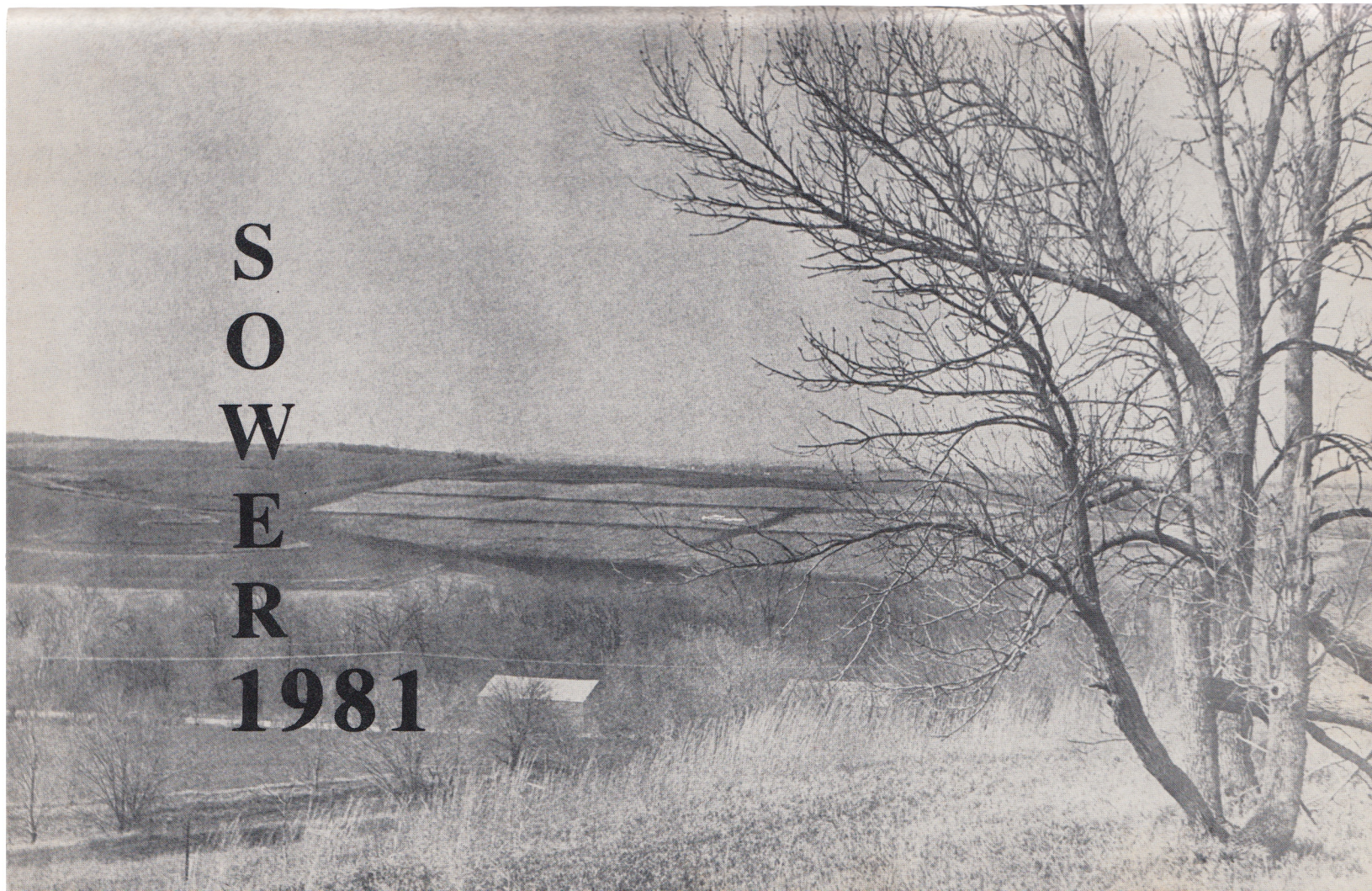

SOWER
1981

# SOWER

Sower of inland plains:
fling the whistling seed
against lusty spring winds;
thrusting it
into the humid earth-womb.

Sower of winged words:
rising before dawn,
swinging your arm over the world,
release your thought
into the lash and roar of winds,
send your seed singing
into the westering night.

# SOWER 1981

## Volume XXXVI

**Editor** ..... Karlin Olson

**Staff** ..... Scott Carrier
Barb Faris
Celeste Hutton
Mogens Knudsen
Sue Lazzaro
Sally Miller
Andrea Neve
Kristi Swensen

**Translation Consultants** ..... Mogens Knudsen
Barb Faris
Celeste Hutton
Andrea Neve

**Photography** ..... Scott Carrier

**Cover** ..... Karlin Olson
Scott Carrier

**Advisor** ..... Norman C. Bansen

Committee on Publications and Department of English
Dana College • Blair, Nebraska

## AWARDS

### Joseph Langland Award for Poetry

Limited Vision . . . Tom Quale

### Joseph Langland Award for Prose

Double Indemnity . . . Suzanne Lazzaro

### Kay Munk Award for Translation

Song of the Snails Going to a Burial

Laura Anderson

## THE OLD BATTLE-AXE AND ME

The Old Battle-axe. There she was again, screeching and hollering at two second-graders for ruining the grass in the teachers' parking lot. I hated to tell the old biddy, but, first of all, it wasn't much of a parking lot — three cars could fit at the most. Second, the only "grass" was the weak, jandiced gravel that invaded the small area in front of our grade school.

We called her the Old Battle-axe because she often let us know how she disliked teaching in the poor section of the district where the factory workers lived. The Old Battle-axe was Mrs. Thomas, the third-grade teacher. She was prehistoric — at least fifty, and had *blue* hair. She drove big cars to school which we called the "Battle-axe Cadillacs". It was said that she *ate* children for not having their work done. But I also heard that she put Bobby Jurgensmeier in the closet for a whole day because he didn't have a reading workbook page quite finished. He was still around, so I doubted that first notion. Yet even the patrol boys quaked in fear of the Battle-axe. There were so many horror stories of confrontations with her that I figured it would behoove me to stay out of her way, even if I was a fifth-grader and could take care of myself.

One afternoon in late November, the first snow of the year hit Rockford. It was glorious! The factory-gray aura of the city was cleansed and the fumes were absorbed by the snow. In the classroom, we were antsy. Finally, the bell rang. We were like transplanted Californians who'd never seen a snowfall. Naturally, the snow began to fly in tightly-squeezed mitten-fuzz-flecked snowballs. We giggled and shouted as we grade-schoolers crossed seniority lines and became one age, one group of comrades playing in that snow. Children were playing from the steps of the school all the way to the fence that kept the school separate from the rest of the neighborhood. We took up about half of the short end of a city block.

I was with my little brother, who was a first-grader. He was scared of getting his glasses crunched by a snowball, so we stood at the outer edges of our snowball battleground. We were working our way toward home. I turned around for one last shot with the best snowball of the day in my mittened hand. Who should be the lucky recipient of this treasure? Then I saw him. Billy Jurgensmeier, a sixth-grader, and brother of the closet-stuffed Bobby, came out of the front doors. He was Patrol Leader this week and blew the whistle for all of the patrol boys to leave their posts. Billy Jurgensmeier was the most wonderful . . . cutest . . . nicest . . . So I decided to clobber him with a snowball. He'd be impressed if I could hit him from here. I revved back and let it go. I knew I'd hit him. No sweat. I didn't have the best arm of all the fifth-grade girls for nothing.

I missed! If half of the double doors hadn't opened just then and gotten in the way, I'd have pelted him right between the shoulders. Instead the love-note snowball hit the vandal-proof glass and slid in its juice like a bug after hitting a windshield.

Since I'd missed, I turned around quickly so Billy wouldn't know I'd been humiliated. A shrill screech stopped me dead in my tracks.

"Who did that? Who did that?" a voice shrilled twice in succession. "I could have been injured! Who did that?"

Oh no. The Old Battle-axe. From her crow's nest on the steps, she was searching in all directions for the culprit. *She* must have opened the door.

"Well, maybe if we keep walking home," I told my brother, "maybe then she won't notice." So we nonchalantly turned around and innocently began walking home. That was our mistake. She noticed the only two children not frozen in terror. As soon as the Battle-axe spotted us, she swooped off those steps and commanded us to stop. Now, I suppose we should have used our heads and run to safety in the North Woods of Wisconsin or somewhere like that, but, having been drilled for years on elder respect, we stopped and faced the wrath. Ready for the worst, I braced myself for the attack.

The Battle-axe had my brother in her clutches! She was pulling at his ear with one hand and shaking him with the other!

"Did you do that? Did you? Did you? Young man, you people are a curse to society and the reason good teachers leave these poor neighborhoods! I could have been injured! Did you stop to think of it? No, none of you think! Not one. And there are good teachers like me trying to make you *poor* children think like regular people . . ." My brother did not speak. He only cried.

"Mrs. Thomas. Mrs. Thomas," I pleaded, trying to stop her tirade. "My brother didn't do it, and it wasn't his fault." By now her thumb nail was severing my brother's chin from the rest of his body. "Mrs. Thomas," I tugged at her dress sleeve. "Mrs. Thomas, there's been a mistake." I couldn't tell her I'd thrown the snowball. She'd murder me where I stood . . . Bill would hate me forever for goofing like that . . . But I couldn't let her shake my brother like that, or keep digging into him with her nails . . .

"Mrs. Thomas." She kept screeching the whole time. "*I* threw the snowball." My brother fell from her talons.

"You what? You little wretch!" She was shaking me now. "What is the matter with you people?"

"Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Thomas," I tried to speak through the rattling. I was nearly crying.

"Mrs. Thomas." That voice wasn't my own. It was deeper, much deeper. The shaking stopped. I looked up into the kind face of our principal, Mr. McCauley, a big Irishman with red hair and a big grin. He wasn't smiling now.

"Suzanne, come with Mrs. Thomas and me. We have a few things to discuss."

We couldn't be going back into the school building! No one ever went back in once they'd left for the day. I was publicly disgraced. As I walked into the building, a million billion people watched in silent awe. We disappeared through the double doors, Mr. McCauley separating Mrs. Thomas and me.

We went into the big office that was Mr. McCauley's. It smelled of chalk dust, pipe smoke and disinfectant soap. Usually, these scents were wonderful, but now they nearly choked me.

"Well," Mr. McCauley leaned back in his chair. Mrs. Thomas and I were on the edge of ours. He asked me to tell my story first.

"Since it was the first snow of the year . . ." I began. I told the whole thing, including the parts about liking Billy and Mrs. Thomas digging into my brother's chin. I told it like I'd seen them do on T.V. on Perry Mason reruns. The truth: plain and simple. I could never lie to Mr. McCauley. I even apologized to Mrs. Thomas for the mistake.

Then it was the Battle-axe's turn. She fudged a little on the size of the snowball, and said I'd had malicious intent, whatever that was. I think she meant I threw it because I liked Billy.



She finished with, "I'm taking this to the State of Illinois Board of Education. They will deal with troublemakers like these — these factory kids! She looked at me threateningly.

That blew her case right there.

"Mrs. Thomas," Mr. McCauley said, "Factory workers' kids don't turn out all bad." His green eyes twinkled at me. "My father worked for fifty-three years on tool and die." I was victorious.

It was too much for Mrs. Thomas. She huffed out of the office. I supposed she was going to the State Board. I knew it was an idle threat, though, so I didn't sweat it.

But now I had to face Mr. McCauley's verdict.

"I think Mrs. Thomas will realize the misunderstanding when she gets over her fright. You really scared her, you know, hitting the door with that snowball, right in front of her. You'll have to be more careful."

He wrote a note to my parents to explain the delay in my arrival home. He smiled at me as I got ready to leave.

"You have quite an arm, there, my girl."

I walked out of the front doors, my note clutched in my hand. There was a crowd of kids still outside.

"How many times'd you get hit?"

"Did it hurt?" The questions pelted me.

"I didn't get hit. We just talked and it's okay." They were dumbstruck. Everyone had been anticipating my execution and imminent burial. But here I was, untouched and in one piece.

I just wanted to get home. I didn't want to gloat over my victory over the Battle-axe. I headed toward my brother who still had the brand of the Battle-axe on his chin. Before I got to him, Billy stopped me. I felt a shiver up my spine as if someone had put snow down my back, but no one had. I figured he was going to give me a snide remark about trying to hit him with the snowball.

Billy smiled at me. "You've really got a good arm, kid." I blushed.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## SADNESS OF A STAR

A beautiful Minerva is the child of my head
A star of blood crowns me forever
Reason is at the bottom and the sky is at the summit
Of the head where, Goddess, a long time ago, you armed yourself

That is why, of my troubles, that wasn't the worst
This nearly fatal hole and which is starry itself
But the secret calamity which feeds my delirium
Is much larger than any soul has ever hidden

And I carry with me this burning suffering
As the glow-worm dyes in his body ablaze
As it is the heart of France that beats
And as the heart of the lily the pollen perfumes

**From the French of Guillaume Apollinaire**
**Translated by Andy Neve**

## Viewpoints

He looked at the rock
and thought it quite rough and ugly.
He said it was worthless.
"It will never be anything beautiful,"
he claimed, "What a waste!"
Then he marched proudly off to church, leather-
covered Bible in hand, and preached about
the beauty of all God's creations.

But I looked at the rock
and thought it quite beautiful.
"The inside is what counts most," I knew.
For when the sun shone on its outer disguise,
it glistened and glittered and brightened the world.
I said a quiet prayer of thanks
that no one but He heard.

Then he looked at you
and thought you quite unholy.
"Sad," he said, "He'll never be anything worthwhile."
Then he said a prayer of thanks that God
had saved him so early in life.

But I looked at you
and thought you quite special.
For I saw your hidden treasures,
disguised so deeply inside of you,
patiently awaiting their chance to enrich the world.
"What a beautiful friend!" I exclaimed.
Then I said a soft prayer of thanks
that I had known you so early in life.

**Jann Buckley**

go softly into the night, my love.
i'll watch you from the window
as the moonlight glimmers
on your back.
i held you so close.
now my arms are empty.
the bed is cold
because you've gone.
i, too, am cold . . .
alone at a window
tracing a memory
with my mind.

**Jana Christensen**



## HOW LONG WAS THE APPLE IN PARADISE?

The dream of being freed
from its nourishing bough,
torn by childish resolve
making it heavy on its mother's arm,
making it damp,
to slip down!
Finally to be its own fruit:
gazing apple in the grass
nature with wholly private
cycle and shade,
flushes of panic,
sky-blue iris
mirroring the moon now and then —

Possibly the fashion
At any rate a fall
At any rate
a fall.

**From the Danish of Lise Sorensen**
**Translated by Sarah Hansen**

## COCKATRICE

November is a lonely place.
The cornucopia valley cradles the wealth of the land,
trying to protect it from a wintry death.
There is no life to accompany me,
no grasshoppers to bid me welcome.
Rolling hills of September,
flattened by October,
became
burnt-over, perspectiveless November.
The cement-gray of the sky speaks "snow",
but does not put forth its promise:
a clothing for a naked, refugee earth.
Breeze chills the timothy more, now.
One small greenery arches its back against the dried, hard sod.
A foolish blade!

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## PAPER PRIDE

"Are you sure you can wallpaper the bathroom?" my wife asked concernedly.

"Of course," I replied, "This do-it-yourself manual I bought at the hardware store explains it in step-by-step instructions. Only an illiterate moron could screw up something so simple as wallpapering a bathroom."

"I don't know," my wife said cautiously, "Maybe we should call my father. He's quite a handyman and I'm sure he wouldn't have any trouble at all."

"Carol, you've got to get used to the idea that I'm the man of the family now that we're married, not your father. So just get me something to mix this wallpaper paste in and don't worry about a thing." She was such a sweet girl but she just had no confidence in my redecorating ability.

"Honey all I could find is this old ice bucket."

"That'll be all right," I snapped. I dumped the white powdery contents of the cardboard box into the silver ice bucket and filled it to the brim with hot water from the tub faucets. The directions said to stir immediately upon adding of the water. Having neglected to get something to stir the mixture with I used the handiest thing. The handle of the back scrubber. How in the world such a fine powder could ever produce such a lumpy mixture I couldn't imagine, but after forty five minutes of mixing I resigned myself to having a few lumps in the paste.

The instructions then said to roll out a section of wallpaper, and to cut it off at the approximate length needed. That didn't sound so difficult. The difficulty arose when I tried to find an area long enough to unroll an eight foot long section of wallpaper. After considering all the possibilities I decided to pile the living room furniture into one corner. Enlisting my wife's aid we relocated the furniture and spread newspapers on the floor to guard the carpet.

"Now for some serious papering," I said to my wife confidently.

She just looked at me and uttered, "You know I think my dad is home today."

"Carol," I said forcefully, "Does it look like I need help?" She turned without answering and headed back to the kitchen.

The next step was to unroll a section of wallpaper. A snap I thought, but as fast as I would unroll it the other end would roll right back up. Finally I wised up and placed a shoe on one end and a lamp on the opposite end. Now for the paste. The book said to apply the paste with a brush. I didn't have a brush, so I applied a little Yankee ingenuity and decided a sponge would work as well.

"Carol would you bring me a sponge," I yelled to the kitchen.

"Here's your sponge Mr. Fixit," she said coyly.

Ignoring her cuteness I dipped the sponge in the bucket and then onto the paper, spreading paste with an enthusiastic fervor.

"I don't want to sound stupid, but shouldn't you be spreading that paste on the backside of the paper?" my wife asked.

I froze in midstroke with the sponge. "Of course," I replied, "I was just trying to see how much paste the paper would absorb. Don't worry, everything's under control, so why don't you just go back to your kitchen. I'll call if I need help."



As soon as Carol left the room I wadded up the ruined section of wallpaper and hid it behind a chair. I again unrolled another section of paper, but this time being careful to apply the paste to the proper side of the paper. The next step, as directed by the book, was simply to pick up the paper, apply it to the wall, and work out all the air bubbles. I picked up one end of the gooey paper and raised my arms high above my head. The other end of the wallpaper was still lying on the floor. I decided that the book must have been written for taller people. Undaunted by my shortness, I slowly edged my way to the bathroom dragging the excess wallpaper along the floor.

Cautiously I stuck the paper to the wall and began working out the air pockets near the floor when I heard a sticky sound. I looked just as the top of the wet paper came down around my head and shoulders.

"How's it going in there?" my wife yelled from the kitchen.

"Just fine," I lied back to her. Angrily I wadded up the ruined wallpaper and stuffed it into the linen closet. I sat down on the edge of the tub a broken man. Three hours of work and I wasn't even close to having one piece of wallpaper in place. Somehow I had to salvage my pride out of this fiasco. Then an idea dawned on me. I crept on tiptoes into the bedroom, picked up the extension phone receiver, and quietly dialed my father-in-law's phone number.

"Hello," Art said as he answered the phone.

"Hello," I replied, "Art this is Clyde and I've got a problem."

"Well what's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm in kind of a sticky situation Art," making up my story as I went along, "You see your daughter is trying to wallpaper the bathroom all by herself. She said that she had watched you do it a hundred times and that she could do it easily, but now she's having all kinds of trouble and she's too proud to admit she needs help. Do you kind of understand the situation?"

"Yes I think I get the picture," he said sympathetically.

"I thought maybe you could just drop over kind of accidentally, and then maybe you could finish the job. Of course we won't hurt her feelings by telling her I called you."

"Oh of course not," Art agreed, "I'll be over in just a little while, and don't worry I'll be real diplomatic. Good-bye."

I quietly hung up the receiver and a smile crept across my face. I thought to myself that sometimes even we illiterate morons are capable of some pretty clever ideas.

**Chauncey Wilkins**

God . . . god . . . me . . .
What is "g-o-d-"? — it isn't -
Yet I am . . .

**Peggy Sorensen**

## SONG OF THE SNAILS GOING TO A BURIAL

To the burial of a dead leaf
Two snails are going
They have a black shell
Of crepe about their horns
They are going out into the dark
A very beautiful fall evening
Alas when they arrive
It is already spring
The leaves that were dead
Have all revived
And the two snails
Are very disappointed
But then the sun appears
The sun who says to them
Take take the trouble
The trouble to sit down
Take a glass of beer
If you like
Take if it pleases you
The bus for Paris
It will leave this evening
You will see the country
But don't take the mourning
I'm telling you
It blackens the white of the eye
And then it disfigures
The stories of coffins
It is sad and ugly
Take back your colors
The colors of life
Then all the animals
The trees and the plants
Begin to sing
To sing at the top of their voices
The true living song
The song of summer
And everyone drinks
Everyone clinks glasses
It's a very nice evening
A pretty summer evening
and the two snails
Head back home
They leave very touched
They leave very happy
As they have had much to drink
They stumble a li'l bit
But above in the sky
The moon watches over them.

**From the French of Jacques Prevert**
**Translated by Laura Anderson**



## Desert Noon

Burger and fries
At a roadside stand
Constant buzzing of the flies
Under an angry yellow sun

The mustard dripped down from the hamburger
Onto her brand new dress

She stared down at it

When she looked up,
There was a tear in her eye
the single glistening salt tear
Of her frustration, her anger

"Harold," she said
He didn't hear her, continued to eat
"Harold," she said again louder,
Choking back a plaintive sob
"I didn't think it would be like this"
He looked up, uncomprehending
"Like what," he mumbled
"Like this," she cried, "our honeymoon
At a god-damned hamburger stand"
He blinked and swallowed
"I want a divorce," she screamed
"This is a nightmare"

His mind plodded through grease
He found an answer
"But we haven't had sex yet," he said
"Oh," she said quietly
She thought about that for a second
And then started eating her burger again

**Scott Carrier**

## Broken Hearts and Butterflies

Broken hearts and butterflies
gather on the wind.
A thousand eyes are watching,
waiting for the music to begin.

The band has now assembled.
The opening strains are played.
I guess I'm the only one
who got less than what he paid.

**Karlin Olson**

## DOUBLE INDEMNITY

"Jesus!" I slammed the phone receiver down onto the cradle. I picked it up again and slammed the receiver down a second time. "I can't stand it anymore!"

Another sad, sad tale of a frustrated housewife. "You wouldn't believe it, Mag," she started out. "Oh, I'd believe it, Carol, I'd believe it." I get these calls about once a week from college friends. They're all married now, except for me, and we're all doing the only things we'd ever thought about doing. They're keeping house and raising families. I'm writing for a magazine. So they call me to vent all the irritations of the typical thirty-year-old wife and mother. And they are all so typical, so God-damned typical. No one likes new, improved Tang; being a roommother is hellish; and isn't it terrible what they did to Cassandra and Lance on the soaps? Why do they tell me? I can't relate. Personally, I don't drink Tang because I despise breakfast; I've never been a roomother because I've never been a mother; and I'm at work while Cassandra and Lance are messing around in the afternoons.

It took me a long time to figure out why I was the one they all dumped on. One day, while listening to ever-pregnant Patty telling me how fixing peanut butter sandwiches for her five-year-old makes her puke, I was enlightened. I don't have those problems. I can't top their 'poorlittlemethehousewife' stories. My Big Problem for the week is deciding whether to eat out or at home on any given night. But eating out or in is a problem, a real problem. Do I fix some elaborate meal for one, or do I go out and sit alone at a table for two? How can that match the fact that baby Chrissy is teething and they were all out of Holland Rusk at the Safeway this week?

I washed last night's avocado salad dishes from supper. Carol had whined about her weight today, too. Well, I hadn't had three kids, and I didn't have Twinkies, chocolate chip cookies and Fruit Loops around to munch on. "But the kids like them, and I have no willpower," she'd told me. I thought about all Carol had said. She and Dave, her husband, hadn't been out of the house together in weeks, except to go to the grocery store, and that was with the kids in tow.

"And you, Mag, you meet exciting people everyday. You go places, out to dinner. Why when was the last time we went out for lunch or when did we last get together to play cards?" I confessed I couldn't remember. We had gotten together often right after we'd graduated, but when babysitters became necessary, hard-to-find and expensive, the luncheon dates had become few and far between. As far as playing cards, it was easier for Carol and Dave to have another couple over than to have me and then try to find a fourth for bridge, or whist, a favorite from college days.

I went to my typewriter and poked at a few keys in a feeble attempt at work. "There's no excuse!" I shot out. My words fell dead in the silence. "They could have done more than get married and have children right out of college. They could have waited." But it had been inevitable from the start. No time for being single. Just find a man, get a degree and get hitched.



I ranted and raved to myself, taking my anger out on the apple I was eating. I headed into the livingroom, flipped on the stereo and went into the bathroom to brush my teeth, continuing my wrath. "So there, Carol and Patty and the rest of you! I'll squeeze my non-fluoride toothpaste in the middle of the tube and no one will yell. I can put up guest towels and no one will wipe mud on them. I can have a color-coordinated bathroom that's not blue or brown and no man will gripe. I can clean the mirror and no one will finger print it. Nor will anyone leave blobs of toothpaste in the sink, or forget to change the toilet paper roll when it's empty, or . . ." I looked in the mirror. I was crying. ". . . or no one will hug me goodnight, or give me Mother's Day cards, or wait for Santa Claus on Christmas morning." I wandered around my apartment, tears shining on my face. I was lonely. What could I do? I laughed aloud. Wouldn't Carol be surprised? She thought the grass on this side of the fence was so green. Carol! I smiled as a thought came to mine. I went to the phone and punched Carol's number. "Hello, Carol? How would you and Dave like a night on the town? I'll take the kids for the evening."

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## Limited Vision

I have limited vision.
I watch the television shows
that get the highest ratings
and wake every morning
early enough to shave
and make myself presentable
to go to work
and shove a solid-state circuit
into another color television
for someone else to watch
and enjoy while I
eat my lunch in the cool
lunch-room with the boys,
it's always bologna and mustard,
and after the drive
back home there's the paper
on the stoop and the dog
and the meal on the stove
that I eat with the paper
and later turn on the TV
and watch the television shows
that get the highest ratings.
I work hard,
I pay all my bills I can
and go slowly into debt
and I love my wife
and the dog.
I have limited vision
and I am happy.

**Thomas Quale**

## Do You Love Man?

Man came toward me —
dragging heavily —
in the path behind the
slimy trail
of lies, of oozing sores —.
A voice resounded: — Do you love man?
No! I said — I cannot.
Love! said the voice.

Man came —
closer — crawling —
drooling with desire —
with flies and worms
in his swollen belly.
And the voice boomed:
— Do you love man?
No! I said.
Love! said the voice.

Closer — slowly closer —
inch by inch —
the stench swelled
from the lies' thousand diseases —
and the voice thundered:
— Do you love man?
—No — I do not love.
Love! said the voice.

Then a man stood up —
and held his hands toward me,
and behold: the nail holes oozing red —
from the shoulders the naked arms
were covered by the sins' black sores —
and the man laughed:
— God so loved the world —!
There fell a bandage from my eyes —
and I cried:
— Man — I love you!
And my mouth was filled with blood —
the blood of man.

**From the Danish of Nis Petersen**
**Translated by Sally Miller**



## In His Home Of Ice and Snow

I will ride upon the wind tonight
As fast as I can go.
Tonight, I'll see my father
In his home of ice and snow.

"Oh father, do you hate me?
As all the people say."
"No son, I do not hate you.
You just stand in my way."

"Father, you never taught me,
As other fathers do."
"You are right my son, I didn't,
But you've found the path for you."

"But, Father, my path is lonely."
"Did you expect it any different?"
But father, the road is long . . ."
"Hush my son, your time is done."

And so I hung my head low
And looked off in the distance.
I called upon the wind again
And gave him no resistance.

"MY FATHER, MY FATHER, I LOVE YOU."
I screamed into the wind.
Then the tears came to my eyes
For I knew he had never listened.

Then the wind returned me to my home.
A place where dreams can grow.
And I thought of the man
In his home of ice and snow.

**Karlin Olson**

## The Lestrygonians

The children sit
on the beach and play
with the bones of the dead.
They sit amidst
the scattered corpses
fresh from the slaughter
and laugh,
splintering the fragile bones
over the seaside rocks
with shrieks of joy,
tearing muscle, sinew,
stuffing it raw and moist
into their greedy mouths.

They feast upon the dead.

**Thomas Quale**

## ACER SACCHARUM

We sugar maples have thrown off our facade of leaves —
Be gone, bright coverups!
Be gone, and show the bareness of self.
The prime is autumn, is winter,
When delicacy has passed,
After the blinding heat has cooled.
We need but the bare essentials:
Emotions pure, true.
We do not need pine masks, all symetrical, all identical.
Untouched by the circle.
Youthful needles prick and prevent harbor,
But our limbs are strong and welcoming.
We taste real life: change.
We are each different;
Of the same genus, yet apart from the rest of our species.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

**Will You Gather Daydreams**
**Pam Bramer**



## The World Is Wet Today

The world is wet today.
Grey clouds have come together
To form a roof
Over the earth.
They roll by
Like the waves on some great shore
Beyond our vision.

The grey drizzle that washes clean
The countryside
Is a peaceful easing bath.
This rain is not harsh —
It is unlike the rain which falls upon both the just and the unjust,
Nor is it
The rain which always falls upon the lonely and unloved —
No, this is the gentle rain that drops from Heaven
Like so much mercy.

As the day moves on
To settle into afternoon,
The fog comes,
Moving without sound through the wet day,
It wraps itself around the land,
Clouding out familiar sights.
The stillness of the earth
Reaches up, embraces it,
Lulls the world to sleep,
To dream of quiet, mystic things,
Of ships, and sealing-wax, and kings
And other fancy stuff.

**Scott Carrier**

## DREAM

Of another world I dream
    Though full of folly it may seem,
To depart this earth as known
    as quietly as bird hath flown
Leaving peoples and problems behind
    to see what we may find
Complexity has gone for good
    and we are again as we should.

**Marla Dunn**

Sometimes, looking towards the horizon,
my view gets stuck on the dead grass that covers the plain with the harsh wind that draws the moisture from my skin. And I see the dust blowing with the wind, spreading a fine layer of soil over all that it touches, making it look dull and slightly dead.
Ashes to ashes . . .
I hear the noisy traffic in the background and the shouting of the people who have forgotten how to love, and I feel the lifelessness, not only of them, but of myself.
Then I raise my head, and I look to the sky.
I breathe in the remnants of the smell of a spring day, left from months ago when everything was new, ready to face the world. I see the sunset, strewn across the sky, like God has been fingerpainting.
Most of all, I feel the hope,
that somewhere out there, beyond my short sight, is something good.
Something good beyond this horizon,
something good under this dead plain,
and something good inside the people,
inside me . . .

**Jana Christensen**

A Raggedy End
Mickey Tanner



## Love Is

I will give you as much as I can.
If you will show me how to give more,
then I will give more.
I can only give as much as you will
accept or allow me to give.
If you accept all I can give
then my love is endless and fulfilled.
If you accept a portion of my love
then I will give others the balance
I am capable of giving
I must give all that I have
being what I am.

**Marla Dunn**

## How Hard the Days Are!

How Hard the days are!
There's no fire to warm me
And no sun to laugh with me.
All is desolate.
All is cold and without compassion.
Even the soft glow of the midnight stars
Cannot console me
Since I've found in my heart
That love can die.

**From the German of Herman Hesse**
**Translated by Karen Kreutzian**

## Pb: AT. WT. 207.21

Just like his eleven brothers,
Great-grandfather had black hands,
and a black face,
and a black neck.
But he was an Irishman, so the rest of him was white.
From a cleft in the earth, the blackness came,
conquered,
stayed.
From the mines —
Dark mines took every bit of his daylight
for fifty-odd years (excluding Sundays).
Dark mines paid a dollar a day —
seven walking miles away from home.
Dark mines christened Leadmine and New Diggings
along the southwestern Wisconsin railroad.
Dark mines, burial grounds for five of his brothers,
prison for grandpa, yearning to farm.
Dark mines that provided the lead dust
that provided the emphysema
that provided a way out for grandpa
back in '41.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## Spring

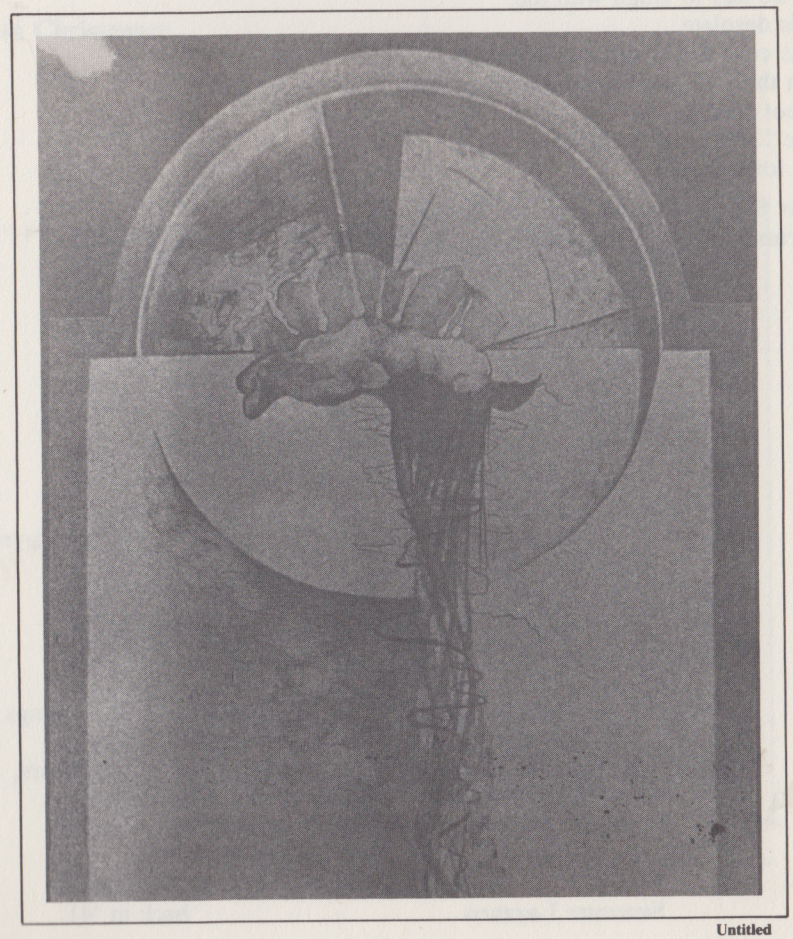
And there were dry Easter eggs
which shattered in the wind.

Tan children
with small dirty hands
dig rivers in the sandbox.

Arrogant birds
trumpet as sneezing lions
in the Orsteds Park.

And three marigolds
in a bottle
bid the milkman welcome

**From the Danish of Arne Herlov Petersen**
**translated by Andy Johnson**



**Untitled**
**Cynthia Forde**



## Gift of the Spirit

The constant swaying motion of the westbound train had lulled most of its passengers, whether human or beast, into a restless sleep. An old, but spry, conductor was just finishing his midnight checks through the cars. Out of habit, the gray-haired man of sixty-five stopped at the rear door of the last passenger car to check his gold pocketwatch. He had a couple of hours before the train's next major stop, Forsythe. In the meantime, he planned to find a place of solitude to rest his aching feet. Stifling a yawn, he positioned his black conductor's jacket around his stooped torso and pulled his cap far down about his large ears to cover his balding head. He had one more passenger to check on before he could rest peacefully.

The coldness of the gray December evening bit through the conductor's warm clothing, even past his toasty red long johns. The snow-covered countryside lay silently and serenely under the clear array of celestial beauty. Beams of light from the bright moon smiled down upon the blanket of snow to create ethereal shadows that bent across jagged rock formations. The solitude was occasionally interrupted with a long toot on the train's whistle. It seemed to be a language, a means of communicating with the terrain of the rugged, lonely Montana countryside.

As the conductor entered the long cattlecar, he shook off the cold which enveloped him. He unruffled his jacket and shifted his cap back to its regular position. Smells of fragrant hay and stale putrid manure meet his nostrils. He could hear the wind whisper through the slatted walls of the car. The cattle shifted their hulking bodies from side to side. A horse snorted quietly. He could see the shiny flanks of the animals in the dimness of the shadows. A single lantern suspended in the car's rafters by a horseshoe spike threw crazy figures and grotesque shapes across the animals.

Taking a pipe, a match, and a worn pouch of tobacco from an unseen jacket pocket, the conductor began to fill his pipe. The cherry-scented tobacco mingled with the other smells of the dim boxcar. He stiffly leaned over and struck his match on a well-worn black shoe. Sticking the pipe in his mouth and lighting it, he puffed thoughtfully for a few seconds. His searching eyes then spied their prey and he walked over to a mound of fresh hay.

Lying on top of the mound under a heavy woolen wrap, he was a boy not much more than fourteen. He had wavy red hair and a large protruding nose. His hands clasped the rough edges of the wrap as though he was prepared to awaken promptly. He dozed soundlessly amid the piles of hay. The boy had been on the train for almost a week now. He was reserved and shy, yet proud and sharp, for he had sole responsibility of the animals in the enclosed car. In his spare time, when he was not looking after the animals, he removed the lantern from its perch in the rafters and read one of the school books which he carried in his pack.

A sudden rustling of the hay and a loud whinny startled the conductor. The sleeping boy jerked up, throwing his cover to one side. He scrambled to his feet, momentarily gazing at the conductor. Regaining his senses, he brushed some of the hay from his hair and brown jacket.

Again, a pitiful whinny and a muffled rustling came from a secluded corner of the car. Starting toward the sheltered corner, the boy admonished himself by saying, "Why didn't I hear her before? I shouldn't have fallen asleep." The conductor followed the boy to the back of the car, anxious and curious as to what treasure lay hidden beneath the shadows.

As their eyes became accustomed to the dim light, the boy suddenly stopped short. The conductor joined him and both gazed at the hay-strewn floor of the car. A chestnut mare with beads of perspiration streaming down her neck sat on her haunches, her heavy flanks shimmering in the soft light. Before her, resting in a clump of hay, a small figure rustled around noisily. Soft black eyes peeked from between two tufts of hairy ears. The foal's downy-like hair was the color of its mother's. A white patch of hair in a star-like formation was painted upon its tiny face. A thin, scrawny tail rested in a bunch of sticky hay. Wisps of vapor encircled the heads of mother and colt as the sharp chill of the winter air intruded upon the scene. As the two watched in quiet awe, the mare gently carressed the babe with her tongue to remove a sticky film. The foal shook its head and mane, stubbornly resisting any assistance from its mother.

The boy beamed proudly in the dark. "He's mine. My brother-in-law told me that I could have him when he came. But I wanted to be here when . . ."

The conductor, who had been contentedly puffing on his pipe, rested his arm on the boy's in a gesture of fatherly affection. "He made it just fine. Don't you worry yourself none about it. He'll make a fine horse someday. Why don't you get this mare some fresh oats? She's had a tough evening and she deserves a reward."

Turning to do as he was told, the boy stopped and shot one proud glance back into the darkness. "I can't believe that he's truly mine." A broad smile adorned his face. "I think I'll call him Dan."

The conductor chuckled to himself. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe on a nearby board, blew into its bowl, and stuck it back into his pocket. Pulling his cap over his head and bundling his coat close about him, he walked to the door to search for a quiet place to rest before the next stop.

**Jennifer J. Jensen**

## The Third World

"Don't just give them a fish — teach them *how* to fish!"

Knowledge shared . . . this is fine.
Yet people must continue to live,
unchanged —
merely bettered.

. . . because what if these people don't even *like* fish?

**Kristi Swensen**



## It Was Meant

Eyes — They were meant to meet,
across a crowded room.

Feet — They were meant to carry you,
closer to the one you love.

Voices — They were meant to use
to speak endearments to your love.

Hands — They were meant to touch
and understand and comfort.

Arms — They were meant to connect
one and another, those in love.

Hearts — They were given to us by God
so we may love and be loved.

**Marla Dunn**

## AS THE CROW FLIES

A mile or so, as the crow flies,
Schjodt's farm is so *far* —
farther in October than September.
The field widens each day,
lengthening with the shadows of encroaching winter.
Their barn just ate the going-down sun —
Swallowed it whole.
A python consuming an egg,
it wrapped its jaws
slowly around the sun
and worked it
down
into
its
depths.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## THE STORMY EDGE OF THAT WHICH IS

Once a being, once a raindrop. What can be seen from within is all that is without. Even though what can be seen is all, what is known is little. By my own forces I am enclosed by a vast wall separating me from the answer. This wall is measurable to what is here, but infinite by closure; transparent by sight, translucent to feel. I see all others, past and future, to hit the ground with seldom a splash. They just lie there with even level on the pavement and flow with the mainstream of society's own conformacy. They all follow. A mad rush to no end, never to know truth, just swept away. In the beginning, in that wonderous cloud, all knew and all was all. I could see, I could feel. Then we were slowly formed and packed together by the masses, each given an uncontrollable destiny — to follow the stream. Then, here am I with all those who fly high, but know not why. I am not one of them, for there is a window in the wall. Something deep within of far without, one and the same, begs the window open. Can it be that I am among the few not fated to the ground? As I move toward that unavoidable window, there is increasing tension from within; a want to remain, even a little fear of what I might find. The urge is too great to know the unknown, I now force the window open. The wall shifts with instability as the slight breeze becomes the powerful wind I once knew. As it collects within me, I grow with knowledge and stretch the wall. Finally, the pressure is too great, the wall is permanently severed. As I explode, all is one and I know.

**Mark Meier**

**Very Still Life**
**Mickey Tanner**



## NONPAREIL

Southeastern Hills:
Bin of wheat, shaped by the Pourer,
calmed by Nebraska October.
Sunflowers, slowing in old age,
still have their heads turned away from the sun at twilight.
Hollow-seashell traffic sounds
mix with glassy grass-rustles,
now drier than September.
September mellowed into October.
No lines of personality conflict are in the fields.
Only patches of sumac,
maroon with anger at their passing,
show any sign of non-solemnity
non-acceptance.
Nebraska Hills are best, now,
in October.
In its old age, the land has learned when to be cynical
knows when to be warm,
cold.
(Unlike trusting Summer.)
Only feisty, firey sumac maroons with anger at its passing —
a bleeding heart
blood-letting ritual
to Clio.

**Suzanne Lazzaro**

## CHERRIES

When love on stilts
picks its way about the gravel paths
and reaches to the trees,
I too, in cherries would like
to know cherries as cherries,

No more with arms too short
or with ladders always wanting
one more rung,
to live on windfalls, stewed fruit.

Sweet and sweeter, almost black;
blackbirds never dreamed so red —
who kissed here,
when love
on stilts reaches the trees.

**From the German of Gunter Grass**
**Translated by Connie Frahm**

## my yesterday friend

. . . forgetting tomorrows,
i can hear your heart in trouble
and oh, when it speaks —
devils awaken within me
that i might know your suffering
for my pain is not far gone.

here i am . . . a playful child
and you
like me, feel free to frolic,
welcoming a familiar embrace.

eager for merrymaking, you are
my desired crony. my heart feels light
and you've amusement in your eyes.
then we kiss — the heat of your passion
warming my very self
so suddenly
you are my lover.
and what of tomorrow?
will i know you still
my confidante, my playmate . . .
my friend?
or will i then be only silently loved?
. . . i think i should want no more
tomorrows.

**Kristi Swensen**