



SOWER

1987



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Volume XLII

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1987 LITERARY AND ARTISTIC AWARDS

JOSEPH LANGLAND AWARD FOR POETRY
"Third and Final Whirling Wind" and "Tintagel"
Steve Godwin

JOSEPH LANGLAND AWARD FOR PROSE
Coming of Age
Rich Prosch

HAL EVANS COLE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS
"Mad Flutter" wood-cut print
M. Michaelson

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Kipp Harris
Kenmare, North Dakota

Poems,
winds grasped,
thoughts felt
infinities scrawled on crumpled paper...

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa

"Mad Flutter"
E. Nicholson
Kingstley, Iowa

The Third and Final Whirling Wind

Gathering clouds and rising winds,
the storm is coming once again.
The cyclone is unwinding.

It's nothing new, so many say,
it's just another dingy day.
Their ignorance is binding.

The knowledge known by those so "wise"
is teaching many to despise
the humankind they're finding.

To see "our" land and not the sphere
shall cost us all that we hold dear.
Disunity is grinding.

And when the storm has come at last
I fear all hope shall be long past.
The clock is downward winding.

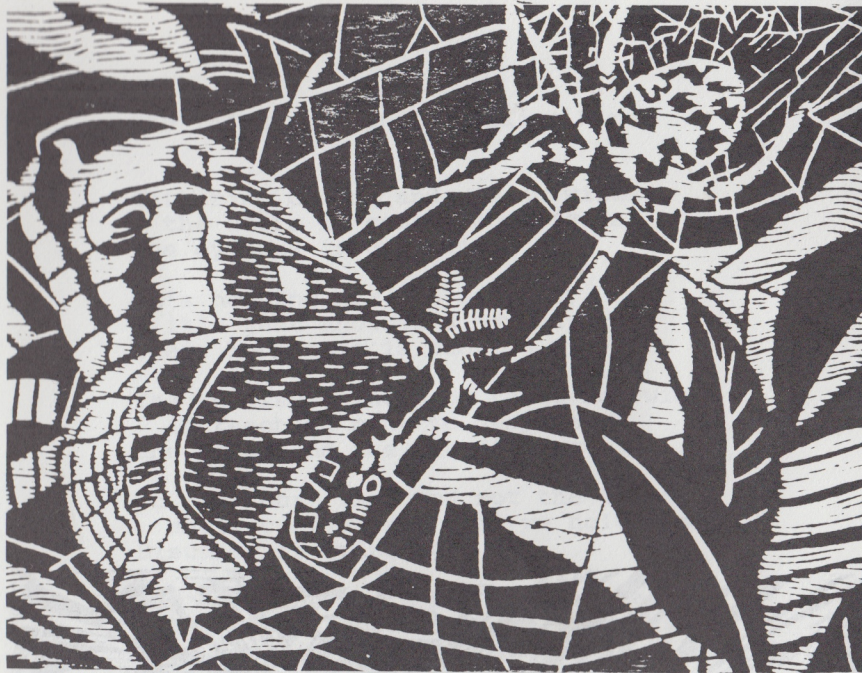
The storm brings rain, both dark and red,
but we won't feel it, for we'll be dead.
The brilliance is too blinding.

If you are wise and truly see
please join me in this travesty.
And let us start re-minding.

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa

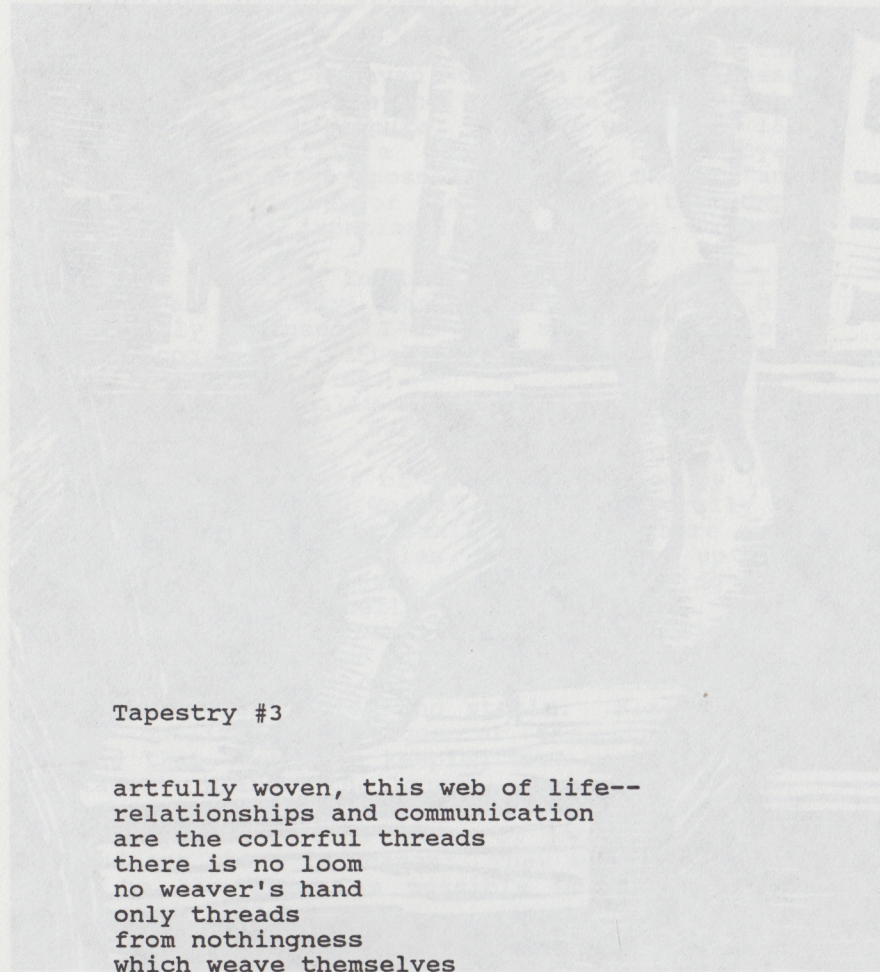


"Mad Flutter"
M. Michaelson
Kingsley, Iowa



"Golden Garden Cecropia Catch"
Catherine Ahlin
Missoula, Montana

WORKING ON AGE



Tapestry #3

artfully woven, this web of life--
relationships and communication
are the colorful threads
there is no loom
no weaver's hand
only threads
from nothingness
which weave themselves
and faithfully unweave
finding return and new beginning

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa



"Untitled"
Nathan Kramer
Bethune, Colorado

COMING OF AGE

Sunlight didn't stream into the Pretty Baby lounge.

Sunlight wouldn't care to be tainted with the atmosphere of such a haven, to have its brightness infected with the purveying decadence. We on the other hand were not so pure. But, we were only 18. Nakedness was still a novelty to be enjoyed whenever, and wherever possible. Greg, Booger, and I stood in the doorway of the Pretty Baby that dark night and waited impatiently for someone to card us.

After standing in the doorway for what I'm sure was an eternity (though as that phrase has been grossly overused, I'll just say, "a very long time") Booger said, "Fuck it. Let's go in and sit down." And we advanced.

I glanced casually around. I had never been in the Pretty Baby before, but it was all I expected it to be. Black leather upholstery covered the lower half of the long wall on my left from front to back. We sat down as naturally as could be managed at a small table. There were about ten other such tables, mostly filled up with blue collar red necks who were busy escaping from their own individual hells via Coor's Light.

At the very farthest wall was a curtain, and jutting out from under it, a square wooden stage. The stage was hemmed on its three available sides by tiny one man tables and stools. Flashing red lights outlined the edges of the stage and I noticed that they were keeping time with the piped in staccato beat of the lounge.

The one man tables were occupied by men of various ages at various stages of intoxication, who all had one thing in common: They wanted to be as close to the stage as possible when Carrie the dancer went into her act.

I knew her name was Carrie because it was plastered all over, around the stage in the form of poor quality Mr. Print posters that spoke of "Carrie: the big city girl with the small town hospitality." A grainy fuzzed out picture of the girl appeared under this, with a caption stating: "Get ready boys this one's a REAL LADY!"

"This one's a real lady Rick," I said to Booger, who was nervously glancing around, as if he suspected a vice squad cop in every available orifice.

Suddenly the lights were out.

Then back on, only this time they were all red. Everything was red. The Pretty Baby looked like the inside of that submarine in "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea."

A small circle of white light hit the center of the stage and Carrie stepped from behind the curtain. She wore small black pointed shoes, which gave way to smooth, muscular legs as one traveled up her anatomy. Her hips and crotch were entrapped by a small leather jacket over her shoulders. As the music started again, the jacket was the first thing to go.

We said nothing to one another, each of us frolicking in his own sexual garden of fantasy. Carrie was not a good dancer. No one noticed. Her body kept fairly close time to the beat and her clothes slipped off very quickly.

Her face displayed boredom as she looked out over us, unseeing. The men at the stage's edge were hooting and calling, "Bounce it, jiggle it, honey! Goddam you're looking good tonight."

Was there a flicker of hatred there in her eye? A contemptuous glance? Or maybe I just hoped there would be, instead of her expressionless visage which held no more emotion at "Bounce and jiggle it, honey" than it would at "Looks like rain tonight." In fact, it probably held less.

Carrie was not a good dancer, but she did know how to please her audience. She would bend over, letting her long, dirty blonde hair almost touch the floor.

"Greg?" I turned as Carrie straightened and resumed her dancing.

"Yeah?"

"Why are we doing this?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, why are we sitting here doing this to ourselves. My dick's been hard since she came on stage fifteen minutes ago. It's not quitting either. Just throbbing along, and for what? We're not going to get laid. We're going to go back to an old brick dorm full of guys at 2:00 in the morning with blue balls. Who needs it?"

"I'm going to fuck her tonight," mumbled Booger, his eyes glazed over, his breathing heavy and rapid.

"Sure, Rick," I said. "C'mon, let's go."

"No wait a minute," said Greg. "She'll put on her G-string and be walking around to the tables in a minute. I heard my girlfriend's father talking about it. You put money in the crotch of the G-string and maybe slip her a finger if she'll let you."

Soon Carrie was working her way outward from the stage. She stopped at a table populated by two middle aged fat men in coveralls who had tobacco spit dribbling down their chins. One of the men said something and laughingly tweaked Carrie's pert pink nipple. Laughing, she slapped his face and moved quickly on.

"Oh God, here she comes," said Booger.

Then the naked dancer was at our table.

"Hi," I said and chuckled, looking away. Never would I admit to being embarrassed by the fact that a woman (devoid of clothing) was standing not two feet away, expecting me to pay her for the pleasure of putting my finger between her legs--but it was uncomfortable.

She stood, looking down at Greg. "Five dollars," he said, and held up the bill, roughly smoothed into something that resembled that first "Dear John" letter you get, after you've taken out your aggressions on it.

"Go for it," she said, impatiently with a sigh tacked on. With two careful fingers and the bill tucked between, Greg slid his hand between the inner G-string and Carrie's sandy brown pubic hair. After perhaps five seconds, he withdrew his hand. Carrie's face had remained expressionless throughout. "How about stopping up to Look Hall, room 45 after work?" said Greg. Carrie bent down, for the first time all evening, with a smile.

"How about 379 Cola Drive at 2:30?"

"How much?" asked Greg. Booger was staring at my roommate with something akin to idolization. Carrie glanced at us.

"For three of you," she paused. "For three sexy college men, \$75 a piece." She looked up at the next table and was gone.

"Goddamn," Booger breathed. "Goddamn." He was still looking at Greg with that expression one might have if Jesus Christ walked up to give a friendly "How-de-do?"

"It's time to go," Greg said and got up.

We were on the sidewalks of Yankton at 11:09. Greg's Bronco was resting silently in a blackened wet alley parking lot directly behind the Baby. A solemn blue streetlight reflected off the red and white waxed surface. Booger started singing, "We'regonnagetfuckedwe'regonnagetfucked."

"We're gonna lose \$75." I chimed in.

We got in and for an hour we cruised Yankton.

While we cruise around, (there's very little going on in Yankton at midnight) I'd like to explain the thoughts that were wrestling around in my mind. This was no holds barred tag team grudge match stuff for sure. At 18 years old I was...okay I was a virgin. And the thought of losing that to Carrie the big city girl with the small town hospitality was not entirely pleasing. I knew there was no way I could go through with it. Yet isn't there that old Galactic Dark Lord in all of us that comes in right then and kicks the snot out of all that moral pansy garbage and says, "Fuck her anyway!"

And right about then that damned old Dark Lord in me, whom I call "Gokart", that "evil side", that totally instinctual, back to nature animal, stepped in and screamed, "Fuck her anyway! That's right! You've got your chance, you've got the money. Do it!" The sweet-always-listen-to-Mom-and-Dad-I've-never-even-fondled-a-tit-side of me says, "But that money has to buy my books". And Gokart the evil shoots back, "Who cares about books when you can put your hot throbber into Carrie's small town hospitality?" Sweet Chastity says, "But you don't even know her." and Gokart says, "All the better, no emotional attachments. Get's you ready for the real world!"

Booger was still singing, and his eyes were more glazed over than ever. Greg was starting to sing along. "Let me off at the dorm," I said.

"Oh, give me a break Richie! You're going to fuck her just like we are!"

"No, Greg, I'm not." ("Yes you are," said Gokart.)

"You really want us to take you back home, huh?" Greg looked at me seriously. ("No!" shouted Gokart.)

"Yeah," I said. "I don't really have the money anyway."

The Bronco pulled up in front of Look Hall and I climbed out. Booger was in the front seat before I could turn about. "I'll try to be quiet when I come in," said Greg.

"I won't," said Booger.

As I slammed the door he was saying, "Listen, I don't really have the money on me either, but my Mom will be sending me some, if you could, you know...."

There were two red tail lights moving back toward downtown Yankton.

At 12:45 I crawled into the lower bunk of our steel beds in room 45. A blue light shone in the window and made a small white star on the mirror.

As I lay semi-naked in the late August heat, my thoughts were on girls I had loved before, and incidents that brought me to Yankton. Secretly prized virginity having so narrowly escaped from death was now flashing my life before my eyes.

Rich Prosch
Bloomfield, Nebraska



Lisa Bilek
Omaha, Nebraska

I turn to you-
-in those times when I am
alone: vulnerable to only
time itself. When darkness
is around me and I am
stripped of all I have,
I turn to you.

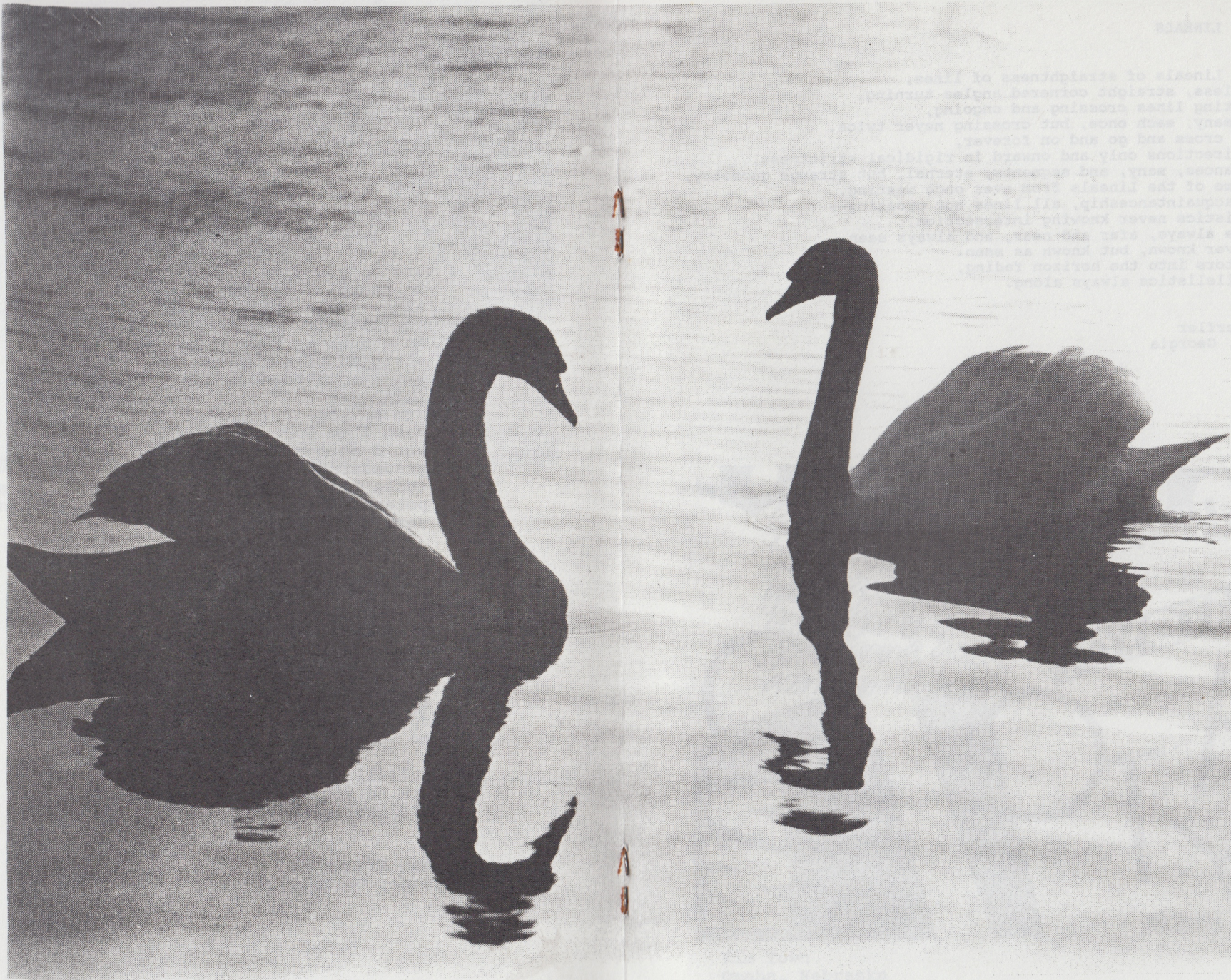
I turn to you-
-when I am lost in a
world of confusion and
misunderstanding. In
those times that
potential and possibility
seem to be absent,
I turn to you.

I turn to you-
-during those times
when distance and
time make all good
seem small and insignificant.

-in those times when
my body falls into a
cold slumber, I turn
to you for warmth and support.

To fulfill my selfish needs,
I turn to you and then give
myself wholly to you.

Nathan Kramer
Bethune, Colorado

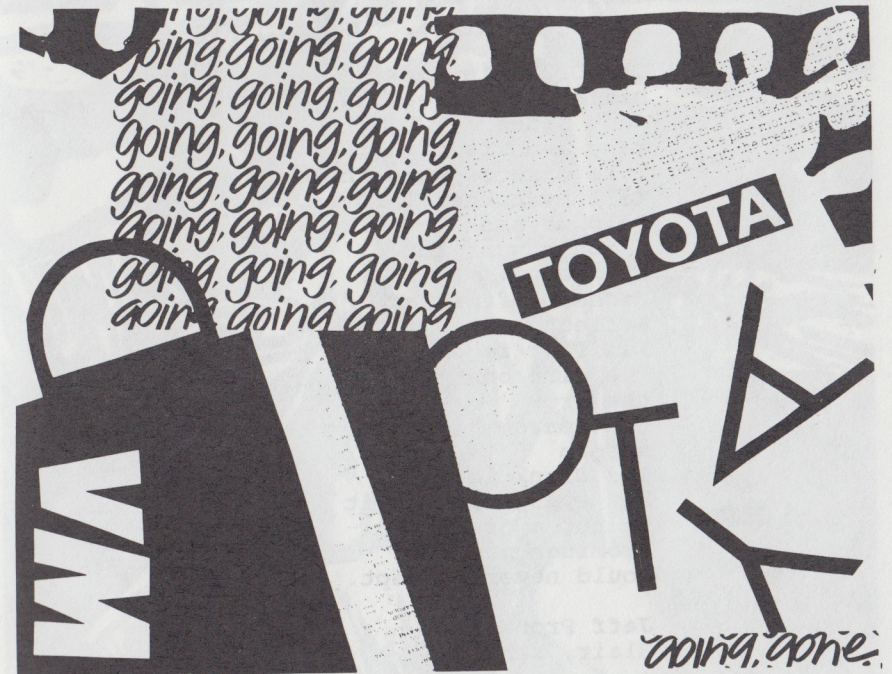


"Lovers" Constable's Walk Salisbury, England--Nathan Kramer
Bethune, Colorado

LINES OF LINEALS

Lines of Lineals of straightness of lines,
Of curveless, straight cornered angles turning.
Intersecting lines crossing and ongoing,
Meeting many, each once, but crossing never twice.
Meet and cross and go and on forever,
In two directions only and onward in rigidical strictness,
Acquaintances, many, and segments, eternal, but strange geometry,
Stops some of the Lineals from ever once meeting.
Untotal acquaintanceship, all lines not crossing--
Parallelistics never knowing intersection,
Alongside always, afar and near, and always seen,
Seen, never known, but known as seen.
Intersectors into the horizon fading,
But Parallelistics always along.

Chris Doerfler
Mapleton, Georgia



Kim Town
Omaha, Nebraska

Valley

The Drunk is dark
hiding but revealing
many sides
many memories.
Take care of this child
Tell my mother I love...
Help me back
I don't want to
die here.
Faces of familiar
Reflect past
Familiar faces.
The dirt on
the brow
the tears which
stream
The Drunk is dark
but everything in it
is not a dream.
Promises made,
could never be kept.

Jeff Probasco
Blair, Nebraska



Kee-Moo
Napawan Harold
Blair, Nebraska

BETTER THAN BEAUTY

"The flowers you gave me, Chris, are so beautiful," she said, her outstretched hand stroking the purple petal of the Iris that she was gazing at with sleepy but rapt attention. She thought that it seemed odd to have fresh cut flowers in February, but still she felt glad that she did.

"The weather this February has been so moody," he said. "Some days have been so pleasant, but others have been much colder, and some have been downright nasty." He wasn't sure if he was talking to her or to himself. The curtains were open, and his hands were propped on the sill. He was staring out into the dark, cold, cloudy, moonless night, and he felt that his soul was under a weight similar to those conditions. Enough light escaped from the windows to partially illuminate a nearby tree. That tree's bent branches and curved trunk told him that the wind continued to blow strongly. He wished the wind could blow the winter clouds from his head. Those clouds hid his motivation, his desire, his drive to do anything. All he wanted to do was sleep.

"Fresh flowers in February!" she thought. It did seem strange. She had lifted neither her gaze nor her touch from the Iris. "They're so fresh and alive, so optimistic, so healthy," she said, finding none of those things in herself. She felt that she was talking more to the flower than to him.

And he continued to address his thoughts to the window. "But most of it has been various shades of cold grays." Like today was, he thought. Though his body was a good foot from the window, the glass panels radiated enough cold air to leave him with a chill.

She too felt a chill, but it was not from the cold. Not the actual cold anyway. She felt cold on the inside, sad, fatigued. The flowers seemed to have so much of the strength and confidence that she didn't. "I wish I were an Iris just like this one," she said.

At these words, he turned to look at her. He'd heard her other statements as she had heard his but had felt no need to answer them until now. "Then you wouldn't live very long," he said as the cold air nipped at the back of his neck.

"Yes," she replied dreamily, sleepily, "but then I would be sooo beautiful."

He turned back to the window. And you'd be carefree, too, he thought. Carefree would be better than beauty tonight.

Chris Doerfler
Mapleton, Georgia

Jimi Jim and Janice are gone nowadays
but the music just thrust itself
(like tumbling Rocks)
out from the Summer of Love
into my living room;
spilling peace symbols into my carpet.

Makes me wonder...

Grace used to be rough when pop cultures
and counter media focused on airplanes
(over Max Yasgar's farm)
rather than starships with
ultra slick wings.
I've got butterflies in my amp.

It's not so much selling out--
as mellowing out--either way
you're still out.

...though I remember...

Never having been at Woodstock
to pick flowers and spit
(at the establishment)
in the rain, though I am still there.
Alone in my protest growing hair.

...that it's never over.

Where are you now: Abbie, Jerry, Timothy?
Made a buck and split the killings
(killing still goes on, it's just not Vietnam)
by mistaking one battle for the war.
My campus doth decay.

It's basically a change in season--
Summer to winter in twenty short years.
Witness me in the dawning of spring.

Rich Prosch
Bloomfield, Nebraska



"Sandpiper Shells"
M. Michaelson
Kingsley, Iowa

Sun through robin's wing
A vision of otherness
Forever fleeting

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa

A WINDOW OF LIFE

I am sitting here looking out the window, my window. It is not a street window. It is not a garden window. It is a dull, dirty yard window, but it is the window that gives me sunlight, grey skies and snow. The window that gives me clues about other people's life.

At first, it is the rat colored brick wall with all the homogeneous windows that catches the eyes. Letting the eyes wander to the top of the building, one of the thousands of the city's black sooted roofs with lots of chimneys appears. Chimneys raising towards the sky as monuments of the past, a past with stoves. -A past with bogs in the yard. Now and then it happens that smoke is actually coming out of one chimney, though. It is the only stove left, now with kerosene as fuel.

Take a second look and the barren landscape changes. Depending on the season several optimistic signs will show up. Grass and wild flowers find their little spots to grow on in the gutter during spring. Pigeons, sea gulls, and house sparrows build nests in calm nooks or in garrets where people have forgotten to close skylights. The birds are busy all summer long and when fall comes they, and their full grown kids, will leave the nests and their droppings behind. The grass and the flowers die and during winter it is a kind of barren. For two years a little beech tree managed to survive in the gutter. A true tree of life. It fought for its life, but the fight was not fair and eventually it died.

I have been sitting there at my desk by the window both days and nights. I have been looking out of my window and into other people's windows. I have watched people moving in and out. I have kept a lot of families' lives up to date. A young girl moving in. A young girl having a party. Washing dishes. Watching TV. A young man moving in with the girl. More parties. More dishes to wash. More clothes to dry. I have seen the young girl pregnant. Seen the young mother with her baby twins, and then one day they moved out.

No matter what time of day it was there would always be something to watch somewhere in the building. If no people were around then their different window decorations, curtains, and the flowers and green plants on the window sill, were my favorite objects. I would make up short stories about my opposite neighbors and their lives. Of course I have never known if any of it suited them, but that was not that important to me. I left my window, room, town, country. What I miss most of all in my daily life is my dear inspiring window, my window towards life.

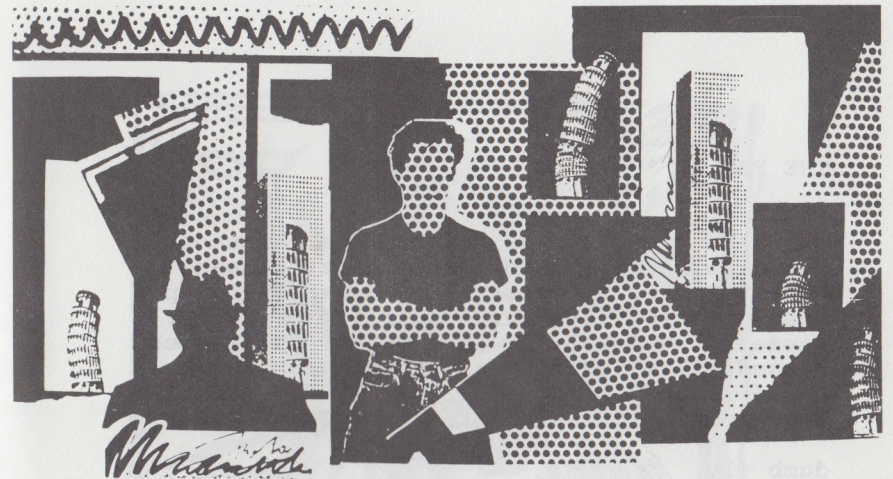
Hanne Nielsen
Copenhagen, Denmark

TINTAGEL

I have returned to my haunt
of time grown dim.
Old stones, their strength waning,
their summer turned winter,
only grow older.
Youth has returned to my feet,
my beard is less thick,
my hair less grey.
But my heart and soul share the winter
with these grey-green stones.

No horse bears me today
as in that dim and distant time.
No noble king awaits
behind these crumbling walls.
No humble prayers are offered by a queen
within this long-fallen chapel.
Only legends' shadows remain
in silence undying.
Only silence undying.
Only salt spray and rising tide
betray their unending tears.

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa



"Street Smart"
M. Michaelson
Kingsley, Iowa

THE FLY

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz. Buzz. Land. Wash. Wash feet.
Toes. Legs. Wash. Wash. Buzz. Buzz. Human.
Where? There! Bug Human. Bug Human. Zip-zap.
Mess up hair. Mess human hair. Slap! Ha, ha!
Missed. Bug Eyes! Bug Eyes! Slap! Ha! Missed!
Missed! Buzz! Buzz! Buzz! Land. Wash, wash.
Dart! Slap! Zip-zap. Buzz. Buzz. Bug Human!
Bug Human! Zip-zap. Buzz. Buzz. Slap! Splat!

dumb fly.

Phil Suhr
Red Oak, Iowa



"Masquerade"
M. Michaelson
Kingsley, Iowa

Keep walking, for you can't go back--
not a year, nor a lifetime...
no, not even a minute.
The moment has fled.
It has died, or lived with you,
and it is surely gone.

You are not who you were--
neither are they.
Chances are,
if it's going back you desire,
nothing was as you recall anyway.
Keep walking.

Steve Godwin
Exira, Iowa