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## Aldebaran Vol. 1, Issue 2

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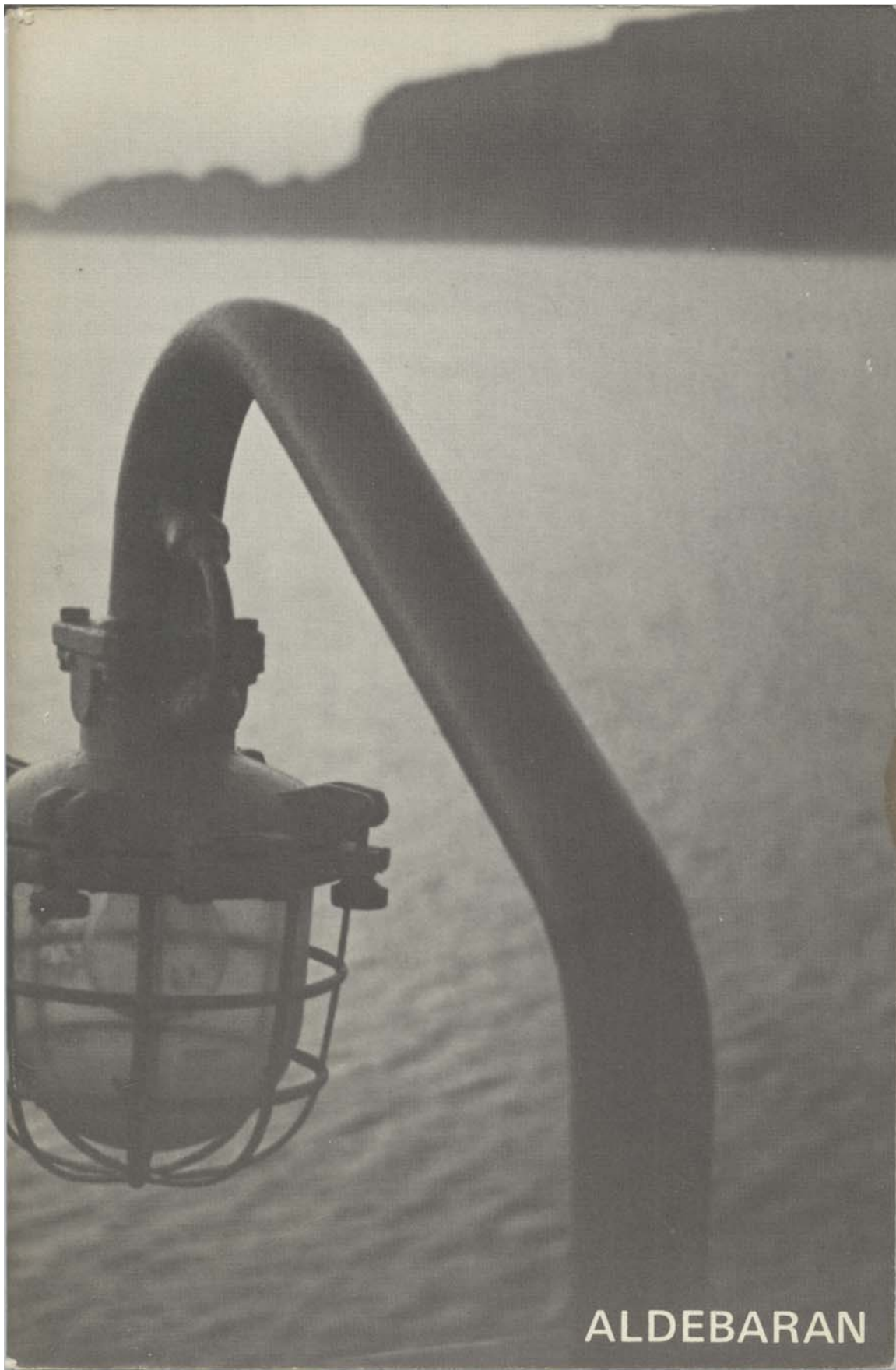
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ALDEBARAN

Vol. 1, No. 2

### Editorial Procedure

The board of ALDEBARAN of Roger Williams College accepts submissions from all students, faculty members, and also from outside contributors who enclose a return address. Submissions are separated and classified as "prose," "poetry," or "art" and then given to a group of readers according to classification. The readers criticize all submissions from a reprint of the material which excludes the author's name. The criticisms and recommendations are then given to either the prose or poetry editor, who then meets with his board to discuss the submissions and reach a decision on acceptances and rejections. All of the accepted material is read by the editor-in-chief and discussed by the editors together. In addition, all submissions are reviewed after the magazine deadline, and the final format is then decided upon.

It is the policy of the board that no submissions are returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The Editors

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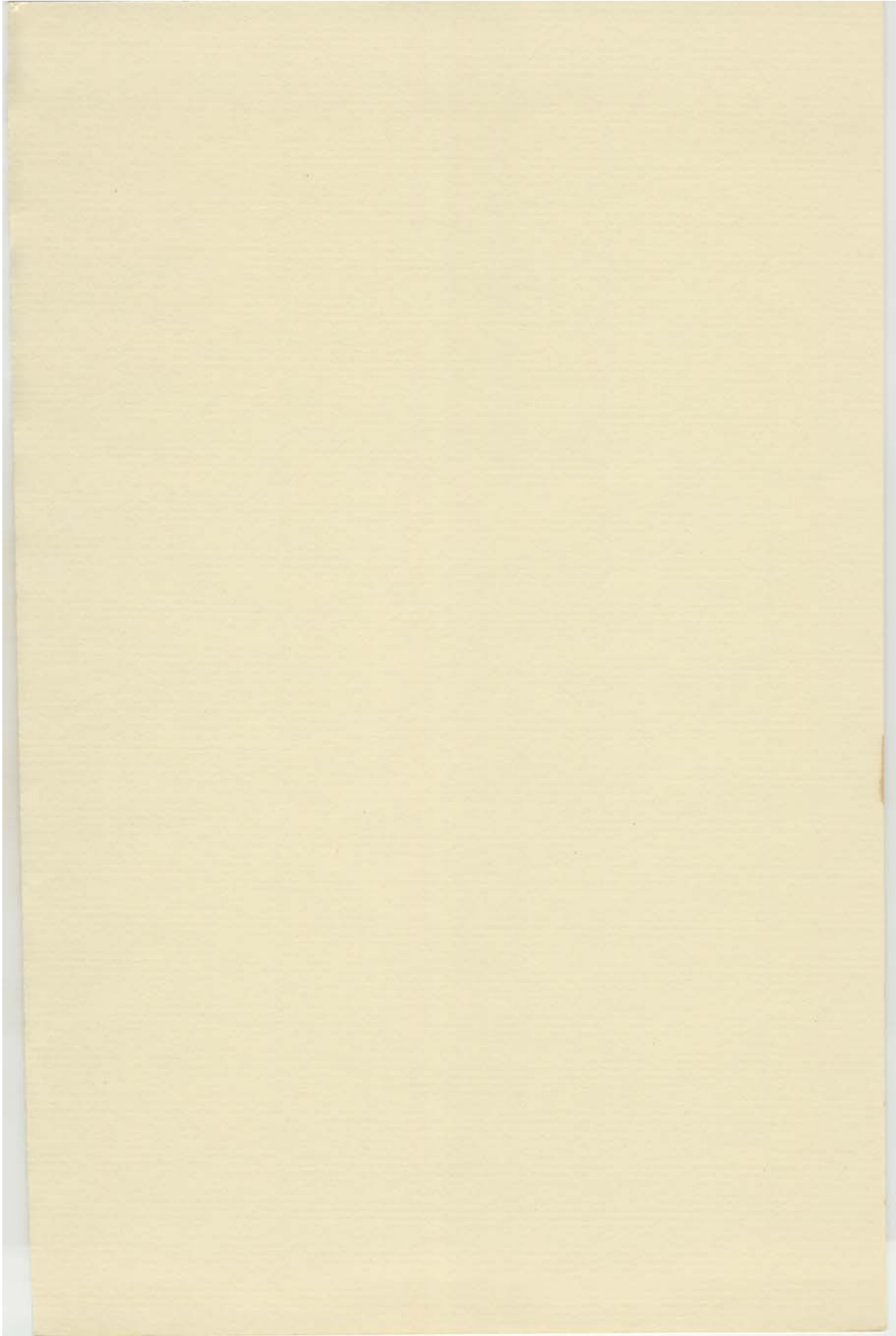
Roger Williams College; Bristol, Rhode Island

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*Elizabeth Federico*

**Mille**

It's going to take more than this  
to slow that small first  
snow  
my breath thick  
moist breath had clouded  
the window and it's hung there  
heavy again and again  
to tell you  
and sitting there three  
stories above,  
but locked car doors enclose  
me  
to show that small first snow.  
An ash  
A red tailgate light hazing  
through  
an ash  
and then a bright white car  
light or a loud record  
goes by turning into black spinning  
black metal  
I haven't shown you  
and then pressing against  
everything with still that  
cool first snow fresh in  
me.  
The highway passivity is me  
it is guilt  
it is shame  
it is breast feeding  
it is Thursday morning traveling.



John Flynn

Grief

(after a Chekov story of the same title)

"What did you say she died of, your wife?"

"A failure of imagination."

He did not miss her. He missed his cat; he missed his garden, he ached for his ocean. But for his wife, it was too raw yet. It was emptiness. Grief. And so he drank. Drinking he lost all track of the days, all days becoming one, a day that began with the lapping of the tides of grief at his heart, ending in drunken insensibility, the empty bottle cradled in his arms.

"I thought you said she drowned."

"She did drown."

She didn't drown. Oh, she drowned. But that was merely a question on a form. For every birth certificate, a death certificate. Confronted with events that tested his wit, man had invented The Form. Another failure of imagination.

"What I meant . . . ," he began.

At first he'd been glad of the noise of the place. He'd even welcomed, at first, the swarm of a hundred people in a bar too small for even twenty to abide amicably. And, had he been himself, he would have had sympathy for some of them, lemming-driven by the unyielding city. But he wasn't himself and all that he wanted at that moment, desperately, was to be alone in some still, dark place. Her way of combing her hair, softly framing the eyes, it demonstrated personal awareness. It suggested, for such was his need, a secret place in her where he might store a portion of his burden.

". . . was that *we* died of failure of imagination."

Instead, she gave him That Look. He'd been getting it a lot these past weeks. You appear rational, That Look said, but now I've had a closer peek, I see you're really quite mad. It was true. He shaved regularly; he went each week to the laundromat; he cleaned his new apartment and forced himself, despite the drinking, to eat proper meals. And yet, even he knew that he was truly mad, dangerously mad.

"Permit me to elaborate," speaking now to the girl on the stool to his right. "Normally, you see, I'm bifocular."

“Is that,” she giggled, “like being AC-DC?”

He averted his eyes. In a crowded bar, simply by averting the eyes a fraction, you can put miles of distance between people. By bifocular, he meant that he was capable simultaneously of absorbing the general and the specific. He could look at a page of proof and spot if a headline or paragraph needed transposing, the while going down the page for punctuation and spelling errors. But the death of his wife had reduced him to single vision. He could with the same facility do one or the other, general or specific, but only at the expense of one or the other. Sympathetic to his loss, his supervisor assigned him only the simplest pages to proof. On the quiet, the others in the department once-overed his work. Still, errors got by. He allowed headline errors, errors in placement of copy, spelling errors by the dozen. When, however, the absence eluded him of a critical letter in the third word of the headline, Great Summer Shift Sale, his supervisor puffed up to his desk to congratulate him, he'd been awarded his vacation a month early.

Each week, although he hadn't been back to work since, his check arrived, forwarded from the old address. Sometimes, he was visited by visions, scenes of absence, that her absence had caused in the routine of his life. He saw his desk gathering dust, becoming dust, crumbling to dust. His garden, that he'd hacked and hoed from havoc into a thing composed of equal parts logic and magic — that a city kid could actually make a tomato plant yield tomatoes on the first try, there had to be magic there — he saw his garden in lapse photography reverting until there wasn't a trace. He saw his ocean, his because it had first claimed him in one way before claiming her in another, an enemy loved that took no notice of his absence. And, wide-eyed and mistrustful, he saw Hank.

It seemed peculiar to love a cat. Never having owned one, he'd sneered at the fools who lavished their lives on dumb, indifferent animals. Then he became such a fool. Hank had been his wife's and as indolent and disdainful of humans as any animal pampered of woman. But, roughhousing with it, he soon taught Hank his true nature. From a furry eunuch that would test in turn every pillow in the house, choosing the softest, Hank became under his new master's tutelage an outdoor cat capable of holding his own in a street fight, a hunter of mice, a stalker after squirrels and birds. Often, Hank would be gone three and more days at a time, returning chastened and secretive, licking his chops. Indoors, he took to attacking anything that moved, fly, shadow, passing leg. Lamenting one day the loss to Hank's claws of still another pair of stockings, his wife accused him of creating a monster. He agreed, feeling pleased.

John Flynn

Hank was boarding with Mr. Stabile, their former landlord. It had probably been unfair to the man, his first stroke paralyzing half his face, his second his left arm, making him care for an animal he hadn't in the first place wanted in his building. He pictured the man trying to open cans of cat food with his one good arm. He pictured Hank attacking him in his sleep as he'd been attacked. Picturing it, he laughed for the first time in the six weeks since.

But the stone weighing on his heart made laughter painful. Why will it not abate, he asked? Then, heatedly, why *won't* it abate?

"I need you," said a breathy voice in his ear.

"You do?"

"I did. I'm sorry. It's so crowded and I have such clumsy knees."

Clumsy knees. He swiveled around to face her, the face unlined, pert.

"You see, she drifted," he began. "I could see her in the water. Not paying attention. I hadn't been for some time. I didn't realize she was drowning. When I did, all those people," his heart suddenly churning, those fat, sweaty people. "There were too many. I couldn't reach her."

"Perhaps if you'd tried harder," her eyes gone moist as a bodily indiscretion.

"You misapprehend," rising in desperation from his stool, "I didn't intend it as an issue for debate."

But just as desperately he suddenly wished for his stool back. Panic had him and he spilled nearly all his drink fighting through to a place less choked with people.

In the editing and refining inevitable to a scene run through the mind as often as this one, he visualized the people in water and on the beach in formal, chess-placement. He here. She in the water there. The others massed between. She waving. He waving back. The bikini going by, the proud young animal inside and out, in and out. Then only the arm, the hand waving. Proceeding with the camera handheld, we see, closeup, meat faces. Meat faces and bodies glazed as canned hams. In the dizzying madness, faces dressed on fancy butcher's display. An Auschwitz of bodies heaped in the way. One needed to cleave them to get through. One hadn't the proper tools. Go around! Go around! But, surrounded, there was no around. And when he finally got to her, the drift had gotten to her first; she was lifeless to his touch.

"You see," he began, knowing instinctively he'd mischosen again.

"I don't see," she affirmed.

"You see," he persisted, "I've never been good on land. Water is my element, land was hers. *Now* do you see?"

"No," she said, her voice, like her eyes, gone opaque, "no, I don't see."

Edging away, he wondered if death was a thing more difficult for men or women to endure? It was probably as difficult, simply that the sexes endured it in different ways. Had he died, his wife would not have moved from their apartment. A land person, she would have stored his effects in one place, her sorrow in another, and gone determinedly on. But how could he store her things? In what container does one put the paint off the walls? The week he remained in the apartment after her death, everything seen, everything touched turned to grief. The cheese, Austrian, she'd just purchased. The eggs. The milk. To eat these . . . The pillows smelled of her smell. Her welter of cosmetics, wealth of cookware. The circled dates on the calendar, notes scrawled below — "Dentist 9:30 A.M.;" "Take Hank to vets;" "H's b'day — these cut deepest, frequentest.

So he moved. Leaving everything in the place to Mr. Stabile, he took an apartment in the city. At night, trucks rumbled through his bedroom. To quiet the trucks, he drank, to quiet his heart.

"What did she look like, your wife?" asked the hard-eyed girl of earlier.

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"You're asking not what but who she looked like. Like herself. My wife looked like herself."

He'd been attracted by her eyes, big, brown, different with her moods, and by her ass. Attraction is involuntary. But love is an act of volition. Loving her, he ceased to appraise his wife.

"There's only one thing that's important here. My wife is dead. We were at the beach and . . ."

"I don't care."

"You don't . . . ?"

"Care."

"You don't care?"

"What'd I say?"

"You said —"

"Look, believe it or not, there are other people in this world with troubles. Me, for instance. For instance, I have to have a tooth pulled tomorrow. Now, that may not seem like much to you. But, to me—"

"You're right. You're absolutely right. Except. Except, you see, if there just weren't so many *people*." To hold her attention, he held her wrist. When

John Flynn

she pulled it away, he took her arm. Then her shoulder. Then her neck. "You see, it wasn't necessary. If it had been, would I be doing this? But a little more attention on both sides, a little more *effort*. You must see that. You *must!*"

Had he been discovered choking the girl anywhere else, he would have been in for it. But anything done in a bar short of murder will only get you thrown out. Heading for another bar, he walked past it. Past another. Another. Soon, he was at the train station.

Better than his living, disapproving eye, Mr. Stabile's dead, malevolent eye expressed his outrage at being awakened at that hour. When his former tenant informed him he just wanted to talk, the man changed color and teetered forward in the direction of a third stroke. It isn't you I want to talk with, he was about to say. But, with a gratuitous swipe at the man's bare feet, Hank was out the door, free of the house and struggling to be free of his master's arms.

"You see," he began, walking off, "what I mean by a failure, our failure . . ."

Then all that Stabile, grim in his doorway, could hear, was the cat bitterly howling into the night.

*brian macdonald*

**touching down**

1

our field lies somewhere  
to the north  
each blade of hay  
has it's own beat  
beneath the ice  
its rocks  
are bits of ancient cities  
reborn into stone walls

2

in a hunter's cabin  
somewhere to the north  
the wind begins here  
its black jaws  
feed on the winter coals  
like a made dog  
foaming through the black  
hollow pipes  
of midnight's breath

3

we touch down  
like leaves floating  
off a mountain road  
all winter  
we have flown  
from mountain to mountain  
the first spring rain  
we touch down

*brian macdonald*

**sea port**

he has come  
in to warmer waters  
leaving the blue ocean rise

too old to leave  
the sight of seagulls  
he tosses them  
pieces of tuna fish sandwiches  
and boston cream pie

he eats his dinner  
at the captain's diner  
fish chips and twenty cent ales  
a game of crazy eights  
for he is too tired  
for poker  
and the bar maids  
call him  
by his first name

by mid-afternoon  
his face tattooed  
scarlet red burning  
the sun of forty years  
falls with sleep  
into the wetness  
of chilled beer

till  
"hey mac, closing shop"  
"time ta go home"  
the bearded barkeeper  
shakes his bony shoulders

the bar lined  
with sleeping watch caps  
each man files out  
to keep his place  
in line outside  
the huge mahogany doors  
to wait for dawn

in the alley  
rubbing the salt  
from his dried out  
beard he wraps  
himself in blankets  
of old newspaper  
and dreams  
if only i could  
go home



*Lindsay MacLean*



*Lindsay MacLean*

**Night Riding**

We drove  
accompanied only  
by house lights,  
set suddenly  
deep in the night.  
It was like that  
view of the river  
all those  
white sails  
like albino moths, tipped  
carefully.  
Lost against  
the circumference  
of the  
black violet  
water.

*G. H. White*

**Sand Pipers**

They were once on the beach  
dodging spray  
and stray dogs.  
Where have they gone  
Mrs. McAllister has them  
in her gift shop  
Hand carved bodies  
#2 common nail legs  
perched in a crosscut  
of the Cape's finest pine

*Maria Flook*

**Kate**

Kate you look young enough to be my sister  
and if you were I'd cut your wrists  
because you have the most sensitive wrists in the family  
and my jealousy is as sharp as a blade  
Your death would be as quick as birth  
(all these months I've begun to recognize your body)  
these joyful days are over  
Your death would be so quick so famous  
the whole city would know the way you were murdered  
Nothing in all the moments we've created could fence our  
cruelty in  
(it shall push and push right through)  
I would be put in prison  
While below me you could quickly decay  
as usual  
both our eyes would close  
as usual  
not in sleep or pleasure or pain  
but in the strain of mutual abortion

*Maria Flook*

The woman is lonely in the night  
when her tall and empty legs lie down  
in a tired conversation with the sheets  
Her knees, lonely partners that mourn  
while her ankles move in semi-circles around the bed  
The bed seems empty like the empty legs of the woman  
They are smooth and silent companions, two hollow hemispheres  
horizontally attached and moving slowly  
into a sleep that is faceless and black  
They cruise, the bed and the woman  
through many dark loops of stars until they enter  
the thin green morning of an island resort  
There the woman wakes and hides her legs under a straw tablecloth  
A Stranger comes and buys her strong Italian coffee  
He is a South American with amputated arms

At night the sheets sing to the woman who is  
lost in the empty halls  
A strange breeze runs lonely through the dark  
attracted to her long black hair  
Feeling love in the wind her legs suddenly  
fill up with sequins, fried marbles and beads  
that shine in her bones

The woman's skin is slightly lumpy under her eyes,  
At night applying cream she wonders if this is why.  
The cream, put in a jar by Puerto-Ricans in New York,  
is white and thick.

In the morning the quiet alarm rings not to wake the  
woman up, but only to say hello. It says hello once  
a day and wants to learn to say other things.

At the office, in the mirror the woman sees the lumps  
under her eyes, from cream? and slowing down her  
expression into a swing, she chops her arms in a  
machine like way.

*Charles P. Mullen*

All the ants crawling to a revolution  
the warrior, the builder, the queen.  
Round sunken treasure coffee cans  
are cryptic hide-aways  
and a parabola sidewalk  
with all the downtown traffic.

*Lindsay MacLean*





*Thomas Goodrich*

I

I was just beginning to slip from pleasant drowsiness into a warm, relaxed sleep when the bedsprings creaked softly and the bed bounced slightly. The light pad of her footsteps across the bare floor was followed by the familiar groan of the bathroom door as it closed. Opening one eye, I stared at it. It was an old, oaken door with panels fitted in it at perfectly spaced intervals. Five panels. No, six panels. I had counted them one day when there was nothing else to do; there were six panels in the door. The half-light of later afternoon, barely obscuring the sharp corners of the high-ceilinged room, contrasted sharply with the harsh, artificial yellow glow which poured from the cracks around the panels and from the old fashioned keyhole. I could hear running water splashing quietly behind the battered door.

The light clicked off, and I watched the little slots of yellow disappear from the door. The door swung open and Susan glided across the floor to the chair where she had left her clothes. Rising up on one elbow, I looked at her. "Are you leaving now?" My voice sounded thick and drowsy. She turned and looked at me.

"Yes. I have to get going, it's getting late." She smiled apologetically.

"Yeah, I guess it is." I wanted to grab her and pull her back into bed with me, but I knew it was useless. Sighing softly, I watched as she started to get dressed. As she bent over to pull on her jeans, her breasts bounced and swayed with the motion of her body. The first time we made love, I decided that her breasts were perfect; not huge and overdone, but not really small. I had never seen anything quite like them before, fair and smooth, and every time I saw them, I had an urge to immortalize them somehow, on film maybe. She pulled her pants quickly up over her thighs and hips and fastened them, then reached for her shirt. I watched as she slipped it on and began to button it carefully. When she was fastening the last button, she lifted her head and looked at me.

"Tom . . . ?" Her soft voice was pleading, but the tone beneath the softness was ominous.

"Yes?" I knew what she was going to say.

"When are you going to tell her . . . ?" The gentle lines of her face hardened a little as she watched, waiting for an answer. Rolling over on my side, I felt like burrowing under a pillow to avoid the question. After a long moment, I raised my head and looked at her, trying to frame an answer that

would reassure her.

"I'll tell her this week. I'll call her and tell her." The words were hollow, but as I spoke the helpless feeling ebbed and was replaced by confidence and anticipation. "Then we can spend the weekend together . . . O.K.?"

"Are you sure? Like I said, I dig you and everything, but you're going to have to make your choice . . . I can always find somebody else . . ."

"Don't worry, I told you I'd tell her." I was suddenly uncomfortably aware of my nakedness. Throwing my legs over the side of the bed, I reached down and felt around the floor for my jeans. I felt her watching me as I found my pants and pulled them on. As I stood up, she moved over to me, smiling gently.

"I don't want to push you . . ."

"I understand. Look, I'll take care of it . . ." Feeling an impulse to touch her, I cupped my hands on either side of her face affectionately, glancing into her pale blue eyes for an instant as I kissed her lightly. "Just don't worry about it, please." I kissed her again, and then moved back and looked at her. "Can you make it over tomorrow night?"

"I'm not sure yet. Why don't you call me in the afternoon?"

"I will." I sensed she was unsure of me. Maybe she won't come back until things are settled.

I went with her to the door and watched her from the top of the stairs as she walked down the three flights and out the front door of the building. After the echoes of the closing door died against the peeling walls of the stairwell, I walked back into the apartment, determined to call Nancy.

I sat on the rumpled bed and lifted the phone off its table. Detecting a pleasant scent that lingered on the air, I paused for a moment. As I leaned back into the cool sheets, it became more noticeable. It was Susan. Closing my eyes, I inhaled deeply and imagined that she was still there with me. Maybe it was only perfume, but it was nice to think that it was just her. "Susan," I said, laughing into the empty room, "You even smell beautiful." Feeling warm and relaxed, I tried to picture her in my mind. Her image floated before me; soft and indistinct. I stretched contentedly, yawning lazily until my hand brushed against the cold black plastic of the phone.

"Fuck," I had to call Nancy and tell her. Sitting up again, I had the dazed feeling of being awakened from a pleasant dream. I glared at the phone. It's simple. Just call her up and tell her. Picking up the receiver hatefully, I put it to my ear and waited for the dial tone. After a few promising clicks, the phone lapsed into electronic silence. Automatically, I smashed the heel of my hand down on the dial and, after a few protesting sputters of static,

*Thomas Goodrich*

was rewarded with a dull drone. I had already dialed the first three digits when I suddenly realized what I was doing and my hand froze. I hadn't even thought of anything to say. What the hell could I say? I couldn't just say, "Look Nancy, I've got a new chick . . ." No, it's got to be gentle . . . Pain erupted in my ear as the monotone exploded into a high-pitched, wavering screech. "Shit!" I slammed the receiver down and fell back down on the bed. Lying quietly for a while in the mounds of sheets, I noticed that Susan's smell had faded from the air. Burrowing into the pillows, I muttered, "No fucking balls," and then closed my eyes, hoping to fall asleep.

## II

I woke suddenly, aware that I had heard something. Not moving, I lay listening expectantly. A hollow thumping echoed through the small apartment, causing the window next to the bed to rattle. Someone at the door. Reluctantly, I stood up and stumbled through the darkness into the adjoining room, turning on lights as I went. The knocking became louder and more impatient. "Who the fuck is it?" I shouted, amazed at the annoyance in my voice.

"Who the fuck do you think?" The voice on the other side of the door sounded equally annoyed. The harsh glare of the unshaded bulb in the hall hurt my eyes when I opened the door. Squinting in the light, I finally recognized who it was through my drowsiness.

"Come on in, man." After a long yawn, I collapsed into a worn out easy chair and watched Gleavy as he came in. "Pull up a chair and make yourself at home."

Short and muscular, Gleavy strode into the room with an energetic, bow-legged motion and bounced into the slightly lopsided couch against the wall. I chuckled to myself as I watched. Gleavy always reminded me of a Viking berserker wearing glasses. He had a loose, unrestricted air about him that made it easy to imagine him astride the deck of an ancient longship, his long, blonde hair blowing in the sea wind and a huge, strangely shaped sword hanging at his side. It was too bad he wore glasses. He'd have to get contacts before he could loot and pillage any sleepy, coastal villages.

"Were you sleeping?" Gleavy grinned with feigned fiendishness. "I'm sorry I woke you up, man, but you told me to come over."

"What time is it?" It must be later than I thought." Gleavy ceremoniously pulled out his big, gold pocket watch and squinted at it.

"It's nine o'clock."

"That late already? Shit." Stifling a yawn, I watched as he pulled off his coat without standing up.

"So what have you been up to, Tom?"

"Gleavy," I paused, sighing dramatically, "I'm faced with a major dilemma." Leaning my head back on the chair, I laughed half-heartedly. Lighting a cigarette, Gleavy looked at me, exhaling a large, grey cloud of smoke.

"Oh yeah? What is it this time?" Gleavy took another drag and picked up a book from the top of one of the piles of them that were scattered around the room. Thumbing through the book, he looked as though he didn't expect an answer. I suddenly wanted to talk about it.

"Seriously, Gleav, I started seeing this other chick and I don't know what the fuck to do."

"What? . . . About Nancy?" Leaning forward a little, his expression remained slightly disinterested.

"Yeah, more or less." Looking up toward the cracked ceiling, I tried to think of a way to explain the gravity of the situation. Without knowing why, I wanted Gleavy to understand.

"Who's the new chick?"

"That chick Susan."

"The blonde?"

"Yeah."

"The blonde," he repeated thoughtfully. "She's a nice kid."

"I know. She's real easy to get along with. I really like her . . ."

"Yeah, I can see why." Gleavy put down the book and started rubbing his stomach.

"The only problem is . . ."

"Say, man, I'm starved. Do you mind if I get myself something to eat?"

"Help yourself. The only problem is . . ." I paused for a moment as Gleavy walked out of the room and into the small, adjoining kitchen, and then continued, my voice rising. "The only problem is that I just don't have the balls to tell Nancy." The sounds of him rummaging around in the refrigerator bothered me; maybe he hadn't heard me. I started talking in a louder voice. "It's not that I don't want to tell . . ."

"Can I make a sandwich?" With his head halfway inside the refrigerator, Gleavy's voice was oddly muffled.

"Yeah . . . Anyway, I really want to tell her about Susan and try to get everything settled. I mean Susan knows about Nancy, but Nancy doesn't know about Susan. Not yet . . ."

Thomas Goodrich

"Do you mind if I have a bottle of your beer?"

"Go ahead. Well, I've got to tell Nancy, or Susan's just going to tell me to screw . . ." Gleavy walked back into the room carrying a weirdly shaped sandwich and gulping down beer. I looked over at him, and resumed talking, my voice falling to its normal level. "So, anyway, I don't know what the fuck to do now." Taking the bottle from his lips, Gleavy stared into its brown glass like a pawnbroker examining a ring.

"Weasel piss."

"What?"

"This shit beer you buy. It's weasel piss." He raised the bottle to his lips again.

"What the fuck. Here I am pouring out the secrets of my soul to you and all you can do is criticize the kind of beer I buy. You're the only one that drinks it . . ."

"No, I was listening," he said sympathetically. He took a huge bite of the sandwich as he sat down on the couch again. "It sounds like you still dig Nancy."

"Well . . . yeah, I guess I do. But I like Susan too, man. I mean, I've been going out with Nancy for a long time and I want to be with somebody different. Fuckin' Nancy just doesn't understand that . . ."

"Then it's simple." He took another bite of his sandwich and washed it down. "You like them both, so just decide which one you want the most and tell the other one to fuck off. What else can you do?"

"I wish it was that easy. That sounds great unless it's you that has to decide. I'm fucked no matter what I do . . ." Feeling suddenly weary, I closed my eyes. Gleavy just couldn't understand what I'm going through no matter how I explained it. I wished I hadn't even started talking about it; I wanted to blot the whole thing out of my mind. It would be better to be a eunuch, completely above and immune to all this romantic crap.

"What the fuck, Tom. It's up to you."

"Such is life in the big city." That was one of Nancy's favorite lines. Covering my face with my hands, I wanted desperately to go back to bed.

### III

It was only three o'clock in the afternoon, and I couldn't call Susan until she got home from work at five o'clock. I felt good when I thought about talking to her. Neither of us had run out of new things to say as yet, so the

conversations were never dull. Two long hours to kill and nothing to do. Pacing around the three rooms of the apartment, I felt restless and edgy.

The entire day was a waste: I hadn't even made it to any of my classes. It bothers me to miss classes because I always get the feeling that it will get back to me and screw things up. I almost wish there was some way to do penance for absences so teachers wouldn't look at it like it was a sly condemnation of the class. Shit. Three classes. I slept through three classes. It wouldn't have happened if I hadn't started talking to Gleavy about it last night and started thinking about it all over again. Even though I was exhausted when Gleavy left, when I went to bed I couldn't go to sleep. All night I lay there thinking about Susan, then about Nancy, and then about what I was going to have to do the next day. After a long time, I drifted off to sleep.

Glancing around, I spotted the portable television that my grandmother had given me for a high school graduation present. I hardly ever used it, but the only other thing I could think of doing was calling up Nancy, so I walked over to the T.V. and turned it on. Sitting down in the easy chair, I watched as the little dot in the center of the screen expanded rapidly, accompanied by a crackling of static until the smiling image of a grey complexioned girl became visible. The camera panned down the length of her trim, neatly clad figure. "Spiffy," I spat at her, "You're very fucking spiffy."

"Girls . . ." Her voice was as sultry and inviting as the two inch speaker would allow it to be. "If you're looking for an exciting, well paid career, you should look into the opportunities of the fabulous world of modeling . . ."

"Are you serious?" Shaking my head with disbelief, I watched as the girl contorted herself into various grotesque poses in front of a vague, imposing marble structure.

"You too can enjoy the world that we models . . ."

"Asshole. I bet you're a virgin." Rising from the chair, I changed the channel, searching for another program. At last I settled on a movie, an old romance from the late thirties. After watching the characters for a few moments as they flashed across the screen, I began half heartedly following the plot and admiring the dashing hero's elegantly cut, three piece suit. Losing myself in the banal chattering emerging from the television, I felt everything else receding and dissolving into the back of my mind, being gradually replaced by a sense of pleasant emptiness. The problems confronting Gordon, dashing Gordon, became more important than my own. I watched fascinated as Gordon confronted a blossomy young girl, apparently his girlfriend, on a rustic bench in the midst of a flowery bower. He started to speak in deep, sweet tones.

"Darling, you know how much you've meant to me. These past few

*Thomas Goodrich*

months have been the best in my life . . . I . . . I never believed that two people could find so much joy simply by being together." Gordon kissed her hand at the end of each sentence. The camera zoomed in on a closeup of his moist, passionate eyes as he continued. "But now, in spite of this, I find my feeling for you starting to fade. I'll always cherish you and keep you in my heart, but I'm afraid that we've reached the pinnacle of our relationship . . ." The girl threw herself tearfully into his embrace.

"I understand, Gordon, I do . . . Kiss me once more before you leave . . ."

I switched off the set and watched as their passionate farewell kiss faded from the screen. Returning to the chair, I stared at the blank television, haunted by what I had just seen.

Unbelievable. She understood. It's too bad people aren't like that in real life; just tell them how you feel about something and they understand. Maybe the way old Gordon had told her had something to do with it. I tried to picture how Nancy would look if I called her and spoke to her like that. Shit, it wouldn't even be funny. But it had worked in the movie . . . Throwing my leg over the arm of the chair, I tried to remember exactly what Gordon had said. "I'll always cherish you . . ." The more I thought about it, the more it seemed to fit my own situation. Old Gordon, who had probably died years ago, felt the same way toward his girlfriend. Wrapped in deep thought, I felt like an alchemist on the verge of discovering the formula for gold. My mind seemed to be re-examining all my feelings and grinding inexorably towards a simple, logical solution. Gleavy was right, I still liked Nancy. I would always . . . "cherish" her. I liked to talk to her, and be with her, and make love to her (we were always telling each other how great it was to make love together), and to sometimes just lie down with her and dream silently. But, we had reached a . . . pinnacle. That was a nice way of putting it; Tom and Nancy have reached a pinnacle in their relationship. I still enjoyed Nancy's comfortable affection, but Susan was fresh and hot, and new. Whenever I was with Susan, her newness excited and enthralled me. I wanted her and all her newness. Wild, blond, free, new Susan. Was it five o'clock yet?

Glancing at my watch, I jumped from the chair and went into the bedroom to call her. It was already five-thirty, and it made me feel good to think of her waiting for me to call. Where had I put her number? Looking around the room, I grew angry for forgetting where I had left the matchbook cover with the number on it. Shit. What would she do if I didn't call her? Maybe she'd think . . . At last I spotted it on the floor by the dresser. Picking up the phone, I dialed and waited for her to answer.

"Hello?" The voice that answered was soft. I wasn't sure if it was her.

"Hello. Is Susan there?"

"Oh . . . Hi, Tom." It bothered me that she could already recognize my voice, but I couldn't recognize hers. "How are you?"

"Oh, I'm fine." As she spoke, I could picture her perfect breasts; I wanted to see and touch them again.

"How was work today?"

"It was, oh . . ." her voice grew full, "just about average." She laughed.

"Well, can you come over tonight?" I wanted the question to sound confident, but my tone was unsure and probing.

"No, I can't. Not tonight."

"Oh . . ." I wanted to ask why she couldn't, but I didn't want to hear an excuse. "Are you doing anything Friday?"

"No." She became serious. "Did you talk to Nancy yet?"

\* \* \* \* \*

As soon as I hung up, I knew I couldn't put off calling Nancy. It had been surprising and depressing that Susan had been so unyielding. Picking up the phone again, I felt that I was no longer controlling my own actions, and the idea angered me. Usually after I talked to her I felt that I wanted her even more. This time, her hardness about Nancy had left me uncertain about what I really wanted. Dialing Nancy's number, I had no idea what I was going to say. It didn't matter; I'd think of something. As soon as Nancy answered the phone, I wished I hadn't put off calling her.

"Where have you been in the last few days?" Her tone was sharp.

"Oh, I've been busy with school and everything . . ." I had already lost control of the conversation. Her anger made me feel helpless.

"When are you coming over . . . I miss you." The anger in her voice had subsided.

"Well . . ." "It was now or never. My breath rattled hollowly over the phone. "I'm . . ." I wanted to tell her, but the words wouldn't come. Sighing, I said, "I don't know. Probably Friday." I was surprised and slightly disappointed with myself when I heard my own words.

"Tom, what's the matter?"

"Nothing . . . I'll see you Friday . . ."

That was that. Feeling dazed, I wasn't sure if I was glad I hadn't told her or not. In a way, I was relieved, the decision was out of my hands. The course of least resistance. I laughed aloud. I decided to call Susan back and tell her I wasn't going to see her again. It wouldn't be too hard; she was already mad at



*Thomas Goodrich*

me.

I couldn't find Susan's number. It had just disappeared. I tore apart the entire apartment looking for it, looking under furniture, dumping out the contents of drawers, but it was all in vain. The apartment was a complete shambles, and I knew it would be weeks before I could find the energy to clean it up. Maybe my subconscious had forced me to throw it away, and then had suppressed the memory of it. I didn't want to talk to Susan anyway. Fuck her, she'd get the idea if I never called her again. I ought to buy one of those multi-colored books to keep phone numbers in.

Looking at my watch, I decided to go find Gleavy. Gleavy. I had the feeling that Gleavy had known all along how things would end up. Sometimes it seemed that Gleavy understood me better than I understood myself. When I told him what had happened, Gleavy would nod and grin a silent "I told you so." Gleavy knew what the story was. As I put my hand on my coat, I thought, "No fucking balls." I was halfway out the door when I decided that was a strange way to look at things.



*James Falciglia*

I wish  
to learn the tongue  
of elves  
and wisper  
into the hollow of a tree  
those same words  
they spoke to me  
as a child

*Lynne Wentworth*

**August**

We are alone close inside the dead barn.  
A bat, not understanding suicide  
Beats black wings and fragile stick bones  
Against wood already surrendered:  
A soft thud, silent, heavy pumping of a short  
Black oily life.  
Outside the rain stops and the creek  
Rushes toward thunder.

Philip Szenber

Thinking of "The Red Wheelbarrow"

i

When I think  
of your poem  
while feeding my ducks  
they notice the puddles  
which were footsteps  
before it rained.

ii

At the henhouse door  
when thinking of your poem,  
I usually find  
an egg or two.

iii

When I think of your poem,  
at the henhouse door  
the pullet  
ruffles her feathers  
in the summer dust.

iv

We had a wheelbarrow  
once, it was quite  
undependable  
before its wheel broke.

v

We had a green wheelbarrow once,  
It was quite undependable  
when it grew up  
to be a chicken.

vi

We had a red wheelbarrow once.  
We painted it green  
After it crushed  
The petunias.

*Philip Szenber*

**Seeds**

When the rains  
Come in to the cellar  
And the floor floats away  
With the cat  
We are ready to plant  
seeds in our garden.

I think you will drown them  
in darkness  
and cause them to burst  
at their seams  
And when you are finished  
with planting  
all of your fingers  
will scream.

Mary Fitzsimmons

Eyes

These eyes have brought me insanity  
The eye of the lightbulb dangling  
from a rusty chain, that couldn't be put on  
when Otto and I were trapped together  
in a Venice wine cellar and  
I kept thinking how romantic it  
would be in  
Harlem with Alex  
of the eye in my breakfast egg that  
was cooked wrong and sent  
yellow tears circling my plate and  
burnt Groucho Marx eyebrows of  
bacon serve as a makeshift  
dam for superfluous yoke  
The eyes in the pepperoni from a Leo's  
Pizzeria special that  
stays with you until  
your bi-annual chest x-ray and  
they say it's malignant  
And the popcorn eyes I devoured to  
keep Butch the wrestler busy  
and from holding my hand  
during "Hercules Unchained"  
The denim workman's eyes that  
I fell in love with  
between the pipes at  
Jack and Harry's  
of the Chinese eyes that drip  
from my faucet to  
play me the "Flower Drum Song" at  
two in the morning  
And the eye of a naked daisy after  
he loves me not —

*James Tate*

**Cabin Fever**

A man with no change  
in his pockets & no cigarettes  
not caring anymore  
I try to cling to that great silent world  
for a few moments, I cross  
against the light  
with annoyed yawns.  
Lift a rotting log and find shelter under it  
the searchers maintain emphatically  
that a windy night  
more than anything else  
keeps the community together.

Even their mothers appeared  
bowing gigantic crazy curtsies;  
no one refuses to touch them  
even their mothers appeared  
finding themselves  
in incredible numbers.

I could no more believe in this  
the love for her job  
and the maid is pregnant  
the gin in the sink  
than a pale blue flower.

Run for five days and nights  
without resting; black dot?  
Why do you have that five-dollar gold piece  
in your vagina, Rosemary?

By the way Linda, there is a tarantula  
in your nose, what a cutie you are!



James Tate

**Violet**

Smothered in camouflage of hangdog shy her tiny limp  
thunder

**A Little Pat On The Ass**

Can't a First Lady have an ass I've seen it before  
haven't I? so why can't I  
come in, now that I'm in  
you musn't love me too many dishes.  
Too many cafes, of course you cannot love me.

Not like a young girl who has not yet seen  
I'd rather you smashed my face with glass  
a cautious, if precarious, resignation.

Breasts and thighs and wings and legs  
all mixed in,  
that joy is too expensive and perishable,

because I am the king of nothing  
this isn't exactly the Chattanooga Choo-Choo,  
I anticipate some squawks  
mystify your hair  
I find myself exclaiming.

My hooves ache,  
my neck is twisted in an oak tree agony  
converses with tendrils of Spanish moss with a stiff tongue.  
Fasting has made me delirious  
I think I'll give up fasting.  
Of course I must leave a message with someone

so the saints will not eat me  
as one might eat a whole language,  
thoughtlessly.

*Anthony Jarzombek*

**I write of**

ambidextrous things  
snowflakes that fall  
left, then right

*Ross Figgins*

Broken tires  
discarded snakeskins —  
railroad embankment

*Jeff Silva*

**The Words**

I have an excess  
of words, stored  
now for future use.

One, a beginning,  
is part of a poem  
about a poem.

It went chugging  
off into a moonscape  
and was a frail

chain of shivering  
little ecstasies,  
each escaping

from my fingers  
like the snap  
of a sandpiper's beak.

The second  
is a description  
the hero of which

would never recognize  
as his own. There  
is also the word

I have never written.

### The Addicts

You stumble through the easy  
poverty of our room. Everything  
is where it belongs. In

the corner, the shabby remains  
of half a marriage; on the coffee  
table a gnawed glass, stained

with old wine. Cigarette butts  
wriggle over the edge of an ash-  
tray, like fierce smouldering

demons. I cannot explain you  
to anyone, not even myself. When  
we have smoked ourselves

into a quiet corner of inertia,  
we don't bother. But here,  
on this cold dog-leg

street, we are easy targets  
for the red light of melancholy  
that slashes the night like a harpoon.

My bent head surveys the cobbles  
intently, watching them for signs  
of large fish. My foot slips

once, and I must look up. The police  
are bearing down on us, and you  
have already started to run.

Everytime they finally catch up  
with us, you are gone. When you  
vanish, the clouds wink gaily

at your departure, and then  
pull themselves together.

*DeWitt Henry*

### **The Family House**

excerpt from a novel in progress

(Anna Maye Potts is 36, fat, unmarried; since her mother's death some 20 years ago, she has been keeping house for her father and working days in a nearby candy factory. Now her father is dead too — just three months ago — and her younger sister, Mary, who is married and has children, has moved back in and wants to take over the house, forcing Anna Maye out into a world she feels unprepared to face. Earlier in the evening of this episode, there has been a quarrel: Anna Maye forgot to pick up Mary's dress at the cleaners, and this is Mary and Howard's bowling night. Howard, the husband, sides with Anna Maye; Mary storms out of the house, and apologetically he follows. Anna Maye is left to babysit. The children, agitated by their parents' quarrel, end up by throwing tantrums too . . . )

"Night, night now, Ruthie."

She turned off their light and left them — telling them sternly to be quiet now and go to sleep, repeating her commands coldly, evenly, in a bored voice, as if everything were secure and normal and all their anguished fussing had no point: Go to sleep now. Then she picked up in the bathroom.

"No . . . Aunt Anna, I don't want . . ." Susan called.

And Ruthie's cries: "Mom-haha-my! My Mom-mom . . ."

Ignoring this, she went to her own room, turned, and started downstairs, slowly, heavily, so they could hear. She stopped half-way down: "That's enough! Be quiet now!"

Downstairs, she picked up in the livingroom. She put away Susan's papers and crayons, straightened the pillows on the couch, removed the pillows, dug out a pencil, a gritty piece of candy and a penny from the seams, remarked new stains and splits. Her eyes were smarting, as she yawned and stretched. She turned on the t.v. She took up Howard's shirt from her sewing basket and held the collar she'd been turning close under the light. She sighed, scowled. Her harshness had been necessary. She put down the shirt and stared at the t.v., shook her head. They were tired and hot, demanding, cranky children tonight — even Ruthie, who was worn out to begin with — neither of them heeding her, denying their own heavy eyes and spent, clumsy bodies, losing control. She must deal with them like sick people or people in pain, for their own good:

force them to bed; carry Ruthie, wailing, upstairs, threaten Susan. ("You're tired," she'd said. "You don't know what you want. But get a good night's sleep now, and you'll wake up tomorrow feeling much better. Your Mommy and Daddy will be here. We'll all have breakfast . . ."). They left with a winded, empty feeling. She had wanted to make things happier, more pleasant and natural, to help them forget the quarreling at dinner, to quiet them. Yet now she worried: Had she been wrong? Had she wanted this too much?

She carefully folded Howard's shirt, lay it on top of the basket, rose, turned off the t.v., collected ice-cream dishes, ashtrays, glasses and went out to the kitchen where she placed them in the sink. Running water and the scraping, chinking of glasses were the only sounds, as she added these last odds and ends to the dinner dishes standing in the rack. Then she was opening, closing cupboards, putting them away: where did Mary want these saucers? where did this pan go? Her hands fumbled with Mary's serving dish . . . but held it.

She cleaned the top of the stove, work counter, refrigerator door; she swept the floor; carried the plastic trash basket out to the back stoop, emptied its contents in a can. Lights shone from back porches of apartments opposite; shouting voices reached her, music, t.v. sounds, and distant traffic sounds. The night seemed weirdly limitless: she shrank from it, dully, bringing in her empty basket. And hooked the screen, and shut and locked the door.

Something was in her room — her stomach tightened. Some large, flying, buzzing thing: it would blunder over her face, get in her hair, touch her — she would be smothered.

She sat up and turned on the light, heart thudding, breathing hard, blinking . . . unprotected. A large, heavy moth was fluttering in the far corner of the ceiling. She pulled herself together slowly and after a moment got up, hurried it out of the corner with a rolled-up magazine, then trapped it on the curtain with a glass. She held her hand over the mouth of the glass, the moth's wings wildly scrabbling across her palm and making a ringing sound against the glass. She carried it out through the dark and silent hall into the bathroom (managed the light) and shook it into the toilet, which she immediately flushed.

She washed her hands, wiped her neck and breast and face. Her face was splotchy, harshly shadowed, with dilated pores and lines and sagging jowls; a broad, upturned nose; mouth drawn and set; eyes sombre, reddened, staring blankly from under gathered brows. She avoided their gaze.

Ruthie lay in an awkward sprawl; Susan's arm dangled down. They seemed dumped in their beds, all in a heap, sheets kicked back, mouths

gaping, eyes sealed tight. She listened to their shallow, measured breathing, gasp and sigh, smelled the fragrance of their sleeping bodies. Streetlight flickered on the wall, on the dresser, on her then, as she moved closer, cautiously. She stood beside their bunk bed, poised and alert, hushed. Susan drew her arm back suddenly, wiped her face, and turned over on her back with a cranky murmur and a jouncing of springs. Ruthie slept on, undisturbed; her right knee was raised, left bent out to the side, right arm lying on her stomach, left stretched out to the side, fingers clutching the sheet; her face was turned towards her. She felt so futile, so hopelessly removed. She wanted to promise them something, but couldn't find words. Stooping down stealthily, softly, she reached across and drew up Ruthie's sheet with a slow, agonized deliberateness, and when Ruthie stirred, she leaned over and kissed her hair with a kiss she'd never know about.

Back in her room, the clock said 12:20.

She couldn't sleep. She lay propped up by pillows, sheet thrown back, night lamp shedding glare. Out of the distance came a rumbling, gathering roar that filled the sky, and passed; she heard a dreary burst and blur of cars, an announcer's voice, a dog nosing, with clinking tags. Over her breasts the silk nightdress was clammy and limp; she was sticky all over. Her breasts spilled stupidly to either side of her body, and then her stomach rose and weight of her splayed hips and thighs sank into the mattress, and round, lumpy, pale, her legs stretched out.

The way Mary stalked out, she thought. She was staring across at the dark corner where the photographs hung: father, mother, Mary-and-herself (she thirteen and Mary five). She really didn't need to see the photographs to know them, or any details of this room. The wallpaper, faded bar on bar of twining roses, she'd chosen at age eighteen (her mother died just after that). The chair, the dresser had stood there nearly all her life, as had this bed, with scrolls and posts beyond her feet.

No matter what her differences with Mary, they were family. They must stick together. She gave them most of her money; she did her best to please them. She kept out of their way.

She lay motionless and slack, listening to her breathing. She turned her head to look at her shadowy curtains and her knick-knack shelves: ivy leaves trailing, ladies in full gowns and gentlemen bowing, a fat, red-breasted robin on a twig, the little Chinese coolie, bent beneath his yoke of buckets.

She must cling to what she loved at any cost.

A car door slammed; footsteps, voices. She sat up. The screendoor

yawned. She got up, hurried to close her door. On the way back, the front door squealed. She turned off her light, quietly lowered herself and rolled onto her bed, squirmed, lay still. Footsteps scuffled downstairs. Beneath her door, a glow appeared. Her heart was thumping and her head throbbed; she blinked up at her darkened room.

"She might have left a light on," Mary said.

"Shh!"

The closet door closed. Just then something went thud, and scattered on the floor: "Damn it!" She saw Mary's bag, and Mary squatting; there were sounds of picking up little things and tossing them back in. "I can do it!"

"Look, pipe down!" he whispered.

After a brief silence: "Don't you shush me because of her!" Mary threatened, and clilup, clilip, her footsteps went into the kitchen. Bang! a cupboard slammed.

"Aw, Mary. What the hell." His voice was pained and weary. "Come on, now," he urged, passing into the kitchen where his voice grew muffled, "I thought we settled this."

She strained to hear.

"We settled what?" came Mary's voice. "I can't move, I can't make a noise around here without you jumping down my throat."

"Will you shut up?"

"I don't care if she hears. I hope she does hear. What does she mean to you anyway? Why do you keep protecting her?"

"You're not even making sense." His voice went on, too low for her to catch the words, insistently reasoning, rebuking. Then he paused, and in a friendly, final tone, "C'mon," he said (he must be near the doorway), "Let's call it quits. Let's go to bed."

"If you don't want her here, why don't you do something?"

"What can I do?"

"You can quit acting like you're afraid of her! She's got you wrapped around her finger. Oh sure, make a face. Listen to me. I want this house, I want my family to myself! Do you understand? What have I got to do? . . . Five years I've been married, and what do I get from my husband? Do I get a decent living? Do I get friends? No! No, I don't! I get kids, and a stupid, stinking apartment and a fat stupid husband wallowing around on his behind all the time, scared stiff of his own father and too lily-livered and goddamned lazy to get out and accomplish anything! And finally, when we have a house left to us, what then? You don't want to see my sister hurt. You'd rather have her here hanging on our necks, when all you have to do is simply tell her, 'Look,



*DeWitt Henry*

we need the house. We want you to move out.' ”

“I’m stupid, lazy, and what? Now, hold it! I’m afraid? Well, get this through your head. I’m trying to be fair! Maybe that’s something you can’t understand, but you better learn . . . And don’t give me this crap, I’m letting you down. I give you a steady living. I do my best. You could damn well show a little gratitude. And as for Anna Maye, how you can stand there, drunk or sober, and talk about just throwing her out, when your father hasn’t been gone three months and she’s got no place else to turn . . . What’s wrong with you?”

“Oh, shut up!”

“You think you just walk over people?”

“Shut up! Don’t you dare criticize me! Who do you think you are? I’m talking about us, and the interests of this family. I’m telling you I can’t stand her. I can’t go on living with her. Now don’t turn around and tell me, ‘Be kind. Be fair.’”

“All right, Mary; calm down. Will you calm down a minute and listen to me? Whose idea was it, moving in here in the first place? — Wait a minute!”

“Keep away from me!”

She gripped the edge of the mattress and twisted back and forth, pulled the extra pillow over her head and held it down firmly over her ear. She felt the pillowcase, crushed hair, her hot and halting breath against her face.

She had nothing to do with this. Nothing. They seemed farther and farther away. She squeezed her legs together and gathered herself as tightly as she could. She didn’t care about their quarreling, which was ugly, bitter and selfish.

She still heard Howard: “. . . She’s not hurting anyone! You can’t get along with her, that’s more your fault . . . ”

They were in the livingroom. Her eyes opened, and she heaved a deep breath, swallowed, then lifted the pillow away and turned over onto her back. Her fingers and toes twitched; she bit her lip; her eyes opened wider and wider. Where was there to go? Why? Her head turned and she rubbed her face with her hand, raked her hair, while her leg bent and pushed against the sheet and the darkness pulsed with living, swarming things that crawled and crept and flew against her with their poisons.

“ . . . forcing herself on us! . . . intefering . . . intruding on our privacy! And you like it, don’t you?”

She groped for the lamp, the socket, pushed the switch: light blinded her, plunged her into molten orange. Eyes clenched, she twisted away and sat up, blinking; and saw her room, its usual shapes and colors.

“You think you can push me to the wall . . . ” continued Mary, tearful.

He should slap her; slap her down — now. Her own hands itched to.

But he wouldn't slap her, couldn't, no more than their father ever had. Her eyes circled the room. He let her go on and on, sneering and jeering and shouting filthy sickness from the bottom of her ugly little heart. Her eyes fastened on the dresser, then the mirror, where a yellowed block of ceiling met the wall. She gripped her knees. She couldn't leave: didn't Mary realize that? She'd rather suffer any rudeness here. They couldn't make her leave . . .

Mary's steps came trampling upstairs, nearer, nearer. She slammed the bedroom door. Below was silence.

Clumsy, bumping sounds issued from the bedroom, a cry of hangers, scuffling sounds, then silence. The door opened, the switch clicked; Mary strode firmly barefoot past her door and into the bathroom, shut that door.

She turned off her light and slid down in bed. She heard sharp, violent noises: water wrenched open and strangled off; fitful fumbling in the medicine cabinet. Something small and metallic fell and rattled in the basin.

She raised her hand to hold the throbbing in her throat. She asked so little. She'd done everything for Mary she knew how. She'd forgiven her so much. This was just her drunken anger talking.

The toilet flushed, and still no sound of Howard. Hall light seeped beneath her door and at the edges. She lay still, scarcely drawing breath, choked and parched, exhausted. She could not be driven from herself.

Later Mary turned restlessly in bed, separated from her by only inches through the wall. They both heard Howard coming up.

"Don't speak. Don't say a word!" snarled Mary, shifting away.

He took his shoes off. He dropped his coins on the dresser. He came out and went creaking past her door and into the bathroom. She heard his stream in the bowl. He turned off the lights on his way back and shut their door.

She lay staring at her window, where a strip of blue, lighter than darkness, defined the night.

They lay like two flayed bodies, raw with sores. They kept shifting their weight around, stiffly, gingerly, as if some new positions could reduce the strain. The sheets were hot, abrasive; the air was sticky. Outside were distant sounds of traffic passing. They lay so close, yet rigid, each one clenched tight and shunning the other. They stared up into the darkness and listened to each other breathe and swallow, grind their teeth. She felt their minds churn backwards over all the details of their quarrel; she felt the fitful, nagging doubts, the accusations, the cramped, raw twitchings of their nerves. Howard cleared his throat and yawned. They were aware of her. She felt their wills press through to her like rays. Their curses thickened, gathered, swelled. Her own mind reeled. She cringed away, far, far deep within herself, shrank away,

*DeWitt Henry*

doubled up and hiding, afraid to move, afraid to stir, and fighting all her body's processes.

Until, finally, came a rustling and a throaty groan. They turned together, wordlessly. They grappled, squirmed, and gasped, and grunted, heedless of their noise.



### Contributors Notes

Elizabeth Federico lives, works, and plays in Bristol. She is a Creative Writing major.

John Flynn came to us through *Ploughshares*.

brian macdonald still lives in Tiverton, and insists on spelling his name with small letters.

Lindsay MacLean lives in Providence and understands the little people better than anyone else ever could.

G. H. White lives in West Barrington and is a Junior Creative Writing major.

Maria Flook is trying to sell Manpower, her horse. She lives quietly in Providence, but will soon move to Middletown.

Charles P. Mullen is living and writing on his farm with Johnny Bull.

Thomas Goodrich is either a Junior or Senior. He is also either an English, History, or Creative Writing major; depending, apparently, on when you ask him.

James Falciglia is writing in the U. W. W. program.

Lynne Wentworth is a dromedary from North Carolina. She spent the past semester reading big fat books, and has participated in The Dance.

Phil Szenher teaches English at R. W. C., and it is entirely possible that he has some goats; unless he doesn't.

Mary Fitzsimmons doesn't want anyone to know that she is in charge of publicity. Spread it around, those are her posters you've been reading.

James Tate has read twice at R. W. C. He is presently teaching at the University of Massachusetts, and his most recent book is *Hints To Pilgrims*.

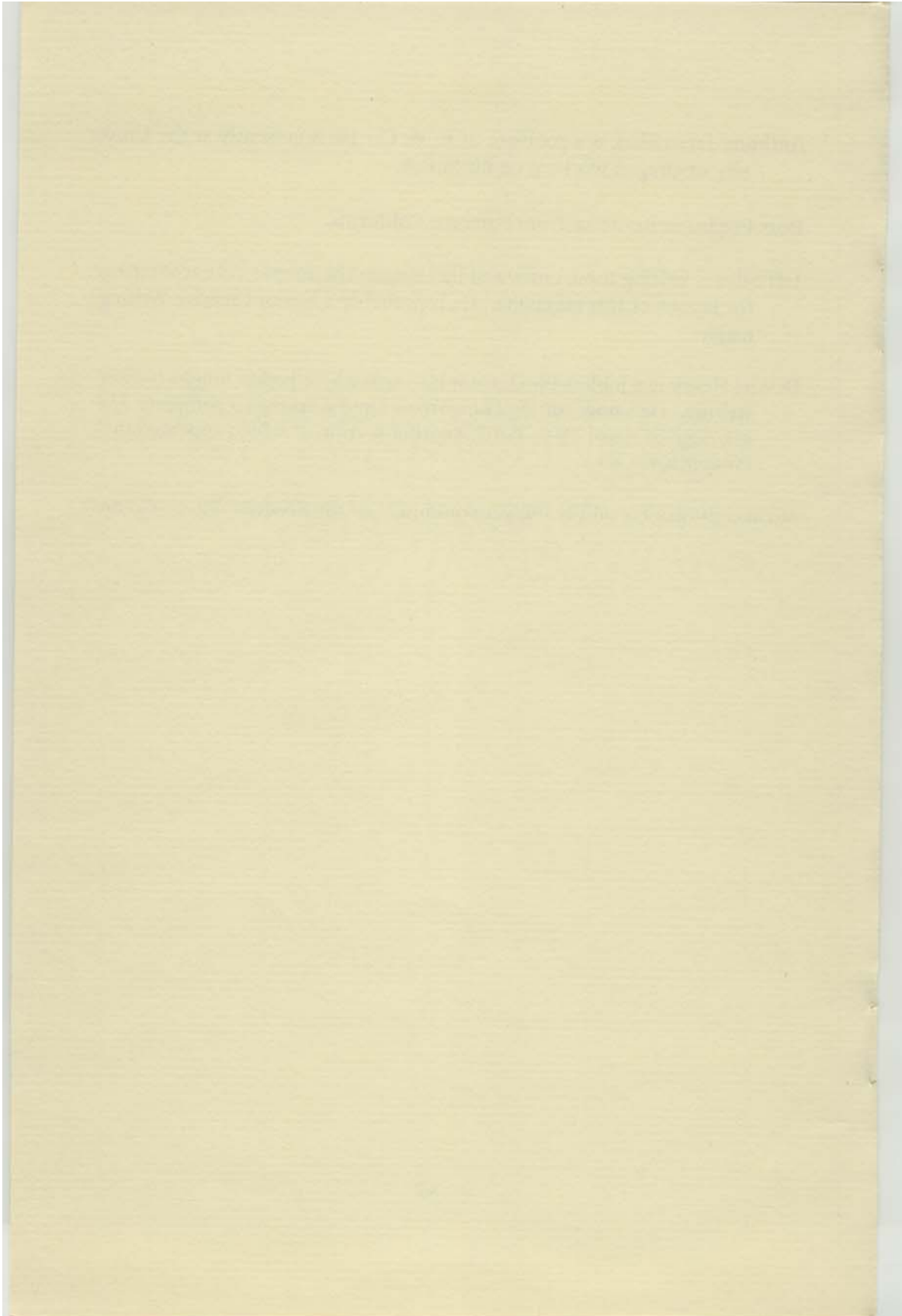
Anthony Jarzombek is a graduate of R. W. C. He is presently at the University of Oregon working on his M.F.A.

Ross Figgins writes to us from Pomona, California.

Jeff Silva is writing these notes and listening to the sounds that accompany the layout of this magazine. He is probably a Senior Creative Writing major.

DeWitt Henry is a jobless Ph.D. from Harvard, where he has taught fiction writing. He's now editing *Ploughshares* and working to complete *The Marriage of Anna Maye Potts*, another section of which appeared in *Ploughshares* #1.

Michael Simeoni is on the budget committee of the Student Affairs Council.



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