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The Connecticut College Literary Magazine

Connecticut College

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THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

LITERARY MAGAZINE — 1975



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A WOMAN'S DEPARTURE

1.

Before he read my letter and knew my sickness,
I had left Richmond, boarded ship at Brighton,
And spent one night sitting up listening to the
Sound of water lap and the fearful scratching of
Rat feet on the oak planking.

2.

The ship owns nothing, it is a vessel.
We have left the land,
And in the hands of another's directions
We follow, there is a place we are going to.

The water is all the same - - everywhere.
For three months we have lived on its surface,
It tolerates the ship.
Sharks follow in the white stern swirls,
Dolphins lead leashed to the bowsprit.

3.

My real sickness, after three months no one knows yet,
Though, they suspect. My early mornings (seasick)
Up with the messboys,
Their pails heavy with brine and breakfast garbage.

(Nothing is fresh - - salt in the wood - -
The oak reeks with it.)

Pales, flung over the side like me
As I puke through the railing, my two hands
Grab support, my belly tightens,
Empty.

4.

Only the yardarms hang over the gunwales
And me. Our shadows glide like birds - - which
We have not seen for weeks - - over the green, transparent.
I hear the messboys laugh behind me, savage.
My face is red wrecked by the wind,
My hair is full of salt.

5.

I cannot save myself nor fight against misery,
What's difficult is beaten by endurance.
What's finite is crossed.
What's eternal breathes like the sails
And billows, too powerful, strikes awesome
Unrelentingly like the sky and sea sewn at the horizon.

A WOMAN'S DEPARTURE (Continued)

6.

The pain in my belly, like I have eaten glass,
Or fallen on a bottle,
Pins in my uterus.

7.

I bring my head back in, it feels burnt.
Empty pails by the messboys' feet,
They gesticulate with mop handles
And stay their distance.

8.

There is little to eat, something like bread,
Much pork, but full of the salt, never fish
Which I would enjoy.

9.

This is Pilgrims Progress?
All the Pilgrims are dead, I am not
A Pilgrim, not the first, not a devotee
Of some cause, religious. I left for no reason
Other than necessity, not love.
My progress?

10.

It becomes afternoon easily. It is hot
I am below.
The sailors fill the deck with their lives,
Tackle, rope, creosote, carpenters smooth planking
My belly moves, I can feel the swell of the ship.
I'm hammocked.

— Michael Collier

IN THE MORNING

Mrs. Wilson sat at the kitchen table. Her arms, tightly folded, rested on the edge of the yellow metal top in a space devoid of debris. One of her elbows was touching a milk carton that had been on the table since yesterday evening. Dirty bowls and plates marked the positions where her husband and Bobby had eaten. Her son's bowl still had a thin ring of milk standing in it, out of which rose a sugar island with the tip of a spoon buried in it. Her husband's coffee cup was empty, and there were several brown rings by it where he had been sloppy placing it back on the table.

Mrs. Wilson pushed her hair back and rubbed her forehead. One hand fell to her lap while the other picked up her coffee cup. Her head tilted back as the last trickles of the brown liquid soured her tongue and throat. She reached her hand to the center of the table and picked up the unplugged percolator. She shook it. She always had to shake the pot even though she knew there wasn't any coffee left.

From her seat, she looked through a large louvered window. About time to get going, about time, she thought to herself. The sun was past the top of the trees now.

Every morning she would get up when barely an arc of orange was visible just above the ground, when most of the sky was black, sometimes the moon still hung high and bright. With her robe wrapped loosely around her she would sit on the sofa and stare through the window while she waited for it to get light enough for her to see her way around the kitchen to fix the coffee. While she waited, she would smoke and listen to Bobby and her husband breathe as they slept.

This morning as she watched the sun rise she thought about all the things she was going to do; especially cleaning the trailer up. She didn't have to worry about borrowing a car to take Bobby to the doctor, and her husband had started work again. There was nothing to stop her today. Her face tightened. She felt good grinning in the dark while every minute the orange band grew larger giving off more and more light. No, today for certain was the day in which she would get back on her feet again.

But that was over two hours ago, she had already fixed coffee, her husband and Bobby were gone, and now her thoughts stilled as she stared out the window until the butt of her cigarette burned too close to her fingers. She stubbed the butt out in an ashtray and as she did a few filter-ends fell out of the full dish.

She closed her eyes then opened them. She pressed her soft yellowish hands against her face, the tips of her fingers felt the swollen skin under her eyes and her palms touched firm bloated cheeks. Her face was vaguely familiar to her as if she recognized an older outline beneath a mask.

The sun was not harsh and did not fill the trailer completely, nevertheless, her eyes were hot and tired. Mrs. Wilson picked her sunglasses up from

where they were folded lenses down near a stick of butter and slid them on her face. She closed her eyes, they felt moist and better.

The sunglasses made the shadows in the trailer disappear, the kitchen became a timeless place of light and dark greens. Mrs. Wilson closed her eyes and tried to think about the past two months: her husband had been home without a job; she recalled how he made her stay in bed from noon until just before dinner. She pictured him propped up in bed, drinking, listening to the radio, falling asleep then waking up, telling her to get more ice cubes, eating fruit cocktail from the can, and when Bobby would come home from school he'd tell her to go say hello to him. "Lock that door," she'd hear as she came back from greeting Bobby, "makes a boy funny when he sees his old man in bed with his mother."

Mrs. Wilson felt a chill. Her eyes were much better so she removed her sunglasses and put them on the edge of the table near her straw purse. She acknowledged to herself that sunglasses always made her feel chilly when she wore them in the house. Then she spoke aloud, "anyways, it's about time I get myself moving here."

Mrs. Wilson did not move from the kitchen, instead she focused her attention on the deep black asphalt of the trailer court driveway outside the window. The sun made the minute white stones of the asphalt glitter and sparkle. The brightness of the small stones made her think of Bobby. She looked at the clock and saw that it was 8:45; school had been in session for fifteen minutes. She thought it would be better to wait until 9:00 before starting her work around the trailer. By 9:00, if she hadn't heard from the school, she could presume that Bobby had made it safely. She didn't want to be in the middle of cleaning then have to go out looking for him. Besides, she was worried about him and fifteen minutes would not be too much time to help ease her mind. This was the first time he had walked to school by himself since after Christmas vacation. The doctor had wanted him to start walking to school with the crutches more than six weeks ago but she wouldn't think of having Bobby walk the half mile on crutches. She had gotten the bus driver to agree to pick Bobby up in front of the court even though he wasn't supposed to pick anyone up who lived within a mile of the school. She just hoped that the walk today wouldn't be too much of a strain on Bobby.

A car drove through the court and interrupted Mrs. Wilson's gaze on the asphalt.

She took her hands out of her lap and lit a cigarette then flicked the match onto a plate where there were other match sticks along with ashes, butts, and a yellow liquid like egg yoke.

When the car had passed the window the glittering from outside returned. Mrs. Wilson thought how stupid it was for her to be so worried about Bobby, he had recovered almost completely and except for a slight limp and cocked hips there was nothing perceptibly wrong with him. At least he hadn't been scarred like her husband.

So confident of the day, Mrs. Wilson began to think about the garden. She knew the ground just below the window was barren except for a few weeds.

It was March and just the right time to be planting flowers for the spring. The flowerbed would have to be weeded and the edges of it straightened. She would have to do that because Bobby couldn't bend over, the strain on his back would be too great. If she could get the trailer cleaned by noon and then take a short rest after lunch there would be plenty of time to weed the flowerbed. She could plant the seeds tomorrow.

She smoked the cigarette intently, concentrating on the pressure her lips exerted on the soft filter. She reached a hand to the center of the table, the sleeve of her robe touching the milk carton as she lifted the percolator. She shook it. It was empty. Still, she brought it to her cup and tilted it until the spout pointed straight down. One small trickle ran out, enough to form a circle in the bottom of her cup.

She had noticed that when the sun got way up in the sky, almost too high for her to see without going outside, that it changed colors from orange to yellow and that it didn't look like a round disc but became more like an indistinguishable yellow glare. She wondered how that could be. Now something as big and powerful as the sun could look like a Christmas ornament one minute and then a little while later be just a bright reflection. It bothered her a little because she thought was important and that there must be a reason for it. The sun was such a source of pleasure for her that she felt a compulsion to know more about it.

At nine the sun was almost out of sight from the window, already it was glaring down on the roof instead of the side of the trailer. "About time, about time." She said, as she thought that Bobby had gotten to school safely. If she bent down level with the top of the table she would be able to see the sun from the kitchen, otherwise she would have to move over to the sofa.

The table she had been sitting at stood between the living room and the kitchen in an area something like a dining room, except that everything was open, there were no walls or dividers. From her seat at the table Mrs. Wilson stared at the sofa. She knew that if she went and lay on it she would be able to see the glaring sun shine down and feel its rays strike across her breasts and abdomen. That it would be warm, and if she closed her eyes the inside of her eyelids would turn orange and red veins would stand out translucent. She also knew that the sun would strike down that way, moving across her body, until noon.

And now with the sofa in front of her, Bobby safe at school, the sun's rays in perfect position deflecting off the back of the sofa and falling down over the cushions, she could not keep herself from lying down just for a minute. It was going to be such a good day that she couldn't resist this one little pleasure. She would get her work done.

When Mrs. Wilson stood up she hit a leg of the table with her knees, there was a clatter of glasses and utensils as things teetered harmlessly from the jolt. She noticed the straps of her straw purse flapped stiffly. She brought her cigarettes with her and as she walked over to the sofa her bare feet felt the dirt on the linoleum. That'll be the first thing I do, she thought. She leaned against the sofa and looked out the window. The mailman had just left the court on his bicycle.

Mrs. Wilson pushed her hair out of her eyes and gave a sigh, then she looked down at the sofa. It was the one good piece of furniture that they possessed. It had a thick soft velvet cloth that hid stain and dirt well. One of the things she liked best about it was that she could stretch the entire length of her body on it comfortably.

She thought of all the times she had stretched out on it, one leg hanging over the side and its foot touching the floor, then she would untie the sash of her robe. The dirty terry-cloth would slide off half of her body; the fingers of light would tickle her skin delicately. Then she would close her eyes.

The sofa at this time of the day was the best place to be. She would get her work done, she had the entire day. Besides, today she felt better than she had in months. Bobby was in school, her husband working. She could clean the house and maybe even weed the flowerbed.

Mrs. Wilson untied her robe as she lay on the sofa. The light was warm. She lifted her head up so she could examine her body. She was only thirty. She knew she shouldn't feel old, but she did. She worried about her body getting old. It was flabbiness that scared her. Physically she wasn't in bad shape. Her breasts were still firm and sensitive, although there were stretch marks, thin red lines that disappeared as they went back to her armpits. Her stomach was relatively flat, especially when she was on her back. But when she stood up a small loose ridge of fat circled around her hips and waist. She stopped her examination there because the robe covered the rest of her body, except for the leg which hung over the side of the sofa.

She noticed how dirty the window was, dusty and filmy. That started her to remember how long they had been living in the trailer court; it had been at least six years. Bobby was almost twelve. She leaned her head back. At least six years. She closed her eyes. At least six years. The sun was warm. Her whole body from forehead to knees was illuminated. The skin gave off a quiet shimmer, a reflection of shadows from the small root-like hairs of her belly and neck.

She opened her eyes for a few moments and looked at the blue ceiling with its metal dips that always reminded her that she did not live in a real house. She closed her eyes and thought of the flowerbed. There would be rows of African daisies growing there in another month. She imagined going to them each morning to watch their petals open and face the sun; the orange, yellow, and white flowers with their green stocks, leafy and healthy. She smiled.

Mrs. Wilson tried to concentrate on the patterns the light made on her closed eyelids. She thought the room began to rock gently. Then there was a motion in her eyes, turning them inward. The red warmth in her eyelids began to fade away until she fell asleep.

The kitchen table where Mrs. Wilson had been sitting was small; three metal folding chairs crowded its circumference. She had recently recovered the table top with yellow contact paper. Already the plastic was ripped in places and there were several brown spots where she had left the coffee pot sit all day plugged in. She always thought if she could get the time to clean it then it would be as shiny and bright as the day she put it on.

Near the edge of the table stood Mrs. Wilson's large straw purse. She kept her purse on the table all the time, unless she took it into her room for the night. When Mrs. Wilson bumped the table in getting up the straw purse had pushed her sunglasses nearer the edge so that now they stayed on the table by sheer balance with one of the bows hanging over the edge. The frames were crooked a dark green color, and the lenses seemed black. Mrs. Wilson never went outside without them on. The lenses faced the direction of the sofa, as though they were staring at her half-robed body in the delicate light.

Michael Collier

Sylph

Moonlight lips the blinded window
with white passion. You are asleep.
The room, close and breathless, has wakened
me throat-dry.

In the kitchen
the white refrigerator, a fat
fleshy mamma, hums throbbing
through the bone-white of moonshine.
A porous globe of orange spins
to my touch and fills out like a belly
the lap of my hand.

Out-of-doors
I crouch, an earth lobe, or
as moon meat sway in the children's
swing, the fruit held tight between
the bulge of my thighs. How can I unravel
a sphere?

My bite leaves a circuit
of white crescent cuts on the orange
skin, releases a bitterness down
my mouth. Beneath the skin and white
sere veins is a unity compounded of sections.

I return to you
fruit-full and moist. Sleep falls
from your body like old skin.
Your face, white luminescent
across the dark of the room,
does not question but like a vapor
fills all things with its presence.

— Lori Bank

Corpus

The old family dog is dying. She hobbles
stiffly, a barrel on table
legs; the joints snapping impetuously
leave her smack on the floor like a Disney
pooch. The tongue thrust through the teeth
is dried and brown-edged like pie crust
as she heaves humphing for air through leathery
nostrils and gummy black strips of lip.

Her ears are clotted with blackened wax,
I pull out the clump balls and straggly hair.
In the mornings, I have to coax
her off the porch. Finger in air
I say, "Bubbles, do your duty,"
but she only turns back with opaque stare
to the comforts of her nappy pink blanket.

Now she wets the foot of the bed
where she drownses nighttimes. I shift
my legs away from the dampness. Her breath
of putrefying blood stains the air
and winds tightly about my head.
Her life has concentrated
to this potency of odor.
She stifles the others, as though she were toxic.
But I have grown to like the exotic.

— Lori Bank

Fly Country

I've wandered down this ash way,
Trying to lose my entourage of tiny flies.
They become part of my movement. Holy,
I move in a cloud of locust.

But everything is heavy this day. Movement is sack-heavy
With heat. Even the dust-white bull in the pasture. His skin
Hangs in watery droops off the bone of his outline.

The blue-eyed dog I met at sunup has wagged across my path.
He accompanies me and the flies down the ash trail but
Starts off to the right where there's a sand patch. The sweet
Pungent ordor of excrement gone alkaline hails from the patch.
I leave him to his delights, spraying the air with grit.

This goes nowhere. Only to a grassy gap of trees. Spanish moss
Hangs from pines like the forgotten
Lacery of a light-voiced southern Miss
Who ran off years ago. Disentangled from a dead bough,
It's hair dried in spirals from a fresh shower.

I will bring it to you.
A silent offering left beside your sluggish body.
The flies must have gotten to you during the night.

I've travelled across the yard and back and back.
There seems to be nowhere I can leave off these speck
Parasites. You say I must become accustomed to them.
I must forget they are there. Give up all self-conceit.
All volition. You would be shamed to think a dozen black
Specks could cause you such a disruption. But I am too weak
To give up will, and too weak to will them away.

— Lori Bank

Anhinga

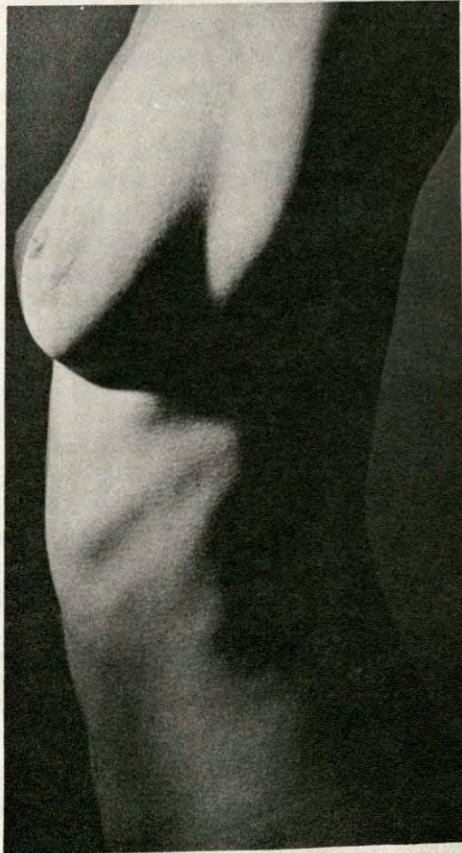
I lie quietly waiting for the sun
to warm my legs stretching from
beneath a chill morning shade.
The clouds are drifting and
I'm full of laziness and soaked with morning.
Drifting into a sultry afternoon
fit for the racket of the birds in the trees
and a gape-mouthed sleep.
I meant to wash the week of woods
dirt and bugs from my bite-riddled body,
uncurl the spirals of dew-set hair
with honey-slow soap and gushes of water.
Water that speaks of metallic tombs
with a muffled voice that vibrates
in the slender neck
of the easy, workable spigot.
Laid up with a game leg,
I've been left to my own devices.
You tramped off at an early hour
all the piece of a natural adventurer,
a festive waterbag crossing your chest
on a strudy rawhide strip.
I've spread seeds across the grill
for the black-purple grackles and redwing blackbirds
like a dutiful princess
who awaits the transmigrating one.
The sun sops dry my senses
and I moulder to sleep.
High in a fir tree perches
a speckled bird with red skullcap.
Descending he swoons to peck at the grain,
settles with measured grace, soft aplomb,
gathering his sacred robes to his side.
He sprinkles the tawny nuggets
over my hair, my face.
They roll in skin crevices,
bounce down my cheeks,
intoning a chant-like speech:

"Anhinga, snakebird, with sinuous neck
has caught your lover, as the fish
she eats, with her delicate needle-beak.
He's seen her glide beneath amber water
her wings flowing back like rippling velvet,
then mount upon her blossoming bough
the drenched raiment spread like a fan,

a shimmer exquisite in the fire of the sun.
Anhinga, snakebird, with sinuous neck
that dances sidelong in piercing caress
sips the black-purple blood of your lover,
drains desire out of his touch.
Her faceted eyes with glimmer incessant
beheld his substance in liquid reflection,
catching his spirit through his glance,
distilling the essence of his soul
in gemlike crystalline tears that dripped
into her amber waters, echoing far below.

I wake to flat hard splats of rain.
The sky is a swift striation of waves
the wind currents in one direction.
I move under a clump of pines,
a sanctuary of green pagodas.
The wetness incenses the pines
to a heady aroma
that pricks my nostrils, stings my eyes.
I send off a bird with seeds
to inquire of your return.
Crystalline drops fall from the needles
onto my face, my hair.
You are transfixed, caught in the rain somewhere.

— Lori Bank



Gertrude's Son With Three Voices And An Explanation

Lay I
Alone.
Heard for one more time
Through a crepe papered wall maze
The sounds of my father

But I thought - - -

My father.

The seven day
Early,
Early Middle
Middle,
Middle late,
Late,
Late early shift street car worker

When did he sleep?
Eat?
Defecate?
Sleep?
When did you see him?

Whom I had seen once
Three years ago

Three?

Three from when I lay alone.

The day of the one day strike.
His alarm, his groans, his shower door,
His shower, his towel, his door, his drawer.
The elephant wails awaiting a 40/40 ordeal
As he's sprayed by a chrome plated Noah

Is this your imagination?

Shhh

Whips crack, cow bells clack, drums roll,
The one man wheel chaired midget band approaches

Who?

It's coming slowly, rumbling slowly

What?

My mother's lover

The latch is lifted
The lion enters
Stalking gasping childrens' eyes,
My eyes

The rest was silence.
There I was waving
At the top of the steps
To him who didn't bother even to grunt
"Punk"

Lost?

Feeling like if you
Were three years old
In a suburban development
Not being able to read numbers
And three thousand identical
Looking alike homes
Trying to find the way back to yours

How can you draw
the analogy?

I imagine.

— Robert Hoffman

David Alvarez would sweep Mr. Wiesburg's store and mind the deli after school. The store was empty a lot of the time so David filled the time by sweeping. He would handle the orange broom like a paint brush, manipulating and convincing a dust ball or match stick out of a crack. He knew where the dust would hide, he knew every notch of the store. Mr. Wiesburg sometimes sat behind the counter and watched David padding around the store, painting every corner with soft calculated strokes, and listening to David's song; the solemn song of scratching hay and the shuffling of scuffed brown shoes. David's shoes were his father's work shoes and they made a hollow sound in the store which always gave David the impression that he was walking on a ceiling rather than a floor. David had great respect for his old shoes as he did for the broom callouses on his hands and the game he played with dust. David knew he was an artisan, he knew the world of dust. He did not like Mr. Weisburg who sat fat, leaning back on two legs of the chair watching his little brown custodian. David is a good worker. He knows how to keep a place clean. The customers don't mind him because he doesn't talk much. But David disliked most of the customers and would take pleasure in hastening them away with dark stares when they would throw a piece of their waste on his floor.

At 7:00 David went home and heated the stew or can of beans his mother would leave for his dinner. He would eat and think about his day, maybe smile at a piece of dried mayonnaise on Mr. Wiesburg's beard that he knew would frighten the customers away. Today he thought about his mother's new owner, Mrs. Wilson. A nice old lady across the street who thought she needed someone to take care of her. He remembered delivering groceries to her door several times. She had an industrial platinum hair-do and she would look at him with kind eyes and disturb the wrinkles on her face with a painted smile. She would retreat with the bag and reappear with mousy thanks and a shiny tip. David remembered the glimpses he caught of the apartment. There was flowered wallpaper and pictures of Jesus on the walls. There were gaudy nick-nacks and a multitude of electrical appliances. The lights were always on, even in the middle of the day, and so was the television. He would hear it talking nonsense to no-one or pouring chunky cackling laughter from its can onto the floor. He had not seen many televisions but he hated them. Now that his mother worked for Mrs. Wilson he knew he would soon have the opportunity to explore the place more carefully.

He finished the last of his meal. It was decent and functional. His best meals were at school. Ladies in green would hand out sandwiches and apples. Sometimes he would use the money to buy paper for his drawings. Whenever his mother saw new paper she knew her boy was drawing hungry but she would keep quiet. David saw it in her look but knew that her silence was part of the bond. She would leave something special for his next dinner. French bread or a carton of milk.

When he had nothing to do he would take a spare moment to pick up a pencil and paper. He would draw the dogs he saw in the garbage cans and his friends with exaggerated features and twisted laughter. Huge perspective distorted tenements with flower pot and laundry garnished fire escapes loomed in the drawings, and the whores on the way to school stared blankly under pounds

of swirling pastry hair. Today he drew old women. Mrs. Wilson sitting in front of her big RCA window. She stares out with her mouth stretched and eyes wide and her hand specially adopted to fit into a wall socket.

David heard his mother's slow step up the stairs and the creak of the banister on the third level. He loved his recognition of his mother's sounds, especially when he could not see her. He felt a small swelling in his chest as the key snapped the latch back and she stepped into the kitchen. She was slow and warm in the small kitchen and she ruffled his hair as she walked past him to the stove.

"Mama". He knew she had been working hard today, for him.

"Oh Davy". She started up a pot of old coffee and sat down. "Oh my, that fixin' house has got me tired out. She's a nice old lady but, my, can she talk".

He put down his pencil and looked into her face. "Good dinner Ma".

"I'm glad you liked it. What you doin' there?"

"Drawin". He slid the pad around for her to see.

"My that's certainly an unusual drawing you have there. My, yes".

"It's Mrs. Wilson". She chuckled softly and shook her head.

"Oh, Davy boy". She sipped coffee in the dusk of the small kitchen and David continued his drawing.

Mr. Wiesburg put down the phone and belched loudly, making a point of it. He bumped his big chest with his fist and sighed. "Ah, pastrami. You want to run some groceries over to Mrs. Wilson's place for me Davy my boy"? David looked up from the deli and wordlessly acknowledged the command.

David pushed the chimes button and Mrs. Wilson peered from behind the crack she made in the door.

"Oh, hello Davy, won't you come in"? Your mother's here".

"I know". He stepped into the harsh coziness of the apartment and gazed at the walls he did not understand.

"Why don't you set those groceries right down here. Your mother is in the next room ironing. Oh! Mrs. Alvarez, your boy Davys' here. Why don't you find yourself a seat and I'll get you something".

David stood in the glare of a fluorescent kitchenette listening to the insect noises of living appliances. Avacado walls splashed around him. A big avocado refrigerator and his dish-washing brother interrogated him with pitched buzzing. He turned and walked into the living area. The cluttered order of the apartment seemed to watch him with silent accusing stares. A

slow burning ball grew in his chest and heated his forehead. He stood rigid, feeling like an old matchstick wedged into the crack of a clean tile.

“Make yourself at home Davy. Why don’t you sit in that big blue chair there. It’s a nice comfy one”. David sat like a doll, his brain hissing at the clean chair for making his jeans dusty. Mrs. Wilson shuffled in towards him with a plate of carefully arranged cookies and a glass of milk.

“Isn’t that a nice chair? I bought it specially for guests when I moved in. How would you like some cookies and milk?”

“No, thank you”.

“Here, they’re home baked”.

He looked at the cookies at ease in a little troop. They could just as easily have been hanging on the wall as sitting there being a treat. He picked one up and ate it slowly. It was sweet and good but it went like glass down his throat. Mrs. Alvarez bent backwards from the ironing board to see her son. He glared up at her from beneath his eyebrows. They talked with their eyes. His mother gave him a look of wisdom and disapproval but he was hearing so much he could not listen.

“Your mother’s a fine woman and a wonderful housekeeper. I’m just as pleased as punch to have such a good person working for me”.

David snapped his head straight. “She’s not working for you, you’re just payin’ her”.

“Davy!”

“Oh, I’m sure he didn’t mean anything by it Mrs. Alvarez, he just misses his mother is all. Isn’t that right Davy?” Davy was not listening. His stare was directed toward the television, concentrating on it, trying to stare it down. Ever since he had entered the place he had been hearing it periodically spewing laughter. Insane group laughter like clockwork, chewing at his ears. He could ignore the jabber but the laughter, the constant undercurrent of invisible laughter working him over from the bottom of his brain. What were they laughing at anyway? What was so funny? Maybe it was laughing at him. Stupidly at him.

“I see my T.V. has caught your eye. What are you watching?”

“Not watching, just looking”.

“I just love my set. It’s such a wonderful machine. To think that pictures can just fly through the air and land in your living room, just wonderful. It gives me the feeling that I can go anywhere without really going, you know? I don’t like going out much. I’m a fragile old lady. Nerves you know”.

“Wonderful machine”.

"Do you like it? I think everyone should have one".

David nodded slowly and rose from the chair. "I have to go back, Mr. Wiesburg is gonna start wondering".

"Look Davy, why don't you come down this Saturday when your Mother comes. They have some perfectly marvelous shows on Saturday".

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Wilson I'd like that. I'm leavin' Mama". Mrs. Wilson eased the door shut behind him, by now, and he walked, leaving the muffled laughter behind him. I'll be looking forward to it, Mrs. Wilson.

David woke and turned on his back. Saturday morning. He stared at the ceiling and thought of Mrs. Wilson and her padded cell. The laughter made him smile.

"Oh, hello Davy, come on in". David once again found himself accused by flowers and plastic fruit but he would not fight this time. He walked slowly, in observant circles, absorbing the place, controlling himself. He walked to where his mother was ironing. He went into the brightly tiled bathroom where the blue tub and busy curtains almost knew they were delightful. There was a set of ugly pink curlers and an inflatable space helmet with an air hose. He flushed the toilet listening to it gargle then left in the middle of the conversation. David was now ready for Mrs. Wilson. He took his seat in the comfy blue chair and saw that Mrs. Wilson was pleased. Once again the arrangement of cookies and the glass of milk was set before him. The T.V. laughed in the background.

"You go to the Middle School don't you? How do you like it?" He thought of the confusion, the fumbling whores in the halls, the fights and the looks. Tired teachers and bored students miles apart, playing games . . .

"I don't like it".

"Oh, you mustn't say that. Education is a wonderful thing. It opens up worlds".

In a smoke-filled, grey-light bathroom, pinned against the wall by enemies you've never seen. Line drawings of Aztec Indians and Washington crossing the Delaware live in shabby texts stained by dirty use. Once a teacher friend gave him a book of stories by someone called Poe. David lived with the book and the teacher was expelled for "issuing unauthorized texts" and other wrongdoings. "There are so many exciting things to learn. Have you learned anything about the war, World War II? My husband fought in the war and died in one of the great battles. He was a fine man, George, he loved his country".

David knew something about the war, and men who loved their country.

"Just a minute, I've got something to show you". She got up and walked as enthusiastically as age would allow into her bedroom. She reappeared a second later with a small black box. Holding it in front of her like an offering she walked, bent and beaming, back to him. A wrinkled child on Christmas

morning. "I think you'll find these quite interesting. My husband's metals he earned in the war". She carefully opened the box and laid the ribboned bits of copper side by side on the table, delighted. She pointed and waved her hands around and stretched her face with quick smiles and wonderment raised eyebrows, explaining the metals and their small history. A dash of sentiment here and there to make them human. She sing-song and loved David being there. She was feeding a young mind with a special history that would be found fascinating because he could never really understand.

"Have another cookie. Now this one . . .". David washed his face of all expression and dove deep down for his protection. Mrs. Wilson danced and danced and sighed with content when she was done. "Well, it's been some time since I brought those out". I've been talking to your mother about your father. He sounds like a wonderful man. It's such a tragedy.

"He fell into a machine at the factory."

"Such a tragedy. I'm sure you loved him very much". David looked down at his shoes. She has no right. She has no right. "Lets not talk about it anymore. I can understand your feelings".

"Oh, look what's on!" They watched the television for a while and then it was time for David's mother to go so they left together. "It was so nice having you both over. Come again sometime Davy, bye, now". On the street they walked with their arms touching and no words were spoken between them. David would have to visit again soon.

After dinner David drew, quiet, alone in his room. He couldn't sleep, he told his mother. Well stay up a little longer and try again. It was late and he knew it was time to go. He slipped into the kitchen and fumbled through his Mother's handbag until he found the key. He had taken special note of the key. It was the key his mother used in case Mrs. Wilson was not up when she came.

He was careful with the door and its lock, knowing them before moving them. He used the key like a disarming device. He eased the door open and closed and walked with tender feet to the middle of the living area. Some lights were on but there was a black hole to Mrs. Wilson's room. It's mine now. This whole place is mine. He drank in the silence. The place was passive and malleable without its creator.

Mrs. Wilson opened her eyes when the gash of light in her room, her guardian, disappeared from the wall and shot out of the door. Blackout. Her eyes were riveted on the darkness and her ears became acute and imaginative. Soft steps. She heard them, and didn't. There was someone in the apartment. Her chest beat it out and her ears sang, believing, rationalizing, lying vibrated her brain. There were voices, she was sure of it now. She hadn't been sure before but she heard them now. They were low and creeping unrecognizable words. She had to move. Her body was stone and dead from awareness. She eased out of bed and guided herself, hands stretched outward to the door. It was the television. The television was on. A white hole. Its grey-blue light highlighted the room and its images danced unaware. She rushed into the room

to stop the fear and was struck heavily on the thigh. Flying forward, flipping through the darkness, a dull pain and her brain screamed. On the floor she bolted frantically hands and knees to the nearest table lamp. Light filled the room and she crawled to a corner and sat. The blue chair had been moved into her path. Her eyes were wild; she felt a presence.

David woke immediately as he always did. As he surveyed his room his eye shifted to a small dark object under the radiator. Mice, they lived with him. He swung out of bed and picked it up by the tail. Save it in a box.

He walked with his mother to Mrs. Wilson's. When they were in she rushed at them, frenzied. "Mrs. Alvarez I don't know what to do, I'm frantic. There was someone in here last night. What were they doing? I almost killed myself with fear."

She rushed around the apartment like a rodent, knuckles between her teeth. "The police were here but they didn't take anything. I've just got to settle down, pretend it didn't happen". David asked to use the bathroom. Through the bedroom his eye caught the black box for metals.

With hot chocolate on her breath and a determination to sleep, Mrs. Wilson went to her room and occupied herself with small diverting tasks. Brush teeth carefully or they won't last. Clean up a little. I'll never get to bed at this rate. She picked up the box of metals to put them away. Another look. Mrs. Wilson's eyes widened, her face bleached, a sharp intake of breath rushed to her chest and seemed to lift her off the floor. The box fell and a small brown body decorated with metals bounced on the floor, limp Mrs. Wilson's sobbing heap withered on the bed.

She took pills and lay awake. Davy wanted the place to move, express itself. He sat in blue and thought. He found the vacuum cleaner and removed the dust bag to begin his work.

Mrs. Wilson awoke with a high pitched buzz in the air. What was it? The vacuum cleaner was on. What do they want? The noise grew in volume and was joined by others. Her guardian gash was gone. Mrs. Wilson melted into the bed, electric buzzing whirling around and through her. She vaulted out of bed and to the door. Tender aged feet were engulfed in a mound of soft invisible dust and she collapsed backwards into the room. She lay on the floor making loud hiccupping noises, disconnected and beyond human.

Mrs. Alvarez came in the morning and found Mrs. Wilson watching television in the midst of an appliance symphony that filled the apartment.

"Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Wilson". Mrs. Wilson was too interested to look up or respond. "Mrs. Wilson!" David's mother ran around the apartment turning things off. "Just a minute Mrs. Wilson, I'm going to make a phone call". She didn't move. She hadn't moved for six hours. It was a good program.

the beach near San Simeon

a stark cold clear California kind of day
walking along the beach near San Simeon
careful to avoid the sharp broken mussels
my path wandering to and from the water
more Arctic than Pacific
until stopped by an odd grey rock
looming among the mussel chips
beneath the tangled seaweed mass
not rock – but sea elephant
unrecognizable as such
the salt successfully decomposing it
either storm or tide or disease or oil
must have brought it so far ashore
leaving it to the sea and sand it had known
my path went my wandering way
until interrupted by squeals
of shattering tourist voices
surrounding the seaweeded mound
the smallest climbed to the top of the dead rock
the rest smiled gathering around
and a camera covered man took their picture

– E. D. Lloyd



January 1965

(To Thomas Stearns Eliot)

your 'passing. was mentioned
on the six o'clock report
after the news of national importance

the smoke in the bar
clouded the picture of you
that was flashed upsidedown on the screen

Sweeney raised his glass to the tube
and drank 'to your health'
then turned back to the bar for another belt
Prufrock heard
but lowered his eyes and said nothing

O Lord grant us just one peace

in our end is Thy beginning

outside snow fell on mud like flour sifted on gingerbread dough
sweaty icicles hung distinterestedly, granting transient pardons
and unfrozen liquids flowed with erotic gurgles
through spirit- and monster-inhabited tunnels
to the disguised river mistaken for Lethe

in your end
in our end
is the end

the flower sanctuary next door stood aloof
an anachronism amid the slush and sludge
where monstrous combinations of rainbows and odors
produced nausea and memories of beauty once known
somewhere still hidden beyond the latched gate
covered by rose and clematis that protect and seclude

plant-preserving heat fogged the window view
of paranoid phantoms
and kept fantasy safely apart from reality
while time pursued the fifth and final prophet
down the teeming street
Prufrock almost stopped to buy a carnation

and yet

let there be somewhere some few explorers
to rediscover the beginning
where one bud adorns the inviolate snow

— E. D. Lloyd

January 1939

(To William Butler Yeats)

in a field outside of Sligo
snow was spiralling gently upward
in the fading rose of celtic twilight

come dance away to Ireland

the afternoon just past
had been silent, dark, and cold
indoors chosen over outdoors
radios playing static music
that in eight months would be a different tune
and in thirty-four years a danse macabre
but the frozen stream in the field
flowed beneath itself
not knowing or caring

come dance in the land of ire

somewhere
in a forgotten roofless tower
Crazy Jane felt time turning in her head
and heard the snow as it climbed to the top
and knew the swans had flown
never to return
calling to her in a single voice
that came from within

to the song of blood and fire

you may have tried that day
to reach out one last time
but the world spun from your grasp
as Jane whirled on her bare feet
in the mounting storm
dancing to a silent song
that you had made long ago
when you were also mad

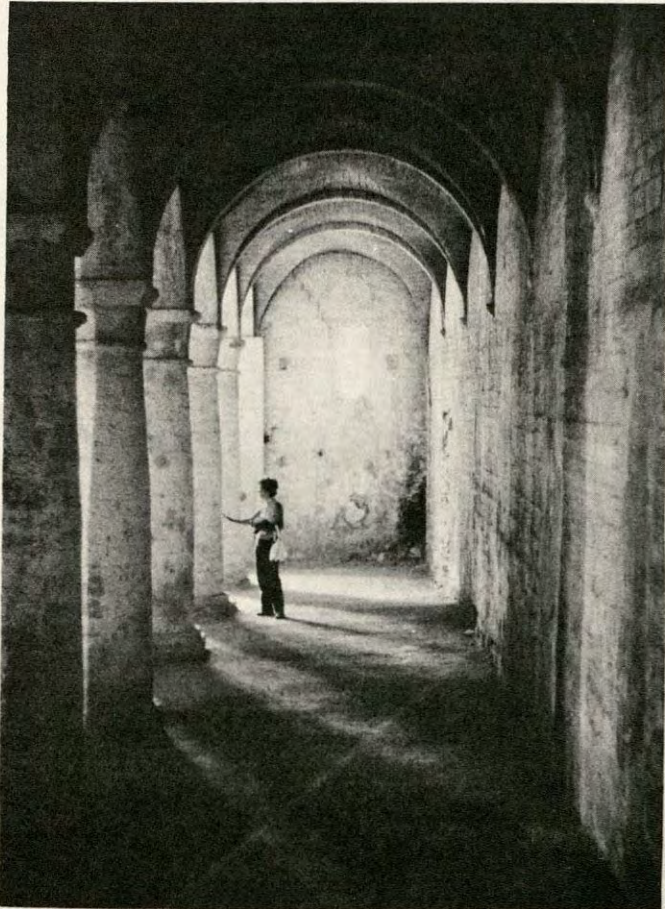
where none can tell the dancer from the dance

Jane stood silhouetted
against the dying rose
arms outstretched to an empty night
until all disappeared
in a shroud of mist and snow
and through the field outside of Sligo

a phantom rider rode
looking on death and life
with a cold and passionate eye
as a strange dawn began to shine
on the haunting, tortured isle
that had made you sing in joyous despair

come dance away to Ireland
come dance in the land of ire
to the song of blood and fire
where none can tell the dancer from the dance

— E. D. Lloyd



LOVE SONG LIKE TAKING A CRAP AND WAITING FOR DEATH

It's like a day starts brillig but the slithy toves are nowhere to be found. I'm feeling mimsy like the borogoves; all thought is uffish.

It's like life goes on too long before stopping - the old souls (as if they could have one left) asleep in doorways of dirty, abandoned stores that front for any kind of imaginable racket, with puckered mouths that breathe too hard as they sleep. Well damn, it's too cold to spend the night, every night, wrapped in third-hand, rat-eaten overcoats and not learn wrinkles and coughs and slow deaths. Sometimes the old ones are awake, just sitting there staring and somebody walks by warm with plenty of bread and fancy new threads in a brilliant-colored store bag that advertises its name to a piece of the world and the old ones have expressions too vacant to feel any sort of envy. They've been the road of asking for hand-outs and they've given up. They just stay molded into the doorway and people look into the gutter as they walk by; they don't realize that these damned wouldn't notice, wouldn't feel ashamed for their world-eaten appearance if somebody sat on the sidewalk and took half-an-hour to draw the doorway and its inhabitant.

It's like so many ought to be dead and every time you see swollen bellies and Children's wide-open pleading expressions on top you just pretend that they're dead because that's easier than thinking about how much it must hurt.

And it's like when hands come out of the pages to throttle your throat if you refuse to help some half-dead kid in some place you've never heard of for a couple of pennies an hour and you manage to gasp Why the hell doesn't somebody think to help me because just eating ain't enough and I got to have something else to live on.

And you know it doesn't do a damn bit of good, probably warps you in strategic places, to know how somebody is dying somewhere no matter where when they flash scenes of half-deadness at you in buses when you're moving and with words in magazines sometimes when you're just trying to be healthy and move your bowels and it gets to the point where you know that the poor damned bastard sitting or standing next to you wherever you are is gonna' drop dead of something in the next minute and there's not a hell of a lot you can do about it, if anything, and you just try not to think about it and all that your mind offers you in such times of stress like that is something that you read once that "nothing in the voice of the cicada intimates how soon it will die" and you wish that everything that was ever gonna' die would just go to hell instead.

And it's like you want to write something that means something without even a slight tinge of death in it, not even wedged in the binding or margin or between the lines or hiding under the page number and you know that it's never been done and so you set out to try and you fail and so you sit out on a rock on a beach and repeat DEATH over and over to yourself with a space of thirty seconds between each utterance without stopping even to light a cigarette, eat a piece of meat or take a crap and soon you die but before you do you give what

you wrote to God 'cause He's the only one that will appreciate how far away from death you've written even if death is eating at your brain and your flesh is rotting because it refuses to live without the concept of death for longer than a sentence and your pen is dry of ink because even the pen has died but perhaps He'll understand anyway except no doubt He won't. Still it won't matter at all because no matter what you did or wrote with your life it would eventually die anyway along with the earth, any concept man has ever wracked his brain to come up with, every idea of truth, every damn attempt at love and least of all, God.

—Holly Dworkin

QUARTET: for O

somewhere far away
you are spilling music with your hands - -
courting the night with your other love;
high above the garden, framed at my window
like a trompe-l'oeil frescoed on some wall,
I am remembering.
the fingers that tighten over the strings
have dried my tears
and blessed my body's nakedness - -
this, too, with art.
Deep summer shadows into a living nocturne
and the singing of my small soul
unwinds in a certain sadness . . .
somewhere far away
you are spilling music with my heart - - -.

— Nina George

OCTOBER REVOLUTION/WORLD WAR I:

Hymn for the People

I hear they put them in trains,
did you know?
All blackened and tear-stained
the straw mats of women's hair, torn away,
bagged beyond return - -
they have worn down their fingernails,
overcoats, working-songs,
and mothers cannot remember
their children's faces.
A sunset like blood through the
freight-car panels
and they have become the last family,
the first tribe
and an outpost of hell
with someone's harmonica whining - -
the lover kisses his dead bride
and the tracks blast under them
like the cannons of their nightmares - -
it will never end
and an old woman remembers an afternoon in spring
an eternity away.
What are these metal stars
and paper authorities
to the father whose son weeps in a trench
a thousand miles away - -
and his other children lie silent in the ashes of his home;
they have murdered his white-hearth and red-cheeked wife
dreams.
It is too true for madness.
Even the night sickens upon them, the dispossessed,
who would trade a flag for anyone's bread
and a moment of joy.

— Nina George

POEMS OF GREECE

I.

Old women wrinkled into black,
shuffling through the dust;
hills of pine and olive rushes,
garnet bundled currants drying - -
a backdrop of shell-colored walls
and cracked brick tiles.
Courtyard tin-potted geraniums
and a slip of azure
eyed between the cyprus posts.

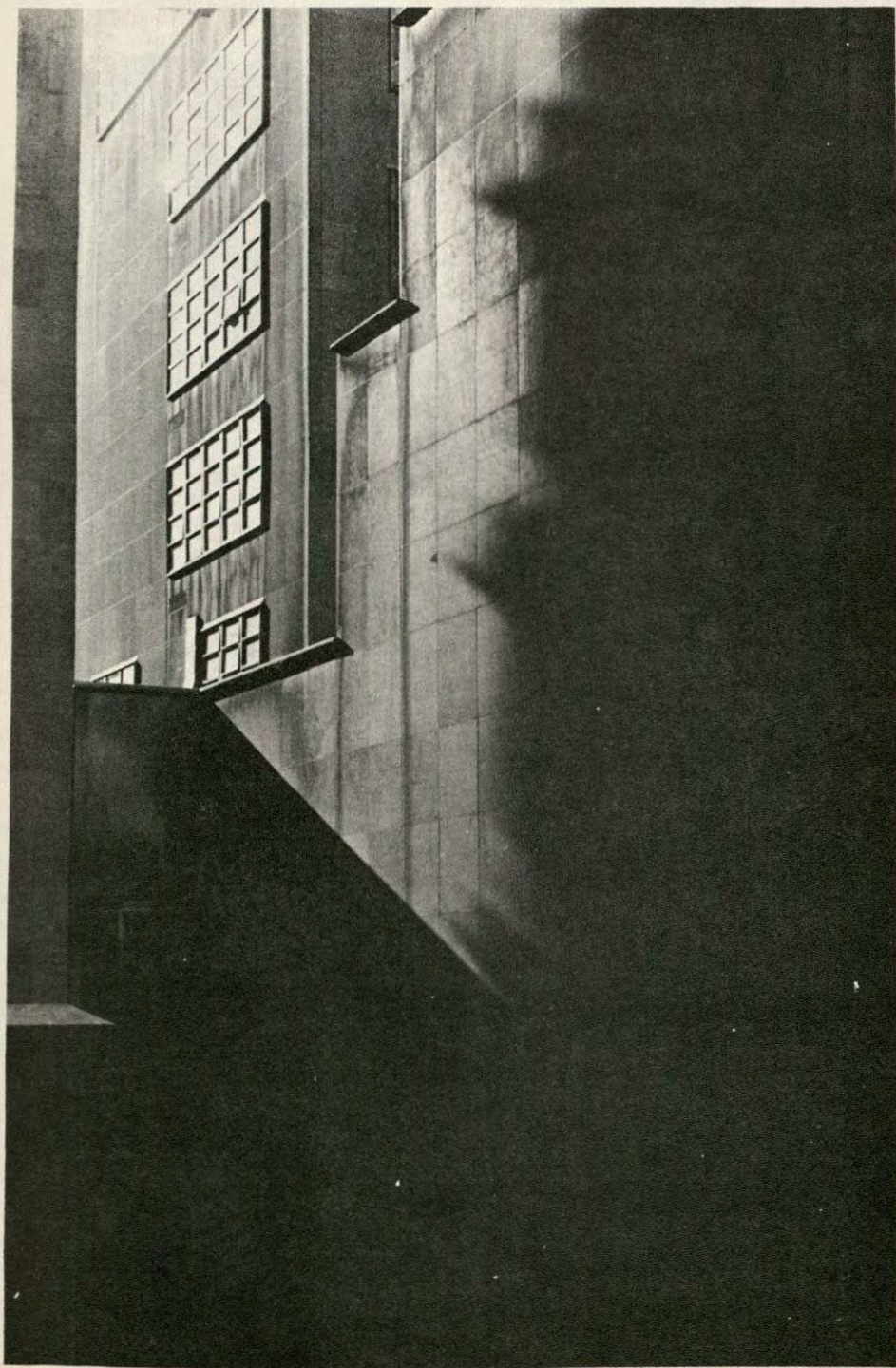
II.

Eucalyptus weeping weave
a black mantilla
gracing the pink marble face
of sundown.

III.

Sun-bleed land of people's hopes,
their struggle is upon the dried fields,
for they have died by thousands,
their blood crushed from them
as a summer's grapes.

— Nina George





A WALK IN THE FALL

The leaves are beginning to turn; splashing the countryside, the hills that have lain placidly by as summer went through carrying the transients, the music, and the excitement. One might include life, but there is the color of the leaves and the crispness of the air which could make life or living irresistible. This might be all confusing if it had not happened so many times before. Perhaps it began with Hawthorne in the little red cottage opposite the Lion's Gate, but now the seasons move from the peculiarly unfriendly winter to the summer when the symphony returns and all its entourage, the young students and listeners, the ballet, summer stock, and rock concerts. Now it was all gone. There are no more crowds, traffic has disappeared from the streets, and those that remain behind will spend the winter there. No, there will be no more fun till next June, that leaves eight months. But this is overlooked, for now there are other things to concern oneself - the leaves and the air. The air that was only familiar to those who got up early to practice or work now stretches further into the day and descends from the hills earlier in the afternoon. The breezes that seem to pick up from nowhere toss what is loose across streets and gather it beneath trees and benches. It becomes cold, perfectly clear, but cold just the same. They like it though, they must like it, even those that lament the end of summer; why else would they be there now? - the land of the free. Everyone begins to pick up, there is no heat or humidity to slow them; perhaps the excitement has gone, but the hills have returned to peace, left to those who inhabit the valleys, to admire the hues, their colors, their trees, their hills. School will be starting soon, and then the snow and colder winds will come down the Housatonic replacing the breezes. But now there are no winds or snow, just the trees changing and perhaps one or two stragglers.

Amidst this movement is the placid atmosphere of the Lenox library, an historic landmark of sorts, it is written up somewhere; and though Lenox seems to be faring the worse for what has been going on, new gas stations, new restaurants that have a misplaced Boston finesse, the library has not changed. Its books have not moved, its listening room with the great big grand piano has not been redecorated, though the piano is kept carefully tuned, for it has been blessed by famous hands. Towards the rear of the building is a small reading area with a high oval ceiling that seems to dwarf the space below. A balcony runs three quarters way round like a horseshoe. At the opening where there is no balcony, tall windows that almost run the height of the room look out onto a small courtyard. One side of the balcony are two long oak tables with chairs and lamps. Most of the time the room is quiet and the sun slowly passes overhead, from one side of the building to the other. As the afternoon falls the shadows grow round the recesses and begin to stretch along the shelves and isles between the stacks. People begin to leave and head for home having finished their business or pleasure. The children are gone and one imagines a feeling of camaraderie between those that remain behind. Where before the building had held itself somewhere between a library and a meeting house for the old guard, it now settles quietly to a place of work, for those who have something to do, who have a purpose to fulfill or at least fill.

At one of those long wooden tables is a young man, he is hunched over some books and papers, consumed in a project. His work is spread beneath one of the table lamps, its perimeter serving as a boundary he does not trespass. His presence is a little strange, the local residents rarely use the library in this way, he is older than a high-school student, perhaps he is older than a college student, the community college is only for two years. His strangeness is that he is here in the first place, the only one here; but he appears to be a native, why else would he still be around, unless he is here solely to confuse, a not impossible prospect given the library's summer inhabitants. But his presence is given, he is here and as they say, he has business. He is occupied, he never bothers anybody. Just coming here every day for the past week. Riding in on bicycle, with his pack of books, he doesn't seem to take any out, just uses his own, and the balcony for a study room. He always uses the wooden tables on the second floor, settles himself there at about nine in the morning and leaves only for the men's room or a smoke - there's no smoking allowed in here. When it's time most others have left, he is still there. But he doesn't cause any trouble, uses the the piano occasionally, pays his money -it costs a dollar an hour to play. Just a nice young man, though he makes some feel a bit uncomfortable.

He comes in sweaty from the ride, and after he has climbed the stairs and spread out his books, tears some of his clothes off. Usually he is just wearing faded jeans and a t-shirt, he might have been any one of those that were here earlier. But he is still here, and he is inside. In that sense one wonders how alive he really is. Of course he breathes and would probably procreate given the chance, though this is not an evident characteristic. But those that are alive would certainly be outside these walls if not romping through the hills breathing the fine cool air, at least walking along back roads. He looks healthy enough, he does the bicycle ride, but his kind should not remain indoors too long, you can see the color drain away, the muscles begin to loosen and dissipate to fat. His hair becomes matted and loses its sheen, his mind becomes narrowed by the walls and endless lines of words on pages. His thinking becomes distorted, his sensibility confused. But he may still walk up the stairs and sit at the tables spending hours doing nothing-something.

He is surrounded by red books, shelved for years, but incapable of moving - unmoved mover that moves no one. It seems books in community libraries get the least wear except for an occasional 'self-taught man'. But then this library is not just a community library, the influx of gypsy fiddlers and student tramps prevent that. The books still appear as if permanently fixed, perhaps that is why the young man never uses them.

As he sits the day begins to leave, the light coming from the tall windows beside him grows dim and the perimeter of the lamp becomes more definite, making more of the boundary -an island. He must be growing tired, his concentration wearing thin, for he keeps looking up and around, perhaps for someone to save him from his drudgery, but he has never come with anyone,

and has never left with anyone. Perhaps he desires someone to come dancing up the carpeted stairs, to his balcony, to whisk him outside before all the light is gone; he has spent the day without light or breath. He wishes that someone would take him for a walk, some pretty girl, a friend he might find comfort in. But no one comes, he remains alone at the table, the light before him growing stronger and less warm as the light outside begins its death. Eventually both will go out, and the young man will take one last look and sigh to himself at nothing; not much work done today, nor tonight, but maybe tomorrow. It is bad the day is gone and almost the afternoon, perhaps it would be best to leave now and take the ride home, but he remains motionless.

The decision is never made, not completely because of the atmosphere in which it was posed, but because before too long, steps are heard coming down the hall, then slowly up the soft stairs. Perhaps; but no, it is a middle-aged man dressed in a plain suit and carrying a slim briefcase, all very out of place, more than the young man could ever be. Perhaps he is an executive from one of the papermills in Lee. The young man looks up and watches the older man circle the first table and approach his own. He lays his briefcase down on the opposite side of the table, pulls up a chair and sits. He then opens the briefcase one latch at a time and pulls out a paperback book, moving beneath the light already provided for. His left hand opens the book and holds it at the bottom, but as with most new paperbacks, it resists staying open and so he must move his other hand to hold open the top of the book. Only then does the young man see why his actions had been done so casually, one at a time. It is only a stump that holds the top of the book open. At the end of the older man's right arm, there is nothing. There is the cuff of his suit jacket; he only wears the jacket through it is getting cold and certainly when the sun goes down he will be uncomfortable. There is a clean white shirt cuff, carefully buttoned, but there is no hand, nothing, but whatever remains behind.

The young man averts his gaze and returns to the same sentences he has been reading all day, the same paragraphs. "And what is fragility if not a certain probability of the non-being for a given being under determined circumstances. A being is fragile if it carries in its being a definite possibility of non-being." Everything seems to grow out of the nuclear origin, that is at least in some way everything has its place in time and space; it has its reason, except this man's hand, which just is not there. Eventually the older man looks up from his book, without ever having turned a page. He looks over to his neighbor to see what he is so occupied with, but has trouble reading upside down.

"What are you working on?"

As if annoyed at the intrusion, the young man slowly raises his head from nothing and focuses across the table, faintly surprised.

"A paper." Thinking again in pause. "I am supposed to be working on a paper."

"Are you in college?"

"Well, not as long as this paper remains unfinished."

"What is your major?"

"Nothing, I have no major, I am not in college."

"I see. Well, perhaps I am bothering you."

The young man looks down for a moment as if to compose himself, and then as a second thought, looks back across the table through the lamplight.

"No, no, I was just thinking about my work, I am tired and I suppose a little irritable."

They talk a little about what the younger man is working on though it becomes obvious he is quite tired of it. Finally he suggests they go out for a coffee, he has been in all day. They get up from the table and walk down the carpeted stairs past the shelves and out the heavy white wooden door. They walk slowly, the young man feeling as if he were stumbling along, and about to fall. But as he steps outside, he is hit by what he has been ignoring. The cold, fresh smell of the fall; it must have rained some time today and there is a slickness over the roads and sidewalk. The grass is as green as it can possibly become without the aid of unnatural forces. The leaves, now wet, are matted on the ground in little patches around the base of trees like spills of some careless painter. It is what he had kept himself from the day before and the day before that, it had been that way all summer, but now everyone is gone, and they walk alone down the street. It seems a little more shameful now to stay indoors, without experiencing any of it, watching it all pass untouched like some museum piece. You can not see the sun from where they are, but it is still light. They do not talk of their origins, they both are in Lenox in the off-season, and neither requires an explanation of the other. They talk of music, of the past summer season, of the weather, the atmosphere and the hills that surround them. For they had spent time here, and as they walk they begin to acquire an affinity for each other.

Both seem comfortable as they walk around the main hotel that imposes itself on the town's main street. They order coffee and drink leisurely, or as leisurely as one can with a stranger. Nothing waits for them back at the library, indeed for the young man nothing -no one waits anywhere for him. Except of course for the paper, but then that has been waiting for so long already, it seems silly to change styles now, it could wait a little longer. The older man turns out to be local, he was born here and spent most of his life here. He had been away for some indefinite period though, and had spent that time intensely or so it seems, for he has lost the provincialism that is hard to avoid in a small New England town, no matter what the goings on in the

summer. But there is no explanation forthcoming, it remains some indefinite period. Perhaps it was the army, a war, and a horrible accident, an explanation for the missing hand, the hand that might have been there once.

Seeing the older man talk, the young man imagines the gesturing done with two sets of fingers, with two hands, but only one is used. The other arm remains quietly by his side as if forgotten for the moment. Perhaps it is for consideration. But it does not seem to affect their conversation. Their talk wanders aimlessly - harmlessly, back to the colors that have just arrived and the hills where they find their most comfortable home. Both men looked forward to the time they can walk in the hills, when they have more time.

As if for compensation they decide to walk down the hill toward Tanglewood before the light fails, it seems they have time, it has taken so long already. They cross the main street and quickly move past the boarding school getting ready for its occupants. The older man sets an almost uncomfortably quick pace. It is unusual only because it is unnecessary, there is no time element, the pace becomes its own purpose; it is as if he were trying to catch up or flee from something, something unseen or unrecognized by the young man. It might be something that takes experience or age to understand. But they talk on, unhampered by the pace.

It is cold and getting colder. It is just as well they walk as fast as they do. Though the sun doesn't seem to have moved, it must have and would soon not be there at all. Then there would be no light and no warmth except for that coming from their own bodies. It is curious about the sun, though. It does not seem to have changed at all, as if stopped. As if it were one of those strange occurrences where some cloud formation reflects the light back down to where it has long since past, where there should no longer be any light if the sun had its way, left undisturbed by the earth's atmosphere. But it is probably not some such cloud formation, more likely time has simply stopped or at least slowed down a bit. If either noticed, they do not bother to check their watches. The older man begins to talk of his family and how they prevent him from taking walks, how they can not walk as fast as he, and slow him down, though none of this makes him peculiarly unhappy. The younger man keeps his head down and his hands in his pockets, his eyes moving rapidly along the tarred road, slick with the recent rain, past bright colored spots of leaves already blown down, pressed into the road by tires. The dusk reflects on the shiny surface, and on the trees and leaves, and on the two figures moving quickly down the hill.

The younger man becomes more quiet, more serene. It is the atmosphere or something in the breeze that makes his gait more agitated and his comments more crisp. His replies cut out as if from some precious train of thought. At Tanglewood they turn into the parking lot, they want to look at the grounds and the shed, to recapture what has only just passed, or perhaps from curiosity as to what it is like now, when no one is around. They cross the lawns, not bothering with the neat walkways already provided for those in the summer. They do not have to worry about wearing anything down, about even leaving a mark. They pass around the shed towards the administration building, out of place with its dark gothic architecture, stuck between the monstrous simplicity of the empty shed and the modern japanese style halls that sheltered

the chamber music. They pass through the Lion's Gate, across the road to the parking lot that overlooks the Bowl, a large lake, southward into Stockbridge. They can see the sun now, it is setting, it has set. They sit on the damp cold grass. The younger man begins to pick at it. They speak of music and of Ives who has become too popular. They speak of pollution and the lake before them that is ruined. They speak of crowds that have come and gone and left debris. They speak of the times neither have had.

The young man becomes more disturbed, if that is what makes him pull at the grass. And if he becomes more agitated, the older man, his companion, becomes more placid and looks on quietly, leaning on his left elbow. The young man looks around for something to say, but appears caught. The clouds passing overhead darken and pick up speed. The shadows of the hills surrounding the bowl blur on the water below, the trees on the shore sway from the wind caught over the waters. The young man roots himself, though like a fugitive caught somewhere unpleasant. The older man might use his age and experience to get them out of the situation they have obviously fallen into, but he chooses to remain quiet, perhaps because they had met as equals, but no explanation is given. So they sit in the dying light.

"Perhaps we should be getting back? It must be late."

"Yes, it certainly must be. But then do you have a watch? I don't. I never wear one. Oh, but of course you wouldn't, you have no place to wear it, no wrist, nothing to keep it from sliding off. It would just keep falling off and breaking. You probably wouldn't even carry a pocket one, just because it might remind you of your lack. But then you never seem to mention it, perhaps you aren't aware of it, that you have no hand, well, you don't, and it's sickening. Or am I crazy and you actually have one, hiding it from me, perhaps you keep it there in your suit pocket or in your briefcase back in the library. Why must I stand by to this? There is nothing that tells me I must stay and watch you make an abomination of yourself. But then perhaps you have no choice. You can not help the way you are. You have ruined the day, you are not a part of us, your lack is so obvious. Your cuffs are tied around nothing, and that bony piece of flesh pushes itself out toward, -toward what is not there and will never be there. I must leave before I get sick and can not return."

The young man gets up and begins the walk toward town. He walks quickly, not looking around to what has never been there.

-Doug Houston

GRADUATE'S BLUES

"All I want is a diploma
far away from reality.
Wouldn't it be insipid?"

- 1) Into a chosen path
settles the future-ite
having learned
control of his narrow sphere
confidence in his blindness.

a stately progression of empty robes
free from the dreams that children grow

fish, caught in midstream
and dried on racks
at the edge of the flow,
ready to be consumed.
- 2) At night along the riverside
where dogwoods showered ghosts of spring
he found beneath her party dress
the dawning of his hands to feel
her skin's damp swoon.

And music warmed her motions into bloom.

Into a chosen path . . .
he banked her in his future plans
until he wrung her moisture out
and she left him in a stupor.
- 3) Next year the future-ite
sulks in his parent's home
doing odd jobs at the office
just for a year or so
until his plans begin to grow.

dried fish
too dead to leap
stare from racks
at the edge of the flow
and wait,
robbed of the comfort
of being consumed
by a world too bloated
to eat.

Interior Decorators

At first glance she
told me that
my apartment was
in desperate need
of refurnishing - and
He said that I was
insecure.

(I listened)

She then suggested that
periwinkle plaid was
perfect for the dining area - and
He said you talk
too much.

While casually inferring that
my carpets had to be
done away with, she
smiled at me

And then somewhat timidly
(but with great sincerity)

He asked me if I
minded his honesty.

She said to trust her -

He said you must believe in me -
(I did)

After careful consideration
lemon yellow flowered wall paper
was applied with expertise
to the bathroom walls, while
He contrived the perfect
moment

(complete with wine, of course)
to tell me of his
love.

And when at last
all the painting and papering
was completed, She
moved on to suggest to
someone else whose

apartment was obsolete,
that she should definitely consider
earth colors . . .
He now implied that
I no longer talked
too much when nervous and
I was capable of standing
on my own; so
I should try it.

— Deborah Solomon

Out - of - Step

I danced a strange dance
(like Lawrence's Gudrun before the cows)
and the curtains wafted about me
and the room was full of a green half-light;
and you glanced at me now and then,
nervously, as you read your New York
Times and paraphrased to me the portions
of interest.

I danced a strange dance
(despite your nervous glance)
and pretended my plants were a
gasping audience.

Self-mesmerized, and moving to the
mirror, I wondered . . . if I were
to kiss my own reflection
would I turn into a . . . ?

I danced a strange dance
upon the section of your New York
Times which had dropped to the
floor, and made you look
at me. (Do I fit into your
crossword puzzle?)

You sighed
and reached for the
dictionary.

September 14, 1974

— Nancy Cutting

Fresh hour of after-rain
our faces buffed to a high glow:
I can taste my loneliness;
it comes, as sharp and pungent
as my love for you.
Oh--the earth, the earth--
be gentle with her now!
She is most tender after rain.

May 13, 1974

— Nancy Cutting

Ambiguity

You ask me why.
I really can't say nor
should you ask, after all
these weeks of doing without a reason.
We fill the ceiling
with private visions.
I've seen more of this
ceiling than you have, somehow.
And that small crack above
the bed has widened
and swallowed me so many times.
(I love the back of your neck.)
You ask me why.
Oh, can't you see, it
threatens me, this
breathless thing we do together.
I'm slowly stifling.

April 16, 1974

— Nancy Cutting

From Mystic To Manhattan
(a morning metamorphosis)

The old white houses of this bay
in today's first light are softly trimmed
with shadows of downspouts; and evergreens.
A clapboard horseshoe on the ocean's foot,
it harbors the Primate, groaning now
out of his sheath of sleep, groping,
and grasping the day with still slumbering limbs.
He yawns and gasps, aerating his head, and
struggles out of sheets, seething with dream.
Stretching up, grabbing hold,
and slipping back down —

My breath lands on the window, stuck
a shining trinket, appliqued,
the Isle of Manhattan,
where at this moment other Lazari are rising
donning a sock here, a pantleg there,
even (I rub my eyes) a brassiere.
One cannot find clean underwear
cursing, he searches for second best.
There is one among the many, perhaps
bathed in some new sweat, thinking of me.
The City dissolves to Times Square, vanishing in smog.

Beyond, ice minces brittlely across the river
Beneath, in the street, I watch them feed the truck
delicate hors d'oeuvres, a cardboard sweetmeat.
I convince myself my life is- "quainter", here.
Mothers and wives here toast and fry,
and try to entice alpaca-lined mouths
to barter bed for breakfast treats.
They cajole and berate with groomed "get-up" voices
and shrilly proclaim impatient school busses.

Grumbling feet portage me over
snoring floorboards to the kitchen.
I award a sleepy smile to the dirty dish montage,
squint at the refrigerator, a big green lime,
and discover the milk for my cereal, frozen.
I reheat old coffee, and pick
another number in the ice-box lottery.
I push the toaster on for warmth,
and sitting there decide
the mammal is a bad idea
with its warm room sensibilities.
My landlord is a reptile
to cold-blooded living given.
The coffee is boiling.

The refrigerator is dripping.
I clutch my mug and seek the warmth that snuggles in
the radiator ribs, I nuzzle
it is cast iron cold. It is inevitable
that reptiles win.

Now they are tucking and zipping and belting,
and late for their labors when finally in harness.
The boulder is found (with Mrs. Sisyphus' assistance),
the briefcase remembered, Christ shoulders his cross.
Wheels of karma in tow they are kissed out the door,
I watch them emerge and drop into their ruts.
Dreams, each with his burden bears,
personal clouds like dutiful dogs
hobbing above on invisible leashes;
a hovering tumult of shape and shade,
Desire's menagerie, a catalogue of want.
Spun of ethereal plastic material,
they are sequins, bright beads on the canton blue sky.

My palms pray for warmth to the coffee cup
the flesh runs in place, chafing itself,
I look, for comfort, to my heart;
it lodges cold and motionless within,
I shudder - it settles with an icy clink.
I reach for it, and raise it up.
Sharp, with facets it is cut,
the wounds are prisms bleeding color
magically, from pallid light.
An enchanting toy, a useless heart.
It slips from my hands, shatters at my feet.
For a moment I would like to cry
but now, of course, I can't.

Manhattan, the Big Mac
Intosh; Love, the Big Lemon.
These are my dreams this day, crisp
and tantalizing; sunny and sour.
Both loom enormous over my head,
they blot out the warmth of this weak morning sun.
The first is the color of a just-scorched lobster,
the last is an aged and adulterated white.
I am tethered at this end of a hundred mile line.
I remind myself of "quaintness," and add a little "charm".
Outside,
the drawbridge yields to a dredging barge,
an ignoble dirtberg with a brown slag lunch.
She raises her girders, rusty rigging slides through,
grazing her abutments, I look the other way
at the queue of crouching cars, loitering voyeurs
some smoke idly, others race impatiently.
River and road, terrestrial intercourse.

Stretched between two continents of dream
I do not draw, but permanently span,
that infinite space that isolates each.
The toll is expensive, paid on both sides,
the cables depend on the strength of one thread.
I am suspended
A bird goes by.
I look at my heart and continue to hang.

From here
I can see a girl in red slacks,
she is seated on the seawall.
Behind, and slightly to the left,
running in circles, a golden dog.
Everything else is going someplace,
a blur of vectors, bits of straight line.
It occurs to me, objectively
one could switch, in this scene
the circling dog and the seated pants
and not destroy the integrity.
The thread snaps, the bridge collapses
I find myself intact, erect.
My heart in pieces at my feet
begins to melt, unite, and beat.
The switch, should I suggest it,
would be met, I know, with
cocked heads and a puzzled stare
I blow Manhattan on the window
and disappear.

— Peter Carlson



Through a wavy pane
I see a silver plow
high against the blue.
Its furrow is
Boston to New York
as - the - crow - flies
but as it slips in
and out
of the glass folds,
it leaps
and glides.

— David Desiderato

Shale II

The lines of shale,
Rock wafers, cumuli of stone,
Are like clouds suspended.

Ocean waves trapped,
Their white crests
Forever poised to crash.

Topped by moss and
The slow trickle,
The spurt of sand.

— Tony Eprile

LABOURER'S CALYPSO

I used to work down Trinidad way
I worked all night and I worked all day
You know the saying: 'The worm has turned'
Well, I saved all the money I ever earned

Salvation! Salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

The boss I had was a mean old man
The kind who makes trouble whenever he can
He used to come to me and swear like hell
Even though I did my work so very well

Salvation! Salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

One day old boss man done give me rag
Just as I was lifting my cement bag
I swung that bag right over my head
And lo and behold; the boss man was dead

Salvation! Salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

I did not know just what to do
And if you were there, then nor would you
To help me think I mixed concrete
With the old boss man lying at my feet

Salvation! Salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

I knew that soon the police would come
To make sure that justice was done
They would be sure to throw me into jail
And put all my property up for sale

Salvation! Salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

But I found a way to spare my soul
I threw the boss into the foundation hole
Mine was a plan that can't be beat
For I filled that hole with concrete

Foundation! Foundation!
Foundation is your only salvation!

Just then along came the supervisor
He asked for the boss and I said: "Why sir,
I haven't seen the old boss man yet
I think he took his alsation dog to the vet"

Foundation! Foundation!
Foundation is your only salvation!

There was consternation on his face
As the super looked all around the place
But the boss man was nowhere to be found
For he was under cement and underground.

Foundation! Foundation!
Foundation is your only salvation!

Now if your boss should come bothering you
Don't you do what I would do
Unless there's a hole to put him in
And 3 tons of cement to save your skin.

Foundation! Salvation!
Foundation is your only salvation!
Salvation is your only foundation!

-Tony Eprile

SERVANT PROBLEMS

Paul was sure that he had put the five-Rand note in his trouser pocket the night before, yet it was no longer there. Every Sunday morning he was up early and at the Johannesburg Market by 7:30. He had already wasted nearly an hour looking for the money for, although he had other money, he had set aside this five-Rand specifically for the market.

"Why don't you have some breakfast, Love, and then go to the market." Alisse said. "There'll still be time to buy oranges and apples, and you know how the kids love them."

He only went to the market for the children. Their healthy and sun-browned bodies attested to this. The move to South Africa had at least done someone some good, and they no longer wore that anaemic, red-nosed look that they had in London. Paul had hoped to get papayas for the kids, as the season was just starting, but it was too late for that now. The hordes of greedy Afrikaners from the suburbs would have snapped up the best fruit. It was annoying, because papayas are healthy, and the kids would have raved over the new taste.

"I want to see Daddy." a sleep-tender, four-year-old's voice sounded from the passageway alongside the bedroom.

"No, Michael, Daddy's cross."

He could imagine his wife guiding the child's slightly straining body towards the dining-room.

"With me, Mommy?"

"No, little one, not with you. Daddy's lost some money."

Her jocular tone, as if dealing with an idiot's moods, was unpleasant to him. Well, it was better not to get upset. He would go and eat breakfast, and the servant could pick up the clothes that lay strewn around the room.

"Florence!!" he shouted.

When she brought the tea in, early in the morning, with her foolish smile and nasal 'Mawning, Master. Mawning, Missis.' all the while she was going through his pockets for a little Bonsella to buy her Kaffir beer with.

"Master?" came the anxious call from the kitchen. He waited a few minutes, but the servant didn't come. These poor people shouldn't have to work as the white men's slave for thirty Rand a month, but you just can't have them taking advantage of you.

"Florence!" he shouted, louder this time.

"Master!?"

"Don't you just stand there in the kitchen and shout in my house. Come when I call you."

Florence waddled quickly in. She was fat, rolls of merry black fat with a wide-toothed grin - - the archetypal African mamma whose bulk hardly fit through the doorways. But now she was nervous and sweat began to trace small rivulets down her plump cheeks, making dark stains on her pink uniform. Her mouth was set in a sullen pout.

"Florence. I am missing five Rand. I put it in my pocket last night... and now it's gone." He realized his words sounded harsh. But, for some reason the clean pink of the uniform with its peeping fringe of lace petticoat, its widening stains of sweat, combined to particularly annoy him.

"Master! I am honest woman." She began to keen and shout. She was a tremendous woman, but Paul was not intimidated by her. "I wek hard for you and never take nothing. You always leaving money around, maybe your children tek it. I wek before in a big house with lots of nice things and never tek nothing."

"It's all right, Florence. I am not accusing you. I know you would not do a thing like that. I only wanted to ask you if you had seen the money."

"Well, Master, I haven't seen it." And the portly woman returned to her kitchen, muttering about the fine house that she used to wek in. Only a week ago, a former servant had returned claiming that she had only left because she was kidnapped back to the kraal by her husband. Florence had run outside and said, "I wek in this house now. You go away." And now she considered the place beneath her station.

Paul went into the dining room and sat down. He picked up a muffin, broke it in half to expose the steamy white interior, and began methodically to put butter and jam on it. The jam was home-made and delicious.

"Daddy, please don't be cross." Michael said. His deep blue eyes heavy and serious.

"I'm not cross." Paul said, and brusquely ruffled the four-year-old's soft, brown hair. He felt the five Rand note sitting ominously in the pocket of the pajama jacket that he was still wearing.

"I've found the money. Call 'the Flod' in, and I'll tell her."

"Shhh! She'll hear you."

'The Flod', a black flood of a woman, came into the sun-filled dining room. She was carrying a tray containing a fresh batch of hot muffins.

"I've got the money, Florence, as I thought. You see, I was not accusing you."

"I tol' you I never tek nothing." She was sulky, but seemed appeased by the white man's admission to her. Nevertheless, she continued to cluck and sigh under her breath.

"You see, Honey, there was nothing to get angry about." Alisse said. Tendentiously, he thought.

"You know I have to put up with all sorts of crap at work. The least you could do is see that I'm not aggravated at home."

"Whose idea was it to come back to this bloody country, and you don't want to be aggravated."

"Well, I will just have to go where I won't be." And he stormed out of the house, leaving her angrily tearful and the children confused. He sped the little red Austin down the driveway, in reverse. A crackle beneath the left front wheel signified the end of some plastic toy that one of the kids must have left in the driveway. It only served to annoy him further, the toy ought to have been picked up by one of the servants.

He drove along the road, down the hill and past the construction which was 'ruining the place', until he got to the Melrose Bird Sanctuary. He began to walk inside the Sanctuary, but returned hurriedly to the car. He was not in the mood to appreciate the area's beauty, and besides he had neither binoculars nor the bird book with him.

As he climbed back into the driver's seat he noticed a bundle of clothes behind him. They belonged to that damn African, Wilson. Wilson had come to work for him, killed his plants by exposing the roots while digging out weeds, borrowed some money "to see his family with", and never came back. He had left all his clothes neatly folded in a cardboard box in the garage. Paul intended to take the African's clothes to the house where he had picked the man up. He didn't want to take the bundle to the police, because the African would probably be arrested for no longer having a valid pass.

Paul now drove to the house, where the African had said his sister worked. A large, black woman was walking down the driveway; a pint bottle of milk firmly clutched in one stout, pink-overalled arm.

"Hey." Paul said. "Is your brother here?"

"My brother, Master?"

"Yes. The fellow who used to work here - - Wilson."

"He just wek here, Master. He not my brother, he a Malawi." She hesitated and then announced proudly. "I am Tsonga."

"But he told me you were his sister."

"He a Malawi! ...What he done?"

As she did not know of Wilson's whereabouts, Paul thanked her and drove off. His anger was now weary and defeated. He remembered laughing contemptuously with Alisse at the conversation at his mother's house. His

mother had invited some young people to meet the newly-returned couple, and the conversation had centred around the bored and spoiled Johannesburger's pet topic: servant problems.

"Never trust a Malawi." his mother had said--and repeated.

He drove around the suburbs of Benoni, taking some pleasure in his easy mastery of the car, but none in the pleasant, lush but well-tended gardens. Ahead of him, a tall African man was talking to one of the prevalent fat African 'nannies' beneath a bus shelter. The man was waving his hands dramatically, and the woman was showing her white teeth and rocking from side to side in appreciation.

"You are too funny." she shrieked, just as Paul stopped, unnoticed, a little way ahead of them.

"Wilson!" he shouted.

The African looked around nervously, but could not see where his name was issuing from.

"Wilson!" Paul shouted again.

The black man came running over to the car, his eyes enlarged and white with fear. He was trembling and he looked dazed.

"Master?" he murmured. His voice not assured as before, but not undramatic.

"Ah, Wilson. I knew I would find you here. Now I want you to take your clothes out of the car, and give me back the money you owe me." And he leaned over and opened the back door to allow the African to remove the box. Paul was relaxed and unhurried, almost as if he had arranged a rendezvous with Wilson on this street corner.

"Master, I have no money." said the African, after he had taken his clothes out of the car.

"Now listen here, Wilson, you come and break my plants and run away with my money, and then you say you have none to repay me with. What kind of a show is this..hmm? I knew where to find you and I know you are lying when you say you've got no money."

"No, Master, what I say is true." And to prove his point Wilson began to throw the contents of his greatcoat onto the street, as if this ritual would appease the angry Paul. Letters, paper clips, delivery notes, rags, and a white handkerchief formed a small pile next to the car.

"No, Wilson, I cannot take a man's money if he says he has not got any. That is, if he is a man."

“I am a man, Master.”

“Well, if you are a man you will bring me my money when you get some. If you are not a man, if you are a little child, then you will not honour your debts.”

Paul started to drive homewards, smiling. It was only a small sum that Wilson owed him, and it would not matter if he never got it back. He could see a roadside stand in the distance, where some piccaninies were selling fruit; it would only be a little more expensive than the market.

“I’m a man.” the African said, still frenziedly throwing his property onto the dusty street.

— Tony Eprile

Thanatos and Ethyl or Death and Deliverance

What you followin' me for, buster?
you want somethin'?

I ain't got nothin', not even sex
 but I've got a dirty old
 stinking old
 loving old
bottle of Sir Tan Come-Fit
and, yes, I'm going to drink it

coughing: like bowling pins clattering:

well, I don't know what is the reason
these old lungs make so much noise
when God knows
I sometimes find it hard to draw a breath.

My son.

Git away! g'wan
you smell like the grave.
And leave an old lady to drink and
baby have a good time
 a fine time
 a wild old time.

— Tony Eprile



