallen
shreds of the leaves

wakes of wind-petals
stripped from Orange trees,

the flush of
uprooted lights.

it twists
through the inch of clean root,

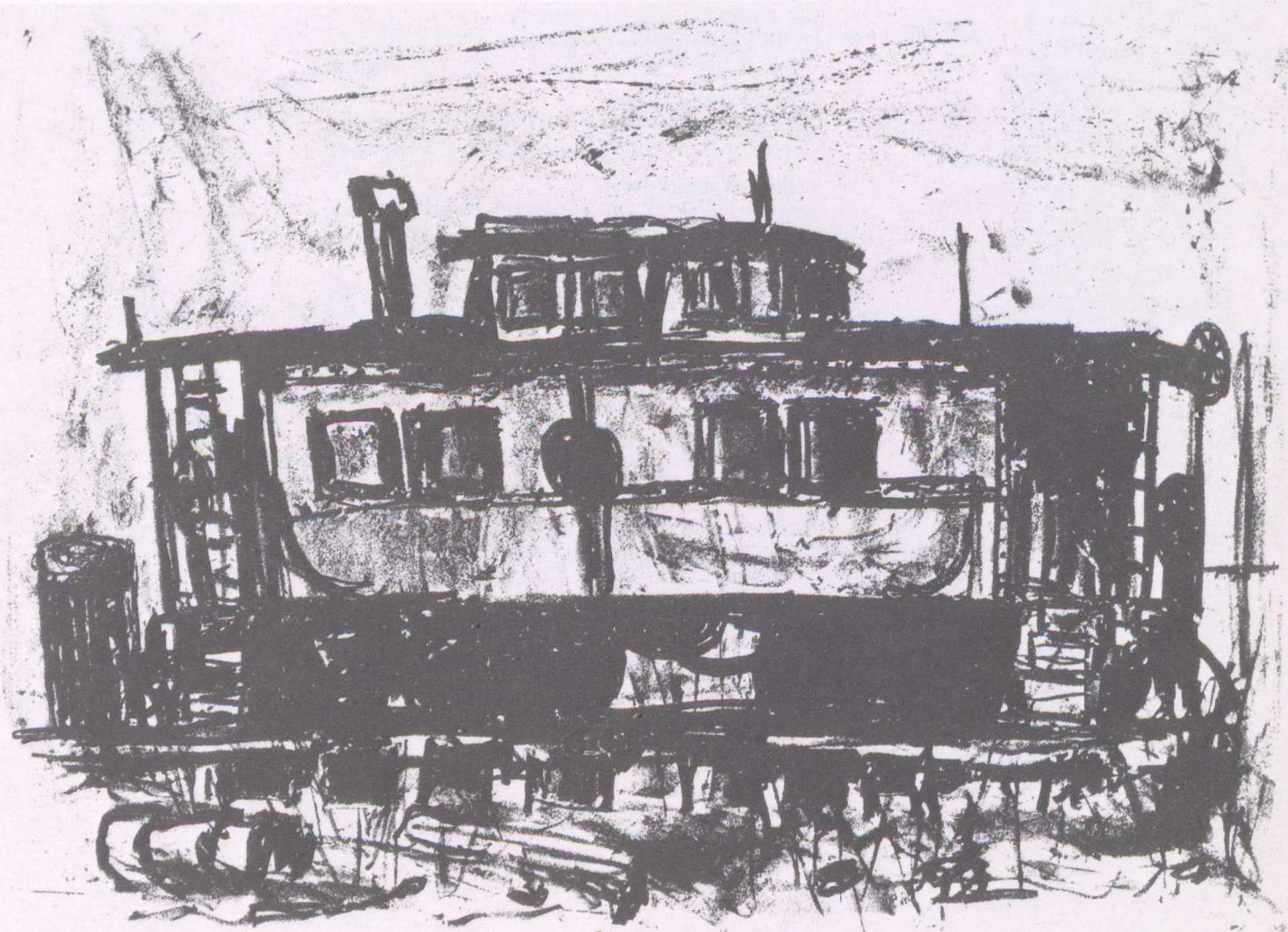
its microscope-eye
dissected—dissecting—

blind as a chemist's glass vial
weighing and measuring

those stems of color
that bit of bark
that held eggshelled breath

to acetate airs
of pure seasons.

Arlene Jozefiak



Caboose Thomas McDonald

Grampa Gordon's Needle

by Dan Riggle

Don't get me wrong. I'm not an atheist like my brother Gilly says, or a hedonist, whatever that is. Mom and Grams say I'm just like Gramps; I don't show respect for the living or the dead. But I just figured, seeing Gramps lying there in the casket, even Gramps himself would have seen the sham of it all. Everybody walking past, blubbering over him, kneeling and praying, it all seemed pretty fakey to me. You almost expected the old bugger's body to pop up from the casket and have a good laugh on us all. I mean, that old man used to needle everybody, even me, and they say I was his favorite. If he wasn't drinking your beers at family parties after telling you Grams wanted you in the kitchen, then he was getting you into trouble with women no matter where you went together. In a crowd, he'd sneak his hand around behind you and give some girl a goose, so when she'd turn she figured you did it. I got plenty of dirty looks that way. Then I'd turn around to see that old buzzard, all five feet tall of him, grinning like a kid who just got his first piece of tail. Even after he hit eighty years old, he could still smooth-talk your girl away by cracking off one-liners so she'd think he was so cute she'd forget you even existed. Pretty soon he'd coax her out to the dance floor for a slow one, his head resting on her boobs, grinning at you so you'd feel like a big dope standing alone at the bar. A couple of times I almost felt like going out and bashing him one.

These pranks never went over so good with Grams. At family parties, when Gramps was stealing the show, she'd sit with a bunch of old corpses at a table, not drinking, not smiling, not even listening—just glaring at that old husband of hers, while his hand inched down past his partner's waistline. I guess the girls took him for senile, so they let him get away with it, but from that cocky grin and the dreamy-eyed look on his mug, old Gramps was anything but senile. Anytime I tried to copy the old fart's technique, all I'd get was a slap in the chops or a knee in the groin. But with Gramps, the girls usually giggled and pressed his head deeper into their chests. Of course, that really primed his pumps, and Grams kind of fumed more than usual then.

Anyway, that's just the way Gramps acted, and Grams had about given up saving his soul for the Lord. Sometimes, though, when he'd steam her real good, she'd wave her beat up old Bible in his face, stepping in for the Almighty to curse Gramp's worthless soul but good to eternal damnation. But he'd just smile at her with those stained dentures of his showing:

"Well, Nora," he'd say to Grams, "I figure if they ain't nothing but a bunch of old fogies in heaven, I'd just as soon go to the other place anyhow."

She couldn't say anything after that because, if she did, she knew it would take a week's worth of praying to erase all the sins she'd yell at him.

Well, I couldn't spend much time looking at Gramps lying there, all phoney-like with a dark blue suit on and rosary beads snaking around his fingers. I remembered Gramps had worked for an undertaker once, and I wondered what he'd think of the job they did on his stiff. He'd probably have wished they put a bottle of Hamms in his hands instead of a rosary. But those ghouls don't have much sense of humor. Not like Gramps, at least. So, like I said, instead of standing around lying about how good Gramps looked, I went over to cheer Grams up.

It seemed funny, Grams being so sad when all she did was fight with Gramps all the time. I figured it was because she didn't have anybody left to get mad at, or maybe because she remembered some good times they had when she still liked sex, when Gramps must have rested his head on her chest and let his hand slide down over her rump. In fact, Gramps once told me Grams had the nicest set of buns in all of Plainview, but looking at Grams, I always had a hard time imagining that. Anyway, Grams looked sad as hell, so I tried to console her.

"Say, Grams," I said, "Why so down? Can I get you something? Coffee? Beer?"

She just gave me that worried look I'd seen her give Gramps so often, usually when he cracked his first six-pack of the day.

"No Vincent," she said, "Just let me pray a little more for old Grampa's soul."

Mom sat next to Grams, and they could have passed for twins, except Mom's thinner and not so gray as Grams. They both wrung their hands together and bit their nails, so it made you think doomsday was coming any minute. And they both wore these black-rimmed bifocals and looked like a couple of nuns out of uniform. In fact, they got along just swell with the religious people, so you figured they would've been nuns if they didn't get married. Then, one of Mom and Grams' religious friends, Father Del Grotto, decided to stick his holy nose into the conversation.

"So, Vincent," he said, "I hope you will offer us something inspirational at the gravesite tomorrow."

What Del Grotto meant was that Gramps made sure I would say something before they dumped his stiff into the hole. Gramps even had the idea written up in his will, and he whispered it to me in the hospital the day he died.

"Vinnie," he said, "I don't want no son-of-a-bitching priest trying to use the occasion for no moralizing. You can't stop some bastard like Del Grotto from sticking his fat ass into things, but you can at least liven things up with a story. You tell a good one—you hear?"

I told him I would, and he just smiled and winked an old glazed eye at me. I almost started blubbering before I left him, but he gave me such a mean stare, then grabbed a handful of sheet at his crotch, saying "None of that

crying shit, you hear. Just remember to keep this tool a-digging till you reach gold."

Sure enough, I burst out laughing, and Gramps settled back again, feeling better. He never did get to drink the six-pack I snuck up to his room that night, because he died a couple of hours after I left. I don't know what happened to the beer; but I heard Del Grotto gave last rites, so he must have drunk it.

Anyway, I didn't have an idea of what to "offer" at the gravesite, so I told Del Grotto I'd talk about God, death, life, and being good. That gave the son-of-a-bitch something to smile about, and he rubbed that fat belly of his like he did after mooching Sunday dinners at our house once a month. Grams and Mom looked at Del Grotto like he was the wisest guy they ever saw, and I stared at him too, but I thought up a few better words to describe him with.

I went with my brother Gilly to the bar that night to see what he thought of the speech I'd make.

"Jesus, Vin," he said, "All I can say is Gramps must be a bigger fool than I thought, wanting you to say something over his grave."

Gilly had been to college for a few years, studying nonsense mostly, and he always had something to say about everything. Too bad for him nobody except me listened to him much; and I only listened because he's older than me, and because he's still got the wickedest left hook in town. But most times, talking to him's like talking to Del Grotto.

"Well," I said, "Gramps knows damned well what he wants, and I aim to do this for him. He helped me out a lot—taught me how to drink beer, how to cuss, and how to get girls—so this is the least I can do."

Gilly sized me up while he rubbed that big, square jaw of his.

"Yeah," he laughed, "Considering your success in all those areas, I'll bet you owe your teacher quite a debt. Sure you won't end up spitting on the old geezer's grave?"

I almost swung at him for saying that, even though it was kind of true. I never could drink, cuss, or chase girls like Gramps, but I figured I had a right to keep trying. Besides, being a blockhead never stopped Gilly from going to school. And being a hypocrite never stopped Del Grotto from preaching either.

"Let's face it, Vin," Gilly said, "You're just a chump's chump. Gramps was a chump and you're his chump. You'll blow that speech tomorrow because you're as big a loser as Gramps. Why don't you save the family from shame and stay home from the cemetery. You'll probably curse us all by screwing up the whole ceremony."

Gilly looked just like Del Grotto sitting there minus the gut, and I guess that's why I did what I did, without really thinking. I was too drunk to aim my punch, but I caught

him pretty good on the jaw with a roundhouse. The table flipped up, and a few drunks at the bar turned around to see what was up. We wrestled balls to the walls for a little while, grunting, sweating, and clawing at each other. The fight seemed to last hours, until I swung another wild right to the same spot on Gilly's square jaw. His eye slanted down, so I knew he was steamed, and he answered with that goddammed left of his, clubbing me in the eye. I spun and fell like a dead man, face down.

"You bastard, Gilly," I said to the floor.

Gilly helped me up, even though I still swung at him a few times; then he put my arm over his shoulder and dragged me home. I guess he felt kind of sorry for me, and I guess I never hated him more than I did that night.

Well, I don't mind telling you, I felt like holy hell next morning. Luckily, Pa had a couple of cold beers in the fridge, or I never would've made it to the cemetery. Gilly's jaw had a nice raspberry-colored fist mark on it, and I laughed when I saw it. But he laughed harder, and I found out why when I looked in the mirror and saw the shiner he'd given me. I started worrying about facing the crowd, bruised up, with no speech, half bagged from the night before. Maybe Gilly was right when he called me a loser; but I still felt I couldn't let Gramps down.

As soon as Mom came home from church, she took one look at us and started wringing her hands. If not for her, though, we never would've made the ceremony on time. She dug out our suits and ties, set out our shoes, and made me put ice on my eye, so it wouldn't be so noticeable. Pa and Grams had already left, so Gilly drove us three over to the gravesite.

I started sweating as soon as I saw the long line of cars—Caddie limos, Del Grotto's new Cutlass, Pa's old Dodge, and about twenty or thirty others. Most folks already crowded near the gravesite, where Gramp's casket sat near the hole. Del Grotto looked real solemn in the middle, like he ran the whole show, his gut pushing out his robes like wind in a sail. It always seemed like he needed a shave, and his black-rimmed eyes reminded me of newspaper pictures of mafioso bosses. Grams stood behind Del Grotto, in his shadow he was so big, biting her nails and wringing her hands like doomsday had just arrived. Everybody sized me up like they just found out I was a child molester. Maybe it was the shiner, or my shirt tail hanging out, or my untied shoe, or my messed up hair—who knows?

Anyway, what a perfect day to plant somebody, Gramps would've said. Clear, November low-sun, 50 degrees, no wind. Somefolks like rain, wind and cold because they figure it fits the occasion. But Gramps always liked it clear, so everything would move faster, and you could get out to a bar sooner afterwards. When I thought about Gramps that way, I didn't worry so much about the story I had to

tell. I felt good just thinking about that old bugger, how he taught me so much, what a great guy he was.

Del Grotto started in talking about God, souls, damnation, and doomsday, and all the stuff Mom and Grams love to hear about so much. Funny thing, Del Grotto's speeches never seemed so short as the one that day. Just when I was feeling good remembering Gramps, that fat ass rushed through his "Amen" and called on "Vincent" to "fulfill the request of his dear departed grandfather." I'll tell you, I didn't feel so hot anymore; my throat dried up, and I sure needed a beer about then. I stepped out of the crowd and over near Gramps' coffin. Del Grotto and Gilly stared at me hard, just waiting for me to screw up. Mom and Grams stood close by, wringing and biting, wringing and biting; and the rest of the crowd hung around like one of those lynch mobs you see in cowboy movies. I couldn't see Pa anywhere. I figured I still might satisfy Del Grotto by telling a story about Gramps' notions of life, death, and being good—Gramps didn't talk much about God. But most of all, I wanted to spin a story Gramps himself would've been glad to tell. So I told a story Gramps had told me a hundred times before, whenever he'd start thinking about death and other such heavy junk. It was a story about how he needled this guy good and felt bad for it later:

"My Gramps used to work for an undertaker in the big city sixty or so years ago. He worked there in the basement with a colored man by the name of Ben, draining stiffs and slabbing them till the real undertakers would dress them up for show. It just so happened, the night watchman, an Irishman by the name of Fat Hughey McGirk, used to ride Gramps and Ben pretty hard. He'd call Gramps a 'wop' or a 'greaseball', and Ben a 'spade' or a 'spook'. And he'd tell them how low-life they were slabbing stiffs for a couple of rich Jew morticians, Stein and Goldman.

"It also happened that McGirk was a big drinker, and he'd go off on his rounds sucking on a bottle of whiskey. By the end of his third round, McGirk would be so looped he'd have to sack out on this cot he kept in the back room for just such an occasion.

"A lot of times Gramps and Ben wanted to get back at McGirk, but they knew he carried a gun that he always said he'd use on them if they tried any funny stuff.

"Well, one night Gramps and Ben put their heads together and thought up a good plan to get back at McGirk with. They'd been working on this young woman's corpse—a pretty, young hooker who killed herself with sleeping pills. The cops told Gramps and Ben she'd left a note saying she hated her job and the fellas she had to deal with, and she felt stuck in her place. Gramps and

Ben figured she wouldn't have minded being used to get back at a slob like McGirk. So when McGirk went off on his third rounds, all red-faced and mumbling about 'wops' and 'spooks', Gramps and Ben took the stiff and put her in McGirk's cot with a blanket over her. Then they turned out all the lights and waited for McGirk to come back.

"When that bastard came back all slobbering drunk, he went right to his cot, as usual and stripped down to his shorts and T-shirt. Gramps and Ben had a hard time keeping from laughing while they waited. McGirk laid down next to the stiff for a time, without knowing what was up. He even said something about 'Who's this babe in my cot', till he reached over and felt that ice-cold stiff laying there for him. That's when Gramps and Ben turned on the lights and started screaming bloody murder, and old McGirk got a peep at the babe sharing his bed with him.

"Sure as hell, McGirk must've dirtied his drawers when he caught on, because he took off out of there so fast he forgot to take his clothes with him. Gramps and Ben laughed so hard it hurt, and they put that girl on a slab real careful-like because she'd been so good to them. McGirk never did come back to work for those rich Jews he talked about, and Gramps and Ben never heard from him again.

"Gramps told me one day he was sorry he did what he did, not for McGirk's sake, but because he felt sorry for that stiff. He told me he hoped that if there was a God, he'd be a God who had a sense of humor, so he'd understand why Gramps did what he did. But he said if God didn't understand, it just proved he didn't have a sense of humor."

"Well, I don't have to tell you that story went over like bugs at a picnic. Del Grotto probably would've called on his God to kill me, if he had been able to speak. Gilly just shook his head like he knew all along I'd blow it. Mom and Grams just kept on wringing and biting, and the rest of the crowd walked away mumbling. For a second, I almost thought I heard a giggle from the coffin before they lowered it into the hole, but I guess I must've imagined it. I suppose it just proves the old saying, you can't please everybody."

"Anyway, the whole thing kind of proved Gramps' point, too. God probably doesn't have much sense of humor; that is, if God is anything like the people that believe in him. But I don't think saying this makes me and Gramps atheists, or hedonists, whatever they are. It's just that we don't want to go where the old fogies' God is when we die; we want to go where there's a God who knows how to laugh once in a while. □

Bliss Beyond Dreams

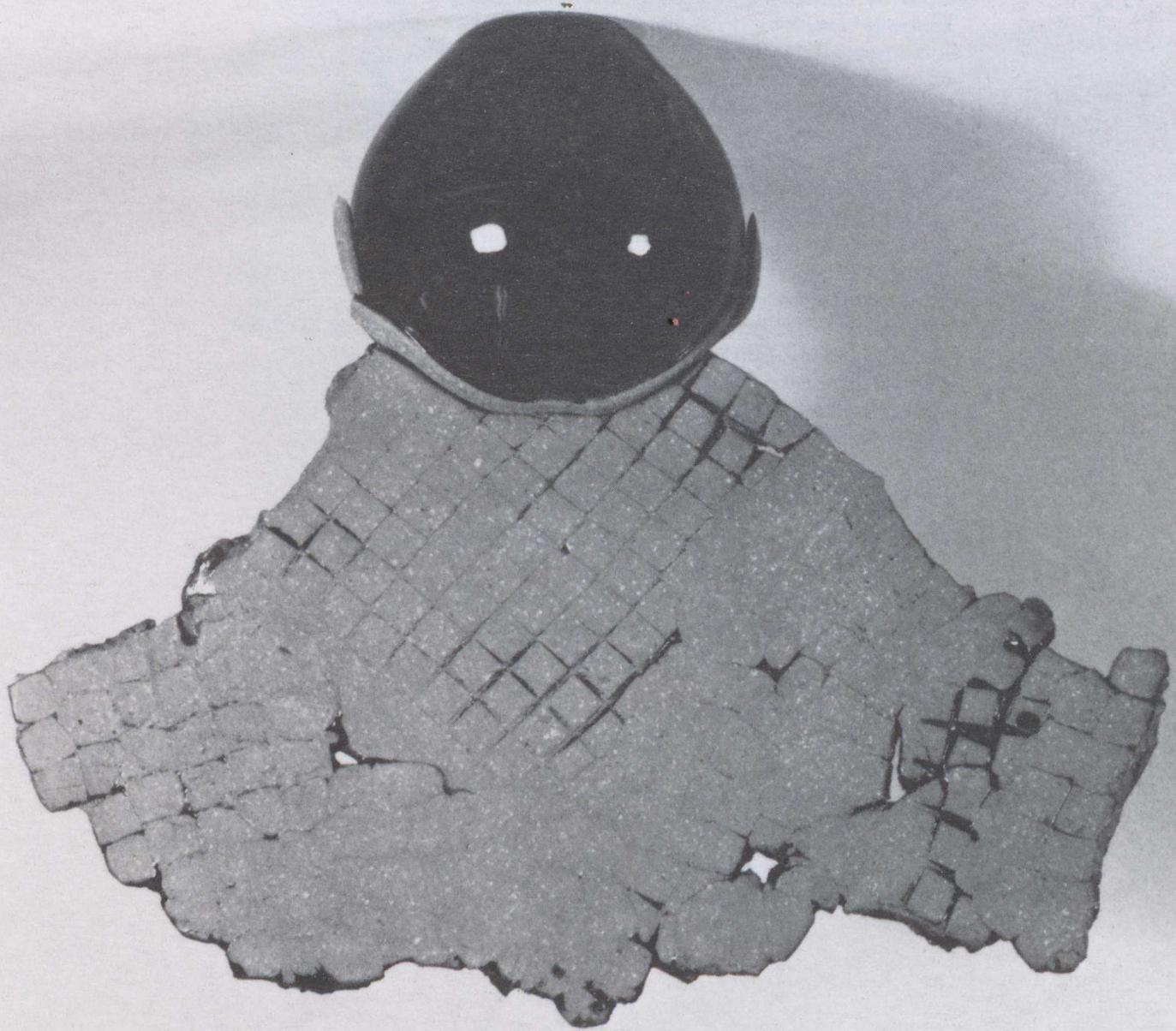
These white crickets
Lick their violins

These yellow herons
Dance on rooftops

I will drench myself
In gasoline

Cool myself
With a white feather fan

Paul Engel



Intersection 2 *Michelle D. Coakes*

Comedy

Comedy's everywhere
Comedy is in our hall
Comedy is where we live
in our neighborhoods and towns
Comedy is the fat-faced women
Comedy is the sun-baked men with their bellies hanging low
Comedy is football — ha ha ha
Comedy is everywhere
Comedy, comedy, comedy — ha ha ha
Comedy, comedy, comedy
Comedy is walking down the street ha ha ha ha
looking at all the funny people
Comedy is the Coke I drink
Comedy is the notes he plays and the words I sing
Comedy is these bad drapes, green chalkboards
Comedy is a useless desk
Comedy is that aqua-blue couch over there —
comes in pieces
Comedy is an empty volleyball court without a net
Comedy is two poles in the air
Comedy is a pipe with a little nozzle to turn
Comedy is those pianos over there just sitting there making no music
Comedy is a Bic pen without a writer
Comedy is a Fake White Brick Wall!
Comedy is the stucco ceiling
Comedy is the little bell
Comedy is the light over there
Comedy, comedy, comedy everywhere
Comedy, comedy
Comedy is the nighttime when all the evil things come out
Comedy is that beer-drinking swine
Comedy is that filthy-mouthed pig woman over there
Why is it that I keep talking about fat women?
I don't know preoccupation perhaps
But it's all comedy
Comedy's everywhere
In everything we see and say and do
Comedy
Yeah, we all like to laugh once in a while
Yeah, we all like to giggle
We like to chortle
and shniggle
and make up silly words

Comedy, comedy
Comedy, comedy, comedy
Comedy,
Comedy, comedy, comedy
Comedy,
Comedy, comedy, comedy
Comedy,
Comedy, comedy, comedy
Comedy,
Everything's so funny,
Isn't it funny, Phil?
Everything is just so funny
Look at all the comedy around you
Comedy is that dead animal on the street
ha ha ha
Comedy is that child there — lost
ha ha ha
Comedy is that woman over there without a friend
Comedy is that little dog over there
Stray, without a family.

Erik Engel
Paul Engel

Heads

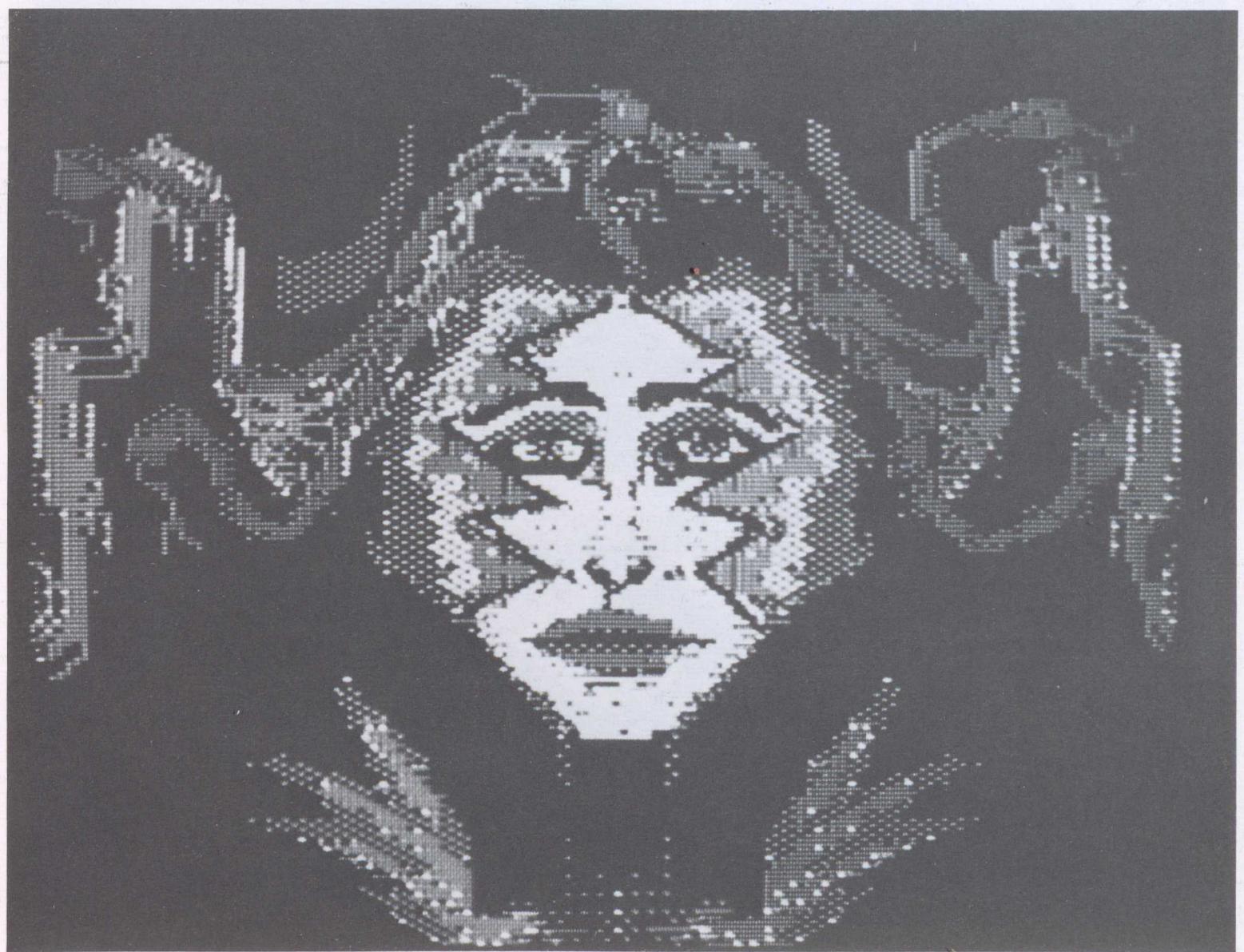
Both heads share the same single
over-sized neck
Both heads are well formed and of
normal proportion
Both heads have a crush on
Suzy
Both heads get paranoid when they hear
laughter
Both heads realize that they are more
amazing
Than The Great Wall of China

Dan Smolla

Breakfast Haiku 1

The haiku writer
stares beatifully at
grease atop his egg.

Phil Craig



Computer Image *Terre Layng Rosner*

How

Tourist Indian chants for rain.
I laugh.

It rains.

I jump up and down
denting flowered linoleum
all fall chanting winter away,
But this earth never does wobble
off its creative course.
Somewhere an Indian laughs.

Geese fly, chokeberries ripen

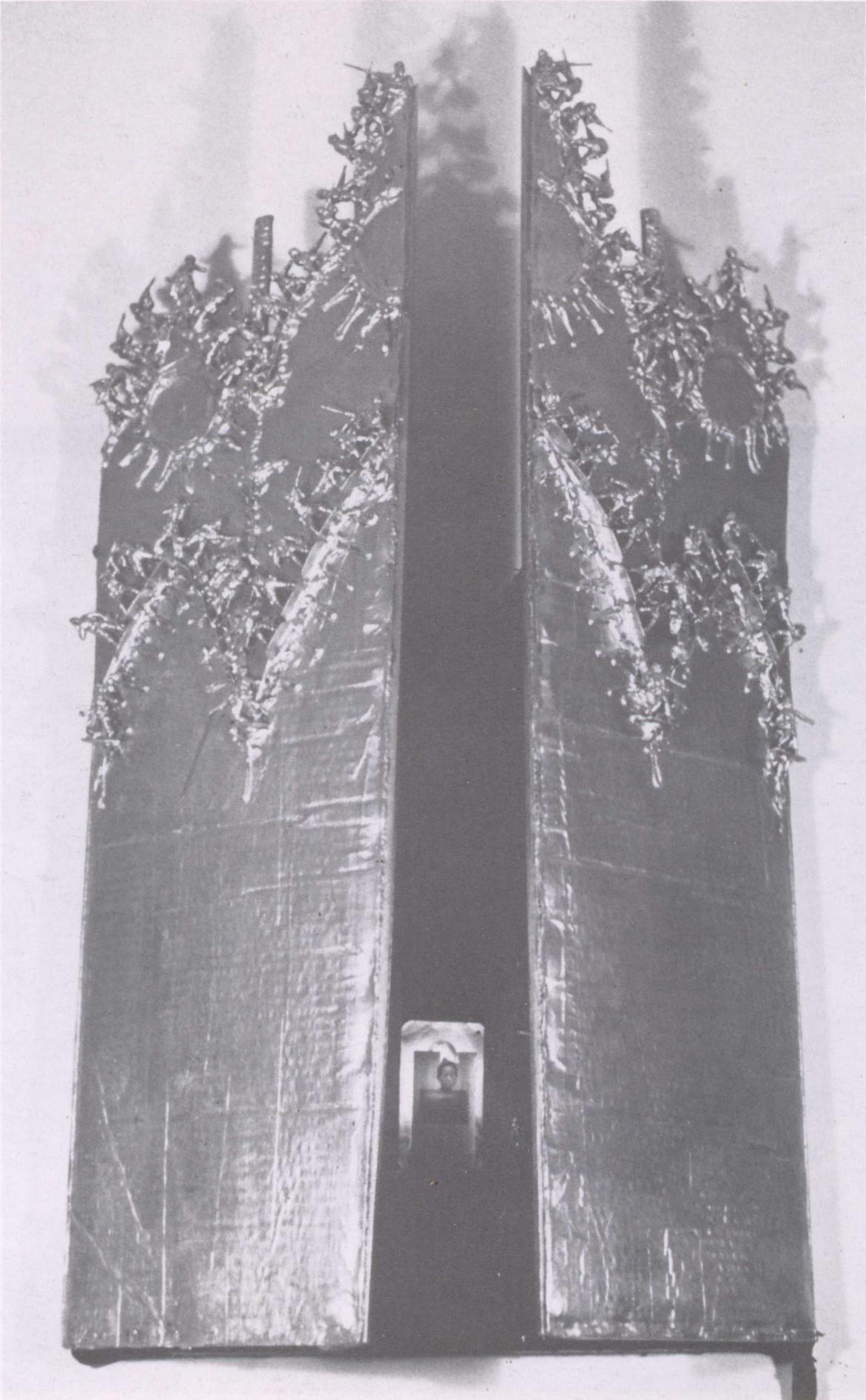
And all the world's Grannie's put up jelly,
smiling, in clear glass jars;
then plan for long teas and gossip
on 4 o'clock gray days
beside warm fires.
While I grump on
about some frozen weather.

Creatures of rhythm and cycles,
Why have only I forgotten?

Judy Ham



Ursula Buendia, caught in the web of her desire *Alberto Meza*



Homage 2 *Robert Billings*

Zinjanthropus

by David Williams

The light from the exit sign cast a red glow in the hall, making visible the display cases full of bone, shell, clay, and wooden figurines of animals and miniature gods. The anthropologist stuck the key into the knob and hit the switch. A flood of white fluorescent light filled the room, which contained a parade of skeletons lined on a shelving, going from one wall to the other. Prosimian skeletons, lemur skeletons, Old World, New World monkey skeletons, those of lesser apes, those of great apes, filled the white walled room; a chimpanzee and a gorilla skeleton were mounted next to a human one from India marked "male." Some of the smaller specimens were upright, grasping a tree branch; others went on all fours, each mounted to its own wooden base, each held together with nuts, bolts, and wire. All the bones looked a bleached white, the teeth of the human much yellower than the others. The empty eye sockets had the effect of forming a chain around the room, especially when the light first hit, like a string of ornaments.

The office door was aluminum, directly beneath the macaque, and the anthropologist opened it. It was just a room with a desk, the walls covered with posters. The picture of an Easter Island head stared across a green-blue sea. The light in the office needed changing, and it flickered occasionally, now and then making a blue glow, the color of a vein. A stack of papers was piled on the desk to be graded. The anthropologist picked one up titled "The History of Man," and he followed the blue ink, marking the paper here and there with a red pen until the paper resembled a battlefield, with the red gaining ground. He went through one essay after another, checking, assigning grades, adding comments. He hated doing it. He'd lost his hope of ever shaping the minds that came to him. Most of the students would walk out as ignorant as they'd been when they first stepped into the classroom; maybe only a handful would actually ever believe what he would tell them. Most of them would chuck it all out for what they'd thought before. It was like he'd heard Margaret Mead say once, "You can teach a man to fly a jet, but you can't teach him that the earth isn't a turtle's back, if he learned it from his mother." It was only a third rate university anyway, if it could be called that, and anymore, he expected nothing. It was a job, and there were few available. At the moment he didn't give a damn about "publishing," and he hated the word, along with the word "career."

He kept a bottle of whiskey in the drawer for nights like this, and he pulled it out and lit a cigarette. He watched the plume spiral up toward the ceiling, then he'd exhale, the delicate smoke lines blurring into a cloud. He looked at the Indian rings on his hand and rubbed the left finger that was without one. He wondered if there would always be a callous on the spot. It was like a knot underneath the joint. When he bent his finger he could feel it. Maybe he

liked wearing the other rings to mask that empty slot below the knuckle, or maybe it just made it more apparent there was nothing there. For some reason, he thought of Mexico, when she was with him: her blonde hair such an odd jewel in that country, the young boys whistling, staring at her in her blue cotton dress. He could feel those old ruins towering over him: gigantic pyramids from where the blood of the people ran, a place called "The Avenue of Death," a steep march to the summit of the "Pyramid of the Sun." He could remember clay flutes being blown: the hollow tone of them echoing through the canyon of adobe brick and stone: children and old men hawking them, along with the obsidian knives, fashioned after the real ones that were used to cut out hearts. You could buy one for a dollar, or you could talk them down. She bought one that day. It was smooth black, with a skull carved into the handle. Years later, she smashed it during an argument, till it was a pile of slivers on their floor, each sharper than the first, that he had to pick off the linoleum.

He went back into the large room again. The freezer in the corner was humming, and he opened it. It was full of specimens to be used for dissection. Two infant squirrel monkeys were on top, wrapped together in plastic. The fingers of their hands like human ones, except for the thumbs; arms folded around each other's bodies, saving space, as were the tails. They looked like small meditating Buddhas, their bodies light with hair. The anthropologist closed the lid; the hair on his arm had risen from the cold: something that happens to primates, he thought: in fear, the body hair fanned out to increase the appearance of the creature. It was an old bluffing technique he'd witnessed often when observing primates at the zoo.

The anthropologist put the whiskey back and turned off the light in his office. His coat seemed heavy, and he noticed the clock drumming each new minute on the wall. He switched off the light of the big room and went through the door, entering again a red tunnel where sets of gold and ivory eyes stared from the African exhibit case. There wasn't a window in his room, so he was surprised to find it snowing when he got outside, but it had been unusually cold for a week. There was no one else around, and he trudged across the parking lot to his car. Ice had formed on the windows, and he used a cassette tape box to scrape it off. He had to dig deep, and the box broke in two. Finally, he was able to carve a hole big enough to see through, using a fragment of the plastic, then he was able to drive to town. A big Santa and his reindeer were draped over Main, all the light poles fixed with green trimmings, colored lights, and plastic elves. The anthropologist found a place to park on a side street, because someone was leaving. Everything was open late for the holidays. Hundreds of people were sloshing

between stores, buying useless bottles of after-shave, cheap toys, and sweaters. He had already sent his kids something. Susan, he'd sent a glass ballerina to; Martin he sent a fossil of a fish. Roxanne had the kids at her mother's. She would tell them he "couldn't make it. Daddy had to work, but he sent this because he loves you, kind of in the way that Jesus loves you," she would say, "but Jesus always loves you more, when you're bad or good, but He always wants you to be good," he could hear the tone of her voice at almost any minute. He didn't know if he could ever get rid of that sound. It was something that had penetrated into his bones.

He felt it was because he'd had to work so much that it'd happened. The door to door evangelists got her, turned her into slosh. She must've never understood what he'd been doing; must've never really known what his work was all about. He thought she knew what he was up to at one time, but she must not have, apparently. She never disagreed with him openly about religious things, or about science. She knew about evolution. She knew how man had developed on this planet, before they got her, but they had poisoned her against thinking, against him. She wouldn't file for a divorce either. He would either have to become like her or start the proceedings himself. It was the damndest thing. The thought of those zealots stirring her up like that made him sick. He still didn't know how she could have believed their damned lies, but it was impossible to live with. He couldn't put up with her like that. It was as if she'd lost her mind, and whatever he did to change things made it worse. A year like that had been too much, and counselors couldn't fix it. "Heaven, heaven, heaven," was all she thought about. What was the quote? "Our nada who art in nada." She had entered the intellectual black hole and had drowned herself, and she'd drown the children too, but at the moment he was helpless; maybe it was his own fault anyway. He should never have left her alone so much. The children would learn to despise him, with their damned crucifixes. He could picture them on a street corners hawking them for charity, for missionary work, for money to convert some savage, a black eyed innocent who hadn't learned of sin.

His fingers were already getting arthritic, and he wasn't even old. The cold made them ache. Finally, he got to the bar and opened the door. There were mostly empty seats along the counter; the television was on. Tinsel was strung up over the neon beer sign in front of the bar mirror. He slopped his coat onto the stool next to him. It was damp; his beard and hair were damp from the snow. He picked up a napkin, wiped his glasses. There were five or six people sitting there; a few others in the booths, a country and western tune pumping out of the jukebox. He ordered a double and slugged it down. The beer

chaser was good after that. He had another and looked around. A woman four seats away was smoking a small cigar. The mirror reflected the image of the patrons as though they were chess pieces, lined up against their other selves, waiting for a move. The woman watched her other eyes, and the smoke of the anthropologist's cigarette met the smoke of her's, and they streamed together above the canopy. A beautiful girl on television was sunning on a beach, smiling at everyone, with black men playing steel drums behind her, and behind them all, the sea: deep blue-green, the color of her eyes.

After a while, the anthropologist moved next to the woman and asked if he could buy her a drink. She looked to be about thirty-five. She had long dark hair, smooth face, with large dark eyes. She said, "OK," and he ordered her what she wanted.

Another country tune jumped up, making the room seem more alive than it was. It was an old song from the fifties. The anthropologist imagined the band trapped inside, being made to gyrate one moment, over and over again, whenever anyone pressed B-9, or whatever the number was. A primitive sound, scratchy and shrill, bounced across the barroom: the long lost tribe from Tennessee, trapped in the jukebox, was going at it again.

The woman seemed like she'd had more to drink than he had, and he wanted to catch up to her. She told him she worked at a factory in town putting plastic disks onto metal shafts, but she didn't know what they were for. She said she didn't want to know. She said that if she knew she'd probably have to quit. Divorced a year and a half, she didn't have kids. Left this guy, and moved back South from Detroit, because this was her home; her parents were still alive.

She was attractive, and he could make her laugh at the things he said. He wondered how she had ended up working in a factory. She wasn't dumb. She had quite a face. Why hadn't she gone into modeling or something instead of getting married? He hadn't seen that face in there before; he would have known it if he had. A pink lip-stick made her lips glossy; her eyes were like the eyes of Indians, but the nose was European, probably a mixture of things, he thought; maybe some Indian blood in her; her parents came "from Oklahoma originally," she told him.

They kept drinking and talking. She would make little ironic comments herself, now and then, and he'd laugh. There were some moments they wouldn't speak at all, and then the anthropologist would drift to Africa, the brown savannah, a sky the color of lapis lazuli, streaked with purple tones, and way off: a plume of volcano smoke rising over the expanse, which was in motion with zebras, elephants, giraffes, and baboons; grunts, deep throated callings; hooves stamping dust; a two million year old

hominid family sitting in the weeds picking lice from each others heads: small, dark skinned, with dense body hair, and pitch black eyes.

"I'll get this one," the woman said, and he turned his head back, the bartender holding two glasses in his hands. Her name was Jan, and she kept a box of small cigars on the counter, and she'd light one every now and then. He liked her, and he wished he could take her home. She wasn't far from his age and was so fine looking. He hadn't been with a woman in a long time. Whenever there was someone around the college he thought he might ask out, he'd decide against it at the last minute; it was such a hassle to go through a "date." He'd just get drunk instead. He'd never met anyone this attractive in the bars.

After an hour or two they were friends, and they decided to go outside to look at the lights. He helped her off the stool and out the door. There was a liquor store nearby, where they bought a bottle of wine, and he hid it under his coat. Shoppers were still filing through the streets, bags under their arms, to a Salvation Army Santa ringing a bell. They ducked into an alley and followed it till they found a place you couldn't be seen from the street. He twisted the cap off the bottle and passed it to her. It felt almost fun to be doing it: drinking, hiding in an alley. The woman was still cracking jokes occasionally, and he'd noticed she was very good looking when they'd gotten outside. Sometimes she would tell him a story about her ex-husband and laugh. She said he made cars and thought it was funny. They went on like that until the bottle got low. When it was about empty she changed moods, told the anthropologist she had a kid once, a girl, who was killed in a wreck at the age of two. "Annie," was her name. It was the only child she'd ever had.

After that, they sat between the buildings and finished off what was left. He told her his children's names, that he was going to divorce his wife, that she'd left him, but the woman didn't ask him anything further about it. On one side of them was a department store, and the other, a restaurant. You could smell the grease from a window that was cracked. They didn't say anything to each other for a long time, when finally, the anthropologist bent over to kiss her, and she kissed him back. She was warm, and he touched her neck. When they realized they were still in the alley, she told him she had a room a few blocks from there they could go to, so they made it back to the street, stumbling, holding each other's arms.

They moved to the corner and waited for the light. The cold and snow didn't matter, though they were wet from it, and they were dirty from sitting in the alley. What could matter, was the one thought that came to him, and he held onto her as they went to the other side, through the shoppers, stumbling, looking like they were dressed in an

animal costume, each with only one leg to walk on, but they didn't fall. They found a side street and turned into the thickening snow. She was back to the good mood and was laughing. Sometimes, the anthropologist would drift back to Africa, for a few seconds, to that family, then he'd remember the woman at his arm and want her more.

She decided she had to find a toilet as they were passing a church, and it was open, with people inside. A pre-Christmas celebration was going on. They entered, and she made it by herself downstairs, where she thought there might be a bathroom. He waited in the foyer and could see inside to the chapel. It looked like a couple hundred people were there; a preacher was in the pulpit making a racket; someone was at the organ, someone at the piano, too. When she came back, she was still in the good mood and decided she wanted to see what was going on. In the barroom she'd told him she was an "atheist," but now she wanted to see this. She said she hadn't been to a church in years. He didn't want to do it, but he didn't want to lose her, and he was too drunk to argue about it. She was too good looking to let go. He hadn't been with a woman in a long time. They stepped inside and found room on a pew in the back. The people sitting there scooted over. Nobody seemed to notice how they looked. The people sitting there didn't look much better than they did anyway.

The church service made him sweat, and it was like he was looking down a tunnel he didn't want to be in. The preacher seemed like a baboon up there, spouting dogma, his voice trailing up and down. Whenever he would get almost quiet, or if he hadn't said anything for fifteen seconds, you could count on him coming back with a "GEEZUS," that would raise everybody's hair. The anthropologist looked over at the woman, and she seemed to be getting a kick out of it. She imitated the preacher with her mouth once, then looked over at the anthropologist and winked. He did like her. How did he find someone like that, he wondered? She was just wearing blue jeans and a flannel shirt, but he could tell she was very fine underneath. He wondered how far away she lived. He wondered if she was ready to leave.

After a while, the preacher started calling for sinners to come to the altar to be saved. People started getting out of their seats and walking up to the stage, some shouting and praising God. There were a couple of old folks sitting next to them that got up. The old lady was grinning with her eyes rolled back, holding onto her old man's hand. Everyone seemed to either have their eyes closed or have them rolled back in their heads. The anthropologist leaned over and kissed the woman on the neck, but she wanted him to wait; she still wanted to have some fun. She wanted to go up there and get in the middle of it all;

"It'd be fun to let loose," she said, "and everyone

would just think you were getting saved. She said it'd be like "going to a rock and roll dance."

There was an organ playing, and by now, lots of folks were shouting, praying, clapping their hands, beating their feet on the floor. He felt like he had to go along with her when she stood up, and she began clapping her hands and moving through the aisle with the others, then she turned around and grabbed him by the wrist and began pulling him along. The floor was packed near the stage; the preacher was shouting into the microphone, saying "Praise the Lord," among other things that were hard to understand. When they got in the center of it all, it was like a madhouse, and he wished they had more booze. People of all ages were dancing around, spinning, crying, laughing, then the music would get louder, and the place would become more frenzied than ever. When the anthropologist looked over at her, she was doing what the others were doing, and she seemed to be enjoying herself. She had her eyes closed and was saying "Amens," and "Hallelujahs", rocking back and forth. After a couple of minutes of this, it made him dizzy. Every now and then someone would shout out a syllable that was nonsense, then the preacher would pick it up and shout it over the microphone, till the whole congregation was saying it in unison like a chant. Then they'd pick up another crazy sound and repeat it for a while, then another, and another. None of the words made sense. They were speaking in tongues. She was repeating the words that the preacher was saying too, and she appeared to be in a trance.

The anthropologist drifted back to Africa where the little family was; they were dancing together, the smoke of the volcano behind them, thicker, looking like it was going to erupt, with drums pulsing; the dark, hairy primates jumping rhythmically in a circle; black eyes, yellow teeth; young, old, women, men, all naked beneath a white, dimming sun; the sky getting dense, then the feeling of ash: a hot rain from the heavens falling down, and a stampede: rhinos, lions, gazelles, baboons, cheetahs, wildebeests, zebras, flooding the earth, the flight of wings also blackening the sky; the early humans there amid the thunder, dust and fire, still dancing: dancing and singing to something.

When he looked back, everything was the same, only louder. He thought of the word "Zinjanthropus," bent to the woman and said it in her ear. She reacted to the sound, then started shouting it, and someone next to her heard it and started shouting it too. The anthropologist couldn't believe it, but eventually the preacher picked it up and began saying it through the microphone, until the whole congregation was yelling: "Zinjanthropus, Zinjanthropus, Praise Be To God," while the anthropologist was making fists and couldn't think. He saw her beside him,

laughing at it all, then he did too. She even fell down to her knees and was laughing on the floor, and he was laughing. But then, it was as if she'd lost consciousness, she was crying, shaking on the hardwood, shaking, almost convulsing, sobbing into her hair; then she threw up.

He bent down to lift her, and a couple of men from the stage helped him carry her to the back, and they lay her on a pew. Church women came with towels, while the ruckus continued up front, the preacher conducting it all from the stage. Finally, an offering was collected, and after that people started to leave. She passed out for a while, and when she came to, she just stared at the floor, so he gave her some water. One of the church women sat with her as the anthropologist walked downtown to get his car. When he returned to the church, the preacher was standing over her, preaching to her about sin, about drinking, about men, and he was trying to have her commit herself to being baptised and becoming enrolled in the church, but the woman wasn't talking to him. The anthropologist stepped in, helped her up, and walked her to the door, then the preacher started in on him too, but he didn't argue back. The anthropologist's head was pulsing, and he felt sick himself. They were among the last to leave the church, and a woman who'd helped clean her handed them a Bible when they got to the car. The preacher warned they'd "better return tomorrow for their souls."

She was almost too drunk to be able to locate her apartment, but somehow she found it after he drove around. It was just a room with a bath in a boarding house, and it smelled like old people in the halls. It was nothing but white, and there were only a few clothes on hangers on a bare pole next to her bed, which was actually a couch that had been folded out. He made her take a bath, and he had to walk her down the hall and undress her. He waited with her and washed out her hair. When she was dry he boiled water for coffee in the room. There was a hot plate on the counter that he used, and there was some instant coffee in the cupboard. He lit her a cigarette, and they sat there, smoking and drinking what he'd made. There was a candle in the room and he lit it. She was still groggy, so he helped her onto the bed. It was good to look at her, and he rubbed her back and neck with his hands. When he moved one of the pillows, he found a picture underneath it. It was of a little girl who was smiling, who was standing by a tree. In a few moments, the woman fell asleep, and he was next to her on the bed, wondering at how pretty she was. It was noon when he opened his eyes, and he was still on the bed with her, with all of his clothes on, even his shoes, and she was still sleeping. There was only one cigarette left in his pocket, and he smoked it, then he lay back down. It was almost dusk before she opened her eyes, and he was still there, his eyes closed, half-asleep, half-dreaming of Africa. She

looked at the dark brown beard that disappeared under his hair, and there was a red mark on his nose, from wearing glasses. Something about him seemed good, and

she followed along the silhouette of his body, wondering who he was. ▀

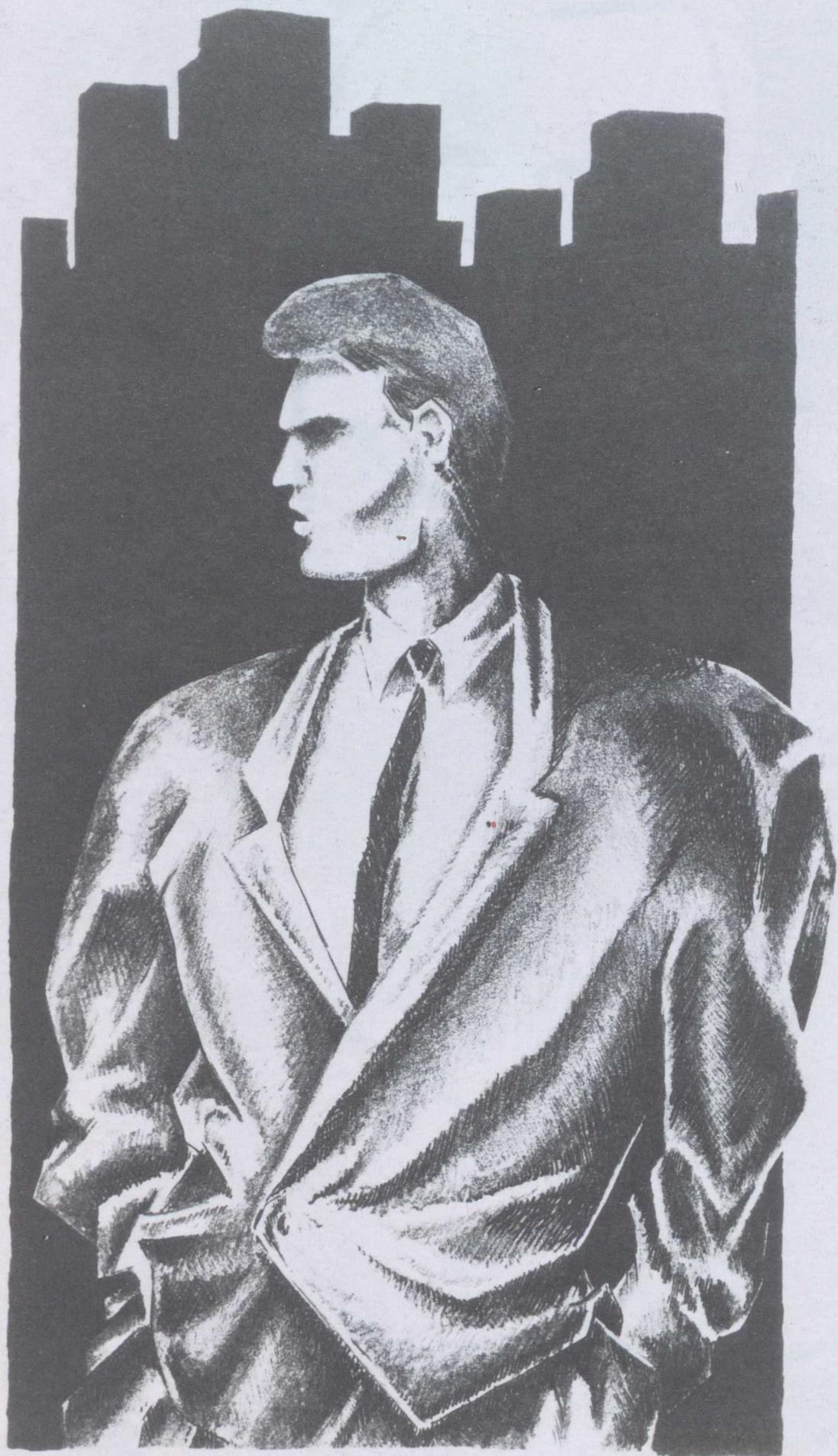


Deliberation Dan Dawes

The Ole' Facade Montage Collage Carrot Thing

I said sometimes
I feel like blowing your face off
with a sawed off machine gun.
You just took a bite of your carrot,
orange with black-lined creases,
“untimely ripp’d” from its soily Mother’s womb,
grown from seed by the calloused, dirty hands
of greasy migrant workers in New Mexico
toiling under a hellish screaming satanic yellow sun
from rise to set, whenupon sleeping away the night
dreaming facade montage collage dreams,
and said, between munches,
there is no such thing,
you dick.

Phil Craig



Finn's *Charles E. Gneich, Jr.*



Quiet Intensity *Michael Ross*

Science Voices I: Owen

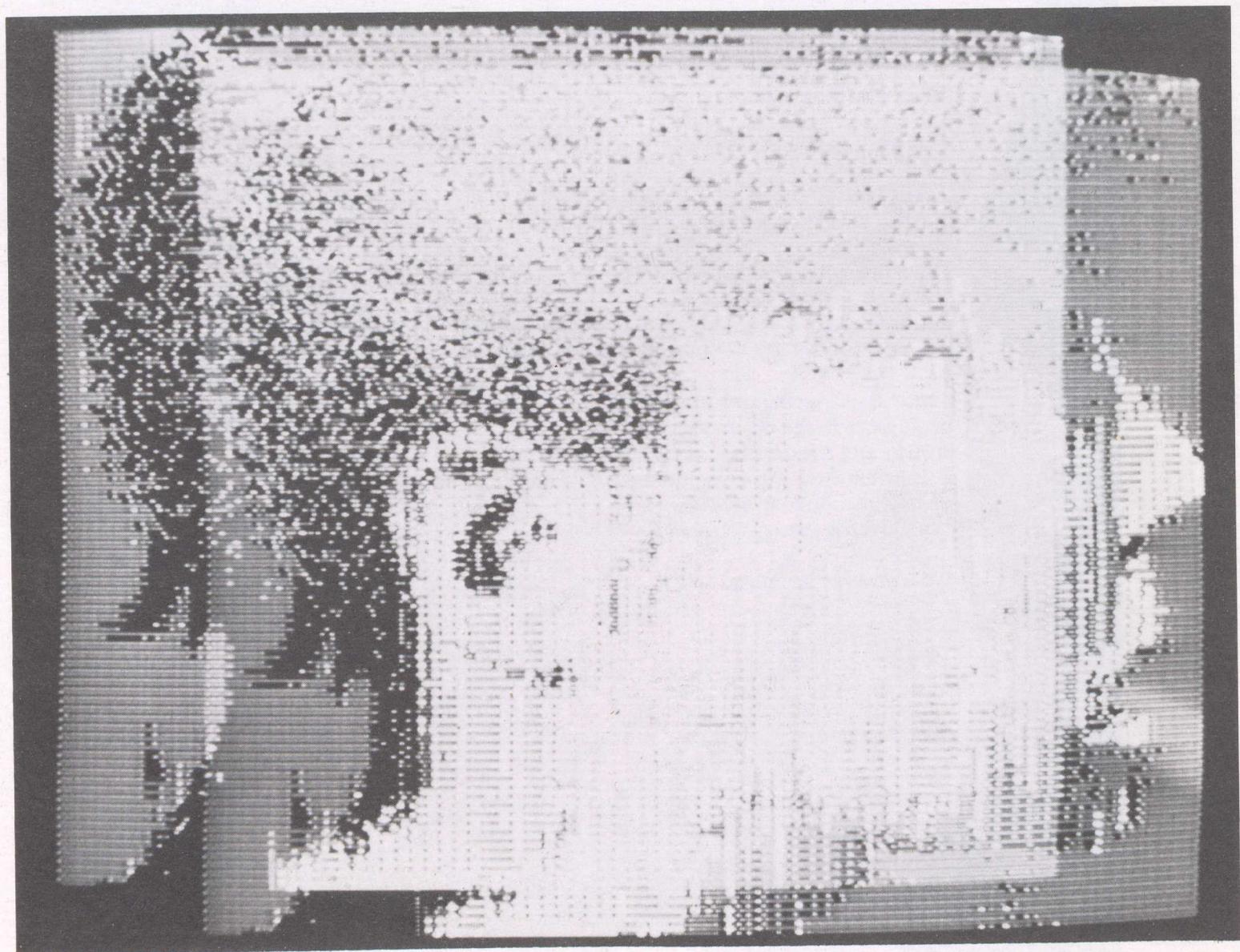
This I think I would listen to,
I identify with the chords. If
it were something that was not pitch oriented, like white noise,
if they don't want to listen, they won't. But it
comes back again, repetition, so it doesn't
startle ya: to keep you ignoring
at a level. Now that I look at that, I reverse it.
Especially for people in college.

You get lonely for it or dependent
on it
or something, and all of a sudden you just escape,
you just switch on your friend over there as though
it were living.
Once in a while, my radio won't be on, and I'll be reading
my book at Morris Library. You've got to put your book down
and listen to it. It catches you, and you want it away,
maybe elusive it just the opposite of that.

These are some things I like to think about. I would
make faces in the mirror and then I'd try and turn
around and not depend on the mirror, try and put on some kind of
a show for these guys who thought I was in the 101st airborne
division. When I never was.
I called it the mad psychiatrist of Hanoi.

Synonyms for haunting.

Bret Hamilton



Computer Image *Terre Layng Rosner*

Christmas Goddesses

They lean in white gloves and hats
lined in the seams that burst
over my brothers' dreaming faces—

and pose in a delicate glass, a column
where mouths freeze open
(as if) astonished

by the furs
of bloodforests
engulfing

those spines braced
on steel angles,
slivers of hip, bolted bone.

They are sleepless,
mute all nights
before Christmas

and only resemble
December's angels tapped
from the head of a pin

unthreading
as Winter
silver and full —

these rise through boxes
like tinmen marching
or dolls that weep

on cue. They bear
a singular stare, a head
that owns me

an arm

that takes and ruptures
my skull, peeling
away my eyes

that fall, diffused as dust
to immaculate floors—
a slight wind

in still paradise.
they walk without motion
through the wings

of the grounded:
shops without candles,
shadows

But in ice cubicles
adhering to ceilings
and turned upside down

flourescence
sits well on those
mannequined hairs—

from the sides of my aisles
my polar fastness—
I can feel them coming

their sculpted nails
and heels tapping—
neither dark nor bright

but sterile—
flesh gray as the arms
of rifles

propared in the silent snow.

Arlene Josefak

Bowl

A hundred and fifty years ago this was part prairie, part forest. Long ago the glaciers left fresh water lakes, and well water that we drink. Our water bodies move along the road between the corn, that's falling back. We want to keep clear water running through us. Water that knows itself: this and not like this again. Now I think I know why drums are sacred: theirs is the sound of a rock thrown into the stream, moving out, holding us in. Our hands have come to us from a long line of drummers. What we touch makes all those worlds alive. When we are drinking from the creek our hands make a bowl. It is the shape for water, and the body of the drum. A thing we never learn, but know.

David Williams



Micro Sanctuary *Robert S. Apolloni*

Downtown Scrabble

C r e a k

r
i
c
k, on Canadian

a
n
e

and a sore foot's

w
o'clock

belly slide, beyond
a snow-hid grate
hand-braking
to the centerline.

Oh, no!

The Custom Van

i
d
e
w
a
y skidding
p
i
n
n
i
n
against
h
e curb —

All

four way stoppers

t
e
p
p
i
n
g out

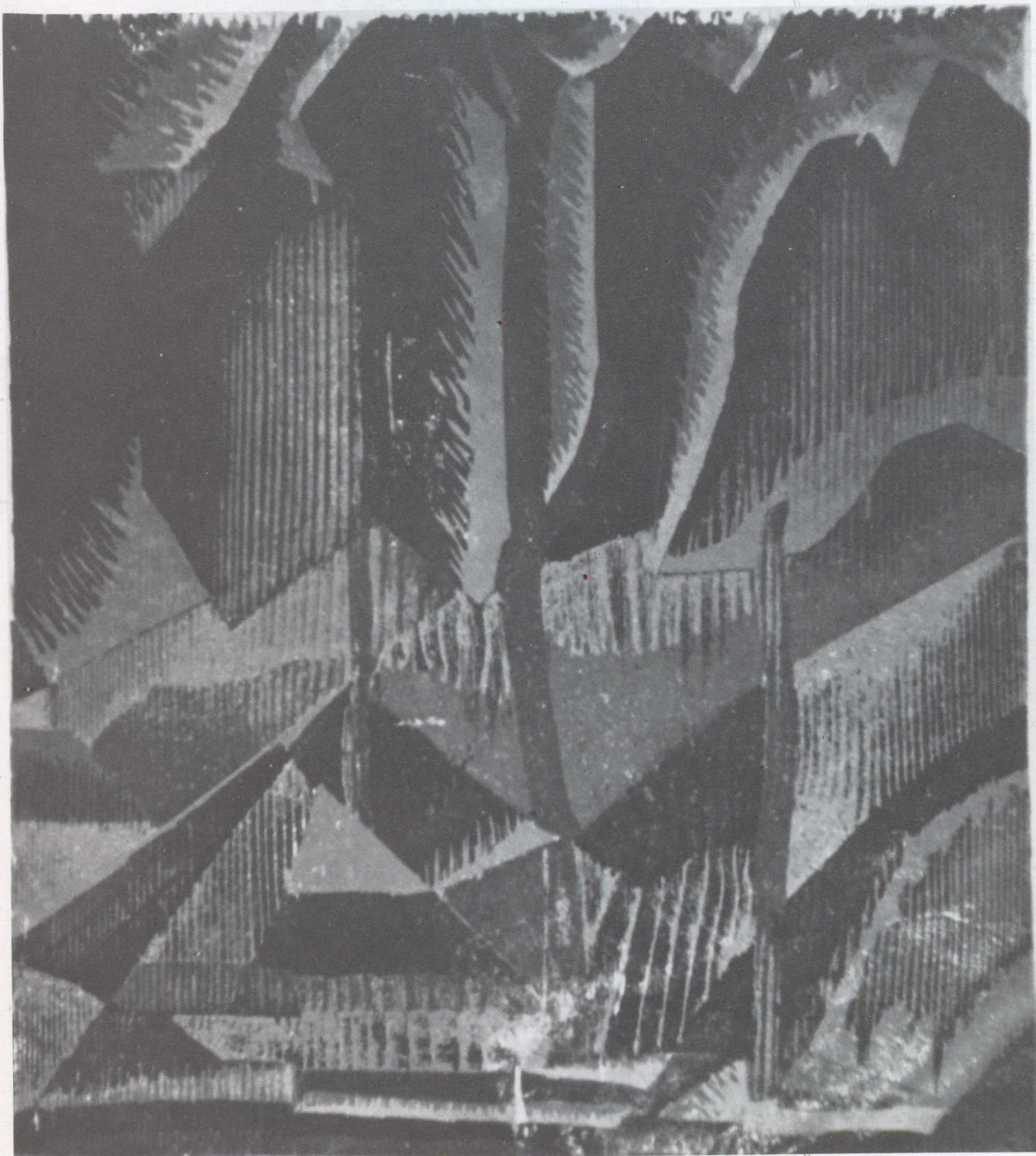
to assemble pieces —
Under snow-frosted
Mustacheoed grin
half-hopping b

a
c
k
w

a

r

did I dig a word?



Woodscape 2 *Jordan David Dauby*

(Untitled)

Allnight costumed dawn —
On January's melting blossoms
Cold diamonds spawn.

Gus Vasilopoulos

Mr. Zen, Rocks? Yamaguchi

Pray, of what do they think
Where they crane
Like ponderous rocks, the heads?

In Puckish midsummer, crows
craning, here?
And there? Blushing snails,

Like silly Bastro shared,
Passed from head
To rock? When artist crowing

About a ripened head, we
Up and come,
Wake up, Mr. Zen before
we strike you dead
with this rock on your head.

*Erik Engel
Paul Engel
Phil Craig*

An Octopus Embraces An Apple

I soak my feet
In music

An octopus embraces an apple
Cracks it in half
Thousands of tiny crabs scramble out

I sniff the sun
Until the sea turns red

There are miracles

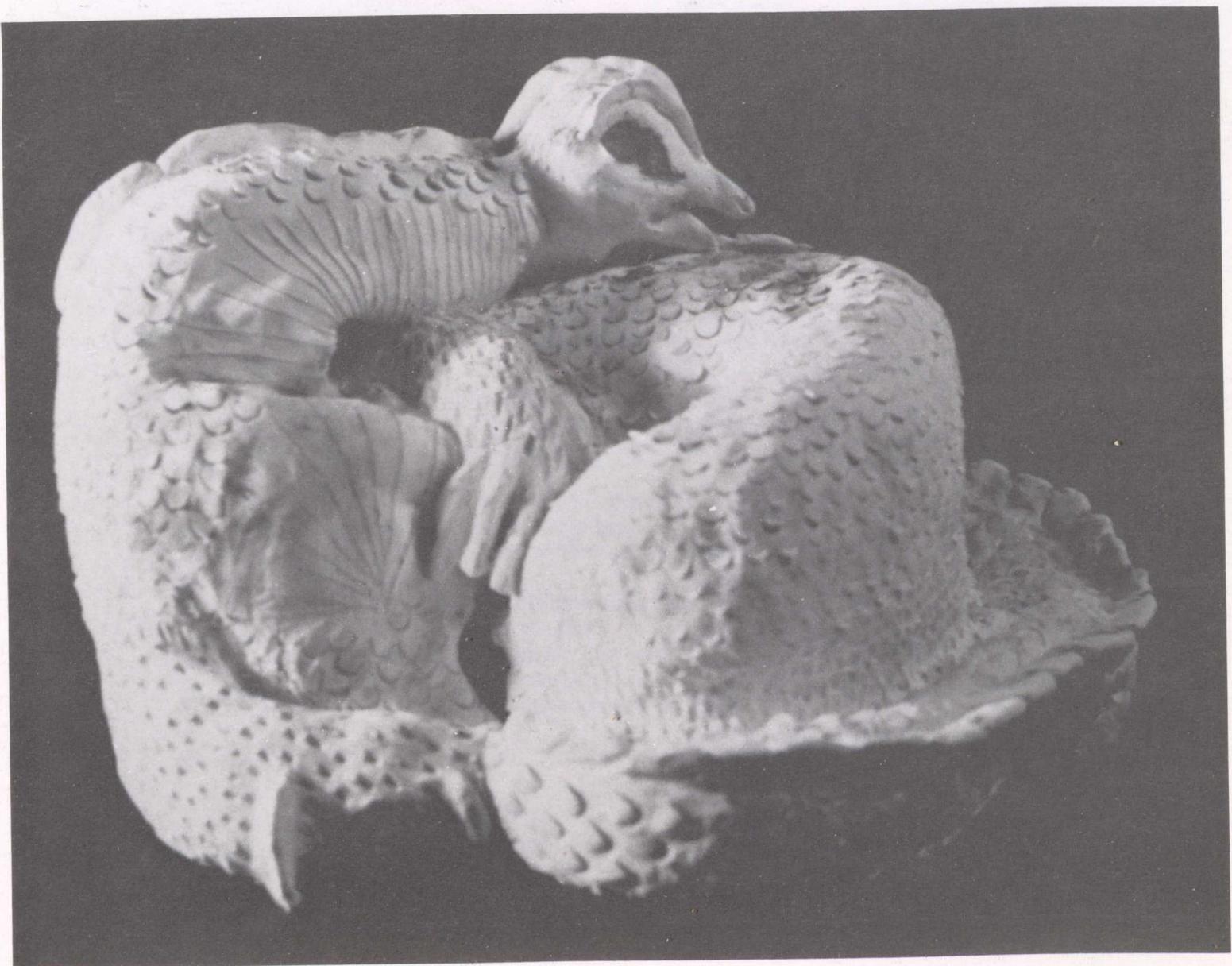
I soak my hands in music

Paul Engel

Driving Through Tennessee

The sun rises
Dripping like a doughnut
Dipped in the milky mist
Of the Smokey Mountains

Paul Engel



In My Garden Beckie Weber

Ghost Limbs

Thinking of her dancing,

Walking home past lame shadows and accidental art,
Her clean posture against that ragged sky,
The sky here becomes a spectacle, huge.

I warn her of the fragmented air,
The din she breathes;
I imagine the damage to her inside,
Jammed signals, immunity to screams.

Here, the danger is in the mute
Profundity of the wind shaking
Failures from the trees,
That rising gasp releasing leaves

To settle and rasp again,
The scraping flux of memory.
The danger is in listening,
Waiting for that note

At the peak of movement
To the resolve all leading sound
And leave a haunting veracity—
If it would come.

The night becomes too important when you can't speak,
When you think everyone is asleep
And the touch of someone you can't get back to
Returns, caught in a brief expression of the past,

A gust that came on its own
And holds you, now, between settling.

P. Austin

Cuts

When he works in the fields, his hands
get hard, and his head
starts talking back:

some fields go
that way
some fields go
this way

You can tell by the line of vegetation.

Some of them
talk baseball, women, things
they want.
He looks at his hands.

Given impossible task
and time to do it, still
he wakes from other days
with tiny cuts on his fingers. Can't
remember what from.

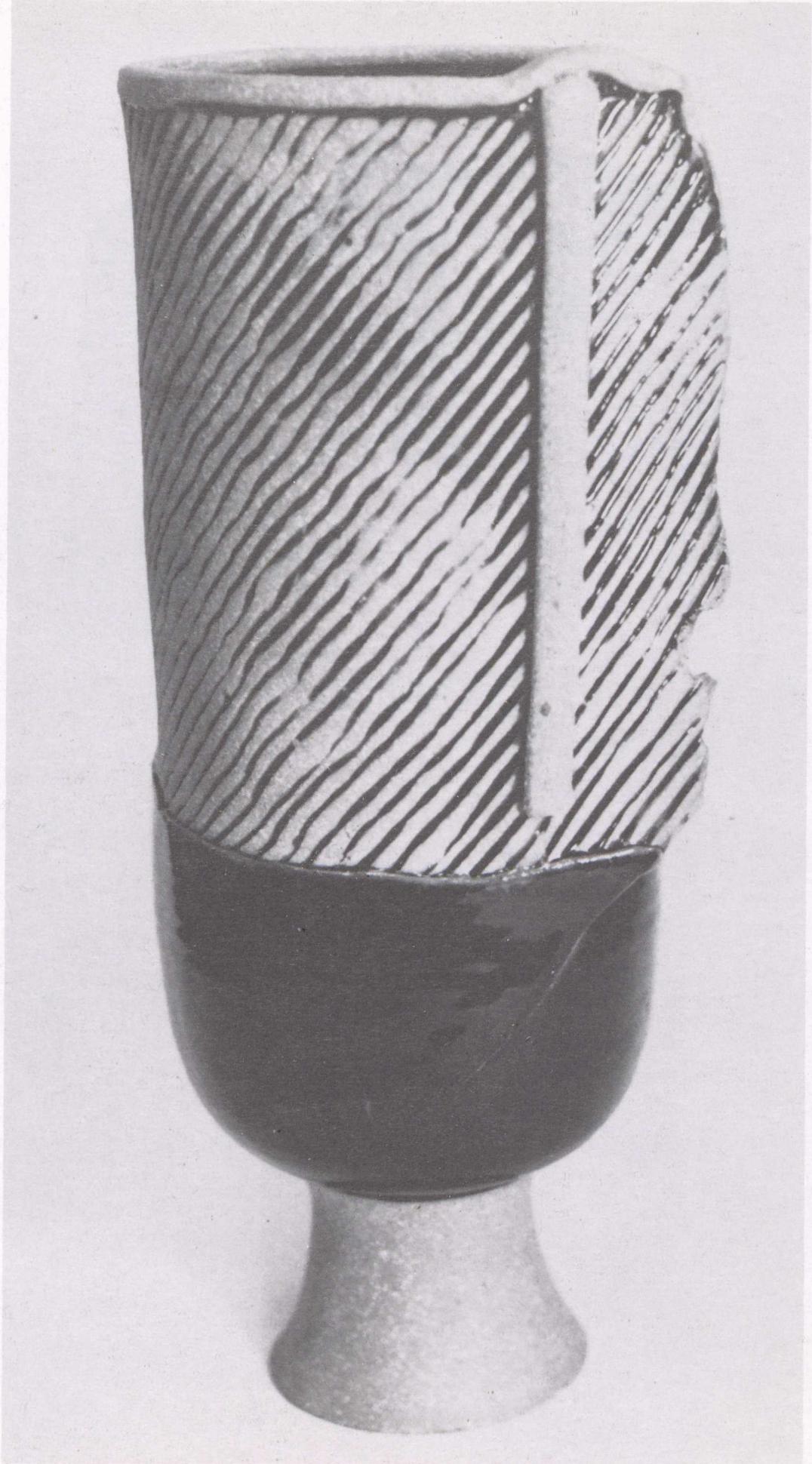
"I tell myself this
is my body
and every time I count my fingers
there's one more."

Given the look that electrifies the spine, logic
has nothing to do with learning what it's like.

Bret Hamilton



Love Seat *Paul Stark*



CS 19 *Michelle D. Coakes*

Whistling

Hear it: whistling,
sure as we. What I give to you is
on the fast chute, whistling to birth.

We laid, played out,
given away. Energy left,
a heavy coat thrown aside. I fell
to dreaming awake, breathing
like wind in rain.

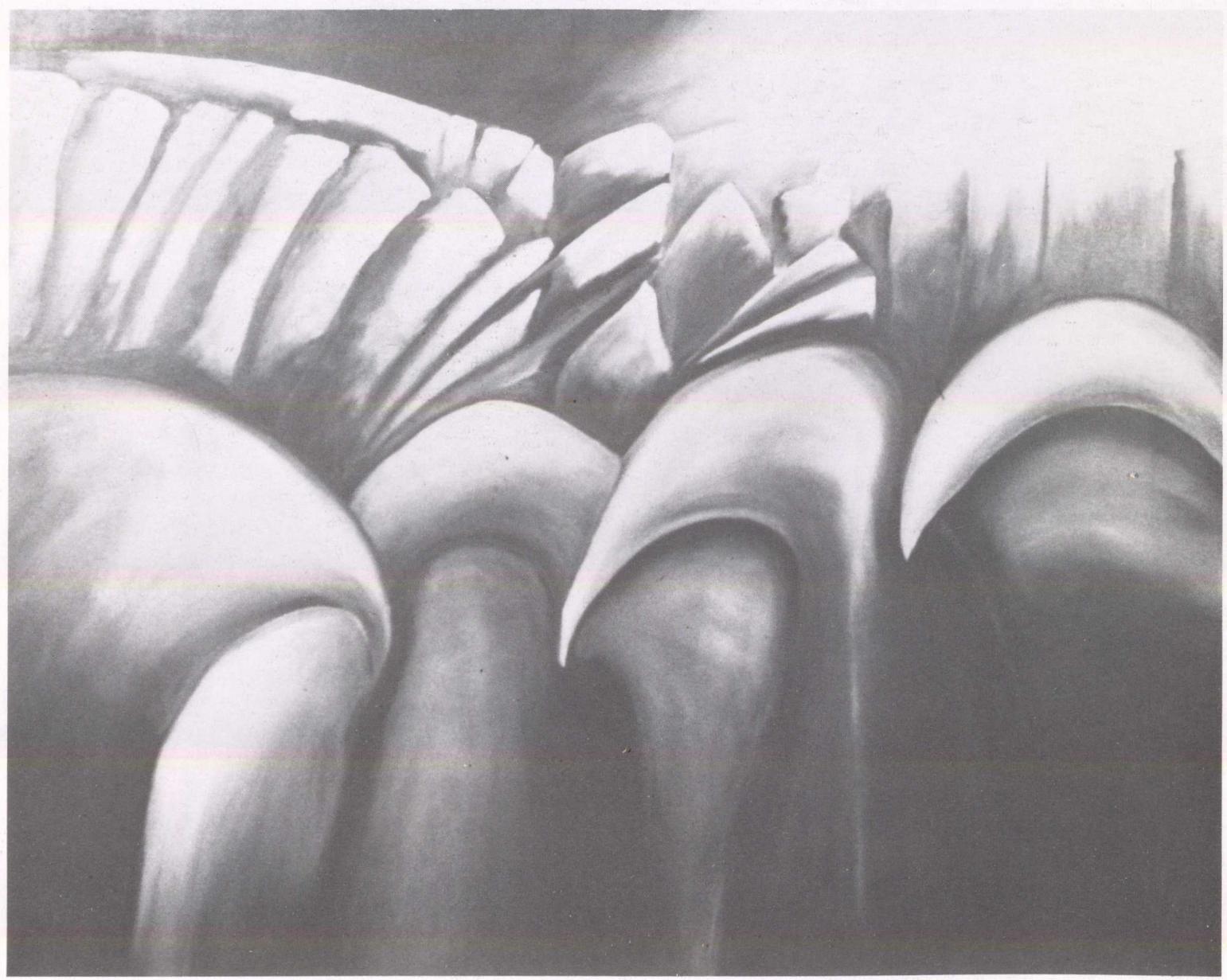
Closed eyes gave me neanderthals, running
in the long grasses, twisting
heels in the blades. Arms
fat with muscles unwind and spit out a bone
fast as pain.

Songs of a scream from the gut, hot and smooth.
A lava flows
like that.

World War One songs of airborne songs
made everyone throw their hats at
the sky. Helmets like frisbees
with a hole
would whistle like bombs.

Sweating in this bed, leaning on you, I heard
the song song song of airborne objects; my eyes opened
and opened. You were afraid, I saw too much.
I saw men, all spinning, singing
throwing. Sound
slowly unwound from them, wool off skeins,
the string of a kite.

Bret Hamilton



Untitled *Dan Dawes*

Chaos: In Five Variations

by Kevin Esser

I Illusion

Chaos never died.

Primordial uncarved block, sole worshipful monster, inert and spontaneous, more ultraviolet than mythology (like the shadows before Babylon), the original undifferentiated oneness-of-being still radiates serene as the black pennants of Assassins, random and perpetually intoxicated.

Chaos comes before all principles of order and entropy, it's neither a god nor a maggot, its idiotic desires encompass and define every possible choreography, all meaningless aethers and phlogistons: Its masks are crystallizations of its own facelessness, like clouds.

Everything in nature is perfectly real including consciousness, there's absolutely nothing to worry about. Not only have the chains of the Law been broken, they never existed; demons never guarded the stars; the Empire never got started; Eros never grew a beard.

No listen, what happened was this: They lied to you, sold you ideas of good and evil, gave you distrust of your body and shame for your prophethood of Chaos, invented words of disgust for your molecular love, mesmerized you with inattention, bored you with civilization and all its usurious emotions.

There is no becoming, no revolution, no struggle, no path; already you're the monarch of your own skin—your inviolable freedom waits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs: a politics of dream, urgent as the blueness of sky.

To shed all the illusory rights and hesitations of history demands the economy of some legendary Stone Age—shamans not priests, bards not lords, hunters not police, gatherers of paleolithic laziness, gentle as blood, going naked for a sign or painted as birds, poised on the wave of explicit presence, the clockless however.

Agents of Chaos cast burning glances at anything or anyone capable of bearing witness to their condition their fever of *lux et voluptas*. I am awake only in what I love and desire to the point of terror—everything else is just shrouded furniture, quotidian anaesthesia, shit-for-brains, sub-reptilian ennui of totalitarian regimes, banal censorship and useless pain.

Avatars of Chaos act as spies, saboteurs, criminals of *amour fou*, neither selfless nor selfish, accessible as children, mannered as barbarians, chafed with obsessions, unemployed, sensually deranged, wolfangels, mirrors for contemplation, eyes like flowers, pirates of all signs and meanings.

Here we are crawling the cracks between walls of church state school and factory, all the paranoid monoliths. Cut off from the tribe by feral nostalgia we tunnel after lost words, imaginary bombs.

The last possible *deed* is that which defines perception itself, an invisible golden cord that connects us: illegal dancing in the courthouse corridors. If I were to kiss you here they'd call it an act of terrorism—so let's take our pistols to bed and wake up the city at midnight like drunken bandits celebrating with a fusillade, the message of the taste of Chaos.

II Assassins

Across the lustre of the desert and into the polychrome hills, hairless and ochre violet dun and umber, at the top of a dessicate blue valley travellers find an artificial oasis, a fortified castle in saracenic style enclosing a hidden garden.

As guests of the Old Man of the Mountain Hassan-i Sabbah they climb rock-cut steps to the castle. Here the Day of Resurrection has already come and gone—those within live outside profane Time which they hold at bay with daggers and poisons.

Behind crenellations and slit-windowed towers, scholars and fedayeen wake in narrow monolithic cells. Star-maps, astrolabes, alembics and retorts, piles of open books in a shaft of morning sunlight—an unsheathed scimitar.

Each of those who enter the realm of the *Imam-of-one's-own-being* becomes a sultan of inverted revelation, a monarch of abrogation and apostasy. In a central chamber scalloped with light and hung with tapestried arabesques they lean on bolsters and smoke long chibouks of hashish scented with opium and amber. For them the hierarchy of being has compacted to a dimensionless punctum of the real—for them the chains of Law have been broken—they end their fasting with wine. For them the outside of everything is its inside, its true face shines through direct. But the garden gates are camouflaged with terrorism, mirrors, rumors of assassination, *trompe l'oeil*, legends.

Pomegranate, mulberry, persimmon, the erotic melancholy of cypresses, membrane-pink shirazi roses, braziers of meccan aloes and benzoin, stiff shafts of ottoman tulips, carpets spread like make-believe gardens on actual lawns—a pavilion set with a mosaic of calligrammes—a willow, a stream with watercress—a fountain crystallised underneath with geometry—the metaphysical scandal of bathing odalisques, of wet brown cup-bearers hide-and-seeking in the foliage: “water, greenery, beautiful faces.”

By night Hassan-i Sabbah, like a civilized wolf in a turban, stretches out on a parapet above the garden and glares at the sky, conning the asterisms of heresy in the mindless cool desert air. True, in this myth some aspirant disciples may be ordered to fling themselves off the ram-

parts into the black—but also true that some of them will learn to fly like sorcerers.

The emblem of Alamut holds in the mind, a *mandal* or magic circle lost to history but embedded or imprinted in consciousness. The Old Man flits like a ghost into tents of kings and bedrooms of theologians, past all locks and guards with forgotten moslem/ninja techniques, leaves behind bad dreams, stilettos on pillows, puissant bribes.

The attar of his propaganda seeps into the criminal dreams of ontological anarchism, the heraldry of our obsession displays the luminous black outlaw banners of the Assassins—all of them pretenders to the throne of an Imaginal Egypt, an occult space/light continuum consumed by still-unimagined liberties.

III *Sorcery*

The universe wants to play. Those who refuse out of dry spiritual greed and choose pure contemplation forfeit their humanity—those who refuse out of dull anguish, those who hesitate, lose their chance at divinity—those who mold themselves blind masks of Ideas and thrash around seeking some proof of their own solidity end by seeing out of dead men's eyes.

Sorcery: the systematic cultivation of enhanced consciousness or non-ordinary awareness and its deployment in the world of deeds and objects to bring about desired results.

The incremental openings of perception gradually banish the false selves, our cacophonous ghosts—the “black magic” of envy and vendetta backfires because Desire cannot be forced. Where our knowledge of beauty harmonizes with the *ludus naturae*, sorcery begins.

No, not spoon-bending or horoscopy, not the Golden Dawn or make-believe shamanism, astral projection or the Satanic Mass—if it's mumbojumbo you want go for the real stuff—banking, politics, social science—not that weak Blavatskian crap.

Sorcery works at creating around a psychic/physical space or openings into a space of untrammeled expression—the metamorphosis of quotidian place into angelic sphere. This involves the manipulation of symbols (which are also things) and of people (who are also symbolic)—the archetypes supply a vocabulary for this process and therefore are treated as if they were both real and unreal, like words. Imaginal Yoga.

The sorcerer is a Simple Realist: The world is real—but then so must consciousness be real since its effects are so tangible. The dullard finds even wine tasteless, but the sorcerer can be intoxicated by the mere sight of water. Quality of perception defines the world of intoxication—but to sustain it and expand it to include *others* demands

activity of a certain kind: Sorcery.

IV *Paganism*

Constellations by which to steer the barque of the soul.

“If the moslem understood Islam he would become an idol-worshipper.”—Mahmud Shabestari

Eleggua, ugly opener of doors with a hook in his head and cowrie shells for eyes, black santeria cigar and glass of rum—same as Ganesh, elephant-head fat boy of Beginnings who rides a mouse.

The organ which senses the numinous atrophies with the senses. Those who cannot feel *baraka* cannot know the caress of the world.

Hermes Poimandres taught the animation of eidolons, the magic in-dwelling of icons by spirits—but those who cannot perform this rite on themselves and on the whole palpable fabric of material being will inherit only blues, rubbish, decay.

The pagan body becomes a Court of Angels who all perceive this place—this very grove—as paradise (“If there is a paradise, surely it is *here!*”—inscription on a Mughal garden gate).

But ontological anarchism is too paleolithic for eschatology—things are real, sorcery works, bush-spirits one with the Imagination, death an unpleasant vagueness—the plot of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—an epic of mutability. The personal mythscape.

Paganism has not yet invented laws—only virtues. No priestcraft, no theology or metaphysics or morality—but a universal shamanism in which no one attains real humanity without a vision.

Food money sex sleep sun sand and sinsemilla; love truth peace freedom and justice. Beauty. Dionysus the drunk boy on a panther—rank adolescent sweat—Pan goatman slogs through the solid earth up to his waist as if it were the sea, his skin encrusted with moss and lichen—Eros multiplies himself into a dozen pastoral naked Illinois farm boys with muddy feet and pond-scum on their thighs.

Raven, the potlatch trickster, sometimes a boy, old woman, bird who stole the Moon, pine needles floating on a pond, Hecke/Jekkle totempole-head, chorus-line of crows with silver eyes dancing on the woodpile—same as Semar the hunchback albino hermaphrodite shadow-puppet patron of the Javanese revolution.

Yemaya, bluestar sea-goddess and patroness of homosexuals—same as Tara, bluegrey aspect of Kali, necklace of skulls, dancing on Shiva's stiff lingam, licking monsoon clouds with her yard-long tongue—same as Loro Kidul, jasper-green Javanese sea-goddess who bestows the power of invulnerability on sultans by tantrik intercourse in

magic towers and caves.

From one point of view, ontological anarchism is extremely bare, stripped of all qualities and possessions, poor as Chaos itself—but from another point of view it pullulates with baroqueness like the Sex-Temples of Katmandu or an alchemical emblem book—it sprawls on its divan eating loukoum and entertaining heretical notions. The hulls of its pirate ships are lacquered black, the lateen sails are red, black banners with the device of a winged hourglass.

A South China Sea of the mind, off a jungle-flat coast of palms, rotten gold temples to unknown bestiary gods, island after island, the breeze like wet yellow silk on naked skin, navigating the pantheistic stars, hierophany and hierophany, light upon light against the luminous and chaotic dark.

V

Pyrotechnics

Invented by the Chinese but never developed for war—a fine example of Poetic Terrorism—a weapon used to trigger aesthetic shock rather than kill—the Chinese hated war and used to go into mourning when armies were raised—gunpowder more useful to frighten malign demons, delight children, fill the air with brave and risky-smelling haze.

Class C Thunder Bombs from Kwantung, bottle rockets, butterflies, M-80s, sunflowers, “A Forest in Springtime”—revolution weather—light your cigarette from the sizzling fuse of a Haymarket-black bomb—imagine the air full of lamiae and succubi, oppressive spirits, police ghosts.

Call some kid with a smouldering punk or kitchen match—shaman-apostle of summer gunpowder plots—

shatter the heavy night with pinched stars and pumped stars, arsenic and antimony, sodium and calomel, a blitz of magnesium and shrill picrate of potash.

Spur-fire (lampblack and saltpetre), portfire and iron filings—attack your local bank or church with Roman candles and purple-gold skyrockets, impromptu and anonymous. Build frame-lattice lancework set-pieces on the roofs of insurance buildings or schools—a kundalini-snake or Chaos-dragon coiled barium-green against a ground of sodium-oxalate yellow—Don’t Tread on Me—or copulating monsters shooting wads of fire at a Baptist old-folks home.

Cloud sculpture, smoke sculpture and flags = Air Art. Earthworks. Fountains = Water Art. And Fireworks. Don’t perform with Rockefeller grants and police permits for audiences of culture-lovers. Evanescing incendiary mind-bombs, scary mandalas flaring up on smug suburban nights, alien green thunderheads of emotional plague blasted by orgone-blue vajra rays of laseréd feux d’artifice.

Comets that explode with the order of hashish and radioactive charcoal—swamp ghouls and will-o’-the-wisps haunting public parks—fake St. Elmo’s fire flickering over the architecture of the bourgeoisie—strings of lady-fingers falling on the Legislature floor—salamander elementals attack well-known moral reformers.

Blazing shellac, sugar of milk, strontium, pitch, gum water, herbs of Chinese fire—for a few moments the air is ozone-sharp—drifting opal cloud of pungent dragon/phoenix smoke. For an instant the Empire falls, its princes and governors flee to their stygian muck, plumes of sulphur from elf flamethrowers burning their pinched asses as they retreat.

The Assassin Child, psyche of fire, holds sway for one brief dogstar-hot night. □

A Senryu

Sob, sob, sob, sob, sob.
I cut my poor lawn to death.
Sigh, sigh, sigh, sigh, sigh.

Erik Engel

A Senryu

I am the last of
the olive drab people that
became house siding.

Erik Engel

