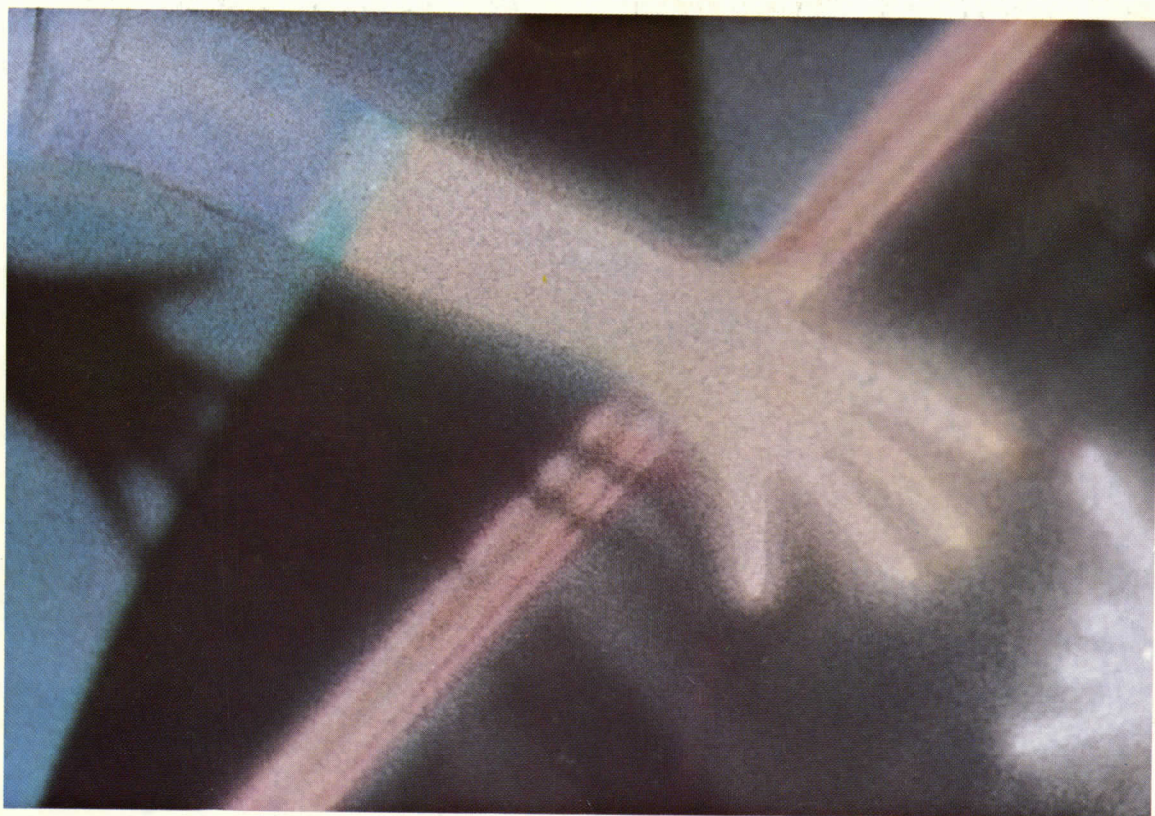


# *Collage*



**Spring 1986**

**Middle Tennessee State University  
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# *Street Car*

The old crooked line really  
makes for say and do,  
curled and centered  
in the pith of heart

Awaiting the pleasures of the Stranger,  
Twisting and laving,  
darkened sod of crooked rose,  
blossomed petal to bleeding torn,  
counterpoised to metronome,  
nourished and cankered in the shifting seasons of light--

The crooked line is desire and departure,  
arrival and negation,  
Syncopated to suns  
obdurate and sinking

In medleys of cacophonous cry and  
discordant fiery shadows  
of the great dying

Laboring to construct a straight line in the center,  
of the heart.

*J.P. Montgomery*



*Amy Harris*

*Second Place*



# The Witch Sat Reading

"Not only does the critical equation of pen and penis, discussed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, suggest that women lack the necessary equipment to write, or at least to write well, but the feminine text itself is often used as a standard by which other products are measured and found to be not wanting." (*Loving with a Vengeance*, Tania Modleski, 12)

"Where are these penes made up as pens, Ms. Modleski?  
Show me. I've yet to see one.  
I see pens, just as I see apples  
only. No red moist (glossed even then!)  
lips, nor teeth, nor tongue coming,  
going, there, or gone when I bite  
into the sweet meat. That's not  
to say I don't have expectations.  
Lord, high expectations I have of my  
apples, but I moan  
money wasted, not life.

"And pens . . . I see pens . . .  
riding across a page . . . maybe  
with me rolling down the page  
beside them . . . astride an apple.

"What do you see?"

"I see you whipping the apple on."

"Touche, Ms. Modleski."

"If only I could . . . ."

*Robin Ridley*



# Perfect Timing

Jim Yablonski rummaged through the morning's unusually large mail delivery for that crucial letter, the one which was more important than any he had received in the thirty years of his life. His pulse lurched as his eyes rested on the initials "S.Y.G.," underscored by "Santa Monica, California," on a large manila envelope. This envelope, to Yablonski, seemed full of promise, increased by its very "official"ness, as he tore into it with a mixture of uncontrolled anticipation and extreme concern not to tear anything, a manner characteristic of a third grader receiving his very first correspondence from, for example, the Three Stooges Fan Club.

"S.Y.G.," of course, stood for *Spill Your Guts*, the number one daytime contest show, one that Yablonski always caught late afternoons. The format of the show was basically that contestants were to compete for prizes based on what the show's staffers unabashedly referred to as the Hard Luck Quotient, or HLQ score. An aspiring contestant would write an essay describing his or her life, the HLQ of which would be judged by the show's staff of experts, including four clinical psychologists, four lesser-known writers of self-help books, and four ex-Presidential cabinet members. This was a formidable jury, no doubt, designed to ferret out from the thousands of aspirants only the "truly needy," psychological or otherwise. These were fit to be contestants. During the show, the contestant who presented the best (some said most pathetic) case in a five-minute segment would receive what he most needed, or in some cases, wanted. Timing was important, and as Yablonski had watched the show over the years, he had become increasingly amazed at how adept these people were at telling their life stories in five minutes. The show's success definitely disproved the old saw "nobody likes to hear a hard luck story." *Spill Your Guts* was, in fact, not unlike the old *Queen for a Day* series, and critical response to the show would

often mention the comparison, whether calling it "A breath of compassion sweeping a medium stultified by the 'me generation'," or, as one more waggish critic termed it, "a mixture of pathos, bathos, and animal shit."

Yablonski had long since passed such considerations of the show's aesthetic merit. He wanted to be a part of this coast-to-coast spiritual purgative. The essay he had dashed off to California far exceeded the obligatory length requirement of five pages and was, he felt, a testament to much more than hard luck. Yablonski had, in fact, put his life's blood and horror into this magnum opus, and as he read the letter of acceptance, he felt a grim satisfaction that his trials would soon be rewarded. If there was one thing Yablonski could do, it was empathize, and his essay reeked with empathy.

As he walked the twelve blocks from his one-bedroom apartment to the warehouse where he worked, Yablonski felt himself becoming, as one would say, connected with his surroundings, feeling, rather than merely seeing, the squalor which made up so much of East Nashville. He particularly noticed the beer joints he had often frequented, each one of which was referred to as the last jump-off before the Shelby Street Bridge, and each one smelling of piss and recycled lunch. These smells had permeated his masterpiece, as had the sounds of Wolfman, a prominent wino, taking his morning constitutional retch at the corner of 8th and Woodland, a sound which at the moment Yablonski was listening to with a sense of morbid reassurance.

At work, reassurance became repetition then became reassurance again as he carried bundle after back-breaking bundle of leather from the loading dock to the cutting room of the shoe factory. The physical repetition of this mindless task gave rise to a mental one of Yablonski's life on the domestic front. His wife had come home the night before from her para-profession of nursing at one of Nashville's leading, yet ridiculously low-paying, private hospitals.

"I'm not going back to that glorified funeral parlor," she had reiterated Yablonski knew not how many times, referring to the Intensive Care Unit. He had listened

carefully, as he had listened (and empathized) many nights before, to her relating the trite-but-true saga of the ICU, where patients "went bad" more often than not, and confused old ladies would rip out their IV's and perform body-slams of Hulk Hogan magnitude on the hapless angels of mercy who would try to restrain them. The doctor on call, of course, was God Almighty, and the nurses, who did all the work, were that link of the Great Chain of Being somewhere between rock and fertilizer. Mrs. Yablonski's job was, in short, not very satisfying, and she had expressed this point at a particularly high-decibel level the night before. When she had started her harangue, her tone had been particularly defiant--"I'll show those assholes! I'll go to med-school; then I'll be God Almighty!" Hours later she had been reduced to a weeping despondency--"I'm worthless; I don't know what to do with my life--maybe I should start back going to church--oh hell! I don't know what I want!" Yablonski had begun to suspect these mood swings of hers as indicative of something more than mere job burnout when they were at a party with some of her colleagues, and he had sat with his best, frozen smile, as Mrs. Y. and a friend with trendy-thin figure and deviated septum began bragging about "making it snow" in the linen closet at the beginning of evening shift. Having partaken of Satan's own brain-detergent himself in a dilettantish way, Yablonski could empathize with the long and the short of it.

Yablonski's talent for empathizing in general certainly manifested itself in his essay; it occurred to him as he clocked out. And that was just for starters. He was gearing up for *Spill Your Guts*, but it wasn't going to be an orgy of self-pity--oh, no. He knew that in his spiel of five minutes he would summon up a conglomeration of angst for himself and humanity that would dwarf anything heard on the tube before or since, and he was ready to take off for California. In fact, he had planned to leave the following morning without telling his wife, or boss, or anyone. The letter from SYG had informed him that he was scheduled to be on the show in two weeks, and Yablonski figured he could surely hitchhike out there in that time.



As fortune would have it, Yablonski was able to arrive in Tinseltown on the day in question. Five minutes, in fact, before air-time he had found his way to the network studios. He had no notes for his five-minute speech, as were allowed of contestants, but he knew this one by heart. After all, this was his life. The fact that he had been on the road for two weeks and had taken the equivalent of a bath and a half could only add to his HLQ, he thought, as he presented his identification to a lady known only as Continuity, who wrinkled her nose at his "aura." Yablonski was scheduled to be the last of three contestants for that day's show.

The great moment arrived. Snappy synthesoidal vamping began, and Yablonski heard Don Pardo announce, "And now! It's time for the show with a heart--the one America eats out when it's finished with its own--SPILL YOUR GUTS!!!"

As the show got under way, Yablonski understood perfectly the reason for its wide popularity. It was a perfect blend of the traditional "give away" quiz show, complete with hosting by Peter Marshall, an atmosphere of "relevance," provided by the judges, Dr. Joyce Brothers, Dr. Wayne Dyer, Dr. Ruth Westheimer, and Dr. Demento, and finally, some amazing music. The last of these ingredients, in particular, Yablonski thought, put this show beyond the pale of schmaltzy, sympathy-grabbing productions that had come and gone. The band, made up of some of LA's premier synthesizer wizards, played music geared to the emotional quality of the stories of the contestants, as if it were in total empathy. As the first contestant, a skinny lady of about thirty with long, dark hair, told her story, the band seemed to synchronize its mood with hers. The first part of her story dealt with her leaving home at sixteen and heading for New Orleans. The band hit a fast, light jazz groove, which turned to downright nasty blues as she told of moving in with a pimp/drug dealer. As her eyes began to brim over while she told how he threw her out with no money, a junk habit, and two three-year-olds to support, the band hit a foursquare gospel rendition of "Calling My Children Home." Timing was important; timing was perfect.

The audience empathized, but not like Yablonski, of course.

The second contestant was a second-generation immigrant from Northern Ireland. Fiftyish and prematurely aging, he told, accompanied by a synthesizer instantly programmed to the sound of mournful Irish pipes, how his father had packed up the family and left Ulster to escape religious persecution. As he began to relate how sporadic work had been for his father and him, the sound became that of a particularly sodden, country/western fiddle. When he ended by boasting how his son, eighteen, had returned to Ulster to, as he put it, "morder as minny Pprotestant pigs as possible," the menacing guitar-chord intro to "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" was eerily approximated. Timing was important; timing was perfect. Needless to say, the audience empathized, but not, of course, to Yablonski's degree of absorption.

Finally, after a perfectly-timed (except to Yablonski) set of commercials, it was Yablonski's turn. Forgetting his "by heart" speech, he instead told a tale of a life-time of blind frustration, guilt-induced empathy and resentment. The music was completely atonal, changing in seconds from a contemplative chromatic sustain to sharp, piercing pterodactyl yelps, to apocalyptic crescendos of the whole band as Yablonski brought his story to its tortured climax.

"The truth is," he wheezed, "I've never wondered where my next meal was coming from. I've always had relations and friends to fall back on, and that's what's driving me insane. I owe the whole world everything!" he sobbed, then immediately snarled, "but goddamn me if those bastards ever collect! Damn them all; they haunt me in my dreams! I'll kill them all! I'm tired of feeling guilty! Oh, it's no use! I want to die! !!--!!--" The primal scream that followed blended perfectly with the rapid ascendancy and slow decay of the last note of the synthesizer. Timing was important; timing was perfect.

The audience was on its feet, empathizing, applauding and screaming in one

mass catharsis. There was no doubt in the minds of the judges who would be today's winner. Yablonski sat in a semistupor as they awarded him a Hard Luck Quotient of 89 (the highest given previously to any winner had been 70). Peter Marshall, smiling professionally, announced Yablonski the winner, and added in a most characteristically unprofessional manner, "Jim Yablonski has to be the most truly needy contestant we've ever had on *Spill Your Guts!*" Yablonski, still drained from his dramatic monologue, showed no emotion at this, but became suddenly attentive as Marshall put a question to the audience: "Well, what about it gang? Shall we give Mr. Yablonski what he *needs*, or--" Marshall's perfectly capped teeth seeming to become pointed, his eyes receding farther back in their sockets-- "what he *wants*?"

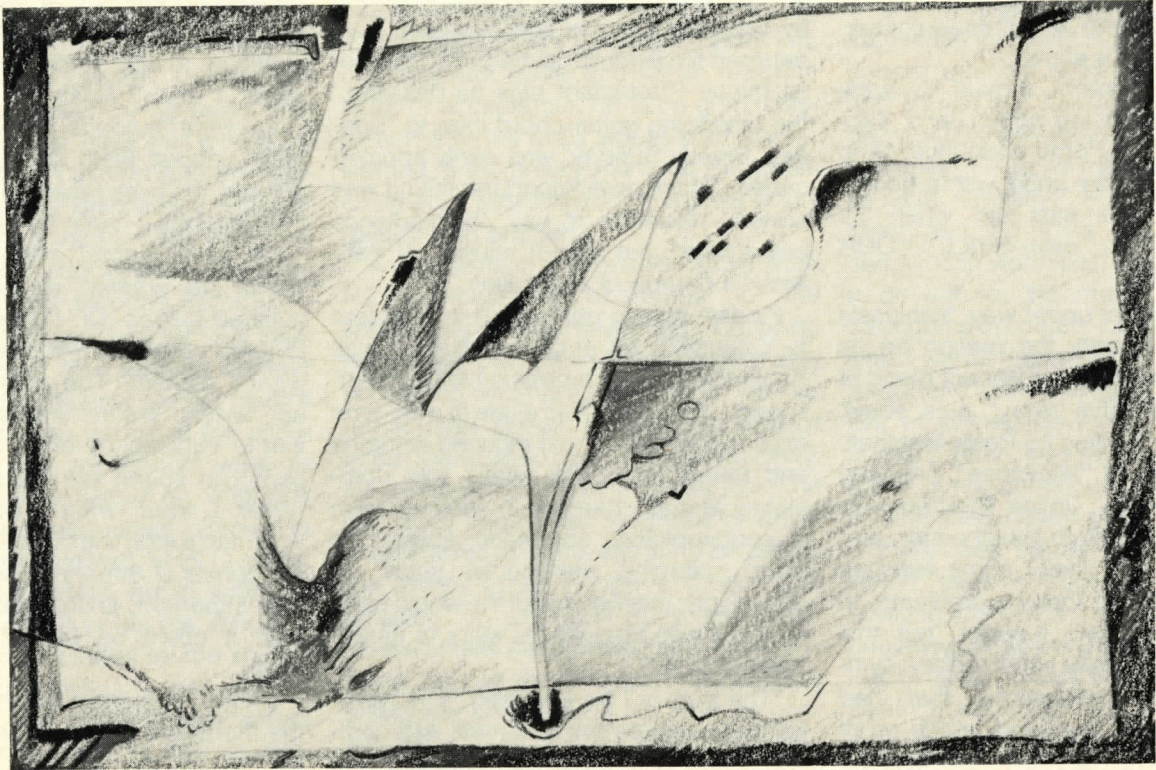
"What he *wants!*" cried the audience. "What he *wants!*" echoed the distinguished judges--Dr. Demento beginning to jump up and down, chanting, "*wants! wants! wants!*" The audience picked it up--"*wants! wants! wants!*" in a chorus that to Yablonski's fading consciousness began to sound like his wife repeating, "What I *want*, what I *want*," then like Wolfman's morning constitutional retch at the corner of 8th and Woodland. Timing was important; timing was more perfect than it could be before or had been again...

Jimmy Yablonski rummaged through the morning's unusually large mail delivery for that crucial letter, the one which was more important than any he had received in the nine years of his life. His pulse lurched as his eyes rested on the inscription, "Three Stooges Fan Club," underscored by "Hollywood, California," on a large manila envelope. This envelope, to young Jimmy, seemed full of promise increased by its very "official"ness, as he tore into it with a mixture of uncontrolled anticipation and extreme concern not to tear anything, a manner characteristic of, for example, an aspiring game show contestant awaiting the results of the preliminaries.

## Second Place

Elkin Brown





*K. Kallenberger*



Je te donne mon coeur  
Pour chérir et protéger.

Je te donne mes rêves  
Pour savoir et désirer.

Je te donne ma maison  
Pour y vivre et partager.

Je te donne tous mes biens  
Pour avoir et dépenser.

Je te donne ma vie  
Pour aimer et toujours garder.

Je te donne tout cela  
Parce qu'à moi tu t'es donnée.

*Jay Freeman*

---

Ils montent en flèche par dessus  
des plaines arides  
ou dessus un désert de plages  
de sable doré.

Ils se perchent sur un escarpement haut  
ou ils descendent majestueusement sur  
leur proie.

Ils montent à la porte du paradis  
ou ils cherchent un abri sur notre terre.

Rien n'est plus beau  
qu'un aigle en plein vol.

*Sheila Marie Currie*

# *What Did the Children Do?*

What did the children do  
As the swirling waters rose?  
Did they stand on tiptoes  
Struggling to hold mouth and nose  
Above the surface  
Until finally forced to swim  
Until they could swim no more?  
With panic stricken eyes  
Did they reach outstretched arms  
Back toward parents stranded helpless on the shore?  
Were their fearful cries for mother  
Lost in the roar of the water  
Before God could hear?

What did the parents do,  
There at the end,  
Stranded on the mountaintops  
As the waters continued to rise?  
Did they at last climb what they hoped were sturdy trees?  
Did mothers sit in treetops  
Clutching infants to their breasts  
Or perhaps try to build them  
A hasty, makeshift raft  
Or finally even rope them  
To a piece of floating drift?

Was Noah, there safe on the ark  
As the rain fell,  
Filled with the proper reverence  
Or horrified at the sight of the decomposing bodies  
Bobbing in his wake?  
And then on Ararat,  
Was he joyful at a new beginning  
Or choked by the stench of rotten flesh?  
Did he have any real trust in the rainbow  
Which promised him only  
That he would not drown?

*E. Arthur Day*





*Kathy Brady*



# The Common Cold

On the early fall nights when the leaves would drift past his window he would listen very hard and her voice would come whispering from the corners of the room. And he would kick his way out of the quilts and the furry red blankets and stumble out into the drafty darkness, only to find a cruel trick of the wind, and only leaves at the door. He would walk back to bed, fluff up the flat foam-rubber pillows and settle back down, closing his eyes, pushing out his breath and filling the warm spot in the bed like a corpse in a chalk outline, and suddenly her voice would come rushing back, the ringing of wind chimes, the melting of icicles. He could hear her laugh, and wondered if she were thinking of him, all those miles away.

They are in a field, walking; he is bent against the wind and keeps looking around at the shadows, when he feels a tug at his hand, and a voice that says, Cold, see? And though the evening is cool all he can feel is the soft heat of her mouth as she presses his hand to her cheek, like a hot coal that doesn't want to burn you but only wants to give you its warmth, and when he draws his hand away he can see the blue outline of his fingers on her face. She looks up into the sky, where stars already shine through patches of buttermilk clouds. The sky is bursting with reds and deep pinks, a ceiling of opals, and he watches the sky through her face and wonders, Why am I here?

He would open his eyes to the ticking of the clock and struggle with the sheets. Why was I there? he would think, and the nagging of the question would bother him until he rolled over, searching unexplored polar regions of the pillow. The only thing he would hear was his heart looming in his throat: whenever he opened his mouth it would make terse little thup-thup sounds that worried him. He would not look out the window, not only for fear that he might see some ax-wielding maniac preparing to crash in but also because the leaves passing by drew his eyes to the moon, and its size this time of the year scared him. So he would close his eyes, even

though he knew the moon would still be there.

She is a tall swan of a girl with skin that shines like moonstone tempered and somehow made human, and he watches her walk and the way the hem of her cloak brushes the tips of the tall grass. He stands by her side, aware of the wind that presses her cloak to the soft curve of her body, and he realizes that he is not cold in her presence, that he can merely stand next to her and feel alive. He secretly wishes for the benign sky above to whirl up into a storm, and in the storm he will pull the cloak from her shoulder and press his mouth to the hollow of her neck, drinking the beads of rain from her skin. He settles for flicking a bug off her sleeve. And before he knows it he has gathered her cloak in his arms and entangled his fingers in her hair, holding her so close that he can feel her breathe. Just the life inside her makes him feel dizzy, as if time stands still in the face of such closeness, as if by holding her close enough he can share her soul.

He would often feel at this late hour of the night as if he were the only person alive; turning on the television only reinforced this opinion. He would lie back and stare at the ceiling, which never disappoints you by changing. From the window he would hear the rustling of the wind through the spruce outside. No matter how hard he tries he cannot get warm. All the heat seemed to have escaped through the cracks in the window. He would get up and stagger blindly through the house looking for some water, never thinking to look in the bathroom or the kitchen. He would sink back into bed with the same dry dull taste in his mouth.

He doesn't want to scare her. He has tried to reason himself out of feeling this way. Just lonely. Just tense. Just close. The moon comes out. I love you, he says, not looking into her eyes, clutching the hem of the cloak in his fists. She runs her hand through his hair and pulls his head to her breast so that he feels the moist heat and softness of her body. He turns





## *Charles Hayes*

over in bed, corpse in a chalk outline. I love you too, she says, but he can't mistake the fear in her voice. Cold, see? And when he touches his lips to her shoulder he feels a chill pass through her.

There is a spruce tree as old as he is. He always thinks it seems to be praying, maybe for rain. The evening is cool. They are in a field, walking toward the spruce tree. And though the evening is cool all he can feel is the soft heat of her mouth as she presses his hand to her cheek. He touches her face and kneels in front of her, his knees sinking into the spruce needles. Looking up at her with her cloak swirling around her reminds him of watching a bird in a high wind. He would kick his way out of the quilts and pull her down with him, draws her down to him and is scared of the feeling. Her coming down-- is it love or is it gravity, and how do you tell them apart?

She breathes deeply and huskily; her chest heaves like tide. Her hair whorls on the ground behind her head like water spilling from a glass. Her eyes are closed,

but is it from passion or repulsion? No one has ever loved him and he can't tell the two apart, but he can imagine how sick it would feel, to be touched by someone you don't love. Still this does not stop his hand. It slips under the hem of the cloak and travels in a determined lump up her stomach, the rat creeping under the blanket to get at the baby. He leans down to her ear and whispers, Is this what you really want? the question nagging him until he rolls over. There is no answer, so he crushes her against him. His kisses are so hungry that she has to respond just to keep from being devoured. Under the cloak he feels muscle ripple beneath his fingers, hardness replacing softness. Her mouth is wedged open, his doorstep of a tongue preventing any foreclosure. And above him there are skeletal branches waving across an arc-lamp moon, and below him a churning ocean, her hips rising to meet his hands, thrashing in the liquid heat of the cloak. And he clasps her against him, tighter, tighter, as if by holding her close enough he could

share her soul, as if he were the only person alive. She cries out: the ringing of wind chimes. The melting of icicles. I love you, he says, to reassure the both of them, but I don't even know if this is real. Is this real?

But he would know that he had answered his own question as he kicked the covers from the bed. And he would sit up and listen as the leaves scratched against the storm window, and he would rise from the bed, drawn to the window as the daylight flooded the room, staring outside even though he knew the moon would not be there. For this was morning.

No matter how hard he tries he cannot get warm.

*Jim Ridley*





*First Place*

James Tucker



# *The Visitor: An Introduction*

Standing in front of the window  
in your gray  
pin-striped suit, your hat cocked--  
not a careful fashion statement,  
but jostled in my resistance  
to your journey,  
your face obscured by the late  
afternoon sun, you were and were not;  
yet, you had arrived.

Probably 5' 11". About your neck,  
resting over your tie,  
dangles a string of pearls  
retrieved from my neck  
in a dream I had  
years later: In the home  
of a German captain, I slide  
down a bannister into your  
arms, your face a blur.  
Pass you the pearls  
that later snag on barbed wire:  
dream ends: we live it  
without shame.

You look across the room  
at me, "Be taken."

I wake, I flee.  
Down sidewalks dodging  
parked cars, women, strollers, men,  
dogs, children, trees,  
I am frantic  
in a language none cared  
to understand--I'd not  
learned to rant in theirs--nor think.  
I run to the metro, a station  
which wouldn't require descent,  
forgetting that to reach  
the Beaubourg I must arrive  
subterraneously; I must ascend.

The time to the Center was negligible,  
rather than, in my usual eagerness, interminable.



Looking about, I see you  
in the car down at the other  
end, riding a pole.  
Together we flash through tunnels,  
the earth long forgotten,  
packed behind concrete that drips piss.

We take in thirty or so  
at a time  
flying bras, Moulinex blenders,  
milk grins Chesire in our speed,  
"C'est C'est C'est  
du Chinoise pour moi moi moi."

You follow me through lingering  
breath, sweat, grease, laughs, coughs,  
rustling paper, dropping packages,  
fights, kisses, a capacity  
crowd rubbing thighs,  
"a man eyeing little girls with bad  
intent." Afraid,  
I turn from you--but feel you  
there behind me.

We spill out with the others  
into the incandescent tunnels.  
Glossed tiles bounce "Here Comes the Sun"  
from the hungry  
guitar of a young man.

We all push toward  
promises, croissants, cafes,  
housework, fights, kissing,  
blasts of exhaust. Our heels  
click out the upward motion.

Re-emergence was a sweeping street,  
a thrusting gray, regardless of sunlight.  
Passing from one into the other,  
the merging jarred me back: the window,  
the suit, the hat, the pearls.

Who are you? Why are you?  
Why flee you? Why flee here?  
Who are you?



The steps open out  
onto a plaza, encompassed  
by justice encased behind tall windows,  
giant women and scales,  
un grand magasin,  
the river, the river, the river.

I walk the blocks to the Center,  
waiting for it to rise in the way  
objects can rise only in the city,  
foreshortened horizons. Finally  
the stark red, green, blue ducts  
and vents. I breathe  
in its relaxed manner, its promises.

Already recorders, tambourines, sitars  
sound. There will be  
no snakes that coil upward, but men  
will eat fire, and women  
will walk over shards of glass.  
Children will smile.

I look behind me; I'd felt you were gone.  
You will return.

*Robin Ridley*





*Kathy Brady*

## *Second Place*



## *Stem, Leaf and Petal*

Fields of flowers offer the colorful eye  
a vision merged, as in Monet,  
by light playfully denying a static  
spectrum--blurring a discrete order  
of reds through blues.

No, not denying but affirming the eye  
through objects infused in the personal.  
Seen so, the shimmering space between  
transforms red poppies--surrounded  
by a mixed palette--transporting  
them to a seer of summer  
who brushes moving shades  
on the canvas of his eye.

If such seeing is so  
(and I believe it to be),  
what explains the surprise at  
one sudden bloom from the vision  
demurely detaching itself?  
Among many in the frame of the eye,  
a vernal poppy singular, emerging,  
opens its crimson petal wings,  
sharply limned in penciled black,  
to reveal its axis pierced  
by saffron stamens of sun.  
And returns the eye from seeing seeing  
to flower--stem, leaf, petal  
and golden core.

*Frank Ginanni*



# *Requiem for a Heavyweight*

You took what you were and what you knew  
With you when you died.  
And all we have left to know you by  
Is a few volumes of words on paper.  
A few volumes. It is not much  
For the whole of a man's life.  
Especially when you consider  
The days and years of toil  
That went into them.

I wonder what happened to the books.  
Not the paperbacks, which anyone  
Can buy in any store  
For about the price of a fast food lunch,  
But the good ones, leather bound, that you signed  
And gave to your friends.  
But I guess that now,  
A quarter of a century later,  
Most of your friends are also dead  
And the books bring a good price at garage sales.

Then too, we have the wisdom of the scholars.  
They never smelt the smoke of artillery  
Or sat late at night in a clean and pleasant café,  
But with little pink tongues between ivory teeth  
And paunches bloated fat with self-importance  
They chew you up and spew you forth  
Out of well oiled mouths  
And tell us what you were  
And what you weren't.

For a man who never met you  
Or stood in your shoes  
To say what you, who have been dead for twenty five years,  
Were when you wrote something on paper  
Over a half of a century ago  
Seems to me to be rather speculative.  
I would question them,  
But it is no use.  
They get pride along with degrees  
And pick and squabble like vultures over your bones.



The books sit silent and waiting on the shelves  
Neatly arranged by title,  
They have taken on lives of their own  
Apart from you.  
For, even if you sweated your life's blood in their creation,  
They eventually, like children,  
Go their separate ways.

You are dead now  
And beyond all of it anyway.

I've never been to Kilimanjaro  
But, in this at least, I've done the best I could.  
You walked alone without cover or protection,  
And asked no favors and carried a soldier's scars.  
I wish you had had time for more.  
But a man only has so much truly good  
He can give  
And then he has to cheat to give more.  
You would never have cheated.  
And, although I know you thought about it  
And decided it was best,  
I wish that finally  
It had not come to that.

*E. Arthur Day*



# *My Kind of Man*

I have never loved a man  
with passion yet  
who wasn't some kind  
of raving lunatic.  
I go for the prophets  
the poets the obsessed  
and borderline insane.

I like 'em with glints  
in the eyes smirk on the  
mouth breeze in the hand.  
Scarred up from  
motorcycle wrecks and  
gunshot wounds.  
A smell of heat and  
whiskey with a hint  
of breaking glass.

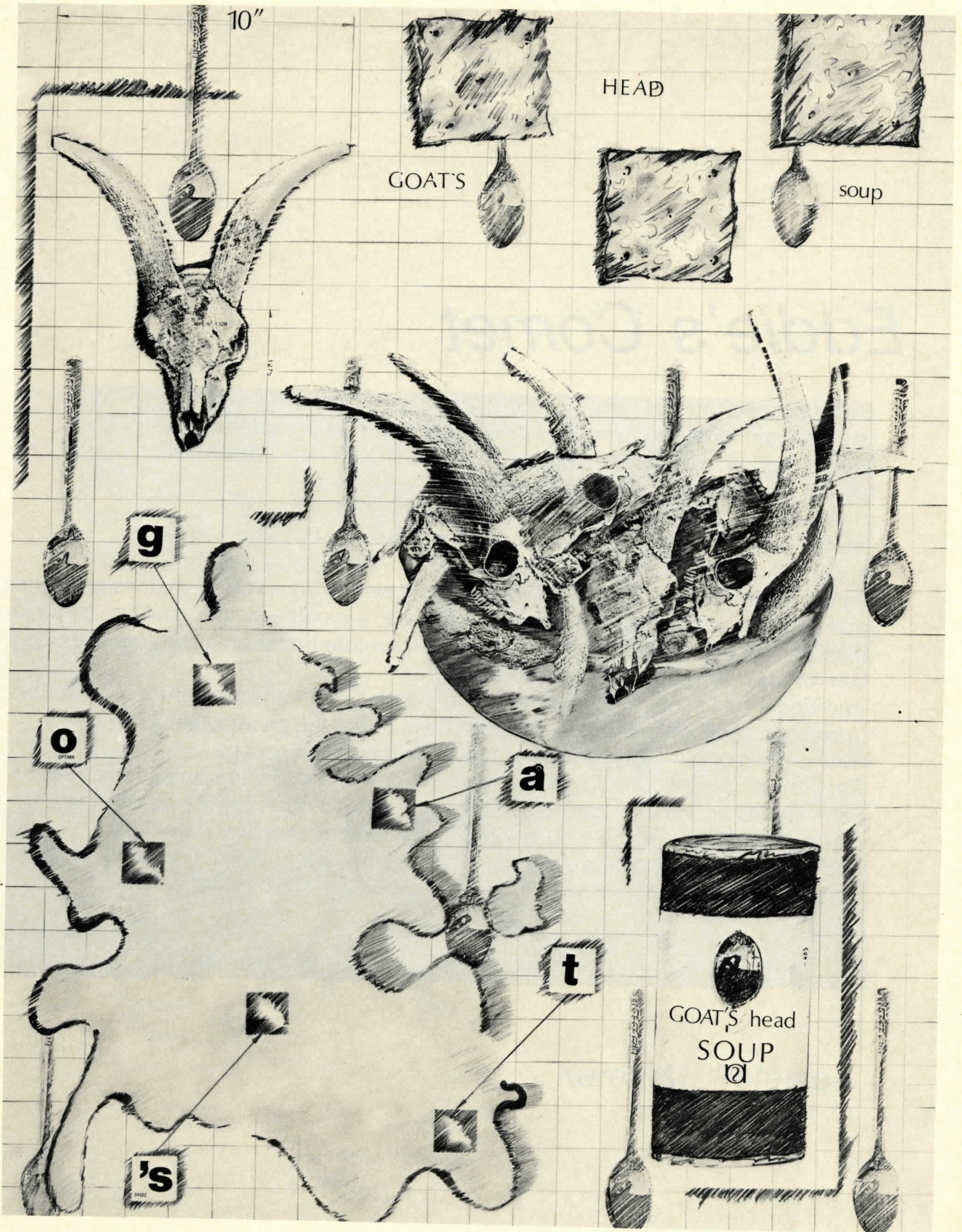
I don't want no  
doormats, thank you.  
Old school gentlemen  
need not bother  
to apply. My kind  
of man foams at the mouth  
and can entertain  
a demon  
all through the night.

But mostly he walks  
his own dream  
and lets me  
walk mine.

*Kathy Brady*

*First Place*





Keith Harris



# *Eddie's Comet*

Eddie popped the first pitch up and under a blue hat his eyes led his brain to the bright white ball as it approached perihelion, trailing behind a curl of whirling electrons circling for new attractions amidst the fading sounds of Eddie's violent propulsion.

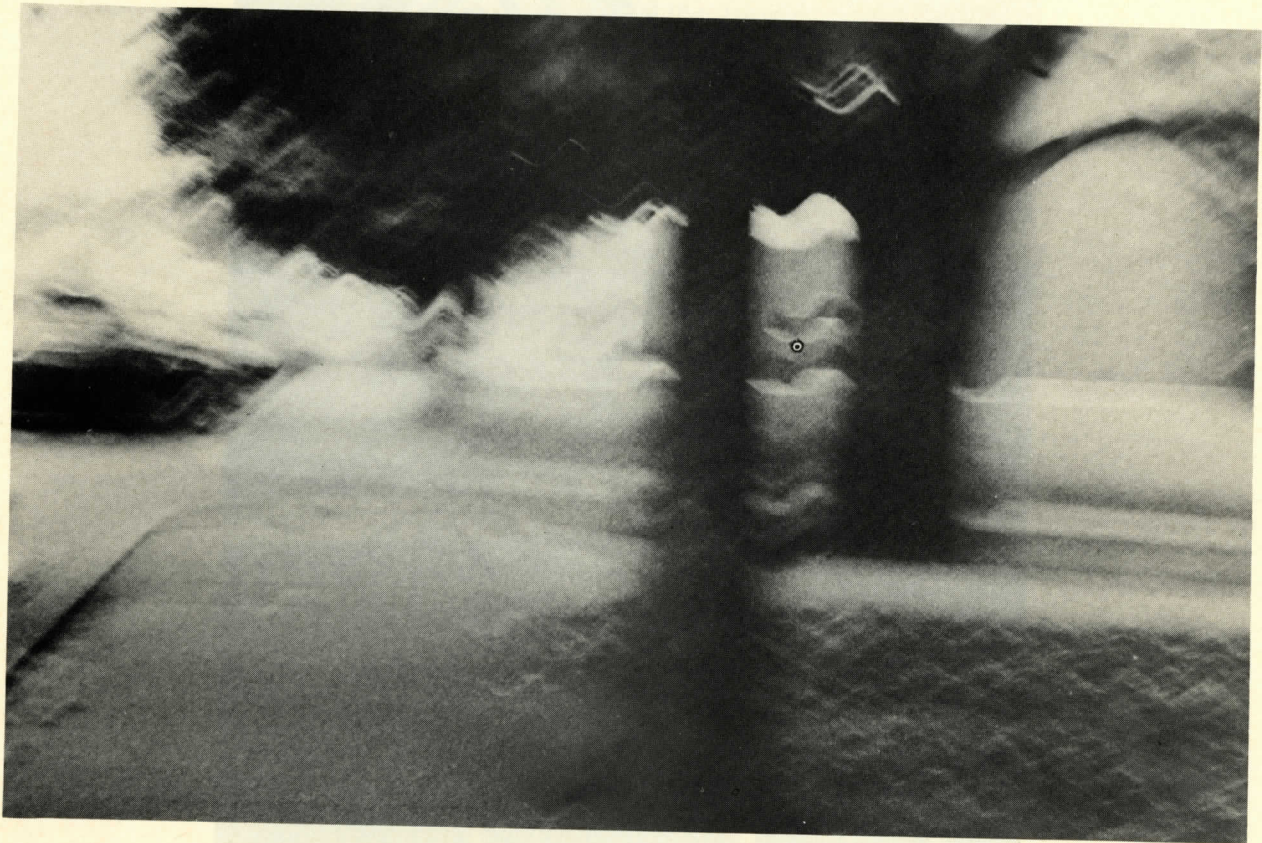
He paused in the box with the bat in his hand and then his brain led his legs up the line in a doomed march toward a base he had apparently failed to claim. All faces craned to view Eddie's enormous failure, hardly a celestial and ponderable wonder but simply a pop-up of vast insignificance and sure out when the team had needed more, a motion, simple addition, some familiar men from one to two to three to home and then true home on brown benches as the sum of their frenzied run was recorded.

And Eddie had subtracted from two to one as his act burned toward a leather oblivion in webbed environs when intention had been to set the clean white flying freely over clipped green fields and gone forever in perpetual ascent.

But the ball went around its orbit and down, down, and Eddie rounded his useless base and its boundaries closed like a border, yet his heart led his soul to the return, the next trip to the box, toward the portentous and possibly-brilliant, whose metaphor formed already from the endless, fiery tail just beginning to be visible in the southern sky above a descending white baseball.

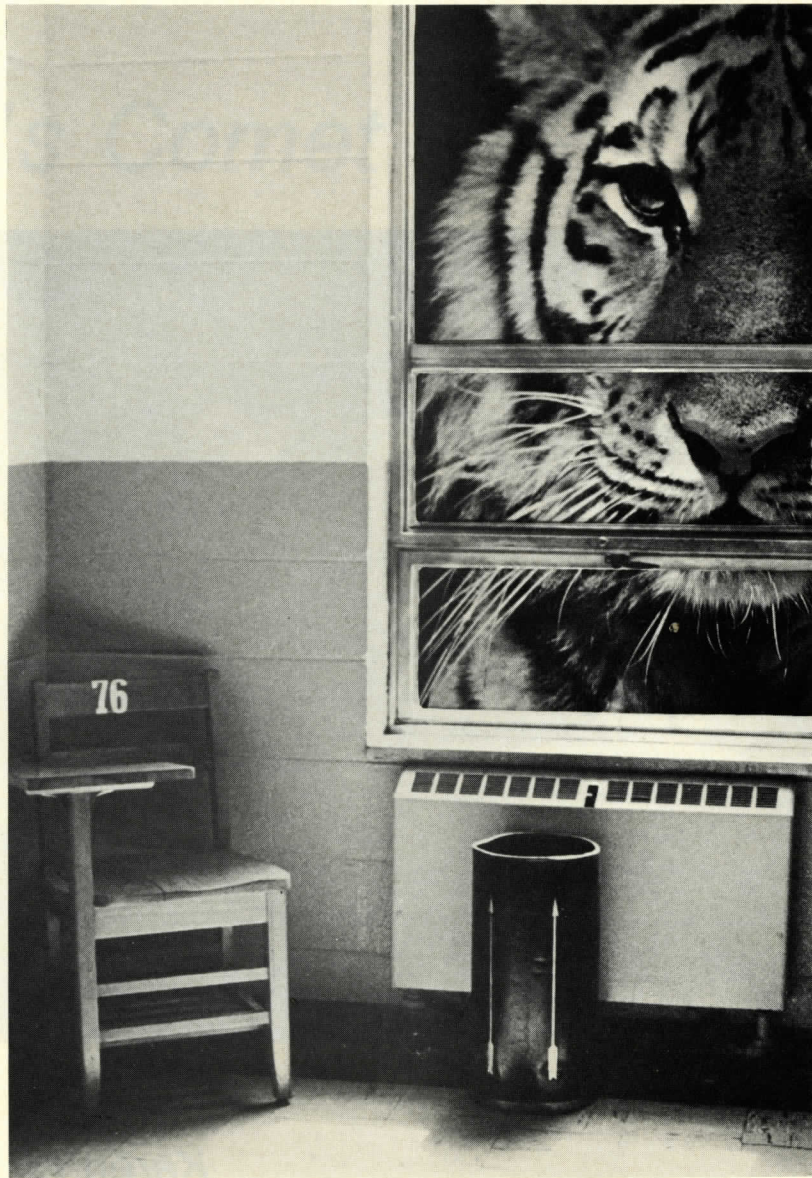
*Crosby Hunt*





*Karen M. Poteete*





*Charles Hayes*



## *An Affair of Note*

She touched his strings  
and trembling made the music  
of mankind on willing instrument.  
Their symphony played until the end.  
Their coda caught the ear  
of friend and foe alike,  
each reading in her notes  
what he wished to think--  
intentions of the player matter little  
when the old familiar score  
is heard in lustful hope.  
Once played now public domain  
played now by willing fingers  
strumming what they think will be their share.  
To her all she does is justified,  
not itch but freedom tuned  
to spur of moment beat,  
no ragged note discordant,  
shrill undersong, defiant,  
played again and again  
against the silent orchestra.

*W.H. Holland*



# Reflection

She was there, she flashes up.  
I was here: in videos  
the outer falls in  
and through rock 'n roll  
dreams pursue.

Purse strings, apron strings, ties  
here too tight,  
I hold on. I dance  
the fine line--predictably.

It was so literal  
I could slice it into frames  
and roll it. Hanging fire,  
I wait for words.  
Burn indecision at the wash basin,  
for there is no  
non-she or non-he  
to dance the dancer.  
Eventually, we point to the Bible.

So woman to woman  
I'm saying with you,  
eyes fight to catch eyes.  
Tumbling  
    through the functioning quiver  
    we meet in quiet  
    recognition--  
                    though no connection  
drawn.

The dancer  
balances the middle of the clothesline,  
running one pulley  
and the other, taking -----  
(pronoun?) nowhere from window  
to window. We sit and watch  
the swaying over the alley,  
the canal, the grass.  
Our eagerness thinks a snap  
into the line. Windows slam.  
Still balance, straight waving lines  
that run despite moments of non-decision.

We pull our chairs up  
to our prospective windows  
and stare into our togetherness.

*Robin Ridley*



# *Swan Night*

In the half light of the evening  
The water mirrors a purple sky.  
A lake formed of cold water  
Flowing over dark stones.  
And descending from the mantle of coming night  
Are five and twenty swans.  
And one apart from the rest,  
A great swan in the last days of his prime,  
Trailing behind in strong but awkward flight.

With a rush of wind through feathers  
And drumbeats of giant wings  
They bank and land in the purple evening.  
Skimming along the twilight water,  
Flowing cold among the stones,  
Are five and twenty swans.  
And one apart from the rest,  
A great swan in the last days of his prime,  
Trailing a bent and dragging wing.

They pair off and side by side  
Lovers glide through the dark water.  
And a great swan apart from the rest  
Remembers a neck laid along his back,  
A gentle nudge of head or breast  
And the call of a mate now dead.  
And in his dark and terrible eyes  
A dark and terrible beauty lies.

Beyond their ability to harm or help  
He paddles by himself in the lapping water.  
The night whispers to him and the moonlight softly sings  
Strange, chanting voices trouble his dreams.  
He is waiting for the call that will bid him  
To leave them there and take flight,  
To clamber painfully into the night.  
A great swan in the last days of his prime,  
Trailing behind a bent and awkward wing.

*E. Arthur Day*



# *Venus Rising*



*Charles Hayes*



# Goodnight, Irene

She sat curled up in the old familiar easy chair studying this creature she had once loved and lived with as though he were the photograph of a stranger. R.D. was sitting Indian-style on the floor, surrounded by issues of *Field and Stream* magazine. She thought how absolutely demented he looked these days. Must be that \$2 haircut, the boot camp clip. With the beard gone, too, a sharply square chin dominated his face, drawing attention to an almost hawklike nose holding up wire-frame glasses. An amusing description came to mind: punk rock Hemingway. She did not bother to share this with him.

"Here it is," R.D. said, plopping an open magazine in her lap, "That's what you saw out in South Dakota--prong-horn antelope."

She glanced at the glossy likeness. "Yeah, that's them. We saw big groups of them grazing out in the grasslands, under this huge blue sky..."

He wasn't listening, but skimming the article, his eyes moving rapidly back and forth. His shoulder was nearly touching her knee. She had a sudden urge to reach out and touch him. In her mind she saw a sleazy Bette Davis enveloped in cigarette smoke. "Cut the crap, R.D.," Bette drawled. "We got some scores to settle, chum. I didn't come here to discuss antelopes with you."

"R.D.," she began. He glanced up, but his eyes skirted hers. "Uh," she stammered, "we saw an elk, too, at Yellowstone. It was really weird. Here was this huge animal grazing right at the edge of a main road. All these cars just pulled over and people jumped out and started taking pictures. This one woman had a tripod set up not three feet away from the elk, and he just stood there, munching away. The whole scene struck me as so unnatural, you know?"

"Animals are smart. They know ain't nobody going to shoot them in the middle of Yellowstone." He closed the magazine and stood up. "Like to get me an elk one day. Hunting club I joined is going out to Wyoming soon. I ain't going with them, though. They're renting a Winnebago,

rum and coke and all the conveniences of suburbia. When I go, I'm packing in. Just me, my gun, and the deer family."

"And the bears," she added.

"Bears ain't no problem unless you're stupid. Take the proper precautions, they won't bother you."

"I don't know about that," she added carefully. Whenever she disagreed with him, she still felt like she was picking her way across a mine field in the dark. "A friend told me that once he did all the things you were supposed to do, strung his food up high and all that, but a bear came into his camp anyway and attacked one of the tents..."

"Your friend's still alive, ain't he? Bear didn't eat your buddy, did it?"

"Well, no, but still, I read this other account where..."

"Bears won't bother you," he said firmly, "if you take the proper precautions."

Subject closed, she thought. Yeah, sure, well whatever, R.D. Still and always you won't bend an ear to listen. What the hell does he know about the world anyway? Only time he's ever even been out of Tennessee was to deliver a company car to Florida for Christ's sake. And to think that once my world was so small, I thought he was brilliant. She felt sad and tired suddenly, watching him rocking back and forth on laceless dirty sneakers. She imagined they hadn't been washed once since she had left.

"...on the porch awhile?"

She realized he had been speaking to her. "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"Said let's go sit on the porch awhile. It's cooler outside."

"Sure, okay." She followed him outside.

A slight breeze blew through the hollow. The trees at the edge of the small perimeter of yard swayed, rustling shadows in the dim light of a slender moon. Behind the trailer, a steep hill, dense with underground and tall poplars, rose like a soft and living curtain. Above them, and dipping down into the ravines, rolled a sky like blackest velvet flocked with stars. Creek sounds echoed through the stillness.

R.D. was first to speak, and when he did, it was in a quiet voice like a child will use in church. "It's so wonderful here, so peaceful. But you couldn't learn to like it."

"That's not the whole truth, R.D. I love the country; you know that. I like this place a lot or I wouldn't have bought it with you."

"Yeah, but you couldn't be satisfied, like I am, just being here. You know," he said, sitting down on the porch steps beside her, "you still can't seem to find any place or thing to satisfy you for very long. There will never be another place better for you than right here. Do you know that now?"

"No, R.D., I don't know that. I guess I haven't found a satisfyingly permanent place to be, as you put it. Still, I know it isn't here with you."

"Haven't you ever wished you had stayed?"

She sighed. "Yeah, I have. Once or twice, in fits of depression, it has seemed a mistake to have left."

"Tell me, love," he whispered, "just what was in the back of your mind when you wrote and said you wanted to come down for the weekend?"

She almost laughed, so blatantly suggestive was his tone. "Absolutely nothing like you're thinking, R.D."

"Enlighten me, then, about your motives."

All week she had, in her head, written and revised the speech she was about to deliver. She told him how she felt it would be better for their daughter to grow up seeing them interact as friends rather than as enemies. That she believed visits spent together in the same house would be less confusing to Annie than the hurried weekends transporting her between homes. It was what she had come to say. A bit jumbled, yes, but as courageously honest as she knew how to be. And yet, she knew by his face that he could not accept what she was saying, not now, not ever. She watched him twirl a blade of grass between his fingers, smiling a smile which told her that it all sounded like something she had read about in one of her feminist self-help manuals. Chapter ten: Custody and Visitation Alternatives. She wanted to scream at him, Look, goddammit, things are so weird this way, I can't stand it anymore! Instead she lit a cigarette and waited for him to start, as



he had so many times in the past, systematically, like some computerized machete, cutting down the things she'd said, and pointing out the great gaping holes in her logic. Softly, confidently explaining, as one might to a moron child. We love you, dear, but the fact remains, ma'am, that you are thoroughly invalid.

But he didn't. Instead, he said, "Shot a stray dog down here a few weeks back."

She wondered what this particular piece of trivia had to do with anything.

"Weren't no real big dog," he went on, "not too old. Just a mutt, kinda cute in a sorta ugly way. Crawled up under the trailer and kept looking out at me with these sad, sad eyes. Stayed under there a couple weeks. Weren't sick or nothing far as I could tell. Couldn't get it to come out and act friendly for nothing. Then, one morning I got up and it was layin out there in the yard, sunnin itself like nobody's business. Well, golly gee, I said to myself, look who's come around. So, I took down my bow, see..." He raised an imaginary bow, pulled back, and let go, making a soft thh-wack sound in the back of his throat. "...and I shot it."

She was too stunned to reply. R.D. jumped up, making a horrible high-pitched sound like that of a dog yelping in pain. He ran around in circles, head thrown back, his mouth an elongated cavern, the escaping noise piercing the night obscenely.

Goosebumps rose on her arms, but she waited as calmly as she could for the travesty to end. R.D. stopped finally, cramming his hands into his pants pockets. "That's how it sounded," he said, "took the critter a good while to die." He smiled at her.

"Did Annie see it?" she asked.

"Naw, Annie spent the night with the sitter. She wasn't here." He kicked at the ground slowly, like a bored child alone on an empty playground.

"Why on earth did you do such a thing, R.D.?"

"Just wanted to see could I hit it. Gettin right good with that bow, if I gotta say so myself."

Who is this sick person, she thought, and how could I have ever loved him?

"Know what I thought when I got your

letter inviting yourself down here, ladybug? I thought, man, I could do her just like that dog. Put an arrow through her and toss her off in the woods. Be between me and the gatepost. Goodbye troubles."

She felt the adrenalin rush through her. It doesn't mean a thing, she told herself, it's just another of his mind games. Still, part of her was frightened. He had driven her out here. She was stuck. There was no phone in the trailer, and the nearest neighbors were a mile away.

"I think you're crazy!" she blurted. "Besides, what would you tell Annie in the morning?"

"Wouldn't be the first time you up and disappeared, would it, love?"

So that's it, she thought. Punishment for leaving, once again. But why? He'd won so long ago, gotten the child, the place, everything.

"And what about my friends, R.D.? There are people who know I'm here. They'd come looking for me soon enough. What then, huh?"

"I'd just say you walked off in a huff. Again, not unusual behavior on your part, is it?"

"This is going absolutely nowhere," she replied. "I refuse to continue this conversation."

"Fine," he said, "suit yourself." He got up and went inside the trailer. She heard him cross the living room, heard the familiar sound of his bow being removed from its hooks upon the wall, of an arrow being taken from his quiver. He tromped across the trailer and stood in the doorway behind her. "Last chance, ladybug," he said. "You gonna come on inside now and act friendly, or stay outside and carry on like that dog?"

She said nothing. She did not turn around to face him.

"Have it your way then, dog." She heard him pulling back on the bow. Heard the soft thh-wack sound going off in her head. Heard him laugh, then shut and lock the door. "Goodnight, Irene," he said sarcastically, "I'll see you in your dreams." The lights went out in the trailer, and she heard the bed groan beneath his weight.

She began to cry then, soft as the velvet night. She didn't want to wake the baby, after all.

*Kathy Brady*

## *First Place*



# A Song of Sorrow

I set out to sing a love song,  
But then I thought of how often  
It all went wrong.  
Of how the dead littered Troy's plains,  
Fair Juliet in her coffin,  
And blind Samson in chains,  
And my voice grew cracked and broken.

So I thought I'd sing of friendship.  
Until I remembered  
Old friends that I'd forgotten,  
Friends too busy to call,  
Walls that time had put between,  
And mighty Caesar's fall.  
Until it seemed  
That I only babbled of false greatness.

So I decided to sing of beauty.  
Until I thought of how it fades,  
Time that holds all things in contempt,  
Tall youths bent,  
And pretty girls age,  
And my happy song became a lament.

And so I sing a song of sorrow.  
Sorrow the common bond of men.  
I could not sing of beauty,  
Of friendship, or of love.  
But I sing sweetly,  
Like a bird, of sorrow,  
Like the sweetly aching mourning of the dove.

*E. Arthur Day*



## *Pretty Boy*

he was a pretty boy one of  
four sons begat by a weight lifter.  
the old man never spanked nor said  
love, just fixed his gaze  
firmly above the boy's head  
held it there for twenty years.  
son hopped up and down  
on pills and mattresses begging  
to be noticed. finally got some  
attention last tuesday  
with a borrowed 38. father came  
and made the proper arrangements:  
closed casket navy suit yellow mums.  
those who knew said  
the corpse wasn't much to  
look at anymore.

*Kathy Brady*



## *Old Man at the Bar*

He peels the labels  
rolls them back and forth  
between his fingers--  
more trash to pick up.

Watery eyes watch  
nubile girls' orgasmic moves  
to music he can't comprehend--  
more trash to pick up.

Close grey hair  
rumbling belly doubled over belt  
his mind awash  
in beer and obscene hope.

Forgotten pains goad his groin  
while labels yield  
to nervous needy fingers--  
more trash to pick up.

*W.H. Holland*





*Kathy Brady*





*Kathy Brady*



# *A Dirty Poem*

The cutting current of the big river carries debris of the kind  
you would expect to see in water, visible in small crests,  
flushed forward with an aimlessness  
which bespeaks final design.

Random, purposed wandering. No river meanders.

Some poets have lied about this. Of love

others have lied also; of all subjects this and the water

they have missed the farthest, urging us onto flat rafts

for a row with our lovers, who pick dull leaves from just

beneath the surface and hold them dripping at lengths

measured to miss their Sunday shoes should a drop descend in the blue sunlight.

When what I want is to leave the boat with the barefoot girl  
and float in patterned disarray, ducking under the foam  
to find her feet, drowning if downward becomes my direction,  
holding her leg like a tiller, my open mouth against her flesh  
in wordless, watered ecstasy.

*Crosby Hunt*



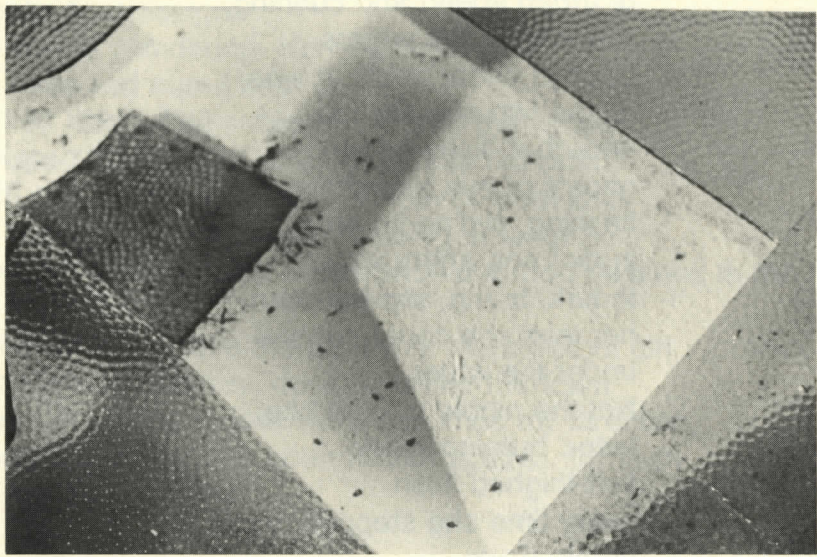
# *Piranha for R*

It was the fish that did it  
and not the ones painted  
on rock mud walls  
but vicious ones with teeth,  
of urban speed and cunning,  
warming in the waters  
deep in cedar pools. It was  
all the fish she ate too,  
after that, fishy headed  
ghosts of eye and scale  
flashing, sliding fin on gill  
in dim and angry water,  
to lurk, bump, slip between  
her legs she could not see  
under the water.  
Not the nibble but the bite  
bitter, burning inside  
soft-thighed flesh  
every time she stepped, sank,  
drank, down  
into the water.

*Dixie Highsmith*



*A Dirty Poem*



*Geoffrey Hood*



# *My Uncle Tom*

works on a turkey farm  
lives there in a mobile home  
with his wife and gilt-  
framed photos of grandkids.  
his face and arms coated  
with fine dust of dung.  
the smell of gobblers  
sneaks in under the kitchen  
floor and mocks him over  
grace at the supper table.  
more than twenty years  
he's been at it this year  
got rewarded with an audit.  
"know what's dumber than  
a turkey?" he asks.  
"no what?" "the guy that  
takes care of one." laughs  
so hard at his own joke  
swear to god sounds  
just like somebody crying.

*Kathy Brady*

*Second Place*







# Autumn Leaves



Julie Jack



# *The Other Side*

At forty you traveled back in album photographs  
to preening sophomore anguish,  
your tragic white socks stacked  
to the hem of full skirts.  
Moondriven, tidal, resolute--  
you stared at the shattered other side  
of an antique, towered ballroom,  
saw no chaperons waiting time, nor  
lovers dark and dancing on  
the box-littered empty floor.  
Pendulous and fragile, you dipped,  
arching your back to the witched  
crosscurrents of the Cumberland River.  
Sister, you are not now a ghost in  
your own house, nor an  
old woman waiting her delinquent mail.  
Your straw hat wreathed in jaunty violets  
drifts the mud surge and the undertow.

*J.P. Montgomery*



# *View from Below* *—Four Months Later*

So she jumped, and, falling, looked up  
the skirts of the girl climbing  
into the damn gondola,  
dragging over its frayed lip  
the last dirty gray burlap bag  
ballast—the weave of the wicker  
splitting round  
and only two dirty children left  
their thumbs in their eyes  
standing in the straw watching,  
her bent eye to the clotted rag,  
torn paper, cigarette butts  
and banana peels pitched  
by the absent crowds,  
those watchers who even now  
read some ugly story  
of the leap.  
How the woman was leaning down  
while the child waved,  
and how she smiled, stepping out,  
and how she sailed right down,  
pushed her face like a kiss  
into what she had seen below.

*Dixie Highsmith*



# *Always Come Home*

my mother used to scream at me over  
telephone wires and write long letters pleading  
that i give up my art get a real  
job come to my senses and buy a washing  
machine for the love of god and the  
children's sake. she'd cry. you know you can  
always come home. and please be sure to  
let me hear if you  
need anything for yourself.

then my father left  
a note on the kitchen table where she'd  
served him twenty-seven years of her  
life on battered melmac dishes. goodbye  
ricocheted off her spotless walls her  
perfect floors her precisely  
folded sheets. lodged itself in the  
washing machine for the love of  
god and the children's sake. she cried.  
you know you can't always  
come home mom. and please be sure to  
let me hear if you  
need anything for yourself.

*Kathy Brady*



# *Dead Men Keep Their Silence*

"Stern all! the White Whale spouts thick blood!"

"If design govern in a thing so small."

What the dead at Pompeii  
Lying in the halls and streets  
Of that buried city deep beneath  
The ground over which peasant farmers  
Drove their oxen toward their own graves  
And piously muttered their Aves  
Know of God's love and man's dominion  
They do not say.  
Dead men keep their silence  
And the living, for the most part, are happy.

What the skulls around the Titanic  
Deep under the dark waters  
Of the frigid North Atlantic  
Over which vacationing travellers  
Sip champagne in State Rooms  
And waltz to violin music in Ball Rooms  
Know of human success and confidence  
They do not say.  
Dead men keep their silence  
And the living, for the most part, are happy.

What the fallen at Mexico City  
Buried beneath the twisted rubble  
Left from the earth shaking slide  
With statues of the benevolent Savior  
Lying broken at their side  
Over which rescue workers dug  
With hopeless desperation toward muffled cries  
Know of human knowledge and belief  
They do not say.  
Dead men keep their silence  
And the living, for the most part, are happy.

*E. Arthur Day*



I give you my heart  
To cherish and protect.

I give you my dreams  
To know and to want.

I give you my home  
To live in and share.

I give you all my wealth  
To have and spend.

I give you my life  
To love and forever keep.

I give you all this  
Because you have given yourself to me.

*Jay Freeman*

---

They soar across barren plains  
or over a desert's golden sand.

They perch upon a high cliff  
or sweep down upon their prey.

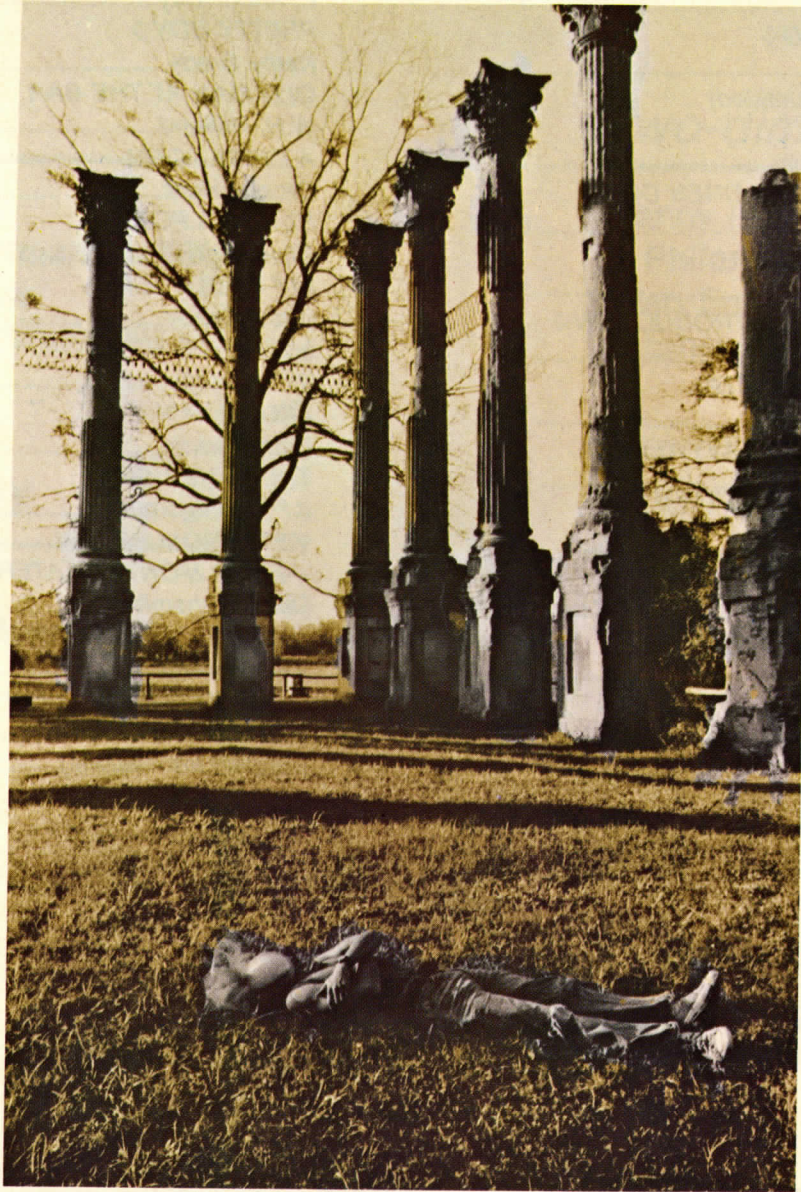
They rise above to Heaven's door  
or seek shelter upon our land.

Nothing is more beautiful  
than an eagle in flight.

*Sheila Marie Currie*

*(English translations)*





*Kathy Brady*



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# Art and Photography

*Kelly Hayes* ◇  
*Amy Harris* ◇  
*K. Kallenberger*  
*Kathy Brady* ◇  
*Charles Hayes* ◇  
*James Tucker* ◇  
*Keith Harris* ◇  
*Karen M. Poteete* ◇  
*Geoffrey Hood* ◇  
*Julie Jack* ◇

Contest entries denoted by ◇.



# COLLAGE Contest Judges

## *Fiction*

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Dr. Elaine Ware  
English Department, MTSU  
Dr. Angela Hague  
English Department, MTSU

## *Two-dimensional art*

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Danny Phifer  
Phifergraphics  
Glen Emery  
Emery's Fine Arts Gallery

## *Photography*

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Greg Kinney  
Free-lance photographer

## *Poetry*

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Guy Anderson  
English Department, MTSU

Fall 1985

## *Literature*

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Dr. W.H. Holland  
English Department  
Dr. Linda Badley  
English Department

## *Art*

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Dr. Christopher Watts  
Chairman, Art Department  
Professor Janet Higgins  
Art Department