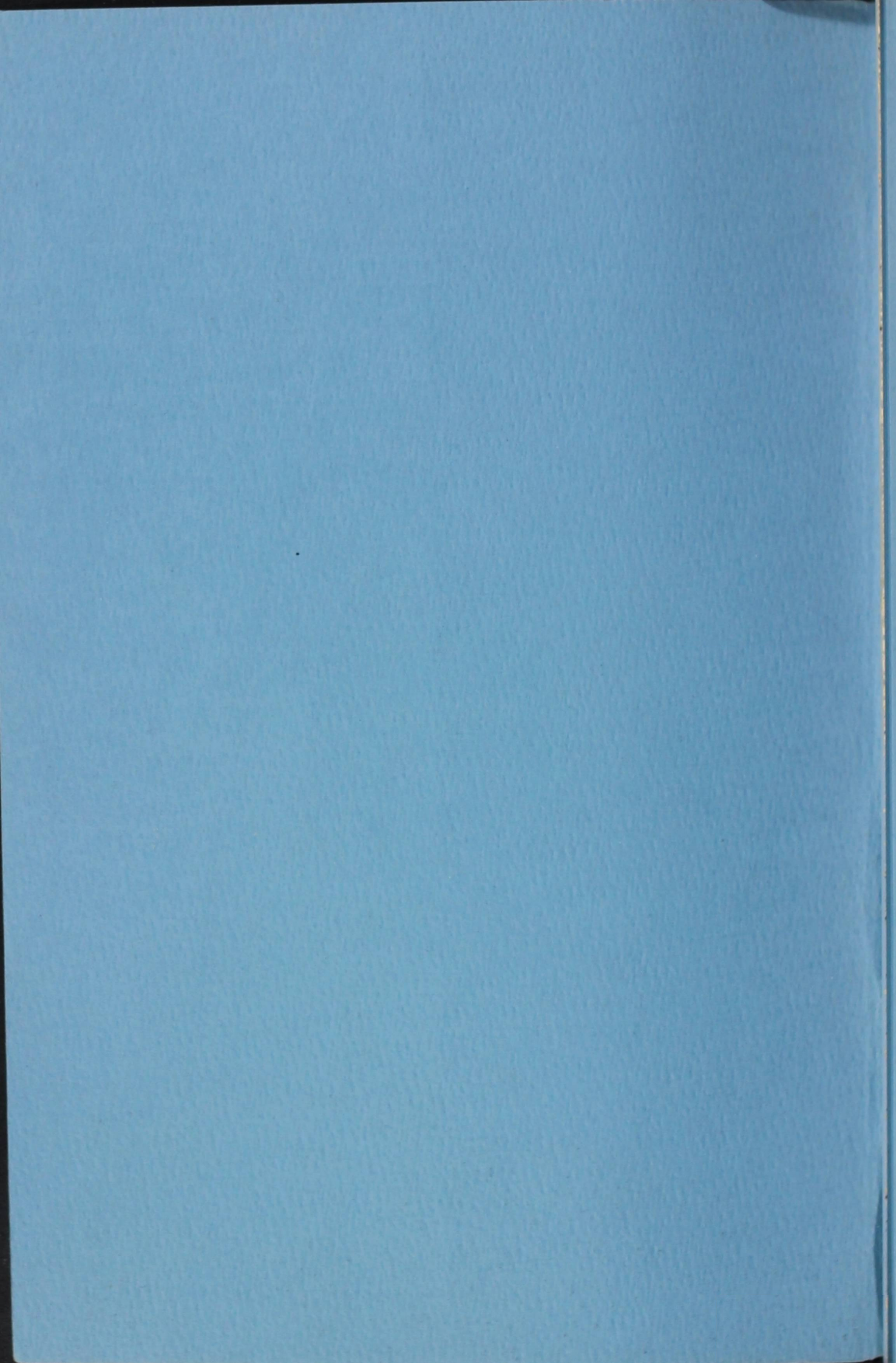
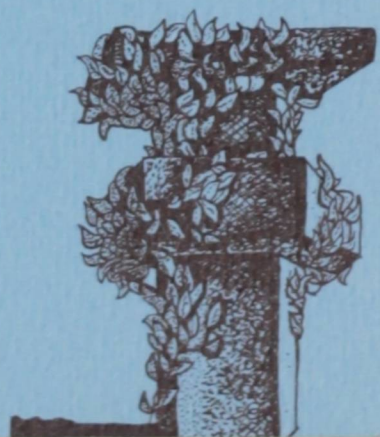




JASON





JASON spring '73
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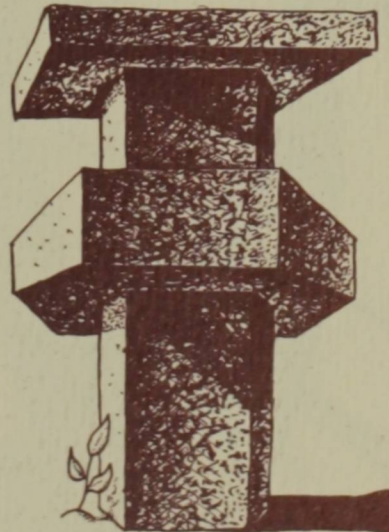
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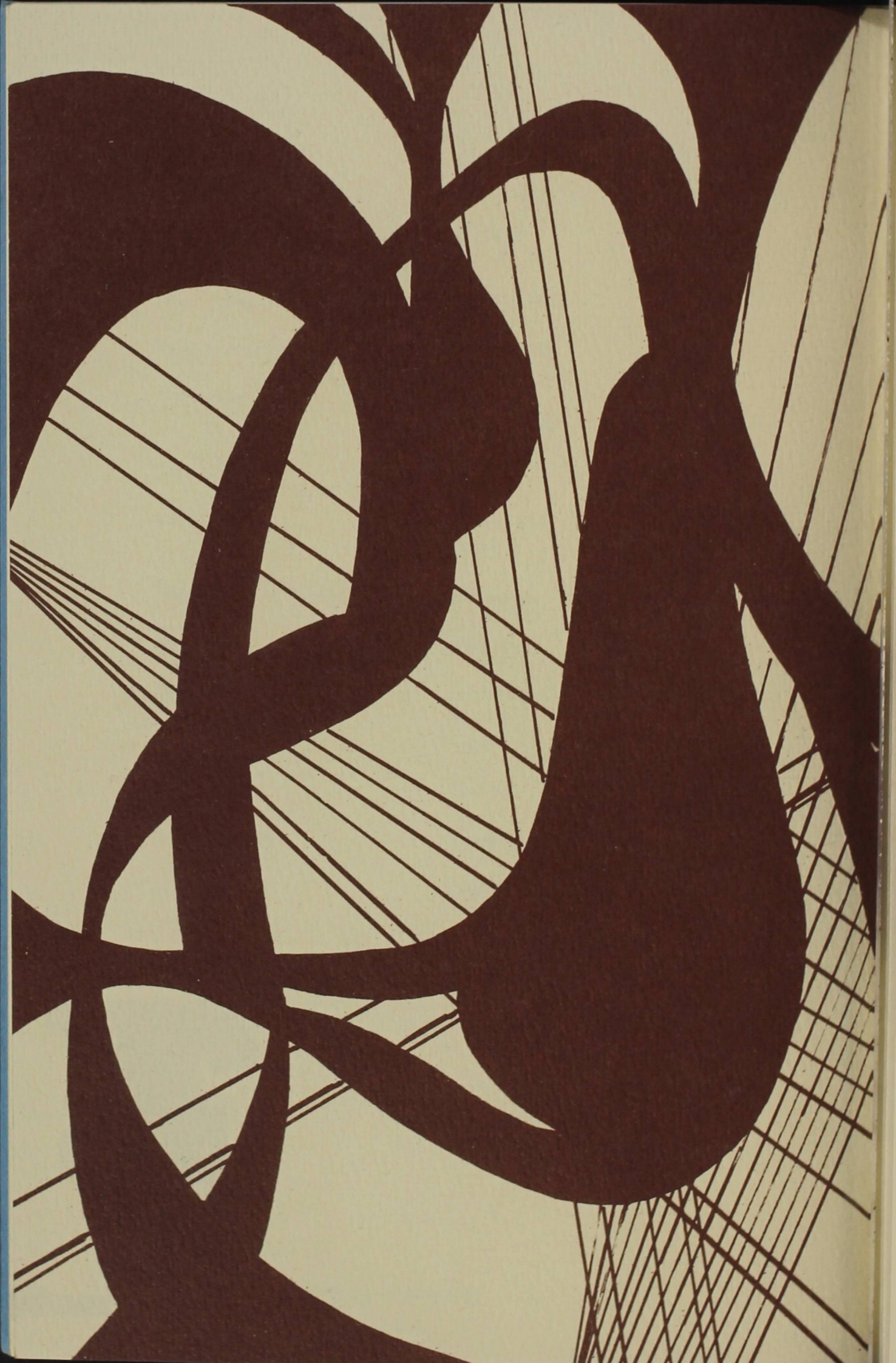
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*You have left me, but your scent
Clings to my hair, my skin. Haunts me.
Bittersweet. No. Not bitter and not sweet.
Odors, like musical tones, have substance,
shape, and texture; they are tender or hard.
This smell that clings to me, yours, and now mine
Is smooth without the rawness of a violin's note.
Its corners are sandpapered to roundness
Of soft pine wood. Woodwind notes sound thus.
Flutes, or a clarinet, perhaps,
Croons at the edge of sense when I move
Hair falls in my face, faintly scented,
Repeating a single phrase again
And again. Fainter now --
It finally will end in a minor plagal cadence.
But now it lingers and recalls you.
Why did you not take all of yourself
When you went, instead of leaving
Insubstantial smell that mocks the touch?*

*Beth Blachly
First Place*

SHORTY

"Mom?"

"Huh?"

"Shorty's out in the field with his tractor." The pigtailed girl shot a last glance out the window and hopped down from the sink.

"How many times have I told you not to stand on the drainboard?" She didn't speak harshly, but looked up from the kitchen table and her Reader's Digest, "Did you finish your sandwich?"

"Yeah."

"Wash your hands then, and go out an' sit on the fence 'til he comes by. And use the bathroom sink; do you think you're a vegetable?"

The bare-footed girl ran from the kitchen, turned right, bounded up eight steps, and hurried into the bathroom. She leaned over the sink, turned the "cold" knob, rubbed her hands together twice, and shut off the water. She then rushed from the room and back down the stairs, wiping her hands on her bluejeans.

"Bye, mom."

She was through the living room and out the front door before her mother could answer. The door slammed without notice and the small figure scurried off the cement porch and across the dry lawn. She climbed the board fence with ease and sat spraddle-legged on the top board. She shaded her freckled face with a rough hand and looked out across the hayfield. It seemed forever before the tractor turned the far corner and started the row next to the fence. The child stayed until the tractor came close, and the driver waved heartily as he slowed down.

"Hey, Dawn!" A wrinkled face smiled from under the well-worn cowboy hat. "You wanna ride?"

"Sure, Shorty." The girl jumped into the field and walked to the tractor.

"Put your foot there." The man pointed and reached for her hand as Dawn stepped up, "There. Sit on the fender and hang onto the seat here. Ready?"

"Uh-huh."

The tractor moved slowly and the child grabbed the seat. She held on tightly, but loosened her grip as she got used to the bouncing.

"Shorty?" She had to shout over the noise of the engine.

"Huh?"

"How long's it take to do the whole field?"

" 'Bout six hours, why?"

"What time's it?"

"One o'clock."

"You gonna finish today?"

"Yup."

The little girl looked at the front tire of the tractor and watched the tall grass get mashed under it as they went.

"Smells good, huh?"

"Yup."

The sun was hot, not much of a breeze. The hay fell to the mower; the girl watched as the rows and the afternoon diminished.

"You 'sleep?"

"Huh-uh."

"You ain't said nothin' for darn near half 'n hour."

"I was just thinkin'." The girl wrinkled her brown nose and looked up at him.

" 'Bout what?"

" 'Bout different stuff."

"You wanna tell me?"

"Only if you promise not to tell nobody. Okay?"

"Okay. I promise. Come sit here on the seat and help me drive."

Shorty stopped the tractor and helped her up. Her bare feet dangled and the man let her hang onto his thumbs as he steered. The freckled face grinned.

"Shorty? You sure you won't tell nobody?"

"Yup."

"When I grow up I'm gonna have a tractor just like this one. An' I'm gonna have a horse like Unky Art's. An' you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna be just like you are."

The child tilted her head back and looked up at the wrinkled face of her companion. "What time's it?" she yawned.

"Three-thirty. You tired?"

"Huh-uh." She leaned back and rested against the man. Her eyelids dropped and her hands relaxed their grips on his thumbs. He smiled at the limp form and pulled out the throttle.

Four rounds later the man looked up and noticed someone walking across the field toward him. Shorty stopped the tractor and squinted to see who it was.

"Hey, mama."

"What did you do to my daughter, conk her on the head?"

"Nope. Seems the old and the young jus' understand each other."

"I guess so. Do you want me to take her?"

"No need 'less you want to. I'll be done in a while and I can bring her home then."

"Okay. Ted won't be home 'til later so you might as well have supper. See you later."

The woman walked slowly away.

Shorty started off again. The rows to go got fewer and fewer. Soon only the center part of the field between the ponds was left. The child in his lap groaned softly and stretched.

"Hey Shorty, are you my friend?"

" 'Course I'm your friend."

"I just wondered."

He stuck out his thumbs and Dawn took hold of them. The rest of the field went quickly. At five-thirty the dusty crew headed up the dirt road to Shorty's barn. He drove the tractor into the big barn and Dawn poked the choke in to kill the motor. Shorty got down stiffly; he turned and told her to jump.

"Catch me!" She leaped off the seat and landed in Shorty's arms.

"You're gettin' heavy."

He lifted the girl to his shoulders and shuffled to the orange Chevy pick-up. The man pulled the door open and Dawn swung across the seat.

He started the truck and they bumped down the dirt road and onto the pavement. A burnt and dusty little face stared up at the driver.

"Shorty?"

"Huh?"

"Are you sure you're my friend?"

"Damn it, I told ya once . . ."

"Don't be so grumpy." The ragged little girl leaned over and gave the rough cheek of her friend a tiny kiss.

Dee Miller

L AROU
L N D
A me S T
T H E TRE E W
E R

UNTIL

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feel so
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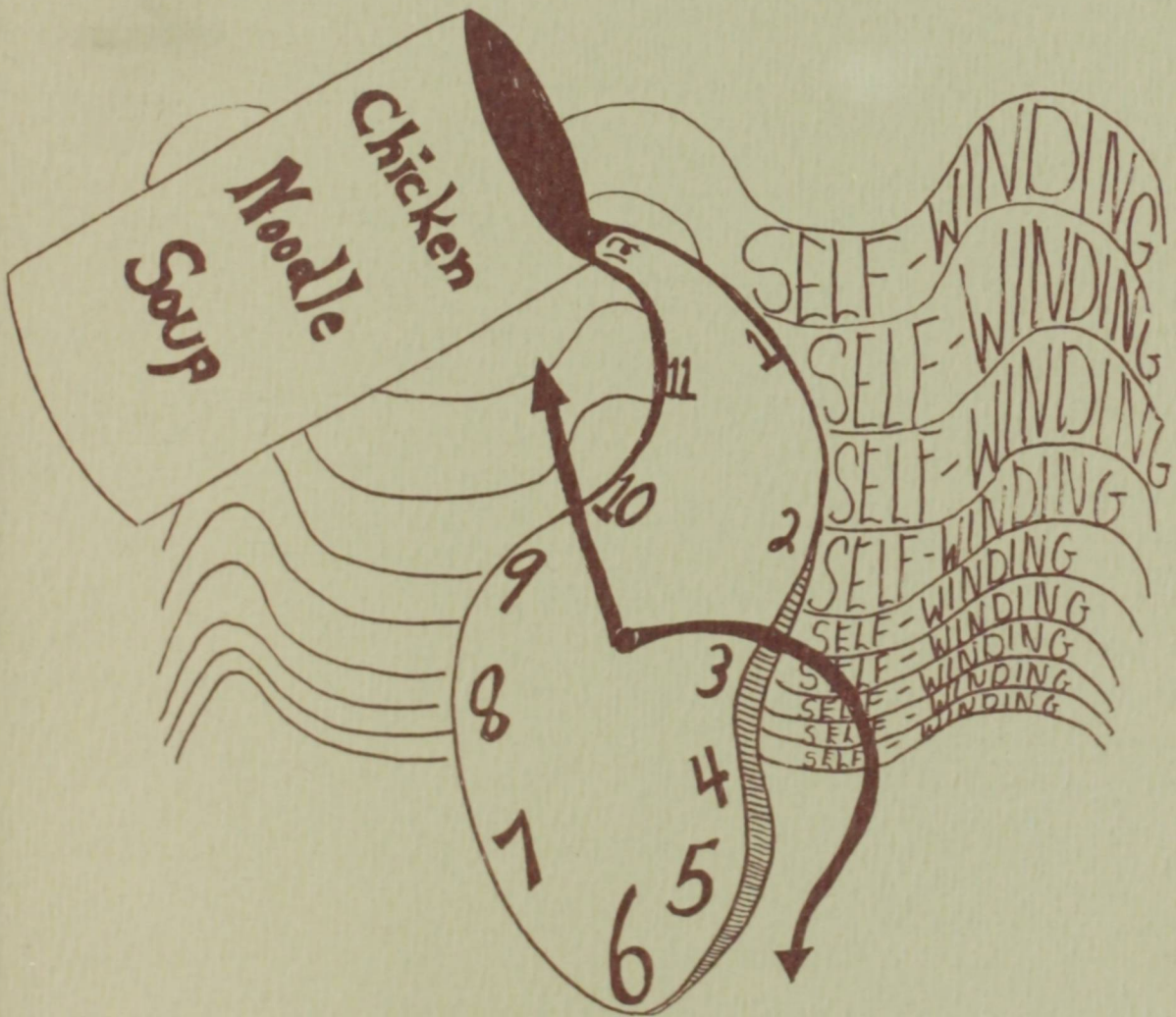
Eric Nelson,

UNDERSTANDING

"Damn your incessant ticking! Time rushes by; it trudges. A moment is all. How can you not know? Not CARE?! But you must. You can't can experiences like fruit — a pint of applesauce isn't a minute of pleasure, of suffering. I won't let you pressure-cook my life. You'll run down; I'll not save you from death."

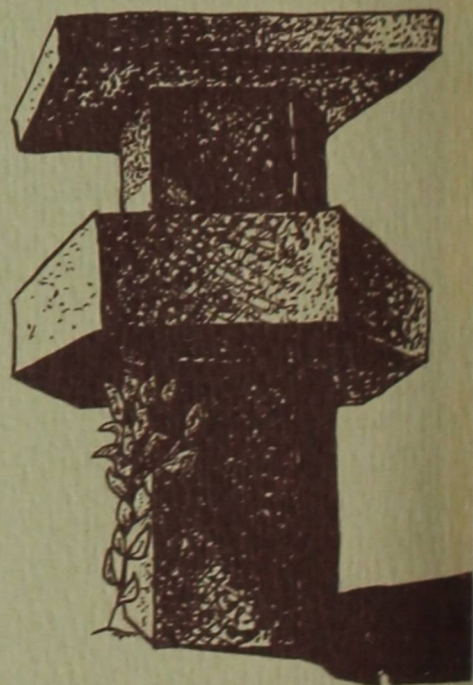
So I screamed threateningly in my frustration. I threw it down on the table. I saw the proud block letters — SELF-WINDING. I smiled.

Dee Miller



Banging his toy drum
The demented soldier wheeled
His chair toward home.

Leslie D. Hall



Flying free
My love soars
Far beyond
My earthbound grasp

So I wait
Watching the white gull
Winging upward
Then swiftly sloping
To touch my earthly spirit
With wingtip dipped in sunlight

Donna Binard

Yellow
(A prose poem spaced for reading)

*Morning. A child in the sunlight picking flowers and laughing.
Probably me. Wet grass and ants on the peonies. A smell of
roses and about-to-be apples. The constant life-hum of nature
interrupted. Silence of the mind. A man in black.
Probably them. Thorns on the roses. Some blood. A child in the
sunlight running and crying. Two watching eyes. Sadistic delight.
An earthworm smell. Emptiness and life-hum. A shadow
tall and black. About-to-be running. Running and crying.
A child in the sunlight. Running and laughing. A man in black.
No life-hum. Silence of the mind. Blood on the flowers and
two tear-washed cheeks. A smell of fish. Black. Laughing.
A tall shadow running. A child in the sunlight falling and
crying. Life-hum and tears. Wet grass and ants. A tall black
shadow. Silence and emptiness. Two rough hands and laughing.
Blood on the flowers and life-hum. Earthworms and fish and
about-to-be apples. A knife. Thorns on the roses.
Blood on the flowers. A man in black. About-to-be running.
Running. No-life hum. Silence and emptiness. Blood. Wet grass
and ants on the peonies. A child in the sunlight lying and
dying. Constant life-hum. A smell of roses and about-to-be
apples. Morning.*

T.S. Berczynski



TIME CAPSULE

*A segment of time, like a seed,
Popped at my feet
As I flushed a tiger lily
Where the nettles grew thick.
As quick as thought
I paused in my delight;
There at my feet Under the blind foot
The lily growled and I stepped back,
Surprized at the sound.
It was just a phantom of mind
I thought: but nonetheless
Raised my foot to release the
Beast my mind had caught.*

Carl Hall

Did the melting snow

Hatch them? Birds fill the bushes,

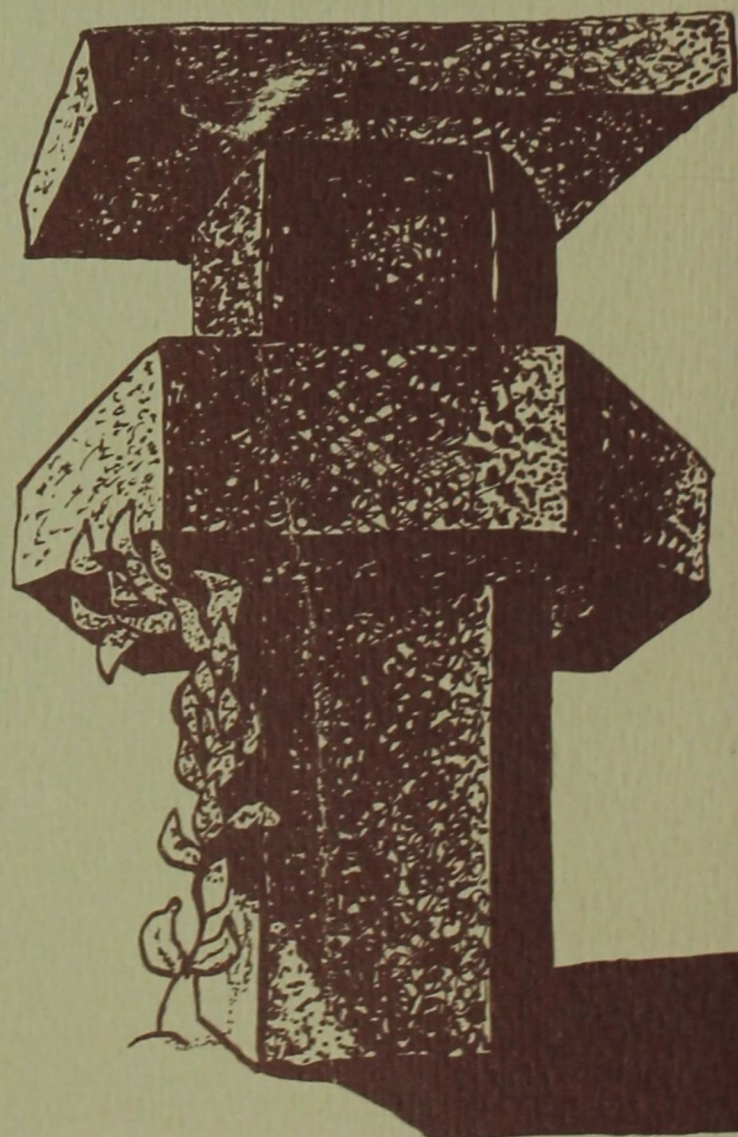
Twittering of spring.

Crickets' clamoring.

The song of a lone robin

anticipates dawn.

Beth Blachly



JOHN TASTES FREEDOM

John entered his home; it smelled of boiled carrots and mothballs. John had a pyramid stack of books propped on his right hip and a pair of track shoes strung over his left shoulder. John entered the kitchen where his mother sat reading a copy of True Romance.

"How did the race go, John?"

"Fine, Mom," John said as he put the books on the table and his shoes on the floor. He went to the utensil drawer and removed a fork from it.

"Did you win?"

"Yes, it was a slow race though." John pared one of the carrots in the pot on the stove and walked over to the table.

"You always win, John. You're such a fast runner. Well, sit down and rest those legs of yours."

John obeyed.

"A letter came for you today, son."

"So?" John stated apathetically as he munched his carrot.

"It's from the Selective Service System," John's mother said, carefully emphasizing and enunciating the sentence.

"Where's the letter?"

"It's on your desk, dear. Why don't you go see what it says?"

John left the table and proceeded to his room. He took the letter off of the desk and opened it with the fork. The letter informed him that he'd been drafted. "Nuts," John said.

John left his room and went to the kitchen. "I've been drafted, Mom."

"Really, dear? Oh my, what will your father say? You know he's been counting on you to help him at the store."

"Well, it's not my fault. I don't even want to go in the stupid Army."

"Now, son. Everyone must do his part. A few years in the service isn't going to hurt you, and it may do you a world of good."

"Hi, everybody," John's father exclaimed as he exploded into the kitchen. "How'd the race go son? Don't tell me you won. With those legs how could you lose?" John's father laughed and kissed his wife on the cheek.

"I've been drafted, Dad," John said solemnly.

"Well, there was that chance, wasn't there? I don't know what I'll do without you at the store, John."

"But I may have to go to the war, I may even be killed."

"Let's eat, honey," John's father said hurriedly to his wife.

"Don't worry John," his mother said, placing her hand on his shoulder, "Everything will be all right. The Lord will provide."

"I hope so, Mom."

"Come on, you'll feel better after we eat, son," said John's father in a cheerful and consoling manner. "You'd better wash up."

John walked from the kitchen, bewildered and amazed. "Are they serious? Do they know what this means? Are they trying to act clam so it will be easier for me?" John found himself walking back into the kitchen. He saw his father at the kitchen table and said, "Dad, I wanted to wash up. . . ."

"So, wash up."

"You don't understand, I was in the kitchen. . . ."

"What do you mean, 'I don't understand'? You were in the kitchen and you wanted to wash up. What's there to understand?"

John looked at the kitchen clock. It was ten o'clock. He looked outside and realized it was morning. "What's going on? What happened? It's morning!"

"The sun came up," John's father said sarcastically. "Now, come on! We'll be late."

"Late for what?" John asked.

"Your induction, of course. What's the matter with you anyway?" John's father scolded.

"I don't know, Dad."

"There's an answer for you, Margaret - I don't know."

"Come along now, John; everything is going to be fine," John's mother said.

John opened the front door, walked through it, and found himself standing in front of a table behind which were seated five men. Every man was wearing a suit with a white shirt and tie. "I just came out the front door."

"What?" said the man seated in the middle.

"I just came out my front door - I don't know how I got here."

"Don't play the insanity bit with us, kid. Play it with the psychiatrist, but not with us," said the man at the end of the table.

"You've been asked why you think you should not have to fight in a war. Now, you can answer the question or we will stop this thing right now, and we'll assume that you want to fight in a war," said the man in the middle of the table as he shoved a big cigar back into his mouth.

"I want to be free, I guess."

"What is freedom?" asked one of the men.

"It's being able to do what you want without hurting other people or infringing on their rights." John said proudly, convinced that he had won the argument.

"That's not freedom, boy. That's Americanism!" the man at the end of the table exclaimed. "Let me ask you this, son: do you feel free right now?"

"Yes, except for being drafted."

"You're never hungry?"

"What do you mean?"

"Are you free from hunger at all times?"

"No, I guess not," John said reluctantly.

"Are you free from having to sleep?" asked the man in the middle.

"No, I guess I have to sleep."

"Are you free from feeling love, hatred, or fear?"

"No, I feel those things at times."

"Are you free from death?" asked one of the men.

"No," John stated solemnly, and then after a long pause, "I guess I have to die sometime, too."

"Then you're not really free, are you, John?" the man in the middle.

"No, sir, I guess not."

"You can't ask this board to grant you the status of Conscientious Objector if you don't even have a reason not to fight."

"I don't want to kill another living animal," John said, on the verge of crying.

"No one wants to kill. That's sane. Man must harvest crops and kill livestock if he is to survive. Man lives off of the death of other life forms."

"But I'll be killed!!" John screamed in tears.

"Let me tell you, boy. If you don't fight them over there—you'll fight them over here- it doesn't matter where you fight or where you die, it will happen sooner or later," the man in the middle said.

John shuffled out of the room in dismay. "I'm losing my mind. I don't even know how I got here . . . I must be dreaming. This could never happen in real life." John sat down on a bench. He started to cry again, but decided to lie down instead.

"You're late for inspection, private," said a mean looking drill instructor to John's face.

"What?"

"All right smart guy. You're going to have another first today. You're going to do hand-to-hand with every man in the platoon," said the drill instructor.

"No, I'm not," John said emphatically. "You can do anything you want to me, but I'm simply going to wait to wake up." John made an about face and walked towards the mess hall.

"All right, men. We've got a deserter on our hands." John could hear the drill instructor in the distance. He sauntered past the empty mess hall and looked inside. The cook, an obese old man, sat in front of the table that had a head of lettuce, a dozen tomatoes and a bushel of carrots. John stopped and went inside. He walked up to the table and took the carrots and ran quickly out the door. He looked to his left and saw the platoon running towards him in full battle dress.

"Get him, men. There he is!" the drill instructor screamed.

John took one carrot from the bushel and dropped the rest on the wooden stairs of the mess hall. He ran. He ran smoothly and easily, lengthening the distance between himself and the platoon with every stride. At the top of the hill, he looked at the platoon. He wiped the sweat from his unusually long, grey, pointed ears and ate the carrot he'd taken between gasps.

He ran, and then he was on four legs running faster than he could ever remember running. He scampered into a hole and waited.

Soon his breathing returned to normal, and he stuck his head out of the hole. "I'm finally free!" John thought, "Finally." He hopped off into the forest thinking, "I wonder if it's like this for everyone. Maybe I'm just lucky."

Larry P. Given



PALE FLAG AND THE KISS

I hate jumbo jets. They're cold. Vapid. Yet prior to the 3rd grade, I was innocently intrigued with their beauty; their mystical grace. But that was before.

In the 3rd grade I lived in Chappaqua, a small town beyond the screams of New York City. I was in love, but I forgot her name. She was a brunette with dimples. Each day after school, I would carry her books home. Her mom would shower me with chocolate chip cookies and drown me in milk. Politely, I gorged myself. But I wasn't only trying to hustle some free cookies, I had other intentions. I wanted to kiss her. I dreamt about it. I even practiced on walls, baseball cards and my sister's crummy stuffed animals. I had many golden chances to kiss her too, but I chickened out. I was afraid I might drool on her or that maybe I still had peanut butter plastered to my teeth from lunch.

Anyway, this went on for weeks. I knew the moment of truth was coming, and besides I was getting tired of chocolate chip cookies. Somebody died in St. Louis and her parents flew there to attend the funeral. They were to be gone for two days, Thursday and Friday. Thursday night I decided that Friday, after school, I was going to kiss her. Right smack on the lips. No cop-outs either. I had been doing some breathing exercises and figured I could kiss her for 30 whole seconds, with one breath. Thus breaking Buster Schwartz's record of 24 seconds with Sally Finch. I massaged my lips until nearly 10:30 p.m. I was ready.

Cleverly, I brought my toothbrush to school for post-lunch brushing. With sparkling bicuspid I smiled and stared at her in class all afternoon. I lived and relived the kiss in my mind a thousand times, but I was getting anxious for the real thing. I wound my watch in nervous anticipation. . .

But, just prior to the end of school, a strange lady came into our class, privately conversed with Miss Peach, our teacher, and kidnapped those impassioned lips of my dreams, my cookie mistress, my girl. Impatiently, I waited for her return. And I waited and waited and waited . . . She never came back. . .

After school, I searched for her in the office and the playground, but she was gone with the wind. I couldn't understand it. Lost, I stood there beneath those stupid monkey bars.

When I got home I told my mom I had lost my toothbrush. I guess it fell out of my pocket during the chaos of the search. She yelled at me, but I didn't care.

The next morning, I discovered why my girl had left class with the strange lady. Mom told me the jet plane, which her parents were aboard, had crashed in the Catskills. No survivors. Mom handed me the newspaper. Bad news.

I hoarded that goddam paper in my arms and ran to my room. I closed the door. It was front page news.

With tear-whipped eyes I read the names of her parents on the list of the dead, over and over again. Somehow within that cool web of words that jumbo jet, the pale flag and the stolen kiss were reduced to just ghosts of the stillborn past.

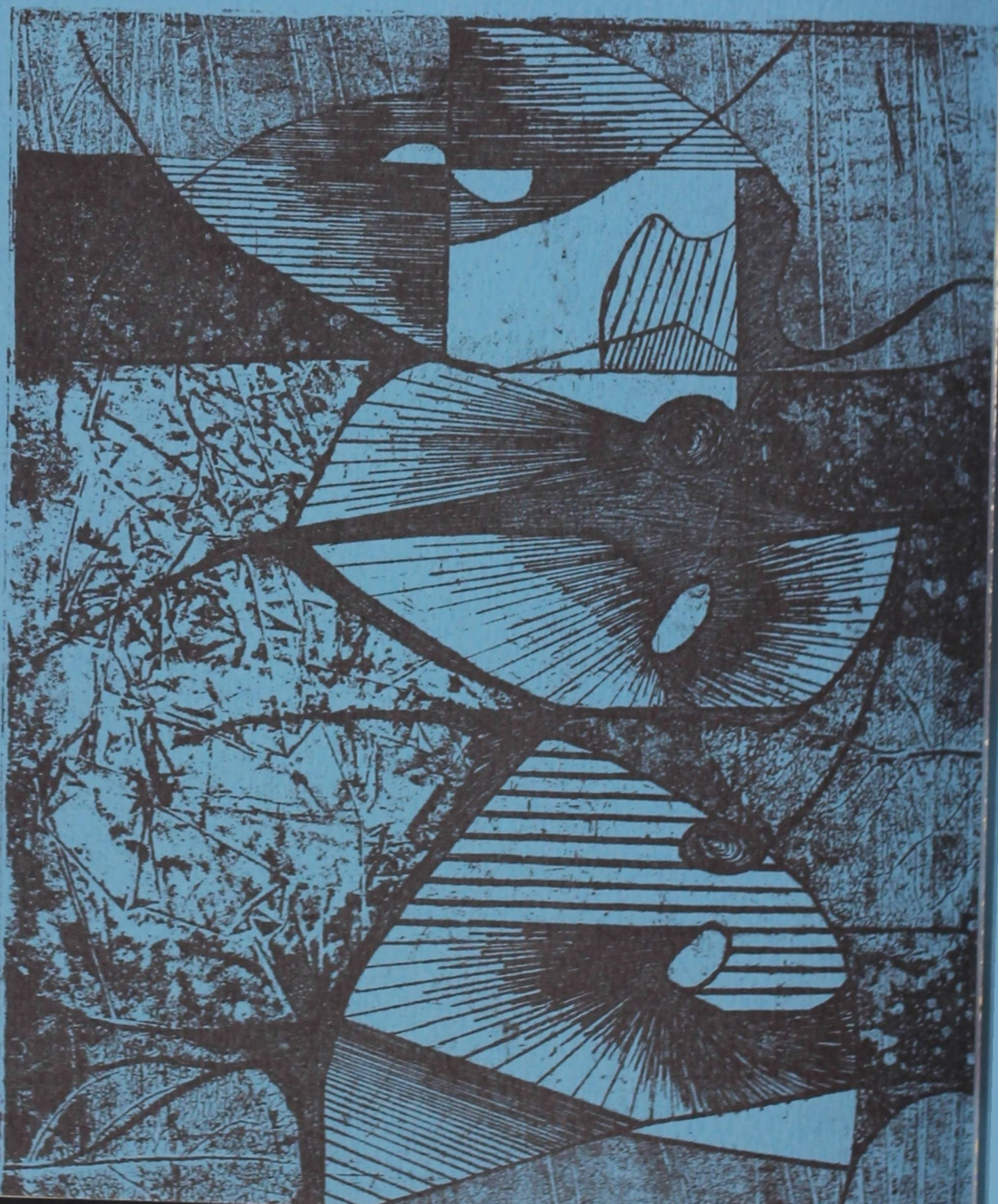
That night I broke out in the hives.

.....

She never came back to school again. Someone said she went to live with her cousin in the Bronx, twice removed. But I wasn't sure.

About a month or two later, Buster Schwartz was bragging in the bathroom about how he and Sally Finch had set a new world record for kissing; 43 seconds. I punched him right on the kisser.

John Leonard
Second Place (Tie)



Oregon's wet rain
dashes trochaic across the
tin roof:

Apprehend it, incarcerate it!
Save it for your iron.

Dee Miller

Like a book I am waiting
on a dark and dusty shelf
upright
for a chance
reader who may pick me up
and
glancing at the smooth unruffled cover
momentarily blows some top dust off
opens me with a
bind-cracking jerk
flips through a page or two
with half-excited hands
but goes no further
and as an unread book I travel back
back to the dusty shelf
to join the others
large or small who are also
alone
and
waiting.

On the Dark Side Out of Phase

I look into the morning mirror
for some fragment of a reflection
you may have left behind,
but the glass
can't bring you back
like the mirror of my mind.

Lowered eyelids
form for me
a looking glass -- my own,
a wonderland of "we" evergreen
where the thorn of "I"
has never grown.

I have what I can't hold
in this garden dark and dumb
of dimensionless dimension;
you are here but not now,
now but not here
in my eden of retension.

T.S. Berczynski

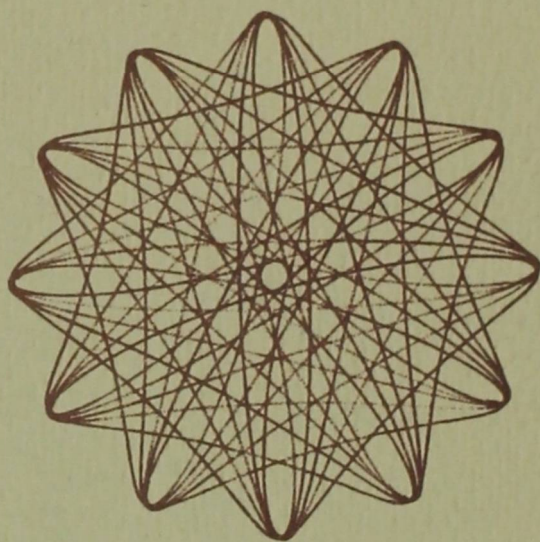
NIGHT SOUNDS

When the last movement has ended,
I listen to the music of the night.
The clock ticking, slowly.
The fire crackling, rhythmically,
Six crackles to two beats of the clock.
Cars go by quieter than in the day.
Have they put on bedroom slippers?
That squeak is branches rubbing the window.
The other high thin noise is wind chimes.
When I turn my head, my hair makes a noise,
Rubbing my collar.
Far far away, a train whistles
One note or two, a third or a fifth.
Passing cars sound much like wind.
When the wind rises, it blows rain against the windows,
But the taps of the drops can scarcely be heard
Through the blowing.
The clock pulses constantly.
The fire smoulders, hissing, whispering to itself.
The wind come in gusts,
Random, like the passing cars.
Themes are repeated, simple or embellished,
But the symphony never repeats.

Beth Blachly







*I spent
a great deal
of time
spinning my web
but finishing
found my self
trapped
outside*

Donna Binard

Euthanasia for an Autumn Afternoon

They won't let the day die
in my city:
neon pretenders
to the throne of light
shine in life-like
pantomime.

And I alone,
like a grave-digger
for the day,
bury the last horizontal rays
in a cemetery of cement,
in a tomb of buildings --
cold
 gray
 stone.

T.S. Berczynski

The Summer rain

chuckles, as it soaks

the parched earth.

Evening is falling

and the cricket orchestra

tunes one-stringed fiddles.

Winter crescent moon.

Frost has taken a giant bite:

The ravenous beast.

Was it birds lighting,

or a flock of leaves that blew

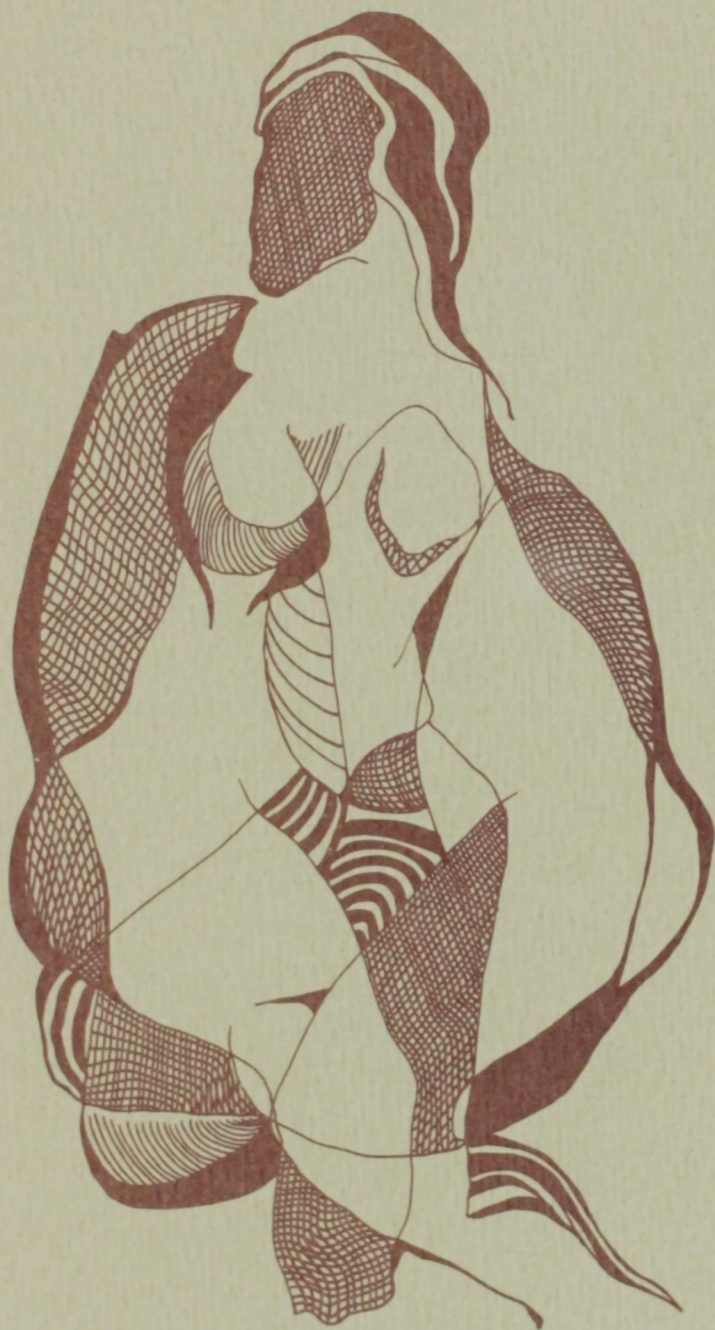
into this tree?

Beth Blachly

It might have been rain,

This summer water-chuckle

when I watered my plants.



Rain on the window

blurs the view, but in each drop --

observe the whole world.

THERE WILL BE OTHER GAMES

Shoeless, Andy shuffled toward the kitchen and the giggling of his dad's girlfriend, Dottie.

"Hi, honey." Dottie rattled the ice cubes in her glass.

Andy mumbled a reply, saying to himself, "Hi there, honey. How are the ice cubes?"

"You rested and rarin' to go?" His dad sipped at his whiskey-on-the-rocks and further loosened his tie.

"You'd better get ready to go to the game, Dad. They're expecting a big crowd. You should be there by seven-thirty."

His dad raised a hand ceremoniously to stay further comment. "You think I don't know? It's the district championship game!"

Dottie chirped in. "Your dad wouldn't think of being late, would you, honey? He's been waiting for this game all week, honey."

Andy felt like saying, "It hasn't been too long a wait, honey. Today's only Monday." What could his dad possibly see in this broad? No brains. No looks. No anything. And after the wife he had. He was almost certain he knew why his dad went with Dottie, but why couldn't he be more discriminating if that's all he wanted?

"I'm expecting 30 points tonight, Andy. That's nine above your average."

"You've been reading the papers."

His dad rubbed the furrows in his forehead. "I've been busy, Andy. Very busy." Then he added, "But I'll be there tonight." He clicked his glass against the enamel tabletop for emphasis. He'd said it before and never shown up, but Andy thought he seemed more determined this time.

Andy opened a can of chicken soup and dumped the gloppy contents into a pan. As he was adding water, Dottie asked, "You want a bowl of soup or something, honey?"

Andy thought, "What the hell do you think honey is making now?" He sighed and said aloud, "No thanks." "Hells" and "damns" and any other words that would have offended his mother were part of his silent vocabulary now.

When the soup was ready, Andy sat down at the table with them. His dad rapped him on the back, causing soup to run down his chin. "Your old man will be the proudest man in the place tonight, Andy."

Andy wiped his chin with a paper napkin. "You're not an old man, Dad."

Andy noticed his dad used the "old man" expression a lot these days. He didn't like the term for anyone's father, but he especially didn't like it for his dad; it was too close to the truth. Too well he could remember the slender man who had put up the basket and backboard and showed him how to shoot with his left hand, how to dribble without looking at the ball, how to bounce pass. But that was before his mother died, before his dad started running around with this oddball woman.

His dad beamed. "The paper says: 'To win, the Ramblers must stop bespectacled Andy Frost, deadeye Friar forward.'"

"Yeah, I read it. That guy mentions my glasses every time. You'd think I was a freak or something."

His dad sobered. "I'll have enough money for those contact lenses next year, Andy. A little setback this year, you know." He was so damned defensive -- Andy hadn't meant anything about getting contact lenses.

Andy started to read the paper, occasionally catching fragments of a typical conversation between his dad and Dottie, talk about people he didn't know and didn't care to know. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Dottie rub his dad's hand affectionately. He rustled the paper in disapproval.

He got up abruptly and put the soup bowl in the sink. "I'm going now. Don't forget to be there by seven-thirty, Dad. You'd better leave soon.

His dad attempted to brush away concern with a wave of his hand. "I'll be there with bells on, Andy. In the old gym by seven-thirty. Yep, in the old gym by seven-thirty." He sounded convincing to Andy.

Dottie added, "Have a nice game, honey." She shook her glass and the ice cubes rattled. Andy wished she'd knock it off and get his dad going.

Andy grabbed his jacket and Adidas. As he went out the door, he heard Dottie ask his dad if he wanted more ice cubes. His dad should buy her a damn ice plant for Christmas.

* * * * *

After the game, Andy ran home. He paused before opening the apartment door, hoping Dottie would be gone so he and his dad would be alone. He swung open the door, half expecting a reception at the front door. The only light came from the bulb in the tinny fixture in the kitchen. Leaving his Adidas at the door, he walked down the hall and peered in his dad's bedroom. The bed was rumpled and a glass with nearly melted ice cubes was on the headboard.

"You were great, Andy. Great. Thirty-seven points. And those two free throws at the end. Fan-tastic!" He stepped out from the kitchen, a wobbly silhouette. He held out his hand.

Andy ignored the hand. He noticed his dad avoided looking at him. The nasal tone of his words lacked conviction. Andy didn't know where he learned about the game--maybe from Mr. Turner downstairs, but he knew his dad hadn't been there. He'd blown it again.

"I didn't think I could stand the tension, Andy."

Andy blinked his teary eyes. He wanted to say what he'd held back so long. He wanted his dad to know he wasn't fooling anyone. About the game. About Dottie. About anything.

His voice trembled, "I hope you enjoyed yourself with Dottie while I was playing." Then he charged into his room and skidded his glasses across the bed and onto the floor.

His dad came in and sat on the edge of the bed. He clutched his head in his hands and Andy could hardly hear him when he spoke. "That was a terrible thing to do, Andy."

"I'm sorry, Dad. I shouldn't say things like that, but. . ."

His dad shook his head in protest. "No, I didn't mean you did anything terrible, Andy. I meant me. Me. I lied to you. I let you down again, Andy. I let myself down."

Andy felt his bitterness draining away; he'd always been a sucker for a confession.

"Remember when I used to stick out my chest, tighten my stomach muscles, and let you hit me in the gut? Remember, Andy?"

Andy nodded.

"I'd laugh when your punches would bounce off." He grunted in disgust.

Andy walked around the room crouched over until he found his glasses. He put them on and stared at his dad. At his ruffled and thinning hair, at his overgrowth of beard, at his stomach pushed out in the too-tight T-shirt.

"Don't sweat it, Dad. There will be other games." Then he added, "Maybe Dottie would like to come to a game sometime."

Ralph Wright

Last Saturday night, I was sitting alone, at a bus stop across the street from a Doggie Diner, in the heart of the city. Curiously, I was watching a burning bush on the sidewalk. The crowds of people rushed by without even noticing its dancing, flaming fingers, its depth, its strange warmth, its beauty. I sure couldn't figure out what the hell a flaming bush was doing on a sidewalk in the heart of the city on a Saturday night. I watched that burning bush for a long time until it died and the feet of the faceless crowds kicked up its ashes into the thick, gray, neon night.

John Leonard

why

into, I wanderer

and wonderer

laughing

lifying I look

and luck

(occasionally

but not mostly).

Fantastic; likely

in a hopeful way I hop

from mossy rock

to muddy bank

through the, an ever forest.

looking for no

one

hoping to find them.

and looking back

only perceived

bent twigs

and overturned pebbles

Eric Nelson

The Sabbath

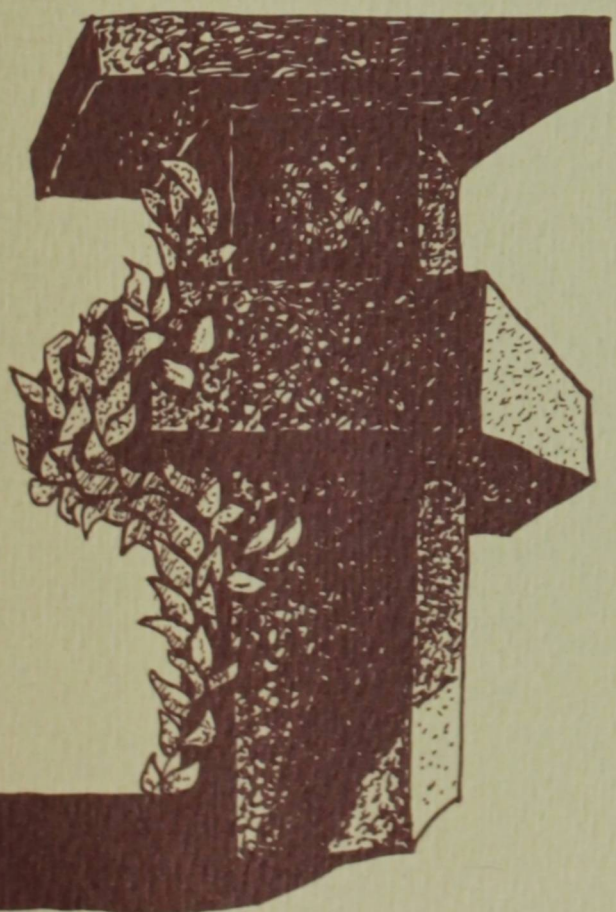
Summer Sundays
in Denver
were quiet mournings in a way -
my blood burned throughout the day
with vivid
memories
like her thighs warming up my feet.

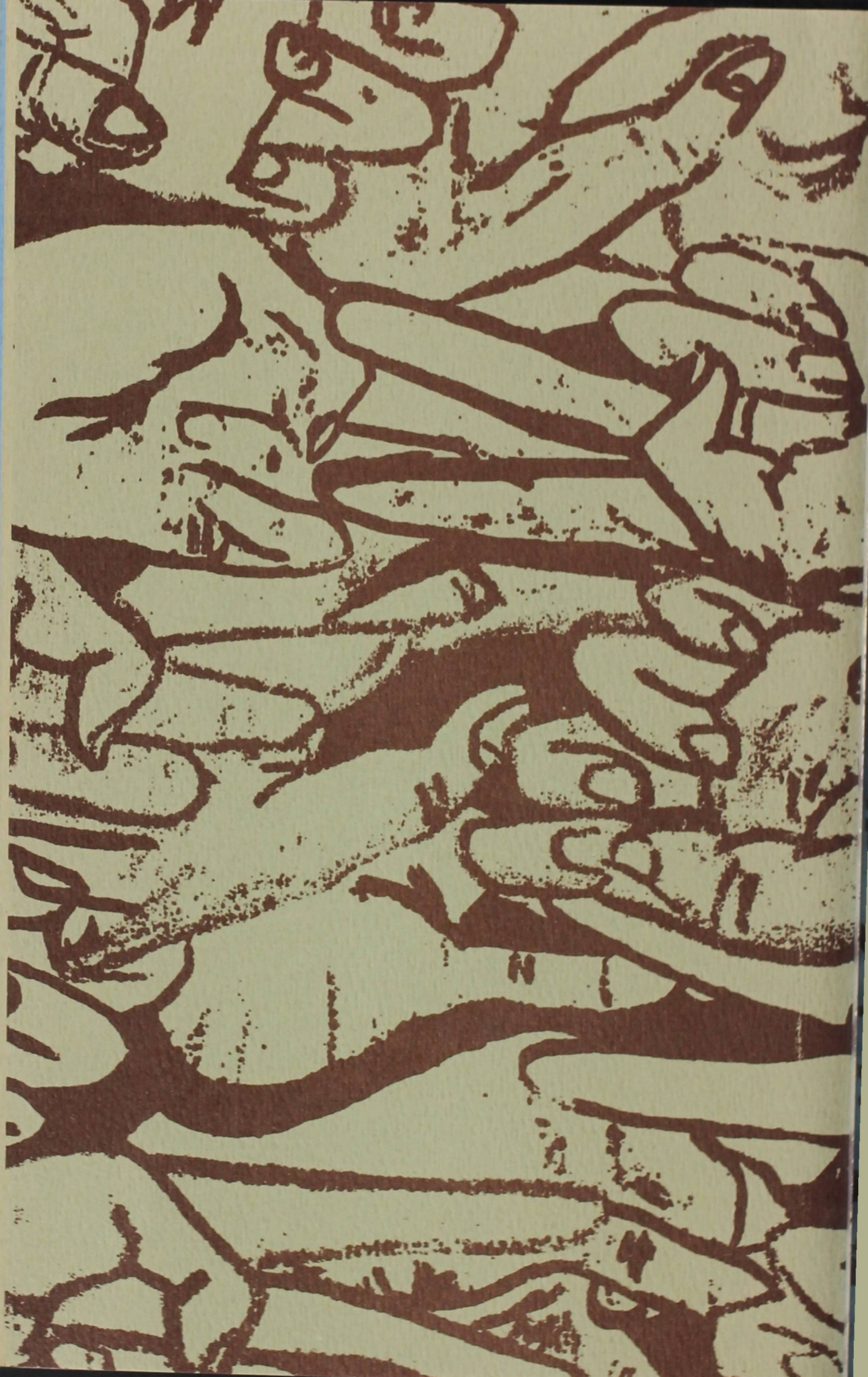
Summer Sundays
in Denver
were almost as bad as drinking -
they seemed to interfere with all my thinking
about living
and the death
that I saw walking every street.

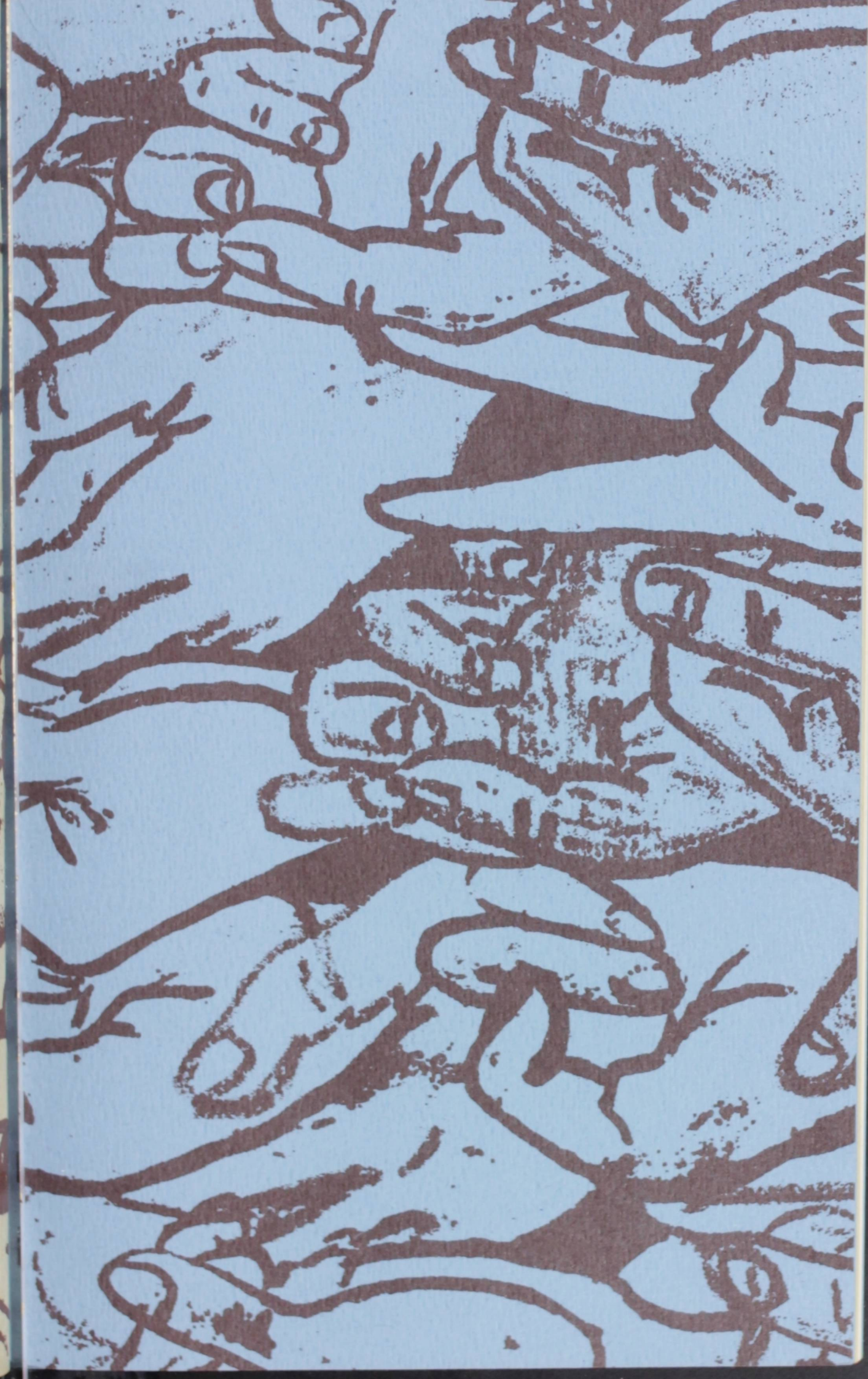
Summer Sundays
in Denver
were, for the most part, spent in vain -
everytime they came around I almost went insane
watching blinded
and crippled
people's faces mirror everyone's deceit.

Summer Sundays
in Denver
were like my younger days in church -
I don't think one went by when I didn't go in search
of someone
or for something
which would make me feel complete.

Larry P. Given
Second Place (Tie)







The Curious

Royal Sarn Arnan watched his wife as she undulated and flowed in a most unregal manner. It was particularly disturbing because he most admired her control; indeed he chose her because of it. Until now she had been smooth and fluid, she had never formed the obscene pointed appendages, the edges - and worst - the corners that he saw her forming now.

He was disgusted by her emotionalism, and he knew that it showed in his flow; he was rippling and small areas of solid crust were crystallizing on his normally soft flesh. These he had to slough off immediately so that the cells beneath would not die of oxygen starvation.

"I see no reason," he stated flatly, "to be so upset merely because our request for a Questor has not been answered, though we sent it nearly an hour ago."

She moved toward a communication terminal, one of two meter diameter hemispheres, centered in opposite quadrants on the flooring of their otherwise empty cubicle. Yet she did not flow onto and cover it, with an intent to communicate outside.

"I see reason." She replied. "Our entire claim to the throne rests on this request. If it is refused we will be no better off . . . than the others." She formed a grotesque parody of an "arm" of the other humans; the common humans who performed the basic jobs - those jobs the aeons could not leave behind.

He looked through the now transparent wall she had gestured toward. Outside walked those humans; the men no longer capable of understanding the complexities of galactic society. Centuries ago, millenia ago, mankind had decided he must take more than one genetic path toward the future. Three succeeded: the Royals, rulers of the universe; the Superiors, the administrators; and the patient, plodding *homo sapiens*, workers.

"What good," she continued, "will our genetic inheritance have been, in fact our whole existence be, if that upstart Superior, Stentanam, is permitted to remain in power? We might as well," she rippled violently, "have two arms, legs and eyes!"

* * *

Kal Stentanam listened silently to his Prime Minister, working hard to control his impatient flows.

"But surely, Superior, you realize what Royal Sarn is planning." He paused to make sure he was being taken seriously; it was hard, so horribly frustrating to be only a man, an only man, within the government. He knew he was a token to legitimize and appease; but where does one appeal?

"So what if he brings a Questor?" Kal asked tersely.

"You know it's impossible to defy the Symbols. The Symbols are more basic to your psyche than even your ego; I know that. There is no conceivable way for you to deny that a coup took place."

"You think I do not know that neither I, nor Sarn, can hide the truth from a Questor?" Kal snapped. "But the Questor's power is only the power of the Symbols. The Symbols that are tied to the foundations of my being, still only keep me from lying in the presence of a Questor: truth can only be your truth, because you exist only within your own universe; thus all truths are relative. I believe the truth of my rightful rule, for I am, at worst, the equal to Royal Sarn.

"Since the original conception of the Royal-Superior principles, and their realization, we Superiors have existed to balance the rule of the Royals. That is my truth, and therefore it exists as truth." He paused, "So I shall be, in no way defying either the Questor or his Symbols."

* * *

Salone the Questor looked through the perfectly transparent walls of the Cube of Truth to see the millions of *homo sapiens* come to see the Quest. Crowded like ants around food they covered the slowly rising hills that surrounded the Cube of Truth; a natural, full amphitheatre a kilometer across. The tall monolithic trees on the hillsides stood like pylons in a sea as the men milled about them.

Salone doubted that the results of this day's Quest meant as much to them as they thought. What troubled them was that they did not know their "true" leader, not the difference it would mean to their lives. It was curiosity, not care, that brought them.

He broke off his thoughts and let his eyes wander about the Cube of Truth. Like its counterparts on hundreds of thousands of other planets, it had four exactly square sides and ceiling, all of perfectly transparent crystal forming a cube exactly one hundred meters across. Near one corner was the single communication terminal rising out of the semi-resilient flooring that was otherwise bare. The deep blue of the flooring made an ideal background to highlight the slightly iridescent gray of the bodies of Salone, Sarn and Stentanam.

Without moving his form, he brought his eyes around to focus on the antagonists. It was time. The Questor was ready.

He had spoken to both and had let each tonal change, pause and motion correlate in his mind to determine how he would phrase, tone and deliver the Questions.

Salone drew his fringes in toward the center of his amoebic body as he strained to form the necessary disc like plane and hold it up against the drag of gravity. On the slightly curved plane - imperceptably so, he knew - he would draw fibers tight, mound flesh; manipulate his cells to display a Symbol so complex that only a long-trained Questor would understand it and its profound ties to the psychic essence of the Royals and Superiors.

Concentric circles formed on the plane, yet somehow intersecting; arcs that crossed where they should not; common geometric figures eludingly familiar.

"What is this?" - to Stentanam.

"The Symbol of Royal and Superior Truth, but . . ." he stopped, stress lines appeared as he concentrated.

"Yes?" - blandness.

"Nothing, I suppose." Kal; distantly.

With effort Salone rotated the plane so that it squarely face Royal Sarn.

"What is this?" - in precise repetition.

"Why, the . . ." Sarn looked away and then back, refocusing his vision, "the Symbol of Royal and Superior Truth, of course!"

"Of course . . ." - echoing. Turning back to Kal, "Are you the hereditary ruler? Knowing the answer could not be defied.

"No." The word blurted uncontrolled. Kal rilled and swirled furiously. "I am a rightful ruler!"

"Are you?" - quietly. Subtly Salone altered the Symbol.

"No." It burst out again. Kal fought, "Yes! Yes! I am! It's true, I am rightful!"

Salone imperceptably stretched one of the tiny lines that wove about within the Symbol. Strange, he thought, few are ever able to resist this strongly.

"Are you the rightful ruler?"

"No." Kal jerked his eyes away. "Yes I am the rightful ruler! I am! You cannot force me . . ."

"LOOK!" Salone ordered.

His eyes were dragged back to face the Symbol.

"Are *you* the rightful ruler?"

"No." was the calm sounding answer.

Certain now, that equations balanced, Salone climaxed, again changing the Symbol.

"Who *is* the rightful ruler?"

Realization shattered Kal's mind when he felt the words forming in his vocals. Flakes of crystallized flesh rained onto the blue flooring, landing on each other and splintering into silver-auroras.



Royal Sarn flowed expectantly.

Kal shook violently. He crystallized, and was still.

"Who *is* the rightful ruler?" - immediate.

Startled, Sarn quickly slowed his flow, tightening his vocals. The words came, but were beyond hearing.

"*Who* is the rightful ruler?"

His vocals would not tighten. Coming fluidly, the words counterpointed his panicked rolls.

"Salone the Questor." knowing the voice was not his. His flow sputtered, he could only think hatred and betrayal.

He crystallized.

Salone relaxed. Outside the Cube, the orgiastic hysteria. Watching them, he thought: what do they really care, the curious? on their ineffectual planet?

Eric Nelson

*If I could,
I would take you with me
to a place outside the world
for a day and a night.
Forever.
To a hut in the forest by a lake
or the sea.
Where the only eyes staring through the window
are the sun and the moon.
And the tappings are only moths
flying at the pane.*

*There we could rest and recover
from the wounds of the world.
I would run cool fingers over your tangled mind
And rub your body with sweet oils.*

*There we could slumber
and wake to stillness.
There we could wander by the water
that never ceases, but renews.
There find a music of silence,
crushed in the city,
The thrill that tautens the air
before the first bird's call.
There we would not dream,
for dreams are desires.
But there desires cease.*

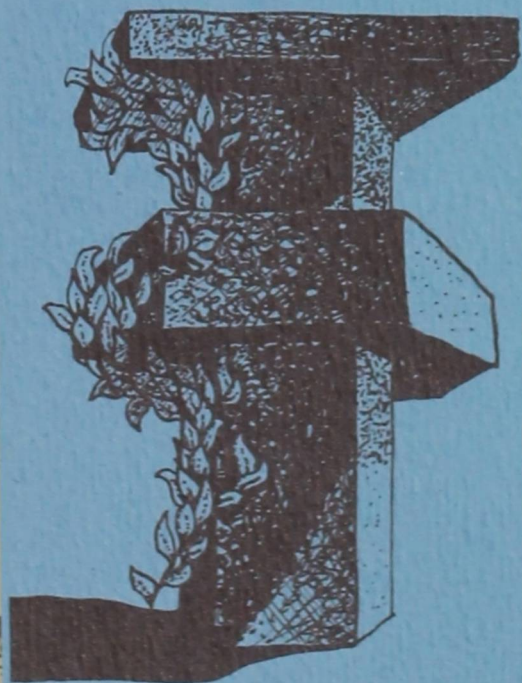
*How still!
Yet in the stillness
Voices louder and stronger than noise.
How clear!
Yet not translucent,
For it is the surface we see,
though lighted from within.
How strange
It is still ugly and still beautiful.
I do not understand.
Why must it be?*

*Once we arrive, it will only take a day.
Only an hour.
Only a moment.
But where is the road?
Shat kind is the vehicle?
What magic words will transport us?
Can one reach the center,
travelling a circular road?*

*You know the way better than I.
Why should I tell you this?
Only to say I wish to follow
if you will take me.*

*But the road is too narrow for two.
Scarcely wide enough for one.
And it crumbles behind you
the moment you lift your foot.
I must find my own road, then.
But do not let your path lead far from mine.
Do let the glow between us
now and then make two paths one.
If for just one second.*

Beth Blachly



Love Poem

I wait at her door; returning—
I left her with the birth of fall
to walk a university
far away from her.

I walk the familiar sidewalk and porch
as Tumbleweed leaves that scraped with a hiss
are transformed into ancient wet scraps of paper,
forming mosaics with the puddles created by the shower
that dampens my spirits
and makes my windbreaker sweat with serpentine tears.

I'm apprehensive shifting my weight
as she opens the door with her famous smile—
the smile that made mine real
those how many times
beneath turquoise sheets
with nothing on
but an album sung
by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
—but a spectral shield is between us
through which I can see imposter eyes
shifting uneasily and quickly

We went inside and sat on her familiar couch
and I read her a poem I had written—
I used to think I loved you
and I guess that's what they'd call it,
but discounting what I feel
words can not resolve it.
And so,
I wanted you to know
all I really said was
I believe in you
—she tried to hide the mood the poem had made
and jokes completed the camouflage
around her pensive state.

She hugs me on tiptoes firmly and usual,
and I listen to the tenderness
that only she can express
and I let it sooth and stifle my guilt
stemming from an old an empty
"I love you."

Even wined and relaxed, catchy phrases
embellished with vacant words
replace us and that which must be said;
not even the semblence of sighs,
melt the icy thoughts
which are concealed beneath the remnants
of a sacred trust which lives only on its resignation
to a special precious obligation.

It binds us still before her mirror
that reflects me watching her combing
her shower fresh hair as she asks
me to tell her I love her—
a fist presses my throat
the phrase chilling me as dull and deep
as the moment of silence
which hurts her enough to say
"It doesn't matter."
—in a nonchalant way and she brushes
her hair without emotion.

As we walked in the rain
games fall among us like droplets
and a dismal She and Me are revealed
just before she turned to face me
for the first time in too long—
"A weed is but an unloved flower."
Her words made me a witness of the weeds
that stood in their simple naked beauty
and I smiled as I realized they had to die with that duty.
We smiled at a wisdom that was ours
in the summer and know that what was to be said
is said, and that we as one are forever,
except for always, dead.

The goodbye is swift, sweet and uncostly,
filled with nervous laughs and a fading wave
that leaves behind a shallow bitter old man
gilded with a young me
remembering Erich the Seagull who said,
"Life is never having to die."

Larry P. Given



SOUNDS

Om-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m(a little barber-shop contemplation, eyes shut, listening to the sounds of the world).

Hoyee-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee-ee(some inner music to provide background for listening to the vibrations of life).

“This is some kind of fight”(the voice from the TV set in the corner, a feeble effort at describing two Latin-looking dudes knocking the hell out of each other--but forget that stuff. . .don't try to describe the sounds. . .just listen).

Alleluia, alleluia, a-a-a-le-e-e-e-iu-u-u-u-ya-a-a-a(never could do that right, but should have the Christian touch. . .must be a Christian contemplator, mustn't I?. . .stop thinking, just listen).

“Good weather we're having for this time of year”(barber's cliché to be friendly to a customer who is a stranger and who obviously hasn't had his hair cut for a long time. . .must be charitable and interrupt contemplation to answer).

“Uh-hum-m-m-m-m-m”(sort of a vibrating answer. . .pretty neat, Barney).

Om-m-m-m-m. “How do you want it?”

“Just a little over the collar and ears”(translated, that means short enough so there won't be a big hassle all the time I'm home).

Om-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m. Click-click. Click-click(barber's scissors cutting off treasured locks. . .stop identifying sounds--very difficult to do in this world, especially in this boxy little barber shop).

“The trouble with religion these days is we got too many goddammed freaks running around”(a discordant note from the chair next door).

Barney's eyes popped open; he wanted to see who had so rudely torn him from the world of contemplation: a beefy, 40ish dude with lots of hair everywhere but on the top of his head.

“Every other guy you talk to these days acts like he's a personal buddy of Jesus. You know, the two of them sit down and chat a bit every day.” He turned both ways, obviously seeking some kind of acknowledgement.

“You know what I mean, Harry? ‘Jesus says to me’ and ‘I says to Jesus’. That kind of crap.” He appeared annoyed that three barbers and two other customers didn't care to affirm his observations.

“Tell me, Harry, have you ever felt like you were really talking with God? You know, this walking-in-the-garden-with-Jesus stuff?”

The loud guy's barber mumbled a few well-er's and something Barney couldn't make out.

Om-m-m-m-m-m(glad no one is giving this dude encouragement).

"Sir, perhaps your problem is that you have never really tried to know Jesus." Wow! Barney's eyes popped open again. The man who had been in the third chair was standing next to the loud guy; he had a little booklet in his hand. In view of the loud guy's comments, Barney had to hand it to this thin Jesus man; he was gutsy.

The loud guy slid out of his chair, kicked a pile of hair out of the way, and stood inches away from the Jesus man. Eyeball to eyeball.

"Well, well, well. . .if we haven't got an honest-to-goodness little Jesus freak right here in the barber shop." He looked at Barney. "I told you, every other guy is like this these days."

Barney watched with admiration as the Jesus man held ground. "As I said, sir, perhaps your problem. . ."

Barney knew that was a bad start. "My problem? My problem? Buddy, you've got the problem, going around preaching to strangers. We don't care to hear all about how you were born again. Somebody ought to drag your ass into church where you could learn some basic catechism."

The loud guy grabbed the booklet and flung it across the shop. "Look, I'm not going to put up with this invasion of my privacy. Get outta here, freak! Right now!" Barney realized the situation was getting out of hand. This guy was a first-hand bully. Barney observed that he looked like the antipathy of Superman, standing menacingly with the green barber sheet open at the back revealing his wide rear-end.

Barney had his fists doubled up under the sheet. He couldn't just sit and watch. Maybe he should just duke it out with this wind-bag, maybe go home with his head split open after getting conked with a hair-oil bottle. Then he got an idea: this is the Age of Kali--that is, the age of quarrel. The solution is the Hare Krishna mantra. Wild idea!

Barney lept out of his chair and started dancing, something resembling the Indian dances he used to do in Boy Scouts.

"Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna."

Barney's green sheet swirled and he noted with delight that the two guys who had been eyeballing each other were standing side by side gaping at him.

Encouraged, Barney continued. "Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare."

By golly, it really was working; he'd broken up the hassle between the Jesus man and the loud guy. Carried away with his success, Barney danced and

chanted on, everyone in the shop backing up a little to give him room. Then one swirl brought him face to face with someone new: a cop. One of the barbers had run for the fuzz.

"Okay, okay. Show's over, chief." He had a crew cut and acted cool like they're supposed to, but Barney thought he looked like the understanding type, like a TV-hero cop.

"What's all the Indian dancing about? You're disturbing the people in this business establishment." Barney was panting a little after his tour de force.

The loud guy rapped the Jesus man on the back and offered an explanation. "This gentleman here and I were having a friendly discussion about religion --the Christian religion--when this wierdo starts hopping all over the place. Right?" He elbowed the Jesus man.

"Well, not. . ."

The loud guy's barber cut in. "That's right. Just a friendly discussion and then this freak goes into his act. Me, I think religion is a very personal thing. I don't go in for these public displays."

"You ought to lock him up." Barney watched as the three barbers and the loud guy drummed out any counter explanations by the Jesus man.

Finally, the cop called off the harangue and led Barney out of the barber shop, assuring the loud guy and the barbers that justice would be done. When they got outside, the Jesus man came running after them. "Don't worry. I'll come to the police station and testify for you. I have money. I'll see that you don't get locked up."

The cop waved him away. "Forget it. He's not going to jail."

The Jesus man handed Barney his card and told him to call him if he needed any help. Barney thanked him and took the card; he knew the man meant it.

The cop started asking questions. Who was he? John Barnabus--they call him Barney. Student? Not just now. Where's he going? Home to visit his parents. Hitchhiking? No, supposed to catch a bus in twenty minutes. Greyhound? Yes.

"Hop in the car. I'll drop you off at the bus station." The cop lit a cigarette.

"What's the problem, Barney?"

"No problem. Just trying to find the handle, I guess. Went to get a haircut before I saw my parents. This loud dude looked like he was about to sock the other guy and I tried something other than punching him in the nose."

"Looks like it worked."

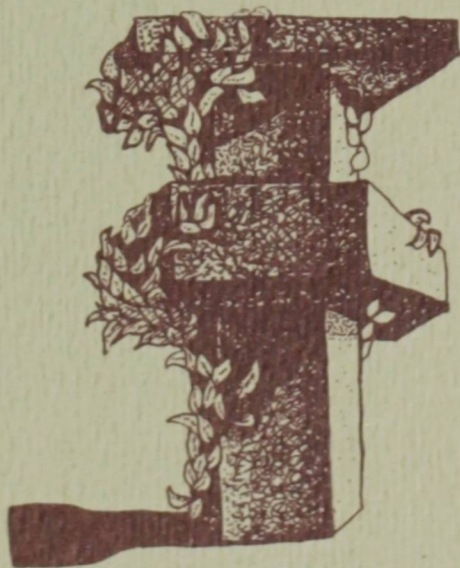
"I guess it did. But it was phoney--or I think it was. You know, it wasn't a spiritual thing, just a wierd way to get attention to break up those dudes."

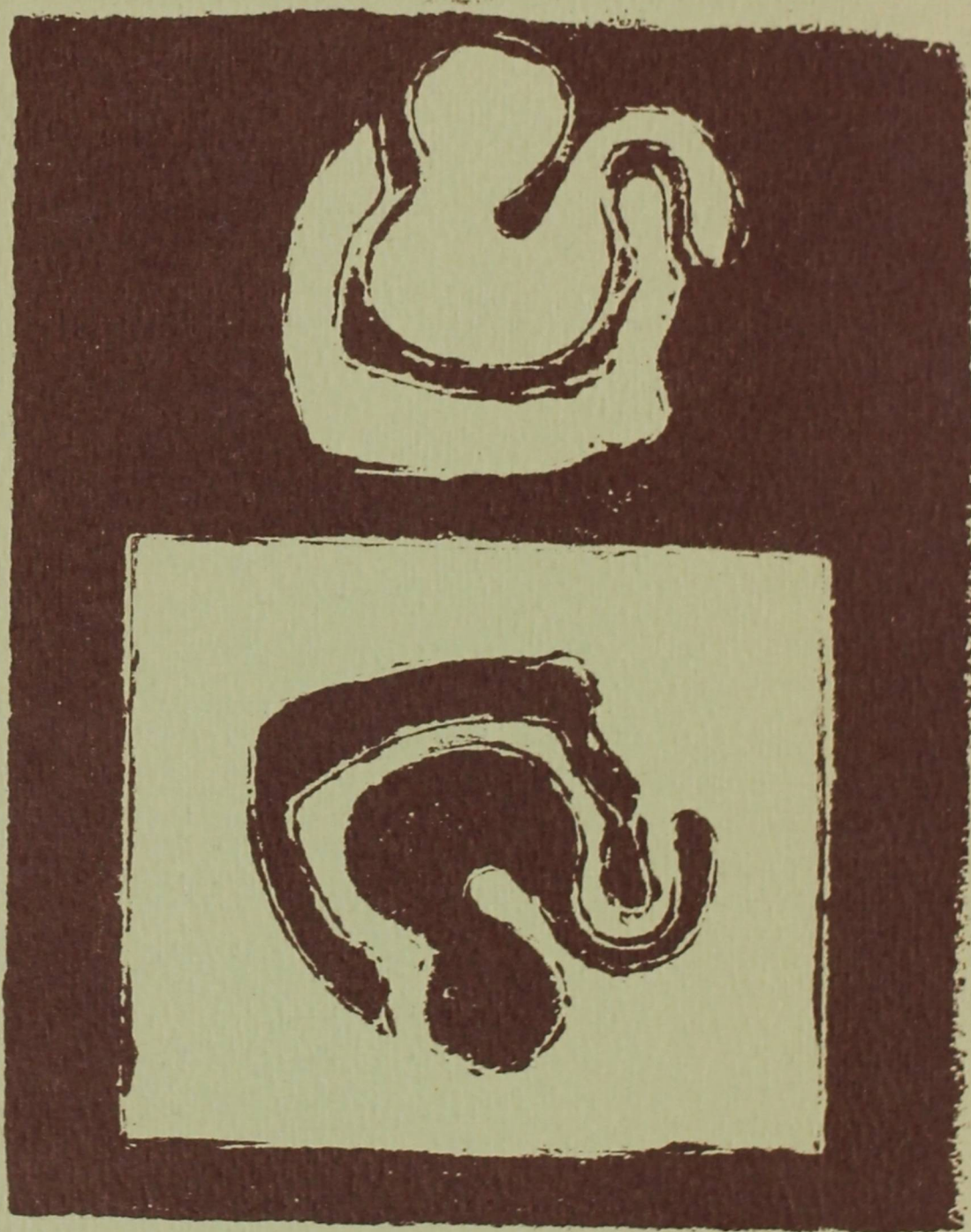
The cop nodded. Barney thought maybe he understood.

At the bus station, Barney sat down in the most isolated area, thankful for a nice cop and for a free haircut(served those barber dudes right).

The bus station was full of sounds--announcements, babies, 25¢ TV, people dragging baggage and talking Spanish. He leaned back and started humming. Come right in, set right down, daddy let your mind roll on. Om-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m. Alleluia, alleluia. All-e-e-e-e-e-lu-u-u-u-ya-a-a-a (never could do that right).

Ralph Wright





If I Let Go

I walk up the staircase
holding to a banister
which isn't there.

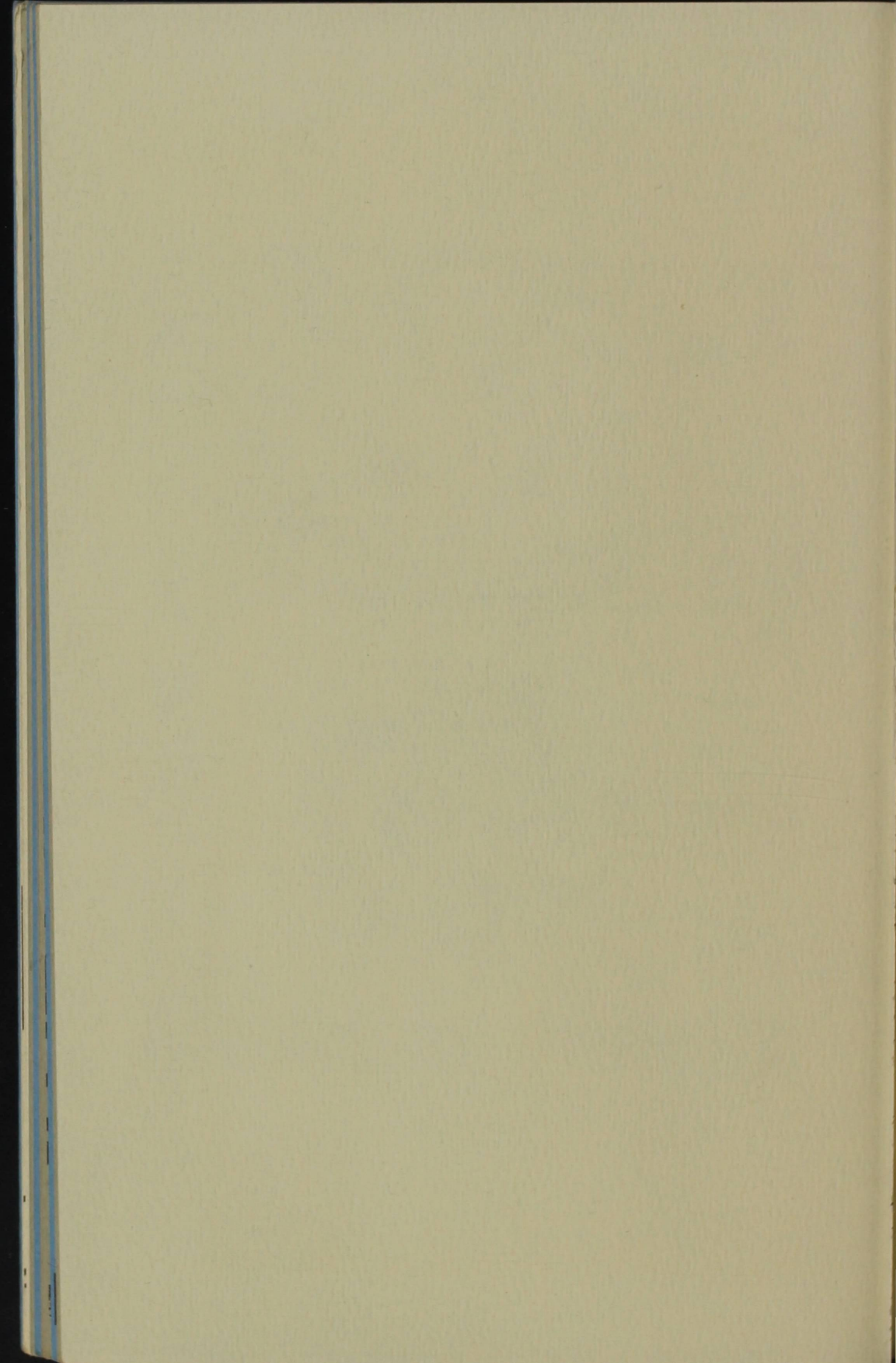
The passers-by
ask me why

I walk so slow
and yet they know

that I'm afraid
of falling down

and will
if I
let go.

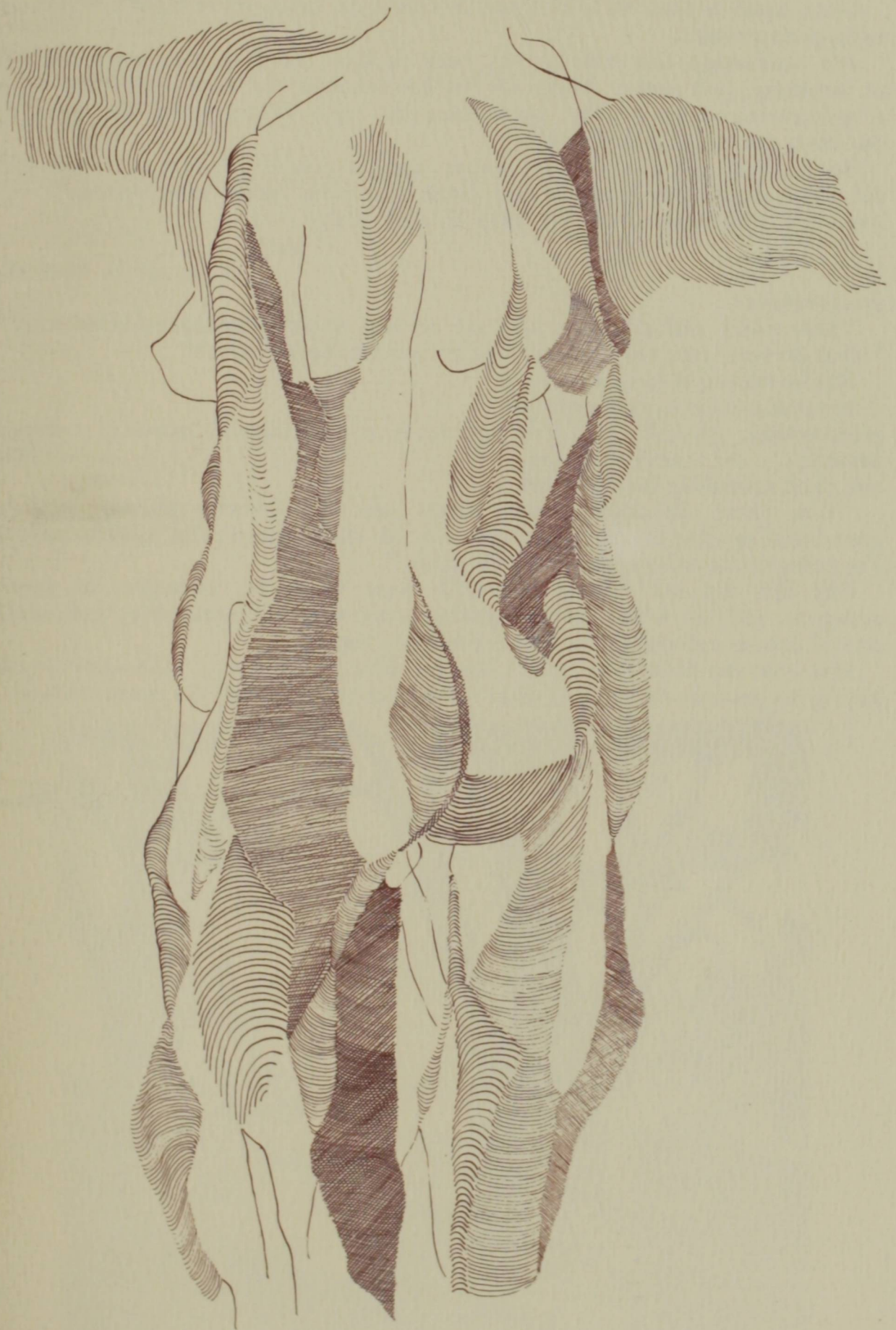
T.S. Berczynski





We walked through the night snow,
Arms around each other.
The snow was perfect for sliding,
A layer of ice beneath it.
Walking down a hill, I slid.
He cried out,
"Oh, are you all right?"
"Fine," I answered.
"But I felt you slipping,
Falling under my grip."
He held me closer.
"I slipped on purpose," I said.
"You slipped on purpose?
You could kill yourself!"
"If I can't slide, or anything,
Why should I live?"
"How will I live if you break your neck?
I'll hold you so you can't fall."
He held me closer, but I twisted free
And ran down the hill.
I slipped once or twice
But I never looked back.
I know it was cruel.
But I had to.
I saw him last on an escalator
Going the other way.
We did not speak.

Beth Blachly



Yes Mr President - or -
Ask Not What Your Country CanDo for You, But What You CanDo for You

Once upon a time in a lil town in Ohio, or Iowa, there lived a little man with greenworms.

It's notthough that the worms were in him, or that they were diseased or anything, just green. And with his greenworms the man performed many a greenworm miracle. But even then his wife would leave her make-up on when she went to bed.

So he had to bathe everymorning, and to top it all off; : ; : his wife did not even like the stupid worms 'cause they were "green'nflat'nyukky". And the little man and his wife fought many

many
many times over the
greenworms.

"You crazy dirko"-she would say in her downwithdirtycommies voice - "what do you want with worms that are green'nflat'nyukky?"

But he managed to ignore her because he was happy with his greenworms, afterall, she did not want to understand anyway. though someday he would show her. Then one dark dismalday his wife said

"You crazy dirko(you crazy dirko was her favorite phrase, next to green'nflat'nyukky)ifyou don't get rid of those green'nflat'nyukky worms I'm going to stomp on them and kill them."

But this did not bother the little man 'cause he knew(but he wasn't going to tell his wife)that the greenworms were indestructible, indimortal, and of course indivisible(i.e. she couldn't see them).

But still the little man didn't like the idea of his skinny wife symbolically killing his greenworms(and he didn't want her to do it with the drums either)

So he threw green paint on her.

"Now who's green'nflat'nyukky?"

Eric Nelson



THIS BOOK DOES
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