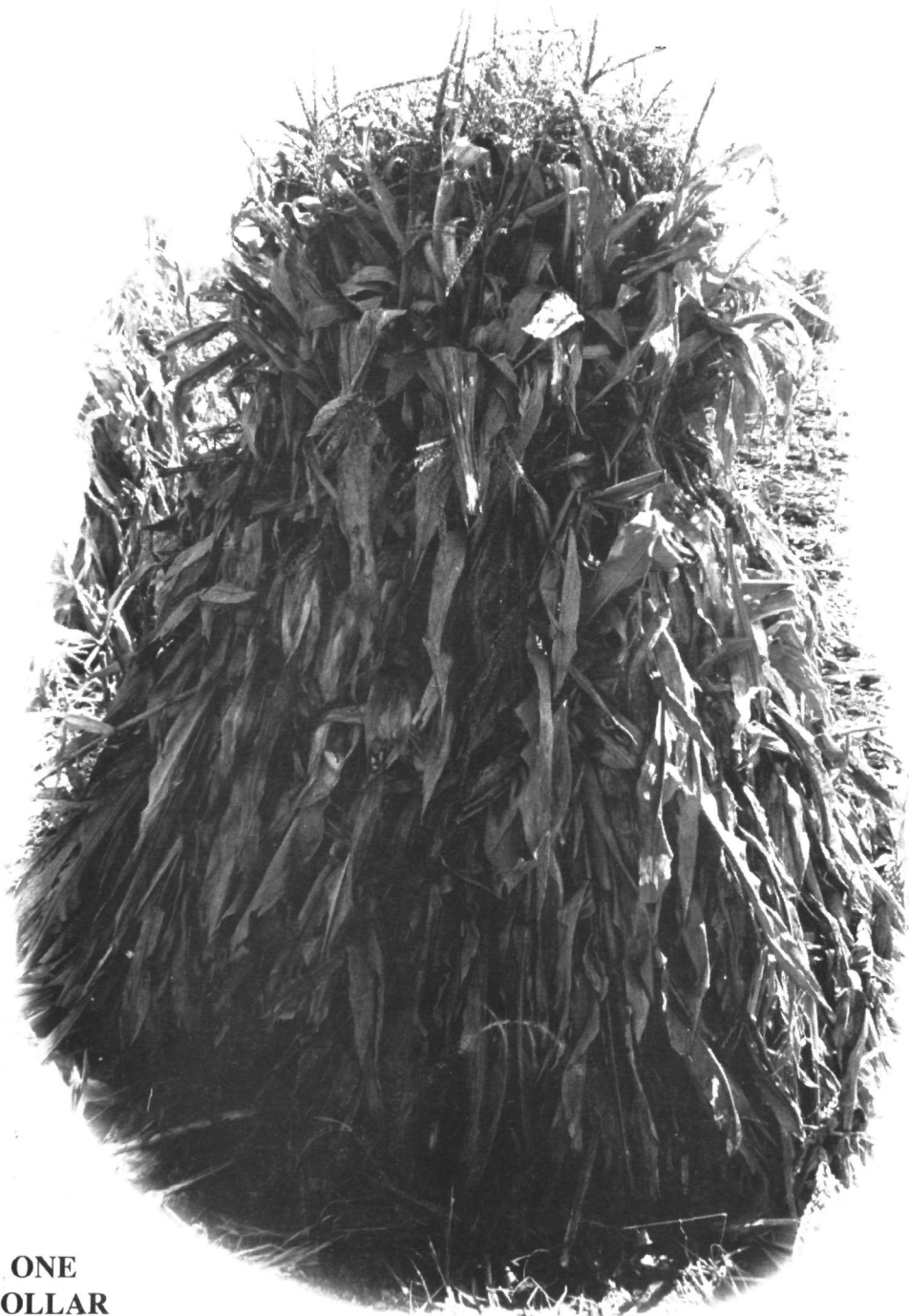


CORNFIELD REVIEW

An Annual of the Creative Arts

1976



ONE
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CORNFIELD REVIEW

An Annual of the Creative Arts
1976 Vol. I

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B. M. BENNANI

Prima Ballerina

Her disheveled hair
dances in the air
like a host of butterflies
she dances away on ropes
tautly drawn from my eyes.

JOHN M. BENNETT

Wind

The wind my mind is it
the sky is blue and
white its buds ex
PLOding eyeballs is a
distance cross the river WOOLCO
sign is bending under
wind is roar my sight a
coughing joy bursts out is blown
my brain its branches bare and
light and tossing whipped
around the air thrust in
my lungs cracks out and breaks these
damp and bandaged ribs my tongue

BUD BRICKER

Joker

Cards—who are the cards?
Are they the pasteboard
Or the people?
Do the players lead the trump
Or is the trump soul leader
Guiding hands to its glory in play
Laughing at the guided?
Is the joker in the deck
Or the deck held by the joker?

PAUL BENNETT

A Birthday Thought, 1976

Born in snow
After heroic resolution,
When coral-bells are interior,
Their airy stems bending,
Their petals like cheeks,
Soft as lips,
Is to be different from
Those customary men and women
Trapped in syntax
Piling fuzzy words
On words night and day.

Nothing means
Except it be bitten off—
Except its saying touch us
In intimate places, intimate ways,
The moisture of feeling
Primeval as mud,
Stones ground fine
For our nurture,
Osmosis: the passage of liquid
Through a membrane,
The substance of silence.

DARRYL PRICE

What Happens Now

The grass has
Turned into a fire
Blazing over her feet,

Until she is the center of the sun,
Like the flame around the wick
On a candle. She goes anyway. I sicken

And die, a petal ripped beneath
An evil rain's mad paws. I am shredded,
Like colored balloons going up now.

ROBERT BESCH

Soul Song

In our deepest selves we bind
Black and white so tightly
That the hues between—
The shades of earth and people,
And all the pigments of
Our common lives are lost.
Oh that we might see
This fullness that is ours,
That has been ours
Since primal times;
That we might find delight
In greater spectrums
Hidden by our minds too long;
That we might seek a truth
In every color made
To keep our souls together.

When You Have Grown

Child, when you have grown
Beyond the magic
Of your seedling years,
Remember . . .
Mornings when you ached
To drink the total beauty of a day
In small, exquisite sips;
The sun in your exploring eyes,
Bright things cut from paper,
And the smell of new crayons;
Fields that save their mysteries
For brave, bare feet;
And wishing trees
Where fleeting dreams are cupped.
Remember these and all the other
Corners of your shaping world,
Against the time
When others might forget.

To The Sundown Bird

Sing your lyrics softly, I must not
Be lured into the woods again tonight.
I was there this morning and forgot
How easily I lose myself in flight.
Finding homeward trails took much too long;
Have a heart and give me just your song.



JOHN S. BRINKERHOFF

The Real World

he awoke
in the ache and heat of boot camp,
opened his eyes to living
on false walls and high nets,
in the bump and growl of his helmet.
his rifle was made for his hands.

he grew up at normandy
in the shade of glider wings and sound,
then fell into poses,
dented helmet cocked and rifle stock on his hip,
for the kids
puking quietly between their boots.
he was larger than myself
a hero, a god
to be loved forever.

he left a leg in belgium
and died when I touched new york.
he was all I could ever have been.
and sometimes, at meetings over lunch, he comes
deep-eyed
fierce in the roaring dust,
touching the talk around me to wordless babble,
calling me back from the grave.

Substratum

enter the fat earth.
rappel carefully down
the striped well-side . . .
see how it all came about,
youth to age, strong to weak,
the loss of essential malice.
tough it, feel it
in your dark veins,
the once-warm world
full and open to sun,
now folded in stone, faded
as remembered flowers.

study the prints
of layered love,
each creating another
of more intricate design . . .
see how the tender skin
hardened into armor,
how the stammering touch
became cool and poised,
how from each innocence
evolved a higher form of doubt . . .
eternal rhyme
of rock upon rock.

press against it . . .
recall grass, sky,
beasts and birds,
mountainous clouds . . .
the endless seams
of loss and gain.
hold the young bone,
time's champion
before you, now,
bone-hunter
life-hunter
of morning mirrors.

Marion, Ohio

noon's golden boats
heeled on the parking lot

ladies in broad hats
affected tennis on my lawn

servants murmured
in the halls of the church

it stays on, bewildered
as its memories blink out
one by one—
sirens in deep morning

and handsome warren waltzed
the gray and dying girls . . .

THERESA CHANCE

Morning Star

an 11:30 musty april night
just as i closed one eye and then
the other, and
stretched my arm under my pillow and
snuck my feet onto mona's legs,
i heard the rumbling of maybe
a thousand thunderstorms
so i jumped
bare feet on cold floor
over to the window and pulled the shade . . .
far, far back in the field by the fence row
a small light, twinkling like a morning star pulled to earth,
came towards the house
slowly, bumping up then down
and it rumbled louder then louder
until i realized my twinkling morning star was only
our neighbor driving his tractor through the black soil,
plowing by night light.
i ran jumping back into bed
just as i closed one eye and then
the other and
stretched my arm under my pillow, and
snuck my feet onto mona's legs
she awoke and asked,
"what was the noise?"
"a morning star," i said.

HALE CHATFIELD

Prose II

Now it is full of dreamings. There is a still minute when the sun seeps down and I grope for it with eyes ears tongue and the tree like a Japanese painting squirms into gentle and muted angles. Birds float here from their busy and shy remotenesses their names and their songs are legion and their colors ebb to grey when they drift into suspended momentum among so many icy colors.

Jet-trails linger on the winter like chalk lines. The sun is like a flare afloat in a puddle of mercury. Or phosphorous fired under mica. The high clouds could be peeled from the sky like lead foil.

Across the street the postman's ordinary green car bulges momentarily against the drifted snow. There is beauty in the simplest passings of things in this sharp whitened world I say trivially to myself but self-consciously, and thunder into reflections.

not only any of all that but the infinitely thin clouds *should* be peeled back so I can suddenly shock your pale neck with the sudden and clumsy brush of my warm lips.

(What should be. What should be. We are always talking of what should be but the soles of our boots nonetheless squeak confidently and sharply in the crystals of the miraculous snow.

Ashamed and saddened. What philosophy is there in the graceful and unlucious sag of our big spruce in the February wind—in the hoarse and colorless threat of the dark wind that at night gnaws aimlessly at our shingles

?)

Way off in the world a very big and very cold dog howls into the iciness and I look from behind the windowshade into the circular weather arrogantly and immortally blowing circles of sheen against the streetlamps.

Hair.

The hair of a wild and wintry blondness.

An icy girl in the negligee of neglect thriving on coldness; frost; your warm littleness turmoils in sleep against my thighs—

I will kiss you in your sleep. I will kiss you in your warm unawareness while the winter shimmers innocently around our vulnerable room.

SHAWN MILLER

The Boy I Was

I feel
A strange kinship
To the boy I was.
He was . . . so young . . .
And so different.
A self-centered life
Forged from loneliness;
Confused and lost.
How he called the girls
And cried
When they said “no.”
He spoke of me
As a prophet would.
I only wish I had known him
And shown him the way.

ERIC W. FELT

Free Fall

Ride the winds
Burn the air
The sky is electric
at terminal velocity.

Right turn, left turn
Back roll, front roll
Arch, look, reach
pull at 2000 feet.

Catch the wind and run
Hit the disc
Dead center in the pea gravel
it's over, dynamite.

BETTY M. DIETSCH

Three Poems from the Sea

Spring Tide

All night I lay
curled in the curve
of your shelter
serene as a mollusk
in the pulse of the sea.

Sea Jewel

Our love is
a salt-water pearl
opalesque
ocean-bathed
by tides
and storms.

Finis

On a barren beach
lay one half
of a mollusk shell
pearlescent
empty and
alone.

ROBERT FLANAGAN

The Garden, The Children

Dirt where I promise beans and corn,
you ask when they will come.
I tell you what I can:
“These things take time.”

Your mother has cried with pain
from childhood scars and, given nature,
memories of your future.
“The beans need rain.”

Blood-dark, I at times become
a man to fear, the stranger
who masks fear with anger.
“The corn needs sun.

Safe for now from flood or drought,
we stand by our measured plot.
“Children, I’m . . .
Sun. Rain. And time.”

Kathleen Ni Houlihan

Black shawl binding
pinched meal-grey face,
the old woman is
knotted
by hunger’s drawstring.
On the road
an Irishman is fallen
young as other sons, broken
as a husband left unburied
in the bogs.
She touches the body
inquisitively
as a lover, cradles the head.
Her lips brush a cool cheek;
teeth, yellow and long,
tear into meat.

The Song of the Separated Man

I
she hurt
I am
and the children
I am afraid
touching hurts
I am afraid of
loneliness
my comfort
I am afraid of being
alone
untouched
hurt

The Flight

Except for the softness of his middle, Carter thought, he might as easily be taken for her lover as her father.

He glanced beside him. Ruthie wore a blue jumper and looked like any highschool girl going on vacation or to visit an aunt.

How long before her belly would swell noticeably?

Light glinted on the window. He pressed his forehead against the plastic but could not see the sun. Below, cloud cover hid the land. He felt as if he were a bomber pilot hunting a target.

Flat black silver-edged arrows were painted on the wing. They pointed back and down. Between them was stenciled "Emergency Walkway Only."

Beside his head a squat red arrow aimed up at an "Exit" light. He congratulated himself on having chosen a seat by the emergency exit. In case of trouble he and Ruthie would be sure to get out.

He leaned forward and pulled an airline magazine from the seat pocket, leafing through an article on "Twelve Great Spots for Family Vacation Fun." Maybe they would rent a place at the shore this summer. If Ruthie felt like it by then.

Her mouth was working, the small even white teeth—the costly product of braces—dragging back and forth across her lower lip. The lip bore tendrils of torn skin.

She was too nervous; like her mother.

He thought of the secret life she carried, certain it was a girl. With her, when her mother was pregnant, he had always imagined the baby to be a boy.

"Scared?"

"I guess so."

"Don't be. You couldn't get better care anywhere. Strictly confidential."

"She nodded. "I know."

"Try to relax, okay?" He checked his watch. "Another fifteen minutes we'll be landing."

"You going to call Mom?"

"When we get in? Sure. The worry-wart."

"I bet she's still mad."

"She'll get over it."

"You think so?"

"Some people take longer to adjust is all."

She gnawed at her lip's pout. "She said she'd never forget, ever."

"Your mother is emotional," Carter said. "She says things she doesn't mean."

"I hope so."

"You've got yourself to think of, remember." He patted her hand lying limply on the seat arm between them. "You've got your whole life ahead of you. We don't want one mistake to ruin it, do we?"

She twisted her wrist, her hand turning palm up to grasp his. Her thumb got tangled in his fingers. She squeezed and let go.

“Thanks, Daddy.” She didn’t face him. She stared at the seat back in front of her as if she feared his look would silence her. “You’ve been a real help. Really. All along. I’m sorry, you know, it happened. Mom . . . You’ve done a lot, taking care of everything. Thanks.”

“Forget it.” He felt it was as embarrassing for him to listen to her small speech as it must have been for her to deliver it.

They had never talked much to each other. She had always been her mother’s girl.

Yet Rachel would let, force, the girl to ruin her life. The way she had argued, actually ranted! He’d had to slap her face to keep her from hysterics. Then Ruthie crying herself sick. The two of them.

He had put his foot down. He was not going to allow any daughter of his to make a decision she would regret the rest of her life.

What it could have meant to him back then. To have taken the East Africa assignment instead of sticking to the Cleveland office.

But you couldn’t pull up stakes with your bride set to deliver in little more than a month. So she’d said anyway. What about the hospitals? Were there competent doctors? The trip over, even the preparations for it, might be enough to make her miscarry.

Well, he thought, he’d been young. It was the privilege of the young to be foolish.

He wondered if Billy Gilmore was thanking him this very minute for the gift of his future.

Had he been the only one? She claimed he was.

Ruthie was leaning back in the reclined seat, eyes closed. Her baby-fat face struck Carter—was it the amateurish daubs of eyeshadow now smeared by tears?—as tainted with corruption.

Her mother, despite her initial protests, had proved adept in his car’s back seat. He doubted he had been the only one. No matter what she said, he would always doubt it.

Did he doubt even that he was the father of the girl beside him? Why shouldn’t he? What traits claimed her as his? Her face, especially the low forehead and weak chin, was distinctly her mother’s. And wasn’t her behavior her mother’s as well? Women so stupid or so clever as to get themselves pregnant.

He thought that maybe it was something in the blood, a looseness, a carelessness, passed down from mother to daughter.

What had he to do with either of them?

They had no hard edges. They seemed a swamp in which he was stuck neck-deep. The smell was sulphurous and turned his stomach.

The wing beyond the window dipped toward earth like a divining rod to water. The “Fasten Seat Belt” sign flicked on.

“We’re starting our approach,” Carter said.

GARRETT W. FOX

Msaisuhtne

Summer nights in Indiana are usually pleasant; cool breezes balloon lacy curtains, whip them aside, and then reward the patient for their day's labor. Unfortunately, I didn't have any curtains, and even with the brown shade rolled up to expose all of the screen it was still hot inside. Those cool winds seemed particular, all up and down the street they'd rush in one window and then another, but never mine. Perhaps they knew the electricity had been shut off or they had seen the uncollected garbage on the back porch and had decided that I was undeserving of reward.

My warmth, then was not caused by the nude reclining on the chair in front of me. With my bare ass resting on the edge of the cot, I'd been leafing through an old *Playboy*, my flashlight reintroducing me to half forgotten cartoons until I came across "Miss December." I checked the front cover—1966—and unfolded the hinged body so that her head rested on the back of the chair and her legs dangled over the edge. I sipped some beer, placed the bottle between my feet and offered my apologies for not remembering her better. She'd born her years well; the creases across her shoulders and belly were a little more evident but she was still everything a boy could want for Christmas. Her red lips smiled warmly. Her right hand, poised above her head, held some mistletoe tied with a red bow and her left hand seemed to be losing its grasp on the flannel pajamas that in some future time would slip forever from her round hips.

My attention shifted to the drop of sweat that was slowly working its way down my brow. Past the bridge of my nose and on to the tip—"plunk," it found its way into the small opening of the bottle below. I finished the last of the warm beer and went to sleep.



Less snobbish than last night's cool air, the sun easily found my open window. Miss December watched me light a cigarette and flip on the radio—9:16, 82 degrees and "Boys and girls, moms and dads, an oldie but goodie: "Summertime, summertime, sum sum summertime/ Summertime, summertime, sum sum summertime"

Since school let out I'd spent my summertime looking for a job. In the past I'd avoided going home by working for a local printing company but they were no longer hiring temporary help. When the dorm closed I'd anticipated the summer's poverty and had moved my junk into an old two-storied house that a friend and four or five others shared during the school year—they'd all wisely gone home but to not lose the place had paid the rent until fall.

It was amazing that such a small town had so many places where one could look for work. But looking was about all I could do. I'd spent several weeks applying at all the local factories but with no luck. Finally, in desperation, I'd

ignored the “experienced only need apply” phrase in the help wanted ads and sought work pumping gas or washing dishes only to find they wanted someone year round or that they actually did want only “experienced dishwashers.” It was definitely a buyers’ market.

There were only two more possibilities left. World Wide Plastics and Weird John. I’d spend just one more day looking and if I couldn’t find anything, well—I’d head back home to the cornfield.

★ ★ ★

I’d discovered World Wide Plastics the previous night. Several miles out of town and not far from the dump, it appeared to be an old brick school house made over so that Crawfordsville might capture the world market in plastics.

The inner office surprised me: panelled walls, carpet, and even an air conditioner in its one window. The secretary was less of a surprise. The several dozen I’d seen over the last few weeks all seemed alike; you got the feeling that if one of their girlfriends described them no mention would be made of charm or wit but only “Wanda drives a ’73 Mustang with mag wheels and four on the floor.”

I filled out the application with all the proper names and numbers. It typically takes about a half hour to print your life history, filling in two pages of blank spaces in order to delight some future anthropologist interested in twentieth century midwestern life.

The next hour’s wait was also typical. As “Wanda” possessed the only reading material, *The Sensuous Woman*, and as I wasn’t bold enough to seek her opinions on whipped cream, I spent the time silently daydreaming about Miss December.

The manager’s performance, too, was familiar. He divided sixty seconds between glancing at my application and repeating a speech I suspect is passed from one factory to another on a crumpled typewritten page, “We aren’t hiring any summer employees at the moment but we appreciate your application and we’ll keep it on file and give you a call if anything comes up.”

Before he could catch his breath and run out of the office I gave him a suggestion I’d offered others during the last few days: why didn’t he save all job hunters a lot of goddamn time and trouble by simply installing a neon sign like the ones motels use, “No Vacancy.” His response, probably taken from that same typewritten sheet—or borrowed from a recent *American Journal of Personnel Psychology*—was brief and to the point, “Fuck you.”

★ ★ ★

My last chance to stay in town was by working for Weird John. W. J. deserved his title. Besides being queer, he had a passion for potbellied stoves of the type found in railroad cabooses; in obtaining the most recent addition to his collection he had been arrested. As punishment for being weird he was given a year’s probation and expelled from school for a semester.

Besides all that, however, W. J. was a financial wizard; at twenty, he already had a fat bank account, a plane, a new sports car and even a panel

truck (for hauling potbellied stoves, I suppose). His project this summer was to calculate the amount of refund due customers of an Ohio electric company that had been overcharging. W. J. had put in the lowest bid, rented the top floor of an old warehouse and staffed his operation with some high school kids.

John didn't need any extra help but finally hired me for the afternoon. I was given an alphabetized stack of pink slips, all W's, and shown how to calculate the refund and where to record the amount. Later the second runner-up in the "Miss Montgomery County Beauty Pageant" would punch the information onto IBM cards and then an even more expensive, if less comely, piece of machinery would type out the checks.

Four hours later I was finished with Robert Wythers (only a \$42.37 refund, old Bob was apparently frugal with his kilowatts) and yet still had a number of slips left. Then I discovered that the remaining slips all belonged to the same person: Miss Joy Wyuka, it seems, had moved no less than twenty-seven times during the last few years. Each move was beautifully timed to correspond with the arrival of the electric bill as only one was marked paid. (That one was for two months at 1210 Main Street in Dayton—it must be an extraordinarily attractive neighborhood.) I stapled the one paid bill on top of the others and recorded the refund due a more conscientious customer. If the check ever catches up with her, perhaps Joy can settle down—at least for a few months.



Six bucks for four hours' work. Not too bad, but unfortunately, that was the last day of W. J.'s operation. Still, six bucks was enough to put some gas in the car and finance another day's job hunting, though I really didn't know where else I could look.

The money was the most I'd had in several weeks; I passed up my usual 25¢ hamburgers and headed for Carl's. The place was deserted—only a few townies—but a cold schooner and a corned beef sandwich left me feeling better than I had for quite some time. And even at Carl's prices I still had enough gas money to take me home.

Home; reason number one for trying to stay in Crawfordsville. God how I hated the farm! My dad's corn fields stretched for as far as the eye can see and—corny or not—that's quite a distance in Indiana. Christ, how I hated those corn fields. I remember one day slowly wringing the neck of one stalk and then throwing the cob as far as I could; I watched it somersault against the summer sky until it descended and brought my eyes back to—more corn, miles and miles of it. No trees, hills or streams, only corn, and no way I could kill it all.

I picked up a wet dime from the change and called reason number two. Janice, however, had decided at the last minute to join her parents for a week's vacation at their cabin in Nebraska. I asked her grandmother why in the hell anyone would buy a cabin in Nebraska but she didn't answer.



Fitz came in. For some unfathomable reason he hadn't wanted to spend the summer with his parents in California. He too had been unable to find work but did have one last idea, why not work in Indianapolis? Between us we had enough money to finance at least one day's job hunting and if we did find something, it was close enough so that I could see Janice as often as I liked.

Fitz treated for another beer and a copy of the *Indianapolis Star*. It took a good half hour to work our way through the want ads but our labor was well rewarded, for, with mounting joy, we had stumbled across an array of the most fantastic opportunities ever dreamed of:

Summer Employment for College Students! Humanities and Science Majors Only Need Apply. (Who else?) This is *not* a selling job but one that offers a guaranteed salary and a chance for a scholarship for those willing to perform a public service. Apply room 805 Capital Building.

And on and on, so many jobs just waiting for the untrained college student. Crossing off the few factory jobs we'd circled at the beginning, we were left with an even dozen ads and each one seemed to have been written just for us. It was agreed; Fitz and I would share expenses and make the sixty mile trip the next morning.

Carl finally tossed us out at closing time and I carefully drove back to the house; I wasn't in beer drinking shape since my dad's monthly checks had ended with the school term. I had forgotten to put the flashlight in the car and so had to grope to find the keyhole and feel my way past the living room and into the kitchen. I opened the refrigerator and discovered I didn't even have a warm beer left. (It had somehow seemed appropriate to keep my case in the refrigerator although it had ceased functioning.) Holding the handrail, I found my way upstairs to the front of the house and my cot. I stripped and opened the shade. I was just at that point of drunkenness where I didn't feel like sleeping; instead, I focused on the summer night outside, at my neighbor's gently moving curtains, at the moths that banged against the street lamp and at my old Ford parked below. Then I remembered the one joint hidden in the car. Bumping into the hallway, tripping half down the stairs, I was outside and opening the hood. The weed was in a magnetic box hidden under the fender panel; as I bent over to retrieve it I remembered that I was bare-assed naked.

Upstairs I smoked, coughed, and resolved to find a better hiding place for any future grass. I vaguely remember saying good night to Miss December as I tucked her between her paper covers.



Our hope for honest employment was short-lived. The first two jobs turned out to be selling encyclopedias door to door on commission. The third "public service, guaranteed salary job," was for selling magazines door to door; again on commission and again with a slick and somewhat less than honest spiel to be memorized.

Discouraged but still hoping, we phoned the remaining ads. The secretaries weren't very friendly but most cooperated; "liberal arts and science majors

only” jobs involved, it turned out, selling everything from pots and pans to Bibles. Only two sounded the least bit encouraging and we headed toward the first of these.

“Msaisuhtne” (mā-sūt’-nē) yelled the man in front as his right arm, with clenched fist, punched the air above him to punctuate his cry. “Msaisuhtne!” A dozen clean-cut bodies echoed their leader. Each carrying a cardboard briefcase, they marched two abreast from the office we were about to enter—we can’t claim we weren’t forewarned.

Inside on several long couches sat fellow college students. Most, it seemed, had an appointment with a Mr. Rozelle and as promised he appeared promptly at 11:00. Except for his haircut he looked exactly like the guy on TV who for the past seven years has conducted “. . . for this month only a search in *your* area to find talented artists to meet the ever increasing demand of the ART World!” You know the one, he shows you a picture of a hockey player “but you’d be surprised how many people don’t recognize this as a hockey player! They lack the vital gift of ‘graphic recognition.’ ”

But this guy’s line—my God—in five minutes he’d destroyed any cynicism the morning had created, in fifteen any that I’d learned in my twenty-one years, and at the end of the first half hour he could have sold me the Emperor’s clothes. *This* man was no lowly encyclopedia pusher.

“Our concern is education! We wish to place teaching machines in various homes for the edification of children. To encourage parental cooperation you are authorized to give the parents a free set of encyclopedias and, in addition, a ten-year subscription to our information service, permitting them to receive a written answer to any question they have, ten questions a year!”

God! We’d simply be asking parents to help “educators” gain knowledge about the efficacy of teaching machines and we’d get paid for our trouble.

Rozelle demonstrated a model “similar to the ones you’ll be placing” and it certainly was impressive: lights, buttons, buzzers, and programs for different areas and different age levels.

An hour of complete mesmerism and then Fitz began to ask questions. “Do the parents have to buy the encyclopedias?”

“No! They’re absolutely free—only an inducement to encourage them to use our teaching machines so that we may improve the quality of their children’s education.”

“Do the parents have to pay anything for the machines?”

”No! They’re absolutely free!”

I pushed Fitz in the side—this guy was obviously a saint, only trying to spread the noble aims of Academia in humble Indiana—and didn’t deserve to be given a hard time. Another half hour went by and in spite of my new found faith, I did get the feeling that this saint was telling us more about the encyclopedias than the teaching machines that were to shed Promethean light upon our bucolic land.

But then Fitz stiffened as if he had suddenly seen all the ills of the world laid before him. “Do the parents have to pay for the information service?”

“Not really. We usually charge a fee of \$5 for each question subscribers may ask, but the families you’ll be dealing with will only pay a nominal fee.”

My prospect of an honorable fortune began to fade somewhat but it wasn’t for another ten minutes—the dude seemed to be finishing and was beginning to ask how many were interested in working in this high paying and humanitarian cause when Fitz asked the final question:

“How much is the nominal fee?”

“Uh! \$3.95”—and then back into the closing pattern.

Everyone seemed pacified but I had grasped Fitz’s logic: ten information tickets a year for ten years at \$3.95 each--\$395. We were being recruited to sell encyclopedias, short and simple!

★ ★ ★

Fitz and I were the only ones who didn’t agree to come back the next day to take the training course on how to place those marvelous teaching machines. MSAISUHTNE!

We got some coffee and Fitz called his parents, collect. His end of the conversation consisted mostly of grunts but when he returned to the table he announced he was heading home. He had an airplane credit card and enough left for cab fare. I said I envied him for having California to go home to. He said he didn’t know why and left.

Since it was on the way to where the car was parked anyway, I figured I’d try the only want ad we hadn’t eliminated.

★ ★ ★

“Look Mr Campbell, I might save us both some trouble by telling you that I’m not interested in pushing encyclopedias.”

Mr. Campbell smiled, “I know exactly what you mean; those encyclopedia boys should be put away! But our product doesn’t need to be pushed. It’s really like our want ad says, we really do feel that we’re offering something the public needs.”

I sat down. We made small talk about my college football team while I examined the product: a small plastic fire alarm with a little disk inserted at the bottom that apparently melted at a certain temperature and set off a piercing alarm—“guaranteed to wake the dead and keep ’em up for at least five minutes.” I guessed that it sold for four or five dollars and figured it wouldn’t be too bad a job if there wasn’t any high pressure routine involved.

“Hell no, we don’t need any high pressure tactics. All you need is our little booklet; it’ll sell them for you.”

He pulled out a briefcase with several fire alarms and a glossy pamphlet inside.

“And none of this knock on every door in town routine. We only approach middle class families and older people. And once they see this little booklet they buy one for every room! And besides helping people out there’s good money in it for you. You get \$10 for each one you sell. That’s a 20 percent commission.”

Christ! Fifty bucks for something any half-wit could make himself for a few dollars; but before I could say anything, he opened his “self-selling” booklet—glossy photographs of children and old women who had been severely burned.

I was on my feet but Campbell was taking my profanity calmly as though he were used to it. But when he moved to show me the door I removed the disk from the sample alarm still in my hand. It let off an ear shattering noise as I tossed it into the far corner of the room. Campbell rushed toward it as I proceeded to disarm the five alarms in the briefcase. As I left, Campbell was at the other end of the room trying to break the plastic box with the heel of his shoe.



Back in Crawfordsville, I filled the tank, picked up my few belongings and headed home.

A half hour along on my three hour trip I stopped at a roadside tavern and bought a cold quart of beer. My cigarette ash dropped on the seat as I reached for a second sip from the bottle beside me. The sun was just setting and in front of me—and behind me—and on either side—stretched miles and miles of corn.

GALEN GREEN

The Eyes of the Cynic

for L. S. Perry

Because your father with his large hairy forearms never acquired a taste for the sports page or the financial section, you enter gym class with an underdeveloped sense of competition, for which we drive you to the library . . . (instead of to the ballpark, the church, the liquor store, the television set) . . . from whose dark stacks you emerge with a polite refusal to join us in bombardment when the whistle blows—not so much from the fear of broken glasses as from the vision of the entire class lying forever in our separate graves—and from your pity for even the smell of our sweaty gym socks.

But we, who are unable to return a pity for the smell of your laundry, teach you that to survive you must constantly see through our games, our stained-glass windows, our gin & tonics, our television screens.

Your vision we then label “cynicism” and warn our children against it by bringing your eyes home for dinner.

CARL PHAGAN

First Dawn

First dawn merging into sunrise
Horizontal light refracted in near-perfect webs
strung with delicate dew-points
Then the spider moves
and there is greater reality

Mirror stillness of chilly dusk reveals
the last bits of snow by muddy otter-slides
and buds full to bursting with new sap
A trout rises and there is deeper meaning

Broken shells
and twisted weathered driftwood
and dull greyness
and distance
and power
are given hope by the gull
hovering low in the cold wind

And the coyote's howl is welcome
in the lonely darkness.

Just so—
she came to me

EDWARD LENSE

Evening in Parma, Ohio

The plastic flamingoes are sleeping in stately poses.
The children running in circles on the lawns
pause, stare at each other gravely, half asleep.
In their dark garages the cars are settling down
and placidly ticking away their heat.
Ice is growing like new skin over the swimming pools.
Shadows slip between the houses, silence
follows them, walks like a man alone in the street.
Yellow windows light and go out in a slow rhythm;
they would look, from a distance, like a swarm of fireflies
if they ever moved.

STEPHEN NAGY

Minglings

Demetrius reels. His muscles ripple as he reels. The Legion has no more water; it is eight days to another oasis. Sand (eternal sand). Pain is on his rugged face as beads of sweat roll carefully down his temples. Rome's battered eastern legion withstands the barbarians, but their positions are weakening. If only there were boulders. He could use some boulders . . . to throw. It is exactly 1:34 in the afternoon and the Libyan Desert is taking its toll (the sun beating down unmercifully). By sheer discipline they hold against the furious onslaught, but now their numbers dwindle. And yet Demetrius inspires his troops to join shields and reform into protective phalanxes. Blood drips from the tips of their lances. This will be the final attack. There are too many faceless barbarians. Demetrius sees the marker and sinks to his knees. His armor clanks manfully. His handsome blue eyes squint upward into the blue sky and follow a contrail moving slowly toward the horizon. It is nearly over; they cannot last forever. Octavian had promised a relief legion. If the gods will it, they will arrive in time. A din . . . distant, and getting louder. The Emperor's forces!? He isn't sure wha-- dune buggy erupts over a hill and charges at them, its tires spraying sand high into the air. The driver screams obscenities as one of his riders throws a half empty can at Demetrius. Blatz spatters on his back. The fat director smacks the cameraman on the head with his usual Neapolitan violence. Spinning in a taut Apache-like circle, the buggy guns off ferociously towards Flagstaff.

To Huntington, W. Va.

The city is an ember in the mirror,
delegated to a committee of memories,
but its smell still hides in my car.
Laminations of civilization peel off inside
like a migrant skinning an onion.
This is an ultimate country, one we
passed in the normal time,
where women's love is heightened in cafes,
and gaunt hillbillies smelling of the foundry
stand at street corners, smoking nervously.

THOMAS J. OWENS

Dillinger

I know the bolt
jerking back in my hand
and the press of the clip on my palm,
but, in Chicago, Capone's fat fingers
point to a graph.
In some Ohio police station
Purvis and Huntington
eat sandwiches at midnight.
Tracing my escapes,
they find the pattern of veins
on my wrists.

Sleeping in woods,
I wake covered with dew.
A spider-web hangs above me
like a bullet hole in glass.
I see it all--
the fingerprints eaten away by acid,
the Gable movie, the Woman in Red.
Thousands come to see my body
gray as five day meat
while carnival barkers make bids
with my father.

I light a cigarette.
I load my gun with bullets
the size of fingers.
All day, I feel like a man
saying his name into an empty well.

DEBORAH SUE CLEVENGER

Rainstorm

Why do days resound in silence
As people's heads turn from
The flagpole to the refuse of gutters
Searching for security
The clouds descend
Dispensing God's rain
Downpouring to cleanse their souls
Offering redemption
As they see it trickling before
Their eyelids
They protect their ears
Afraid to hear as windows close
I hear the rain
I reminisce
In wanting to hear it again.

MARGARET HONTON

Introductory Composition

How I Spent My Summer:
graduated
vacated
wrote with abandon
took leave of my lover
took leave of my senses
cycled (meshing gears
singly in tandem
in tour de forces
hosteling cross-country)
charging pubic hill
grooving mesial valley
spilling watershed tears
day in night out
falling head over handlebars
knocking myself out
hearing birds seeing stars
unconsciously until
I came to
you
cycling in a streak
to the peak.

DORTHY PREDMORE

Ducks on the Pond

There are ducks on a neighboring farm pond this fall for the first time in well over a year. There have been ducks around the pond all this time, but not on it, and the reason for this unusual state of affairs is a story which should be pondered.

A city child had received three ducks and a chicken as Easter gifts, and the fuzzy fowls had lost their down and their welcome in their urban home at about the same time. What could have been more logical than to take them to a farm, especially one with a pond?

At the farm, the ducks headed for the water, but the chicken, a rooster, spread his immature wings and dive-bombed at the ducks, chasing them back until they finally accepted the fact that they were chickens, and should not swim. So they paraded single file around the shale banks of the mixing bowl pond, herded by the ubiquitous rooster.

The farm children, three boys and a girl, thought the whole thing was very funny until a warm day in June when they decided to go swimming. The rooster tried his best to stop them, lowering his head, fluffing his growing wings, and charging them with all his broiler-weight strength.

One by one the children broke loose and got to the pond, but the frustrated rooster would not give up. He enlarged his tyrannical domain to include any human being in sight, whether near the pond or not, until he became a nuisance to adults, and a terror to small children.

Finally, the ducks took over. It is one thing to give up your own freedom voluntarily, and quite another to stand by while freedom is taken forcibly from others. They rode herd on the rooster, keeping between him and his intended quarry, often biting at his neck until it bled, if he persisted.

A stalemate seemed to have been reached. The rooster saw to it that the ducks did not swim, and the ducks made certain that the rooster did not chase people. Such is often the fate of those who aspire to be leaders.

Surely those ducks must have wanted to swim! On a clear day in April or September when the white ringed mallards made flying wedges in the sky, the shale-bound ducks must have wanted to invite their wild cousins down to swim, or perhaps to fraternize.

On a still morning when the white pole barn and the color rampant hillside woods were inverted in the mirror smooth water, the ducks must have felt an urge to ripple the water, to dive for minnows or duckweed, to preen their dusty coats, or to sail nonchalantly out of reach of the rooster, But they resisted the impulses, and at what outrageous cost! How terrible to suppress your God-given talents. How awful to be a duck who cannot swim.

And the rooster. The poor rooster. Surely he must have wanted to chantic-leer the dawn, to strut on the lush front lawn instead of having to patrol a grassless circle. What a burden it must have been to try to keep three wives in line (or was it a wife, a mother, and a mother-in-law?), especially three who seemed to have no idea at all about how chicken womenfolk are supposed to behave.

If his behavior had been motivated by genuine concern for the safety of the ducks, or even from the economic necessity of keeping the pond full of clean clear water, it would have been admirable. But the truth was that the rooster, like all tyrants, was driven by fear. Because he was afraid of water, he decided that water was bad for everyone. The more the fear possessed him, the more determined he was to control everything around him.

After more than a year of the deadlock, the farmer, when sending his caged layers to market, decided to send the rooster along.

That evening the ducks went swimming. They waddled casually down to the pond and went swimming as naturally as though they had been doing it all their lives. They seemed no more to remember or regret their recent restriction than a mountain stream recalls its frozen origin.

Only the children remembered. And wondered.

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WILLIAM THOMAS

The Necklace

“I want to give you the plot for a story.”

Up to this moment I had thought of Arthur Stanley as one of my good British friends. He sipped his cocktail with a complacency that was almost an added insult. I suppose I winced.

“Don’t you want it?”

“You know very well, Arthur, that I’ve more plots in my head than I can ever use. For every one I get out onto paper, two more come in. Besides, I never can make a story sprout from somebody else’s germ. No matter how good it may sound, I’ve no enthusiasm for an idea that isn’t mine.”

“This is a true story.”

“As if that’s anything to recommend it. A writer knows that fiction is truer than truth because the truth is always cluttered up with non-essentials. The writer has to hew them away before he can deal with what’s important. When he invents, he invents only what is useful to him.”

“This is a story about a necklace.”

“Arthur! How have I offended you to make you treat me like this? Once upon a time, back in the happy days of the nineteenth century, there was a French author whose name was Guy de Maupassant. He wrote a story that he called ‘The Necklace’. It has fascinated many people. Every schoolboy reads it. At least in my day all American schoolboys read it. And how you could get to your time of life—”

“Yes, Jud, I knew I’d have to bear up under this. Now that you’ve got the lecture out of your system, maybe you can bring yourself to listen. Among the people who’ve been fascinated by Maupassant’s rather slight story was Somerset Maugham. Maugham perceived that, even though Maupassant was able to impart a great deal of tragic irony to the situation he contrived, a quite different and possibly more convincing story about a necklace might be written on another Maupassant theme, that of ‘The Jewels’.”

“That’s the one about a clerk whose wife is fond of gaudy jewelry—only it turns out after she dies that the stuff is real and worth a fortune.”

“Her husband is made wealthy from the proceeds.”

“But Maugham didn’t copy Maupassant.”

“Not really. Maugham’s ‘Mr. Know-All’ deals with one point in time in a single scene. This story, you may recall, which takes place on shipboard, is constructed around a wager between a jewel merchant and a consular attaché as to whether the pearls worn by the latter’s wife are genuine. The merchant is about to reveal the truth when he sees the look of terror in the woman’s eyes, pronounces them false, and pays off the bet. To Maugham, this was a more plausible function of a necklace in a story than Maupassant’s concern with the paste diamonds that Madame Loisel lost returning from the Minister of Education’s reception. Or the mental agitation of a poor man made rich by his wife’s infidelity.”

“I remember the Maugham story,” I said. “But any fictional use of a necklace makes one think first of Maupassant’s.”

“As you say, that has fascinated many people. And Maugham, who was adept at getting the utmost out of a good idea, didn’t stop thinking about a necklace after ‘Mr. Know-All’. He wrote another story, which he called ‘A String of Beads’. Do you remember that one?”

“I think I’ve read it. But recall it to me.”

“In a way—perhaps not a subtle way, but that would be pretty hard to achieve—it’s a spoof on all stories about a necklace, including the one he’d written. It begins in Maugham’s typical and lazy-seeming manner with himself as narrator being offered a plot for a story.”

“Only Maugham could get away with that.”

“A true story that takes place at a dinner party.”

“What would Maugham have done without the institution of the dinner-party?”

“He’d have had to be a different kind of writer. In ‘A String of Beads’ he is sitting by a woman whom he calls Laura, and she is telling him about a dinner where the hostess, Mrs. Livingstone, has brought in their governess to fill the place of an absentee. One of the guests, Count Borselli, is a jewel expert, and he remarks that the pearl necklace the governess is wearing is extremely valuable—worth fifty thousand pounds. The governess, Miss Robinson, denies that, but before dinner is over two men from a jeweler’s establishment come to reclaim the necklace, which had been brought in for restringing and then, by a careless mistake, given over to Miss Robinson in place of one she’d paid fifteen shillings for. Hers was having its clasp repaired. As a sort of reward—or solace—they give her a check for three hundred pounds.

“Now instead of doing something sensible with the money, Miss Robinson goes off to France for a fling, captures a wealthy protector, and abandons her career as a governess for a highly successful one as a mistress. For Maugham, it becomes *her* story, and he conceives her course of action as the logical working-out of circumstances. Whereas Laura, who observed it to happen, is dissatisfied, and would have preferred Miss Robinson to marry properly, buy a little house, and devote herself to an invalid husband.”

“The romanticist’s view is nearly always sentimental. If that’s the plot you’re offering me, I don’t want it. I’d rather go to school to Maugham.”

“Maybe you would. And I grant you could do worse. But in this instance he didn’t make the most of his material. For some reason, he didn’t see it steadily or whole. It isn’t Miss Robinson’s story at all.”

“Whose is it?”

“Mrs. Livingstone’s. What actually happened is this: the valuable necklace was Mrs. Livingstone’s, and it was she who’d sent it to the jeweler for restringing solely in order that she wouldn’t have to wear it at the dinner. Her husband, who knew she had it as a birthday gift from a man friend of long standing, and didn’t disapprove, thought it a bauble worth eighteen or twenty pounds. He liked to see her wearing it, and would have been annoyed with her

if she'd appeared without it. Mrs. Livingstone, who was sure the Count would instantly recognize its value, also feared that he might remark about it even if she herself were wearing it. In any case, she didn't want him or anyone else present to know its worth."

"But if Mrs. Livingstone's husband liked her to wear it, he must have noticed it on the governess."

"He was at the other end of the table, and he wouldn't have given much attention to the governess because of her station. So he mightn't have observed it but for the Count's remark and the men from the jeweler's. Of course he went to the jeweler and verified the fact that his wife's necklace was worth fifty thousand pounds. That made it a different sort of gift, and the giver a different sort of man standing in an altogether different relationship to his wife."

"You speak, Arthur, as if you were reciting facts instead of fiction."

"I told you it's a true story. I'm a barrister, and senior partner in the firm of Stanley and Osborne. I have it from an unimpeachable source."

"Mr. Livingstone, I presume?"

"That isn't his name, to be sure. But you're quite right. And, since they've been exposed, Mrs. Livingstone's old lover has left her and taken up with Miss Robinson. All Mrs. Livingston has left out of the ruin of her life is her valuable string of pearls."





NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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