

The Idol

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The Idol

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As the Union College community celebrates its Bicentennial, The Idol becomes a 67 year-old tradition. First published in 1928, The Idol is a biannual publication featuring the creative literature and artwork of Union College students.

The Idol will be accepting submissions for the 1995 Spring issue until the deadline, April 3rd.

Thank you to all who contributed and made this issue of The Idol possible.

Adam Oestreicher

Editor-in-Chief



ADAM ROBERTS

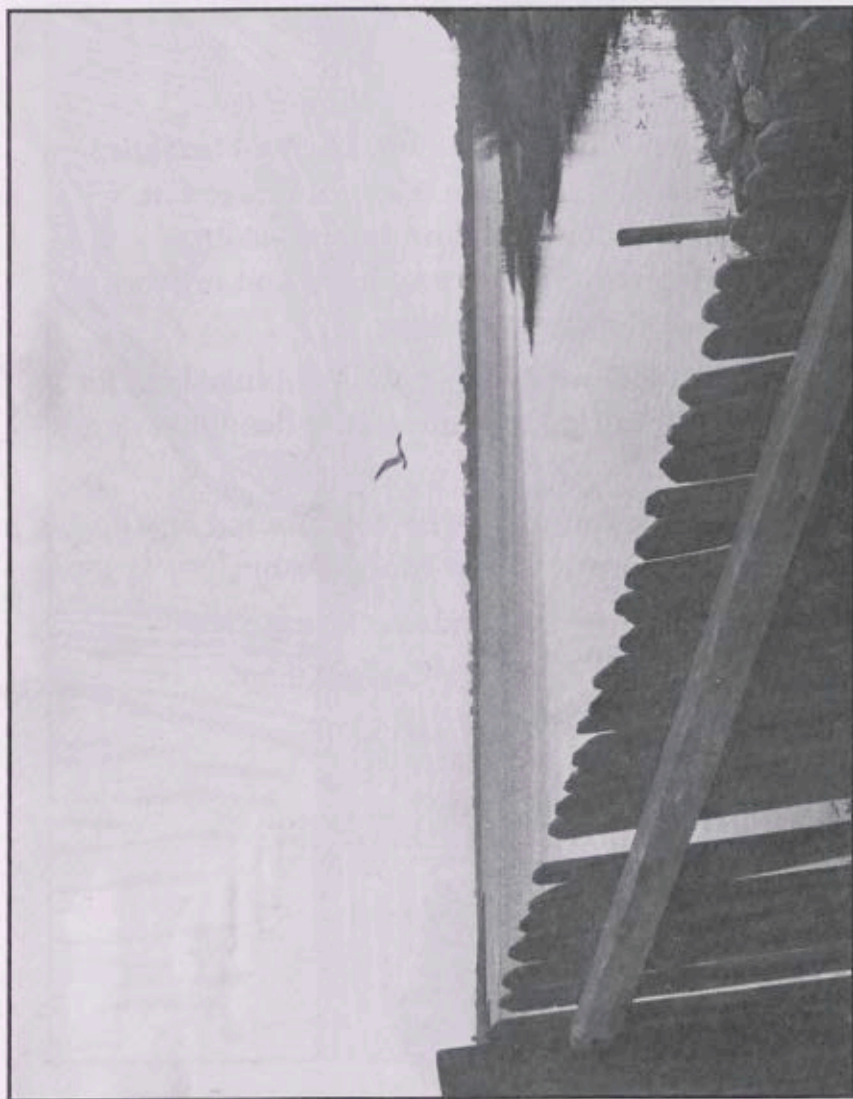


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MEREDITH MILLER	ART - UNTITLED	IBC

A black and white photograph of a wall-mounted mail slot system. The system consists of a grid of mailboxes. At the top, there are two larger, rectangular mail slots. Below them is a row of four smaller mailboxes, and then another row of four. The mailboxes are numbered 1 through 9. Mailbox 1 is at the top left, mailbox 2 is below it, mailbox 3 is to the right of 2, mailbox 4 is to the right of 3, mailbox 5 is below 4, mailbox 6 is below 5, mailbox 7 is to the right of 6, mailbox 8 is to the right of 7, and mailbox 9 is below 8. Each mailbox has a slot for mail and a small handle. Some mailboxes have additional labels or numbers. For example, mailbox 2 has a small label with the number '12345'. Mailbox 7 has a small label with the number '7'. Mailbox 8 has a small label with the number '8'. Mailbox 9 has a small label with the number '9'. The wall is dark and textured.

UNWRAPPING STRANGERS

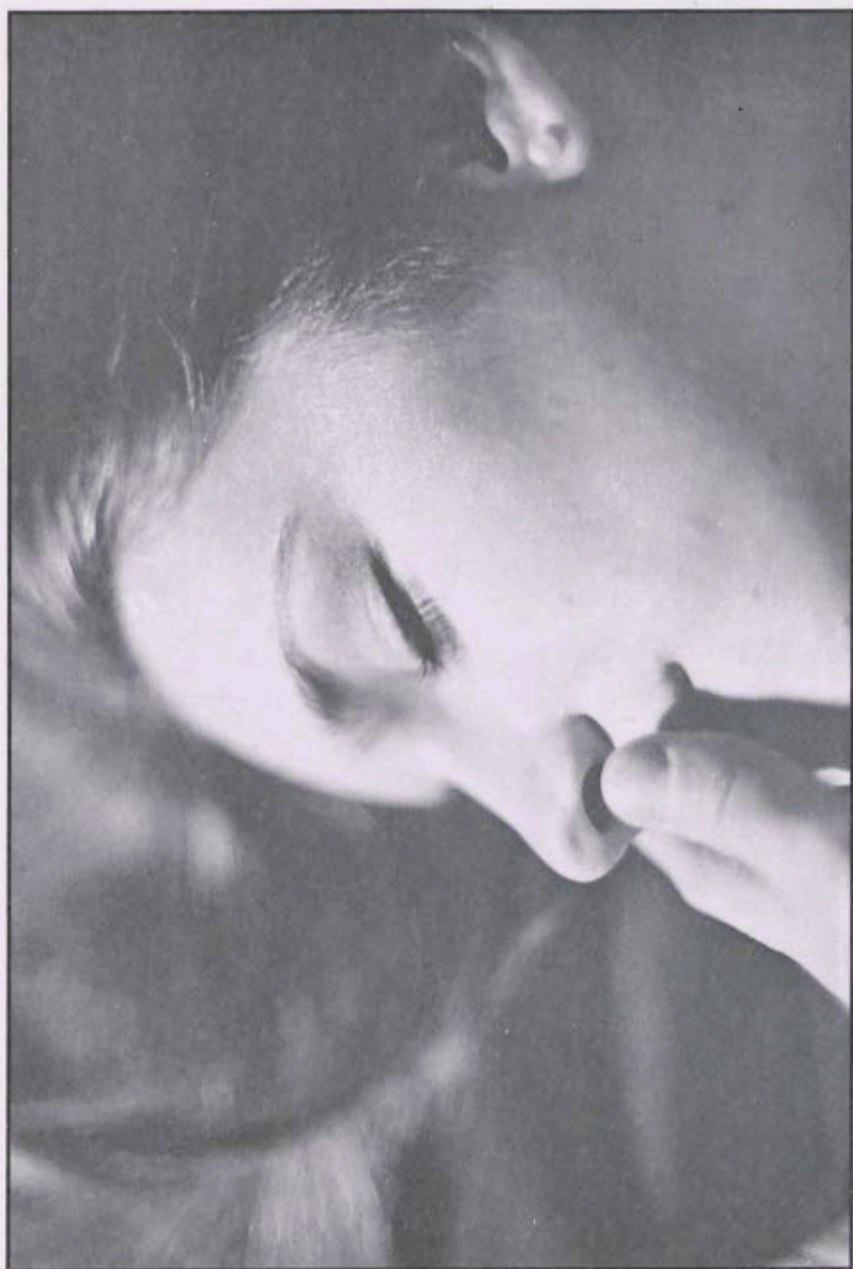
Strangers passing on the street;
 sitting across from each other at the dinner table;
 colliding in a frenzied rush like microscopic
molecules;
Strangers sharing their lives, their fears, their secrets.
Strangers dying

 They surround us everywhere.
The woman at the check out counter of the supermarket.
The people in the cars we pass as we drive down the interstate.
Our friends.
The bosses we face at work everyday.
Our Families.
Ourselves.

 We are like packages hidden under many layers of paper,
 For a fleeting moment every package lies unopened —
 Strangers concealed by wrapping.

Sometimes we only peel off a layer or two —
 the mailman who delivers your mail everyday,
 but about whom you
 know no more.
Sometimes we unwrap many layers —
 those we love, those we live with, those we trust.
Most though are unopened packages —
 gifts sitting under a Christmas tree
 destined to be returned or thrown into
 a back closet —
Not enough time, too much wrapping, fear, apathy
Excuses.
Hidden treasures who merely remain unwrapped strangers.

MARK SCHULTZ



THE WINDS OF TIME

We're like a single snowflake in the
Blizzard of Time.

A solitary grain of sand
on a beach that falls off
into
the horizon.

A small four-leaf clover
hidden among ALL the rolling
green hills of Ireland.

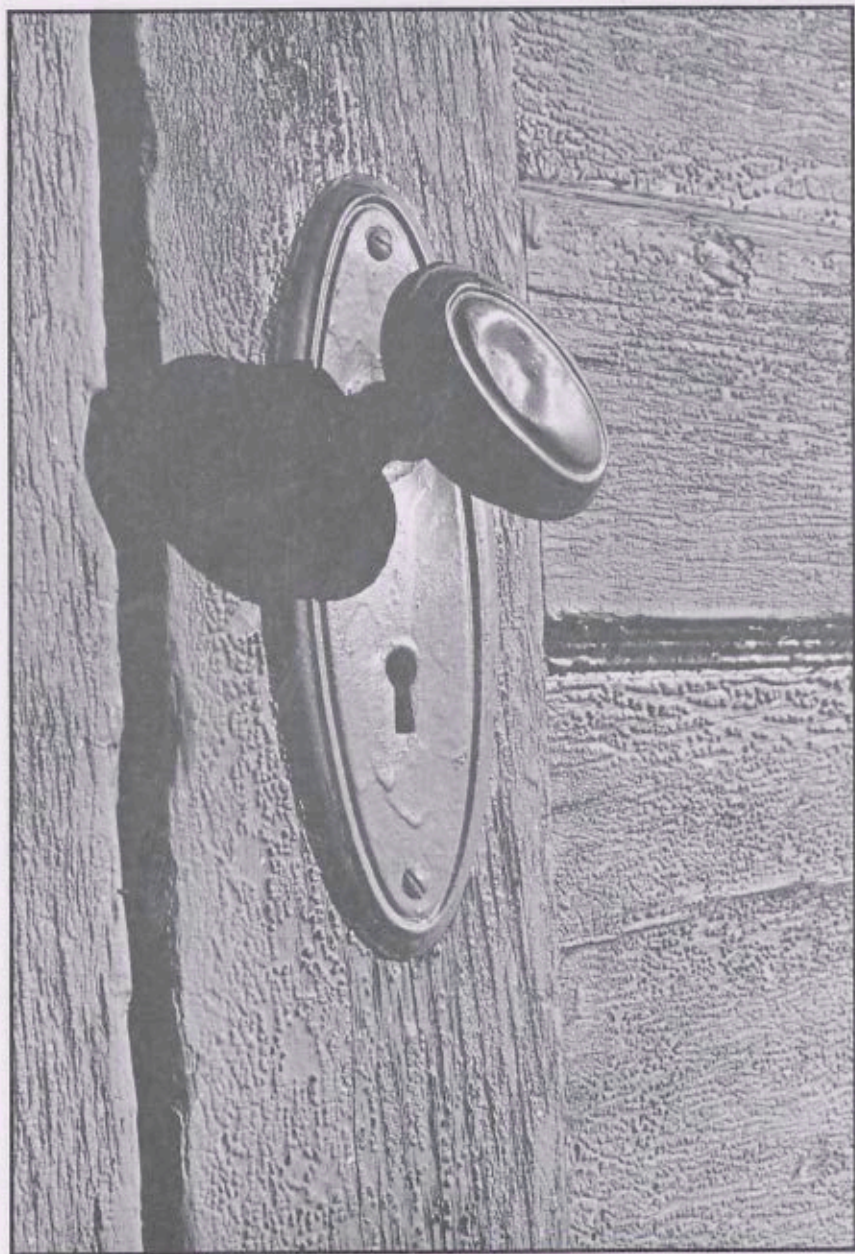
We're fractions of a second
on the time clock of history.

Yet Everything seems critical to us:
I aced a test.
My girlfriend dumped me.
I'm going to college.
My mother died.

Our Time seems abundant,
I'll do it tomorrow,
But is really so slight.

We're like the soft, small white seeds
of a Springtime Dandelion,
Which blindly and desperately clenches
the Hands of Earth,
destined to be blown away

MARK SCHULTZ



HOME

Squinting

Grateful for blackness.

Squatting

Grateful for walls.

Silent

Grateful for solitude.

Almost peace

them relentless

coming again

and again

stolen drops of solace

and then again.

Love fashioned hate

the fruit of loathing

in the garden of fury.

Who glances towards the black door?

Past the rusty doorbell

the screams go mute.

Down the hall

invisible stains

closet door throbs with sorrow.

Behind it lies the boy.

KAREN PEPPIAT

FRIEND You fill my empty spaces
with yellow love;
leave me breathless
at perfection,
Pillow of comfort with
eyes like water,
I can come to you with
a torn heart,
you will sew it sweetly with
a needle of love.
I can come to you also
weak with hunger
You will feed my famished soul
with inspiration.
But today, when future
has arrived, when
Tomorrow is a blank page
And I am full with doubt,
Still —
You are my one constant.

VACANCY

I am vacant; You are void
You own everything
for out of void it all began
And when void is done, its over.
You are void; I am vacant
I possess nothing
empty, waiting to be full
I always yearn for more.
I am vacant; You are void
The scream of nothing is much
louder
But you, Void, can never
contain me, Vacancy,
Therefore I am empowered.
am vacant; You are void

ROSEMARY CHANDRANKUNNEL



SANDRA ROJAS



TIME REMOVED

I thought of you today,
of the things you told me,
last night
sitting on the porch stoop
with the hum of summer a natural back drop.
it was nothing important,
it was only
Everything
because it was you
You melting into me
So I thought of you today
You were eating all my thoughts
And I heard only us
in a time removed.
Until she asks me
"Why are you smiling"
And I was pulled back into now
Only able to say
"I didn't realize I was"

GAEA SCHWEIZER

I haven't written in forever, plus some time
when there is really so much to tell, so much to
explain.

Each day I pass by the woman who is selling
tomatoes,

(or does she just watch them all day? letting time slip
slowly away)

and this sight strikes me as poetic

as this little girl Patti, who

in this SEX CRAZED, DRUG CRAZED, VIOLENT world
— still has hope

and this magical hope that she has is that someday
it'll all let up, and

when that someday comes — I can let go, I can fade
into you.

As I do we will sit on the rock in the sunshine,
along the river beside the trees, after a naked summer
swim evaporating the cool water droplets into the
yellow summer air

from our bare skin, and we will listen to the laughing
sound of the river holding
each other close.

A whole lot of love to give, a whole lot of love.



KAREN BROWNSTEIN

DECEPTION

The slowly moving clouds spread like a melting glacier

The winds howl like a wild dog

at a full moon on a clear night

The trees tower above like ALMIGHTY GODS

Walking, a creaking, is it a breaking

Twig underfoot?

or the imagination?

Then noise is louder and closer

An owl hoots in the distance

Scared, start running, running

From What?

Imagination?

Reality?

Who Cares?

Does it REALLY matter?

A light ahead, a warm inviting light

Run towards the light, the comforting light

A BARRIER

not able to be comforted by the light

push, pushing with all the soul's force

putting both mind and spirit into

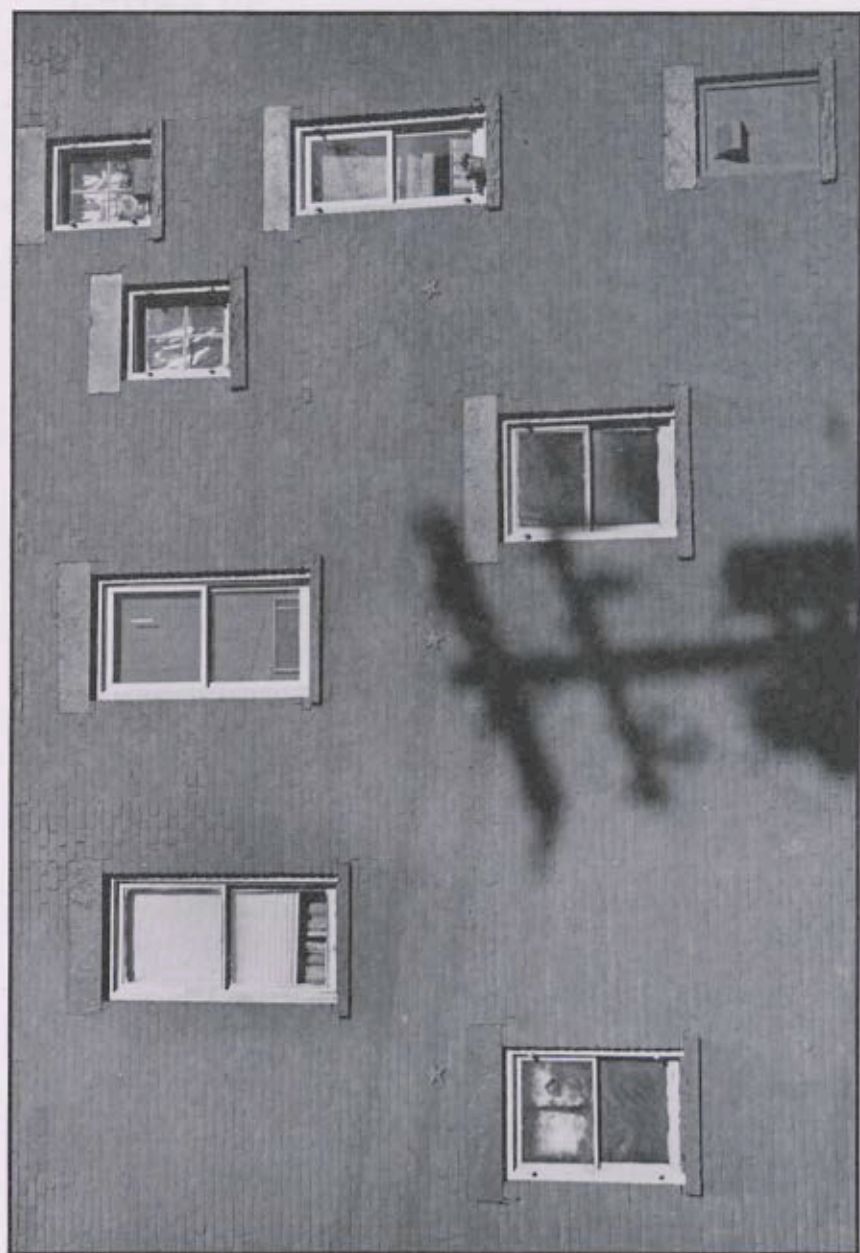
BREAKING

the barrier

push, CRASH, it is broken

move into the serenity and the comfort of the light!

All is forgotten!



LAUREL RUMA



GROWN UP

Grown up, I've found you out!
One day, age nine, at a desk with markers,
I suddenly suspected
that a picture of the planet
had to be drawn the same every time.
I looked down at my amorphous, green chunks of land
randomly floating in their circle of blue and
somewhere, doors closed.

One day, I realized that one zillion wasn't a number.
But when I pulled away the sheath of that secret sphere,
it was empty.

One night, I did not wake
to late night sounds in the kitchen, and,
rubbing my eyes, walk in on adults at the round table
like King Arthur and his knights,
shrouded, illuminated
within their enchanted, private cloud.
Instead, I was one of them;
but the cloud, once lifted, betrayed me with
thin air.

Grown up, I've found out your dirty secret.
But when I pulled away the sheath of that secret sphere,
it was empty.

In a diner, I saw
an old couple at their table;
the window to the street was their only relief
because everything had been said,
everything was known.
One day, at the mall,
I looked at an old man seated upon a bench alone, and
I suddenly knew of
the tiredness of life.

O magic, stuff that only children know,
O hocus pocus, where did you go!
This delicious, foreign fruit is hollow.

The day air ports lost their magic
and children became strangers,
somewhere inside of me,
a light went out.

GARAGE SALE

Years after the death
I found myself standing
In a cracked cold room
Of broken guitar strings
Unread books
Mounds of polyester and flannel.
And in the middle of this calico pile
I found your old driving derby
Flat, coppery, and plaid
Perfectly broken in by your
Beautiful bald head.
Closing my eyes
I smelled you one last time
My Aqua Velva friend
Before you sold for \$1.25.

CIGARETTE BREAK

Crows feet frame her cornflower eyes
Under the burning Nevada sun of mid July,
Scarecrow dressed in red and white paisley
And cutoffs,
Sinewy, outstretched on the
Blazing maroon of the '67 Mustang.
Yellow and white tufts of bleached blond,
Like the petals of Lazy Susan,
Blow effortlessly into and out of
The partition of her cracked pink lips,
A wind barely there.
The droplets of Nevada sun spill down her
Arched beaded back
As she lights another stale cigarette and
Squints into the distance
Where the pitted rock haze
Of Penumbra Cliffs
Interrupts the serene unbroken indigo.

HENRY CHINASKI

VISION

for J. L.

I River blindness

There's a man wading
in the shallows
looking for his eyes.

II Argus

"There's no lie like certainty"
grandfather once confided, peering out at me
with seaworn eyes whose pupils
are tired gulls slow to focus or swoop
but move still assured of pattern, of arriving.

III Mira

Spun up girl with raven bled eyes
she knows wishes are just lies
between silences
the wilderness of eyes.

IV Dilation

We are sad
radiances in
the resonance of eyes.

V Fish eyes

We return to play, silver irised
unworked, eating raw, pouting.
Thinking eyes are owned from the outset,
we arise to sell to but to chew & evince
love for the should & the rest we shall mince.
Somehow we can't stuff our bellies full
though our mink bibs smile for us, white as chill.
We taught the sickness & taunt the ash
we rise as we emblazon & descend to no crash.

VI Iris & mother

Look both ways now, it's a different darkness.
She says the carpets & hangings on her walls
accumulate a beauty that lift her windows
for a moment, catching small lights in her hair.

I hold your hand sometimes when we walk now,
as we lead each other through the city,
talking about the future.

Your lead me through stores & sidestreets
fascinated by ancient methods, Asian herbalists.
You sit with death & argue
that he eats what you have prepared for him
too quickly.

I watch you wave to the stranded
& give ten-dollar bills to the homeless.

I weave for you
pieces to redeem your deferred fire.

VII Cataracts

Crows burrow into night,
a badger leaves her lap of a field,
jarred into flights,
by paper traps, sly summons, trumpet agendas
send for drowsing spirits
settling fleece & a lullaby.

Pure was a sidewalk speech
the steamwhistle brought no train
& when we cut through the fog
we cannot remember
where we have been.

continued on next page

HENRY CHINASKI

VIII Jason

To my sight, the sky is bruised
& the stars are in angry revolution.

From wiry passings
we have become what found us
we have gained what we did not earn,
& we are in the same nets our fathers tore,
subsisting upon raw givings, edgy flowers.

We sit & twine with stillness
until we can capture grace.

IX Vision

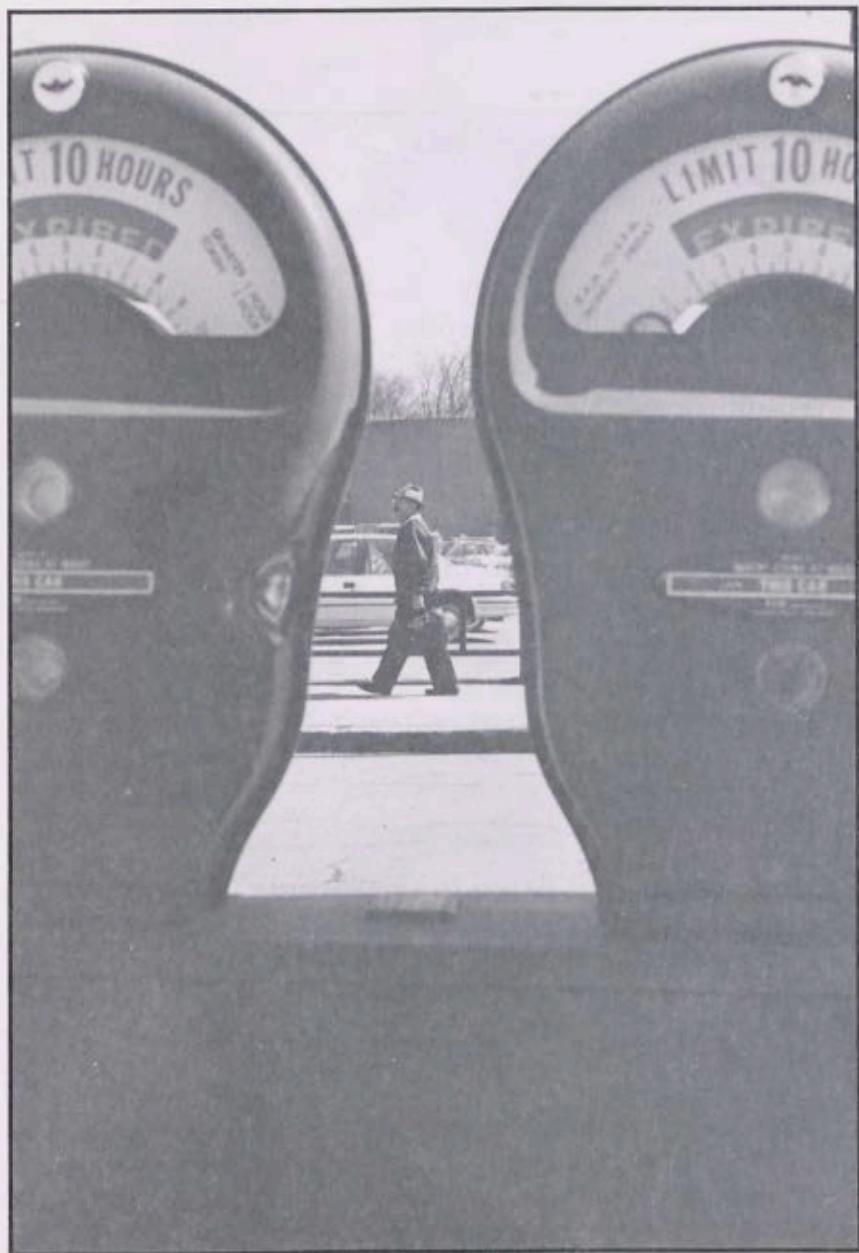
In the half-light
I move to surface & blush.
Uneasy dreams ask a discarding
to ride a descent
that is both danger & treasure.

In the deepening shallows
we tread & stagger
Jason, with whom
I absolve eyes.



$$E=MC^2$$

Energy equals mass
times light unimpeded in all directions.
The power of relativity
the speed of light, no time—just brilliance
The power of the infinitely small,
the genius of god,
the manipulated intelligence of man,
Energy and Mass interchangeable.
We are only light
powerful enough to
kill millions.



ONLY YOU

I tend to listen
when he lingers nearby
And fall away into his spirit,
not knowing if I should be
Thinking such a
thought.

Overwhelmed with his presence I
feel my heart ready to take
A chance again but
love is just another mask.
Linger closer to me
i think destiny created your countenance.

Noticing the time, I
look
Over to him and listen to the sound of his perfect
voice, realizing that sometimes,
Even fools can be lucky.

BRIANNA PATNODE



IF I WERE TO DIE TOMORROW

If I were to die tomorrow, let it
be with you, let it be next
to you, in your bed,
fading to black in a
placid sea of poppies

If I were to die tomorrow,
let me look at you once more
angelic face, sylphlike body,
unexplainable perfection
Let me gaze at those luminous almond eyes,
blissful ruby smile,
gentle patient hands
once more, once more,
oh please yet again.

If I were to die tomorrow,
let me hold you next to me,
Let me caress every voluptuous
extension of your sacredness
Let me sleep in harmony with
the sweet music of your breathing
If I leave this chaotic Earth tomorrow,
let me kiss you,
hold you,
touch you,
love you,
and sleep among the poppies
as I fade to black

If I were to die tomorrow,
eternal damnation be it
My time is not yet near
My life with you is not
yet finished
Life newly begun,
brand new chapter,
I will live to tomorrow
Poppies not, tulips yes,
Revelation of great
fantasies yet to occur

I will not die
tomorrow, nor the next
I will see you again
I will kiss you again
I will sleep with you gently
in a lake of snow, you will be mine

S. A. VALLOPPILLIL (SANDERS)

LAZARUS

Lazarus I was
when flaxen hair and soft eyes
of sapphire blue
woke me from a distant sleep

As shrouds of linen dissolved
and abysmal night became the light of day
stark beauty like no other
enveloped my heart and
surrounded my soul

Faced with this phalanx
I surrendered
and rapture unheard of
was mine
Unbridled passion stirred deep within
a fire extinguished by nothing

It was there, then,
while touched by this seraph,
that I shuddered under the presence
of an immaculate soul
Virtuous character and
chaste spirit plundered mine

More alive then
then ever,
just awoken from rest,
I was Lazarus

MARK SCHULTZ



S. A. VALLOPILLIL (SANDERS)

INTROSPECTION

I've come here to think. To ponder life's unanswerable question. Why is the sky blue? No, not how, don't tell me about refraction of light — but why blue? They say that here in the middle of the Mojave that even the greatest paradoxes of life can be solved. There is something about being among 500,000 saguaro cactuses and not much else. But I haven't come here to find out why the sky is blue. I want to know why my mother died. No, not how, but why. I have been asking this question for five months, but to no avail. Perhaps the bitter desert wind and rambling gecko lizards will bring forth some momentous realization, but this I seriously doubt.

I don't know why I came here — it's useless — people die, that's it, end of story, adios. There's nothing to question about it, at least nothing I've been able to perceive so far. All I know is that one night mother was forcing her black bean burritos down my throat, and the next morning she had the most horrific seizure I'd ever seen (though I'd only seen them on TV up to that point, and haven't seen any since). She shook violently and her face contorted and twisted into the most repulsive expressions. But in her eyes, you could see the fear — she knew that she would die right there, yet she could do nothing about it. She had absolutely no control of her body, she couldn't even speak last words to us, she couldn't tell us what life is all about — people supposedly figure this out right on the verge of death. Her soul was in someone else's body, one which she had no capacity to regulate. Her only gateway to the outside world and us was through her eyes, her fiery emerald eyes that had lived through fifteen presidents and seen the collapse of the once monolithic communist party. This gracious, kind-hearted woman is gone. I am just now realizing what has been blatantly obvious to others, the difference being that the death of loved ones is something difficult to come to terms with.

The sun is now setting over the distant horizon; it casts a ruby-topaz flame across the barren landscape. The wind is slowly picking up; a transient tumbleweed glides across the sand, encountering minimal resistance. Looking at the vibrant hues of this waning desert sky is like looking into my mother's eyes that fateful morning. It is here, in this solace, that I am learning about life — that there are no answers, only guesses. Indeed I am a refugee of an unforgettable plight, but here I have found peace at last. Though I did not have some incredible philosophical realization, for some unexplainable reason I feel different. Now I know. No, I understand.

DEAD SKIN

Snatching at the specter
Full of wholes to nowhere
You reach
Past my bleeding wounds
To catch a veil of air
I writhe and wail
here
under your feet
Scratched, beaten and spat on
I am humanity
the staggering cripple on the roadside.

You strike me
To hold a the fleeting hand
that isn't there
Bare, bloodless fingers on my neck
You choke me
And deny I have a voice
Take me out of the trash can!
Or I will wither like dead skin
Only to be sloughed off again.

I carried you on my wings once
Lifted you light
Till you gasped with thrill
Why do you wrench away and drop me
a shriveled piece of parched
nothing?

Run, reach, hunt on fool
Dare not look down
I am here
A limp broken body in the dust
My warm breath
Panting in your face.

WINDS OF TOMORROW

Brass domes and mighty arches
Pillars in pompous creamy white
 And in the midst
 A nursery
 green, unravished.
Buds bursting through damp soil
 Open their eyes
Brimming with wonder, wide
To a sky of glass above.

Safe Haven
Shielded from the dust storm
Of Smothering ash beyond
Where singeing cinders of ruin
Smoulder and rot away.

The gray mist of disillusion
Still spreads on and steals
And a shrill siren pierces
The heavy midnight air
Crumbling brick walls
Blackened by grime and grease
Cast reeking shadows
And a street lamp at the corner
Sheds its yellowness over all.

NALINI K. GUPTA

But Look
Into the eyes of Depth
deeper, deeper
Behind the glass
There lies the flame of will

The fresh and young
Know not the question
But are eager to ask
Their voice pulsates silently
Give it distance
and hear it vibrate
through the quaking air

Today their heads nod gently
brushed by soft, silent breeze
Let the raging wind break through
It cannot destroy
It will strengthen.

RAPTURE OF THE DEEPS

I remember
one particular place
when I think of our summer
distance.
The water whipped to egg-white
foam by the rocks
and opposing currents.
It gushes towards
the drop,
an arms-length away and
I feel danger —
because the water calls to me,
safe and comfortable
near you, near the little pools
of water swirling
in lack-a-daisy circles,
rejected from the raging peaks.

It calls to me
because it thinks me along,
thinks me unhappy.
For once, I'm simply content
with your mute lips
as the water runs
through my cracks
and fills me.

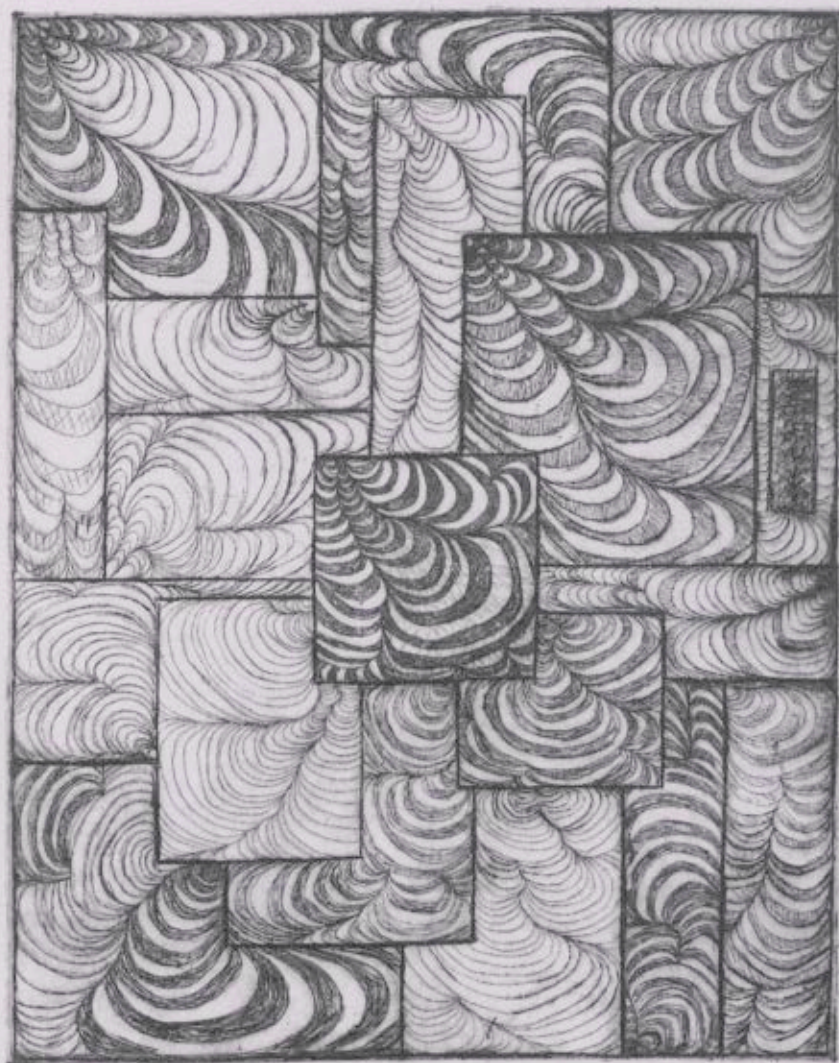
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BECKY CONHEADY

Vulnerable, I try to turn away.
It's egg-shell blue
hue and syrupy mist intoxicate.
I want to leap,
to feel the water bubble over
me like you used to,
filling my nose,
earns and mouth with roaring
silence,
and falling

Baptized,
we were once
the river;
now separated
by stagnant green.
You watch it rumble pebbles
against your depths
while your boyish curls,
hung with vapor,
fall to cover
deaf ears.

MEREDITH R. MILLER





Union College
1795-1995
Bicentennial