

SOWER 1973



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SPRING

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Joseph Langland Award for Prose

APPLES

Steven Schou

Hal Evans Cole Award for Excellence in the Arts

Self Portrait

etching

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Kaj Munk Award for Translation

MAY

THE TRUE PESSIMIST

by Kumbel Kumbell translated by Jacquie Ward

THE FIRST LOVE OF A MONARCH

As a nine year old boy I was extremely self-conscious and shy. At school I carefully chose friends, one or two, and all classmates and teachers took it that I was bashful more than necessary. Strangely enough, at home I felt too much at home and always had my own way, so my younger brothers nicknamed me Monarch something of which I wasn't fond but proud.

One November afternoon when Grandma went shopping in Takehara, the largest city in the area, I accompanied her supposedly to help carry things but actually because I knew I was going to ride a train and wanted to talk her into buying me a new toy pistol.

Well, when all the shopping was done Grandma wearily sighed, and sure enough I found myself standing in front of a toy shop firmly claspng in my hand her index finger.

There from the ceiling hung on the end of a silvery string an alluring pistol with which I could have rescued many tragic heroines in fairy tales. Instantly I fell in love with it. I asked, besought, and prayed her for the glorious weapon with such zeal that when things went unfavorably for me I launched a sit-down strike in the middle of the pavement right before the shop. This heroic performance must have been appealing because passers-by thronged around to look at us. However, instead of embarrassing Grandma's feminine vanity, it developed in her the hit-while-hot spirit* as firm as iron. So determined was her mind that she even told me I could stay there, alone in the cold, as long as I wanted. So the intended unlimited strike ended up winning me only two things—a crest fallen heart and freezing buttocks.

At 8 o'clock p.m. we were on the train home, on which we happened to share a compartment with a mother-daughter couple. The lady, dressed in a stripe-patterned, quiet-blue kimono, had the aloofness of an old single school-teacher. She was sitting straight with her smooth, pale hands neatly placed on her knees. Beside her across from me on the window side was sitting the daughter holding the sleeve of the lady's kimono. When her large, impressive, black eyes blinked at me I blushed and hurriedly turned mine out of the window. I wanted to talk but some strange boyish pride kept me from starting a conversation, so I just sat still looking out at the dark blue mountains in the distance pass slowly behind us, while the lady and Grandma were exchanging that P.T.A. compliment of how intelligent the other's kiddie looked.

Soon I made a wonderful discovery. Reflected on the window-pane against the darkness outside the girl's profile could be seen. I watched her image to my heart's content, my elbow on the window-sill, my chin in my hand. In this unreal, square world her magical eyes met mine occasionally, without embarrassing me. The longer I gazed at them, the more en-

chanted I felt. My heart kaleidoscoped from Ryugu, a sea bottom kingdom, through Aladdin's castle to Snow White's forest, as her eyes made a myth out of the moment.

My dream, however, was interrupted by the sudden thought that we were getting off at the next stop. Then grew in me an urge to find out what she thought of me. So I took a couple of caramels out of my pocket, unwrapped one and threw it in my mouth though I didn't want it. Then I offered the other to the mother, which as I had expected met a polite lady-like refusal. This breaking the awkward silence, I now held it out before the girl, but who wouldn't take it easily. She first hesitated a moment and looked into the lady's face, but assured by her nod, accepted my present. In the meantime she hadn't uttered a word. I felt both glad and uneasy but I didn't know why I felt the way I felt.

When the train reached Yoshina, our home station, and we had to leave I, with all my courage summoned, said, "Sayonara."

"Sayonara," came back in an innocent tone.

At home I overheard Grandma, laughing, say to Mom something like: "The stingy boy gave a caramel to a girl." But the teasing didn't offend me as it used to.

Now at the age of 24 I still like girls, 6 or 7 years old even if they don't have the same magical eyes, because they remind me of my young romance.

*There is a Japanese saying: "Hit iron while it is hot." Iron can be moulded into useful tools while it is hot and soft. The implied meaning is: Discipline your children while they are young and flexible.

Akira Okada

HAIKU

Petunia earth's
Exploding star frozen in
The coolness of dawn.

Debby Schou

A painter's palette
of rich fall colors mixes
to brown in the rain.

Jan Sailer

She walks like a bear.
The child inside is moving.
Her eyes show the joy.

Kay Probasco

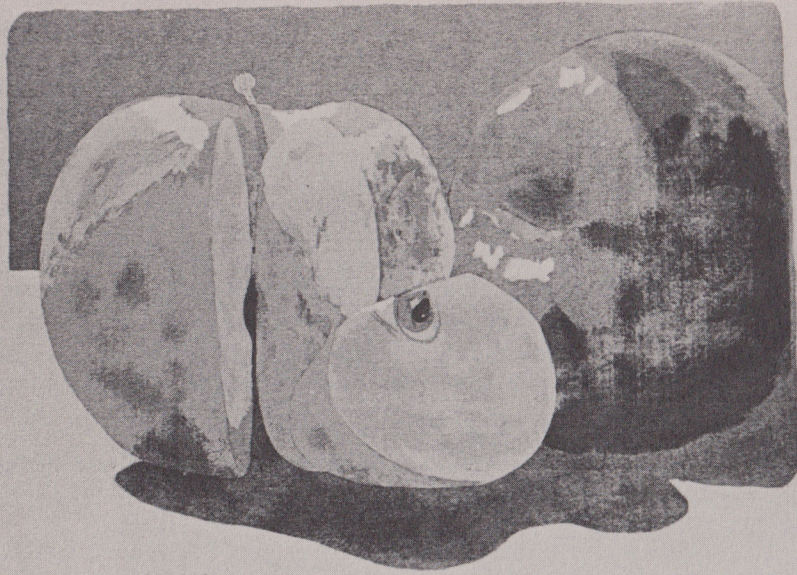
Flames fly as birds fly.
They lift their yellow heads and
Soar into the sky.

Linda Watt

The clouds are moving
Across the moon brightened sky
Patterns on my floor.

The snow falls gently.
Visible in the street light,
Hidden in the dark.

Kay Horton



STILL LIFE silkscreen

John Elling

A QUARTER-MILE UP THE ROAD

There stands the house, once warm and light
 Now faded brown—it was painted white,
 I recall, and trimmed with emerald green
 The frosted panes of glass now stare
 Like empty eyes, the life they've seen
 A drifting seed upon the air.

The garden rows now strangled by time
 And weeds, the apple tree I'd climb
 Now faintly waves a whitened hand.
 The barn's decaying shingles are blown
 To rest in brome, and the dusty land
 Is lulled to sleep by prairie-wind's moan.

Steve Hahn

LAMENT FOR YELLOW THUNDER

the wind piled high thunderheads
 the grass bent before the buffalo
 and the meadowlark sang

his life
 ochre dust
 and a thundering rain

they gave Yellow Thunder

we gave
 his death
 panther piss
 & a 57 Ford

when the prairie sun rose high
 they found his body in a used car lot
 and the meadowlark sang

John Mark Nielsen

LULLABY TO A TIN SOLDIER

by Tove Meyer

Sleep, tin soldier, in your military best.
 Clothed in black, a mother walks alone
 While the small children follow fatherless,
 And every tiny girl weeps quietly.

Sleep, tin soldier, through the darkest night
 With large birds droning overhead.
 Borge's brother disappeared one day.
 Rosa's, with a bullet, fell and lay.

Sleep, tin soldier, heavily and safe.
 Niels' father walks on wooden legs,
 Aunt Lene left to visit God,
 And the house around us split and fell.

Sleep, tin soldier, I'll stay beside you,
 Here between the trembling walls.
 For you it seems improper shelter,
 Tin soldier, sleeping peacefully alone.

Sleep, my soldier, the tearless children
 Rest in cold black beds this early hour,
 And all the children weeping
 Rock your cradle with their cries.

translated by Jamie Heide

WHO FORGIVES ALL YOUR INIQUITY,
WHO HEALS ALL YOUR DISEASES

—Psalms 103:3

She sat in her rocking chair and creaked away, never changing her pace; heel, toe, heel, toe, one, two, three, four; as steady and as reliable as a metronome. She never took her eyes off her knitting, and she never talked.

But, god, how her sister did.

“My stars, won’t that boy ever stop playing that piano, Amy?” Rosalind knew better than to ask as she passed the stairway flipping a cold, breezy glare to the room at the top. Its door always closed. And a mad rampage of musical notes attacked the frozen atmosphere of the family mansion as it lived fifty years ago.

“Will he ever stop?” Rosalind asked every day. But . . . she never talked.

“It’s become an obsession. I knew it twelve years ago. You should talk to him about it, Amy. He is your son.” Rosalind picked up the serving tray with long, thin fingers as cold as the coffee in the cup. The tray’s dull, silver gleam winked as it popped from the table, stuck to uncounted spills. The table’s varnish had bubbled years ago, bubbled black just like all the other furniture in the house; and all was frosted with yellowed doilies.

The great stone fireplace that Amy rocked in front of was again unwillingly placed into battle against the piercing thrusts of frigid air that blasted as uncontrollable drafts when the old house shuddered, yawned, sighed and rested again.

Rosalind swung around toward the kitchen. Her flower-print dress, faded and calf-length, nearly camouflaged her completely against the old flowered carpet that smelled of must a hundred years old. Well, it was a hundred years.

Amy just rocked . . . she never talked.

Rosalind boomed from the kitchen. “I talked with that psychiatrist fellow this morning on the phone, Amy. He said that it was all in his mind. Frank’s fingers do not burn if he doesn’t play the piano. What number is this one, Amy? Fourteen? Fourteen of the same opinion. It’s all in his mind. Why don’t you tell him, Amy? . . . You know, Amy, it’s sad to see Frank go like this. He was such a fine, healthy baby. I wonder what happened? What snapped inside him to twist his mind? . . . Twelve years. Twelve years of every waking moment pounding that blasted piano. It wouldn’t be so bad if it was tuned. Why don’t you talk to him, Amy? You haven’t talked to him practically since he was born thirty years ago.”

Amy sat and knitted . . . she never talked.

The music that flowed from upstairs hung in the air like dust, shaken from old, long-neglected curtains; light, but still heavy; thick, and hard to breathe. And strangely enough, or rather as usual, Frank’s music kept time with Amy. It always did.

With clinks and clatters, Rosalind put the dishes she had just finished washing and drying in the cabinet, trying, for a moment, to drown out the constant barrage of musical notes. She half skipped, half trotted into the parlor and fell to her knees beside Amy’s rocking chair. Rosalind lay her head on Amy’s shoulder and sighed, and ran her finger up and down the arm of the rocking chair.

“Wouldn’t it be nice, Amy, to go back? . . . When we were young, and everything was fine? Daddy smoking his pipe here in the parlor . . . and Mother telling the cook tonight’s menu.

“Oh, remember when the ice man came on those hot, August days. And we’d run out and steal little chunks of ice from the wagon when he was across the street to the Murphy’s I used to like to dip mine in sugar and syrup. But remember, Amy, you liked honey.”

Rosalind paused and stared out the front window at the ancient weeping willow tree as it swayed in time to the music Frank played upstairs.

Her face contorted as if she were going to cry from remembering.

“Then you and I would sit out on the porch swing. Me with Joe and you with Frank’s daddy. I wonder what ever became of Joe? I wonder what ever became of”

Amy stopped knitting, rose from her rocking chair, and with an ominous grace, walked up the stairs to her bedroom and closed her door.

Rosalind sat for a while thinking as the evening sun shone outside on two little girls in frills and petticoats as they waited for their daddy’s buggy to come up the road. Oh, there it was! Look at them run! Rosalind smiled in her trance, and then the sun faded away and so did the little girls before they reached the buggy. Rosalind slowly got up and walked tiredly up the stairs to bed. And now, she didn’t talk.

Now the house was quiet. It was the only time the house was quiet. Frank was asleep now, too, and the piano in the music room rested to capture its strength for the next day.

The thick, stale air that chilled the house moved slowly against every board of that elderly home, making them creak under the pressure of its frosted sting. The grandfather clock on the stair landing was the voice of this night, speaking to the ears of the walls as it passed its secrets. And the walls answered back with heaves of shifting plaster board. Yes, it was night, but it wasn’t so quiet after all.

Rosalind . . . Amy . . . and Frank slept.

The first light of dawn that shone through the parlor window focused on Amy sitting in her rocking chair, knitting. Nobody knew when she got up. No one ever saw her or heard her come downstairs, not even Rosalind.

Rosalind descended the stairs. And as she walked to the kitchen, she spoke into the parlor. "What do you want for breakfast, Amy!" Amy . . . she never talked. And Rosalind always fixed the same breakfast.

Both Amy and Rosalind could hear that Frank was up. Each floor board he stepped on protested.

"Here we go again," Rosalind cringed. "I hope he doesn't get stuck in that Mozart rut again like yesterday." She shook her head as she beat the eggs to death before pouring them into the frying pan. But, she nearly dropped the mixing bowl when she hear Frank scream.

"NO! NO! It can't be! My fingers! My fingers! They're burning up!"

Rosalind rushed out from the kitchen, not accustomed to hearing Frank speak, let alone cry out.

"What's wrong, Frank?" she asked from the bottom of the stairs.

"The door! It's locked! My fingers are burning up! It's locked! It's locked!"

Frank's panic rose in pitch to screams and shrieks. Rosalind stood where she was, unmovable, grasping the wood banister, hypnotized by what she saw.

Frank beat the door uncontrollably. Then he clawed at the door, breaking off bits of wood with his fingernails. The silent, watching rooms of the house echoed the scene.

Frank pounded and scraped again and again. Blood splattered from his cut fingers onto the walls and onto the floor.

Frank was half-way through the door and could even see through to the piano in one small place when he fell over backward on the stairs. And there he lay, dead. His arms remained extended; his fingers were an unrecognizable mass of pulpy, red skin and shattered bone from repeatedly being stabbed and ripped by jagged splinters of the clawed door. Blood ran down his arms in bright, red rivers, sparkling in the light.

Frank's head hung over the edge of a step and a cold, wide-eyed stare pierced straight into Rosalind's mind. Rosalind stood there for a while, then rushed to the kitchen and vomited.

Amy never looked up from her knitting. She only rocked. Rocked away with a key in her lap.

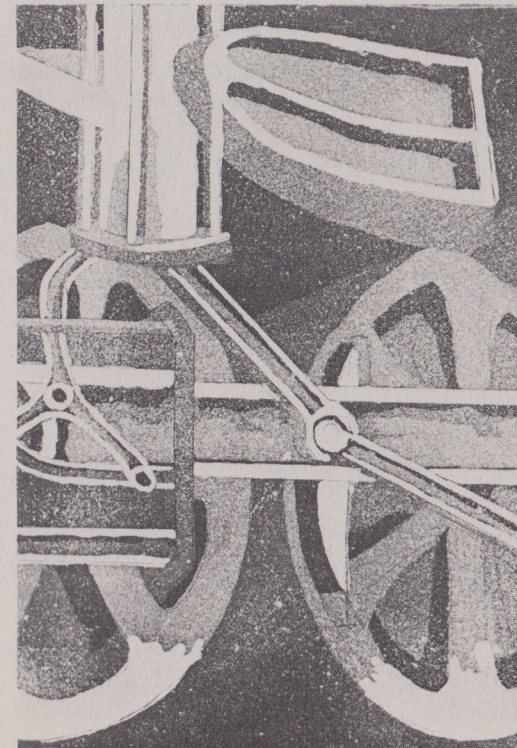
Amy . . . she never talked.

Stan Lassegard

UNHEARD

Meticulously decked from posts and shops,
They are nudged by chilled winds to glide,
And persuaded by a setting sun to glitter.
In night's blackness
They are encouraged by streetlights
And headlights to dance.
Seasonal ornaments shout a holiday greeting
To those who care to look up and listen
But defened by their own verbiage
And the screeches of traffic,
Many shoppers scurry by—
Heedless.

Carol Prouty



STEAM
LOCOMOTIVE
etching

Gail E.
Bertelsen

WHERE THE MOON RISES

Will you come with me, my friend? There are things I would show you of such wonder, if only you could forget your cumbersome sleep.

Come into the night. No, leave your shoes. These hours are hallowed. Tambu, tonight things will be which few people ever see, so come.

Stand on the grass, how you wonder at its softness! It is always as soft.

No, do not use your torch, the full moon is rising above us: you can see how dark our shadows are on the grass.

Tonight is the Night of nights, Tambu. The moon will visit the earth tonight.

Spirits? No, my friend, do not fear them; tonight even they are filled with joy and are dancing through the tree-tops. Tonight there is only peace.

Walk quietly, o friend, can you not hear the silence of the frogs and other night people? They are all waiting.

See there how the flowers gleam white against the black leaves of the trees, and fallen petals lie thick under their branches. The air is heavy with their sweet perfume, but come away.

Sit here on the wharf, where we can watch the earth, the sky and the sea.

Have you ever seen the sky blue at night, my friend? It is blue now if you care to look.

The sea is still, silver laced across her face as fish glide slowly within her, looking up through her veil.

Now the moon is reaching the heights of heaven. Watch now, my Tambu.

A breeze passes through the leaves of the coconut trees. They shiver under its warm caress and sigh, bowing numbly over their sister the sea; not daring to look up.

Now the moon has stopped, and is hanging down close from the sky and gazing at the earth.

The earth lies breathless as shadows are gone and the colours of life answer the moon's adoring glow. The trees unbend and reach out to touch her face as spirits hide their eyes in the fullness of such glory. The water reaches trembling for the earth and slips away, sinking to its very depths.

Then the moon starts and moves to leave. All the shadows of time fall onto the face of the earth. And she goes her way.

Tambu, let us go; tomorrow there will be stars and the sky will be black; tomorrow the spirits will again be evil and the people of the night will speak; tomorrow we will all sleep.

But stop a moment, and feel the tears of the earth on your feet and hear the emptiness hang heavy on the air and know what you have seen.

MAY!

Who puts the jubilation in every songbird's
voice?

It is May!

Who gives to all the doubters a reason to
rejoice?

It is May!

Who fills every young girl's heart with desire,
and strikes in every fluttering breast a fire?

It is May! It is May!

by Kumbel Kumbell

translated by Jacquie Ward

SPRING

so strange

sometimes i wonder at myself
why is it that i must

always
remember and miss the past

sometime after
when it's gone
and changed

but it never

fails
the time always comes
i may be happy and peaceful
yet it will come

and i will feel as if a piece of myself
has ended
in times past
and i wonder if parts of it will ever be
regained
even if different

and i become quiet
more into myself
and usually
it's spring

JUNE 29

As always, I asked her how she felt-
knowing the truth could not be grasped by the living.
She smiled, saying fine,
With the wisdom of saints
Shining bright blue in her great soft eyes.
How I admired and worshipped her
for all this wisdom she had gained through the pain.
Truly, this was an angel I was holding.

It was a precious thing I held that night,
Far too precious for this world to keep long.
The Spirit lets us see Him for such fleeting moments;
But I saw Him,
Soft and suffering in those pale azure eyes
for the moments she lasted that night.

How she loved all living things that night!
How she blessed us with her saint eyes!
Love this pure
shakes the very soul of all it touches.
Flawless she was,
This fragile little sufferer.

Many were crying out;
Soft and low sobbing sounds
blended with the night air.
But I could not cry while under the angel's spell.
I could only gaze in wonder,
Witnessing and sharing her inner peace.
Total oneness we shared
for the moments she lasted that night.

Stroking her fine, moist hair, loving her,
I now saw the cycle:

I— her child; she protecting.

I— a woman; she—my child.

The battle now closing,
Not yet knowing defeat of endless days to come,
All we could do was cling to each other
till the moment she left us that night.

—Karla



MOTHER AND CHILD
woodcut
Jan Sailer

HAIKU

a) A red butterfly
Flutters with lavender wings . . .
The night approaches.

b) Tulip's clawy hand
Of springtime terrifies the
Fast-digging earthworm.

Steve Hahn

SUMMERSTORM

Dark footsteps
Of grey-white monsters above,
Silently stomp the highway.
And then move on.
Those silent beasts
That carry the sun on their backs
Are a lot like people:
Air between them
Makes them nice
To watch
And be with.
But in crowds they get ugly.
Crowding and shoving
They grow darker,
And keep the sun for themselves.
Tension sweeps the crowd.
Someone flashes the signal
And others thunder in agreement
The crowd closes in.
They scream threats
In a thunderous bass
While flashes of excitement
Spur them on.
The blackness reaches a terrifying pitch;
Then

softly
it
rains.

SUNSET

The prairie sun,
Like some sunkist,
Melts in warm frosting
On an angel food farmhouse.
The boy was twelve today.
Papa brought in a newborn calf
For the boy to raise as his very own,
The boy is sleeping in the barn tonight.
Cattle move like so many raisins towards
The distant cherry barn,
Orange frosting slides
Off the angel food.
Silence after the
Birthday party
Brings its
Gift of
Rest.

Christopher Warman

SPRING EVENING

Spring is there, outside his window.
His eyes point west to the red tired sun
Which returns a frail glimpse through his cold window.
His heart no longer cries for company
(Too many games of love he has lost)
But weeps a dry lament with a feeble sigh.
Against his will it has crystallized a transparent shell—
Strong, sharp, and rational,
And severed his old dreams from the despairing reality.
Crouching in the center of his solitude, he gazes
Blankly at his soul sinking silent on a spring evening.

Akira Okada



WINTER WEED
etching
Jan Sailer

PRESSURE

The mind, is a wonderful thing. It enables you to think, to analyze, to experience every range of emotion. In it are stored all the facts you have ever learned. The mind is a marvelous thing, but it has its faults.

My mind, for some strange reason, refuses to function on command. I can be in mid-sentence and suddenly my mind will go blank. No amount of thinking can bring back the words I intended to say. The same thing happens when I am forced to do something original.

A writing or speech assignment is something I dread, for no sooner is it given than I cannot think of anything to write or say. In high school I was reduced to writing an essay entitled "Writing an Essay" and giving a speech on the experience of giving a speech.

Each time a new assignment is given I vow I will find some brilliant topic to write about but my mind refuses to co-operate.

When I cannot think of something to write I become almost physically sick. I will spend a whole afternoon writing and then destroying the work. Nothing will come and soon I feel that I cannot do it. I get nervous and depressed and can't concentrate on anything. The more I force myself to work the more nervous I become. Round and round I go in a vicious circle.

I can ignore it but soon it is due and then it has to be written. As the time draws closer, I find that while I cannot think of anything but writing. It becomes an obsession. I must write. I must! But why?

I pace the floor, I talk to people, nothing helps. I want to forget everything, to sleep, maybe to dream of something besides writing. Instead I have nightmares in which I am in class without a completed assignment and am called on. I wake up trembling and lie there for hours, unable to sleep because of the nagging fears.

Finally I begin to write. I drag each word from my mind to the paper. I feel it is terrible. I am torn between the thought of reading such trash to the class or having to say I have nothing written.

I am finished. I cannot call it an essay for it does not deserve the name. I sit in class and pray that I will not be called on. As I listen to everyone else read I want to leave. I wish the floor would open up and allow me to sink beneath its level. The bell rings and I am saved for another two days.

Often I have written something completely different to turn in at the next class period. Perhaps it is a little better but only because some of the pressure is off. It may receive a poor grade but only the professor will know that I cannot write. That is somehow not as bad as the whole class knowing.

Isn't it amazing what trivia the mind produces under pressure?

THE TRAGIC HOAX

"Lire!" The emaciated old man dropped my suitcase with an unceremonious thud and shot out a stained and calloused hand. A frantic expedition into the densely populated depths of my bag brought forth an American quarter which I graciously and benignly placed in his palm. The staccato outburst of unintelligible sound that poured from between his teeth was of such volume and passion that a crowd materialized instantly. A second quarter finally appeased him sufficiently for me to ignore his indignant and voluble gums. Within five hectic minutes in the Hong Kong air terminal, I had lost to that ancient and dirty Chinese porter not only the nightmare tug-of-war over my suitcase, but also two quarters, my composure, and all my illusions about travelling. The romanticizing of travel has throughout history been the greatest hoax of all time. No matter how luxurious the aircraft or liner, it will invariably involve discomfort, in convenience and frustration.

Airline companies in particular employ a great host of subtle devices with which to snare the unwary and increase profits. In the tourist coach section on every flight are several company employees of the species "the Fellow Traveller," stationed there to ensure that the passengers will pay for first class seats in future. The "Tourist," who becomes inebriated and loses control of the mechanism employed in keeping the top and bottom jaws locked firmly, together is a common type; as is the "Child". Children insist on sitting by the window and they inevitably experience an uncontrollable urge to explore the bathroom at the sight of a laden fork en route to your open mouth. It is necessary for you to put down your fork, remove your serviette, and somehow hold up your dinner tray while folding the tray stand and juggling the coffee that is too hot to drink, while the child climbs over your legs. He is not ready to sit down until you are settled again.

The serving of dinner is also a signal for the pilot to execute a complicated series of maneuvers designed as a coordination exercise for all passengers. An earfull of coffee is a sure indication that your neighbor has failed.

"Look after your purse in foreign countries" is a warning I have always largely ignored - the local people undoubtedly have more money than I do. A nerve-wracking ride in a crowded train in Tokyo one night and thirty minutes of frantically slapping straying hands taught me the hard way what it is people are interested in. Except for the unfamiliar language and oriental faces I might have been in any major city in the United States.

My gastric system has suffered such terrible indignities that it has never fully recovered. When I shuddered at a cold fried egg one morning, I was blissfully unaware of the raw egg and the wide variety of raw fish that was in store for my stomach. Having on one occasion fumbled for almost two

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Airline companies in particular employ a great host of subtle devices with which to snare the unwary and increase profits. In the tourist coach section on every flight are several company employees of the species "the Fellow Traveller," stationed there to ensure that the passengers will pay for first class seats in future. The "Tourist," who becomes inebriated and loses control of the mechanism employed in keeping the top and bottom jaws locked firmly, together is a common type; as is the "Child". Children insist on sitting by the window and they inevitably experience an uncontrollable urge to explore the bathroom at the sight of a laden fork en route to your open mouth. It is necessary for you to put down your fork, remove your serviette, and somehow hold up your dinner tray while folding the tray stand and juggling the coffee that is too hot to drink, while the child climbs over your legs. He is not ready to sit down until you are settled again.

The serving of dinner is also a signal for the pilot to execute a complicated series of maneuvers designed as a coordination exercise for all passengers. An earfull of coffee is a sure indication that your neighbor has failed.

"Look after your purse in foreign countries" is a warning I have always largely ignored - the local people undoubtedly have more money than I do. A nerve-racking ride in a crowded train in Tokyo one night and thirty minutes of frantically slapping straying hands taught me the hard way what it is people are interested in. Except for the unfamiliar language and oriental faces I might have been in any major city in the United States.

My gastric system has suffered such terrible indignities that it has never fully recovered. When I shuddered at a cold fried egg one morning, I was blissfully unaware of the raw egg and the wide variety of raw fish that was in store for my stomach. Having on one occasion fumbled for almost two

hours with my chopsticks in the vain hope that the graciousness and patience of my host would run out, I resentfully and gingerly swallowed the greasy globs of octopus that contaminated my plate.

I have often been convinced that my feet had deserted me somewhere along the long miles of steps and cobbled streets. It is unethical to sleep overseas - a nagging guilt feeling of perhaps missing something ensures that, and remaining dregs of energy will be drained as you continue a hectic attempt to "do" the city. Even if you are somehow able to control this obsession, you will be too exhausted for sleep. I have passed innumerable vigils wrapped in a skimpy hotel towel soaking my aching feet in a hot bath.

During long hours of the midnight rendezvous of my feet with the bath, I have pondered the problems of this endemic and widespread madness that so tragically strikes man. I see no legitimate reason for leaving the comforts of home for the chaos and confusion of travel. I groan, but resigned, each time I feel that insistent itch in my feet, and I start packing my bag.

Marilyn Fenske

SONNET: FORUM AND PALATINE HILL

A sacred silence stills these cobbled streets.
Pines sigh and swallows sing Calliope.
Patrician felines deck the Senate seats,
And Caesar's blood has long since washed to sea.
What grandeur must have filled these ancient ways
When conquering Tribunes bore their laural boughs!
What vanity caused emperors to raise
Triumphal arcs to shade their noble brows?
These walls no longer echo Cicero.
Plebeian throngs have vanished with their trades.
Corroded short swords could not stay the blow
That vanquished Rome and felled these colonnades.
In modesty I kneel before the brave.
I have no right to stand upon their grave.

Steven Schou

SELF PORTRAIT

etching
Ryle Smith



ARTIST'S PROOF "SELF-PORTRAIT" RYLE SMITH 73

APPLES

I pushed the lawnmower around the lilac bush, trying to get in as close as possible to clip off all the sprouts. All the way around I went, three-hundredsixty degrees and then started back toward the driveway. There was a man standing down there. I slowed down, pretended not to notice him. I wanted him to go up to the house instead. I didn't want to talk to him. If I did I would have to shut off the mower and it would be a hell of a job starting it again. I walked slow, looking at the ground in front of the mower. It's hot today, I thought. Hope there aren't any snakes out. God, I hate running over snakes. I looked up. Still there. I walked slower. Beautiful day for mowing lawn. Hot, really hot. It makes me sweat. I looked up again. He's still there. Looks like I won't be able to avoid him. I wonder where he came from. There's no car around. And the dogs didn't bark, so he couldn't have been walking along the highway. I was close to him now and he was shouting at me. I looked up and smiled. He was an old man, in his sixties. Bushy white hair, a short white beard—either that or he hadn't shaved in four or five days. He had on a plaid shirt, mainly red with some black and white in it also, grey work pants with cuffs and back pockets that buttoned, and some ankle high work shoes with long tongues like the ones I was wearing. I shut off the mower.

"Hello!" I called. I wouldn't have had to shout, but my ears were still ringing some.

"That's quite a lawn you've got to mow there."

"Yah, I guess. But I don't mind."

"Bet it takes you all day."

"Oh, I'll be done in a couple of hours."

"It's a nice day for it, though."

"That's true." I could see he wasn't getting to the point of his visit, so I said, "Can I help you?"

"Yah. Sure. I was just passing by and wondered if I might pick some apples. Would it be all right if I'd pick some apples?"

"Yah, I guess. We've got apple trees." I shrugged and decided I'd better show him where they were.

"Yup, you've got quite a job to do there, don't you."

I smiled and then had a thought. "Any idea how many apples you want?"

"Well, I'll take a whole bagfull if you can spare that many."

"O.K." I chuckled. The way he said that made me laugh. I ran into the house and got a large grocery sack, a double thickness one so the bottom wouldn't rip out. It only took a minute. "Here you go. Do you want a step-ladder?"

"Will I need one?"

"Well, no, you wouldn't **have** to have one. You can reach them from the ground. Yah, I better get one. A lot of the lower ones are pretty wormy." The top ones were wormy too but I figured it didn't matter. He'd be able to find enough good ones. I took the ladder and he brought the sack and we went over to the apple trees. I set the ladder up for him and was going to leave, but then thought better of it. He climbed the ladder and began filling his sack. I stood below leaning against the ladder and steadying it at the same time. He had a hole in the bottom of one of his shoes. I couldn't help getting nosy. "Do you live around here?"

"No. Just passing through."

"Oh? Where you from?"

"No place in particular. Done a lot of traveling. These are nice looking apples you have here. What kind are they?"

I didn't know and since he didn't know either he apparently didn't make a profession out of picking people's apples. This man seemed kind of funny, and good-natured, too, so I asked, "Do you have a name?"

He laughed. "Oh, you can call me Robert Frost."

He must have been educated.

"And what's yours if you don't mind my asking?"

"Steve," I said. No one said anything for quite a while. He began whistling. I looked around pretending to be occupied by observing something. Otto was lying in the shade underneath the car watching us. Strange that he hadn't barked or anything. Usually he'll even bite one. The silence got awkward. "We make a lot of pies out of these apples. They're real good in pies."

"Oh," he nodded. "There's nothing better than a good hot apple pie."

I expressed my assent and looked around again. Otto had his eyes closed now and his chin rested on his paws. The ladder shook. He was coming down.

"You've had too much of apple-picking, huh?" He didn't laugh. Maybe he wasn't as smart as I thought he was. I folded up the ladder and we started back toward the house. I lagged behind just a bit as though the ladder slowed me down some.

"Well, I really appreciate this," he called over his shoulder.

"I leaned the ladder against the garage wall. "Sure, that's all right.

We can never eat them all ourselves. Ah, is there anything else that you wanted?"

"Nope. Just wanted to pick some apples." He shuffled away, up the driveway. I followed behind again but stopped at the lawnmower. I watched to see which way he turned. He went north, but I didn't know if that's the way he was coming or going when he stopped.

"Just wanted to pick some apples," I thought to myself. I pulled the lawnmower cord. It wouldn't start. "Hm! Just want to pick some apples," I said aloud. I pulled the cord again. It still wouldn't start. I straightened up and gazed up the highway. A lot of heat mirages this afternoon. He was walking on the pavement, on the right side. "Just wanted to pick some apples."

Steven Schou

POEM FOR THE DEATH OF THE VIRGINS

When the last blossoms fall
among the empty pools
and lifting flowers no longer stand,
their pastel petals broken down
before the wind,
I mourn the tearless children
who saw the virgins die.

They no more suckle
at the breasts milked white before the dawn,
but empty handed
beg among the crowds
whose holy eyes
are drowned beneath the sun.
Their tearless eyes
can no more know their mother's arms,
but stumble blind
among the praying crowds, until
their simple loins have clutched the earth
and buried in the mud.

Then, when between the broken trees
grown soft before the fertile wind,
the sun returns again
and rain-stained flowers
lift their heads in joy,
I cry for the tearless children
who saw the virgins die.

—John Mark Nielsen

MESSIAH

a risky undertaking
put forth on trial basis
containing costliest results
without replacement
copies
immitated requirements, with
blue undertones
initiated
outward thrust

—Mary Staby

REMINISCE

dizzy circles in forward motion
spinning aimlessly
around and around
unconnected spaces flashing
at intervals unknown
to a reasonable soul
loose ends flapping in
slight breezes, torn
and tattered from
former storms
face to face
- seeing not
but believing so,
keeps circles round.

— Mary Staby

WHAT A HELL

To my shadow, I said
to hell with hell
because I love this broad
way that leads to hell
especially if hell is half
as great as this broad way.

But then something whispers to me
that I should know better
and to that I reply to hell with it.

You know how it is, don't you?

Anyway, what is wrong with good hell
if we could just let hell go to hell,
especially if hell will consent to stay in hell.

Damn! It's so easily said
yet so doggone hard.

O! Heavens what a hell.

Sam Inko Dokubo



UNTITLED FIGURE

bronze
Joy Cole

The True Pessimist
Psychological Gruk

There is nothing
more depressing
than to sit
and have forgotten
what the cause was for depression.

by Kumbel Kumbell

translated by Jacquie Ward

URGROSSVATER

He'd sit in that old wooden chair of his,
My German great-grandfather of eighty-four,
And take me into his large lap—

I was small enough to fit on one knee—
And I'd twine my fingers 'round his suspenders,
And I'd bury my nose in his bushy grey beard,
And I'd slide down his legs till I got to his feet,
And he'd pick me up and I'd do it again.

Yes, we'd sit in that old wooden chair of his,
And he'd call me little cat in his strange native tongue.
He'd say, "**Katzchen**, would you like to hear a story?"
And he'd show me the days when he was a boy,
And I'd see a child in grey flannel knickers,
Running and falling and rolling in clover
And calling old Rosie, a great bulging milk cow,
And herding her home at the end of the day.

Yes, we'd sit in that old wooden chair of his,
And he'd smile and tell me of his little **Tochter**—
Of bringing her at age three over the ocean
So that she could grow up on the plains of Nebraska—
Her yellow hair tossed by prairie winds,
Bringing a bucket of water to Papa
And to bag o' bones Frederick, her favorite plow horse.

And, sitting in that old wooden chair of his,
He'd point to my mother out in the kitchen
And tell me stories I couldn't believe
About a little girl who went fishing in a creek,
And swimming there without any clothes on—
Who'd kick and scratch her poor brother Henry
When he would pull her long braided pigtailed
Or chase her down the lane with a broken sparrow.

And he'd rock me in that old wooden chair of his,
And pat my head and squeeze me tight
And tell me of a little girl he loved
More than anyone else in all the world,
And I'd twine my fingers 'round his suspenders,
And I'd bury my nose in his bushy grey beard,
And I'd slide down his legs till I got to his feet,
And he'd pick me up and I'd do it again.

Cheryl A. Harris

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE ISLAND

Squatted below the ancient palm, she is as ancient as the battered and twisted trunk. Both hunch their back in autocratic defiance of the sou'-easterly gale howling over the southern Pacific. Her leather skin furrows like a bark of the palm, and like the laughing ripples of the lagoon when an ineffectually officious breeze bustles across its sunlit surface.

Only her scalp is smooth - the glassy smooth of the water at night when the moon swoons melting into the shadow of the warm dark water. When the sun breaks into the grey of morning, the sea breathes great heaving furrows and crests rolling on forever to the rhythm of the barely perceptible rise and fall of her shrunken chest.

Her hands, strong and vital, are thin claws, constantly moving with the inexhaustable energy of over a century of emancipation - clearing land, digging a garden, chopping wood, weaving, fishing, and raising countless squabbling children.

Above sunken cheeks her eyes smoulder dark and piercing - piercing what seem eons of living. Their bottomless smile flows out into a delta of crinkles over her hollow temples. That smile reflects generations of naked children splashing and shrieking their ecstasy in the sundappled shallows. It is the smile of lazy windblown days on the rocky headland, baking clams among burning coconut husks while soaking in the eternal strength of the pounding breakers that grind slowly into the rock; and of the mumued* pig walled by a fortress of yams on banana leaf mats: and the thudding of the kundu drums, pounding remorselessly the beat of the dance and of your very soul.

Her emaciated shoulders still sense the slow ongoing strain and swing of countless hours passed gliding over the lagoon, the cool water slapping and caressing the canoe sides while whispering around the outrigger. She is the land - has lived all her long years in a symbiotic harmony and interchange as a part of the island. Every animal and plant of the sea and the land is a part of her, because she knows each.

Around her the village bustles about the business of life. She has seen her people come and go, and she watched impassionately the inevitable changes. Progress is good but it is the tumbuna mama* who gives final counsel out of the wisdom of her years and only she knows remedies for the bite poisonings and the ailments of daily living. She has time for everything that lives and needs.

Clamped in the wry toothless grimace of her stained gums, her battered pipe serves as her only concession to progress.

* Mumued - cooked on hot stones in a pit in the ground

* tumbuna mama - very old lady, respected by everyone in the village.

Marilyn Fenske

BAD LUCK, NO LUCK

Wizards aren't dead, they're in my closet up to the knees.
They ain't exactly pretty, that's their luck.
to revert to me, that's my luck.
Cows are easy to please and violets are red
when it comes to my luck it is dead.
Whense sitting on a stool I enjoy smoking a cool
only to find someone had just deposited upon my stool.
For me women are a breeze, like a box of cold cut cheese.
If it weren't for the mold pink eye would be for me.

Carl R. Nielsen

PLASTER MOUNTAINS

I sit here waiting and I look
at chicks' legs. And I hope,
I can leave, that 20 minutes will
pass like 20 seconds and I can leave.
And I think I have looked 12 times
at my watch and it never moves.

The wind is wispering to me,
secrets of life.
Only I have not trained my ear
to listen.
I live as each day comes
never spoiling
plans that are
never laid.
This wind begins to give me . . .
a chill.

My feet freeze and I want
to leave . . .
only, everywhere I go other
people want open windows and
feel the breeze.

I want three rooms.
One,
to listen to music in.
One,
to look at paintings in.
One,
to read books in.
I want three rooms to love you in.

I would perpuate these nymphs.
This nymph of Music.
This one of Art.
This one of Books.
These . . . are led by one,
small, blue-eyed one with clear
eyes . . . and befuddled thoughts.

She feels only good
but steps on thorns
strewn by wolves waiting for her
to leave the path, so she
punishes herself and leads
her sisters.
And, I stand behind with
my prod and drool as they leave.

As sturdy as a brick wall seems
it sways as the earth moves.
Each brick stacked on the other,
only by fate do they stick together.
I stand back and watch,
waiting for it to fall. I know
it will and if faith moves mountains
my faith can shatter a wall plastered
by only fate and pile it into a
mountain.

Douglas Bro

And I wait,
and they open the window wider.

UNTITLED POEM FOR LOVE

In the sunny shade of the checkered cloth trees
I was King among the cherry pies
Peppermint-stick ice-cream cone happy
and sailed the tadpole marshes
where the red-wing blackbird warbled
on a bow-string cat-tail

And I wine warm
suckled
till the nipple, dark on
the star lit breast, was
firm

The sun drowned in a moon washed tide
of hushed cathedral silence among the oaks
and the bard black priest of the mistle-toe
baptized me and washed away my sterility
when the leaves were swept down the sky
dry, by the bare blown broom trees

And I tear warm
burried
my head in your wet breasts
and caught the lingering scent of your
skin

The sun suffocated in the tempest torn clouds
where the smacking fish sea crashed up the shore
its salt foam fingers clinging to the creviced cliff walls
split the rocks in sucking whirl-pool of sperm
and the clutching earth pulled the panting sea in
till brine salt kelp entwined about the loins of the lovers

And

I
was
King
no
more

until

A shy breeze smiled timid on the rocks
dried away the moisture and the stone
cold melted away in the warm sand
And we sailed the tadpole marshes
And were lulled to sleep on the waves.

John Mark Nielsen