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Insight, Volume 5 Number 4

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Recommended Citation
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May 1963

Alice Johnson

INSIGHT

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MOTIF DRAWINGS: Carolyn May.
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Jane Uricchio:

MUSTY TREASURE

Frustrated
Worn
Unhappy
The old miser sits and counts his gold
As
Rain pitches rudely over shadowed treetops
Greengoldensilverness clinks on scratched tables
JOHN HATES DADDY
Moist tongue moves over scorched lips
Feverish eyes gleam in crazy darkness
As
Mary plays hopscotch over the selfish giant's grave
one
two
double three
A stone's throw determines fate
But
Heavy rhythm still lingers in the neverendingness
of perverted reminiscense
Money
Hate
Evil
Happy feet dancing on wet pavement
Heavy sighs echoing from barren walls
JOHN STILL HATES DADDY

Helen Tsandoulas:
THE BACK OF THE HUT

I just followed the others. It was going to be a hot day. The earth had already started to perspire; I felt the grass warm and wet, my bare feet. It must have been spring or else early summer. Flies and bees buzzed in the air as we pushed forward. Sweet smells were coming from the bushes inviting me to draw closer, but mother, who was walking ahead with my little sister in her arms, kept urging me to go on. "There is no time to waste", she said. My aunts were walking with her. Grandmother was ahead of everybody walking quickly, almost running, lips tight, eyes straight forward with only occasional side glimpses at my brother who was trying to keep up with her. Before we left the olive grove, the man hired to tend it with his wife and sister joined us. By the time the procession had started uphill it was enlarged considerably by newcomers. The men were old and walked in a group by themselves talking in hushed voices. The women were silent behind them, my grandmother in the lead. By now nobody was paying much attention to me, and I was left free to linger behind collecting flowers and chasing big black ants.

I knew the country there pretty well, but this was a new path. It had not been more than a month since we had come to the village, and I had not had time to investigate all the area yet. What I knew was mostly from previous week-end visits, — hunting trips for my father and uncles. I kind of liked the place. Miles and miles of olive trees, most of them with hollow trunks where I could hide and go to sleep. One of them was all mine; I was keeping house there most of the time, and that was the first place to look for me if I was wanted in a hurry. The only part I didn't like was the back of the hut. That was where they would finish off half-dead game from the hunt and where they killed chickens on Sundays. Once I watched my aunt do it. I didn't want to but I made myself. My brother went to watch it every time. My aunt first sharpened her knife, sliding it across the blade of another knife and kneeled down holding the bird with her knees and its head with her left hand against a flat stone. The bird was struggling desperately to get away. She raised her right hand, and when the heavy knife came down spilling hot red blood, the bird broke loose from her embrace. With its head cut off it ran fast towards the bushes just missing an olive tree. Blood was gushing up its throat and I disappeared as fast as I could in the hollow trunk of my olive tree. My dress was stained red. I never ate chicken after that day, or approached the hut from the back.

Apart from that, I liked living in the hut. Nobody paid special attention to me. I often went to bed without washing; my fingernails grew black and my mother gave up trying to make me wear shoes. All the help and the local people went without them too, and nobody seemed to mind it.

It was different in the town. Even before we left that evening mother had made us go to bed fully dressed, shoes and all, because "I might forget

when the time comes" she said. It was in a dream that I felt being tossed in my uncle's arms because of the bumps in the road as we drove on. Then I remember being in the row-boat sliding in the pitch-black night. Were we going to the olive grove hut for the week-end? That was the way to it without doubt, but what an hour to go! And it was very cold. When I woke up I knew that that was the hut ceiling all right. I could tell by the cob-webs gathered at the corners and hanging down like strings overhead. My hand groped for the floor; dirt floor. That made it final. Mother said that this was going to be a long weekend, but we lived it in the hut, didn't we? We could go on playing in the grove around the hut, but remain within calling distance. We should not let anybody scare us with stories, and above all we were to behave and look after ourselves. My grandmother came too, the next day with my aunts. My uncles would come occasionally bringing food. They had let their beards grow, and their clothes were covered with mud.

One day my father showed up. He had a long black beard and a leather bullet-holder hanging from his shoulder. He wore khaki army pants and shirt, wrinkled and dirty. He must have been hunting; that was the only time that he wore those clothes. We gathered around him, trying to embrace him all at once. He hugged us and squeezed us in his arms. Then he got up and went into the hut followed by the grown ups while we were told to go and play. My brother and I were left alone staring at each other. When would we be old enough to be included in their conversations? We could not go on every time half-knowing and half-guessing, but it was not long before they came out again. My father and uncles kissed everybody and disappeared hurriedly in the olive grove. There was silence and something in the air that kept us from asking questions. Finally, mother gathered us in her arms and with a cracked voice said that father was gone to do something very important; we should pray for him with all our heart because . . . she could not continue any more. Grandmother was sitting on the ground leaning against an olive tree, with her head on her bended knees.

It was the next day that we took the path that I had not taken before. Finding myself well behind I let the trapped ants go and I ran upwards. The procession had stopped at the clearing and stood facing the sea; way down in the distance there was a black cloud coming up from the hills spreading towards the sky. I drew nearer. Then I heard wailing piercing the air. I wanted my mother. Some of the women were crying, their kerchiefs, usually covering their heads, were on their shoulders, and their hair was loose. The men were gesticulating, their fists in the air as if to knock down the black cloud that kept swarming up from the distant hills. Mother saw me first and called me to her. As soon as I saw her I started crying too not knowing why. "It's Prevenza," she said pointing to the cloud. "They are burning Prevenza." Prevenza! That was home! Burning it? "Who and why, mother? Tell me, TELL ME!" "The Communists," she said, embracing me with her free hand and breaking out in sobs. The baby in her other arm was crying too. In a veil of tears I saw my grandmother standing by, erect, immobile, facing the ever ascending cloud.

"The bastards," she said, and spat on the ground.

I walked back with the grown ups. The ants had all disappeared and I was listening to their conversation. One would start saying something, and

everybody talked together. I could not understand much of what they were saying, but it felt good to walk with them.

"We must get away!"

"No, it's better to stay."

"Only God can help us!"

The following few days I heard much confused and desperate talk in hushed voices. Then, one afternoon, I saw my uncles coming down the large path. They were holding the four ends of a stained grey army blanket with something heavy in it. People gathered around. The blanket was set down, and opened up. The arms and legs settled on the ground, and there they remained. The head, hardly attached to the body, doubled up under the shoulders. The whole upper part was soaked in dead blood.

"He was shot just three kilometers down this way, near Hagii Apostoli," said my uncle pointing over the hut and to the back of it. So it was not only the back of the hut! It went on from there, three kilometers down, my uncle said, but maybe more than that; maybe all over, even around and inside my olive tree. I could not go to it. What's the use? Outside, together with the grownups, was just as good.

Rikki Goodwill:
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED?

The seven o'clock mass was over. Only a few townspeople came through the heavy oak doors. The men were wearing work clothes — business suits or denim overalls. The old women leaned on the iron railing to climb down the steps. They were the perpetual attendants. They became misers, clutching grace as tightly as they clung to the rosary. The grandfathers and the old men who lived alone gathered into their society of old stories and three-

day chess games. They looked at the sky and declared that the day and the week to come would be hot and dry. There were not many birds in the sky, only a pair of parallel sparrows.

Among the railroad men, three remained on the top step, talking to the priest. They usually remained after mass, talking. Sometimes the four went fishing. The night before a Negro laborer had been killed in the railroad yard as he chased a runaway goat. They were planning a relief fund. When the bell rang the quarter hour they also left and walked to their job, discussing their plan. Fishing talk became mixed with charity and they laughed about their Sunday trip, away from wives, children and engine steam.

The flies in the grocery store window gathered on the sill in buzzing groups. The noon heat, rising from the street, made the town quiver. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Koch nodded over their checker game in the front of the post office. Their hunting dogs had disappeared into the lumber yard, looking for cool holes. Everything breathed carefully. The birds had abandoned the dusty trees and the eaves of the stores. There was no singing, they seemed to have dried up.

John, coming home from the river, walked carefully down the street, hopping into every island of shade. He whistled the only song. The formula that delivered him to his door was made up of sixty four steps west through the center of town, a left turn at the Presbyterian church, fifty nine steps, two picket fences down his street and a front gate that whined from raising too many children. The whistling followed him into the house, over the worn oriental rug in the living room, into the kitchen. The morning had been very successful. Their cave was almost completed.

His mother was at the stove with steaming arms over steaming pots. She did not greet him. Her shoulders moved back. She turned as he went toward the ice box.

"Where's Freddy? We've been looking for him all morning."

"I don't know. I haven't seen him." John had his eye on an apple, and moved toward the fruit bowl.

She just looked at him. Her eyes were large and her right hand was white where it held the spoon.

"He was with you this morning. You left together to go swimming." Her voice was getting faster. "Freddy has to go home. Where is he?"

"I told you I don't know and besides, it's a secret."

She closed her eyes and put down the spoon. The only sounds were the echo of the spoon on the tin-top table and the bubbles of the soup. As John watched she began to tremble and hold her sides. He was frightened and fascinated. When she began to speak her eyes did not open. The words were so close together he could barely understand them.

"You must listen, Johnny. Mr. Sutphen has been killed at work. He's dead and Freddy's mother needs him. He has to be with her. I helped look for you this morning but you weren't at the river. The whole neighborhood was screaming for you but you weren't there or you wouldn't answer. Don't you understand? You must tell me where he is."

John looked at her and said, "How was Mr. Sutphen killed?"

She began to cry and shake him. The hair fell out of her bun. "Where did you leave him?"

"We're playing in the sand pit," John yelled and crumbled on the floor. She didn't notice that he was crying and left him to sob on the floor as she ran next door. He stopped crying immediately. His eyes moved through the kitchen, but his head didn't move. John remembered Mr. Sutphen, standing in their kitchen that morning, waiting for his father to get ready for Mass. Mr. Sutphen worked on the trains and brought all the boys sticky candy from Baltimore. He began to cry again. He jerked his head when the kitchen canary scratched its gravel and newspaper floor. The boiling soup flapped the pot top. His mother was frightened and he was frightened. His chest became too dry for crying. He started to cough. Before his mother came back he got up and went to the cellar.

The coal bin was cool and quiet, in an uncomfortable, hard way. The footsteps above were looking for him. He wasn't coughing now but it was still hard to breathe. He thought of the fishing trip his father had planned that morning with Mr. Sutphen. They laughed and would not let him go, now one would be going. Mr. Sutphen had really liked to fish.

He was changing his position on the pile when his mother came down the stairs. He didn't hear her until she made him jump.

"Johnny, I'm sorry I frightened you, but I had to know where Freddy was. Please don't hide. We had to find him. Don't you understand?"

"No," he said as his foot deliberately started a coal slide.

She looked at him with an understanding smile. Being very careful, she climbed the pile, took his hand and led him upstairs. There was a lot to do.

He was going to have to dress up, even though it was summer. John tied his shoes slowly. His parents did not pay any attention to him as he dressed. His father, who always wore a blue cap, combed his hair with a wet comb while his mother brushed her blue dress. They didn't talk and they didn't smile when they passed each other in the bed room. John streched on his bed and watched a string of dust waver on the ceiling. It was too hot to be wearing shoes.

When his mother was ready they walked to the car, quietly.

"You just don't believe things like that happen," his father said. "Any man but Hank. He was a good man, a good friend. The best friend a man could have. Worked hard, loved his family. He feared God and never did anything wrong. Why did it happen to him?" He was not asking anyone. The questions seemed to be addressed to the white dividing line of the road.

John's mother was also watching the line. "Don't try to reason it. It's happened and we can't do anything to change it. You don't know why it happened. All you can do now is remember him. Think of your fishing trips and how good it was to be together. He was a good man. It's impossible to find reasons for all things. We just don't know. It's frightening."

John's father didn't look at her. "Let's not start it again," he said. His face was tight. His forehead had the same line as a horse's with its ears back.

John tried to curl his feet in their shoes and count the telephone poles. The ninety-fourth telephone pole was in the middle of the church parking lot. There were only two cars there. One of them belonged to the Sutphens.

"Let's wait in the car until more people come," his father said.

"You were the one who wanted to get ready early. Now we're here, I didn't want to come in the first place but I'm here because he was your friend and his wife is my friend. We have to go in." Her eyes were still staring, looking for the white line in front of the car.

They got out of the car quickly. It was even hotter outside. John's parents walked quickly into the church. John walked slowly. His feet hurt. The church was cool inside. But even its coolness had some of the summer dust in it. The rugs felt good and something smelled like Chinese perfume. His mother did not kneel when they reached their pew. She sat with a stiff back, looking at the stained window above the high altar. John had never seen his father pray before. It embarrassed him. His discomfort increased as time passed and other people came in. Nothing about the church was familiar. He looked around the church and tried not to look at his father, whose shoulders were shaking. The priest's words were foreign; he didn't even try to listen. The sound of the words reminded him of the piano tuner who came to their house every spring. His father didn't notice that John went to sleep on his mother's arm.

The midmorning made everything explode white and yellow as he came out of the church. He slid his hand down the iron railing but it was too hot to hold on to. He watched the expressions as the neighbors and friends came down the steps. No one looked at the neighbors they passed. They did not smile when they talked; the sounds came from half-opened lips. Their voices were low, but the pigeons sounded saddest. His feet still hurt.

His father did not say anything during their ride home. He did not say anything for the rest of the day.

John returned to the coal bin after the funeral. His father had put the car in the garage and then disappeared. His mother was in the kitchen. He had considered going to the sand pit, but there was no one to go with. Freddy couldn't play. The coal bin was special. It was quiet. He kept the reserve army and all the golf balls they picked up in the corner with the coal shovel. This place was his sanctuary. His mother was never very mad with the black coal dust he collected. She would just give him a bath and put his shoes on the back steps. She answered his father's complaints about the dusty footprints by saying "Well, it's a place to go. It's good and dark and quiet. I think it's good for him to be alone sometimes." His father always suggested a tree house, " with a little more air and a little less dirt," but it was never put up.

He made as much noise as possible going down the cellar steps. There was nothing to do but count golf balls and repair truck axles. He sighed as he settled down on the top of the coal pile to count. The day was going to be very long.

This time he heard her coming. She came directly to the bin. She was still wearing the dark blue dress but the usual apron was over it now. Her lower lip was in her mouth and like his father John recognized the expression and looked away. She was going to talk. He was not going to be interested in what she was going to say. He was counting golf ballls.

"Johnny, why did you come down here? Did the funeral upset you?"

"No. It's cool here." He continued to count, keeping his head down.

She climbed up the pile and sat down next to him, even though it was her only good dress. She stared at the wash tubs. "Do you know what a funeral is for?"

"Yes, it's for burying people," he answered with third grade precision. A golf ball rolled across the floor.

"Mrs. Sutphen will be unhappy for a long time, so will Freddy. They are alone now. Death has taken their father. Do you understand?"

"Won't he ever come back to see them?"

"No . . . People don't come back when they die. It's like when your little brother died, only you were too young to understand any of it then. The Sutphens will think about him and pray that he will come back. But he can't. They loved him very, very much. They still do. Even though he never did anything wrong he was killed. It was an accident. Accidents can't be stopped. There is nothing they can do. Do you understand a little of what I'm saying?"

"Yes. I guess all they can do is cry," John said as he climbed down from the top of the pile to search for a golf ball.

Joan Ross:

A POEM FOR PEACE . . . our new year starts in January when winds are bold and hearts grow old for me war's still cold.

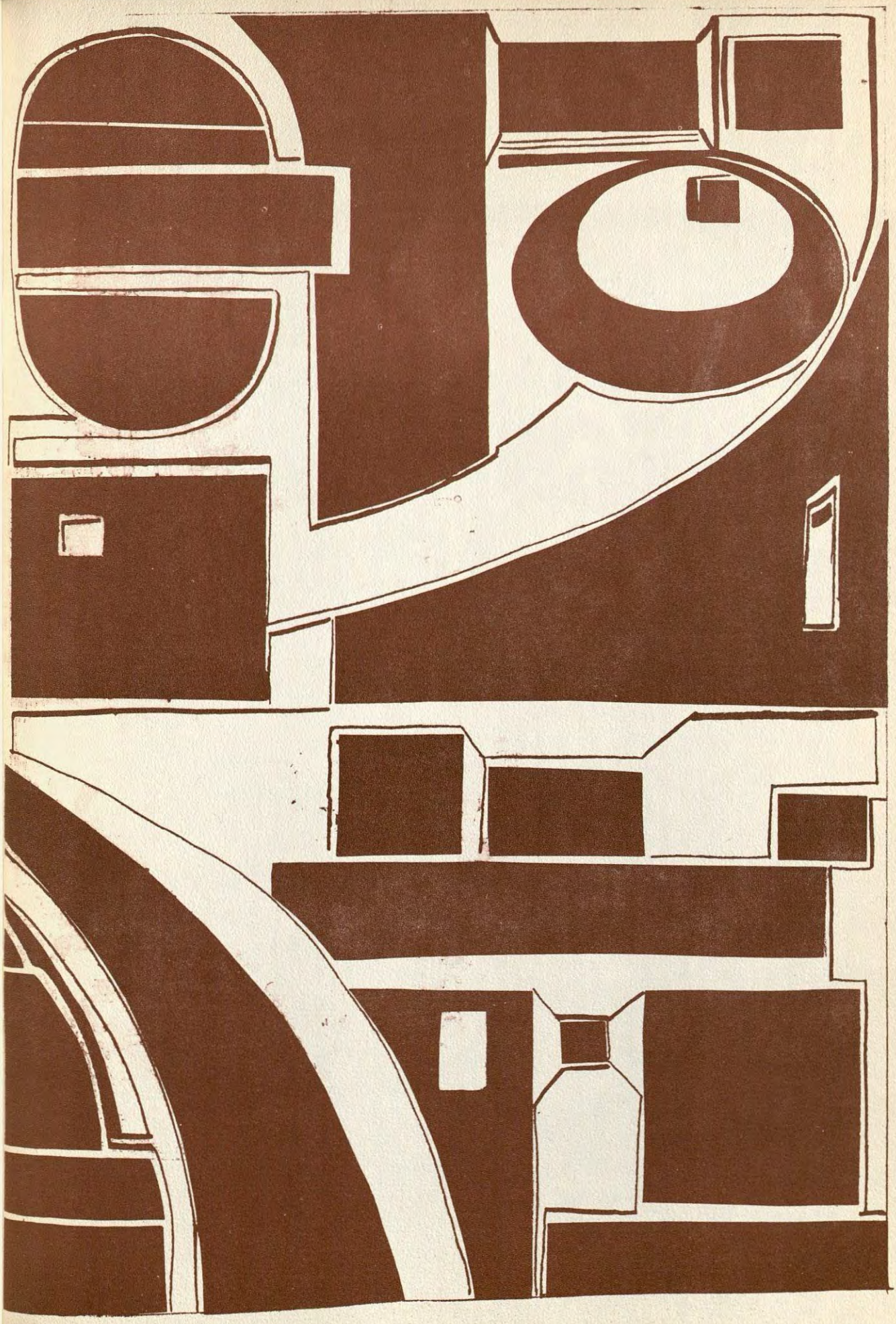
Take us over, they cried
To the other side.
Can you turn your boat around —
For the Promised Land we're bound.

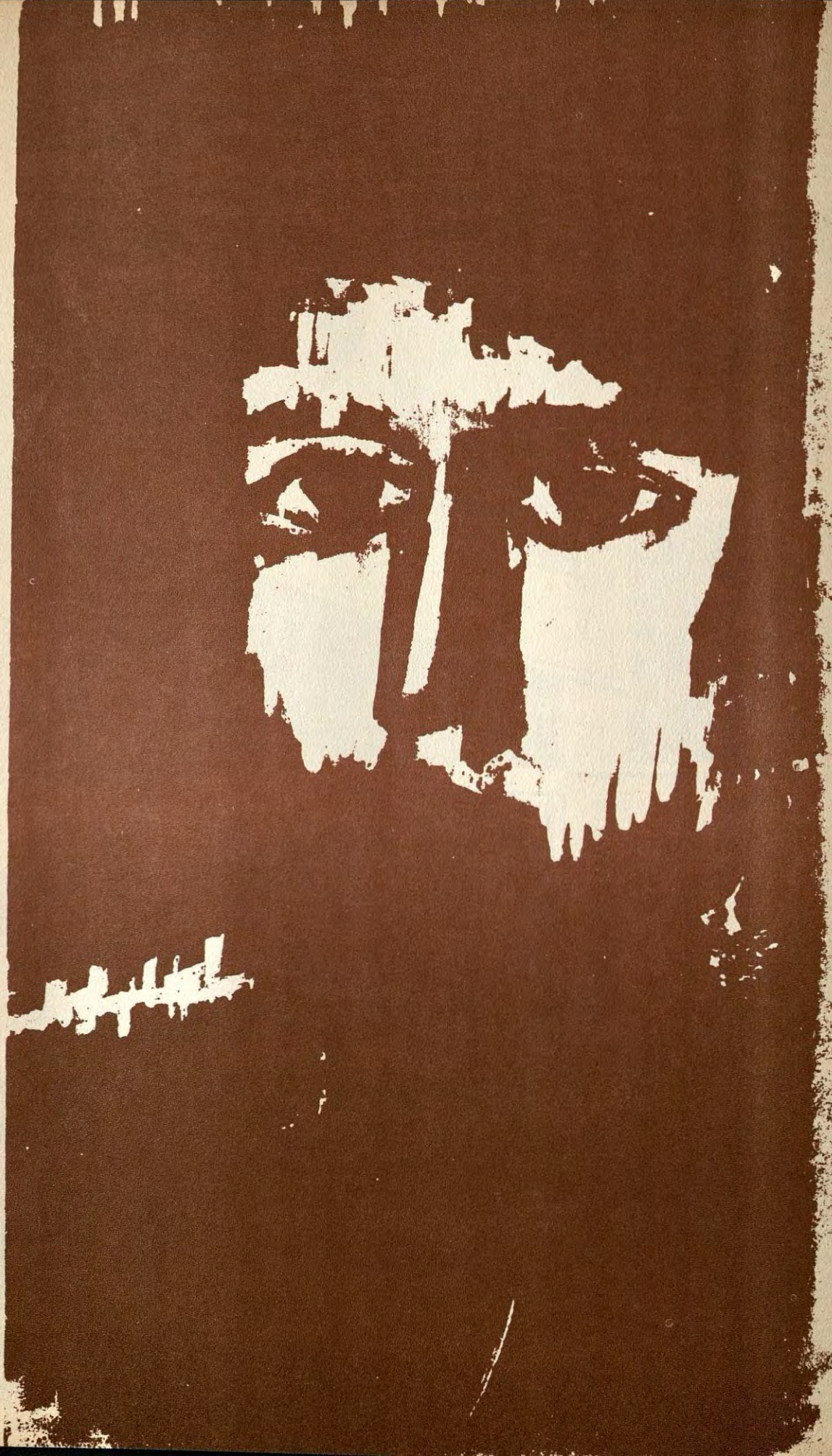
I cannot stop; quick! Grasp —
For my life-saving clasp —
I'll take you on —
Past Babylon.

But some are left,
Their lives bereft.
The hope of Canaan's passed them by.
They dream of Judah's hills, and cry.

They cannot hide
On this side.
Dream milk and honey, and a smile,
And then — the horror of Exile.

They'll just stay here —
Alone, and empty, full of fear.
Unmoved.
Untried.





Kimba Wood:

PARIS

(a transference of cities)

Lovers' Haven for the World
Match-maker, Rekindler of Love,
Dabbler in Passion and the World's Delight;
City of the Pressed Lips:

They tell me you are shabby and I believe them, for
I have seen the clochards on the quai in the
pre-dawn frost.
And they tell me you are sordid and I answer "yes," for
I have seen the Algerian punks brawl in Pigalle.
And they tell me you are degenerate and my reply is:
on the faces of women in the streets I have seen the
marks of sin.
And having answered so I turn once more to
those who sneer at this my city, and I give
them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show men another city with free heart
beating so glad to be alive and in love,
Murmuring endearments during the course
of the midi break, here is a gentle, tender lover
set proud against the course, booming cities:
Tender as a fawn with tongue lapping at its
mother, innocent as two running down
the quai hand in hand,
Rain-drenched,
Windblown,
Careless,
Exhilarated,
Laughing, weeping, laughing again,
Under the clouds, rain-drops all over her cheeks,
smiling with pink lips,
Under the beautiful retreat of love smiling as
a young girl smiles
Smiling as a starry-eyed demoiselle smiles who
has never lost in love,
Dimpling and confiding that under her
palm is the tenderness and under her
breast the heart-beat of the people,
Smiling!
Smiling the innocent, trusting silent smile
of Love, short-skirted, perfumed, proud to
be Lovers' Haven, Match-maker, Rekindler of
Love, Dabbler in Passion and Delight of the World.

Carylle Bartholomew:
ESSAY IN THREE PARTS

He did not know Spring because he saw a robin pulling worms and violetness of crocus by the walk. Nor did he hear the cabbies throw their chains amidst the ashpile. It was her feet that morning, early toes in sandals though snow still hid the river bank.

* * * *

I will see my love soon; the mouth of his world-ugly face will be widely stretched at the corners and it will be for me. If there is a tear in his eye it will be mine also, and when his white hand, long, shoves back the grainy hair, it won't be an embarrasssed motion, but only for his vision. I can wait now; the joy absorbing tears and struggle is a nightingale in my heart.

* * * *

You ask me, "Are we happy?" I do not hear, I am looking at the morning — it is thin and gray. Again you ask, "Are we happy?" I wish to say, "Your lips are wide and red; my eyes are brown and deep."

We sit on the Charles bank. The grass beneath us feels like a terrier pup and I know your hair is soft when the sun shines on its blackness. You talk of the reflective power of the Seine — the debauchery and disease that floats lethargically atop the river. And Eliot-Shakespeare's Afton. I do not hear you; I see the green-brown fluid steadily and specked by white and pink and twigs.

We are on the train high above the clear city. Your hands are crossed and in the paleness there are hairs upon your fingers. To you it is this man's building and that one's dynamic city processes — the bitter meal of the lonely. I do not hear you; I watch the magic web spin twinkling gems — hidden here, staring there.

Please do not flick the switch. The morning gray will vanish; then will soon be light enough to see. Please do not ask again.

Charrie Randall:
THREE POEMS

March 17. 1963

Every year the day appears
Dry sometimes or bright
Daylight time suffused with light
Moving into the blackness that is night
With the coming of the fear

When you did not forget or sleep.
Forget Helen Schoeni's day?
A day different enough to say
It is a day like her and pray
Someone will find a day for you to keep.

January 29. 1963

Sea gulls walk in the snow today
Picking for food in the white sunny snow
Looking for earth under the snow
And Robert Frost is dead.

Sea gulls have come to the snow to eat
Walking the ice glassy snow with their feet
Searching the snowy beach for grass.

I'm putting raindrops on the leaves
She said, in caught-in-the-act distress,
Halting the dip of her fingers to please
The eyes that scowled at the watery mess
With a groan.

The younger eyes looked up and left.
The older returned to the leaves in relief
Touching the heart leaves, her fingers deft
To the quivering life that stayed her grief
At being alone.

Leilani Vasil:
POEM

I remember the road winding narrowly
Between fir trees that bent low to whisper
To us as we passed
Of the beauty of that spring night,
When the new moon climbed high into the heavens
To escape the mantle of black velvet clouds
That hung in the sky, and gave the land a radiance
That hinted of ablution.

On a night like this centuries ago
Roman matrons would have set out for the Palatine
To wait the coming of day — that day which equaled night
In which they would perform rites of savagery
To Bacchus, Iris, Cybele;
Then, too, the scent of pine and early blooms
Would combine to create a fragrance
That hinted of the mysterious East.

Yet we were only moment spectators of that world,
It's magic could not detain us;
We were traveling to another realm —
A world of strange reality where nothing changed.

There stood the cabin — to this retreat
We came to perform our ritual;
It's sameness confirmed the infiniteness
Of our love.

You would carry in the firewood and bend
To start a blaze that would not warm us.
I would watch and when a spark took
Would carry over the old storm lantern

For you to light. With it in hand
We would slowly climb up the stairs
To a room where a stronger fire flourished,
Where rites in antithesis to destruction were held.

Jean Laurence:

ERITAS

NOTE: The author is a graduate student at Feinburg University in Wineland, South Dakota, where she is studying Sociology on a Margaret Meade Fellowship. Recently, Miss Smith had the fortunate experience of traveling to Eritas Island in the South Pacific with a crew of professional anthropologists, cinematographers, translators, and jeep drivers, to study the habits and mores of the Eritasians. The following is a brief report of those travels.

We caught sight of Eritas in the distance, a red speck in an azure sea, curtained in a blue haze. The red appearance of the land, we learned, is due to the excessive clay content of the soil, and the haze is a fog which obscures the land from sunset to noon because of the coldness of the days and the warmth of the Eritasian nights. Upon closer observation, the tropical paradise was seen to be choked with exotic verdure: hanging foliage and twisted vines, strange green plants, flat and rubbery, or long and tortuous, tubular, or sharp-pointed; and everywhere splashes of burning red, flaming orange, and rich, tangy yellow.

But even in the midst of this forest primeval in all its native majesty, I caught a glimpse of a sight which thoroughly shocked me, a sight which was at first totally incomprehensible to my ordinary understanding: a sort of westernized new-world building, all circular and cinderblock and glass-panelled. And on the front of the building, the Eritasian word Dward Micto in Latin script, which Dr. Jameson, who was much more familiar with Eritasian history than I, translated as "Public Library." The Eritasians, Jameson informed me, were a highly literate people, and they dedicated all their resources and leisure time to the improvement of their mental faculties. Jameson asked me to take a closer look at the building and to tell him what I saw. I had to confess that I was quite impressed by the almost New York-ean modernity of the structure: the architectural grace, the majestic beauty, the artistic triumph of that glass-walled monument to the literacy of the primitive Eritasians! Jameson smiled. "Unfortunately," he chuckled softly, "because of the beautiful, artistic, 45° tilt of the building, it is impossible to shelve the books, which are stacked, instead, in random heaps on the floor. Ah, these natives!"

He added that the library had the world's largest collection of Eritasian translations (or Canters, as the Eritasian word has it) of foreign works in the entire world, a claim I had no cause to doubt. The amassing of such a collection, he went on, was based on the assumption that a good book is always better in translation, that so much is lost in the original. Jameson's report had made me almost unbearably curious, and I anxiously wished to see the Eritasians for myself.

As we docked and dropped anchor, a close look at the tribal community disclosed row upon row of nearly 500 wooden huts, every hut perched upon

a raised platform, and every hut exactly alike in every detail as far as the eye could see. Indeed, I had the feeling that my retina was playing tricks on me and that I was seeing a multiple mirage; I had to rub my eyes several times. Between each row of huts ran a well-beaten main path, and a path from each hut to the main path, and between each hut a path, all paths well-beaten. Strangely, I noticed no evidence of trampled grass anywhere else, nor was it cut, but allowed to grow over four feet high. A few of the inhabitants emerged from their huts to regard our landing — and the reader will pardon me if I express amazement at the sight of my first Eritasians: they are a rich bronze in color, and are a frightful eight feet tall (all men, women and youths over a certain age). Their heads are a foot long and are narrow and elongated, and sit upon their necks like a football upon an axis. One sprig of hair protrudes from the back of the head like a horse's tail, and hangs three feet down the back. Their lips are colorless and inverted, and they have no teeth. But most to my amazement, I found that every Eritasian is exactly the mirror image of any other. (Men differ but little from the women, and the children from their elders only in size). They appeared, indeed, they appeared to be absolute replicas of one another.

Once upon the ground, these strange creatures refused to walk anywhere but on the paths beaten by use, and cringed, in fact, at the touch of the grass which surrounded them. If two walkers happened to meet on the narrow path, the one least far advanced would back up all the way from where he had come, in order to avoid stepping off the beaten track. (Our landing had caused quite a furor, and the paths were choked with pedestrians making just such allowances for one another). I nudged the good Dr. Jameson, and suggested that perhaps it would be wise to seek out the chief of the tribe for protection and safe admittance, as the sight of this strange troop, giving the impression of a sort of reflected image en masse, had quite unnerved me. Jameson, who knew the chief well from a previous visit, assured me, and we found him in front of his hut, smoking an evil-smelling substance wrapped in green leaves. There he greeted Jameson like an old friend. The chief was a charming man in his 250's (I realized, to my horror) adorned with all manner of golden trinkets, Glass Beads, etc. and graciously offered us his most humble service as host and guide.

Our host led us into the very heart of his village, and the first question I asked him (somewhat shyly) was the meaning of the shunning of any route but the beaten path. I was told that this was no ordinary custom, but a law observed at the cost of one's very life. To walk where no one had walked before, he said, constituted an anti-social act under the law. Figuratively, he went on, it is imperative to follow in the footsteps of precedent; since deviation of any kind invites diversity and thus, exclusion, jealousies, and all the other social maladies. And thus it is for the sake of the emotional well-being of the inhabitants themselves that diversity must be avoided at all costs. For the Eritasian credo is "freedom from social maladjustment, and security for all." What chance has an Eritasian, he added hopelessly, to adjust, if he has cause for jealousies and feelings of inferiority? The chief told us that his life-time goal has been to achieve complete emotional adjustment as a result of complete, pacifying uniformity. (Unhappily, he admitted, just as he is about to realize his goal, there is generally at least one hapless soul who

must be reproved and punished for "continued acts of violent self-abuse." Ah, well). When I asked the chief if perhaps enforcing uniformity to the extent of restricting the walking area weren't going a bit far, he admitted that, yes, perhaps the laws had become a bit ridiculous, but where does one draw the line? The smallest deviation must be nipped in the bud, lest the social mores become weakened and dissimilarity run rampant. I expressed my disapproval, and the Eritasian chief was genuinely shocked at my account of Western non-conformity and rugged individualism, a standard so dear to us. "Individualism," he said sternly, "breeds discontent."

When I mused aloud at the remarkable physical similarities of the Eritasians as well, the chief smiled proudly and invited me to see the "molding rooms," where the wonderful process of "uniforming" took place. I was not prepared for what I saw: Tables on which subjects were strapped down, their hands and feet pulled in opposite directions by aids. Their were other tables on which the subjects' heads and feet were forcefully pushed toward the center. All this amid the most ear-shattering moaning and groaning. When I looked quizzical, my guide explained that these were the stretching racks to stretch those under 8' 3¼", and the squeezing racks to squeeze those larger down to size, so that height might remain uniform. In addition, I noticed assistants binding the heads of new-born babes in such a way as to make them grow to specification, I was told. The chief added that, although not present at the moment, there were usually assistants to unwind the cloth of those who had reached 16, thus displaying a perfectly elongated head. Here as well, my guide told me, the hair is cut, the lips stretched exactly to form and inverted (if, by some mutational mis-chance, one is not so well blessed), and here flesh is snipped off and grafted on in the right places. And every effort is made to correct any deviation from the norm, absolute conformity to the ideal standard being the mark of physical perfection. I was staggered at this utter disregard of individual singularities.

The chief, sensing the triumph of the "molding room," lost no time in showing me his home and village, and expressed pride in his housing community; for my chieftain host had been awarded the title of sacco-mitgay, or "pace-setter," and influences and enforces all trends and behaviors as well as the architectural design of the community. The title, he boasted, was a thing apart from the title of chief, and is awarded separately. The Sacco-Mitgay, he said, is chosen by his peers according to certain talents and merits. The prime and deciding factor, he informed me, is the talent for having a founding ancestor. To be eligible for the title, an inhabitant must have had an ancestor (the more ancient the ancestor, the better chance one has) who either 1) founded the colony, 2) supervised the building of it, 3) founded village schools or foreign-translation libraries, or 4) subsidised any of the above. It is even more helpful if the ancestor had himself been a sacco-mitgay, or at the very least, an influential man in the community. For the effects of heredity, I was told, is stressed by the Eritasians the belief being that the "blood" of the fathers will be visited upon the sons, and that only the descendants of the worthy will be worthy. After this initial exclusion, my guide told me, the remaining contestants are chosen according to personal merit: very simply, all must put their household goods and all other objects of value on display for inspection by the community. And very simply, the contestant with the greatest number of most valuable and time-honored

goods is chosen for the title. Thereafter the winner makes the decrees as to household decoration and rules for family living according to his own taste, and all must follow suit, must replace their entire furnishings, if necessary, with others that match the pacesetters own. The chief beamed. I offered my congratulations, [but had the urge to enlighten the dear fellow as to the adsurdity of such a way of life (so unlike our own), an urge which I suppressed, realizing that I was an honored guest as well as a social scientist.]

We at last reached the chief's hut (or scome, I was told), of which he was so proud. In front of the elevated scome, I caught sight of a strange bush, to which the inhabitants of the village were bowing and praying. When I asked about this, the chief told me that this was the sacred Babbitt tree, blessed by their god Babbitt, who is vested with the power to insure emotional security, and to punish "evil-doers," (that is, those who are a "disturbing influence to the community"). When I asked about the punitive measures taken by the god, my guide blanched and declined to tell me anything but that the measures were too horrible to mention. When pressed, he finally admitted that the least of these was ostracision, whereby the sinner was shunned like a leper.

The chief continued with his guided tour:

The scome itself stands exactly 12' 3 32/52" from the ground, and thus must every scome in the village, according to written law. (He told me and my fellow-travelers of the time one scome-owner inadvertently cut a pair of foreshortened poles — 12' 3 31/42" — and was stoned to death as a subversive revolutionary). In addition, every scome has a wide front window displaying a chartreuse and maroon cucci-cula feather (indicating their high standard of living), a yellow brick chimney with one brick displaced, a knocker made from the charcoaled jaw-bone of an ass, a sandlewood door dyed magenta by the berry of the ju-ju, each door with 142 splinters in three of the corners, and with 26 termites in the woodwork. (The chief told me and my companions of the time he fired a volley of poisoned darts at a dangerous serpent which was threatening his entrance, missing the worm, but leaving 61 indentations in the wood frame of the door. By nightfall of that day, the innovation had spread throughout the village. It was an impressive and heart-warming sight, he said, to watch 500, 160-pound, eight-foot, rust-colored scome-owners lined up like a regiment of well-trained soldiers, all intent on the task of shooting poisoned darts into their doors.) Indeed, this wonderful adherence to tribal decree knows no bounds!

The chief next led us onto the field where a crop of strange blue fruits were being harvested by his people. He explained that the harvest of the fruit, called paei, was the sole livelihood of the Eritasians, except for volunteer work in the "molding room," which is non-remunerative. He then turned to us, thanked us for our kind audience, and suggested that we might now like to be on our own to question his subjects about their beliefs and way of life. After thanking him, our crew and interpreters moved onto the field where the pickers were arranged in parallel rows, about three feet apart. In the row nearest us, 24 pickers were arranged two feet apart. Odd, I noticed, that the next succeeding row contained only 22 pickers, and that each successive row decreased by two pickers, until, 11 rows from where we stood, only two pickers worked side by side. The arrangement seemed to produce a sort of

pyramid effect. Further, as I walked between the rows, I noticed that the quality of the harvest became increasingly better as I neared the top of the pyramid. The spongy fruit was fatter, richer in color, and more succulent at the top than the shriveled, spotty crop being harvested by the mass of pickers at the base of the pyramid. The higher up one worked on the pyramid, apparently, the better the paei. When I inquired about this arrangement, I was told, simply, that this was the way the paei grew, and always did grow, and that the pickers must adjust accordingly. My informant went on that because the better paei were more pleasant to pick, because less effort was required to pluck the better fruit off the stems, and because the pickers were allowed 10% of the fruit they had picked for home use, the higher positions on the pyramid were places of envy, much sought after. These places went to those who had proved themselves strongest in battle against their neighbors. Usually, my informant continued, the pickers accept the position they have earned, but often — and here his voice dropped — the lower workers become dissatisfied with their lots and the unwelcome supervision and advice that the higher workers hand down from the ranks, and they complain, he said, that their poor showing in battle was due to extenuating circumstances beyond their control and call for another match. A re-match not granted, they often rise up and do battle with their neighbors unsanctioned. Things often become very unpleasant, he sighed. It would all be much easier, the higher worker said if one would keep the place one was assigned.

[I must tell the reader that I couldn't be at more variance with this principle, and realized at once that this state of affairs was in diametric contradiction with the standards on which the Eritasian society is based.] The dear chief's visions of absolute equality and freedom from jealousy! How could such a situation as this exist simultaneously with the chief's ideal of homogenization and emotional security? And how — here I addressed my question to the higher worker at my elbow — if all were to be alike in all things, could each hold a position so different in status, each a position distinctly separate. . . . "Aha!" My friend interrupted me, as if embarrassed by my blasphemy, and wishing to set the acounts straight. "Separate," (he grasped at the word like a drowning man grasping at a straw, "separate, but equal! You see, we're all doing the same thing. . . ." He was still looking somewhat uneasy when I left him.

We left the fields and entered the homes of some of the chief's subjects, in order to observe their mores and customs. We spent many days and nights at the homes of several, eating with them, working with them and playing with them. We even watched their children at play, and took copious notes on their activities. One particular discovery of mine was this security of absolute uniformity (on the home scene, at any rate.) Thankfully, Eritasian men do not let the division of labor and its problems obtrude upon the general principle of uniformity.) It has a definite moral influence on the children of the tribe. It instills modesty. Unlike the modern American child, the Eritasian child does not boast to his playmates (whom he cannot tell apart) of the superiority of his parent. The Eritasian child is hindered, necessarily, from saying "My father is taller than your father," or "My mother is prettier than your mother." For all fathers and all mothers, according to the dictates of custom are equal in height, weight, and physical characteristics. In fact, it is necessary that each child wear an anklet engraved with his

father's mark, a mark which is branded behind his father's left ear, for purposes of identification. In addition, each child wears around his neck a dogtag bearing his name, age, and serial number, and the exact location of his scome by longitude and latitude. For the Eritasian child would otherwise become lost 10 yards from his identical house and would not find his way back to the right one, nor could a mother identify her child without his dogtag. (The chief told me of the time he was missing his eldest son for three weeks until his unwitting foster parents read his dogtag and discovered his identity. They never did find their son, however, he mused sadly). I can easily see how this might be so, as I have often, upon finding myself between the rows of scomes, all with their cucci-cula feathers in the window and ass's jaw-bones on the door, had the feeling of being trapped in a maze of cleverly placed mirrors.

But the village mothers do find this uniformity particularly comforting: when every child is an identical child, there is no problem of sibling rivalry, no neighborhood jealousies, no measuring the achievements of one's child against the achievements of another's. These children, incidently, all attend the same village school, housed in the library. I attended classes one school day, and was able to record many interesting observations. They go to school only in the morning; the rest of the day is spent in practicing the theories they are taught in class. Their studies, in toto, are enumerated as follows (20 minutes per "course): Getting Along With Others, Working in Teams, Emotional Adjustment, The Importance of Uniformity, and Succeeding to Happiness. The children are taught on a volunteer, non-remunerative basis by their fathers (in well-working teams). The goal and purpose of their education, as set down for all to read in an impressive, gilt-edged plaque on the library wall is "adjusting to the world around us." A most ennobling sentiment.

Over a cup of tari, the wife of one of my kind hosts confided to me that she and all her Eritasian women friends find it most agreeable not to be forced to express an opinion as to what to wear, what to cook for Sunday dinner, what game to play on Wednesday nights, how to behave when in a group of peers, what to say when, etc. How much easier, she sighed, to simply follow and keep pace with the chief's wife. She couldn't comprehend my suggestion that perhaps the chief's wife might resent this sort of imitation. She assured me that the chief's wife certainly expected just such behavior, in fact, insisted upon it. It was her fortunate role, my hostess said, as wife of a sacco-mitgay. Indeed, I had the occasion to witness this commendable social attitude in practice when I was invited to the gala raindance held in the chief's outdoor snake-pit, to which all the ladies wore the same zebra-striped Kukla. The chief's wife, who had stressed the advisability of zebra stripes, almost fainted of shock, stood gaping, and finally burst into hysterical tears at the sight of one lady who was not wearing the same kukla. Apparently, social jealousy is unknown among the Eritasians.

And so with renewed faith in human nature and a change in attitude, I and my companions somewhat reluctantly left the socially adjusted Eritasians. On our way back, the good Dr. Jameson remarked to me that the Eritasians were indeed a happy race, except for one single object of worry: the Eritasians are living in deadly fear of the Bubonic Plague, an ever-present threat which hangs over their heads like a cloud. I sighed sympathetically, and remarked on how lucky we were to live in a culture so technologically and scientifically advanced that no one need fear death by Bubonic Plague.

Nancy Rustici:
TWO POEMS

It was rather a shame
For Mullahey, that fame
When it came, at last,
Was too late.
His tastes were formed.
He never could be
One of the Very Few.

Lobster, avacado, and ripe black olives
Like frozen daiqueries,
Were not for Mullahey.
He could not
As they say, acquire the taste.

His sepulchre at Nice
Was overstuffed
With Danish Modern,
(Bought in sets.)
In Hong-Kong silks
He wilted. But he had
The old Upper Lip.
He kept on trying.

He made the Tour,
And joined the Club,
But never felt, quite, with it.
Very sad.
One day, they found him
Dead.
Lying on the sand,
With a peanut-butter sandwich in his hand.
Can you imagine?

She loved the jungle tiger
With his greedy glistening fang,
His burning eyes and rippled coat
The snarling song he sang.
In secretness she watched him glide
And leap with agile grace.
In secretness, she laid the trap
In his most private place.
He sleeps enchained before her now,
Domesticated, fat.
Amazed, revolted, she's exchanged
Her tiger for a cat.

Amelia Fatt:

POEM

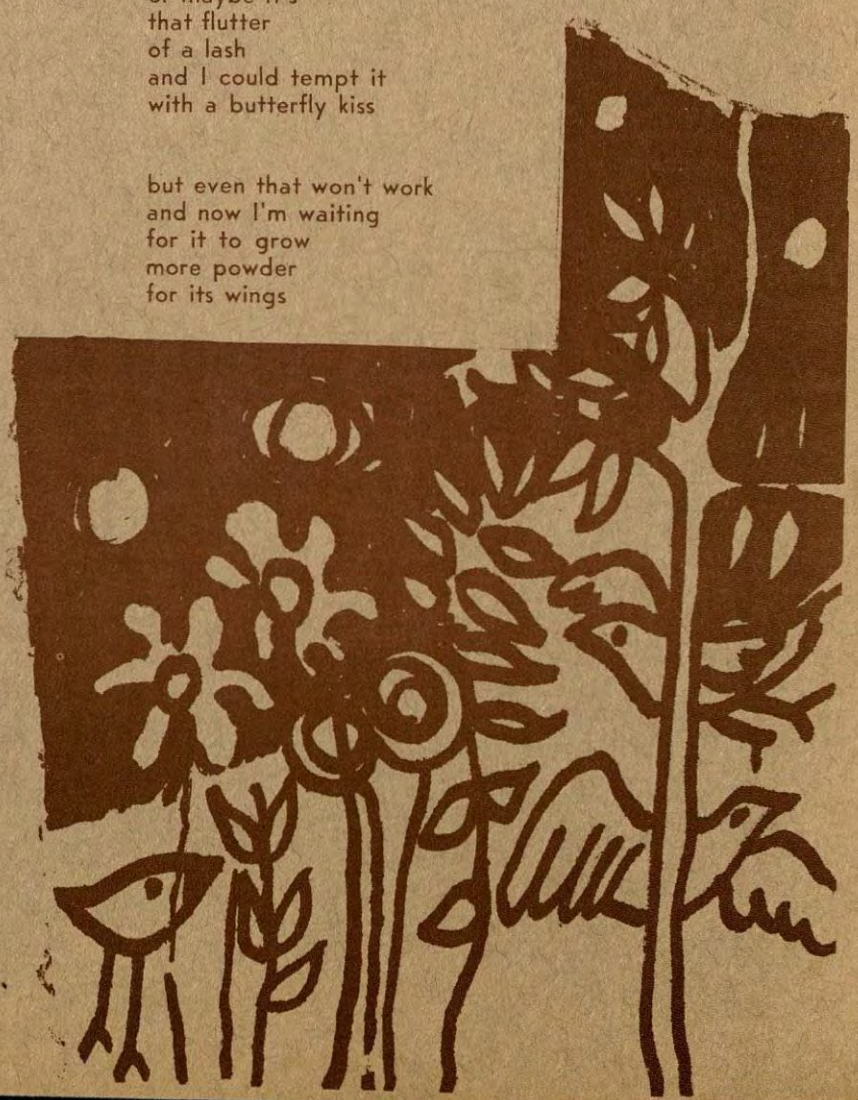
your butterfly soul
eludes me
though I watch
your complicated body
like a cage

I somehow felt
it might show
in your face perhaps
that tremor
at the corner of your mouth

I pressed that mouth
against my own
to see
if it would fly out
but I think it's shy

or maybe it's
that flutter
of a lash
and I could tempt it
with a butterfly kiss

but even that won't work
and now I'm waiting
for it to grow
more powder
for its wings



Joan Snyder:

WINSTON

"Whom Jupiter would destroy he first drives mad." — Sophocles

Cheyri.

It used to be so nice, but it's not anymore. Christmas is coming and it's just not nice. Mommy and Daddy yell and scream at each other, and it's awful, and it's so noisy. I hid a lot today. I ran behind the piano when I thought Mommy wanted to talk to me. I knew she wanted to tell me about Daddy and I love Daddy and I just couldn't stand her. I am not going to buy her a present.

Nanny came over today and she brought me a chocolate marshmallow santa claus. I wanted so to eat it, but if I save it it will last longer. Mommy cried when Nanny left. Then Carrie came to take me upstairs for a nap. I wasn't tired, but she told me to hush up child and come without a fuss. Carrie is so big. Bigger even than Daddy. When I get in bed I watch her every time she breathes and I try to breathe just like her. Except hers are deeper and I can hardly breathe at all after that. Then I have to turn over and try to think she isn't there at all so I can get my own breaths back. Then I get them back. But I still never really go to sleep. I close my eyes and pretend, so she'll leave me. But Carrie watches my eyes so that I know she's looking and I can hardly help blinking. I hate it when she watches my eyes.

I wish it was spring again. We have fun in spring and I don't have to wear my leggings all the time. Sunday's are my very favorite. We drive to the zoo in Daddy's car. I like it because just two can fit in good, and when Mommy doesn't come I feel best. The elephant house smells so awful. That's the worst and I cry, but they always make me go in. Their skin is all wrinkly and I have to hold my nose. Once I went to a rodeo and I had to hold my nose through the whole time and when I got home I was sick. Mommy says Daddy's sick. But I don't think so. When I'm sick I stay home from school, but not Daddy. He's hardly ever home. But Mommy says he's not hospital-sick. You can't see his sickness. I'm glad you can't because I was in a hospital once when my tonsils were out and it was scary not to sleep home.

When it was time for sleep tonight Daddy came in. He wasn't there for dinner and I didn't eat my vegetables and Mommy got mad. She said I'd be sorry one day for not eating all the right foods, but I don't think I'll ever be. He said he was sorry for not playing with me a lot and I said it was all right because he didn't feel good. He said what do you mean, I feel fine, but I knew he didn't because Mommy said he was sick. He said he wanted a kiss from his favorite girl, and I gave him such a good one that he stayed with me for a long time. I like it when he stays.

Winston.

I hand't heard from her for a long time. Today she wrote:

> I know you'll be wanting to hear why I haven't written you for so many months. Well, I've been here and I've been better and I was almost afraid to think of you for fear it would set me off.
> It has been snowing a lot and we went outside today and my cheeks are all rosy. I feel young again, almost like I did then, but not as good. They say I'm still pretty, but I don't believe them.
> I have not had many visitors lately, but I don't mind because they are nice here and I have made a lot of friends. One especially I like. She is Dotty Goodrich and wanted to be a nurse, too. We talk a lot about medicine. Her story is very sad, but I won't go into that now because its too long and maybe you would not understand.
> They say I am so much better now. I am not afraid to turn on lights, but I shake when they have to go off. And I never even thanked you for that yellow blouse which is pretty. I can't put it on yet, but I will tell you when I do.
> It is easier for me to write this letter than the old ones. Maybe they are right and I am better. You are a very generous man, they say. I get proud then when I go into the room. Well, as I was saying, I have to go on up and eat my lunch.
>
> Good by,
> Florence

Florence. Pity? No. Grief? No. What? oh I don't know. When Eva says dear you should see a Doctor; maybe Sperry can help you, I feel nauseous. I see yellow spots. I don't even have to — She's already made her pronouncement on me. She knows it all, she says. Last night she told me, dear I think your'e sick. Then I couldn't stop. It was so ludicrous I couldn't control myself. She thought I was laughing at her, and I didn't want to tell her I wasn't, because she'd just ask me well what are you laughing at then, and I wouldn't have an answer. It was all so funny, but I couldn't say why.

When you haven't known your wife for months, you feel dirty. Some men would think they were saints if they didn't for that long, but I feel lousy. And when Cheyrl came to me and said Mommy doesn't love you like she used to, I wanted to crawl into a hole and never come out. I felt that big. Sweet little thing. She's a replica of her mother only . . . But I can hardly even know what Eva looks like. I don't see her anymore. . . .

I'm not drifting, I'm not. Roger says I'm letting it slide, but I almost

don't care. Maybe if I just knew why, I would. He says the Anderson account is slow this year. You know what that means Winston, he said. Well do I? Why don't you take a few months off and go somewhere with Eva? Eva. That's a joke. We can't even carry on a conversation without screaming, no less spend a whole vacation together. She was at it, too, though. Why don't you go away dear and get some relaxation? You could use the rest. They're all so worried and concerned about me, so damned anxious to get me out of here. Well, I wish they'd leave my affairs to me, and spend their time handling their own. I don't care, why should they?

She always says can't I help you dear? Let me share it with you. It was hardest when she wanted to name the baby Florence after her grandmother. Said she couldn't break her family tradition and I said she could damnit and she cried for days and was afraid to face her mother. But I controlled myself and said Mother, we're not bound to continue these outmoded Reckson names. Its my baby, too. I want to show her all the time how much she's mine, the only true thing that has ever been completely my own. To see her toddle around and crawl up on me and put her soft little arms around me, that's the only thing. . . .

The thing that worries me is when she gets out. She never knew we left and probably thinks us still in New Haven playing like we played when she was there. And if she goes back. . . .

Its worse now than in all the years. Its heavy and sometimes I can't breathe it weighs so much. And its empty and open and sore and I can't look. I'm here and everyone else is there and when I think, they can't hear me. I'm not me, but who is? Sometimes its funny but I am not laughing now. I see yellow spots and I don't want to stay but I can't go because there is Nowhere. I think I am going to vomit.

Carrie.

I know he don't mean to make her cry like that. Lord, when they were first married, he couldn't have been more loving to her if he'd have of tried. When he was a baby he was like that too. Just as good and kind and always saying nice things. I says to him I says Mr. Winston, why you done gone off course? I says it again and he answers me and says real low and sad, Carrie, Carrie, and that's all he says.

Oh Mr. Winston, you looks so tired. Why don't you go on up to bed now? He don't seem to hear me say nothing. I'm guessing he might just want to be left by himself, so I start in to go. But what's that I hear? Carrie, he calls. He say it so I know he's got a big hurt and wants to have his old Carrie with him. It's late, my lands, but Mr. Winston, he's my first child I raised for Mr. Charles, and it ain't nothing he wants he don't get from his Carrie.

He say turn off those lights, and I does, and I go and sit down next to him at the table. He looks real worried. His head, it's down, and it gets lower and lower. He looks sadder than I ever seen him and his head, it keeps going down. It be quiet enough to scare a ghost, but I wasn't scared, not at all. I don't know why but the quiet, this time, it was real nice.

It's all going to be all right, honey, I just knows it. Now Missus Eva, she

stili loves you, she tell me that all the time. She just worry about you because you been acting funny lately. Says you not treating her like a wife. And believe me, that's bad on the little one. Don't think she don't know what's going on. She's mighty smart. He tells me he knows she's smart. I swear he just love that child to death.

But his head, it's still down, and he acting like he want to talk bad and say it all at once. I sits there, because I know when he get's ready, he's going to tell it all to me. It's quiet again like before and neither of us makes any move. Then he starts up and begins to shiver and shake. His eyes looking strange and flashy. He tries to speak but all I hear is sounds like f's, like he wants to say fly or flea, just f's. What is it honey? I say. You can tell your old Carrie. But he just keep on stuttering and trying to say it, f-f-f-fl-fl. After a while he calms down a bit and his eyes, they don't look so bad, and his head it start going down again, getting lower and lower. He be all quiet like before after a little while.

I hear the clock ticking but I can't see it, so I don't know what time it says. But it's mighty late, that I know. I am plenty tired, but I never would leave my lamb, him feeling this way.

We stays like this for a long time, me waiting to hear. But I don't want to ask him, I just let him take his time and it will come. Then I move over and put my arm around him, still not saying anything. He puts his head on old Carrie's bosom and he stay quiet again for a long spell. It be getting light already but who would move, not me. He not stirring a bit and I look to see if his eyes are closed. My lands, when I look, I am sure surprised to see them wide open staring straight ahead. He looks at me then real hard, and what he start to do but laugh. Then I know he won't tell old Carrie. No sir. He's far away now, Mr. Winston is. He won't tell his Carrie, I knows he just can't.

Marianna Kaufman:
POEM

No more an initial flash, enlightening
Today an element from pain and pen.
Our throaty lord and sun-glassed master
Apprcve the storm: the Tree must bend.

The former no longer fares this tempest.
The latter's now the prevailing wind.
The Nun of Amherst must take shelter
Blackmur and Pound are tidal men.

Catullus, carmen 51

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
ille, si fas est, superare divos,
qui sedens adversus identidem te
spectat et audit

dulce ridentem, misero quod omnis
eripit sensus mihi; nam simul te,
Lesbia, adspexi, nihil est super mi
vocis in ore.

Lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
lumina nocte.

Otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:
otio exsultas nimiumque gestis.
Otium et reges prius et beatas
perdidit urbes.

Holly Lee Schanz:

ILLE MI PAR ESSE DEO

Ille mi par esse deo
Like a god I think he must be and blessed,
if indeed such likeness be not forbidden,
any man who sitting before you gazes
time and again and

thrills to hear your laughter like music; even
so all sense was stolen from me bewildered
when I first, o Lesbia, glimpsing heaven,
found myself speechless.

How the tongue lies languishing, while the slender
flame of love flows over me, while my ears sing
with my blood, and eyes that are dazzled seek for
refuge in darkness.

Leisure now, Catullus, becomes disastrous,
for in leisure feverish visions haunt you.
Leisure once sent kings and their blessed cities
down to perdition.

Ellen Greenspan:

THE CHOSEN CHILD

When I was eight, I discovered a pigeon egg on the roof of the Harkness building next door. The roof was several inches lower than my window and I had a clean view of the Park. Mostly, though, I had a clean view of the egg, for the egg meant more to me that winter than the Park did. I watched it, off and on, from November to April when one morning it simply disintegrated and disappeared forever. I can't say exactly what I expected to find in the egg, but it was there and I watched it.

I would often climb onto the sill which was black with the cinders of the city air and stare at the yellow, crackled egg for hours. I came to the watching sill most frequently when I returned from school and would sit until dinnertime with my arms wrapped around the iron bars of the open window and my legs dangling down into the air shaft. Nanny would usually come and chase me away, complaining that I was getting filthy with soot and why didn't I play with my friends. I had no friends — that was why I didn't play with them. I had tried; tried and given up, and tried again. Flattery, bribery, intimidation and hero worship — and like all things which people push too hard, my stormy attempts at friendship had gained me no friends and won me instead several irretrievable enemies. So for consolation, I sought the egg and consolation I found.

The wonderful thing about the egg was that it was just there and it was always sitting on the Harkness roof when I needed it. I could talk to it, imagine myriad fantasies about it, wish it away — and it would always be there. It was an imperfect egg. It had obvious dents and pits in its surface and yellow-gray stains bleached against its shell. Undoubtedly, the unformed pigeon in its yolk had ceased to exist, as a fact or a possibility, a long time before and if I had broken it open would have found a matted hardness in its core. But sometimes, in the shadow of a cold moon, when you couldn't see the scrapes and dents and bruises, it looked like a perfect egg. I would climb from my bed with its carefully tucked corners, still awake from one of Nanny's flamboyant stories — Nanny was Irish and told wild stories about leprechauns and goblins and wee people conspiring together on the moors — and go to the window to admire my perfect egg.

My mother didn't care much for my fixation, only she was more subtle than Nanny trying to wean me away from it. On Saturdays, when I entered her rose-tufted bedroom and watched her fix her face and hair and jumble notes reminding her of the day's adventures, I would tell her about the egg. She was always politely interested because, I now suspect, a book she kept on her night-table told her that this was the way to handle problem children. She would dust some powder on her stomach and pull a clip from the corners of her mouth, jabbing it into her hair, all the while nodding towards my general direction whenever I had anything to say. Occasionally she would ask me questions about school and who I was acquainting with. I could never

think up adequate answers, but then again it didn't really matter because, splashing on her cologne, she would continue, saying that although I went to a good school, I'd have to be careful and that all the children I knew hadn't had the advantages that I'd had, and that you could only judge a child by his parents and wasn't it a pity that she didn't know the parents of my friends better because an apple never falls far from the tree. Our conversations were always a little one-sided.

As a white December diminished into a grey January and the Park beyond the window turned into gullies of slush and naked wrinkles of boxwood and rhododendron, things got progressively worse. In the first place, I hit a girl with a shoe one afternoon right in the middle of "Petit Famille Rochaille de Paris" and had to be sent home with a stern note from Madame. I fell on the ice crossing 76th street and broke my front teeth, and the feel of that big, gross plastic cap protruding into my lower lip and tempting the constant exploration of my tongue was more unpleasant than the loss of the teeth themselves. Housepainters were retouching the back rooms of the apartment and my room was never cleansed of the acrid stink of turpentine and Lastex wall enamel. The egg was covered with snow most of the time and it was hard to see; and on top of all the other disasters, Nanny had stopped telling me her wild Irish tales and had begun to ask me questions, sometimes masked by stories, but always with questions at the end of them. It seemed to me that Nanny was becoming a lot like Mother.

The most significant of these evening interludes, however, happened in middle February when things were getting better, when the painters had left, the snow had drained from the roof and I had received three Hallmark valentines in our inter-school holiday exchange. The day had turned suddenly cold and gusty and by nightfall the panes rattled in the casement and long moans of wind bellowed up from the air shaft. Nanny came in to bring me an extra satin comforter, a rose one, I think, borrowed from the chaise in Mother's room. She sat on the corner of the bed, running her boney hands over the rumples of her black uniform, pausing to pick out a speck of lint at the hem.

"You know, dearie, I was thinking of telling you a story tonight about a wee girl I once knew."

'About the wee girl and the ogres and the fairy folk,' I hoped with a special, unquiet desire.

"It seems this bonnie babe was a mite of a lass, with blond curls and eyes as blue as cornflowers, when her poor mother (she pronounced it mither — like a stock stage character) and father died. They were sent off like that in an auto accident and she was left back in the country with the servants, all alone in a big mansion it was. She had no aunts and uncles to take care of her so a kind good-hearted family, a little elderly with no babies of their own, took her in and made her their little girl. She never really knew about the true parents and she was such a happy, beautiful little girl her new mother didn't tell her. She pretended that the baby was her own child and she gave her lots of love and toys and pink dresses. On outings, they would go to the sea shore and sometimes to the gypsy carnivals."

"Did the little girl get stolen by the gypsy's?"

"No, because her parents were always careful that she should never get too near the gypsies. They loved her very much and didn't want to lose

her, and anyway, she loved them and wouldn't have gone with the black band."

"I would have."

Nanny savored this statement for a moment, opened her mouth to say something and then thought better of it.

"It's getting late, let me finish your story. Where was I? Ah, so the little girl grew up in time and had many parties and friends. Her parents still didn't tell her that she wasn't their child and as the years went along it became a harder thing to do. But they lived very happily, all the three of them, and the girl never knew her origins."

"Well, why didn't somebody who knew who she was tell her the truth. I mean, it could have just slipped out one day?"

"Her parents always warned people before they met the girl that they should mind what they were saying. But one day, when she was twenty-one and engaged to a handsome, wealthy young man, with the wedding not being more than a fortnight away, an old biddy at a party said to the girl, 'You didn't turn out at all the way I expected you would. If your sainted parents were alive, ya wouldn't be pampered and spoilt like this. Ya wouldn't be dancing and wearing fancy clothes and flirting with the neighbor boys. You'd be spending more time in school and maybe workin yer fingers to the bone.' It was puzzling to be sure, but the girl paid no mind because she couldn't imagine not being born of her own parents."

"When the wedding was a day off, and the white lace veil was pressed and the flowers for the church, cut and standing in tubs of water, the girl's parents received late callers. It was the intended groom and his parents who came in with their hats awry and their coats unbuttoned. They wanted to stop the wedding. The parents said that they had no idea that the Mr. and Mrs. were not the girl's real parents — and how were they to be expected to give their son away to just anyone, someone who might have been born a guttersnipe or — worse. The son said that the girl had been unfair and dishonest to him, not telling him the truth about her life, and how could he be expected to live with a dishonest wife."

"So they left, they had stayed only a short while, and then the girl, who three hours before had everything — a ring, a fiance and a happy future — was left with nothing, nothing except the truth, which her heartbroken mother finally told her."

"What happened to her?"

"The girl went away. I didn't hear of her again."

I shot my legs out to the end of the bed, twisting impatiently. I didn't like that kind of a story and I didn't warm to Nanny's way of telling it. It was almost as if she were trying too hard to cover up the serious things she was saying by putting in the sort of details she thought would interest me. Of course, all fairy tales are like that, but some are more successful than others.

"May I go to bed now, Nanny, I really feel sleepy tonight."

"You doze off now, darlin. But first answer me one question. Had you been the girl, would you have wanted to be told about your parents or would ya have rather not known and taken your chances?"

The answer seemed so unimportant. I yawned and pulled at my hair a bit and turned the question over in my mind. "Yes, I guess so. If I were

her, I guess I'd rather have known where I came from. Good-night." The lights were flicked off.

"Good-night, darlin." And it was softer and sadder than usual.

The next morning was Saturday and I watched the egg a bit longer before I went into Mother's. There were blue circles under my eyes and a slow, prickly shiver round the back of my neck; I hadn't slept well. Nanny's story kept coming back to me. The Park shimmered under a glass case and a frigid, pale sun lit the frozen lakes and treetops. Nothing moved out there. The egg, too, looked desolate and cold with no ledge to protect it from the wind.

I met Mother in the Library. It was my favorite room in the apartment. It had a deep rose rug and heavy walnut paneling carved with sheaves of wheat and harvested fruit. There were rich-looking books in the cases, books bound in gold and shiny leather and the trinkets around the room on tables had polished stones and ivory and riotous enamel on them. A bowl of winter anemonies, red, purple and blue, was placed on the desk and beyond the bright tongues of petals you could see the Park. The Park looked better from this room than from anywhere else. We moved over and sat on the window seats and I looked at the tiny cars on Fifth, wondering how long it would be until St. Patrick's day when the center line would be painted green.

"Did Nanny tell you a story last night?" Mother started right off.

"Yes, I didn't like it much. Won't you ask her to tell her interesting stories again?"

"Did you understand the story, dear?"

"Yes, it was about this girl and she . . ."

Mother cut me off and took my hands with their rough bitten nails in hers. "You know how we love you, darling. We love you very much and we want you to be happy. Mommy and Daddy tried to have a baby for a long time before you were born and the doctors said we couldn't and then God gave you to us. You know how we've always said that we chose you out of all the babies in the world. Well, when we saw you in the hospital, with your blue eyes and your blond hair, you were just perfect, just what we'd always wanted, and we brought you home." Through all this, I was looking at her eyes, watching heavy tears roll up from the red corners near her nose and bulge out from her lower lids. Her gaze had misted up and her vivid lips tightened against her teeth, making two taut lines down her cheeks to her chin.

"You know what being adopted is?"

I knew and now I knew a lot more as well.

"We adopted you, Daddy and I, because we wanted you, and only you to be our baby. I didn't know whether to tell you or not but Dr. Bruch said that you would someday thank us, having told you, and then when you told Nanny last night that you wanted to know, Well . . ."

The tears were coursing down the furrows in her cheeks now and falling, absorbed, in the sponge wool of her dress. I must have been crying too. The Park was a bright, cruel blaze where trees and lakes and bridges and people and toy poodles flickered and disappeared in a watery stain. The room, too, had lost its concrete form and color and was now a whirling, streaming mass before my eyes, like oil slick in a rain puddle. Mother reached forward to hold me, and then, unbelieveably and instinctively — I

slapped her, and ran howling from the room. "It's not true, it's not true, it can't be, I don't want it to be, I don't want you."

I went to talk to the egg, which was like me now, alone. There was much I didn't know: who my parents had been and the circumstances of my birth, but I did know that I was different from everyone else and no one could love me because I didn't belong to them; I belonged to no-body. The egg sat there on its cold roof-bed and it seemed to say: "Don't mind it. I got along without them, so can you." For a time, I don't know how long, it seemed to be more than just an egg.

Then Nanny came and told me to get dressed. Mother, in her compassion, was taking me to the Ice Capades to keep my mind off what she had told me. Then why had she told me it? And she wasn't my mother anyway so why did I have to do what she said? I went anyway; I've always liked the Ice Capades — the skaters in their costumes, and the ones who fall down during their numbers (you almost hoped it would happen), and the cotton candy and the cavern of Madison Square Garden with all the people in the attic — but it wasn't much fun that afternoon. I kept looking at all the people and feeling different from them and everytime Mother looked at me, she'd cry again. They gave me a small cotton candy and none of the skaters fell down. I felt hard inside, hard and empty, like the egg.

But something strange happened in the next weeks. In March, when the chill left the Park and the school bus would take us to play in the 72nd street playground, somewhere between roller skates and Capture the Flag, I began to make a friend. She was a dark little girl, very quiet, with crooked teeth, a crooked smile and scraped knees. Her name was Myra Goldstein and somebody had pushed her over a crack in the pavement and she had tumbled off her skates and now she didn't talk to anybody. As I didn't either and would always skate by myself past the bend in the road that led to the obelisk it was inevitable that we should begin to skate there together. We made discoveries in the balmy March sunshine. We found fuzzy buds like goose-bumps on the bushes and inside there were tiny yellow petals growing. We found spiny nuts from the preceeding fall but they weren't any good to eat. We went to the obelisk; I told Myra that Napoleon had given it to New York, she said that she knew that. I told her that I could read the strange writing on the strange stone needle and Myra dared me to do it. In the end, we made up things that we thought the writing said. One day I told Myra that I was adopted; she didn't know what that meant but somehow just sharing these confidences was more important than understanding them.

In April, I didn't go home as often in the afternoons but would take the cross-town bus to the Majestic Apartments on West 75th street. That was where Myra lived and it was right across the Park from my house. One rainy afternoon, we contrived a fantastic scheme to string wires across the Park and thus be able to talk to each other at night. Another day, we devised a code which was to be transmitted over the treetops and the lakes by raising and lowering the window shades. Myra would show me her favorite dolls and the tortoise shell music box in her parent's bedroom. And after a while, I believed that I wanted to show her my egg.

We came to my apartment late because we had been so engrossed in skating the obstacle course of Fifth Avenue pavement; knocking over a little

boy, upsetting an old woman in a wheel chair, scraping lines in the terazzo floor of our building's entrance way and teasing the elevator man. We went into the kitchen and sat on the marble slab table, along with the evening's roast, drinking Bosco milk and munching grahams.

The egg looked much smaller and uglier than I had remembered. We sat on the sill staring at it. It was decidedly brown by this time and part of its left end had begun to crumble away. If only I could have had Myra up to see it in the moonlight, then maybe she would have been more impressed with it. This way, in the half-light shadows of the Harkness chimney, it was at a definite disadvantage.

"Well it's interesting," Myra said, "but it's just an egg."

"Oh but it's very special, it has magic powers, it just came there one night, perhaps a fairy put it there, and it's never going to go away."

Myra gave me a wise, old look, arching her eyebrows. "Seems to me like it's an old mouldy egg that's gonna fall apart soon — but if you say so."

I had a feeling that she was right, but I didn't want to give up the egg, not just yet. "Doesn't it look lonely out there. Can't you imagine how it would be like to be that egg?"

"Sure — cold, wet, cracked and dirty. Isn't there something else you have to do in your apartment? Otherwise, let's go back to mine again."

We headed for the Library. I thought that would please her. There were tulips on the desk and the red sun of spring streamed through the windows, in dusty rays, hitting the jeweled ivory elephants and the porcelain sea shells and making them look important. We moved through that cathedral of a room and settled on the window seat. The green fuzz of the trees had a parsley stalk look and there were strollers, black dots, down by the lake. The sun had just cut into the top of Myra's building, losing its brilliance fast behind the tooth-edged skyline. Myra reached out her hand and touched mine, my fingers tightened around hers. Across the Park, a red balloon broke through the greenery and swung effortlessly upwards, towards the infinite blue of the sky.

Bette-Jane Raphael:
BROOKLYN LOVE SONG

I hate you
Martin Melta.
Every time I see your face
I wanna yell ta
you and paste
a bag on your head with glue.
You never like
what I say
or do
and every day
you bang me too,
with your bike.

I hate you
Melta.
And just watch.
One day I'll tell ta
your mother the botch
of foo,
that's you.

Joan Snyder:
POEM

Have a nice weekend Mr. Mailman,
Said I and then he, The
Weekend is always always
The hardest part the worst
In the week for me old me
No wife no housekeeper
Nowhere to eat except
Alone poor me always
Always weekend hard
Weekend worry weekend
Old and you you have
Fun there in the city
See you see you monday
Bye now girl. Bye
Mr. Mailman bye bye. I'll
try oh yes I'll try I will
said he, yes be seeing
you girl, be seeing you.

INSIGHT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, NEW LONDON

MAY 1963