oakwood

I may not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

WALT WHITMAN

oakwood

South Dakota State University

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A Letter to Any Young Poet About Poetry

These past few months have been interesting, in terms of my understanding of poetry as a psychological mechanism. Getting ready to teach Neoclassical British Lit. has made me go back over Aristotle and Longinus—they play into Dryden and Pope and Johnson— and I'm beginning to think they all missed something! What they all have in common is the implication that, somehow, the poem is the thing that happens and the reader is simply acted upon. Something like jabbing someone with a pin, or hitting them over the head with a ballbat. But to me this seems to reverse the situation; afterall, the reader is alive, moving, etc., and the poem is much closer to dead.

Let's get off the alive/dead idea: the poem is **fixed** and the reader is **fluid**. Neither one can happen without the other, in a real sense. Thus I take meaning to be something dynamic, an event between poem and reader. Naturally: a poem about old age means more when you're old than when you're young. It happens to you, or more exactly you happen together. Hmmm: could that also explain why really immature minds like Rod McKuen?

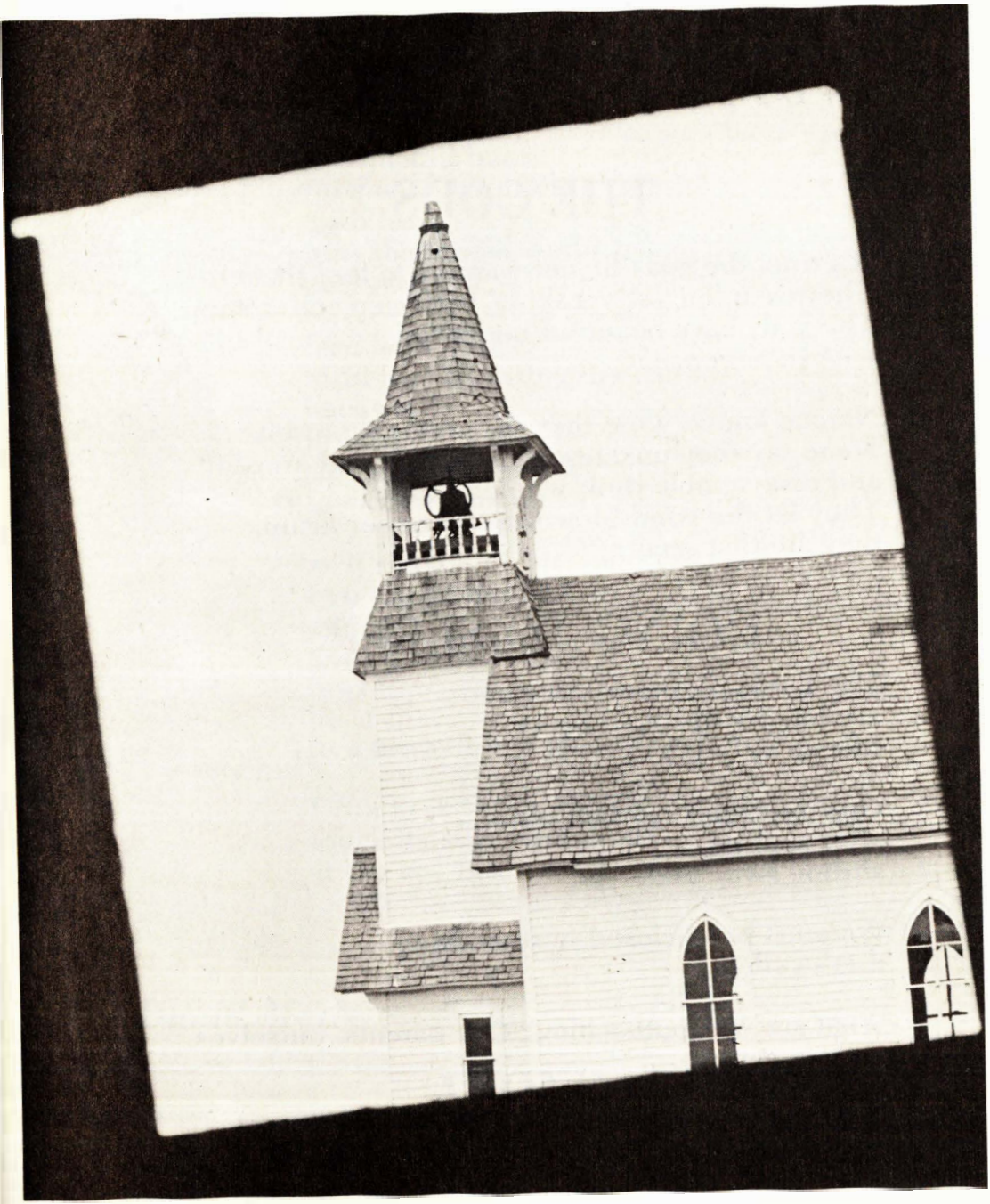
But I'm not looking for leverage by means of a poem, which is what McKuen is. I'm looking for the direct experience, the event, between the poem and my mind; I'm looking for that great dialogue, which is an end in itself, and which doesn't happen except when I read a poem. (Bad poem=poor approximation of a good event. Good poem=event in itself.) And I don't think that can happen when a poem tries to dictate terms to me. A poem is an act of witness, not a lecture, and because of that it can't give orders. I want a poem, then, that will share its author's sense of life with me, and let **me** decide whether it has value for my life. Afterall, we all decide that anyway, don't we? Then why not think of poems around that principle?

What I'm aiming at: poem as act of dialogue. Writers (teachers, critics, some readers) have so often seemed to believe that poems are written in a vacuum, the half-crazy writer talking to himself via a piece of paper. No: he is "a man speaking to men." Get that straight: poems are written because, ultimately, someone might or should enjoy them. Poems are NOT written as exercises in craft, bearers of critical tenets, ethical monographs, inquiries into id. Those are verse at best. A writer has to share his sense of life, his sense of language, in the hope—not ever certainty—that those senses will move someone else. You can't McKuen it, I mean you can't count on your audience responding just because it's there and says it loves you. Hell, that's no audience at all: they are using McKuen for intellectual masturbation. Audience: someone who responds with reasonable care to what you say the way you say it, who has reached out enough from ignorance and laziness to want to hear you at least a little. But not enough to give you one tear, one chuckle or groan or laugh or sigh, unless you earn it. The best audience is free response, the best poem is free witness.
Free? Nothing is free, is it? Yes, some things are free. If I am a real poet I do not impose my feelings on you; if you are a real audience you do not demand any particular feeling, as opposed to any other feeling anyway (wanting "happy endings" is a sickness). We communicate so well because we are free of prejudicial demands on each other—and yet we are open to sharing it all. To be most receptive is to be given the most; to be most open is to give it.

But a poem is still, always, not an object. Nothing spiritually valuable is an object. Poems are events, as are human beings. Don't you tell me what the poem "means," then: let it happen to me and then I'll know what it means, beyond any critique or explication or paraphrastic nonsense you have.

Craft? Craft? If I am your audience, then you had better be as aware of what you're doing in language as I am. Otherwise, you get in your own way. Craft? You earn your freedom, and you keep it with work. You lose it by giving in to the eternal tendency to write what "anybody" could write, or by what someone says you "should". Your own style is the most expensive thing you will ever learn as a writer, and the most worthwhile. Don't send me "anybody's" (your teacher's, your idol's, T. S. Eliot's, Shakespeare's) poems, send me your own.

All this to mean: tell the truth your own way. Witness it; don't impose it on me. Think of it as happening to me. It might, you know.



Steve Rezac

Philip Dacey

TWO POEMS

THE GODS

It's true, the gods do not want us to feel them up.
They wear long, silver skirts, both men and women.
The gods have beautiful bodies
we can never see.

No one knows what they do among themselves.
Some say they unscrew their heads, and arms,
and disassemble their whole bodies.
They let the wind blow them together again,
they are that secure.

GOING TO SLEEP

The borders we cross in sleep
are lined with small lights
like an airfield's.

One delicately marked zone
after another
sliding away under us.

We must be enclosed in something,
it is so silent.

What are we approaching? Our parents, ourselves,
some great eye
like an observant sea?

And are there red warning lights
on our underbellies?

Mary Klinkel

POEM

A whitetail buck
runs out a cornfield
each leap
puts the whole world in
perspective:
forelegs tucked to chest
face held high
hind legs thrusting the earth
backward
it soars
till earth rushes back
to catch it again

as it nears
two cracks from an
enemy
grab it in mid-flight
hurl it
head-first
to a heap on the ground.

I run to it
touch its still-warm body
at the last beat.

David Meile

ALONE

To be lonely
is to hear
birds
and not fly

Sid Larson

TWO POEMS

SUNRISE OVER SADDLE BUTTE

rose dawn
that electric east
and the nighthawk

morning light
the fine process
of becoming.

AMERIGO

Cold Aurora

a nighthawk

lifting high
with a crisp tuck
she falls away

and gone.

Glen Barton

KNIGHTS AND WHITE HORSES

The old woman was peering out the front window in response to a noise she had heard. It had sounded like someone knocking at the front door. She saw no one, but remained, her hands forming a cup on the window to aid her vision. It had been failing her more and more lately, her vision. It had all been the fault of that doctor who had prescribed glasses for her to cut down on her vision. He said her eyes were too strong and that that was what was making her sick. Her eyes were draining the rest of her body. But that was so long ago. She had been only a child then. Had the year been 1890? She couldn't remember. It wasn't too long before she had been married though. But she didn't like to think about that too much while she was alone. She had never thought about outliving her husband, but one day she suddenly had. She thought a lot about him now, about when she would be with him again. It was something she could look forward to.

Her train of thought was broken by a group of boys who ran into her yard making machine gun noises and dying and getting up to kill again after a respectable period of death. She went to the front door and down the steps as fast as she could. Her legs were so stiff it was hard to get around any more.

"Now, you boys be careful! Play nice!"

"Yes ma'am."

"Don't you big boys hurt that little boy."

"Yes ma'am."

"You're bigger than he is, and you'll hurt him if you play too rough."

You just always had to be after boys. She knew, she'd had a few of her own. The good Lord knew they wouldn't look after themselves. Someone had to do it for them. In the house she took her magnifying glass out of the letter box and settled down to a peaceful evening of reading her bible.

Before turning to her place where she had stopped reading the night before, she turned to the middle section of the bible where weddings and deaths and births were recorded. She liked to look at this section and often did. She had pictures of everyone whose name was recorded, many of them tintypes,

and she looked at the pictures as she read the names. Her mother, her father, her brothers and sisters. Her and her husband on their wedding day. These pictures are about all I have now, she thought. She rarely saw anyone any more.

The clap of thunder sounded in the sky and a few drops of rain hit the roof. She hoped that it would be a good rain. It would cool things down and the farmers needed it. Her husband had been a farmer when thay had first married. A good farmer too. And the best shot in the county. He had taken pride in that. All the younger men had come to him for lessons as he had gotten older. He had never taken anything for those lessons, and they always let anyone who wanted drink from their well. That was the way they had lived, and they had always gotten by. They didn't have much money, but then . . . well, you just didn't need much money back then. The world seemed to get along pretty well without it.

It began raining hard, and she got up, setting her bible on the table beside her chair, and went to the door to get a good look at the rain. It was nice, the rain. She had always liked rain, even as a child when other children would be afraid of the thunder and lightning, she would enjoy laying in bed at night and letting the rain sing her to sleep.

But the mornings after the rain, that was the best part. Everything was so fresh and clean then, and she and her other brothers and sisters would hitch up the big white horse to the wagon and go to school. As they drove through the woods, the rain would still be hanging from the leaves on the trees and the smell...the smell was wonderful.

She couldn't remember it now, the smell, but as she looked out on the street at the rain falling, she could almost feel it all again. Sometimes those times seemed more real to her now than the present. They had certainly been nice at any rate. And they still were.

She was going to the back of the house to see how the rain was doing in the back yard when she heard another knock at the front door. She turned around and started back in the direction from which she had just come. She wondered who it could be. Then she saw that it was a little girl. The only one in the neighborhood who ever came to see her. She wished they would all come.

The little girl held an object up to the old woman for inspection. She didn't say a word, just held the thing up for inspection. The old woman couldn't tell what it was. She bent closer, squinted her eyes, and saw that it was a small horse and buggy. Very roughly made, the horse dwarfed the buggy and didn't look at all like a horse at that.

"I hope you like it," said the little girl. "It's supposed to be the one you told me about having when you were a little girl."

"It's very nice," said the old woman. "It's really just like the one I used to have." "I'm afraid the horse is too big and looks more like a dog."

"No, it's just perfect. Just perfect. Can you come in for a while and have some tea?"

"OK."

The old woman unlatched the screen and the little girl entered. They went to the kitchen table, where the little girl sat while the woman began preparing the tea. She hummed as she worked, repeating the steps of making tea one more time in a seemingly infinite sequence. The rain was coming down even harder than before. It accompanied the old woman at her humming.

"What is that song?" asked the girl.

"What song?"

"The one you're humming."

The old woman smiled. "Well, I don't guess I know," she said. "I've always hummed it though, and I think my mother used to hum it too."

"Where did she learn it?"

"From her mother, I suppose. Yes, that's right, but my grandmother used to whistle it. And I do too, sometimes." The old woman closed her eyes and pictured her grandmother whistling that tune. She could vaguely remember that it used to have words, but she couldn't remember what they were.

"Would you whistle it for me?"

The old woman immediately began whistling the tune. It sounded shaky, but good, she thought. She was standing beside the cabinet, steadying herself with one hand. She got carried away, seeing the girl enjoying the tune, and didn't stop until the whistling of the kettle blended with her's. She poured the tea into a pan after the water, and left it to steep for a while. As she sat at the table, opposite the girl, there was silence. All she could hear was the rain on the roof, and now dripping from the roof and running in the street.

The little girl began trying to whistle the tune. The old woman whistled a bit of it to her, then the girl tried again with a little more success. The woman got up and fixed the tea. Returning with the two cups she almost tripped and fell, but managed to regain her balance. These old legs aren't what they used to be, she thought.

"Do you like your tea?" the woman asked the little girl.

"Yes, it's very good."

"It's getting dark. What time do you have to be home?"

"There's no hurry. My mother knows where I am."

"I thought she didn't like you coming down here to see me."

"It's just because she's afraid I'll bother you, and I told her you said that I don't."

"That's good. Maybe you'll get to come more often now."

"Do you like the horse and wagon very much?"

"Yes, I like it very much."

The rain wasn't coming as hard, and the woman thought it sounded as if it had settled in to stay for a while. Yes, she thought, it had definitely settled in.

"I made it in school."

The old woman had been lost in thought and hadn't understood. "What?"

"I made the horse and wagon in school."

"Oh, I see. Did you make it all by yourself, or did your teacher help?"

"No, I made it all by myself. I didn't think it would be the same if someone else helped. I'm the one you told about when you were a little girl and all that."

The old woman looked at the horse and wagon which was sitting in the center of the table, and realized that it actually did look quite a bit like the wagon she had ridden in as a girl, and the the horse was white, just like her old horse. What had his name been? Horace. His name had been Horace. That had been her father's idea of a joke. Horace the horse. The name came from Horace Mann, who her father regarded as a fool.

The horse's name was Horace."

"Horace," the little girl shrieked, "That's a funny name for a horse!"

"Well, my father was funny man," the woman replied.

"Tell me about how he used to ride a big white horse and carry a gun all the time."

The old woman laughed. "I've told you all that at least three or four times," she said.

"OK," the little girl replied immediately, "Tell me something new."

The old woman thought. What could she tell the girl about herself that she would especially like. She thought about telling her something of her husband and what a flashy young man he had been on his horse. How handy he had been with a rifle. But that was the sort of thing she usually told. She wanted to tell something different for a change. Ah yes, she thought. I know.

"I'll tell you about ghosts."

The little girl had been watching the old woman very closely as she thought, and when she heard this her eyes

opened wide and she became erect in her chair.

"Really?"

"Yes really. We used to sit and listen to them at night. We couldn't see them, ever, but we heard them all the time."

"What did they sound like?"

"Well, it wasn't the ghosts we heard. It was the things they did we heard."

The girl was scrunched up in her chair now, her feet pulled up under her, presenting the smallest possible target for a ghost. "What did they do," she whispered.

"Well now," the old woman continued, more slowly now, "we would sit around the fireplace or just around the front room and maybe we would hear a rake or a shovel move in the corner, or hear a board squeak."

"But how did you know it was a ghost?" The girl looked very frightened, and the woman could tell she was enjoying the tale.

"Why, because things like that don't move by themselves."

"Oh." The girl nodded her head in complete understanding.

There was a knock at the door and the little girl jumped just a little, but came down in a smaller ball than before. The old woman got up and went to answer the door, chuckling to herself. She really did enjoy having guests.

The woman at the door was pleasant looking, but she also looked very businesslike, matter of fact.

"Hello," she said, "are you Mrs. Hamilton?"

"Why yes, I am." The old woman smiled to think that someone should be looking for her. Should come to her door in search of her.

"I'm Mrs. Franklin, Lorie's mother. Is she here?'

"Yes, we were just in the kitchen having a cup of tea; won't you join us?'

"Well, I wouldn't want to impose, Mrs. Hamilton."

"Oh, it's no bother at all. I'm very glad you came."

The prospect of having two guests for tea made the old woman quite happy. This is really going to be quite an evening, she thought to herself. I can't remember when there has been so much activity around here.

When they entered the kitchen, the old woman noticed that the little girl stiffened upon seeing her mother. "Hello Mother," she said. The old woman thought that it sounded somewhat strained. "Won't you sit down here," the old woman offered the mother, and they all sat.

So, there were three of them at the table, leaving one chair empty. The chair at the head where her husband used to sit. It was fitting, she thought, for it to be that way. She felt, somehow, that he was with them. In spirit, of course, only in spirit.

"Mrs. Hamilton has just been telling me about ghosts, Mother," the little girl said.

"Oh, how nice," said the mother. Of course you know Lorie, that ghosts aren't real. We only talk about them to amuse ourselves." She stared point blank at the old woman. "Isn't that so, Mrs. Hamilton?"

"Ghosts are usually only real to those who believe in them," said the old woman. She didn't appreciate this younger woman's attempt to use her this way. She couldn't have agreed less with the mother.

"Last night," said the girl, almost whispering, "in bed, I woke up and thought I heard someone trying to get in the the window. At first I thought I was dreaming, but I wasn't. He was all dressed in black and trying to get in and wearing a cape or something." The little girl was looking straight into the old woman's eyes, ignoring her mother.

"Well don't you see, Lorie, it was only a dream. Just a bad dream."

"At first I was me, just like I am, but then I was Mother, and the man in the black cape got in the house. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't because I was Mother and she doesn't ever scream. She says it's...it's..."

"Irrational," put in the mother.

"Yes, irrational. Then, all of a sudden I was you," she said to the old woman, "and I wasn't afraid anymore."

The mother looked from the the child to the old woman and smiled. The old woman thought that it looked like a forced, rather insincere smile. "Now, Lorie," she said, "tell me that you know that it was a dream."

"It wasn't a dream, mother. Because I woke up and it was still happening."

"But, Lorie, you can dream you wake up."

The old woman watched in silence as the other two argued. She somehow knew that the girl wouldn't give in. The mother had no right to be acting this way. After all, an invited guest. Well. The rain on the roof was softer. But it was still coming down. She loved the sound.

"Would you like some more tea?" asked the old woman.

"Yes, thank you," the mother answered. The little girl held out her cup as the old woman made her way to the cabinet to refill their cups.

"Lorie, I'll tell you why I know it's a dream," said the mother as the old woman was filling the cups. "Last night, I heard you making noises in your sleep. It woke me up. So don't you see, that was when it happened. You were asleep, dreaming."

"But how do you know I was asleep? I might have been awake, Mother.

"Well, I got up and looked in on you, Lorie. Did you know I look in on you several times every night."

"I love to look in on children while they're asleep," said the old woman. "They look so peaceful." She remembered being a child. She had loved the time when all the children retired to the large bedroom for the night. All eleven of them. They slept around the walls of the giant room in bunk beds. She would climb under the heavy quilts and be asleep within minutes, dreaming her favorite dreams. Before she would go to sleep she would tell herself what she wanted to dream, and she usually got her wish. Her favorite dreams were those about the days of King Arthur. Her father had books about that, and she always was reading them. In her dreams there was always a knight, no, a lot of knights, and they all rode white horses just like the one that pulled their wagon to school. Old Horace. But with longer manes and they were younger with more spirit. But, what, the little girl's mother was talking to her and she hadn't been listening. "What, I'm sorry. What did you say?"

"I said, Lorie looks so peaceful and innocent when she's asleep. I just love to look in on her. On any child, but especially her."

"I know what you mean," said the old woman. "I know exactly what you mean."

"But you know Mrs. Hamilton," said the mother, "Every time I look in on Lorie while she sleeps, it's kind of sad for me."

Here, thought the old woman, is a person that needs someone to talk to. Why, she's not much more than a child herself. "Why does it make you sad?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Everytime I see her asleep, it reminds me that there's no one left to see me when I'm asleep. You know, my husband was killed in the war."

"Yes," the old woman answered, "the girl told me."

The little girl had gone to sleep on the table, her head on her folded arms.The old woman noticed that she hadn't finished her tea. She tapped on the side of cup with a spoon and the girl woke up.

"That seems important to me," the mother continued. "I don't know why, but I just know that I'll never have another husband. I'm not as pretty as I used to be, and I don't really

have the energy to...to...I don't know. You know what I mean, don't you?"

"Yes, I know what you mean," the old woman said. She was trying to think what it would have been like for her if she had lost her husband as early as this young woman had. She couldn't do it. It was unthinkable.

"You know last night," said the little girl, "when that happened?" The old woman nodded that she did.

"You mean when you had your dream," the mother stated.

"Well," continued the girl, "afterwards, the moon was shining in the window through a tree and the branches made creepy shadows on the bed."

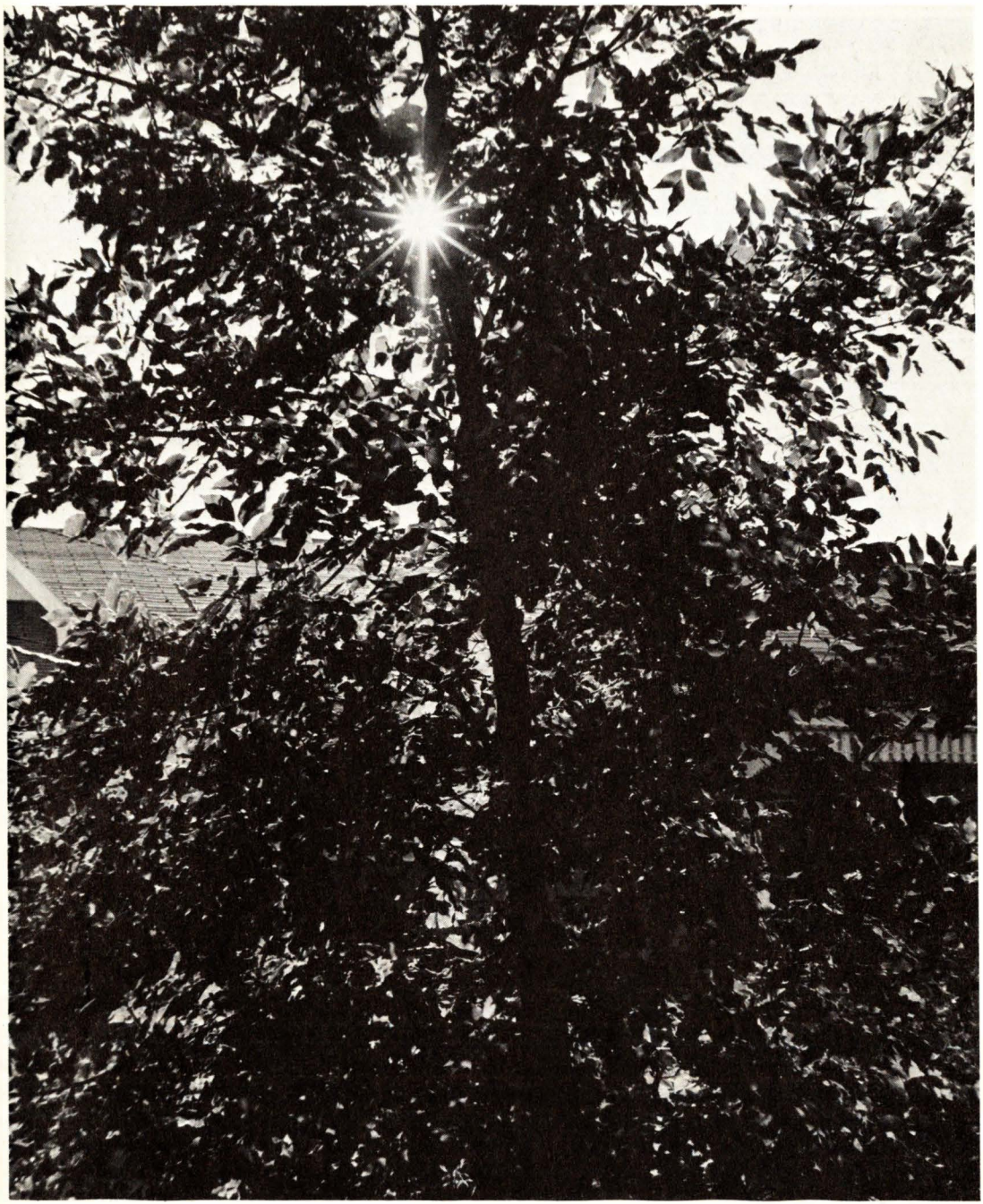
"But you knew the shadows couldn't hurt you, didn't you," the mother said.

"And I looked down on the bed at the shadows and they made me look ugly. I was so little that I barely made a bump in the covers, and the shadows made me look all twisted. I had to put my head under the covers to go to sleep."

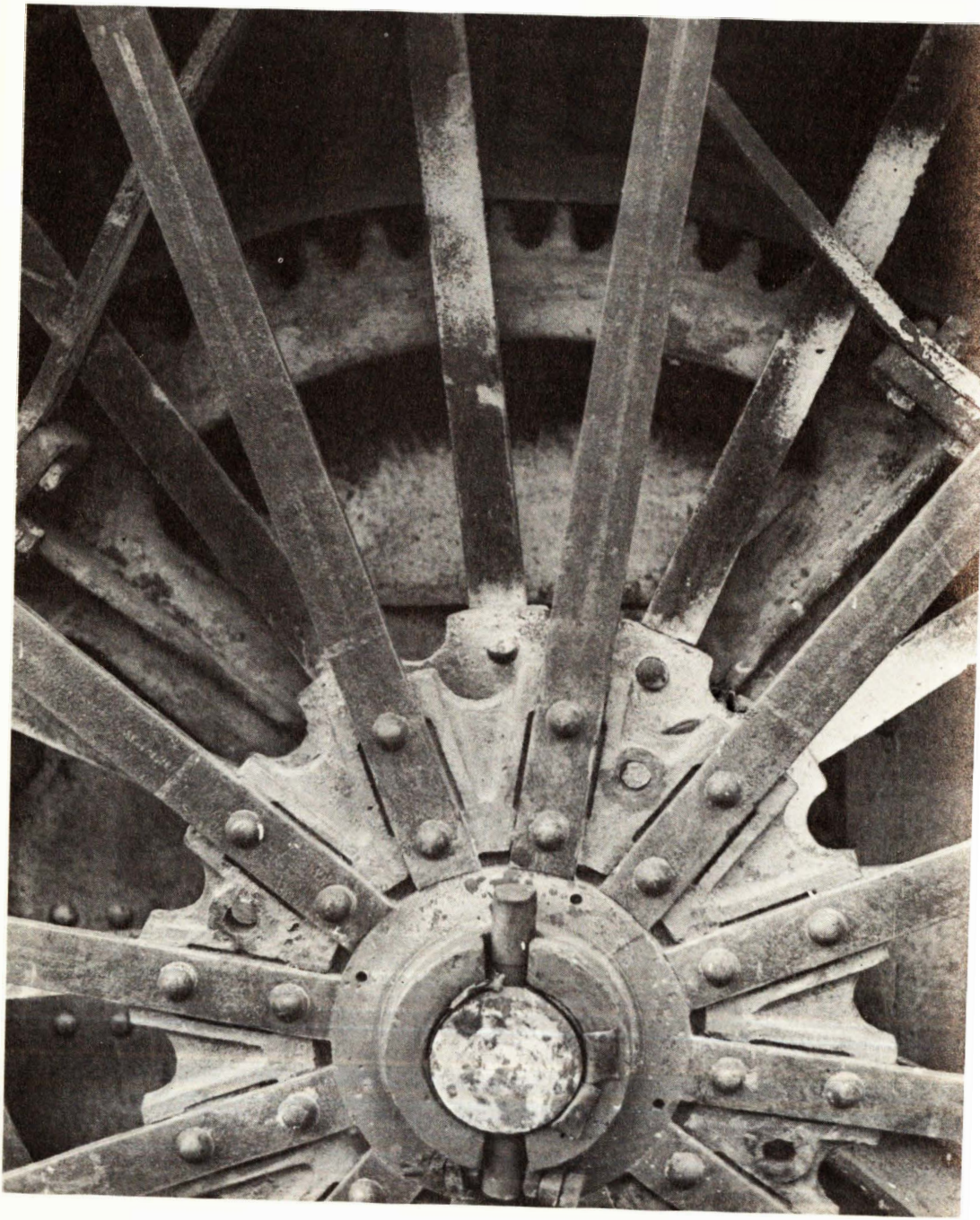
Her mother got up to go, and the little girl got up with her. "Well, thank you for the tea," the mother smiled at the old woman.

"Certainly," the old woman answered. "Now you come back, both of you, any time. I'm always here, and I enjoy company. I don't get too much any more."

The old woman stood on the porch and watched them walk down the block to their house. The rain ran off their umbrellas, one half as high as the other, and fell to the sidewalk. It was coming harder, the rain. About time to get into bed. That's the best time to sleep. When the rain is on the roof. It's so nice to lay under heavy quilts and listen to the rain.



Randy Williams



Dennis Sampson

MOON POEM

The moon wants to be a bone tonight,
tossed over the shoulder,
the knuckle-bone of an old
man who gave up his solitary
life to fall in love with miserable women.

The moon wants to loll its tongue,
wants to foreclose something,
wants to puff its cheeks,
pretend to believe in doors.

The moon wants to bat 500.
It wants to watch a woman walking away.
It wants to smoke and drink whiskey in
any bar where the drinks are half price.

The moon wants to be convicted
of lechery, live on death row
for a little while, burst
the bars and vanish into the past.

But when the sun rises tomorrow
the moon will go down
like it has a million other times,
muttering to itself, hunched over,
dragging its rag of darkness across the sky.

Steve Rezac

Beth Mabee

POEM

The geese are passing overhead.
The window of my dorm room fits badly
and the night air whistles around it;
still, I hear the gabble of their conversation.
What optimists.
Their arrow flies confidently north
in spite of the black trees and dead grass.
They actually believe it's spring.
Night after night, for a week now,
I have switched off my study light
and pulled back my cheap curtain
to watch the wavering ranks of dark dots perforate
the clouds.
I crouch on the end of the squeaking bed
and wonder if geese ever have doubts.

Craig Thompson

HERE TO STAY

On my horse way up in the
red wyoming mountains
I became king, no one
not even the deceptive red sky
could overtake me
I have never been here before
now I am here to stay forever

Tim Hinkley

Two Poems

BUT THEY'VE ALL GONE

What will return
the Indian dream
would return real
meat to buffalo bones

POEM

She has an ass
as wide as
Montana

I'd kiss both
sides of the river

Carla Carlson

Death Song

I am the thickness,
The violin,
The darkness.
I am the death.

Freya Manfred

FOR A YOUNG SOUTH DAKOTA MAN

I no longer want to meet
people who have no muscles.

I love your muscles.
I love the barbwire cuts in your
tan-gold shoulder,
the rattlesnake skin tied around
your head,
the way your hands curl like warm rabbits
beside the campfire.

I planted a lilybulb,
hoed the corn,
rode the horse,
swam in muddy Missouri,
toed a dusty road
with you
green green green green
you.

I'm in love with the way
the land loves you:
the way you greet
morning wild rose
afternoon fence post
evening fire under forest leaves.

You show me how to walk
in the country dark:
Blacksoil in waves
under white moon Dakota.
Black soil seep,
sing Dakota.
Black soil in your fingernails,
white sweat on your forehead.

You speak of farmlights,
and the north forty.
You speak of choosing a home
by swimmimg toward it through river water at night
and judging whether you need to live there
by listening to the animal sounds on shore.

You move with light in you
toward me in the dark.
When you open your mouth and eyes,
light rides out of you toward me.

I no longer want to meet
people who have swallowed no living light from
black soil.

Michelle Burbank

WHOEVER KNOCKS

By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes;
Open, locks, whoever knocks...

Wm. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Soundlessly Ann locked the door. She laid the key just outside it and ran, in her bare feet and billowing nightgown, down long bare corridors and dark stairs back to the schoolroom. The others were waiting there, boys in dark pajamas, girls in pale nightgowns. At first Ann had thought they could wear ordinary clothes if they took off all the metal. But there was so very much metal—hooks, zippers, eyelets—that she finally told the rest of the children to put on their pajamas. The buttons were all plastic. The children were all barefoot, and she saw to it that none of them wore watches or lockets or hairpins or spectacles.

When Ann closed the schoolroom door the little ones stirred drowsily.

It's time," she said.

"Did you see Mrs. Farley?' whispered Elizabeth in the shadows.

"Yes," said Ann.

"Did she believe you?"

"No. She was mad because I came to see her in my nightgown. I tried to explain about the metal but she wouldn't listen. I locked her in her room."

A swift murmur of triumph, quited by the rest, "Sh...sh."

I didn't want to," said Ann, "I didn't, but she would have tried to stop us, and then we would never be able to save the little ones."

Ann was the tallest and the second oldest of the orphans. Helsa, the oldest should have been the leader, but there was something wrong with Helsa's mind, and she could only sit and stare. Sometimes at night she sang to herself.

"Was there anything on the radio?" asked Ann.

One of the boys answered, "They're getting closer. They're almost to the city. Some people were talking about their ships,

and all the burning buildings, and the awful madness when they find you."

In the room arms tightened protectively around the sleeping younger children.

"Then we have to hurry," said Ann. "Michael and Elizabeth, take everybody down to the deepest deep basement. Did you put all the watches and things in the kitchen?"

One of the boys nodded. Another asked, "Can we take the radio with us?"

"No! We have to leave it here. They know how to follow radios."

"Then how will we know when they reach the city?"

"We'll know."

Ann took a last look around, and checked to see that a toy car clutched in a little boy's hand was only wood.

"I have to go back to Mrs. Farley's room," she said. "Maybe she'll listen to me now."

"Why?" said Michael fiercely. "When has she ever helped us? She had her chance, and she didn't take it."

"We have to give her another," said Ann. "At least I have to warn her about what to do when they come. We can't leave her trapped there."

Three of the children helped Helsa to her feet and led her out, murmuring soothingly when she tried to sing. "Sh...sh."

Don't let Helsa sing," said Ann. "And don't ley any of the little one cry."

"Hurry, Ann!"

Ann sped down bare, dark hallways toward Mrs. Farley's door. She could hear nothing as she neared it, but the key still lay on the floor.

"Mrs. Farley?"

A movement inside.

"Mrs. Farley, it's Ann. Will you please listen to me, Mrs. Farley? I only want to help."

"You let me out of here at once!" said an angry voice, quite close to the door. "And don't tell me any more of that pack of lies!"

"They're coming, Mrs. Farley," cried Ann. "They're almost to the city."

"There's no such thing."

"But Mr. Farley saw one of their ships himself."

"You're old enough to know about my husband."

"But he wasn't drinking anything when he saw the ship, Mrs. Farley."

"You nasty children can't play any prank that takes your fancy on as flimsy an excuse as this."

"Please, Mrs. Farley," Ann called desperately, "take off your jewelry and put it in the kitchen with the pans, so they can't find you by the metal pattern. And when they come, be as quiet as you can. Then they won't find you."

"I'm going to call a locksmith to let me out!" exploded the voice behind the door. "And when I'm out, you children will regret this!"

"No! You musn't call anyone," said Ann in an agony of apprehension. "They listen for telephone calls too."

"Let me out!"

"I have to go now, Mrs. Farley. Please be as quiet, as quiet as you can."

Ann ran as fast as she could downstairs. Her nightgown flapped around her ankles. She ran down black stairwells and through lightless basements, until she reached the deepest cellar in the orphanage. Frightened eyes turned toward her as she burst in, eyes reflecting the light of the dusty bare bulb in the middle of the ceiling. Walls and floors were cracked. Damp shone in the light. The children had spread out blankets to sit on, and now each little one lay asleep in the lap of one of the older children.

"What did you do about Mrs. Farley?" asked Elizabeth anxiously.

"I had to leave her locked in. She wouldn't believe me. I tried to tell her what to do when they come, but I don't think she heard."

"Good," said Michael in a hard voice. He and Elizabeth sat one on each side of Helsa.

"Helsa's all right," Elizabeth said. "I don't think she knows where we took her."

Footsteps echoed emptily outside the cellar door. The older ones froze, staring at each other in terror. Something heavy fell against the door.

"Hey, kids," called a thick slurred voice. "What you doing in there? You playing games? Hey, kids." The voice went on and on, muttering to itself.

"It's Mr. Farley," hissed Micheal.

"What do we do?" whispered Elizabeth. "We can't leave him out there."

"We can't let him in here," said Michael.

Ann opened the door.

Mr. Farley sat on the floor outside, an open bottle in his hand. He broke off his rambling as the dim light fell across him. "What you doing in there, kids? Having a party?"

"Mr. Farley," Ann said urgently, "they're coming. You have to hide."

A little fear come into his face. "They coming?"

"Yes, Mr. Farley. If you stay here, they'll find you! Go hide in the storm celler."

He staggered heavily to his feet. "Storm cellar."

"Hurry! Hurry!"

Ann watched him shamble away until he was swallowed in darkness.

"Is he gone?"

"Yes, he's gone." Ann shut the door. "I hope he reaches the storm cellar."

"Listen!" said one of the children. "They're coming!"

Through the walls and floors of the house, they could hear the screaming in the city. Ann turned off the light.

"Be quiet. Nobody make a sound."

They listened to the screaming for a very long time. Then it was quiet.

"Are they gone?"

"No! That means they're here!"

The older ones tried not to breathe. The younger ones were all asleep. Into the silence, Helsa began to sing. It was a faint humming at first. Micheal and Elizabeth tried to quiet her. Helsa sang.

"Tie something around her mouth!" hissed Ann deperately.

Singing broke the new silence. At first Ann thought it was Helsa again, but she reached out and felt Micheal's pajama top still tied around Helsa's mouth. The singing was drunken, faint and far away.

"He didn't reach the storm cellar," whispered Michael.

The singing stopped. Mr. Farley screamed. Some of the little ones half-woke, frightened, but the older ones soothed them back to sleep. A little while later there was another scream upstairs.

"I told her to be quiet," whispered Ann. "I told her."

"Will they find us?" asked a small girl.

"Not if you're quiet," Michael hissed savagely.

Footsteps echoed outside the cellar door. Something heavy fell against it.

"Hey, kids," called a thick, slurred voice. "What you doing in there?" The voice sounded like nothing they had ever heard before. "You playing games? Hey, kids..."

Pat Collins

On Hunting Jackrabbits in Winter At Night

They would run before the car forever, leading
Us to who knows where.
Instead we must kill them, stop them
Before they run too far;
As if we are afraid of where
We may be led. Anything beyond the headlights' glare
At any given moment is fearful and strange
And we will not be taken there.

Linda Shelbourn

THE OLD MEN

I envy the old men.
They spend their summer afternoons
playing checkers in a patch of sunlight
by the window. They are
reconciled by death,
and they speak of long dead friends
as if they had just stepped out of the room.

The darkness
doesn't frighten them.
They have grown accustomed to the thought
of winter alone.

Margery Whites

POEM

Geese flying north
Their honking brushes the air
Winter is over.

Bart Christensen

THE POLITICIAN

A band blares,
A baby cries,
and when the crowd has gathered
he comes
with polished teeth
and amplified voice
and boasts
of words he has done
and words he will do.
and when he goes,
echoes
are all
he leaves.

D. M. Philen

FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET BEEN RESCUED

We cast lines
into the Big Sioux
Down among the cars and cans
and the sacrificial blood of Swifts.

Beth Mabee

THE PARTY

It was a cold October night—really too cold to throw a party outside, but no one wanted to forego the first big kegger of the year. It was dark, too. Someone had switched off the parked cars' headlights so the only illumination came from pale stars and an occasional wavering flame that showed through gaps in the anonymous crowd huddled around the bonfire.

I shivered in to the sheepskin collar of my jacket and edged closer to Sue and Marie. They were my roommates; we always went to parties together and then eventually separated. It was a standing joke: we always came with the girls and left with the boys. Tonight, however, there were no unattached boys in sight, and the contents of our paper cups only warmed stomachs and heads, leaving fingers and toes victim to the lashing wind.

Twin shadows detached themselves from the trees and moved toward us, rustling through the litter on the ground. Snatches of their conversation reached us during the lull in the wind and identified them as friends (very good friends) of Sue and Marie. I was tactfully backing away when something lightly touched my elbow.

I turned cautiously. (I had lost count of the refills in my paper cup; my head threatened to float away if I moved too quickly.) It was another shadow, about my own height but definitely male. He had one of those husky voices that appeals to me when I'm sober and weakens my knees when I've been drinking. I left my elbow in the hollow of his hand.

He said something that I didn't catch. Not that it really mattered. I inched closer. After carefully testing my tongue (to see if it still worked), I said cheerfully and somewhat indistinctly, "Hi, there! I'm Kathy."

He laughed, and ducked his head nearer to mine so that I could hear him above the screeching of the wind and the ringing in my ears. "Come with me," he said, and I went.

We walked to the edge of the woods and he took the paper cup away from me gently. I decided not to be annoyed. It was probably about time to quit anyway. We sat down and he put his

arm around me. I tipped my head back against his shoulder and shut my eyes, watching with interest the black and red spirals on the inside of my lids.

It was very comfortable, sitting there—for a while, anyway. I hadn't done much drinking that summer, though, and my stomach didn't appreciate an abrupt return to my collegiate lifestyle. In short, I was suddenly very sick.

I pushed away from him and staggered to my feet. Saliva was pouring into my mouth and I gulped frantically, locking my teeth together against the nausea forcing its way up my throat. I turned and lurched for the trees.

A protruding root caught one of my sneakers and I fell hard, knocking the air out of my lungs and scraping my left knee. I gagged, and lay there on my stomach, retching and trying to keep my face out of the mess.

Finally there were only dry heaves and shaky hiccups. I sat up with a sob. I started to grope in my pockets for kleenex, but a hand appeared from nowhere with a handkerchief and carefully wiped by trembling lips. I had forgotten him, but he must have been there all along. Distantly I felt ashamed, but I was too miserable to really care what he thought. I only wanted something to hold onto. I buried my face in the sheepskin collar of his coat. His careful fingers smoothed my tousled hair. "Come with me," he said, and I went.

We stumbled a little farther into the trees and sat down again. He hugged me as tightly as our thick coats would allow, and I butted blindly into his shoulder. We stayed there while eternity whirled in a pattern of elusive sparks;then he loosened his hold and I slid down onto some damp, moldy-smelling leaves. He flattened himself next to me and put his arm across my shaking body. I waited, numb and miserable, for some sort of heavy pass, but it didn't come. He had only held me close. He didn't even kiss me; I was glad, because I had been sick, and because I just wanted to be protected.

After a while fatigue and the beer ganged up on me and I rolled over, trying to lose myself in the leaves and go to sleep. He shook me and I murmured, one word sliding into another, "I wanna go home."

He shook me again,harder, his cold hand tightening on the back of my neck. I repeated, louder and more clearly, "I wanna go home."

The wind whipped his answer away, leaving only a vague impression of annoyance. He crouched beside me and shook me till I rocked. I finally sat up, head lolling. "Come with me," he said, and I went.

He led me slowly through the woods; I reeled along, smashing occasionally into dark shapes that were people and darker

shapes that were trees. Once a detached voice sounded off to one side, "Boys' can on the right, girls' on the left", and then I could see the orange glow of the fire and the red and black silhouettes moving in front of it. A gleam of light reflected off the silver keg and somebody's toothy, sodden smile.

Gravel crunched and slid underfoot; we were headed away from the party. I stopped and peered muzzily through the gloom for some sign of Sue and Marie. None of the wild shrieks of laughter I could hear were at all familiar. His fingertips brushed my sleeve. "Come with me," he said, and I went.

A car door opened and I flinched as the dome light went on. He guided me onto the cold bucket seat and I leaned back with my eyes closed. His voice was loud in the windless quiet of the car. "If you feel sick, just tell me and I'll pull over." I nodded and slipped into a shallow doze, bumping my head against the window whenever we turned a corner.

The car stopped and the door opened. I stared blearily out at the peeling paint of my apartment building. When had I told him where I lived? "Can you make it up the steps by yourself?" I nodded and walked away, concentrating very hard on staying erect and reaching the door and going to bed and never getting up.

A last gust of wind rattled a dead leaf stuck on my hair and brought his voice swirling out of the night. "I'll stop by tomorrow evening to see if you're all right."

I grabbed the doorknob and clung to it, and waved uncertainly at nothing in particular.

A scum of stale beer coated my teeth when I woke up at noon; mintflavored Crest, instead of killing the taste, sweetened it sickeningly. Aspirin stilled the jackhammer in my head, and stirred my roiling stomach to greater rebellion. I was staring in nauseated fascination at the open refrigerator when Sue and Marie shuffled in.

"Well, well," yawned Sue, "look who's here. All right, who was he? What, when, where, and why? What did he look like?"

An egg dropped from my suddenly numb fingers and splattered across the linoleum, oozing up to my slippers. "I don't know."

"You what?"

"I don't know." I checked frantically through my memory. "It was too dark to see his face and about half of the night is a blank anyway. I don't even know his name."

"Not even his first name?"

No."

Marie joined the conversation to ask incredulously, "Didn't you see his face when he brought you home? He did bring you home?"

"Yes, he brought me home, but I had my eyes closed in the car, and when we got here I never turned around to look. All I know is that he was a little taller than I am, he wore a sheepskin-collared coat like mine, and he was awfully kind. He didn't even desert me when I got sick all over everything." Then I remembered. "He said he's coming back tonight to see how I am."

Marie laughed weakly. "A visit from the faceless stranger! Boy, do you pick some winners. Never mind, Sue and I will stay out of the way. This time, though, we expect a full report."

I nodded, and went to the cupboard for a paper towel to mop up the yellow eye on the floor.

Leering outrageously, Sue and Marie headed for the library right after supper, leaving me alone with a pile of dirty dishes. I cleaned up quickly, and then put a stack of records on the stereo and sat down in the big overstuffed chair by the window.

It was going to be another wild night. Already a chill draft seeped in around the windowsill and the bare fingers of an elm beat a tattoo against the side of the house. Dead leaves spun crackling through the air and a few isolated snowflakes were falling. The last rays of the setting sun touched the sky with crimson. I got up to switch on more lights and then returned to my warm chair.

No stars were going to be visible; scudding clouds were blanketing the sky, dense and low and massive. The snowflakes came thicker and faster and the wind rose gradually to a constant howl that carried even over the steady beat from the stereo. The streetlights blinked on; I could see for three blocks, and one block at a time they beat back the night. A record on the stereo finished and the loud click of the reject mechanism and the swishing drop of the next record startled me unreasonably. I wished fervently that Sue and Marie hadn't gone out. They might have trouble getting home, and I never had liked being left alone.

The living room lights started to flicker and I padded into the kitchen to make myself a cup of nice hot cocoa. The lights stuttered again. I found myself muttering, "It's good to be inside on a bad night like this. You feel safe when you look out and know that nothing out there can get at you—nothing at all."

The streetlights were only fuzzy blurs when I got back to the window. My uneasiness increased. Probably "the faceless stranger" wasn't coming at all. He'd probably only said he would out of politeness. It showed real fortitude that he'd put up with me as long as he had. Or maybe he'd forgotten the whole thing. After all, he'd been drinking, too.

Or had he? The smell of beer was woven into the unreality of the night, but had I smelled it on him?

Not that it mattered. No sane person would go out on a night like this. Certainly not just a passing acquaintance, someone who'd been only a faceless shape in the dark.

The doorbell rang.

As I walked slowly over to answer it, the wind crescendoed to a final demented laugh. The snow whipped past in a thick curtain that totally obscured the view from the window and the lights flickered three times.

I opened the door.

There stood a man about my own height, with a sheepskin-collared jacket and long, gentle-looking hands.

He held out one hand. "Come with me," he said.

And I went.

David Smith

ICE FIRES

Across the Phoebus slough
pure layers of water level
hard, seizing these last hours: the free
zero of the moon shivers

the hole where three fishermen blow
soft blossoms in calloused hands, where
flame snaps in the mouth of lard cans,
a ring of fins glitters like swimmers.

Not long ago the free-falling Mallard
hovered an instant, the whole blazing
shoreline in his eye, then tacked,
one fading shadow in the pure ice.

For hours we have skated circles,
skirting fire on the white perimeter,
two and three, nameless, changing
like a family with no place

to come back to where the dawn glides in.
Panting now, submissive, we stop
where we began, look for lanes
not gouged with use, something new.

We sweat in this coldest hour, know that
soon the hunter's gun must boom, the shag-
eyed fatherly fishermen whistle off
with what little they have won

stinking and stiff on their arms,
leaving holes not one of us can leap.
What beds, what dreams they sleep in
we have not said. But in the dawn we know

where they have been, all night anchored,
tending fire for little reason where
nothing ever is but slight moves, proof
against the dark, the biting holes.

Randy Williams

Doug Cockrell

THREE POEMS

BAR BATHROOM

open the door
follow the tracks in

they lead to the toilet bowl
where someone has emptied himself

they lead to the wall
where a fist has been planted

between the studs
for years

CARPENTERS

on the shell of 155 feet of posts
corrugated steel and studs,
the carpenters drive 16-penny nails
hard and deep
with four sure strokes
their free hands are continually reaching
feeding their 16 oz. hammers
from nail sacks on their overalls
while they are straddling rafters
in thick combat boots.

DAKOTA TOWN

To D. A. E.

The elevator stands watchman,
its windows claimed
by the stones hurled by
boys who have left.
Now there are tires moaning
over the highway bringing
wind gusts past the last gas pump
where an old man in overalls watches
head-lights and tail-lights
all day.

The streets are just Dakota summer dust
where the rain sinks untouched
to the sewers that have stopped their
hissings through the pipes,
and the shit-houses are filled to the brim.

A farmer has jerked his country school
from its roots among the uncut weeds
and his haystack mover has taken it
to his home outside the town.
The church, the bar,
the hardware store and the lumberyard
have been claimed
for fences and wind-breaks.

The graveyard lies at the edge
of a cornfield by the edge of town,
along the highway ditch,
the tombstones among sunflowers nodding
at the moaning tires going by.

Shirley Ingalls

HUNTER IN A DUCK BLIND

He stands, he waits, his body
layered with wool and canvas
inlaid with rows of shells

The quiet is complete
He waits

Sunrise
the gun takes aim at an empty sky

Kathleen Winberg

A SHORT POEM ON SMALL WAVES

Small wavelets pat the shore.

A. H. Richter

WILD

Wild animal, why do I search you out?
Why does my heart leap with joy
When I catch a glimpse of you?
Why do I stalk you
With camera and lenses?
Wild animal
Is it because you are free
And I am not?
Is it because you are wild
And I am not?
Ah, to be wild—like you—
And, like you, to be free!

David Allan Evans

TWO POEMS

INTERSTATE 29

the white dog
suddenly
just up ahead
on the blacktop
shoulder was
looking
into the traffic
for a casual gap
then sauntered
onto the freeway
making me swerve
but tick him
going by then
in my rear-view
mirror he
gyrated back to
the blacktop
landing somehow
upright
shook himself out
and gazed in
my direction
growing
smaller and
smaller

BULLFROGS

sipping a Schlitz
we cut off the legs,
packed them in ice, then
shucked the bodies back into
the pond for turtles

ready to go home
we looked down and saw
what we had thrown back in,
quiet-bulging eyes nudging along
the moss's edge, looking up at us,

asking for their legs

Jill Noyes

MY BED

a place to overhaul the day

Paul Witherington

WHAT IT IS WITH LUNATICS

Jane sees the other moon rolling through back yards
from a stand our table took before the wind
the fact that she's dead wrong
is no big deal
what is
those curlicues
she serves herself afternoons
how visitors lean as if she made sense
the heart she rides before it has begun to heal

Dan Domench

SIGHT SEEING UP FISHERMAN'S WHARF

Mother and father come from Sacramento. Father adjusts his camera. The children dance around their mother. She says, "Don't forget to take the lens cap off dear."

Black haired fishermen drink coffee. They lean against the wall. To them, nothing shells like fish. An old Italian claims loudly, "Darwin never said survival of the fittest, he never said that!" The young fishermen watch for legs. They speak their own language: the fat girls are tunas, the sleek ones are sharks.

Father takes a snapshot. "You fishermen there, do you mind?" The fishermen hug shoulders. They raise mugs in a toast. They laugh violently. These visitors are easy to enjoy. Mother is perplexed by the smell of these men. She looks at her husband. He is concentrating. He thoughtfully rubs his sharp sideburn. He tells his wife, "Mother they make me feel like my tradition is a rumor." She doesn't understand what he sees. "A rumor?" she asks. But, her husband has walked on ahead. He can't hear her. What tradition, she thinks. The children pull on her skirt. She hears the old Italian hiss, "Shark!"

Sherry Dennert

THREE POEMS

LIGHTNING

licks across the sky
the forked tongues
of snakes

FEVER

cold fire
dancing
behind the eyes

TO A FRIEND

I have a gift for you
because I know you will understand.
The gift is a ring of grass.

If I ever wrong you in any way,
and you find it hard to talk,
tear it from your finger.
I will notice.

Al Fogel

THREE POEMS

THE END OF CHILDHOOD

one day
I woke up
and the tooth that I put under the pillow the night before
was still there.

ROBOT

circuitry set. plug in. press button.
output: Jesus saves. stop. wait for response.
negative response. continue output: Jesus is the only
way. stop. give time to react. negative reaction.
continue output: you're going to hell. stop. wait for
response.
negative response. stop. move to next
sinner. press button. output: Jesus saves.
stop. wait for response. positive response.
continue output: yes brother hallelujah amen. stop.
place both arms around brother. hug brother tightly.
stop. report to headquarters. let
disciple record numerical input. hug disciple.
stop. go to sleepquarters. lay down. recite prayer.
unplug.

TO BUILD A LEGEND

talent, of course.

but don't just stand there.
rage. throw bottles.

tho the heart breaks
say something witty

and when the occasion warrants mirth
wax profound.

now you're catching on.
at all costs remain incongruous:

take off your clothes
tho the weather freezes your balls

and when you're placed behind bars
rape the guard or start a riot

the lights never go off
even in sleep burn

scheme about tomorrow's exploits
and in the end when you finally

reach asylum's refuge the insane haven
just don't stand there.

scream!

Michael Heffernan
THREE POEMS

MISS DECEMBER

Always at home outdoors,
here she enjoys a reflective
moment among some rocks,
water and logs: her see-thru blouse
is soggy, though the long
back of a leg looks chalky dry
and, in the next pose, knees
bosoms and buttocks shine as if
from the same light the rocks
and logs shine by—as if she were
seated among them to
glance over an elbow under
a sleeve oblingingly
fallen loose, lending one shoulder
leeway to face the sun

with the tenderest topmost skin
of Christine, city-girl,
come off to the woods to dangle
her ankle in this brook
or lie on a rock on her long
white belly with the crack
that splits her ass in half as cool
and black as a grotto
behind these impudent waters.

POEM

She walked in the door: tautly
the door wheezed shut: the cleanly
stench of the Ladies Room sprang

up around her. From the sides
of her eyes she was standing
in a row of mannequins

in a million windows. When
the last of them had vanished
she wandered to where the wall

was a gallery of pink
versions of how she was here
and in each one the pistol

she brought to her skull went off
from every direction. What
she began to notice now

were the stains in the ceiling
like a map of lost islands
adrift amid blue and blue

and the door wheezing open.

A TALE OF BEARS AND THE BLACKBIRDS

a tale of bears and the blackbirds
Out in the moon the wolves have left
nothing but blue shadows in the woods
and the cottonwoods haven't moved
except to turn the undersides
of white leaves shining at the moon
afloat as a rowboat over weeds,
or so I told her. One by one
they disappear. The great bears come
and where there had been moon the sun
stipples the ground. The trees are calm.
The bears have gathered unbeknown.
We listen, and we hear them drum
beyond us in a patch of ferns
while we lie quiet as we can
nudged among nettles, twigs, and stones.
The blackbirds in the trees begin,
from where they sit against the sky,
to shake their rainy voices down,
at which she had to ask me why
I made this story as I did—
where the wolves go, how she and I
come to be there, and why I said
the birds have voices like the rain.
Because I thought a blackbird would
if something in the air said rain,
I told her. And it starts to rain.

Ron Ikan

THREE POEMS

DILEMMA

This is a poem about pale hillbilly women
and those dark bottles of Orange Crush—
the ones you don't find any more in the city
because of difficult times, circumstance, unrest.
Now you must drive long into the night
relentless and without a moon and forever

just for the sight of chicken wire, for Arkansas.
Now you cannot lie about your age or gasoline.

As faster and faster your speed has become
the more they accrue: these tremulous stations
of the mind; road maps done in crayon;
pictures in the dust your great toe has made;
the yellow dogs stuck like flypaper in the ditch;
saws commencing to sing behind the barn.

Signs and tail lamps trickle through your head.
O this life is hard, so hard to get a purchase on!

Soon the highway will turn to water,
Daisies will corrode your running board.
There is nothing that can slow you, nothing.
Your ancient past is disappearing like the dawn.
Mountainous women flag you down completely.
You will die from thirst if you live.

Ron Ikan

Color Pomes

ALONG HIGHWAY ONE

Last night there by the garage
I popped a Blue in the moonlight
and I swear; smoke came out!

Believe me; the moon was as yellow
as the beer and the smoke
was the color of war. I saw

this. I learned to tell the truth.
I'm telling it now. The beer
tasted good: like wheelbarrows.

AMERICAN PASTIME

–for George Wallace

This is a warning. Vida Blue
is on the other side of this poem.
And he's been bringing smoke all night.

And you know this is the seventh, we're
stretching. Who can stand in against him?
Now is when you should go home. If

not, Vida Blue will demonstrate.
So you better leave. The next one is
yours: high, hard, colorblind.

Phil Hey
TWO POEMS

OLD MEN WORKING CONCRETE

won't be rushed; will take
their own sweet time.
Now and then, will stop
for snuff (reaching in
the pocket where the circle
of can has worn a circle
in the cloth); and then
get back to work, mix mud
and fill and walk that barrow
back and back and back.
Soon enough the slab end
takes shape. The one man
on his knees with a float
checks it with his eye
stopping time and again
to run his striker saw-wise
and level across the top.
Soon enough it gets long;
smoothed with broad swings
of trowel, it gets long.
Finally they stop the mixer.
One trowels out the last space,
one works the edger.
Done, they stand back.
They take one more look.
It's good. Yes sir, it's good.
They talk. They dip snuff.
They are happy.

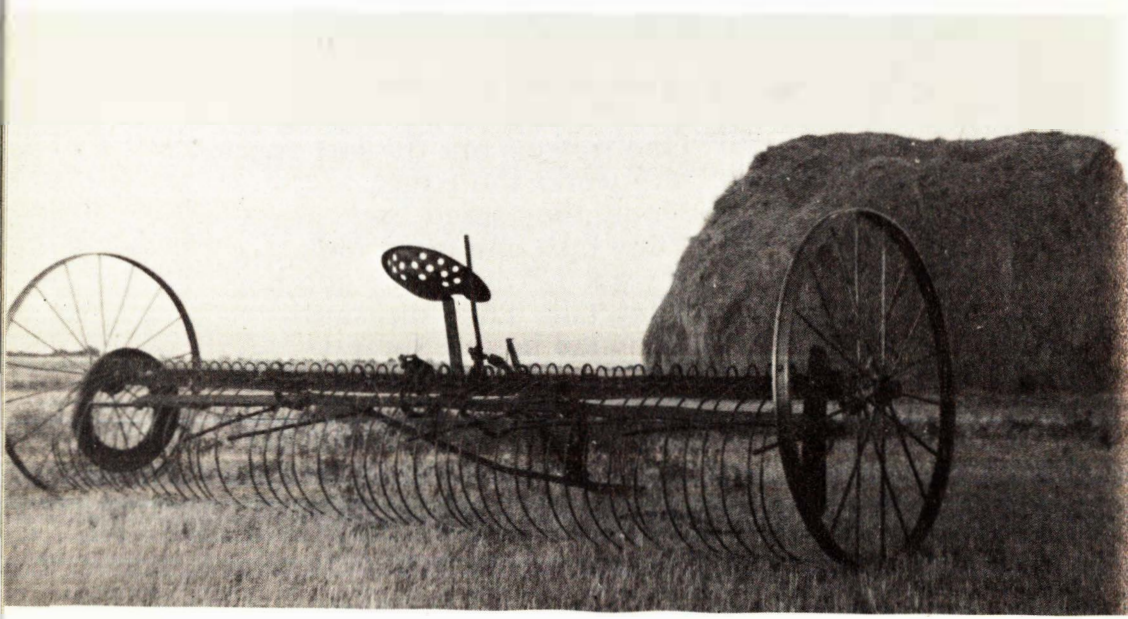
Phil Hey

C. 1974

IN MEMORY OF J. CHARLES GREEN

--poet, student, friend

And now that it's too late
I can tell you what it comes to,
this foul tinker's work: to be torn
from sleep more desperate than for love
or money, not caring anymore, and all
you make is words, words. And blunt
the damnedest tears so you can read
as coldly as a Nazi. Ah God, Charlie,
what have we asked ourselves to do?



Michael Berg

REVIEWS

LE SOLITAIRE, Eugene Ionesco.

In this first and, so far, only novel written by Eugene Ionesco, we find the dramatic, almost tragic force which is present in his great theatrical works. In addition, many of the themes and techniques characteristic of his theatre are recognizable in *Le Solitaire*: proliferation of words and matter, dislocation of language, disintegration of matter, disappearance of people and things, exterior and interior void, futility of life, passage of time, inability to love and to justify human existence, boredom, apathy, willingness to act but inability to do.

Thus, from the standpoint of themes, techniques and situations, *Le Solitaire* seems, at first glance, but a composite of Ionesco's plays. Upon closer observation, however, it becomes evident that this novel falls in place as a logical development of his writings. It is not a servile imitation of his theater, but the next step up the ladder, presented in a most interesting and intriguing way.

The main character has no name except that given to him by the title. He is indeed a solitary man, who retires at age thirty-five, after receiving a very handsome inheritance. At retirement he is a rather mediocre worker at an anonymous office, somewhere in Paris. He then decides he is going to change his habits, his lodgings, his friends and he is going to enjoy life.

But man is a creature of habits and routines. Our hero finds himself buying an apartment which looks like all other apartments, having all his meals always at the same time, always at the same table, at a little restaurant which resembles all little restaurants. His days are all alike, the people he meets fall into the same patterns, the newspapers have always the same news; everything is boring and without a purpose. He is astonished by the fact that people have opinions, tastes, preferences, passions and desires. What is it for if they are all going to die, if they will never have all the answers? He looks for forgetfulness, he has regrets of a wasted life, of missed opportunities, of his inability to enjoy his existence; he is nostalgic for the knowledge of things which is denied him. He is frightened by the passage of time, unable to tell whether it is a question of seconds, days or years that have elapsed between events.

Ionesco's first novel gives unity and direction to the mass of his literary creation. It is a focal point for his ideas and a summary of his anti-philosophy. In this work, the universality and the individuality of man reach a new state of expression; the human condition is recreated in this one man, the *solitaird*: "Je suis comme tout le monde, comme tout le monde a notre epoque, sceptique, desabuse, fatigable et fatigue, vivant sans but, travaillant le moins possible—parce qu'on ne peut pas faire autrement—,un peu gourmand: de l'alcool, un bon plat pour echapper, de temps a autre, a cette amertume et a cette lassitude universelles." (p. 9)

Tamara A. Paulson
Michael G. Paulson, Jr.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIEWING A SOLAR ECLIPSE, Dave Kelly.

Most of the poems here are serious, dramatic, spare, and idiomatic. Kelly's perception is always interesting, often unique. One is impressed by the ease and naturalness of his lines, as in the first poem in the collection:

So they all went west with hope in their hearts
and their children strapped to the saddles
with bits of furniture locked in their teeth
they stopped further away every night
and the sun closer and they grew beards
and said things like "this is the place."

The lines confirm, prove the notion that everyday, informal, contemporary American speech has the stuff of poetry in it—if the poet will listen long enough to discover it.

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The imagery in these poems, usually visual, is often rich and dense:

Naked legs of angels become burned roots
They wrap around each other like basketed snakes
Wreaths of flowers fall from doors and scream
The sun is an eye with a nail stuck through it

The voice can sound impatient, and that impatience is often combined with a rapid shifting from image to image, idea to idea, action to action, as well as an emphasis on impersonal, physical violence. The result is a kind of cluttering in fast motion:

The surgeons wear their white coats.
They cluster around a table, sleeves
splashed with red as severed
legs and arms fly out around them.
Singing they revive a corpse of God.

Kelly's handling of violence can be startling, especially when the poem has a dramatic/narrative base:

The drums thud the children march
into the dirt field they are tied
to posts they are raped by baboons
they are shot by their fathers and
photographed with their eyes closed.

The lack of punctuation, the brevity, the impersonal, relentless tone are exactly suited to the actions described. A number of poems are about America's peculiar kind of violence, displayed, for instance, in war or in recent assassinations. Kelly is usually uncompromisingly direct, concrete, and specific.

Because of his extreme conciseness, Kelly's adjectives—though sometimes used in a pat way—often stand out. In "Dogs" he describes dogs playing in a yard, and ends with: "At night there are/fine silences/between them." And in "The Generation of Love" he speaks of "Steel stars," a "shattered *smile*," and "the speech of a ripped tongue."

But violence is not the only subject in this collection. The poet gets around. He writes about bums, seductions, winter fields, "loose" rooms.

I recommend at least the following poems: "Turner's Thesis: Sonnet for the Donner Party," "November 8, 1966," "Brass Band Evening," "Dream Cowboy," "The Kalapalo Indian," "The Pool," "Fishing," "The Seduction," and the title poem.

There are probably just a few young American poets who have already discovered their own voice. Dave Kelly is one of them.

D. A. E.

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FOUND POEM: CRUISING THROUGH OAKWOOD STATE PARK

V E H I C L E S
O N G R A S S
U N L A W F U L

Pat Leech