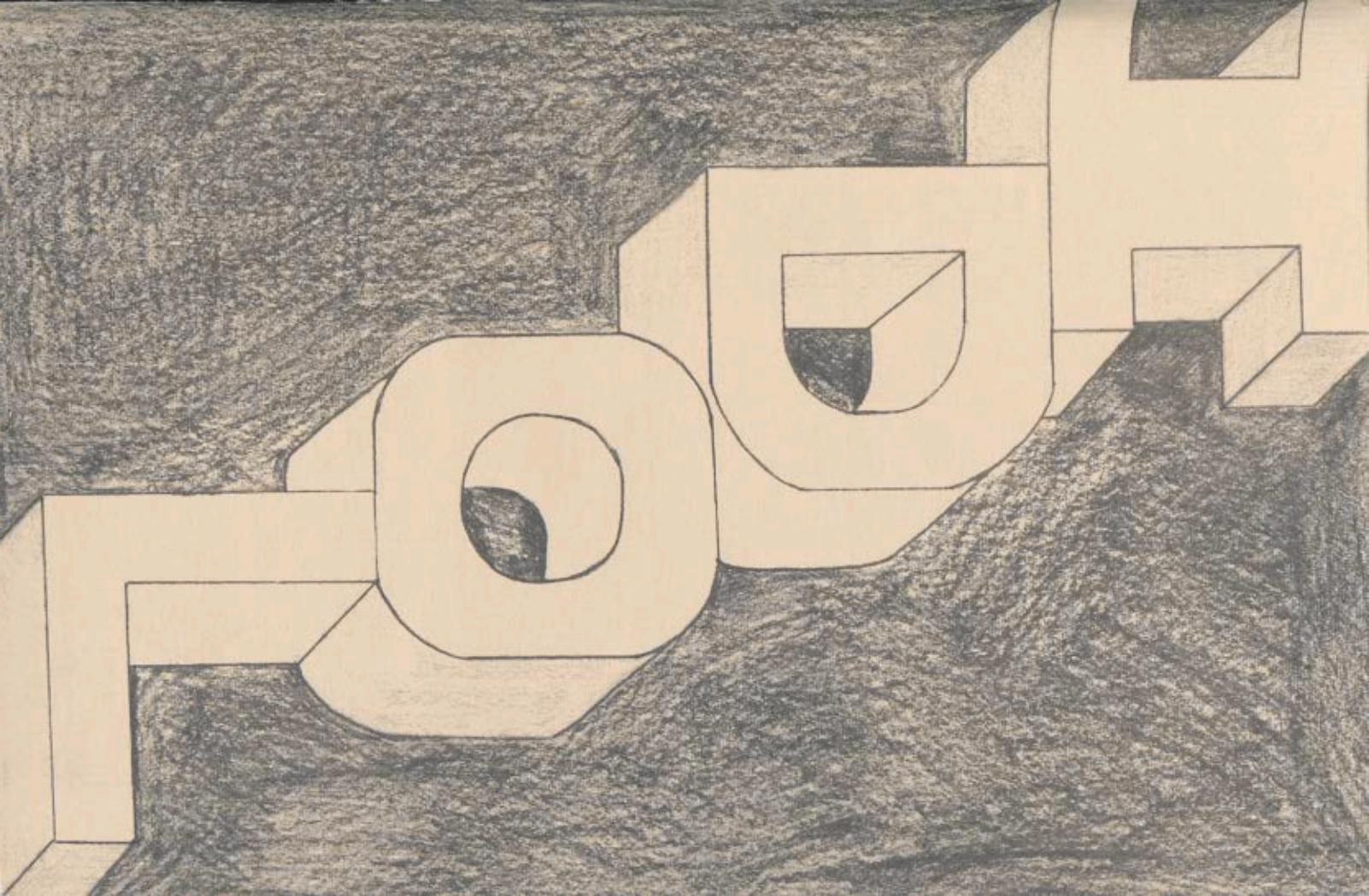

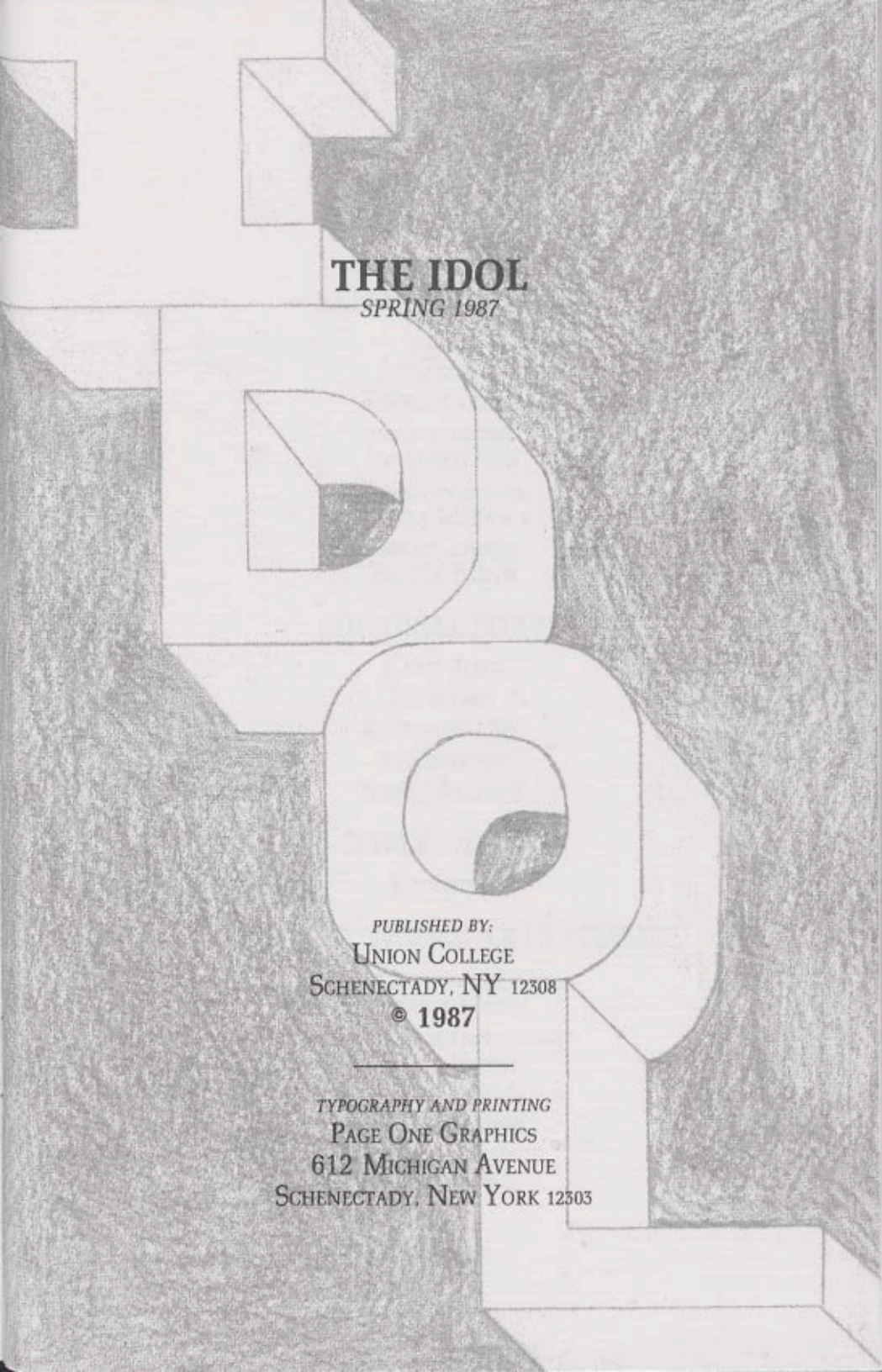

THE IDOL

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THE IDOL

SPRING 1987

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Assault

I see this white guy
big gut
standing in the alley
between AM/PM
he's not a bum but
his clothes (used?) just
hang
off his body
like that.

I'm far away so
he doesn't see
me see
him pick his nose
and flick it
on the ground

I can't see where
he walks off
a small brown
spot on the pavement
I wonder if he's robbed anyone today.

Prayer

Through a season's labor in one night
the morning peels back a little film
and a silvery bud begins to recite —
    this is the secret you've prayed to hear
    how everything is faint and streaming
    and lost
    out of the resolution of a sphere
    (but step back)
and my nudity is pale and serous and spreading
a color that might touch you
with a thousand chimeras drowned or treading —
and if she wakes up
and talks to me slowly
in the sad voice of a yawning pup
then I will join her and glide
and turn kiss on delicate kiss
and begin again a natural tide
and not expect anything
love in one sigh
and rest, and sleep.

For Aaron and Amy and You and Me

Hot summer nights
Late warm breezes
That write our poetry for us
As we make love on the mattress on the floor.
The white curtains blow in and
scatter the colored pencils on our desk
And you want me to take the curtains down
But instead I just tie them in knots
And orange juice tastes so cool and good
After the heat of the night
And our poetry is written
By scattered pillows
Dirty glasses
White cotton camisoles on the floor
Amidst faded jeans
And the trials of our days are
Decided in the chambers of our nights.

A 20 Line Poem

Singular is the heart that beats within one's chest
Two are the souls that twine together at
Three a.m. when outside is dark and quiet and inside
Forgotten dreams are remembered
Five p.m. eyes meet over tea
Six candles burn and reflect off
Seven faceted crystal from which wine to toast to
Life and Love are consumed at dinner at eight.

Nine lives has a cat but we only one
Ten or more pictures taken at holiday
"See us eating dinner in Spain at 11 . . ."
One dozen images of lives spent together

Warm mornings consisting of sweet smells
Rumpled blankets
Soft skin
Hands entwined as windows watched
Smiles exchanged when presents bought

Universal images of
People loving life in a
Twenty line poem, too long and too short.

Drain All My Energy and Then Call Me Beautiful

Early morning visits
Late night tete a tete

Finding myself not alone
Silence shared with squeaking thoughts

Finally you left me
Because you could not understand my yell
My voice was water logged
My fingers wrinkled as if I had just stayed in my tub too long
    blowing around the bubbles
My hair became a playground for small tropical fish
The kind whose colors you instantly fell in love with
. . . How sensitive of you . . .

Twining Ghosts

Twining ghosts
    from the end of a burning stick,
Light-blue, ephemeral,
Entwine me in your gentle arms
For I shall find no other warmth
On this very cold night.
I set the flame
Which yields your fragrant caress,
So perhaps you will comfort me,
For no one else holds me
In these cold days.
I'm alone and tired,
Let me drift and dream,
Asleep among your tendrils,
There is nothing here which
Needs my attention.
My breath disturbs
Your wavering line,
So replace it with your own.
Let me lift above
To fade off in the smoke.
All that remains is a short,
Fragrant memory.

Foolish Child

Foolish child.
You were so proud when you
Blithely cast off companionship.
You sang out in silence
Of the love you kept for yourself
When it seemed that no one
Loved you.
You saw your life ahead of you,
All neatly planned and packaged,
And began to open it yourself,
Miserly,
Not asking for help in
Snipping the string
Or prying the glue.
You never let us look into your life,
When the opening was large enough
For only you,
Then you guarded, jealously,
And lived on, gloriously alone.
The party that no one was invited to,
And the little child who,
Out of pride,
Never revealed what took place.
Cold comfort.
So you know what's in the box,
And you know where you're going from here.
A present opened before Christmas,
A secret too soon revealed,
What's the use in going on?

Gabriella Fontaine

peroxide blond dances
with half a face
talks small about the weather
and Gene's new car
sips champagne from plastic glass

Gabriella Fontaine,
the voice, when it comes,
is lip-sticked and moist
on a rolled gold cigarette pipe

Hot ash falls
onto black chiffon
she laughs teeth
gleaming from plastic glass

Glass Eyes

Sitting in your living room
smelling tea leaves burn
on a pinewood shelf
I feel your teeth

white as parchment paper
smile from pink lamplight
wanting to suck me up
like leaves do drops

Everything might have been ok
if the eye of that stuffed cat
lying naked on the spread
stripped of its eyelid
had not reflected the glass

In Dusty Theater Lights

In dusty theater lights
when the bald soprano enters
laughter peels his skin flap back
to reveal a peppered head

I never knew

In candy glass
a face, chilly pink
grins with missing teeth

Boobs with no bra
hang in chest jowls
on a body pale as a whore's
when the lights are bright

Sometimes I stand this way
in a pool of white light
and clamp a mask over my head
so I will not scream

River Dawn

She kneels by the River Tana
ochre dust flaking onto wet light
that ripples away from her child
hands wrinkled and worn as old leather

Cupping muddy water
burying it with her face
chiseled and scarred as stone
carved by the rain
she drinks from a body
almost dried up.

Cathexis Shadow

A worn shadow
thrusts in and out
between milk white thighs
sprawled in wet grass
that smells of stale rain

Watching as coarse black coils
spin away into nothingness
beneath a body spent
and tired of thrusting

Was it just one night
or a whole lifetime spent
rubbing shadows?

The Pole's Room

A yellow stain spreads across stone.

White light burns,
a single suspended bulb
Cheese cloth hangs
heavy on the window pane

No one must know

Door,
barred with package planks
is no exit.

Boots,
crackle on leaves
brittle from the naked tree

Words are silences

Clammy,
fingers pull him in
lock his name behind stone walls

Chilled
air whistles
through a chink in splintered board

And he sweats

Sadness,
in his stare
he no longer exists
In a room of white light,

God Lives In The Broken Lighthouse

God lives
in the broken lighthouse
crusty old man
with hollow eyes

I've seen his shadow quiver
in wind's breath

As a child
I spoke to him

He'd hobble to the lighthouse window
cast a shadow
in the wave's ripple

I stopped talking because
the shadow always moved

Some nights when the wind races
I laugh so hard
tears blow salt into air
And I wait
for his shadow to disappear

"The Junkyard"

It's snowing real hard as Jeff and I prepare to climb into my '77 Nova. Being a Bostonian, he makes a nasty comment about my "GO METS" bumper sticker, as we walk from behind the car to the front.

We sit inside the car and immediately Jeff admires the red interior, paying special attention to a huge gash in the upholstery of the front seat so that a yellowish sponge-like cushion is exposed.

"Wow!" says Jeff, "You still have the original AM radio in here — nice, real nice."

"That's funny," I think to myself, "This thing is a piece of shit."

"How 'bout turning on the heat, Rob? It's freezing in here."

I have to remind him that I can't close the window because the window handle has been broken off.

Making a left onto VanVranken, I listen to Jeff as he excitedly tells me how his laundry (primarily socks and underwear) was stolen from his powder blue '71 Hornet in downtown Schenectady. I find that he seems to be doing most of the talking. He also seems to have an obsession with cars. Everything is going just fine when suddenly Jeff's jaw drops, his lips begin to quiver, and his brown beady eyes triple their aperture.

"Look Rob, look," he spews, mouth trembling, droplets of sweat gathering on his forehead. Although I find it very difficult to navigate my car through the snow without keeping my eyes on the road, I find I must look at Jeff who sits mesmerised in excitement. Pointing straight ahead, he gasps, "There it is there's the junkyard."

"Jeff, Jeff are you ok?" No response. "Here take this," I say, handing him a dirty rag that has been sitting on my dashboard for weeks. As I proceed to make a left turn into

the junkyard, Jeff looks at the rag, frowns and throws it angrily to the floor.

"Rob," he says without moving his head to look at me, "Don't you realize the importance of this place? This is not your ordinary junkyard. This is an institution, a landmark. You might say that we've arrived at the Schenectady Museum of Art Deco."

"Oh," I say a bit taken and extremely confused. "Please excuse my lack of concern."

I park the car in front of a large cement building painted a very dull grey. As we get out of the car, I notice for the first time that Jeff has brought along some kind of case.

"What's in the case, Jeff?" I expect the worst.

"Just a camera," he replies flippantly.

"What do you mean just a camera?" I recall Jeff's other obsession, photography that has led to his vast accumulation of wide-angle, telephoto and zoom lenses, not to mention various types of flashes and filters.

"Look, Rob, I was planning to take a few pictures if that's alright with you." It was obvious that he was becoming riled by my inquisitiveness and obvious displeasure concerning this hobby of his.

"Fine, but can we please get my handle before the photo session?"

"Of course, Rob," he says reassuringly, shaking his head from side to side in disgust. "In that building directing me towards the grey cinderblock structure."

I walk with some trepidation, as Jeff trails closely behind. He is humming some Grateful Dead song — I think it's "Fire on the Mountain." Now only a few feet from the door it occurs to me that I should have worn boots. The snow, that is by now a half foot deep, has managed to find its way into my loafers so that my feet feel cold and wet.

I think Jeff is having an orgasm as he studies the inside of the building. The room is poorly lit, and unlike the outer cinderblock structure, the inside is wooden. It smells very musty, as if someone has been smoking cheap cigars. Pictures of some race car that looks like it was used for

stunts in "The Road Warrior" hang carelessly on a wall to my left. Beneath the pictures an article from the **Schenectady Gazette** lauds the driver's talents.

"Jeff, are you ok?" I ask for the second time, but not the last. His face is rigid, frozen with splendor.

In a very delirious voice he says, "My God Rob, it's Jerry."

I look at him very confused wondering if he has just dropped acid. "Jerry, who? Where?"

"Garcia, you asshole," he snaps, as if he has been rudely awoken from an excellent dream. He is pointing to a man behind a counter.

This man, who does not seem to be pleased with our arrival, has a face that consists mostly of hair, in particular a grayish colored beard that must be at least a foot long. Where there isn't hair one makes out a wrinkled skin that looks like meat that has been set out to cure in the sun. I'm uncertain as to whether or not he is bald because he is wearing a felt green hat that must be as old as he is. I have to give Jeff credit, he does show some resemblance to Garcia, but really he looks more like he could be the brother of those guys from ZZ TOP.

Next to him is a man wearing the mechanic's jumpsuit. Although the color of it is blue, this fact becomes questionable given the amount of grease covering it. I can't put my finger on it, but he looks vaguely familiar.

Suddenly, Jeff leans towards me and says, "See that kid," pointing to him — I interrupt before letting him continue — "I know let me guess Jeff, that's Tom Petty." Jeff tells me to shut-up and then says, "That's the kid in those pictures with the race cars." I look to the wall next to me to see if Jeff is right, and sure enough, he is. I don't really care though. Instead, my attention is now focused on a man with no teeth who sits crumpled in a beat-up old chair that seems to be swallowing him. He is holding a small brown dog.

"See that dog over there," says Jeff pointing to the man's dog, "That's a Chihuahua — I really love them."

"That's funny," I think to myself, trying to ignore Jeff,

"The old man is talking to his dog. I strain my ears in order to hear what he's saying — Sounds like he's telling the dog that they're going to go home for dinner — Something tells me that he's been saying that all day — Better yet all week — The man and his dog go nowhere.

I turn to Jeff who in the meantime has been focusing his camera in the direction of the man and dog while saying over and over, "I really love Chihuahuas."

"Jesus, Jeff, what the hell happened to your camera?" I notice that the whole body has been banged up really bad. But before he has a chance to answer Jerry asks very unpleasantly, "Whatya want?"

I look at him without answering. I'm positive as to what he wants, us to leave. I also notice that Jerry's eyeing Jeff in a way that makes me think he's seen him before. Finally I speak. "Uh-Uh, my car, my Nova — the handle — it's broken. You know the thing that rolls up the window — I was wondering —"

"Year?" He asks me, mad.

"It's a '77," giving him the largest number that he knows. He doesn't answer me. Instead, he walks over to another man, tall and lanky. He's wearing one of those hats with the ear flaps so that he shows resemblance to a kamikaze. It looks as if he spends most of his day outside, in the cold. Jerry walks over to him and whispers something in his ear.

"Jeff," I say tugging at his coat like a little child, "maybe we should go, they probably don't have it anyway."

"Would you relax, Rob." Jeff, obviously, is more concerned with Jerry and his friend than with me. "Look at these two, would you. They would make one hell of a picture."

"No Jeff," I whisper forcefully, "they'll kill us."

Fortunately, Jerry looks at us and says, "Go with him," an indication that we should follow the tall lanky man outside. As we're about to walk out the door Jerry says looking directly at Jeff with his two bushy eyes, "You with

that camera — Don't let me catch you inside the gates."

I look questioningly at Jeff. "What the hell's he talking about? What gates?"

"You'll see. C'mon," he says practically pushing me out the door.

We walk, outside into the snow, trailing behind the worker who walks over to a brown Nova, no headlights, shattered windshield, lots of rust. Sounds like he's having an altercation with the car as he tries feverishly to extricate the handle from the door.

"Let's go," Jeff says.

"Where're we going?" I question softly, not wanting to have this guy hear me.

"There!" Jeff screams excitedly, as he points to an opened gate with a big sign that reads NO TREPASSING. Behind it is the actual junkyard, rows upon rows of cars, one touching the next, all under a blanket of snow, protecting their permanence as they are swallowed by the earth.

"Jeff, Jerry said — and the sign says no trepassing. I really don't think it would be a good —"

"Fuck the sign! — I've been in here tons of times." He pauses to wipe the foam off of his mouth with the back of his hand. "My God, Rob, I've taken girls in here don't tell me that you're afraid — Besides I have to take pictures."

"Alright," I say, wondering what kind of girls would want to hang out in a junkyard.

We walk into this auto-cemetery. Jeff, having assumed the role of tour guide makes sure to indicate certain points of interest. "Did you know," he says to me "That each type of car can be found together by year and model."

"Wow," I say wondering if my toes will have to be amputated from the advent of gangrene.

"Here," Jeff says, "get next to that car and pose." I respond obsequiously, noting that the car has neither windows nor wheels.

"What's wrong Rob, did you forget how to smile?"

"Jeff!" I scream, "behind you." He turns around so that now both of us are looking at Jerry, and the tall, lanky

degenerate. Jerry walks over to me with a slight limp, grabs me by the collar of my coat and grimaces so that his yellow stained teeth, hilighted by pieces of tobacco, are only a few inches from my face.

He shouts, "I thought I told you and your friend to stay outa here!" Then, incredulously Jeff says, very calmly, "could you just hold it right there sir," as he focuses his camera and snaps a picture. Now Jerry is really mad.

"Christ, Jeff! This isn't the time."

The tall lanky man walks over to Jeff, grabs his camera, and throws it truculently to the ground.

Now Jeff is really mad. "YOU FUCKING IDIOT!" He yells jumping up and down, so that he looks like a child who has just had his favorite toy taken away. "That's a three hundred dollar camera you just broke." But the man doesn't seem to care.

Jeff bends over to pick up his camera, disillusioned. Then he grabs my right arm and pulls me toward the gates.

"Jeff," I tell him, my arm practically out of its socket. "You can let go now." He does. I've never seen him so mad. He looks at me as we walk, then bellows, "I just wanted to take a few pictures."

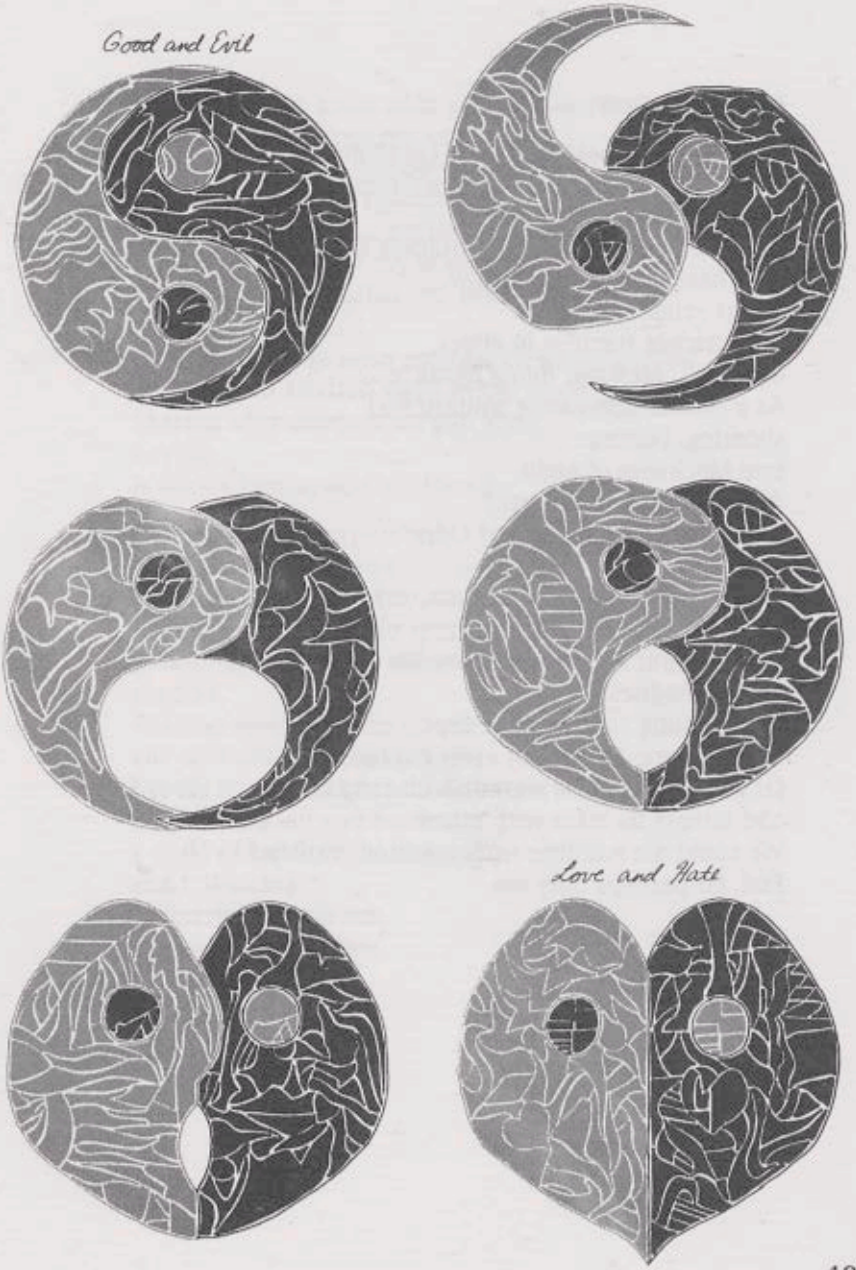
"Yeah, what about my door handle!"

Jeff looks at me again. His eyes narrow. His nostrils flair. He opens his mouth to yell, I think — but doesn't. Instead he paternally puts his arm around me, and says, "Come on, lets get out of his blasted hole."

We climb into my car. There is about two inches of snow piled on the front set that has managed to make its way into the car through the open window. I use my hand to brush it out. My hand turns red and numb from the cold. As I start the car I ask Jeff, "Where am I going to get a handle?"

"No problem." He says in a much calmer tone, "we'll come back tomorrow. I look at him totally shocked. "We will?" I ask.

"Why not." He says confidently, with a slight grin on his face, as we make a right onto VanVraken. "I still have to finish taking pictures."


Good and Evil
Love and Hate

Mingled in Dust

Whispering, if oaks and stars could die for sorrow . . .
Would I love wildly or die freely then?
Who could emancipate me?
If icicles and pine needles dropped in a crash
onto hardened ground below,
desert sands react.
Thus nature tumbles in effect,
changing, growing, dying because . . .
As a human glimpses a solitary star
shooting, bolting
into blackness of night
do they invade our earth?
Whose earth is it anyway? Ours
of theirs?
Words may personify the stars, oaks and desert sands —
but rightfully? Dare we?
Would a star sacrifice its fiery life
for my madness?
I'm spiraling . . . Would it cry
tears of wax, hardening upon my face?
Or would it breathe warm air into my lungs
and mingle its tears with mine?
We could die together — nature and mankind.
End. Or perhaps only me.

The tree would know only another sorrow,
if the ground sucked my ashes
I feel . . . it would tremble and wilt,
outstretch scraggly branches
and grow. I would be for the better,
thus, if a tree found my affection.
We could live in eternality, pretending,
until the world died.
But it won't have been useless, I'll have touched
my soul to a kindred spirit in the woods.
Sharing only compassion and grief,
Loving.
Is such a conception maniacal?

If I could metamorphisize
all of my history into a
silver star,
I could fly winged with sparkles
gleaming, trailing my evasive translucent
shadow.
Rushing amongst fairy-tale clouds
and obscure heavens up high.
I could fly and twist in circles,
defeat mankind and become
a child of freedom, nature's sky
and I, dancing.
In flurries I could run
everywhere. Twirling,
everywhere.

Illusions

They live on the third floor
and the porch jutts out
a little farther than the second floor's
you could see right down to the
cobblestone street where the
concrete carpet crept
down the hill

There's a view of the
colonial firehouse on the corner
below, and although the bricks
are a bit too neat
the atmosphere remains undisturbed Harvard

Two blocks west is the river
smoothly serpentine;
farther down the river
all the schools are out

But I can still imagine
the oarsmen in
synchronized strokes a sort of swimming centipede
scuttling, cutting a straight incision
down the center of the Charles

But tonight the river is a palet
for the sunset,
painted a la Maxfield Parish
on the
silk pillow smooth surface

I threw a stone
and watched Emersonian
concentric circles
echo ripple outward

They enjoy living by the river
and riding bikes to lab
they even rode out to Walden pond

I remember at the graduation
they read Thoreau
and it sounds good
in springtime

under evergreens which shed
clouds of yellow pollen powder in cooling currents;
behind country colonial castles

with sky blue fountain ponds
encircling marble druids,
whistling water
and bubbling eloquence

I said they sure like him
and Walden Pond
she said
they like Walden Pond
so they put up with Thoreau
politely

I think they
will be happy here
and I will visit often
it seems like a third floor built just for them
this little home in Boston.

By The Boat Pond

The Woman

standing
under an umbrella-slow waterfall
a milk foggy grey
in the park

—by the boat pond—

she watches
splashdowns
reappear
though they never strike the same place twice

Her pale
jade green sweater hairs,
a dew beaded web
solitary color in a black and white movie scene

The Man

hat and coated
downpour postured
jogging, slowing
drops spilling over the front of his brim

The Kiss

from behind
is a tangerine-drop;
spot,
at the base of her neck
a moist warm shudder in arms, and a rolling of her head back
yet they may only meet in the eyes of rainstorms.

Red Lights on Park

The air hung thickly
in the city corridors
red lights on park:
park and 40 somethin
The subways inhaled what cool air
blew it off the rivers
the moist breadth of the city
on my neck
and all over the face I wipe
which feels to be someone else's

Red lights on park:
by the center for cosmetic surgery
and the park ave. dental care cooperative
gold plaqued
A street relic walks
plastic bubbled package packing
makes his cape
a folded brownbag his cowl

able to drain tall bottles of thunderbird in a single snort
look up in the dumpster
it's a fish
it's my ex broker
it's
Super Homeless

Red lights on park:
and the girls with
boxes of trojans in their bags
45 yr. old black transvestite men?
no, not here
these girls are blondes
runaways in red pumps
"Takin what their given caus their workin for a livin"

One has her torso
stuffed in the drivers window
of a new blue B.M.W.

Red lights on park:
and a cop smacks her on the butt
she's not surprised
and he tells her to
"move along"
and she does
and so do I
green lights on park

Surprise On Tuesday

A bacon-like stench wafted past Kevin's nose as he shielded his vision from the harsh light of the sun. Somewhere outside, a dog barked his ritualistic morning greeting to the neighborhood. As Kevin's faculty for rational thought returned to him after eight hours of sweet, dream-filled, rejuvenating unconsciousness, he remembered the night before in touches of colour; the red wine, the green eyes, the electric purple dress, the dull yellow rose petals.

The bristles of his toothbrush pricked the blue-and-white striped toothpaste he squeezed out. The monotony of swoosh-swoosh-swoosh as he pushed it back and forth across his teeth lulled him, until he slipped and jabbed his gums with the hard bristles, some of which found their way beneath the sheath of his gums. It was then that Kevin finally greeted the new day: "Goddammit!"

"So you're a scuba diver," Greeneyes (so called because Kevin had forgotten her name somewhere between the third bottle of cheap wine and the cab ride home) said as if repeating a carefully memorized line from a technical book. "Do you have to dive today? Where is there to dive besides the East River?"

Kevin decided not to answer this one; better to simply let her be impressed by what little she already knows, he thought.

"Oh," she said, as though he had given her a perfectly satisfying reply. "Well, there's bacon and eggs Benedict. Except you didn't have the right stuff for the hollandaise sauce, so it's eggs Benedict without the Benedict." She giggled like a child who had just made a particularly cunning remark.

Kevin peeled an overly brown slice of bacon from the paper towel where it was draining its grease, and munched on it, trying to look like a connoisseur enjoying a lovely chicken Kiev at Elaine's. A noncommittal "Mmm" was his only comment for Greeneyes' cooking skill. I think I liked her better before she got into my kitchen, he thought profoundly. He suddenly had to dive today: "Listen," he said with feigned remorse, "I'm **really** sorry, but I have to dive today at . . . let me see . . ." It was 11:30 now, so . . . "At one o'clock. Um,I have to prepare myself for about an hour —

you know, take a shower, check my gear, do my Zen pre-stress relaxation meditation — the usual," he said in a bored tone. He hoped she would get the message.

"That's okay, honey, I can stay here by myself and have a real nice dinner waiting for you when you get home. I bet you'll be real hungry, huh? Let's see . . . I'll make creamed chicken on toast, baked beans —"

Kevin had to interrupt her, for obvious reasons. "No, thanks," he replied sweetly, trying not to vomit on her eggs Benedict. "I'll have to pass. You see, the president of the diving company invited me for dinner — nothing special, just a little Cornish game hen or something — and I really do have to show up. I wish I could have dinner with you tonight, but . . . c'est la vie. You know how it is with us bachelors." He stressed the last word.

That's okay, sugar, maybe tomorrow night."

He hated to disappoint her; she sounded so hopeful. "Well, that would be great, except I'll be going up to my parents' house right after dinner tonight. God only knows how long **they'll** make me stay."

"Sure." She could feel the tears invading her eyes, ready to betray her. "That's okay. Um, why don't you call me when they let you go then?"

"That's a perfect idea! I was just about to suggest that."

"Well, good. I guess I'll see you then. I'd better get going — you know, the cat has to be fed and stuff. Um . . . bye."

Kevin was good enough to see her to the door and give her a long kiss.

After she was finally gone, gone, gone, Kevin went back to the kitchen, dumped the bacon-and-egg mutation down the disposal for proper burial, and made himself a real breakfast: a handful of Wheaties (no milk), a glass of soda, a cup of instant coffee, a banana, and some cookies-and-cream ice cream. Jumping into the shower, which was becoming rather prolific as far as mildew goes, he caught a glimpse of Greeneyes' tube of blue mascara on the sink's edge. He recalled how unnatural her eyes looked with green irises and blue lashes. Why do people do things like that? he pondered. Kevin thought it unnatural, against the laws and boundaries of good taste.

"Damn!" he cursed as soap ran into his eyes. Instead of buying shampoo, he figured he would save money and use

Irish Spring all over, even on his hair. It did make his hair a bit brittle at times, but so what? Now was the time, he decided, to invest in a bottle of Johnson & Johnson Baby Shampoo, No More Tears Formula. Or was it Masters & Johnson? No, Masters & Johnson was the team of sex therapists because Masters sounds like the beginning of "masturbate" — that much he remembered. So those two semesters of the Psychology of Memory & Thinking actually **weren't** a complete waste.

Before wrapping himself in the green terry towel, he stared at himself in the mirror for a while, practicing his nonchalant poses. He remembered the full-length mirror he had had as a teen-ager. He would stand there in front of it, flexing his muscles at imaginary girls. "Hey, babe, how 'bout you and me going for a hamburger after the game?" or, "you look like an intelligent girl. How would like to . . . Oh, there were a million different endings for that one. One time, he asked Maryalice Perrita if she would like to go to Magic Butte with him. She asked why and he told her so they could just look at the view. She said Sure. The night of the date crept up on Kevin, and he had forgotten to iron his white cavalier shirt. He went to pick her up anyway. At her house, she, of course, was not ready when he arrived. That was the custom back then: A girl always kept her date waiting for her. The parents always said it was because a young lady shouldn't look too eager. The kids were too stupid to figure out that it was because the old man wanted some time to size up the potential fetishist/rapist/axe murderer who would be in possession of his little girl that night. Kevin waited downstairs while Maryalice's mother primed and primped her little prize. Maryalice's father: "So, Kevin . . . Tell me, what are you planning to do after high school?" Jesus Christ, what did he expect the kid to say? "I guess I'll hang around Columbia University for a while and study to become an architect. Then I figure it'll take me about a year to set up my own business after I graduate. Once our net income reaches about a hundred grand a year, I'll build the house and install the self-cleaning oven. By the time, I'm sixty-five I'll have a real good retirement fund for me and your daughter there???" I'm not going to marry your daughter, sir, I just want to try to cop a feel beneath her sweater, he thought.

But Kevin simply answered, "I'm not sure yet, sir. But I'm only a freshman, so I have a few years to think it over with the help of my guidance counselor."

Fiiiiiiiiinally, down the stairs trots Maryalice. She told her parents goodnight and she would be back before 8:00. They walked for a while, then ran together up to Magic Butte. Watching the sun set, Kevin leaned over to kiss her for the first time. She slapped him and ran away. So much for mirror practice.

The ice cream weighed heavily in his stomach, like piles of rocks on an Indian burial sight. He thought about what he could have for lunch. He opened the refrigerator door and peeked in, finding meagre offerings: one-quarter of a carton of half-soured milk, two tangerines with the beginnings of mold forming on their navels, a sepia banana, and a pot with crusted string beans. That did it: he could practically hear Paddy's Pizzeria calling him.

"Yeah, a medium pizza, extra cheese, mushrooms, sausage, and . . . that's it, to seven-oh-two Schofield one-D."

"That'll be seven sixty. Half an hour."

A young, muscular, red-headed man had just gotten his eighth strike in a row on "Bowling for Dollars" when the doorbell rang. Searching for money, Kevin upset the lamp and broke its bulb. He swung open the door and handed the pizzaman $7.75. "Keep the change," Kevin told him.

The pizzaman looked irritably at Kevin and turned on his heel. Kevin lifted a tepid slice of pizza from the greasy box and bit off nearly half of it. After five slices he decided the cheese tasted rancid, and closed the box on the remaining slices. He mentally labelled it "breakfast" and relegated it to the refrigerator.

Just then the phone rang. Kevin let it ring three times before answering. He and his long-standing best friend Peter had a code: Since phone calls between them were billed as long distance though they lived but a few miles apart, one would call the other with a ring signal to tell him he wanted to meet somewhere. One ring meant the Razor Tavern, two rings meant the corner of Bleecker and Thompson. If the other couldn't meet, he would ring back once for No and hang up.

"Kevin? This is Jasmine. What are you doing?"

"I just got out of the shower," he lied. He remembered

Jasmine only too well. After two-and-a-half hours of continuous lovemaking, he laid back on the pillows, hoping to get some sleep. When she finished her smoke, she woke him up and said, "Ready for some more, Tiger?" She dug her purple nails into his chest and grinned lasciviously. He rolled over and covered his head with a pillow. After she had left early in the morning because he "had to dive at one o'clock," he found little flakes of purple nail polish all over the sheets. What the hell had she been doing while he was sleeping?

"Well, I won't keep you too long then, hon. I was just wondering if you'd like to help me use these tickets I have for the circus tomorrow afternoon. Front row, right in front of the elephants."

"Hold on, let me check my calendar . . . I'm sorry, Jas, tomorrow is my laundry day."

"What time do you do your laundry?"

"Wait a minute, maybe I could . . . What time did you say the circus started?"

"Two-thirty."

"Oh, shit — looks impossible; I do my laundry at three or else the laundromat closes. You know what they say."

"No. What do they say, Tiger?" She tried to sound seductive; she sounded as though she had nasal passage blockage.

"Laundry waits for no man — especially **bachelors.** I'm really sorry."

"No problem, Tiger. Listen, I'm gonna let you go finish your shower. I'll catch your action later."

Like hell you will. Kevin was annoyed. He wondered if he shouldn't cool it on these "mini-relationships" for a while, or else he'd run himself ragged. Yeah, that's it, he thought, Cool it for a while, just a little while. The phone rang again, just as he made his monumental decision.

"Kevin? This is your doctor caling." Didn't sound like Dr. Vernn.

"Oh really?" Kevin challenged. "Unless you got a sex change, I don't believe you." Dr. Vernn had already gone through puberty. Still, the voice on the other end was slightly familiar, almost haunting. But it didn't sound like the voice of any woman he had known, for however long a time,

in the past few weeks.

"Kevin!" she said with surprise and admonition, "don't you know who this is? It's Jennie — Jennie Sher!"

Aha! The cogs began moving. It had been a long time since they'd been oiled by that memory of the Bard College Conference on the Constitution. His life as the Assistant Dean of Admissions and the Administrator of the Conference seemed always to hover at the edge of his pre-conscious. This was the cue it needed to be brought back into full awareness. "Jennie! Wow! How the hell are you? God, I haven't heard from you in so long. Must be . . . shit, more than a few years now."

"I just got back from Sweden. My parents gave me the trip as a graduation gift — from graduate school. I'm a Ph.D. **Doctor** Sher, if you please," she joked.

"Well-shit-I'll-be-damned! That's great! So . . . how've you been?"

"Okay, I suppose — a little tattered around the edges, but you've seen enough movies to know that all shrinks are a little bit crazy, right?" She laughed that rare laugh that Kevin had forgotten. "How've you been? Still diving or what?"

"Yeah, still diving. Only, I'm doing underwater photography right now. It's really great doing what I want to do. I'm . . . happy."

"Same old Kevin. Hey, I'll be in New York Tuesday of this coming week. Want to get together?"

"Hell yeah, sounds fantastic. Where?"

"Your place? I'll bring wine and steaks. Seven-oh-two Schofield, right?"

"Right. Well, okay. My place it is. Say, how did you get my address and phone number anyway?"

"I called Patricia. She said she was in New York a couple of months ago and had gotten together with you a couple of times."

"Oh." Patricia was 27 and he was 38. Who was he fooling? He wildly hoped that Patricia hadn't mentioned their "night together." As soon as they had driven back from dinner to his apartment and gotten out of the car, the neighborhood beast-dog — the one with the morning greeting — sauntered up to his car, gave Kevin a nonchalant look, and urinated on the tire — right in front of

Patricia. She thought it was rather humourous. When they got to the door, she began teasing him. He wanted to say Yes to what he construed as the offering of herself, but he remembered her too well as the open and giving 17-year-old, wise beyond her years, at Bard. This is wrong, he thought, I can't do this. So he did it anyway (or tried). She looked so striking in her pink taffeta party dress. Besides, he rationalized, she wasn't 17 anymore. Despite the excitement, things simply did not work out that night, no matter what.

"Kevin? Is that okay, Kevin? You don't mind, do you?" Jennie waited for an answer.

He decided that if Patricia hadn't told her, he had nothing to lose by playing it cool. If she had told Jennie, however, he could act very collected and unflustered and still play it cool. "No, no, no, of course not. I can't wait to see you."

"Great! And do I ever have a surprise for you!" And with that, she hung up, leaving the male mind to wonder what evils the female mind could possibly devise for him. The fact was, it really wasn't evil at all — at least, not to Patricia and Jennie.

Patricia had flown in from Naples on business and surprised Jennie. Instead of having just Jennie come to New York, he would find the both of them at his door next Tuesday; the two of them, best friends since their Bard days, had no secrets between them.

Kevin panicked. He was nervous about what schemes Jennie could concoct; he knew she was a pretty smart cookie. By Saturday, Kevin was pacing his cage. Greeneyes called: a night out on the town? He was annoyed that she had called him. He told her — he **told** her — that he would call her when he got back from his parents' house. Jesus Christ, what'd she think I was lying or something? Well . . . he was, but that wasn't the point. Besides, it was for his own good.

Sunday was marked by a jog in the park — feet pounding, heart thumping, bam-bam-bam! — an ice cream cone, photographing some skyscrapers and bums, and fantasizing about Jennie's surprise on Tuesday.

Grey clouds threatened the city on Monday. The day that had started out sunny had gone astray. People rushed

around as usual, but it was in a more guarded fashion. If the rain hit them on the outside, their insides would dissolve. They would be empty shells, like when a child bites off the end of a sugar cone and sucks all the ice cream out through the hole. The people were a blur of black and red umbrellas waiting to be utilised, and yellow macs waiting to be rained upon. No diving today.

He was tired; alpha and beta waves of sleep were strangers to him. For the past three nights, all Kevin did was lie awake for hours, beckoning sleep to come visit him, which it never did. And since sedatives were not part of his philosophy of body, he would eventually get up and sit at his desk, writing out all the fantasies about Jennie's surprise on Tuesday. One fantasy to a piece of paper; always use black ink; number each piece of paper in the bottom left-hand corner — those were the rules.

But Monday night was different. Although he was anxious about the surprise, he was so exhausted he couldn't help but fall asleep after an hour of intense thinking. He had a dream.

He was hidden in Jennie's tiny bathtub and it was completely dark. Tepid water sloshed around him. He heard footsteps in the hall and he tried to get out of the tub, but an irrefutable force held him there. While the footsteps' owner was running down the hallway, someone pulled open the shower curtain. When he saw no one there, he was not afraid anymore. As soon as the curtain was pulled shut, however, he became frightened. Someone kept opening and shutting the curtain, and his emotions continually went through the same states as they did the first time. Finally, the footsteps ceased and he was no longer frightened. Jennie walked in, turned on the light, and told him not to worry. She wrapped Kevin in the curtain and rolled him into the bedroom, where a doberman pinscher with mirrored sunglasses seemed to stare at him.

Kevin awoke amid sweat-soggy sheets. He put a cold hand to his forehead to wipe away the sweat and found he was burning. Sitting up, he decided to wash his hands and face. He saw that his feet were dirty, too; he stuck in the bathtub and cleansed them.

The bedroom smelled like melting plastic, the clock read 3:28 a.m., and Tuesday afternoon was approaching quickly.

Innocence

Discs of onyx
On two small moons
Eyes are deep
As Sahara dunes
Pierce her world
In darkest night
Taking her higher
Than angel's flight.
Hands with fingers
Intertwined
Conduct the symphonies
Within the mind.
They speak forever
Without a word
The shooting stars
Were all they heard.
The universe
Becomes a toy
Compared to love
Of girl and boy.

Haiku: Is Forever Too Long?

Long golden ripples
Fall cascading down her back —
Sparkles of sunlight.

Transparent blue eyes
Mirrors of her inner soul
Long for transgression.

Soft lips of passion
Still await the fervor of
A forbidden kiss.

Long graceful fingers
Grasp for the fiery red rose
Standing at her feet.

A sharp thorn pierces
A creamy white fingertip —
A drop of blood falls.

Her rose or her love —
When it is within her reach
Pain follows conquest.

Calmly she awaits —
His unlikely return will
Ease isolation.

A sacred marriage
To last all eternity —
She won't forsake him.

But is forever
Slightly more than enough time
To wait for a man?

Pale Dreams

In the darkest dawning morning that crashed into peace
arose from some slumber the jaws of the beast
in a place where the slayers of truth run wild
and prisoners of prophets toil — defiled.

Laboring in sterile towering pillars
that serve as sanctuary for all of hope's killers,
they grind their headstones from fire and steel,
waste in abyss, and believe they can feel.

Onslaught of ash ensue time measured by wars
while sand days disperse on the white windy shores
and masses still huddle in oak threads of shelter
where solitude grows when their fire has melted.

The beast of before stretched its cold claw
the trembling silence, the shiver of awe —
all empty suffering in this place cannot last
for sorrow can sink only deep as the past.

Funeral

The cluster of soldiers
who fell from the heaven
astray can satiate
the craters in my soul,
but nothing can hurt more
than the dead weight of dirt
slipping through rotted holes.

Pilgrimage

Another winter stroll . . .
slipping past evergreen rot
stain'd by bloody fists
(deaf cries of frustration)
sticky sap covers wounds
inhaling the stench of a thick mist
whispering waves in the frozen air
listening to my mind
explode.

Pastorale Ultimate

Hear these words I shall reveal
How I — a mortal — did conceal
My soul, as it were, in Earth's own lands
From the sharpened claws of Time's cold hands

'Twas dawn when I first heard the Siren call
Luring me to surrender to the great fall
But Reason struck, and I quickly fled
Not to drown like those so easily led

I donned a black robe to hide from all sight
And journeyed for miles as day turned to night
Through pits of fire, over Charon's waters black
In the empty void, where Time could not track

Yet Time remained steadfast and hastened the chase
Every second was closer, I could not keep pace
Till I found myself in a large open field
Where I beheld a scythe as a weapon to wield

Time did not falter and began to charge
As he approached, my eyes did enlarge
Warm flesh decayed and turned hard to stone
I displayed to the world only shadowy bone

But my will was too great to stay caught in the snare
In the distance, a stable, I departed through air
There mounted did I, a pale white steed
And forced Time - his poaching to heed

I galloped far from the harsh weighty gaze
With a laugh that echoed in the dark bleary haze
'Tis here I revel in my ego sublime —
The ultimate triumph — I escaped Time

The Seed of Youth

If I were talking to someone, I might like to discuss this evening. One event that stands out in my mind occured on my way here. Never having ridden a Metro North train before, I was a bit nervous. I had to wait at Grand Central Station for 40 minutes before boarding the train. I was sitting on the train a few minutes, when an attractive girl came on and smiled at me.She sat in a seat opposite me, with a seat in between us. I could see her reflection in the side window. The train started. She leaned over the seat and asked me for a cigarette. I don't smoke and told her so. She got a cigarette from another man. I couldn't think of anything else.

Just thinking about her, looking at her reflection, I couldn't stop shaking. I froze; my heart pounded. I stared at her, trying not to be noticed. Occasionally she would glance at me, and my eyes would dart across the car. I couldn't talk to her, I couldn't even face her.

The train pulled into the Riverdale station, and I got off. She looked at me on the platform, and I walked toward the exit. But before going up the stairs, I paused and waited for her to pass me. She was looking out the window, staring at me, with a broad smile on her face. I thought to myself, "How could one person completely consume another, and in the end not mean anything?"

I felt a sudden emptiness. A certain isolation.

I didn't even know her name.

Dancing Poodles

Transparent ballons attached to brass railings
attract memories of Barnum & Bailey,
as DJ's song dedication mask
master of ceremonies undertones
"and in this ring we have . . ."
Desperation drips from dances,
all trying to outmove competition.
Applause found within repeated requests
"would you like to dance?"
Bozo's, fat and skinny, mismatched clothes
are refused or last chance.
While, amazing Fellinis flash goldcards
buying two for one drinks, perpetually partnered.
Strophlights, organ top forty, umbrellas in
cotton candy concotions complete the three rings.
As twisting tires, late night proposals are made during last calls.
Morning crew finds dead ballons,
nothing attached to strings.

October

I see hunger falls the autumn day
where lifeless logs along us lay
and with blackened twisted roots my mood merges
to find the frozen soil, as I am, completely discouraged.
Surprise from behind, you cover my eyes,
pin me down, throw leaves despite my cries.
Yet, you loving, frivolous fun fails to cheer
as your actions continued my thoughts of fear.
Because, eventually fall will eat me up,
cover my remains til decay leaves unrecognized hump.
Obviously upset you comfort, I confide.
Your comprehension extends beyond, from which I've shied,
expressing absurdity by denying respect of the grave
you've long jumped it, packed it with leaves and into it played.
Firm disapproval shakes your kind head, and with
weatherbeaten hands you push my wayward hair, "give
me the book". I hand you *Love Story*, we sigh
after book burial we grin, revitalized, only Jenny has died.

Harry was still, resting from sitting up. Eventually he stood up leaning heavily on his walker. As he shuffled over towards the bed he called, "Louise we're late again . . . Damn kids hid the keys. I thought you'd talked to them. Won't listen, never did. Hid the keys, ungrateful . . ."

Finally standing over the empty bed he shouted, "Damn! Louise you've left without me. Stand here talking to myself like a damn fool . . ."

From the bedroom Louise shouted, "Oh Harry, I haven't left you, I'm in the bathroom, I told you a minute ago I'd be here."

"No you didn't because if you had told me I would have remembered. Whatever they may say about Harry Wallace they won't say he's ever forgotten his memory. Damn kids, Louise! Damn kids hid the keys again. Thought you'd talked to them."

Through the closed door she answered, "The kids don't have the keys . . ."

"Well where are they?"

"Harry please! We've gone over this before. The nurses have your keys . . ."

"Have my keys . . . Damn nurses! What else did they take from me? Creep in here at night don't know what they're up to take anything they please."

"Harry, they have to turn and position me."

"Don't have to. You could tell me, your husband, Louise. Your husband should turn and position you. Don't you think its my duty? Married sixty damn years and you want some nurse to turn you."

"Harry it's their job. You need to sleep. Be well rested. And, I do wish you'd stop swearing."

(Suddenly there was a buzzing sound from the call button.) Eventually a nurse's aid walked in and went into the bathroom.

"Goddamn nurse!" Harry shouted at the bathroom door, "Goddamn nurse, Get Out! Take my damn keys. What are you doing to my wife now?"

"Harry please! Don't mind him dear. Thanks for your

help." The nurse's aid slipped out of the room. Louise pushed her wheelchair over to her bed where Harry sat. "Honestly Harry here to help us and you go off yelling and swearing . . ."

"Don't need any of their damn help. Wish they'd just leave us alone, leave you alone."

"But I need them."

"Don't need any of them Louise. I can take care of you . . ."

"No Harry you can't."

"Given up on me have you. Sixty years haven't let you down once have I?"

"No Harry you haven't."

"Not once in sixty years and now you think I can't do it."

"Harry I need you . . ."

"Just said you didn't . . ."

"No Harry I do need you, terribly! I need you to talk to, to eat with, to watch the news. I need the nurses to get me up, give me my medication. I need you both."

"Nope I could do it."

"What time is it, Harry?"

"What . . . damn watch is gone. Took my damn watch and you think you need them."

"Harry your watch is on your bedside table."

"Put the damn thing back. I scared them. Finally know they're dealing with Harry Wallace."

"Dear, what time is it?"

"Four thirty."

"Would you wheel me out? We shouldn't be late to the bridge game."

"No, we should be on time. Never say the Wallace's are late."

"Never say that, Harry."

And from behind the wheelchair he bent down and gently kissed the top of her head.

"Wait. Where are the keys? We need the keys."

"No, Harry we don't need the keys, the game's in the solarium."

The Marrow of The Bonsai

"An eye for an eye makes everyone blind." — Joan Baez

There is a star up there
(see me point high)
that will one day hatch
into eyes blue as yours.

Boosters and turbines launch me
onto that star up
there, where I land
above cranky, unnatural clouds.

My delicate shovel digs
a perfectly cylindrical hole,
deep and black-black,
on that star's front.
So deep, so hollow you
could see it with your eyes closed.

Pictures taken by no one
with a camera that trades in time —
these will I drop into the hole,
for no one has seen them
more than once or twice.

A thick sheet
of plastic, unpuncturable
and clear as this godly sky,
covers the hole on that star.
The condensation collecting without
seeps wearily into surrounding ground.

Plant a tree beneath the hole:
myriad ramified tendrils and roots;
and the trunk grows
perpendicular to the backside of the star:
a peculiar species of bonsai.

I can watch this creation of mine
careen through twisted space,
able to return my stare
with the apparatus I've built.
I have tried to make it
hatch permaturely: bad.

But is this all to no avail?
Looking to the future?
Can you remember what blue was like?
Or remember the satisfied smiles
with which your trustworthy mirror appeased
when you wanted confrontation?

I'm sure going blind
was a mistake.

Hell Freezes Over

I thought to kiss this flame,
Take it into orangegrove mouth,
Caress with arced tongue —
All without singe, nor torn roof,
Nor sooted teeth. When wits
Bundled back to me (or so I thought)
I leaned towards the flame, mouth
Slightly opened, expectant
Of the warm, silken tenderness.
It seemed then not so warm,
Nor receptive of the kiss.
I spit angrily on my fingers
And clamped death on the flame,
Then tended to translucent rinds
Of flesh peeling from my lips.

Lye

Wasting away in a barrel of lye.
Don't be distressed: soon you will die.
The pain and erosion of your toes and fingers
Will soon dissipate; but lye still lingers
In your eyes and mouth where lubricating fluids
Combat decay like staunch, stoic druids.
Of course, they'll be beaten, devoured, and maimed
As your tormented body becomes inflamed.
The lifeline rope thrown down for you
Touches the lye and burns away, too.
Isolated in that iron tub of lye,
You sadly have no one to wave goodbye
As you sputter and twist, and your flesh sizzles,
And into your lungs clear black lye drizzles.
Wasting away in a barrel of lye.
Don't be distraught: soon you will die.

Tender Box

Crescents of string
strewn across linoleum hands;
squares of purple water
in perfection on oilcloth;
circles of paper
pasted on cork cheeks:
She is cringing
from conflict,
smiling symbiotically
at him.
To him,
her hands are velvet-covered clutchbars;
her clothes are Chinese worm-silk;
her cheeks are plush-spun roses.
Together they eat
raw seafood and smack their lips;
excuse themselves
and purge in separate worlds
marked "His" and "Hers,"
never "Theirs."

For Sisters Asunder
for Jean and Louisa Stryker

Words in low blue ink
woven as the mesh of staid grief
that fuses the separation of times.
Three words, each giving out
a higher (or new) degree
of whose loss it is truly.
But I only read the words.

The brief poem's author
hadn't the strength to continue,
emptied for self-thought
of another. This was enough not
to show the world. How drastically fine
we must keep our eulogies if we are
to preserve the marrow
that pulses in our memories.

I have seen my mother cry:
her tears line the engraved recesses
in her face, those graced cares.
How I wish I could release better words
from my hands, anything
to ease her wild running. She needs
the exercise of remembering, though;
I know she needs the return.

A blond-clad procession leaves
the chapel, the blond hairs
of trust in continuation.
She'd rather be in the world
where my favourite picture was taken
of three curly heads: girls, a boy.
I saw their colour in the black and white
of similar flesh and common equations.

Classic smiles are sharers of love still.
Your death shows her how alive
we all must be for each other.
She chose the only words she could:
My beautiful sister —
half-knowing you'd never read them.
But sleep you well above
with ascensions of her love.

Silk

Silk,
caught on
reality's calloused hand,
flawed
by the paradox of lies
as truth.
An angel's milky white gown,
soiled by mud from a
passing car.
Into light falls
eternal darkness.
A heart-shaped motto,
framed by thorns.

The Lunchbreak Mugging

The twenty-story, white, stone building with its silver bars, which prevented Chuck from taking his morning flight, stood between the A&P and Idle Hour Elementary School. In this hospital, young Dr. Fink was at his first year residency in psychiatry. He visited each patient with Dr. Faustus, senior of psychiarty at Pilgrim State. It was there that Dr. Faustus taught him the importance of a good bedside manner. As they approached the room of Fred, Dr. Fink had his notebook at hand.

Good morning, Mr. President. How is the depression going?" Dr. Faustus asked him in curious tone.

"Oh, not too good, Doc. I can't get these damn judges to do anything . . . conservative bastards," Fred muttered as sweat poured from his forehead.

"Why don't you try to appoint more judges?" Dr. Faustus suggested.

"Hey, that's not a bad idea," exclaimed Fred.

"Good day, Mr. President."

As the two doctors left the room, Fink was curious about the case of Fred. "Why do you humor him?" asked Fink as his eyes and ears opened, clinging to every word spoken by Dr. Faustus.

"It is important not to shock the patient into reality."

Fink idolized Faustus and felt everything must be done strictly by the book. Young Dr. Fink had once sent his brother to a mental institution because he bought a new pair of Reebok sneakers every month. Fink assumed that his brother had a wild foot fetish. When they released his brother from the hospital, they billed Fink's parents $5,000 and sent home a kid who got frost bit on every toe because he no longer would wear shoes.

"Well, Dr. Faustus, I'll be taking my lunch break now," Fink said as his stomach growled to the musak played in the lobby.

"Very well, Dr. Fink, but make sure you are back soon. We have more rounds to make."

"Very well, Doctor. I will be back shortly." Dr. Fink checked his watch, setting his alarm for 12:20 so that he would be back in plenty of time for Dr. Faustus.

He opened the hospital door and entered the busy street. Turning left down McDougal, he entered Howie's delicatessan. "Give me a hot pastrami on rye," ordered Fink.

"Hey, have you heard about the mugger that is running around the neighborhood?" asked Howie in order to start a conversation so Fink would not see the four-week old pastrami sandwich between moldy rye.

"No, I haven't," answered Fink in a disconcerned manner. He was too busy thinking about President Fred Roosevelt. His mind began to wander as he put the sandwich into his mouth. It wouldn't have mattered if it were cardboard. As Fink finished his final bite and swallowed, he was awakened by the loud buzzing of his watch alarm.

"Hey, shut that alarm off," yelled Howie, "you're scaring all the customers away."

Fink realized that he was going to be late if he didn't hurry. He ran out of the delicatessan and took a short cut into a deserted alley. Just then a huge man jumped in front of Dr. Fink. His hair was dark black, and his eyes were blood-shot grey. He looked like he hadn't slept for weeks. In his hand, he held a huge knife which was now held at Dr. Fink's chest.

"O.k., Mac, just be real cool and nobody is going to get hurt," the mugger ordered in a trembling voice.

Shocked by the huge man, Dr. Fink resorted to therapy.

"Good day, sir, what can I help you with," Dr. Fink asked in a serious tone. The mugger pushed the knife closer to Fink, putting a tiny hole in his newly starched J.C. Penny shirt.

"How about your wallet. Give it to me or else."

Dr. Fink's eyes became transfixed on the glistening blade. "That knife you hold. Is that an extension of something? Do you feel you have greater power with that object? Perhaps you have a small . . ."

Grabbing Fink by his neck, the mugger began to sweat, as underneath his arms formed giant swimming pools. "Listen, man, I don't know what penis . . . I mean, planet you are from. Just give me your wallet." The huge man was getting angrier by the second. Fink had no choice but to give the mugger the twenty-five dollars that was smeared with mustard from Howie's delicatessan. "Now, that's more like it," replied the mugger. He began to walk away and accidently dropped his knife. Fink was quite curious about the stranger who had taken his money.

"Hey, wait a minute, you forgot your knife," yelled Fink as he ran toward the mugger. "You know that money, I gave you, you could at least tell me why you need it so badly."

The mugger stopped and turned to Fink. The once giant figure seemed to shrink four inches in front of the doctors eyes. His voice became hoarse as he answered. "My mom is having an operation and my old man refuses to pay the bills."

Dr. Fink thought about how Dr. Faustus would handle this case. "Why, interesting. Hmm. You feel obvious resentment for your father, while you have strong, perhaps sexual feelings, for your mother. You are, therefore, fixated at the phallic stage, and your Oedipal complex has not yet been resolved."

Blinking his bloodshot eyes in horror, the mugger yelled, "You know, I never dreamed I'd meet a man as crazy as you."

"Oh really, now. Tell me about your dreams."

"Why should I," demanded the mugger.

"Because if you don't, I will take the knife you dropped and . . ."

The mugger became nervous, "O.K., I'll tell you my dream. Just relax, man."

Fink now knew the shoe was on the other foot.

"I dreamt I walked through a tunnel all alone and at the light were those beautiful flowers. I tried to pick them, but everytime I bent to touch them, the flowers died."

Fink began to think as his mind was in full gear. His brain was on fire. "Ah'ha!" screamed the doctor victoriously. "You see the tunnel represents sexual intercourse while the flowers are all the women you want to get intimate with but can't because you feel you are not good enough. Therefore, you carry a hugh phallic object, which makes you feel powerful and you take money to help you feel well endowed."

The patient began to nod as his blood-shot eyes poured out their rain. Well, now that you mention it, I have been striking out with a lot chicks lately. I'm just afraid that I will be rejected."

Dr. Fink attempted to calm the patient down as he placed his arm around his shoulder. "Since you have made the unconscious conscious you will no longer feel sexually repressed. Thus, feelings of hostility will lessen."

The once huge man began to grin as his eyes dried up. "I feel like a new man. I don't know how to thank you." Fink

knew exactly what was in order. "That will be twenty-five dollars."

The mugger handed him the mustard-covered money and left Dr. Fink in the vacant alley. Glancing at his watch, Fink realized that he was two hours late for Dr. Faustus. Quickly he ran through the busied street thinking of the mugger that was no longer sexually repressed.

When he arrived at the hospital, he found Dr. Faustus, with a cigar in his mouth, sitting by the bedside of Fred. "I don't care what you say. These damned republicans are no good, Doctor," said Fred.

Faustus, noticing the late return of Fink, replied "Where have you been?"

"I got mugged, Doctor, but don't worry. No harm done," laughed Fink to himself.

As the two doctors left the oval office, Fink once again was quite curious about something. "That cigar you smoke, Dr. Faustus, is that a symbol of . . ."

Doctor Faustus interrupted and replied, "Dr. Fink, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

The Windowpane

The windowpane streaked sightless with my tears,
The sun falls through, yet doesn't chase the
darkness from my soul.
And I seem to see your face —
in everything I see . . .
But even more when you turned and walked away.
Listen and hear, the only sound the beating of
my heart, mixed with silence, but the silence takes control.
Words fall empty, when there's no one there to hear.
I reach out to touch, but there's nothing left to
feel —
So I walk back to my window to look out upon the shore —
but the windowpane is streaked sightless —
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