

TOWERS

FIFTY YEARS OF NIU'S

FINEST CREATIVE WORKS

1939-1989

TOWERS

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES



FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
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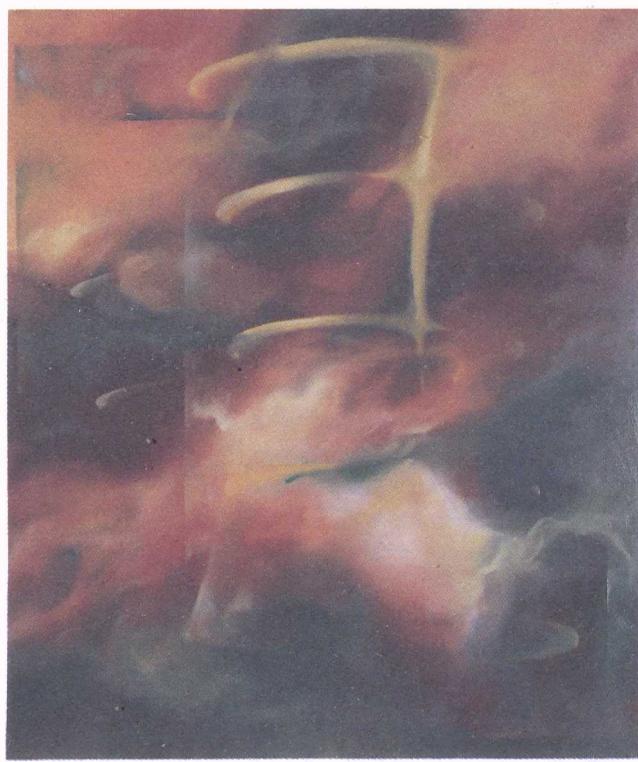
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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Editor's Statement

This year has been a challenge for those who believe that NIU should have a literary and art magazine that is representative of a university. It was the goal of students in 1939 who established Towers to provide a forum for free expression. I am thankful to all those who have supported the artistic community and Towers, the only creative publication funded by the Student Association. Towers is open to all NIU students who share a creative interest. We encourage all students to submit and to join our staff. Towers is a democratically run organization concerned with publishing the work of artists, writers, and poets who are worthy and deserving of recognition.

I would like to give a special thanks to the staff, especially Joe Gastiger, Shelley Wilson, Phyllis Chiarelli, Mark Rattin, Susan Stemont, Misty Beck, and Amy Poskin, for their patience, hard work, and dedication. I am proud to be a part of the Fiftieth Anniversary Issue and I hope that all of you will join us at the Towers Reception in celebration of fifty years of creative achievement.

Elizabeth Renguso



John Beard

Tower Series

Oil on Canvas

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Julie Belenger

Ongoing Thoughts

Acrilic on Canvas

TOWERS



FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
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Severings

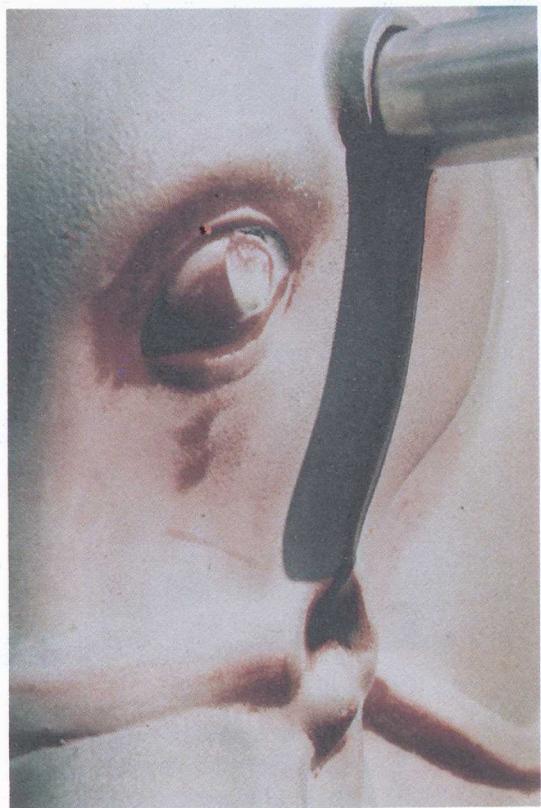
Judy F. Ham

He cut off his wedding ring
with a pair of old tin snips
when I said I was going to spend
Christmas month in the Austrian Alps
visiting my expatriate daughter.

And when I returned he was pouting
against the gray airline gate,
ankles crossed, arms folded around himself.

Much later when we had carefully
worked out whose arms and legs belong
on which side of our bed again,
he announced: I was not allowed
to go anywhere ever now . . .

a risky thing to say
to a late-bloomer with
a sturdy yellow suitcase
and new European connections.



Dan Kublank

Untitled
Color Photograph

TOWERS

LUCIEN STRYK AWARD

Enveloped in my Forty-Seventh Year

Judy F. Ham

A hot spring. Lilacs
Gone too soon. Sooner
Than the day to swipe
At school bushes
Stuffing moist clusters

Down some Margaret
Or some Marilyn's
Starched collar before
Pasting final grades into
School Year Memories.

Shut four decades in
A cardboard photo
Album, I am the waiting
Tip of a snatched mauve bloom, still
Closed in on itself.

This year's bushes rush
Into a wink of flowering,
Droop, in morning fields.
It is my turn to stay behind—
I hear a brown whisper
Of a bad report card envelope.



Steve Tritt

Shadowed Man

Etching

Her Horse Wandered Late

Dan Smolla

Her horse wandered late
into my yard;
I fell from my chair
watching her
retrieve him:

blue jeans;
blue lips;
and a blue bow,
perched like a bird,
in her hair.

At dawn I slipped out
to talk with the grass;

I made my hands wet
with her footprints;

I sprinkled sugar cubes
and apple chunks
where the horse
had made a path;

I carved a statue
of her in blue,
cooking bread,
and planted it.

It's only been days
but it seems like months
or years.

I ask the moon
if she remembers
but the moon
only passes
quietly behind the clouds.

I Confess to Watching

Dan Smolla

I confess to watching
the red meet the black
in your hair
when you write.

And I admit to feeling
the feet of the brown stones
of glass,
of soft glass,
in your eyes
walking thru me
when we talk.

I do not know
if you are my child
or if I am yours,
but I think
that it is something like water
running together in the brain.

Aquiapi ("Brown All Over")

Dan Smolla

Tonight I am grateful
for breath;
for the sight of my breath
simple, in winter star light,
floating in bursts, clouds,
from my mouth,
taking the form of a silver donkeys,
work animals,
made of silver and steam,
pulling loads
of Brown,
in full satchels,
up the side of the mountain,
to the sun,
on the other side
of the world,
rising to meet her.



Diane Dietz

Wrapped Sphere
Serigraph

A Sale

Charles Schroeder

"There's nothing left." His words were nearly inaudible, said to no one. He had said them to himself for the past month. Two women stood behind him, said nothing, paid him no notice. From where he sat he could see the open boxes, the crates and tables all loaded with tools, utensils, and clothes stretched out on the grass and driveway, waiting to be taken away.

A month ago, he had sat inside the house with his children. It had been a long time since they had been together.

"You can't take it away from me," he said, but there was a feeling, a knowledge, which told him there was nothing he could do.

"No one's taking anything from you," one of them said.

There was nothing he could do; he no longer used any of it. No one used any of it. He had lost discussions with his children before. He had let them go when they wanted to leave. The old way could not last forever; it could not be done as it always had been; younger hands were no longer willing.

He mumbled. He wanted to speak. He wanted to hear his voice, uninhibited, like it had been when he had responsibilities. When he worked out in the barn he could say whatever came into his head. Alone, he did not have to worry about anyone ignoring him, did not have to wish anyone quiet when they spoke out of sight. "I can't pretend there isn't anything wrong," one of the women was saying to someone. Her words crept up from behind him, fell with the sun.

His eyes were closed; if he did not look, he would not have to see it go. It would remain his. The people who would take it away were arriving. He could not look at them. Their voices grew in front of him, blocked out the one at his back. The

warmth of the sun felt good on his head but the wind chilled him as it passed through his shirt. He did not want to stay outside. He had not wanted to come out at all, but still they wheeled him through the door onto the slick grass.

Sound surrounded him—voices, sporadic laughter, sweeps of feet on the grass, hard steps on the gravel driveway. He gripped the arms of his chair, wanted to stand up and tell them all to get the hell away. He could do neither. His legs trembled at the thought; his throat ached. "There's nothing left. It's all mine and there's nothing left." Dry words. He turned his head, slowly, searched for his daughters. "Did you hear me?"

Silence. His eyes found them. They turned.

"I want to go in. Will you take me in, please.

The women looked at each other.

"Sure," one of them said.

They each grabbed a handle and together wheeled him into the house. His eyes were shut and he knew he was inside when he could no longer feel the sun on his head.

Vacation

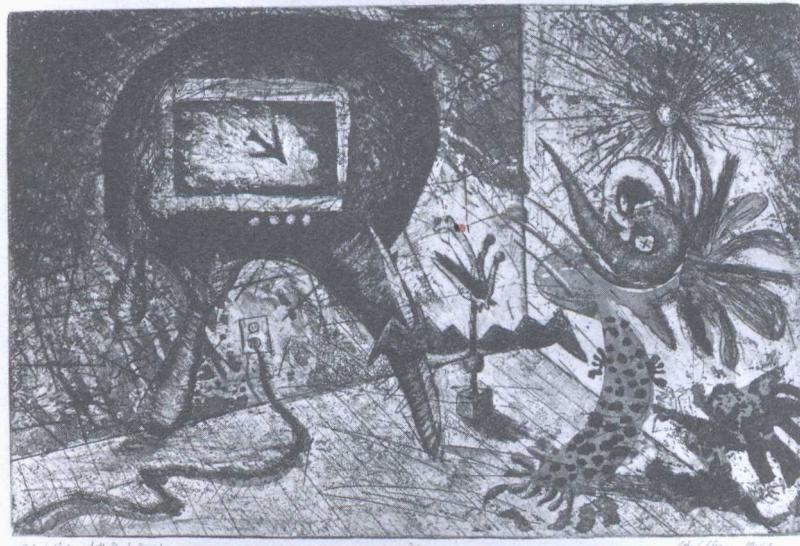
Julia D. Stege

I am in Arkansas
crouched on the edge
of this bluff,
cold seeping up from stone
into fog, fading everything below
and in me.

I drift with the wind shifts,
find your skin in our past sheets:
my lost home.
Occasional raindrops dampen
my surrender to you.

You are in New York,
perhaps in some cafe
sipping steamed milk and cappuccino.
Can you see my face
through bohemian chatter
and poet's smoke,
eyes full of fog and fear?

Here elements taunt me.
Mountains are no escape for
mistakes made,
each slip reflected in the mist.
Alone with the shadows
of nightfall,
I shout
and hear my echoes mock me.



Blackbirds & the B-I Bomber

28

John P. Colson

John P. Colson
Blackbirds & the B-I Bomber
Lithograph

Tall Frazzled Friend

Julia D. Stege

Tall frazzled friend,
your eyes like warm rivers
ran into lakes of laughter
where I loved to wander,
picking up stones to save
in my pocket.

And though the waters dried
into mud and cracked
in summer heat
like a desert,
I can still see where
pools linger,
reflecting yellow august.

I imagine soaking myself
and shaking off rainbows
of forgetfulness

After you go
leaving in your wake
droplets and pearls,
I'll pull the stones
from my pocket
and lay them on a sill
for the sun to warm.

Galapagos

coastline

a portrait on
 swollen
 blue canvas
 over infant
 pink sand
 rolling to foam
 thinning
 rising as anesthetic
 clouds
 under a surgeon clean
 sky

Joseph Mysliwiec

from the waves
 olive eyes
 fall under
 blink
 tight tortoise skin
 deeply
 filled
 within
 bone begets bone
 shell births shell
 eggs

paw pushed
 rabid on water's edge
 fluidity in frantic
 form
 wet jaws open
 like a fur
 lined glove
 thick
 braided
 spit ropes
 hanging on
 hunger's white
 fang
 hung arched and glowing

a pain too deep
 running dogs
 violently smooth
 slide soundless
 inside
 as it is
 after birth
 during death
 when breath waits

TOWERS

FICTION PRIZE

Cordite

Bill Rowe

Paul rode the ferry at daybreak. Puget Sound churned around the rubber-lined docks, white foam splashing against the worn wood shafts. The ferry's props pushed the craft away from the dock.

A bearded man sat on a white plastic seat. He wore a tattered army field jacket with sergeant chevrons. The chevrons were inverted and frayed. Paul looked away from him and lit a cigarette.

"Got another?"

Paul ignored him and shifted in his seat, blowing the blue smoke toward a large glass window.

"Hey, Popeye," the man said. "You got another smoke?"

Paul looked at the man, looked into his eyes. The man did not blink. He held Paul's attention for a moment. Paul thought he'd seen his eyes before.

"Smoke for a vet?" the man asked.

"Veteran of what?" Paul said.

"Don't make no difference."

Paul looked out the window and saw Abe and Sheri on the dock, waving. He waved, too, but knew they could not see him through the dark window. He turned back to the man. His hair was shiny with filth, his beard matted, his pants stained and holey. Soiled white long-johns bunched out through the holes. A peace symbol was drawn on his left breast pocket, its inverted trident faded and smeared. He wore jungle-issue combat boots, with heavy leather bottoms and green canvas uppers. The

leather was worn nearly white and the canvas was sweat-stained and faded.

"On your way, ain't you?" the man asked.

Paul did not answer. The ferry's horn sounded with an energetic cloud of steam. He looked to see if Abe and Sheri were still on the dock. The ferry had slipped from its berth and was well into the Sound. Only the movement of large trucks was visible along the dock.

"How about that smoke?" the man asked.

Paul tapped a cigarette out of the paper pack and held it out.

"A light?"

He threw a book of matches to him.

"When're you going?" the man asked as he handed the matches back to Paul. The man slouched forward, resting his elbows on his knees and watching Paul through the rising smoke of his cigarette.

Paul shifted in his seat. The vibration of the vessel's engines was irritating.

"Suppose it's none of my business," the man said.

"Suppose it's not," Paul said.

"That ring gives you away," the man said. "That and the short hair."

Paul took a drag from his cigarette.

"Naval Academy?" the man asked.

Paul nodded.

"Marines," the man said. "Can always tell a jarhead."

"Fuck you," Paul said.

"No, sir. Fuck you," the man said. "I'm not in the crotch anymore. I can say whatever suits me, jarhead."

Paul looked at him and smiled.

The man folded his arms and sat back. They stared at each other.

Paul threw his cigarette on the floor and stepped on it.

"Cordite," the man said.

Paul looked at him. He figured the guy had jumped his track.

"Smells like cordite," the man said.

Jesus.

"Everything smells like cordite," he said. "Even the coffee."

"What coffee?"

"Can't you smell it?" the man grinned.

"You're a goofy fucker." Paul sat up and leaned against the window.

"Maybe," the man said. "When're you leaving?"

Paul did not answer.

"It don't matter," the man said. "Nam'll be there."

Paul leaned away from the window, stretching his legs into the aisle and resting his head on the back of the chair.

"Things ain't right over there," the man said. They frag young zeroes like you."

"Fuck you."

Paul looked out the window. The Olympic Mountains stretched white above the tiny islands in the Sound. A line of low-lying clouds hung at treeline, highlighting the snow-capped peaks. The bottoms of the mountains were green and fat, shadowed by the clouds. It reminded Paul of a fairy tale, two worlds separated by clouds.

"It gets hot over there," the man said. "Hot all the time. Spent weeks without being dry. Either sweat or rain. No escaping it."

"Ain't going to escape," Paul said without looking at the man.

Many of the peaks were familiar to Paul. He had climbed several of them with Abe and Sheri. Others he would tackle if he came home. He wondered about Sheri and Abe, what they would do if he didn't come home. He wondered what they were doing now, as he watched the mountains they loved. As the mountains shifted with the movement of the ferry, Paul spotted the saddle where he fell his first time out.

"You're gonna see some strange shit," the man said. "You learn who you are real quick over there."

Paul watched the mountains. They shifted with the movement of the ferry, the clouds

separating the high fantasyland from the underworld. Abe and Sheri, that was fantasy.

"Got another smoke?"

Paul handed him one, took one himself and lit both with one match.

"We played soccer once," the man said. He looked into Paul's eyes and smiled. "Used a dink's head for a ball."

Paul stared at him. A nut. A solid fucking nut.

"That was a mess," the man sighed and pulled on the cigarette. "Un-fucking-believable what you'll do over there."

"You're an asshole," Paul said.

The man smiled at him and shook his head.

"Young officer gonna kick some commie ass," the man said.

"I'll handle it," Paul said.

"Macho man," the man said loudly. "Lean green fighting Marine fucking machine. Gonna kick that commie ass all the way to the pass." He stood and shouted. "Our weapons'll be ablaze in the fucking villes we raze. And when we see their mother, we'll bend'er over and . . ."

Paul leaped and grabbed the man by the throat and slammed him into his chair. He squeezed his throat and pressed his knuckles against the man's cheek. The ring dug in.

"Shut the fuck up or I'll strangle your nasty ass. Dig?"

The man nodded. Paul released him and sat down as the man bent double and gaped. He looked up and smiled at Paul.

"It's crazy over there," the man said.

Paul's heart pounded as he caught his breath. He wondered why this guy wasn't locked away in a hospital.

Paul turned away from the man and watched the mountains. His chest hurt from the excitement and he breathed deep, calming himself. Several passengers mumbled out of sight. He wiped his brow and leaned his head against the wall, watching the mountains, the spire where he fell poked up from between two white peaks. Paul closed his eyes and thought of the mountains. The vibration of the ferry filled him. He escaped. Abe and Sheri and the mountains.

"We're off track," Sheri said.

They stood at the mouth of a rocky pass, Abe holding the map, his sister and Paul leaning into his shoulders.

"We're okay," Abe said, pointing to a group of contoured lines on the map. He squinted and looked toward the sun, checked his watch and canted the map so it matched his perception of direction. "This is the pass we're heading into. The spire is just the other side of this ridge. We'll be there in a couple hours. Won't get any climbing in today, though. Gonna have to take her tomorrow."

He folded the map and stuffed it inside his shirt, leading them into the pass.

A hot sulphur spring pushed a vapor of steam from the mouth of a cave near their campsite. After pitching camp and stoking the fire, they walked along the crisp, shallow

river to the falls near the cave. The sun was warm in the high mountain air, but patches of snow held on in the shade of the trees.

"Eden," Abe said, standing on the grass and inhaling the mist from the falls. He squatted and pulled a long blade of grass and stuck it in his mouth. He looked at Paul and Sheri and smiled.

"This has got to be the greatest place in the world," Abe said. "No fences, No roads. No barriers."

Paul walked toward him, squatting and pulling a blade of grass himself. It was tasteless, but moistened his mouth. He looked at the spire towering beyond the falls.

"Never been this far," Paul said. "I usually stay down where it's safe. Never realized how beautiful it was."

"It's something you've got to see," Sheri said. "We gonna take a dip?"

She unbuttoned her blouse and slipped out of her hiking shorts and boots and socks. She reminded Paul of a painting he once saw in a museum, nude in the wilderness, muscled and slender in the bright sunlight. She ran for the river, waving her hand to the men.

"C'mon," she shouted as she hit the water.

Paul and Abe undressed and ran into the river. They screamed at the shock of the icy water as they bounced in the river, playfully tackling and throwing each other. They were energetic as children playing in the freezing stream, muscled bodies bounding, leaping and colliding.

Sheri waded to shore and watched Abe and Paul. Her skin was tight and pale with

goose bumps. She spread her arms and lifted her face to the sun, spinning awkward circles beside the river. White mountains stood around her, and the spire loomed behind her as if it were the axis of her spins.

Abe and Paul climbed out of the river as Sheri ran for the cave. Abe lit after her like a hurdler, long-legged with powerful grace. They disappeared into the cave and Paul followed.

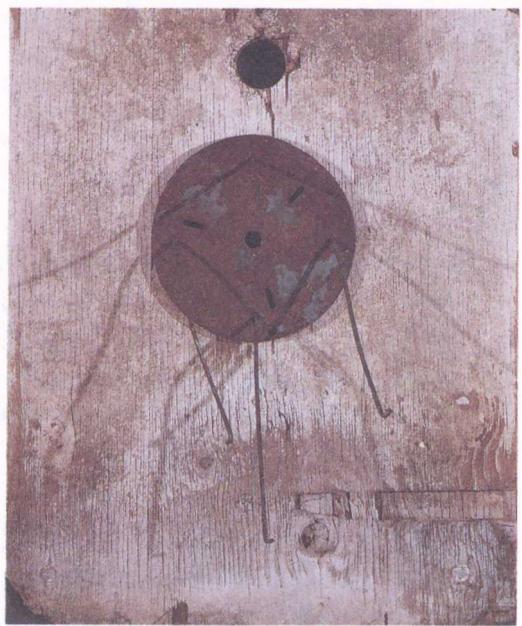
The cave was dark, save for a slice of yellow sunlight falling in from the mouth. Paul could not see them, but he knew they were there. He could feel them.

"Abe?" he said quietly, his voice sounding strange in the samll cavern. "Sheri?"

He inched forward, feeling the warm rock with his foot, and found the edge of the spring. Steam lifted from its surface, rising through the shaft of light falling in from the cave's mouth. Sheri and Abe were floating just beneath the surface, leaning their heads on the edge of the pool. Their bodies were stretched and relaxed in the hot water. Sunlight fell across Sheri and the curves of her breasts and the tender lengths of her belly were shadowed like a sculpture in the light. The water ringed her nipples, moving in and out in rhythm with her breathing.

Abe was barely visible in the brief light. His face was dark, but Paul could see his legs, muscled and stretched across the small pool alongside Sheri.

The steam warmed Paul's lungs. He smelled the faint aroma of sulphur bubbling up through the water. Paul stepped into the pool and lay between Abe and Sheri. It relaxed him like a sauna, deep and loose in the heat. They bathed silently together. Hours, it seemed. He closed his eyes in the dark and felt the bodies floating. Warm, wet bodies inside the mountain, close and quiet. Sheri squeezed his hand and he smiled.



Nicole Beck

**He Used to Put Diamonds in my
Pockets, Now He Carries Swords.**
Assemblage



Carla Winterbottom

Beyond This
Mixed Media

"We better get some sleep," she said. "We've got to start early."

They left the pool and towelled themselves dry. Paul and Abe slept in their tent and Sheri alone in her's. Paul lay awake in the dark, the red glow of the fire pushing through the thin nylon tent. The falls roared a lullaby and the wind swayed the trees. He looked at Abe. His black silhouette was still. Paul heard him breathing, slowly, methodically. It's what he'd expected. They'd practiced the climb many times on short cliffs down the mountain and Abe always moved slowly and methodically, like a parent teaching a child to ride a bicycle. And Sheri watched, patiently pointing out Paul's mistakes. She'd say, Catch them here so you don't blow it on Big Boy. That's what she called the spire, Big Boy. Now Paul was the child going after Big Boy. He stuck his head out the door of the tent and looked at the spire towering in the moonlight. A shadow dashed down from a tree and a scuffle in the bushes and a weak, frantic cry announced the owl's victory over its prey. The shadow floated back up to its perch, burdened by a limp squirrel dangling from its talons, and it hooted. Paul closed the tent and lay in the dark wondering if the squirrel's death had been swift as its terror. . . .

. . ."This is climbing?" Paul asked as Abe wound a complex system of rope around Paul's waist and between his legs.

"Trust me," Abe said, patting Paul on the cheek.

They headed up the rock with Abe in the lead and Sheri last. Paul was tied between them on a nylon rope that felt like elastic. It stretched and did not give him the feeling of security he expected. But he trusted Abe. Paul's rope was the only unsure thing on the mountain.

He looked down at Sheri but saw the ground instead. The river was thin below him

and the smoldering fire looked like a charcoal smudge on a drawing pad. He looked back up as a sharp wind grabbed him and pulled him away from the rock. Paul felt himself hang for a moment, then watched the slack in the rope tighten and the rock blur as he fell. Sheri screamed and leaned into the rock as he dropped past her. He saw Abe above him now, leaning into the rock, anchored with his fingertips and booted toes. Sheri anchored herself, too, the two of them in the same pose leaning into the rock. They stuck their heads out away from the rock to see him, like a pair of turtles nosing up for air. Paul hung spread eagle at the end of his rope, slowly spinning around. The rope lengthened and contracted as he spun, like elastic. A sharp pain tugged at his back.

"Sit up," Abe yelled.

"Sit up, Paul," Sheri echoed.

Paul reached for the rope rising in front of him and pulled himself upright. It was painful, but he leaned toward the rock and pulled the rope against him. The stone wall moved toward him slowly and he bumped it gently, jarring the torn muscles in his back.

"Start down slowly," Abe said.

"Be careful, Paul," Sheri said.

Paul looked up. Both of them were smiling worried, grateful smiles.

Paul lay on his sleeping bag beneath the warm mountain sun. Sheri poured coffee at the fire and Abe kneaded Paul's tender back muscles.

"Jesus, Paul," Abe said.

"Nothing to it," Paul said. "I was between you two like we practiced, then I fell. It was too easy."

"Things sneak up on you," Sheri said, handing Paul a cup of coffee. "Especially up here."

"Too easy," Paul said. He leaned up on his elbow and grimaced at the soreness in his back.

"Let's go into the spring," Abe said. "It'll loosen you up."

They helped him stand and walk to the cave. His back was sore but he felt nothing broken. They undressed him at the cave, pampering him, and held his arms as he stepped into the spring. The heat soothed him, loosening the muscles, and he relaxed. Abe and Sheri undressed and joined him.

They were silent. Bathing in the warmth, Paul closed his eyes and breathed the sulphur mist. Sheri touched him and he rolled to her, exploring and caressing and teasing. She pulled him to her and he entered her. Moving together in the hot spring, Sheri and Paul sweat in the steam and Paul felt it fill him and his head became light as Abe joined and entered Paul. Paul felt the strange fullness of Abe and he relaxed and the three rocked together in the churning pool. The water splashed over its rim as they tensed and loosed themselves and fell away together in the pool.

Paul looked at the ceiling of the cave and watched the wisps of steam intertwining in the sliver of sunlight from the mouth. He tried to feel the pain but noticed only a pleasantness, a new sensation.

"You feel indestructable."

Paul lifted his head. He squinted at the bright sun coming in through the tinted windows. The man was leaning toward Paul, grinning.

"You feel like you're gonna kick their asses," the man said.

"Fuck you," Paul said. He sat up.

"You're nuts," the man said. "The Marines made you crazy."

Paul felt the grin squeeze the corners of his eyes. The mountains were side-lit and shadowed. The powerful engines vibrated the ferry's seats. Paul shifted and watched the man.

"Funny?"

"Yeah," Paul said.

"You think I'm the crazy one."

Paul smiled.

"You wait," the man said.

"Been waiting a long time already," Paul said.

"All that training and all that waiting," the man said. "Then it's over."

"And I come home and smell cordite in my coffee, right?" Paul said.

"Got another smoke?"

Paul handed him one and threw him a light. The man lit the match, put it to his cigarette and shook it out. He sniffed the smoke from the match and smiled at Paul.

"Cordite."

"You get hit over there?" Paul asked.

"In the head," the man said.

Paul looked.

"Don't see any scars," he said.

"Yeah," the man said, putting the cigarette to his mouth.

Through the window, Paul watched as the ferry glided toward the dock. The people waiting there looked cold. They were bundled in long overcoats and knitted caps. A man dressed in a yellow rubber suit caught a thick rope and wound it around a post jutting up from the dock. Paul looked at the crowd but saw no one he knew. The rope pulled taut as the ferry floated in its berth. Drops of water squeezed from the rope's twine. The doors opened and Paul felt the chilly wind from Puget Sound push through the passenger deck. The ferry's horn sounded with a blast of steam. The crowd was all strangers. Paul looked at the mountains. The spire had sunk behind the peaks and the clouds had burned away. Paul and the man rose and Paul gave him another smoke. The man tucked it behind his ear for later. They walked off the ferry and Paul heard the wood planks creak as he stepped onto the dock.

"Unfuck things," the man said, winking.

"Yeah," Paul said as the man walked down the dock. "Yeah."

Diagrams

Joseph Mysliwiec

I have a lover who
draws on my body
Who draws on my body
shadow lines of a
love not physical
A convicted love that
escapes glazed
Coated in conviction
wearing lace-work
lacerating details
Stitched still under
steeled fingers
I have a lover who
draws on my body
Who draws on my body
schematics of silence

TOWERS

HONORABLE MENTION

A Gift of Fire

James Tolan

I've been rubbing
these sticks together
for so long
without even a spark.

Exhausted,
I pull back
and blow cool air
against my palms.

Flames shoot
from my hands.

Should you die,

Should you die,

James Tolan

please don't come back to me
as some fixed object
to be looked upon wistfully
with shallow breath
but as a breeze that pauses
to hold my face and whisper
of when the world was quiet
and we were very much alone.

The Coup

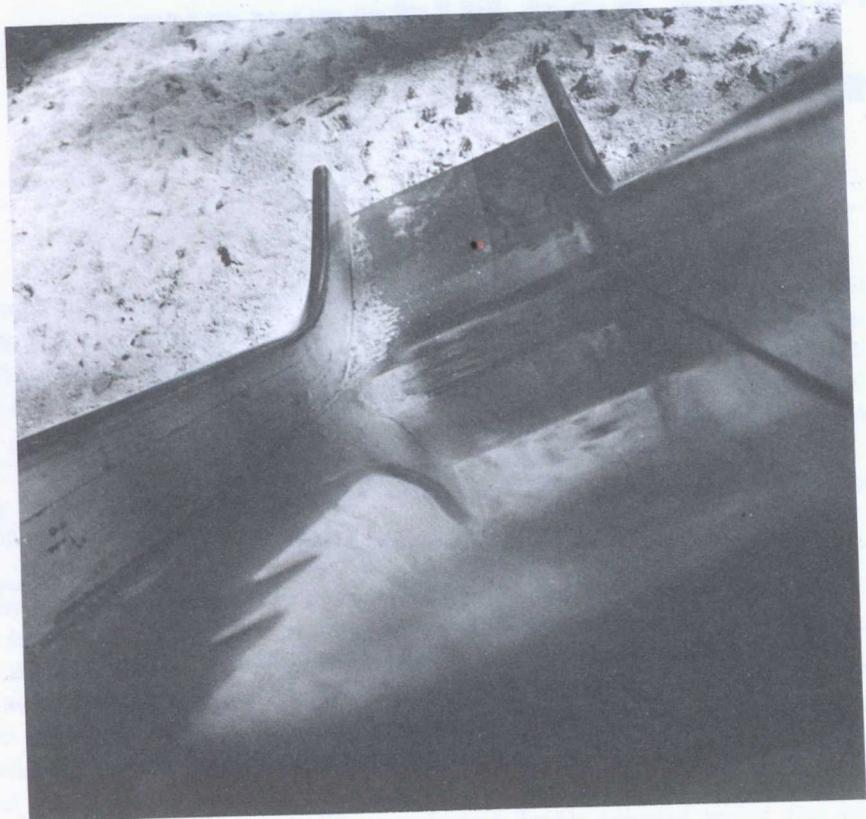
James Tolan

I made a surprise visit home
only to find that my mom was Benito Mussolini
snorting lines off the bathroom floor,
and my dad, who had become a skinhead for the IRA,
was sporting a mean baldy sour and gestapo boots,
marching a Catholic goosestep up and down the hall.

Remembering that history tends to repeat itself
and not wanting to buck family tradition,
I asked Dad if he wanted to haul Benito outside
and string her up like the hog she was.
He grinned, said "Gnarly," and started mumbling
about too much fucking linguine and fascism.

So after gutting our dear old matronly dictator
and other such father-son bonding,
Dad breaks into a medley of traditional Irish folk songs.
Touched, I slip him last year's father's day letter bomb.
He must have been proud.
Martyrdom had always eluded him.

Back in the house, pillaging through insurance forms,
I catch a glimpse of myself in their old bedroom mirror
and note the family resemblance.



Maureen Dempsey

Slide
B/W Photograph

Homes and Hideaways

Erik Humbert

Small, random-cut stones wedged between his thigh and the sanded concrete steps strangled the circulation. The feeling in his leg had faded, and his toes began to tingle. He threw his weight to the right. Blood rushed to the starving muscles of his left leg, and it hurt. He'd written only seven words in the last half hour.

Dear Catlin,

I had the strangest dream last night.

But now, with the pain in his leg, he wrote, spastically.

I was in a valley. Deep at one end, shallow at the other. And there was a house at the tip of the shallow end. It was a colonial, painted yellow, with black shutters. the windows looked weathered and dusty from the outside. Inside, I was sitting at a table with three people, all men my age. I could feel that I knew them, I wasn't afraid of them. Four slices of thin bologna were arranged, clover style, on a plate in the center of the table. Suddenly, I was laying against the steep incline of the valley's deep end. I strained to overcome some anxiety, and lifted my head from its safe refuge between closed, locked arms. The same three men at the table with me earlier were lying around me. They wore infantry helmets, with netting strung across them. One man had grass intertwined in the netting. I could see clouds of yellow dust in the distance, over the valley's ridge. The air was thick with it, but I heard no explosions or gun play. A monotone, calm, female voice rose from hidden speakers. It warned of incoming attacks and of the imminent dangers to those in our area. We were transported back to the table; the slices of bologna had been distributed upon four plates in front of my party. I was very hungry, and asked for more. Someone replied that I could, but then I'd have to go hungry later. I agreed, and the man to my immediate left gave me another. We all grabbed our forks

and knives and were about to partake, daintily, in this feast when a speaker voice rose again. Only this time, it instructed us to keep our mouths closed. And everyone did, except me. But a sense of fear forced me to close it. Somehow I understood that if kept it open a metal gas could enter. This gas burnt the victim from the inside, and every time he moved his jaw the metal fragments would tear his tender mouth. This victim either died of blood loss, starvation, or committed suicide. It was the worst way to die; and I kept my mouth shut not dreading the death of immediate explosion, but the gas, until I awoke.

Hope your night went better,
Jacob

It was one of those fat, red pencils they give first graders. He'd been struggling with it for about ten minutes, then he snapped it; grabbed a real pencil from his pocket. His left shoulder shot pain through to his brain. And he reacted accordingly; unlocked his arm and sat erect. Sun melting the lines on the pages, his writing curved down.

Dear Catlin,

I had another weird dream last night. I was running on a long coffee table in front of a string of newspaper reporters. There were flash pans bursting everywhere. I had to put any effort into any movement I made. I leapt the length of the table, spun in cartwheels along the floor, and to my amazement, but not theirs, floated in the air just by wanting to! I saw newspaper headlines with my name, all in capitals, next to a picture of some criminal. And suddenly a fight broke out in the crowd of reporters. There was a large man holding a woman by the neck with one arm, knife in one hand; in his other a crowbar. He swung it violently enough to scare everyone into a ten foot circle around him. He shouted my name, and came lunging

at me. All I can remember is me completing a floating head-over-heels flip in slow motion while he tried unsuccessfully to strike me with the iron bar. I ripped an arm off the closest chair and ran at him, swinging the wood arm rest. Our weapons met without any sound, and I felt no resistance in the completion of my swing. I envisioned myself swinging an I-beam, the criminal trying to block it with a paper towel roll. All my actions weren't really mine, though. I felt like a puppet. But I felt ok, since I was doing something amazing, and good. The crow bar flew against a far wall. I quickly subdued the disrupter, did another slow-motion backflip and awoke.

Love,
Jacob

Tuesdays and Saturdays he sat on the ring of the nearby pond. Today was Tuesday, and time to skip shore rocks. Three skipper's, maybe four, and he was happy, a paper sailboat, a friend's, rode the ripples of his last stone. The wetting paper drifted close to his chunk of the shore, and he grabbed it, tore off a dry piece.

Dear Catlin,
These strange dreams? I miss everyone.
Love, and write back,
Jacob

Dear Jacob,
I love you very much, honey. Help the doctors, and tell them where it hurts. They're there to make you well again. And try to stop dreaming.

Love,
Catlin

He was on different steps. His left side throbbed from the past half-hour twist to write upon a high step. Nobody seem to notice him there. They just strolled by him, sprawled on the steps. Fixtures, world's fixtures they were to him. He didn't talk to them either.

Dear Catlin,

The strangest thing happened to me yesterday when I took my usual walk around the pond. There was a fish, a bluegill, washed up on the gravel. He was dead. Flies were moving into him. And I wondered why nobody had pushed him in. So I did. And he swam away! Healthy as a mighty bass! So I pushed a bird with hardly any feathers left in. And he flew away too!

Love,
Jacob

As they walked along the shrub-lined path back to the nearby convenience store, he reached in his pocket, pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. Then he reached for the pencil in his back pocket. She stopped him from writing. Staring straight through his eyes, she held his hand to her mouth. Gently, she took the cracked paper and the worn pencil, and she wrote, "Sometime, somewhere, I will talk with you. And then you can come home." She let his hand go.

Dear Catlin,

Yes, maybe you will.

Love,
Jacob

Enginehead

Robert Parran



Pat McDonald

Aching to Gratify
Oil on Canvas

Death Is a Man In a Party Hat

Bradley James Weber

I was lying in bed
while I watched two flies mate on my ceiling.

What shook me from my voyeurism
was a bony hand
whose cold permeated through my sweatshirt.

Standing over me was Mr. Rogers.
He was wearing one of those cardboard party hats
you buy at Walgreen's for 79¢
and the hats never fit
and the god-damn elastic always breaks.

But I wasn't fooled.
My good friend Death had come to pay me a visit.
He makes me laugh
because every time I see him
he's wearing a different face—
but he's always got on that stupid hat
and the elastic never breaks.

Giovanni

Karole Herzog

When the flood came, it took
your letter. Just washed it away
with the Latin book
and the boxes to display
my stationery. And I
didn't remember until now
the tiny scroll with ribbon tie
that told me exactly how
you planned to love me. When
the flood came, it stole your
promise to kill the other men
in my mind. Just once, before
I'd been with any man
You phoned and sent a note
Please meet me if you can
and love me. And so you wrote
too soon, and when the flood came
it washed your letter out
with my files, but your name
and the ribbon tied about
your dreams stay safe.

Through the Eyes of a Child

Shauna Knorr

The fresh sunlight of a new day shone through the small windows of the apartment I lived in when I was young. The sun was warm and inviting on my skin as I pulled on my worn sandals, preparing to go out into the summer air. I looked forward to the routine day of, shopping with all the enthusiasm of a typical, naive five year old. It seemed as if the whole world was joyful.

I skipped around the tiny, four room apartment singing my childish songs. I was vaguely aware that the paint had started to peel off the walls like tiny shaving of white chocolate. The dusty corner cobwebs and the frayed, faded carpeting were invisible to my eyes.

I ran into my mother's bedroom, my eyes straining to see her in the dim light. I begged her to hurry. She looked up from her pile of nursing books and smiled gently. The small lines that outlined her eyes and lips were intensified by the reading lamp on her desk. She brushed the rapidly graying strands of her hair from her face and closed her books. "Oh, I almost forgot," she said with her familiar tired laugh.. As she stood, she tickled my chin. A wide smile spread across my face.

I ran into the livingroom, my pigtails chasing after me like long, blonde streamers. I threw myself onto the tattered couch my mother had bought at a garage sale two days before. It was a dark red color that stood out like a sore thumb in the scantily furnished room. As I landed feet first on the sagging cushions I smiled, remembering the faded blue dress I got there. To me, it was the prettiest dress in the racks of old clothes.

We bought almost everything at those weekend garage sales. Sometimes we would go to many different ones in one day to find furniture, toys, clothes, silverware and appliances. I knew that most of my friends shopped at department stores, but their

parents had real money. My mother paid for our food with brightly colored blue and brown paper. She called them food stamps. They looked like the Monopoly money my friends and I used when we played house. I noticed the difference between the food stamps and real money, but I assumed that we were no worse off than most people.

My mother walked into the living room pulling her hair into a bun. "We're going to have to walk," she sighed. "The car is broken again." It made no difference to me I preferred walking.

A few minutes later, I was running happily down Main Street. I twirled in circles, watching my blue dress flare out above my knees. My mother yelled her usual parental warnings at my back as I neared street corners and alley ways. The sun was warm and bright, and the smell of fresh popcorn drifted through the air. I grabbed my mother's hand and pulled her to the small snack card on the corner. I asked her to buy me something, knowing all too well that she couldn't. We didn't have money to waste on sweets.

I looked up from the cart and saw a girl my age eating a full bag of buttered popcorn. I suddenly felt the strange new feeling of envy when I looked at her pretty yellow dress with it's white lace collar. On her feet, her white shoes seemed to shine like polished glass. Her long, curly hair was pulled back with a yellow ribbon that sparkled with specks of gold. Sadly, I looked down at my own dress, the torn and faded remnant of another girl's pretty wardrobe. My shoes, once white, were a grayish haze. I heard the girl's mother whisper "Look at that poor, old woman. That's one thing you'll never be, dear." I turned, expecting to see a wretched, beaten hag. I saw only my mother, as young and beautiful to me as any princess. I ran into her open, waiting arms, and closed my eyes.

Evening in Paris

A. D. Fallon

Dull summer sunlight
dabbles through the frosted window
in my parents' bathroom
as I sit
on the speckled tile floor
peering into the cabinet
below the sink
at the slender
clear lapis bottle
of musk and ambergris,
glowing in cool alchemy.

Morning Glory

A. D. Fallon

As I walked to the bar,
I turned and sneezed
in the early cold spell
August night rain
and saw
a white morning glory
craning toward the streetlight
from its chainlink trellis.
I reached to angle its face
toward mine,
but it snapped off
in my hand.

The Toad

A. D. Fallon

I lay leathery
under a grey November sun
waiting for my legs
to nudge me down
into the silt and dead leaves
of the narrow riverbank
to sit torpid
until the earth has healed.

Myth**G. E. Colpitts**

Somewhere in the pantheon
Somewhere he has it in for me
This agape-god of light
Moving through shadows of his own making.

Somewhere in the pantheon
Somewhere he tries it out on me
Choosing to refuse me love,
Any love, but that of his own making.

Imagine Danae, lost in a shower of gold;
Leda, enfolded in feathered embrace;
Europa, wild on white ox back;
Semele, destroyed, by his light, arms, face . . .

Somewhere in the pantheon
Somewhere he lies in wait for me
"You are mine," he whispers down labyrinthine madness
"You are mine, and of my own making."

Regicide

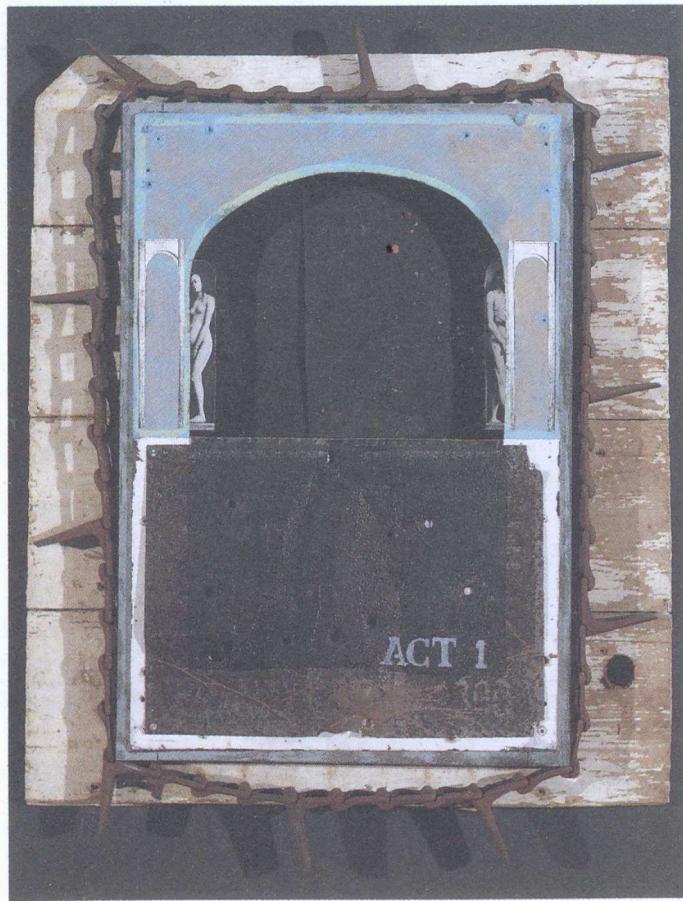
G. E. Colpitts

There is no apotheosis
In this rude dispatch.
The last poor remnant of Capet*
Is poured out, a libation to madness.
A bloody midwife accompanied him
To a new birth, a baptism by immersion.
Priests attend, their teeth set on edge,
Private confessors for so public a waste.

(I am weary of my life . . .
I am weary of those who seek to destroy me . . .)

He was not found innocent.
Whoever is may be first and last
To shed his blood with the razor's edge
of slander.

* Louis XVI, King of France, guillotined 1793.



Todd Persche

In The Beginning
Assemblage

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The Towers

Towers was founded in 1939 as Northern's students felt the need for a publication through which students could find literary expression. Named for the spires of Altgeld, Towers

was originally sponsored by the Xi Delta Chapter, Sigma Tau

Delta, honorary English fraternity, and Nu Iota Pi, the journalistic fraternity. Its contents, creative material such as

poems, short stories, essays, were chosen from student manuscripts on a selective basis. The staff received materials

with the names removed and voted on submissions. During the early years, Sigma Tau Delta members sold Towers on

the streets of DeKalb to help defray expenses. Until 1941, the magazine was printed annually, but wartime restrictions rendered publication impossible through 1946. In response to

student demand Northern Illinois, the college newspaper, collaborated with Sigma Tau Delta and published a literary supplement called "Budding Branches." In 1947, the prewar tradition was revived and Towers began to receive funding.

Many other changes occurred as the teachers college developed into a university. Student art was added with Volume VIII,

1957. By the late sixties control of the organization shifted from the Honorary fraternity to the whole of the student body.

As the University expanded Towers began to receive more contributions and the staff started to produce two volumes a year. The circulation of Towers in 1964 was 6,000, in 1965 and 1966, 7,500, in 1968, 8,000. Towers' Fall 1977 and Spring

1978 issues received an honor from the Associate Collegiate

Press rating the magazine All American. This issue marks the fiftieth year of creative achievement. With each new edition, it is the hope of the organization that other groups on campus might take part in making Towers a compilation of the arts.

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