

SOWER



1986

Dana College Publications

Legende

Saaledes berettes det,
at sædemanden gik hen over agrene
som et skib, vuggende i søen.
Og fra hans hænder føg den bitre sæd,
bredt henkastet,
og faldt i sprukken muld.
Men efter regntid spirede
det sejge had af frøene.

Det berettes videre,
at paa een mark kom han ikke.
Over een mark gled ingen
vandrende skygge.
Og her var mulden lukket over sine drømme
som et stort mørkt hjerte.
Afvventende.
Her skulde engang
de gode viljer spire.

Ole Wivel

Legend

Thus it is told
that a sower went forth over the fields
like a ship rocking on the sea.
And from his hands the bitter seed was flung
and scattered widely
and fell on cracked soil.
But after the rains there sprang
harsh hatred from the seeds.

It is told further
that to one field he did not come.
Across one field there did not pass
a wandering shadow.
And here the mould was closed over its dreams
like a great dark heart.
Expectant.
Here in the future
goodwill would spring from the soil.

translated by Norman C. Bansen

This edition of the SOWER is dedicated to Norman C. Bansen.
He has truly taught us to love, learn, and dream.

SOWER 1986

Volume XXXXI

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1986 Literary & Artistic Awards

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Pellucidly . . . Celeste Hutton

Joseph Langland Award for Prose

Once Kissed . . . Rich Prosch

Hal Evans Cole Award for Excellence in the Arts

Photograph, p. 14 . . . Nathan Krämer



Michelle Krenke - photograph

ocean of life

layers of green clouds
the trees in the sky hang
floating there
the gnarled brown pillars stand
of their own accord

the wind with all its might
sends not one cloud away
floating there
yet again and now a pillar falls
tearing greenness from the sky.

a crashing sea of brown and green
the earth consumes
the fallen
nothing for long floats in this
foaming ocean of life

Steve A. Godwin

Recreational Therapy

Beverly Grissom had been part timing it at the unemployment lines when first she saw him. He hadn't had that hair then though, or the young, handsome face. In fact, he had been a totally different man. Old, dirty, smelling of garbage, he had come smiling up to her window. She had noticed nothing particularly special about this old sterno bum until she went into her routine: "Name?"

"Orpheus."

"Please state your full name."

"Orpheus."

"That's it?"

"Of course." She looked up at him and then back to her form.

"Birthdate?"

"Birthdate?" Orpheus wrinkled his grizzled old forehead and leaned over the counter to look at the form.

"Yeah. Birthdate. Jesus. C'mon pal! People are waiting in line!"

"Not Jesus. Orpheus. Though I'm led to understand that countless college term papers comparing us have been done. As for birthdate, Orpheus is constantly dying and being annually reborn. Thus I achieve immortality through my art." Beverly sighed.

"Listen buddy, are you applying for unemployment, or auditioning for a play?"

"Well, both actually, as life in itself is—"

"Next." Beverly pushed the old man aside with an outstretched arm. A large black man who had been waiting behind readily helped her.

The hours of routine questioning seemed eternal every other afternoon, and when she was done, around 8:00 or so, the small sign on the inside of her window generally summed up her feelings: "Life's a Bitch, and Then You Die."

That night she walked the lonely ten blocks back to her apartment slower than usual. She had a major philosophy paper due at the end of the week and starting it was something Beverly dreaded. Suddenly the old man was beside her, walking in aimless unison. He held in his grubby fist a bouquet of roses. "I'd like to apologize for my actions this afternoon." He thrust the flowers in her face.

"I'm allergic to roses."

"You're allergic to me, not the blossoms."

"If you mean you stink, you're right gramps."

"Simply a human shell I am most comfortable in. And being comfortable is my chief concern now days. Orpheus is on vacation. The Poet's life, the constant dying and rebirth, the repetitive loss of my darling Eurydice. It's just too much."

"Too much booze is your problem pal. Orpheus is a myth. A symbolic figure. I read the whole story last semester. Even saw the movie." The man's eyes brightened and he touched Beverly's arm.

"You've seen the autobiography I directed for the screen then?"

"The director's name was Cocteau. He's dead. Your name is mud unless you stop bothering me." She glanced up and down the deserted sidewalk hoping to see a cop.

"I was Cocteau," the old man was saying, "and Edgar Poe, DaVinci, countless others. I was even lead singer for the Doors until recently."

"Jim Morrison's been dead since 1971."

"Time moves differently for me."

"I'll bet." Beverly started walking faster, leaving the old man behind.

"Beverly! Wait!" She turned.

"How do you know my—" The old man was glowing. A scream filled the air and he melted into a ball of silver light, which, flying through the air, deposited itself snugly into her purse and abruptly winked out.

The following afternoon they were in her apartment. "It is a documentary of the unreal, symbolizing the shattering of self, revealing the end of childhood. The sexual awakening of the girl has been barbarically shattered." Beverly looked up from the paper in front of her, and holding her pen lightly in the air, turned toward the source of the voice.

"I thought you were on vacation."

"I am," said Orpheus, who, having changed his appearance in order to more please Beverly, lounged easily across a delapidated pink couch in her living room. "But this is fascinating. So intricate in its character complexities. The girl, not finding the social satisfaction she craves, is thrust back into the welcome arms of her brother, who, like herself is slowly dying in his nostalgic childhood haze. Indirectly, the theme relates to Poe's "House of Usher". That story and this are not far removed from one another Beverly. I should know."

"Orpheus? What the hell are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the fact, that this counter statement to the fond memories of childhood that you humans so generally have, has at its source a—"

"What counter statement?" Beverly threw down her pen and walked on bare feet into the adjoining room.

"The life portrayal here being shown." Orpheus nodded his head at the small screen TV in front of him, causing his waist length blonde hair to billow on unseen winds.

"The Brady Bunch?" Beverly turned toward him open mouthed. "Intricate character complexities? This garbage?"

"If it is garbage why would the station be rerunning it so many years after its demise?"

"I have no idea. For kids after school with nothing better to do." She reached down and flipped the set off.

"Why, a child could spend hours working out the hidden meanings, drawing analogies to recurring myths, analyzing the visual interpretation. All in all, I should think quite a healthy exercise for developing young minds."

"You're right it is! But not for you! Not anymore! Isn't that what you said? You're sick of all that philosophical high tech intellectual shit! You told me you craved the mundane, the irrelevant! In other words—you were burnt out and wanted to just lay around and veg for a decade or two. So either start vegging, or get the hell out of my apartment!"

"But be reasonable."

"You be reasonable! I'm in there," she motioned back to the kitchen, "not getting anywhere with Nietzsche, Santayana or even Plato for that matter and you're out here digging crap out of the Brady Bunch that doesn't even exist!"

"But it does exist. We see the world and thereby create it. This is the central theme to my entire being." She was slowly counting to ten.

Orpheus smiled innocently, "Perhaps if I read the funnies?" and bent down for the newspaper.

She was getting nowhere fast. (Nowhere fast. An old cliché which originated in a piece of poetry entitled—Shut up Bevy baby! You're starting to think too much like him.) I wish I was, she thought to herself as she looked across the infinite sea of books which at that very moment was defying physics by existing on the finite surface of her kitchen table. She glanced into the living room and saw that Orpheus had fallen asleep under Gil Thorp and Garfield. She looked back across the infinite sea and sighed. A nap sounded like a good idea. She would work on her paper tomorrow. Taking the albatross from around her neck for one more day, she threw a pillow onto the living room floor and fell asleep.

Orpheus had awakened her at 7:30. "Dammit! I've got classes all morning and work in the afternoon tomorrow. My thesis is due the next day." Beverly ran a hand through her hair. "I should never have slept all afternoon. Life sucks!" She flashed a look at Orpheus who sat in the middle of her living room floor. "And don't tell me it doesn't!"

"I didn't say anything," he said.

"You were about to. God! I need to relax."

"It's only 8:00, why not write your paper tonight? You've plenty of time."

"Easy for you to say. You've been living that stuff since the dawn of time. I didn't know what philosophy even meant until about a year ago." She slumped onto the couch. "I think I'll have a joint."

"I thought you wanted to relax."

"Okay. A drink then."

"How about Bugs Bunny? They're having a marathon on cable tonight which—"

"Give me a break."

"I purchased a set of comic books while you were at class, perhaps. . ."

"Orpheus!"

"I know. If your friends drop in, it would be more fashionable to be seen relaxing with drugs than with the Fantastic Four. I was once that way also. I died relaxing too many times."

"Orpheus," she knelt down beside him, "I'm burnt out. Just like you. You're relaxing in your way; let me relax in mine."

"Beverly. Please." And he smiled in such a way that she couldn't resist him.

So they watched Bugs Bunny.

They played charades.

They drank root beer floats.

At 11:00 the two of them started satirizing the philosophers that she was to write on. Half of them, Orpheus had been, but he didn't tell her that. He gave her ideas, and she took notes. Beverly found that her paper was actually taking shape in their conversation, and from 11:15 until 1:30 she produced a thesis worthy of the highest historical poets.

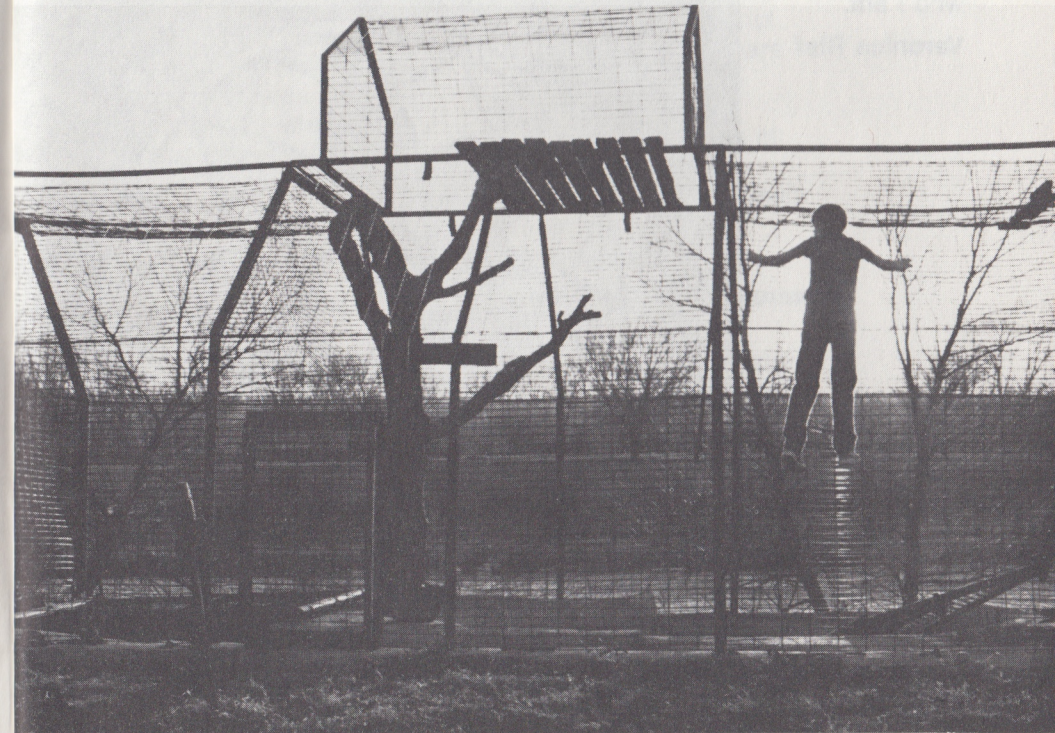
Orpheus was pleased.

Together that morning as they lay in bed, Beverly asked, "And what will you do tomorrow on your vacation?"

"Tomorrow, I will be reborn." She watched as he glistened and melted into a small silver light.

He gently touched her lips, and was gone.

Rich Prosch



It's a fine line

Mark Olsen – photograph

Your guess is as good as mine.
I'm here on the verge
of a break-
breakthrough or breakdown,
I can't say which.
It's a fine line.

Steve A. Godwin

The Riddle

I have no form
but I am one
I cannot be seen
but yet I am everywhere
I am a crystal
that holds light
but also
the reflection of that light
I am a mirror
and if
you look inside
you will know
who I am.

Veronica Rief



Michelle Krenke - photograph

Pellucidly,

fern fronds feathered—fragile.
in sun, scarlet light unseasonable
airily silhouetted on grey wall.
through stained window—refractions,
twirling prism facets,
radiating diamonds, dancing
across the oaken-frame mirror.

Celeste Hutton

Night Dreams

It's there again tonight
in the sky.

Every night I wake up
with the rush of something
wrong.

My blind eyes see only
the blurs of reality — —
contactless in more ways than one.

I find the eyeglasses I never
have worn — —

They are heavy, stiff, and
the carmel brown of them
demarcates my vision.

And I step outside, into the
world of empty streets,
with stoplights uselessly red.

Catherine Ahlin - silk screen
"Swan Frenzy"



I look up and see it, there,
a rip in the sky.

Too long to be a star.
I've become convinced it is
a symbol — —of corruption,
or insanity — — I am convinced
And every night I wake.
And the routine, the blind
fumbling in my crowded room,
the stumbling to the porch outside, and
upwards I look — —

I cried bitterly when I read
it was only a comet
once every 76 years
and I wake now
and lay in bed
and feel the rush of
knowledge
and I fall back asleep
for it is useless
to stay awake.

Helen Diana Sheumaker

Your forbidden footsteps
Enter into my mind
The echo is loud
Can't be ignored

Dance through my mind
Until we both become breathless
And collapse inside
The walls of my mind

Your forbidden footsteps
Leave my mind only for awhile
Until the music starts again
And you intertwine with my soul

Kristen Sterba

The Rematch

All she knew was this gonging. This shrieking. This piercing, burning torment. "Stop it! Please just stop it!" Gong . . . gong . . . gong . . . gong . . .

"Jesus, it's the damn phone." Groping and disoriented she sought the receiver, across the bed, past the aspirin bottle, under a pile of discarded panties.

"Yeh."

"Laurel?"

"Yeh."

"Laurel, I'm in a jam. Can you come get me?"

"Who the hell is this?"

"Vince. Vince Stewart. I'm at . . ."

Now she was awake and stuffing a cigarette in her dry, pasty mouth. Wedging the receiver between an ear and a shoulder she fumbled across the floor for an ashtray. There it was. She stretched to reach—the phone cord was too short. The phone came clanking down on the carpet. "Sorry, what'd you say?"

"I'm at the police station. Can you come get me?"

"Why don't you call your wife?" Laurel began to hang up.

"No! Please, I can't. . . I mean, I'll explain when you get here."

She wasn't certain what had drawn her downtown. It wasn't human compassion. Nor was it that pathetic voice tearing at her weak and female heartstrings. It was more akin to cruelty. She'd hoped to find Vince in stripes and handcuffs, steel bars framing his face. She was disappointed when he only looked unshaven and hung-over.

"Oh God, Laurel, I didn't think you'd come."

"What do I have to sign?"

Vince smiled. This was the woman he used to hold in the chill of morning darkness. This was her way: act tough. But he knew how to break through that facade. "Nothing. Just take me to your place. Please, Laurel, I really need to talk with you."

The coffee was thick and the eggs were a little greasy. The sun was still asleep, but there they sat at the portable card table which served as her breakfast nook. Laurel was still confused as to why she'd gone to pick him up. She didn't owe this jerk a dime. Funny, if it weren't for the obvious tension, she might have mistaken this scene for one of a hundred they'd played out years ago.

" . . . and after she told me to get out, I got plastered. The cops say they clocked me doing seventy-six on the Interstate."

"Screw the sob story, Vince. Why'd you call?"

"Would you believe that I missed you and was meaning to call you anyway?"

Laurel looked away and tried to blow the hair out of her eyes. Vince knew that gesture: it was calculated to be casual, but revealed unresolve instead. Years vanished. He felt as if he'd never married, never stepped out of Laurel's life, never made her cry. Touching her hand broke the spell, though, not when she pulled it away, but as she let him hold the hand, fondle it. He knew he could always break through to her. After all this time he hadn't lost his touch.

"Laurel, I keep thinking about you. In the middle of the night, when she's rolled the other way, sleeping, I want to pick up the phone."

"You'll go home to her."

"I can't."

"Well, you can stay here a day or two until you figure out what you're going to do." She could kick herself! Why the hell did she say that?

Vince took the obvious cue. He circled the table, knelt beside her, cupping a manicured hand to his lips. He felt the victory already. "Come to bed with me, Laurel, will ya'?"

Sharply, she rose and began clearing away dishes. "I have to go to work. Stay here if you like, but don't answer the phone and do not drink all the milk. I can't afford anymore till the end of the week."

"Laurel, my God, I've never wanted you more. Skip work. We'll get some wine, lay in bed all day. . ."

"Damn it, Stewart, you don't get it do you? You are married. You made that decision and then I made mine. Now feel free to stay but cut the shit. Do the dishes; I'm taking a shower."

"You're crying."

The bathroom door slammed shut. As Vince listened to the shower running he danced around the room. He was winning.

Some minutes later, Laurel emerged fresh and primed for work. He couldn't resist. He caught her up in a tight embrace, forcing a kiss on the perfectly red mouth.

"Cut it out!" She grabbed a purse and headed for the door. He was stunned. He was so certain she was giving in. Until that moment he was assured a victory.

"I'll be home after five." And the door swung closed behind her.

Exactly twenty minutes after five the bolts slid back on the door lock as Laurel let herself in to the apartment. Whistling an Irish ditty, she carried the steaks and wine to the kitchen. Taking a glass down she reached into

the fridge for milk. It was then she noticed the empty carton on the card table. A napkin scrawled with some words was wedged under it, half hiding as if in guilt.

Laurel flung the milk carton at the sink, then crumpled the napkin, not bothering to read his apology; he'd reconsidered. In the bedroom the bottom dresser drawer stuck again. Finally, yanking it open, she retrieved the shoe box, full with at least two dozen similarly wadded napkins.

Closing the shoebox lid, the drawer and bedroom door consecutively, Laurel began tasting the salty rain limping down her cheeks.

"DAMN that man!" she screamed. Sinking to the floor, she conceded defeat, once again.

K. A. Swank

Picture Black

I started tapping
I turned around
I heard a word without sound

The silence grew
To a deafening roar
My face felt the wind
As I raced to the floor

The smell of black
Grew bitter and hard
As time passed before
A heady backyard

Now Picture Black looms
over the world
As the people dance
To the final rain swirl

All color invisible
Only one smell left
Touch is tested with my chest
Sweet Gnostic love

Lew Simons



Rich Prosch - oil
"Spacedock"

mind over mind

mind over mind—
that's the ticket
the way out is the way
decide to go and you're gone
choose your state of existence
and you're there
it's mind over mind

Steve A. Godwin

This battle I will win.
Even though
outnumbered,
I stand.
I feel weary,
but my courage
is great.
For as the lion
in the old story,
I inspire
even the weakest
to rebel
against
evil.

So stay
where you are
brave coward.
Then run
many times.
In the end
we will
seek you out,
and from your
land of enchantment
you will
be banned
forevermore.
For your
demise
is your own.

Jeff Probasco

Brotherhood Unbound

- I. Curiosity—
aroused by ambiguity.
Reaching "that" mystic age—
looking back,
all's changed—fallen
on a chronological line,
a continuum, abruptly faster—
rioting! a barrage of questions—emotions.
And Dylan still moaning out answers
heard only in wind. But not a breeze
stirs the sultry day.
- II. Dickens
said clothing determines social status.
(Have you seen the fashions lately?)
Don't we know the songs—
for centuries groaned deep
in suffering (at hands of nicely-
dressed WHITE humans)—
of apartheid in Zimbabwe?
Have we forgotten humanity?
exchanged brotherly love (on the BLACK
market) for thirty silver pieces?
- III. Boredom gnaws at roots!
Misconceptions of excitement
(and wealth) impending.
We must only expect—
and receive tomorrow.
Not tired, we sleep—driven by monotony
(and greed). "It will be here when I awake,"
(only to deepen the wedge). Separate the
stratas—those with and without—of society.
Soar, plummet down—
in hatred, misunderstanding, despair.

Celeste Hutton

A fool and his truth . . .

I had it once
but passing it became
mere faded memory—
then was gone.
Gleaming brightly
of its own accord
it shone.
A shadow thin remains.
Now, nought.
Lost—
another ageless truth.
When to come again?
Too little loved,
too rashly set aside
for colored stones—
the treasures of this age.
Ever found again?
Perhaps in laughter,
perhaps in true lament,
embracing foolishness—
truth rekindles . . .

Steve A. Godwin



Nathan Krämer – photograph

False Trusts

Why does the savage hug his god of stone
Or believe on his wayward, twisting path.
Or the humble city dweller cringe lone
In appall amid a garish light.
And look at the ugly man of substance
Who gloats over his many crooked gains.
The Christian looks down on him with askance.
These false hopes will lead to eternal pains.
And then shall we, God's chosen people praise
The one true Savior to be looked up to.
His miracles in glory shall we raise
To go tell these people without ado.
So why a heathen, his god be worshipped
When by belief their immoral sins be stripped.

Michelle Krenke

Chain Lock

I no longer can write
my life so starkly on paper
for the blood
of my fingers
weakens at the thought.

It is not that my voice
has been deadened
but that my hands have — —
in fear perhaps
of their own power.

It is as though I
realize that the answer
I seek is so simple
that there will be no other
when it is found.

It is this
that my paper
remains as it is
and not as it might.

Helen Diana Sheumaker

Pierrot

Wordlessly he speaks,
His actions expressing his thoughts
Better than words ever could.
His facial features are hidden
Under a mask of white paint,
But his eyes leak the sadness
That is in his heart.

Soundlessly he shows his empty pockets
And holds his head between his hands.
Slow deliberate gestures
Echo his deep despair.

Silently he bows.
Applause destroys the mood
Created by his mime.

Sue Kallman

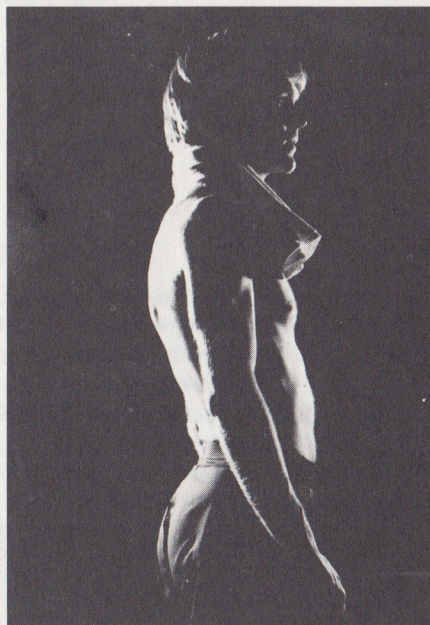
Shall I disrobe for my accusers?
Stand naked before them?
In nakedness there is no shame.
In nakedness there is truth
when you have nothing to hide without.

Within I am naked.
Stripped of human complaint,
stripped of purpose,
stripped of pride,
stripped of self-respect.

Never stripped of honor,
never stripped of truth.

Always stripped of justice.

Jeff Probasco



Nathan Krämer – photograph

—then the Lord God formed
man of dust from the ground, and
breathed into his nostrils the
breath of life: and man became
a living being.

—Genesis

The Old Man

Looking at the surgeon's face, who would imagine that the manila folder in his hands was anything but ordinary? But the intern's eyes clouded with perspiration, and clenched fists revealed knuckles that were white and bloodless.

"Son, you're anxious about this one. It's the first time you've had to face—"

"Life or death, sir. This one's life or death."

"Medicine is life or death. As I was saying, this's your first time. Pay attention to what I'm going to say, because there will be others." Instead of returning to his throne of a desk, the surgeon pulled up a straight-back chair to face the intern.

"It's malignant. We're going to amputate."

"From the knee?"

The surgeon nodded.

"Can't we—"

"Save the leg; we lose the Old Man."

"Take the leg, and we still lose him."

The surgeon flashed. What impertinence! The facts were clear and that kid knew it was the only logical solution.

"Come on, doctor, what will the Old Man have to live for? He's a dancer."

"There's occupational therapy."

"But to hear him talk of dancing . . . it's everything he lives for. God, it'd be like taking the paintings from a museum. I feel he'd rather die."

"You're not God!" Now it was the surgeon's lashes which fought to keep sweat from stinging his eyes.

Conversely, with the first deliberate motion he had made that afternoon, the intern easily reclined, crossed his feet at the ankles, folded arms over his chest.

"And neither, sir, are you. Hadn't been for us, the good Lord would've taken him months ago. We are invested with the divine right to avert Death, but not to let Him in when He calls, is that it? What if the disease spreads? We chop off the other leg? The groin. We keep cutting and cutting, shaving the Old Man down until only the head remains. The more we take away, the bigger the research grants get, don't they?" The intern stood, playing to an audience of air. "Come one, come all, come see the amazing fraction of a man, only a dollar. Yessiree, Doc, you've got quite a little investment there!"

The intern's eyes were glazed with hatred or sweat, the surgeon didn't know which.

"You, good doctor, have no humanity remaining. You are business, strictly business."

"And education, don't forget that."

"Yes, of course. . ." The intern made as if to leave.

Unfazed, the surgeon hoisted himself from the straight-back chair, "If you still want your internship, you will assist me with the Old Man's surgery in the morning."

"Yes sir."

K. A. Swank

El doctor Edmundo

author unknown

De mil enfermos y más
que en año y medio asistí
ninguno de ellos, jamas,
podrá quejarse de mí.
Así habló el doctor Edmundo
y en verdad que no ha mentado,
pues los mil y más se han ido
a quejarse el otro mundo.



Mark Olsen - photograph

Dr. Edmundo

Of a thousand and more patients
that in a year and a half I attended,
none of them will ever
complain about me.
So spoke doctor Edmundo
and truly he has not lied,
since the thousand and more he attended
never will complain, they all died.

translated from Spanish by
Ingrid Westhoff

Wasted Time?

How is it that a man
can ever waste time?
What is it to waste time?
Can time in eon or moment
ever be a waste
or an emptiness?

It is when men seek
for all their days
to be ones of conquest
or enlightenment
that they often miss those days?

Always you seek worth
but what is worth?
What worth is a well
to a man who lives on a lake,
yet what is it
to he who dwells in deserts?
Worth is not yours
to make or claim.

You desire achievement
in all your hours;

but look upon those days-
are the seasons all for sun?
The sun be our joy,
but if it ever shone,
unhindered by cloud,
all would burn to dust.
So it is with you
and with your time.
The seasons be life,
yet their worth
be never the same.
So with your days.

There is no waste.
For you are filled with life,
as is all the earth.
And just to draw a breath,
to eat an apple,
or dream a thought,
is a day's conquest
and enlightenment.

Michael L. Hennick

Going Home

Won't you turn the channel
please

Focus the picture in
On some old star
We both looked up to
It's the last time it'll be on
Won't you play my favorite

song

The one we both knew
We were a handsome

couple

Flying ace and ballet grace

Have I told you that I'm scared
Everyday I drive
Down the same streets as

before

Everyday the dead ends say
You can't drive here no more

Have I told you that I'm scared
My written breath
Has shown signs of death
But, it stank of wolf you see

How many times
Can a man like me
Draw upon reality

It seems I've fought
Every battle in the

war

And like a dozen times

before

I've lost
Not just a battle but a piece of myself

You know it's so strange
I feel so calm
And everything has new

meaning

Now I know it's the only

way

Have I told you that I'm not scared

Lew Simons

Sad Eyes

Those eyes
Those sad eyes
They hide so much pain
Yet they look for something
Something to twinkle about.

Your life seems so empty
Why
What seems to be missing?
Could it be love?

That special feeling that makes the world
go 'round.
Everyone needs it
Everyone wants it,
Even though they may deny it.

People need warmth
They need to share their pain and sorrow
As well as their joy and happiness.
People need people.

Love
Could that be what's missing?
To love and be loved.
Could it change the sadness in your eyes
to happiness?
It may be

Denise Iskra



Mark Olsen – photograph

Survey of Neglect

Having seen snow disappear
all in an afternoon—
from an upstairs window, I have laughed.
Having heard the wind beckon and
seen the plants breathe,
watchfully—I have listened.
Having been touched by Schleiermacher
(and wondering why you weren't)
I have leapt with faith to the entwines of your being.
Having harbored you within me—
hours beyond climax
I have been consumed, again
Having felt the producer—water—
flowing into my being,
through eyes I have allowed exeunt.
Having lived, and grown old—
neurologically isolated in technicolor
and stereo—let me die.

Celeste Hutton

The Persian King

On a nearby driveway rests a long-haired Persian cat. His soft chinchilla fur soaks in the morning sun. Blue eyes sedately scan the horizon. Slowly, a gaping mouth yawns open, revealing sharp, white teeth, and then snaps shut with a final click. Extended claws absently scratch the pavement and then sheathe again. Raising its regal head, the feline surveys his domain. Two playful squirrels race up an oak tree, chasing one another around the trunk. A German shepherd barks in the distance. The Persian cat turns its head in disgust and begins grooming his pale-gray fur. Long, even strokes of a rough tongue carefully smooth pliable hairs into a sleek coat.

Slowly, the cat loses all tension and attains perfect relaxation. Only the blue eyes peering over its swaying tail are aware of the outside world. His eyes momentarily close and then force themselves open again, only to close once more. The gray tail beats time, but slows and finally stops as time wears on. Soon, not a whisker stirs. The only sign of life is the rise and fall of the cat's chest, and, perhaps, the alertness of those sensitive ears. Once more the gray and white feline returns to the realm of slumber, to reawaken . . . whenever.

Phil Suhr

Eclairs and chocolate flies

I sat at the old
peeling picnic table
eating my chocolate éclair.
Beside me sat a spider
sucking dry his picnic fly.
The table, though worn,
was big enough for two
so small as I,
my éclair,
spider,
and his fly.

Steve A. Godwin

My Winter Eden

Thanksgiving Day—I sit content
as the subjects of Pieter Brueghel
in Schlauraffenland,
flossing turkey tidbits from my teeth,
listening to Guthrie wail on
of “Alice’s Restaurant” delicacies,
and thinking it’s none too soon
to decorate for Christmas.

The furnace burns; it does not blow.
The wind blows, but does not enter.
The plants have entered, yet cannot breathe.
I cannot breathe;
I shrivel—nose cilia first.

None too soon . . .
for the seasonal unveiling—ceremonial—
the Rain Maker.
Once encircuited (with glaringly visible cord)
—electric humidity.

Soppy and sapless streams collide—cool and torrid.
A rain storm in my living room?
(Lightning strike me down.)
Thunderous applause.
Hellish flames in my equatorial stove;
mist from a steamy volcano exudes.

Soon, a torrential forest,
tropical vegetation—
flora, fauna, and frost—
covering the windows.

Celeste Hutton

The Mist

It is a spirit,
It is a gossamer ghost,
That cradles the lowlands
And hangs to the coast.

It moistens the sky,
But turns it gray,
Yet it is beautiful enough,
Over the hills it does lay.

It may come in the night
Or deep in the morning;
It can slowly blur
Or conceal without warning.

It hides the rocks
That do sink the ships,
But glistens on the grass
Like maiden’s lips.

It comes quite often
If the season be right,
To turn days cloudy
And block the sunlight.

The face of all men
This air has kissed,
A mystery element,
We call it the mist.

Michael L. Hennick



Veronica Rief – acrylic
“Eliza”

Once Kissed

Kris. Kriskriskriskris. Kris was a senior when I was a junior. Oh, my could she kiss. She kissed me on a waterbed. Imagine the first kiss of your life, (not those dry puckered lip jobbers from relatives, but your first, real, capital lettered KISS) on a waterbed, given, not only by the most beautiful girl in the school, but by the most beautiful girl in the school who was also an entire grade ahead of you. Imagine this; until that point, you had considered yourself a prime candidate for Benedictine Orders World Wide. Imagine that for three years of your sexual prime (and everybody else’s, if you could believe your friends and their Saturday night follies), God had seen fit to have girls treat you like the hind end of a gypsy wagon. That is, with wrinkled noses and general mistrust.

So it was a real kiss. Open mouth stuff, tongue action, swapping spit, everything. Puckered lips and smoochie sounds left to grandmas and Popeye cartoons.

After the kiss she got up and acted like nothing happened. We were at a party and Kris went back to her friends, while I went back to being a gypsy wagon. My friend Harris looked at me and said, "It's about time you came up for air."

"Go to hell, Harris," I promptly replied.

"You might, if you kiss every girl you see that way," he appropriately countered.

I leaned against the counter swirling the remnants from a tall boy beer can in my mouth. Not as solid as a tongue, I shook my head and spit the beer out. They say the last few swallows of beer from a can are mostly backwash anyway. Kris was standing on the other side of the counter. Harris was standing against the sink as I spit. I looked at him. He looked at me. I looked at Kris. He looked at me. Kris looked at him. The Bermuda Triangle had nothing on us. No one interfered with us. People would walk toward the triangle and do an about-face, as if hit by a semi at eighty miles per hour.

I couldn't stand it any longer. (Besides, people were beginning to talk.) "So, uh . . . maybe, uh . . . you want to go for a walk, Kris?" My eyes were on those lips, those eyes, those things boys look at after their first kiss. My hands were in my pockets. My mind was out to lunch.

Kris looked at me, and said in a voice that could melt cold steel, "No, Rich. I want to kiss you again."

The ground trembled.

The counter was in the way.

I should have done what I wanted to, which was to say, "Sure baby, only not in front of the kids." Then I should have strolled casually out from behind the counter, thrown Harris a, "Catch you later, you poor jerk," took the lady by the arm, and made a Joe Ladykiller exit.

However, as I was not (and still am not) Joe Ladykiller, I simply leaned over the counter, knocking what seemed to be three hundred beer cans on the floor, and kissed her.

Now Kris had been smoking a cigarette, and there are those who screech that "Kissing a smoker is like kissing an ashtray!" I've never kissed an ashtray, but I can't help but think that people who feel this way must not give a tinker's damn about the person that they're kissing. Ashtrays are dry and powdery. Kris' lips were just as rich as cherry cheesecake.

At 1:30 I was driving recklessly down dark deserted streets which glistened like the adrenaline in my eyes, as my headlights hit them. Beside me, Kris was doing her best Miss Sex Goddess 1982 imitation while Harris did his best Foster Brookes in the back. Oblivious of him, Kris was passing me hints with her eyes. Hints which spoke erotically of early morning, starlit interludes. Hints which zoomed over my head like Concords. I was too wrapped up in the whole thing to realize that there could be much more to this night than had already transpired. My mind had unlocked the office door, but it still wasn't officially back from lunch. Oh, I had plans. Don't get me wrong. I mean, who wouldn't? Harris would soon be gone and I was going to score. Score with Kris Sex Goddess 1982. But along with

the plans came the whole gypsy wagon thing, and I ended up taking Kris home first.

With Harris in the back seat, I pulled up to her house. Wanting more than anything on God's green earth to walk her to the door, I said, "Uh, well, see you tomorrow." I mentally punched myself out. She looked at me with eyes so liquid that I wondered if they'd make a good mix with Coke. (Oh Kris, ask me to walk you to the door.) She said, "Thanks for the ride," and got out.

Driving down the street Harris said, "So what's so big about one lousy kiss?" Then he belched. I didn't answer him. I might have been a gypsy wagon, but when it came to girls, Harris was a manure spreader.

Rich Prosch

Love: A Periodic Reflection

A cool wind blows
The heat once dominant
Ruby tears
Legacy of a battle
Over now

White fragrance holds the air
Though at last killed
Sweet pain

A dangerous game kept in play
Unknowing, the willing participants
Press Prima-Donnas
Press-on, driftly adamantly
Through time
Reap oblivion

Summer bore our roles
Leads love
Again
Past the cool winds
Of hell

Lew Simons

What is it
about us
that we
drive
people
away?
Is there
a stench
that lets
them know
our ghastly
past?
Our wives
and girlfriends
question
our acts
and our
love.
But for me,
I want
to be
loved
for
who I am,
not
what I was.

Jeff Probasco



Catherine Ahlin - collage

Transcendental Masturbation

Today Beck is ready to live! She's awakened unaided by alarm and lies on her mattress floor covering listening to pigeons mingling with morning sounds—a water drip and a coffee perk—imprinted sounds. She thinks of her body—millions of cells each second copulating within her. Is mutation occurring yet? She arises and, wishing for a Zen pleasure laboratory, retreats to a far corner, commencing to spend several hours exploring her neurological circuits through yoga. Her mantra—"I am aware that I am a robot. I will become unrobotized and escape my passive-receptive hedonic life-style." Good luck, Beck!

Beck is twenty-three years old and lives in an attic. There, she communes with the sky (what can be seen of it in New York City) and the dust around her. She works at a clothing factory—tie-dyeing (and you say that went out of style years ago) for a living. A mindless vocation, perhaps, but where else can you be exposed to such variation of color? It's become quite an art in the twenty years since it was last in vogue. Beck thrives on the colors! She brings them home evenings on the tips of her fingers—ten different colors each day. If weather permits, she dares to dip her toes and thus return home, socks in pockets, with day-glo phalanges peeking above sandals that've gotten more mileage than Goodyear would ever have guaranteed. Those are good days—twenty colors can enhance her personal asylum, and indeed, would be welcomed in the most respectable of New York brownstones.

Hers, however, is far from that. A wooden-framed structure leaning off slightly to the left of its foundation, by floor four her nook appears precarious. But it is refuge for her thoughts which are trapped by sooted

windows and penchant roofs, but no walls within. Walls diminish the flow of movement within a pad—curtains (around facilities) are all that is necessary. This renders to her larval ego a sense of primitivism, but no discordance.

After Beck has successfully put a dent from the pressure of her fingers on the bridge of her nose, she relents and rises from her Buddha position. Thumbing the same nose (lower down) at social bans on rock and roll, she begins to listen to the gratefully alive Dead and continue her daily routine. In this, she does not realize her inability to remain within her oneness. The spell is shattered slightly by dependency on music from without.

Beck soothes aloe on her naked body after a steaming bath. She stealths to the closet, pushes aside the beads which form its curtain, and begins searching for today's fashion statement. Oh, the colors! Yellow? No, too glaring. Violet? No, too drab. Red? Too hostile. Chartreuse? Ahh—the color of spring and new growth. The blouson leaps upon her body and does, truly make some statement when teamed with fuschia pants.

Beck returns to the single mirror and begins the next phase of her ritual. She painstakingly tears dark lines from beneath her brows, freeing each stray hair, tugging to the left or right with a stainless steel pliers. Next, brush strokes of pink and beige—to make the face glow. Then combing on black paint around the eyes. Finally, the curls—lashes first for two minutes each. And the head. Lifeless hair is stretched to full-length. The red, hot iron is snapped on, sizzling, twirling toward the center—the roots—over again. Forty-seven repetitions. She unplugs herself, satisfied, prepared to face her world and return to unity with nature as it exists in the city.

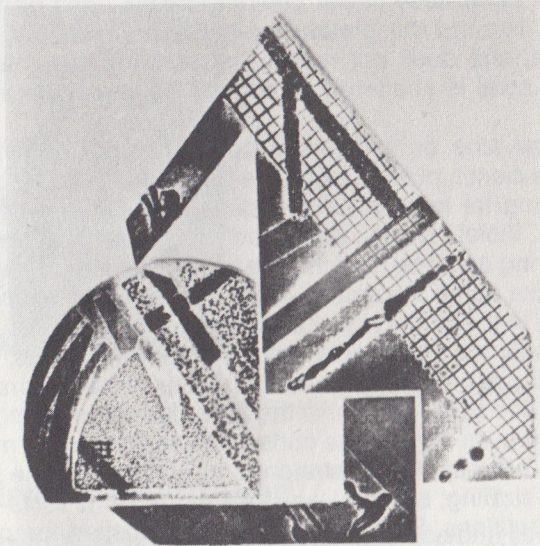
Aware that God does not exist, Beck has invented a god. After all, a sole needs someone intelligent to talk to. It is to this god she ceremoniously prays, proffering some of her strawberry mescaline yogurt, hoping she will be left the larger share. She's left the whole carton. Slurping down the creamy manna with gluttonous twirls of her spoon, Beck leaves her pleasure den and boards the subway. Destination—Metropolitan Museum of Art.

For hours Beck stands before the displays, searching each era with her activated eighth circuit intelligence—the Tarot, the Zodiac, the I Ching, the Greco-Roman Olympic Pantheon, the Hebrew Alphabet—the system for division of evolution into periodic tables of the occult. Ah, the information cells swell and neurological changes occur as Beck is the recipient of facts of humanity's metamorphosis. Beck becomes a reality island in and of herself! Conflict is a result of dissonance among social-neural-genetic structures. How fortunate for the future ones to have the insights provided by history.

Moved by the primal instinct of hunger, Beck retreats to a nearby restaurant and lounge, the European Cookery. She enters the dim bar and allows her eyesight (stimulated all day) to adjust to this new form of somatic hedonism. Sipping an unaccustomed vodka-7, Beck scans the entrées listed in poor calligraphy on the sticky menu. Chicken mousse sounds exquisite. Beck smirks as she orders, thinking it must take a lot of chickens to make a moose. Requesting another cocktail, she ponders drinking

through a straw without holes. She examines her glass, turning it coolly in her hands and says calmly, "Bartender, there was just a sea monster in my drink. It told me the earth rotates at a different speed for everyone. Then it turned into a flamingo, and flew into a flaming, pink horizon."

Celeste Hutton



Catherine Ahlin – collagraph
"Urban Kaleidoscope"

Escalations

The intensity with which
I hold is frightening more
to me than anyone. . .
my capacity for failure is limited
and with each uncalculated move
I wonder if this will finally
crack the tenacious and hate-filled
grasp I have on life.
It is the same principle with which
men and women climb stone hills
with their bare hands leaving the
harsh reminder of blood for the others
following to see.
There is no difference
in the threatened death of the body
or of the mind.

Helen Diana Sheumaker



Michelle Krenke – photograph

Family

There are five pillars.
All bracing one another.
If one should be taken
away the rest would
fall.
There is beauty in this
work.
Each is the strength of
the other.
Pillars of Father,
sisters and brothers.

Jeff Probasco

Archetype

There is a sense of emptiness — —
that when I concentrate on it
my mind slips away.
It is too permanent a presence
and so I ignore it.
I will forget, misplace the thought
and it will fly up into my face
brushing dust and dirt
into my throat, my eyes, my mind.
And for days afterward
I feel the grit on my hands.

Helen Diana Sheumaker

Legend of the Formica Table

It's only an ordinary booth in a typical small town pizza place. You know the kind I mean—red vinyl seats with gum adhered to the bottom, a chipped formica table top and next to a window with a view . . . of the alley. The window can be opened to stir the summer swelter, but you'll have to ask the waitress for a little stick to prop it up, else it falls. But in the winter it rattles gloriously with the wind. There's one piece of graffiti scraped into the formica. There. Do you see it on that corner? "Class of '83." Now, this is just an ordinary booth—to most. But to those who worked on carving that inscription (hiding the pocketknife at the approach of a waitress) this booth was their Camelot.

They numbered five. And every Friday night this was their court, and they the players of the court: the jester and the princess, the advisor, the pontiff and the midwife. At this table each sat equal to the others. All bound by sacred oath. Their deeds of bravery have become local legend, for it was this very booth where the five courtiers began their quest for the Holy Grail.

"Do you have the eggs? Good. I brought the soap."

"This is going to be the ultimate Halloween!"

"So whose car are we gonna take?"

"My folks wouldn't let me use theirs tonight. Pete, can we take yours?"

"Come on, guys, no. You know I don't even want to do this. Eggs can ruin a guy's paint job. And do you realize what the cops will do if they catch us?"

"He has a point there."

"You're right, Pete. I heard they got Tim Delaney last Halloween and he got twenty hours community service."

"That would be like so embarrassing. What if they made you pick up trash on the highway and like everyone you know drove by!"

"Christ, that would suck."

"Yeh-h-h."

"So, you got the eggs? Good. I've got the soap. Come on, Pete. I thought we were taking your car."

The quest for the Holy Grail became their sole purpose. Each would leave the table vowing to return with some clue of the Grail. Striding to the stables, each would mount his trusty steed, usually a Pinto or Mustang.

"CHARGE !!!"

Sometime later in the night the courtiers would return by one's and two's. Sacred relics spilling onto the formica table, they'd sing their tales as ancient troubadours.

"Liz, there's a Cougar! We don't have one of those yet. I'll be look-out while you break it off."

"No, you break it off; I don't want to ruin my nails."

"Shit! O.k., o.k., just watch for anyone coming."

"Be careful, Jan. Hey, why don't you use the wire cutters?"

"You're not being a very good look-out."

"Well, excuse me."

"Ow, this is the orneriest hood ornament I have ever stolen. Liz, hand me those wire cutters."

"I can't. I'm looking out."

One night while in search of the Grail, it was decreed that the larger sacred relics ought to be displayed so all the world could know of the courtiers' brave deeds.

"You guys, did you see today's newspaper? Here: 'VANDALS STRIKE. Once again the local high school was the target of pranksters. Monday morning ten "For Sale" signs, two stop signs and a row of pylons were found scattered across the school lawn. It is believed that the same group is responsible for last month's theft of Holiday Inn's "Vacancy" sign.' How cool is that, guys? We made headlines!"

The weekends came and passed and the five courtiers continued their quest. Then, without precedent, in May of 1983, they gathered and conferred solemnly for hours. For once, the rolling laughter was absent. There was something mystical about the booth that Friday night. Even the waitresses dared not interrupt the conference.

Four years now the five had searched, but the Grail was ever elusive. Late into the night they finally arose. Without a word they walked outside where each turned his own way into the world.

That final night has become the subject of much speculation. Most believe they vowed to split up and hunt the Grail in college or career. Furthermore, it is believed that ten years hence all would return to share new relics. But as with every Camelot, this booth shone briefly, collapsing under its own flames, heaving, sputtering, until only the ashes of legend remained.

Now, my friend, you know the story of this booth. Not so ordinary after all. Ah, here is our waitress. Shall we order?

K. A. Swank



Nathan Krämer – photograph
"Cleaning Ladies"

after Original Painting
of April 6, 1946. *The Saturday
Evening Post.* by Norman

Rockwell