

# Trial Impression

a literary magazine

Volume 2 Number 1



## CONTENTS

### POETRY

<b>GHOST</b> .....	1
<i>Susan Fitzpatrick</i>	
<b>A DISEASE</b> .....	2
<i>Susan Fitzpatrick</i>	
<b>THIS DREAM</b> .....	4
<i>George Keithley</i>	
<b>GRANDFATHER'S CABIN</b> .....	11
<i>Bill Cirigliano</i>	
<b>LIGHTHOUSE</b> .....	12
<i>Lloyd Stensrud</i>	
<b>THE ROUNDNESS OF THINGS</b> .....	17
<i>Julie Wixson</i>	
<b>HOLD FAST</b> .....	18
<i>Gary Thompson</i>	
<b>CAVE ART</b> .....	19
<i>Joanne Allred</i>	
<b>THE WOMEN UPSTAIRS</b> .....	20
<i>Joanne Allred</i>	
<b>BAD DEBTS</b> .....	25
<i>Debra Greger</i>	
<b>MONTHS OF AGONY</b> .....	26
<i>Tina Brophy</i>	
<b>BARON SAMEDI</b> .....	27
<i>Quinton Duval</i>	
<b>SONG</b> .....	28
<i>Joseph Walker</i>	
<b>CLAY BODIES</b> .....	41
<i>Helen Hart</i>	
<b>TONIGHT ANOTHER LOVE'S MOON</b> .....	42
<i>Alayne Ronnenberg</i>	
<b>CONFIDENCE NEEDS OUR EYES</b> .....	43
<i>David Scott Lenton</i>	
<b>AFTER ARGUING</b> .....	44
<i>William Stafford</i>	
<b>ASSURANCE</b> .....	45
<i>William Stafford</i>	

<b>PACIFIC AND ONE CITIZEN</b> .....	46
<i>Gary Russ</i>	
<b>WHITE NOISE</b> .....	49
<i>Kathleen Fraser</i>	

**FICTION**

<b>IVY'S MORNING</b> .....	5
<i>Brooks Thoriaksson</i>	
<b>DOIN' IT IN THE STREETS: A MEMORY</b> .....	21
<i>Clark Brown</i>	
<b>SEEKING BUDDHA ON THE NIGHT SHIFT</b> .....	29
<i>David Cowan</i>	

**TRANSLATION**

<b>STEIN SKAFTSON</b> .....	13
<i>Herb Joseph</i>	
<b>DROUGHT</b> .....	39
<i>Bryce Conrad and Zoran Anchevsky</i>	
<b>WRESTLERS</b> .....	40
<i>Bryce Conrad and Zoran Anchevsky</i>	
<b>LEGEND OF THE ORIGIN</b> .....	47
<i>Karl Simon</i>	

I am thirsty for odors and laughs,  
I am thirsty for new poems,  
poems with no lilies or moons,  
and no love affairs about to fail.

—*Garcia Lorca*

## **GHOST**

**It's true:**

**The trees fill with gold dust.  
In the field where October waits,  
I dream us.**

**As real as the long grass,  
I pull you over the years.  
Sometimes I feel you still  
Eyes to eyes.**

**Dear Ghost:**

**I don't know what's been true  
Since.**

**—*Susan Fitzpatrick***

**A DISEASE**

I was crazy once.  
Everything had edges.  
Life was no better  
Than a postcard  
Bought in a bus station.

It was hard for me then  
To steer a car or cook.  
My hands were full of haze,  
My fingers, ropes.  
They kept me from grasping  
The wheel, the spoon.

I only felt good  
In the shower;  
Or asleep,  
My hands lost  
Under the pillow.

I went to a psychiatrist once.  
In a perfect room,  
I reviewed my insanity.  
He gave me extra time  
To brood.

He wore perfect clothes,  
Stripes and solids.  
He shot my neuroses into pockets:  
Mother, father, sister, husband.

I told him it wasn't that  
Simple.

He ate cold rice from a bucket  
With a big spoon and never spilled  
A grain on his shoes.  
He had perfect feet,  
Side by side in black, zippered boots.

At the psychiatrist's office once,  
I saw another patient.  
I was trying to read "Runner's World."  
(Jog. Exercise. The latest god. Make me happy.)  
The sentences were lost in a funhouse  
Of mirrors and mirrors of meaning.  
The patient was a man, about fifty,  
Wearing intricate confusion.  
His face was one long sliver;  
His head hung like a noose.  
He tested the ground  
Before going out.

Nails looped my heart,  
And I heard construction workers  
Hammering.

At the beach once,  
I hated everyone.  
There were too many.  
They made the sea dull.  
Rutting around,  
Making their stupid useless kind,  
Screaming and scratching for money, power,  
Or totally mute, paralyzed for love,  
Land, water, air.

I moved.  
I met someone.  
I changed my diet,  
Point of view.

I got over it,  
I guess.

—*Susan Fitzpatrick*

## **THIS DREAM**

she dreams  
                  it does not happen  
that is  
                  the beauty of it—

                  The moon blood-red.  
                  Rising, turning  
pale above his bride. Her gown  
a gift of that long light.

                  Stars if they hear  
                  her moan  
beneath the belly of the moon  
appear to shiver.

His gaze the gleam on her face,  
the pearl glow in a pool  
of rainwater awake  
all night in the grass

(winter not yet near)  
                                  her hair

unclasped and his hand cold  
and still as straw  
while she grieves so

no one knows. No  
one knows.

—*George Keithley*

## **IVY'S MORNING**

by *Brooks Thorlaksson*

The screen door caught his heel, scraped, and then slammed shut. He stood on the concrete stoop, fat but tidy, his thumbs hooked behind his suspenders, waiting for Nancy. She waddled up to the porch, a black dog gone white, and waited for Gus to reach down to pet her.

He took the steps one at a time, bringing his feet together on each landing. Finally he reached the ground. "Here, girl. Here it is." He gave her the scraps he'd smuggled from breakfast.

Ivy rattled the dishes in the sink, peering out to be sure he got down the steps and on his way. Old fart. Nearly useless. And fat. After being such a strong man. And addled, too. A pickled brain.

She watched him walk toward the greenhouse. A least he had that to keep him busy. At least he wasn't in the house all day, following her around, looking for attention and entertainment like old Horace Scow. Poor Etta. And he wasn't bald like Jim Crawford who hadn't a bit of hair anywhere—head, eyebrows, lashes—all gone. At least Gus wasn't an oddball. Fat, maybe, but his head didn't look like an egg.

Gus reached for the lock on the greenhouse and pushed in the door. Nancy followed him inside and down the aisle, past the pansies and tomato plants and climbed on the gunny sacks.

"There you go, Nance. Lazy girl. You get up in the morning just to lay down for a nap. What a life."

What a life, Ivy muttered to herself. Dishes, dishes, dishes. It wasn't supposed to turn out like this.

"Ah, Nancy, old girl. What would I do without you? You pokey old dog. Fat dog. Fat like me. Is that why we get along? Both fat, both old, and both still have our hair." His laugh was not a fat man's laugh but a swallowed chuckle. "Old Nancy, pokey old Nancy."

Gus scratched his head and went to the tomato vines. Jim was due any time now. He liked to wander over, pink and shiny, to help pull the worms off the plants. He had a few hens in his backyard that ate the worms, and getting them was his morning's work. Gus liked the company and didn't mind that his help wasn't all that helpful. Good old Jim.

Damn fool. Why would a man think he could hide his bald dome by wearing a silly knit cap? Damn fool. Why can't he walk around the house and go straight to the greenhouse? Think I run a Grand Central Station? Damn fool.

"Morning, Jim. Gus is out back. He's in the greenhouse. Watch the rug there—don't trip."

"Well, Ivy. Morning. Morning. Chipper today? A smile for the day? I was just . . ."

Damn fool. Pink as a . . . "Go on, Jim. Gus is out there waiting." She pulled the screen for him and held it while he shuffled through. Damn fool.

Jim didn't notice that he'd been hurried through the house. He didn't notice much anymore, least of all a cantankerous old neighborlady.

Lady. I was a lady. If I'd stayed home I'd still be a lady. Grow up with a silver teapot and a maid and you expect certain things. Still have the teapot, but not much else.

Ivy stretched the towel on the rack behind the stove and pulled her apron to her nose as she left the kitchen. She tugged at her nose for awhile, partly from necessity, a little from habit. As she passed through the dining room she caught herself in the mirror. There she was, white hair, wrinkles and wrinkles, and a faded apron crammed up to her glasses. She stopped still for a minute, let the apron drop and muttered again, "Lady. Hmp."

"Harumph!" Gus cleared his throat for the third time, just ready to cough when the tickle gave way. "Well, Jim. Morning."

"Morning to you, Gus. A smile for the day? Couldn't be nicer . . ." He wandered off in the middle of his sentence to inspect the pansies and then came back to help Gus with the worms. ". . . as I was saying, Gus, a fine day."

Gus had a fat clicking worm in his fingers and he motioned to Jim to get the flower pot. Jim admired it as it rolled in Gus's hand.

"How're the chickens, Jim?"

"Oh, just fair. Fair to middling. Slowing down some."

"Slowing down?"

"Hmm," Jim nodded. "Slowing down. Not so many eggs. Don't know why. Not so many eggs."

Gus didn't answer. Ever since he'd gone on the disability Jim's hens had slowed down. Didn't lay so good. But he always had enough to sell to Ivy when she needed some. Of course she wasn't baking so much any more. Been a long time since he'd had any sugar cookies or smelled mince pies.

Fat. She called him fat. Said he needed to cut back. No more sugar cookies.

"What's that, Jim?"

“ . . . a lot of worms here, Gus. What do you think?”

Gus reached out for another one. “I think that’s it, Jim.”

Jim continued his story. “And then I said to Anne, I said to her this morning . . .”

Gus never listened to Jim, but he liked him around. He nodded now and then to keep him going, and went about his work. He got the watering can and sprinkled the pansies. People came from all over to buy his pansies. He’d made a new color, just from tinkering around, and had named it Nancy. It was a purple so dark it was nearly black, with tiny white stripes. Ivy even liked it, asked for it when she went to visit a sick friend.

“ . . . my leg that has that ache, and . . .”

Jim was slowing down. Gus moved over to an old car seat he had in a sunny spot and nodded to Jim.

“Well, Gus, I’ve got to be going. Can’t stand too long on this bum leg.”

“Ok, Jim.”

“ . . . nice day . . .”

“Hmm.” Gus reached down to Nancy and scratched her ears. Old flea bag. She wiggled her stumpy tail and moaned just a little.

Ivy moaned a lot. She was down on her knees, her head flat on the floor so she could peer into the darkness. She stretched and pulled at a box under the bed, dragging it into the light. She straightened her back and pulled at her hairnet, eyeing the box. The lid was loose, and a brown flannel bag lay on top and Ivy pulled the teapot out. It was engraved with a fancy design and the lid had an ivory knob yellowed with years.

It was beautiful.

Gus never had understood it. He never drank tea, just coffee with lots of cream, and he banged on the side of the cup with his spoon when he wanted more. He could break a china teacup. She heard the clang of his coffee spoon and could see herself running for the coffee pot. That was when she was younger. Now she walked. She held the teapot in her hand, rubbing the side of it. He never had a cup of tea, not even from the silver teapot.

Old fart. He doesn’t know a thing about nice things . . .

The sun caught the light in the teapot. She held it up and turned it back and forth, her head bending too. The sun glinted off her diamond ring. Hardly a diamond, more a chip. Maybe he did know of nice things. At least back then. He bought her the ring and surprised her.

She set the teapot in her lap, looking from the ring to the teapot. So long ago. First the teapot, and then the ring. Ivy saw him, young and shy, holding the ring in his hand.

She sighed and wrapped the teapot back in its no-tarnish bag. She tightened the cord and pushed it back in the box.

Gus noticed the box of onion plants, green spears falling over the edge. He planned to repot them today. They were crowded and needed more space.

"Well, Nancy." He scratched her ears. "Guess I should get on the work." The sun was warm through the glass. "Good old Nancy."

Gus leaned back in the chair, his hand resting on Nancy. The onions seemed less crowded, a little healthier. He smiled to himself and settled deeper in the sun.

Ivy was hot when the door bell rang, pulling her from her daydreams. She reached for the bed and pulled, but the long time on her knees had weakened her legs. The bell rang and rang.

"Coming!" It was almost a yodel. Ivy was a YooHooer and her voice had music in it. "Coming!" Coming, coming . . . come on, Ivy. She cheered her legs along and hobbled to the door.

It was the mailman. She used to have a cooky for him, but not lately. It was too much work, baking, mixing the dough. Her fingers were twisting with arthritis. Besides, if she baked, Gus ate everything, even before it cooled, and he was fat. A fat man who ate the mailman's cookies.

"Morning, Ivy. Brought you some mail today."

Ivy looked at the returns to see how many bills were in the stack. The coal company and the lights and . . . a letter.

"A letter from Audrey." Wish I had a cooky for him. "It's a letter from my daughter." Damn that Gus. "It's my girl from Oregon. Thanks. Thanks for the mail."

She shut the door and opened the envelope at the same time. Dear mom . . . kids fine . . . you . . . dad . . . moving to Arizona . . .

She sank into her chair and read it again. The greenhouse was framed in the window and the sun reflected off its windows. She pulled at the curtain to shield her eyes and read again about the move to Arizona: New job . . . this ought to be the last move . . .

Poor Audrey. Just like Gus. Couldn't get along with him. Ran away and got married at sixteen, but not before she had screamed at him that she was going to have a baby. Turned out not to be true, but Gus threw her out, told her never to come home again.

Ivy wondered if Audrey would have married Paul if it hadn't been for Gus. Probably wouldn't have stayed with him, except to prove Gus wrong.

Gus had sworn and bellowed and stomped and torn the curtain down. "Goddamn no good . . . slut . . . whore . . ." Not a man of many words, but he'd kept it up while she hid in the bedroom and Audrey ran from the house. And then he blamed her. She had been afraid of him in those days, wouldn't dare cross him.

Now it was different. Now she could handle him. But thirty years ago was a different story.

Thirty years. Ivy leaned back into the chair and shut her eyes. Thirty years.

Gus snored lightly, his left hand riding his stomach up and down. Nancy rolled over and slipped her head beneath his other hand. The sun baking through the roof made the plants steam and the dripping condensation made designs on the glass panes.

Thirty years gone by. But he'd gotten over it. Took him some time, but he finally said she could come visit. Took her more time, but then finally she came. But he never would visit them. Never would go to her.

Thirty years.

Ivy sat up with a start, listening for the sound that had startled her. Must have drifted off a bit. But her mouth tasted like she had slept for awhile, and she couldn't stand up right away. She waited, hands on the arms of the chair, wondered what she had been doing. Just then the fire whistle blew the noon siren.

12 o'clock! Ivy shook her head and walked into the kitchen. Where had the morning gone? She rubbed her nose and yawned and thought about dinner.

Before Gus had retired he had to have a big dinner. Meat-and-potatoes man. Now he didn't work so hard, but he still thought he had to have his big meal. When, Ivy wanted to know, when does Ivy get to retire? But she didn't fight too hard about this one. Be damned if she would bake for him, after all the baking she'd done in her time. But dinner? Dinner she could fix, mashed potatoes and a chop and a little salad. Dinner she could fix.

Ivy fed the cook stove and set the skillet on top. She put a pot of water on and got a box of potato flakes from the cupboard. Old Gus didn't know it, but his potatoes weren't real. Ivy smiled—every little bit helps.

The skillet started smoking and Ivy tossed a bit of bacon in the pan. She didn't think much about cooking anymore; been at it too long. She thought of Audrey's girl, how amazed she'd been when they mixed a batch of sugar cookies.

"Grandma, where's the recipe? Don't you need a recipe?"

How many batches of sugar cookies had there been? How many apple pies? Twenty every morning for three years after Gus lost his work at the washing machine factory. Mean days, up at three o'clock to start baking and then Audrey so embarrassed to carry pies into the restaurants. What could she do? They needed something and a man couldn't get work in those days.

Poor Gus. It wasn't his fault. Not that he took it very well. Maybe that's why he wanted a big meal every day. To erase those years. After all, a man has his pride.

Well, that's it. She poured his coffee and glanced at the clock. Usually he was inside by 12:30, wondering about dinner. Usually she had to invent a few chores to keep him busy until it was ready.

"Gus! Dinner!" The screen door slammed on her words and she carried the plates into the dining room. She got the cream and started to sit down. Where is that man?

Ivy looked out the window but he wasn't coming. She went to the door and called again.

"Augustus! Dinner!" This time she waited. Deaf? Is he going deaf now? First fat and now deaf. She shook her head.

Ivy walked down the steps and headed for the greenhouse. Jim had left the door ajar and she pulled it open. "Gus? Can't you hear? I've been yammering my head off. Dinner is getting cold. We're late today."

She saw him at the end of the aisle, asleep. So that's what it's come to. He tells me how hard he works and he's out here sleeping.

Nancy sat up when Ivy drew near and Gus's hand hung limply where her head had been. His eyeglasses had slipped a bit, caught only by the end of his nose. His head was off to one side and he was very still.

"Gus." Ivy reached for his shoulder and shook him. His left hand fell off his stomach.

"Gus!" It was nearly a scream. "Gus! Wake up!" She shook him, hearing the rush of air in her ears. Nancy whined and pushed at his hand.

Ivy turned and stumbled out the door. She found her legs and ran next door, called to Anne to get an ambulance, and headed back to Gus, sitting in the sun. His watering can was at his feet and Nancy had crawled under his hand again.

He didn't look dead. Ivy touched his shoulder again. The sun was warm on his shirt but there was a heaviness to him, and it frightened her. She began to shake, and Jim found her there, at Gus's feet. He patted her, bumping first her shoulder and then her head, not sure what to do or say.

After the ambulance had come and taken him away, Ivy began to cry. She leaned into the sink, her apron in her eyes and her shoulder's heaving. She cried, tight little sobs caught up in her hands.

But it only lasted a little while. She blew her nose when the neighbors rang the bell and made a pot of tea in the silver teapot and let them fuss over her new grief. Later, when she thought of that day, she only remembered her crying, and she always took fresh flowers to her Gus's grave.

## GRANDFATHER'S CABIN

The cold of January is hard and still.  
Transient air, moored in the valley between storms,  
passively chills, and tonight waves of sound  
seem frozen in their paths. Quiet attacks,  
brutal, infinite. Black is a much lighter color  
than the moonless sky with its slow silver patterns.  
There now, in the grainfield, an owlhoot, hollow.  
Welcomed. Distant night-feeding ducks call  
to no human. Listen. They are close.  
The rippling of raw air torn is barely audible  
above a low gabble, Geese. Gliding  
each taking its turn as leader, laying open  
the cohesive, abrasive wall of sky. Eyes,  
pairs of wings follow. A sudden clamor suggests  
they are low to the ground, a destination.  
At the moment their image does not  
exist, an elusive presence; like that  
of my grandfather's, for cancerous  
cells divided long enough in his body.

—*Bill Cirigliano*

**LIGHTHOUSE**

Jesus had nothing to do with the sea  
Stained cross windows  
Primitive portrait of New England Steeple  
Hard chairs  
Bible assignment for tonight:  
I speak blasphemy  
Jogging across the sand,  
I speak foolishness  
and I mean it.  
Tracks of amphibious sheep in the sea  
Dark sheets of green life,  
Clear membranes of jellyfish,  
Dangerous watercolors of sea-bats,  
Open-mouthed, silent, anemone.

I am bathed by the sea air  
On the steps of the cathedral,  
The rays of two lamps  
Explore the air  
Freezing the frescos,  
The fleur de lys.  
Our real mission is of pain  
Filled with ancient statues,  
Fake parchment souvenirs,  
Mysticism, old racism, Maria Guadelope  
Coiled at our feet.

Giddyup, snore,  
Shadows of a rowboat ship,  
St. Stephan's  
Cross over worthless harbors,  
Lighthouse full of gospel gone bad.

*—Lloyd Stensrud*

## STEIN SKAFTSON

*From 13th Century Old Norse, written down in Iceland by an unknown author.*

Translated by *Herb Joseph*

Stein Skaftson came to Norway that summer (1021) at the urging of Olaf, the King. He was the son of Lawspeaker Skaft and he came with the sons of other famous men—Thorrod, the son of Snorri, Gellir, the son of Thorkels and Egil, the son of Sithu Hall. When the Icelanders arrived in Norway they went to meet the King and were well treated and stayed with him.

After a while they were called into King Olaf's presence. King Olaf made a long speech. His speech was full of friendly words, but when he finally got to the point his words were no longer so friendly. Gellir Thorkelson was to return to Iceland alone and demand of the Icelanders in the King's name that they each pay a yearly head tax similar to one which was levied in Norway. The others, as sons of famous men, were to remain as hostages with the King, pending the agreement of the Icelanders. They were to be treated well but they were hostages nonetheless.

Gellir prepared his ship and sailed to Iceland. He went to the Thing Meeting (Common Assembly) and gave the King's message. The Icelanders sat long and deliberated over this and finally came to the unanimous decision that King Olaf could drop dead before he would get one cent from any of them. Gellir Thorkelson was sent back with the message.

Thorrod Snorrason and Stein Skaftson were confined to their quarters while this was going on and both were peeved that they could not go where they wanted. They considered the whole process demeaning. They threw the furniture about their quarters and generally exacerbated one another. They took to making up derogatory verses about the King and shouting them at one another at the top of their voices. Stein came from a family of poets and had rather the better of this game. Sometime ago his father had composed a Drapa, a poem in praise of King Olaf, which still had some consideration.

One day, when Stein was in the King's company, the King asked Stein to recite the Drapa his father had composed. "But first," said the King, "you might recite one of your own poems about me."

"I'm not really as good a poet as my father," said Stein. "I lean more to dirty limericks and you might not like the subject."

The King reddened at this and Stein left. He was not then in the best of graces with King Olaf.

Stein ran away on snowshoes that night and took only a boy servant with him. He ran up north to Gularas and on to Orkdal and later came to one of the King's farms. In charge of this farm was a man by the name of Thorgeir who was very loyal to the King. Stein barged into the farmhouse acting as if he had just come from the King. He demanded a horse and sled he had seen outside, saying he needed them for the King's business.

Thorgeirr was a very cautious man. "I am not sure I can give up the King's property so easily," he said. "We had better wait until tomorrow and see if the King gives you leave."

Stein roared furiously at this. "I can be held up by the King," he shouted, "but not by his Goddamn thrall." He drew his sword and hacked at Thorgeirr until he was dead. Then he took the horse and sleigh. He bade his boy get on the back of the horse and he made himself comfortable in the sleigh and they ran away over Maeri to Surnadal. Wherever they went Stein acted as if he were the King's messenger and was treated regally.

Stein traveled as fast as he could north to the land of Thorberg Arnason. Thorberg was not home when he arrived, but Stein had come mainly to see Thorberg's wife, Ragnhild, with whom he was on the best of terms. They were great friends and Ragnhild held Stein in high regard. Stein had been handy long ago when Ragnhild's first child was born and he had gone to a great deal of trouble to find a young priest to baptize the child when none seemed available. Ragnhild was grateful to him for that deed.

When Stein arrived at the farm of Thorberg Arnason he went to see Ragnhild at once and she treated him with her accustomed hospitality. He told her what had happened and asked if she might help find someone to intercede for him before the King. She agreed.

Thorberg Arnason soon came home in a bad mood. He had heard all about the matter already. Ragnhild went to speak with him immediately and asked his help. Thorberg demurred. He pointed out that King Olaf had sent an arrow out after Stein immediately, making him an outlaw and that he, Thorberg, was not about to risk everything he had in taking up the cause of a man with whom the King was very angry. Thorberg suggested that Stein had better start running. Ragnhild reasoned with him as only a wife might reason with her husband and so Stein stayed that winter. Meanwhile, Thorberg girded himself for what was coming.

At Yule, a King's messenger came to Thorberg and bid him come to court at Throndeim and answer for what he had done. Thorberg sent word out to his three brothers, Kalf, Finn and Arni

asking for help. His brothers, all powerful men in the North, hinted that he was somewhat of a weakling in being ruled by a woman and declined to stand up against the anger of Olaf for a man they did not know. However, to his surprise, when Thorberg got to Throndeim with his retainers (including Stein) his brothers were there waiting for him and they made all together a rather large group.

It was determined that Finn and Arni should go in first and talk to the King and prepare the way for the rest. Arni and Finn put on their best clothes and were completely armed. They went to the King's meeting. They were strong, upright men and made a fine appearance. When the King saw them he grew very red in the face. "It seems to me," he snarled, "that certain men up north here think they have all the say in things and that I have to jump when they say jump." The King then demanded strong terms including Thorberg's lands as compensation for his harboring of Stein. Finn was very cool. In a calm, quiet voice he said, "We didn't come here to fight or to tell you what to do. We came only with a few people, but if you demand such harsh terms of Thorberg, we have no choice but to move all our family possessions and our people to the court of King Knut.

Olaf looked at them for a moment. Then he said, "If you and your brothers will swear to follow me always both inland and out and be loyal forever, then I will see what can be done."

The brothers returned to their ships and asked Thorberg what should be done, and it so turned out that all four jumped into a boat and rowed to the King's court and swore an oath of loyalty before the King. A settlement was made.

"As for Stein," said the King, "let him go in peace but get him out of the country so that I never have to see that son of a bitch again."

When Stein heard of all of this he laughed and his laughter echoed all over Throndeim. He was still smiling broadly when he went south.

In the spring he took ship and went west to England. In England Stein went at once to the court of King Knut. The King asked Stein who he was and Stein not only told of his famous kin but related as well all that had happened between King Olaf and himself. King Knut was not at that time the best of friends with Olaf. He smiled greatly to hear what Stein said and made much over him. Stein must have expanded the story somewhat because he became known about Knut's court as Stein, "the man who had the best of Olaf."

Everything Stein did for King Knut turned out well. He began to strut about the court. He became known for his gold embroidered clothes and his fancy weapons. It was reported by

wise men that Stein even had his horse covered in gold cloth all the way down to the hooves. After a while Stein put on so many airs that he was too much even for Knut, so he was sent away.

When Stein took ship to return north, he strutted on board. He wore his finest clothes and told everyone who he was and what he had done. He made sure that they knew that he was the Stein, "who had got the best of Olaf." On the journey north just off a very barren spot along the coast of Jutland, a severe storm broke. The ship was forced up on the rocky reefs and broke in two. Everyone was forced to swim in the high seas. Stein jumped in, fancy clothes and all. He struck out strongly in high waves. The shore was some distance away, but he was determined that he "the man who had got the best of Olaf" should not perish in the sea like a common person.

After a tremendous effort he crawled out of the ocean onto the stony, deserted coast and lay in a heap. He had saved himself but he was so weak from the effort he could hardly move. No one seemed to be on the beach for miles. The sea was high and the waves pounded on the shore. As he lay there he saw a bent old woman coming down to the water to wash some clothes. She had some ragged clothes in a basket in one hand and a washing bat in the other. He tried to call her but he was too weak. She came cautiously toward him. He raised one arm weakly. The sleeve of his fancy coat flapped in the wind and he dropped his arm. "I am Stein," he said, "the one who -" As she came closer to him, he caught the look on her face and as she raised the bat he screamed. She kept smashing the washing bat down on him until he was dead. Then she stripped the body of its clothing and left it among the rocks to rot, staggering on down the beach with arms full.

So ended Stein, "the man who got the best of Olaf."

## **THE ROUNDNESS OF THINGS**

Trees, grass stems, wedding rings.  
Edge of a cup,  
path of the stars,  
of the moon around the earth  
and of the earth around the sun.  
Roundness within roundness.

The roundness of things—  
birds' nests, a child's arm, eyes.  
Days, years, time.  
Shore of a lake, craters on the moon,  
the wheels on a car.

The Indians lived  
in round teepees and lodges  
and wove circular baskets.  
They sang a song for the  
roundness of things.

Psychotic men,  
or those under the influence  
of hallucinogens,  
doodle spirals,  
never-ending,  
moving round and round  
toward some unknown center.

—*Julie Wixson*

## **HOLD FAST**

a vulture rests  
on a limb up the cliff almost one  
thousand yards away from these glasses.  
the swaying red leaf,  
the blurred head, makes him easy to find  
in the field guide,  
makes him almost too easy for us:  
Turkey Vulture.  
we watch for hours and nothing happens.

later a hawk holds  
against the strong evening  
baywind.  
my daughter screams  
when the wings change, fold back,  
tuck in.  
but I am watching the fine wing feathers  
twitch casually like fingers  
in the silent glass.

she already knows when the hawk  
dives into her smallness  
a fieldmouse will be clinging stiff  
to the only soil it knows.  
walking home in the near-dark  
she takes my hand and we cling to our small earth.  
she begins to sing hold fast,  
hold fast,  
hold oh so fast.

—*Gary Thompson*  
Reprinted from the (*Chariton Review*)

## CAVE ART

When the great cold crept from the north  
ice grew out of the ground like antlers  
on a snow-bleached skull.  
Around thin bones of fire,  
in secret places,  
magic animals sprang to life  
upon damp walls of a cave.

This was the birth of art—  
conceived of red moments when the boar turns  
and the guts wrench  
for the reindeer-horn spear  
must pierce or  
a race is unborn.

Fear is the oldest ceremony,  
the purest religion.  
A sudden glint off  
the lowered black head charging  
and the young hunter is alone  
on the hunt: a bull's red eye  
of torch light bellows  
in his blood. A life spills—  
he is whole again.

Shadowed in cave at El Castillo,  
etched on dim stone walls, the outline  
of a child's hand touches  
its way through ages.  
We grow into ourselves.  
A voice deepens.

—*Joanne Allred*

## **THE WOMEN UPSTAIRS**

One is clearly the mother,  
a miserable bitch.  
Loudly she complains  
of poor postures, the dishes  
left undone. She does not care  
for a sassy tone,  
silliness, her sex.  
Her face is pinched,  
she waddles;  
in public she acts demure.

The other is blonde, voluptuous,  
a shameless flirt.  
I have seen her on the street  
dressed smartly as for travel.  
Her mouth is tart and wise; she giggles.  
Husband gone, she solicits  
younger men and winks  
at possibility.

The quiet one's the daughter,  
young for her age  
though her blue eyes are old.  
Mornings alone in her room, she dreams:  
pink camelias issue from her vagina,  
trussed-for-roasting babies  
chew on her small breast.  
She fears both mothers  
must be eaten for lunch.

From her upstairs window  
she stares into my life  
counting the hours  
on my upturned face.

—*Joanne Allred*

## DOIN' IT IN THE STREETS: A MEMORY

or

### How the War Really Ended

by *Clark Brown*

THE FIRST THING you needed was a badge, sign or symbol, something to show, as we once said, who you were and what you represented. BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW—SOCIAL WORKERS UNION, LOCAL 535 AFL-CIO . . . COMMIE DUPE FOR PEACE . . . FRESNO SAYS OUT NOW . . . Out too said a Jewish Women's league, a junior college "coalition," the I.L.-W.U. and assorted "impudent snobs." (How many changes were rung on *that* immortal phrase!) Somehow, though, you had to have an armorial flourish—escutcheon, colors, device, or whatever.

It will soon be ten years ago, yet no one is in a mood for nostalgia of this kind. Still, before the rhetoric and iconography fade or are consigned to theses and "studies," I want to recall how I went strolling into Kimball Park on that famous day (November 15, 1969) and let a pretty girl sell me an OUT NOW button, how hardly had I begun to march when another girl, seeing that she had two paper flags and I none, offered me her spare—a black-bordered rectangle: KILLED IN VIETNAM 45,598 AMERICAN / 653,492 VIETNAMESE; how, labelled, necktied and flag-bearing, I tromped on, not yet understanding the necessity for these hesitant overtures, for that, I see now with time, was what they really were.

Despite the Viet Cong flags, the black anarchist flag, the red flags of revolution, despite WAR SUCKS and Nixon (swastika on his forehead like a caste-mark) beaming upon Mickey Mouse, it was the shyest, most wistful and fumbling demonstration I ever saw or joined. On Geary Street some of us deserted briefly to provision ourselves at a delicatessen. "You know what I don't like about these marches?" a girl said. "You never meet any boys." Later, as we strayed to the sidewalks of 30th Avenue, a teenage female monitor said: "Do it in the street, people!" giggled and looked about as though fearing reprisal.

Even the hustlers deferred. All day long you were hit—but politely. You could buy *The Militant* and *Challenge* or drop quarters in the ubiquitous plastic buckets. A boy with a V.C. flag begged pennies to get his cowboy boots repaired. A young monk

in yellow robe, topknot and warpaint urged upon you a stick of burning incense and a card inviting you to chant Hare Krishna, attend meditation classes and enjoy "Sumptuous Vegetarian Feasts" and "Standard Yoga Diet." Someone from Technocracy pressed a flyer into my hand. "Yeah, I'd like you to read that. It's real, real penetrating." No one insisted or pouted.

Myself, I resisted almost nothing, lunching on a ham sandwich, fifty-five cent burgundy and the thoughts of Chairman Mao. A young woman from San Francisco State asked if she might "interview" me. Of course she might. STP and ACID LOVE it said on the boy marching ahead, but I with that fatal necktie was the mark.

Would I march if I thought I were aiding the Viet Cong? Did I believe the System could be reformed through traditional political methods? Did I think the peace movement should run candidates? Would I march if it cost me a week's salary? If I might be arrested? Beaten up? Had I written public officials about the war? Demonstrated previously? Would I support violent revolution? Answer yes or no. How did I class myself—radical, liberal, moderate, conservative, reactionary? "Oh!" I said with a sigh, "wishy-washy-Charlie-Brown liberal." "Like all of us," she said, with a sigh of her own.

Even the opposition was hesitant, almost apologetic. I looked for counter-demonstration, but except for one car with its lights on and one TELL IT TO HANOI sign, there were only a few American flags, small ones mostly, stuck shyly into porch corners to signal support for the war. We went thundering toward Golden Gate Park, past three be-flagged houses, but in between them a grandmother stood at the window offering a furtive peace sign. It was this way all along. A beefy gentleman glared from his kitchen while in the next window his daughter two-fingered us and grinned.

We returned all blessings. "Just give love a chance!" we bleated. Sometimes we wanted "peace" to be given a chance, sometimes "life." We weren't Pete Seegar and the song was practically a whine. How far it all was from "We Shall Not Be Moved" and "Jim Crow Must Go!" Trumpet and drums were what we needed, not so many whimpering guitars. At the Polo Fields Phil Ochs let go with a rousing march against marching (to war), but this was late in the day.

Militancy did not flourish. In stomped the ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT, carrying a couple dozen red flags and a few V.C. banners and chanting, "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh! The N.L.F. is gonna win!" but this, though accurate as prophecy, was not the real mood. FREE KIM AGNEW . . . VIETNAM: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT . . . THOU SHALT NOT OVERKILL. A pleading wit

was the order of the day—a middle-class man pushing a baby carriage: **CHILDREN ARE FOR LOVING NOT FOR BURNING**. True, The Progressive Labor Movement might proclaim that **ONLY WORKERS UNITED CAN SMASH FASCIST RULERS HERE AND IN VIETNAM**, but what about **GAY POWER** and **HOMOSEXUALS AGAINST THE WAR** and **GAY LIBERATION FRONT**? What about **JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY WAY**?

And that astounding faith in gesture and symbol! Dolores Huerta urged us to embrace whoever might be next to us. I clasped hands with a goodlooking blonde and kissed her cheek. (Her boyfriend endured this show of solidarity with sullen grace.) The KSFO helicopter buzzed the field until hexed by tens of thousands of two-fingered fists. The circled-trident talisman appeared everywhere, stamped on people's foreheads, fashioned from styrofoam and lovingly adorned, worked into the American flag, framing a doughboy charging barbwire with fixed bayonet (**JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN**), in the O's of **PEACE IS A GOOD THING**. Skulls retrieved their old medieval power, replacing the stars in homemade flags. A withered corpse declared that it too was an "impudent snob," recalling that other sure-fire symbol, so quickly to be forgotten but one gone.

Agnew was in everyone's craw. His head appeared on a jackass placard. No speaker failed to mention him. To pronounce his name was to provoke a roar of angry derision (though the biggest howl of all was for Reagan). An ugly man, he called forth ugliness.

And surely the potential for ugliness, for furious "gut" reactions was there, nagging the late Wayne Morse. "As free men and women," he announced, "we reach our conclusions through our cortexes and not our glands." He would not have the American flag "supplemented by any other," he snapped, finishing up because now the day was dying, the fog rolling in: ". . . I leave it to you for the consideration of your cortexes."

Most of us, though—mild and hypercivilized though we were—couldn't quite leave it there. The glands—or something—have reasons the cortex knows not of. And now, as the years wing by and all that pageantry and noise fades and comes to seem even a little ridiculous, I begin to think those costumes and symbols were beacons all right, tentative and wary and insistent, not so much for Nixon, Agnew and Reagan, as for the demonstrators themselves, for us, flares fired in the darkness by the lost, the decent, the unfulfilled.

## **BAD DEBTS**

You peel an orange for someone  
who's again bit her nails to the quick.  
She ignores the gesture's fruit,

but who can miss the sharp oils released?  
The air is as freighted as that  
over mint fields during harvest,

something shot past, caught afterwards.  
The civil voices of your parents  
wafted away as you drowsed in the back seat.

Beside you lay the shell, lime-whorled,  
ripe with death's salt and stink.  
Against your ear, its waves matched

the waves of your blood, giving back  
what you are always left, that thief  
of the moment, yourself. You owe something

still to that shell just as this woman  
must owe you for wandering when you did  
and for coming back as if to some other room.

She offers you an orange segment  
but lets you open her hand and follow  
the almost moonless nails, their calendar

of tenses, because it has nothing  
to do with her. It's yourself you must  
pay back, blankness for blankness,

kindness in kind.

—*Debra Greger*

Reprinted from (*Seneca Review*)

## **MONTHS OF AGONY ARE SPENT**

Months of agony are spent  
With low flying birds  
It is prolonged, then ended  
But never finished.  
The curtains spread my papers  
They give in to the breeze  
Remind me the water is boiling  
I'm liable to be cold  
Watch them laugh  
Their vulgarity is deafening.

*—Tina Brophy*

## BARON SAMEDI

We are here to educate as well.  
This is why fear is not allowed.

We talk to ourselves silently,  
coming into a town so small  
it is barely on the map.  
The chickens are neutral as usual.  
There is an air of people gone only  
a few seconds. Dinner's on the table.

One of the men calls and we go  
to the barber's hut.

In the stool sits a small black man  
made of wood and bone and wire,

No one touches it. **Baron Samedi** is  
whispered. In this 20th century  
since whenever we started counting,  
six educated men refuse to touch this doll.  
It stares at us.

The barber's razor is dim in the bottom  
of a bowl of dirty water. We decide to go.  
Our boots leave the only man-made tracks  
in this area. We back out slowly, and  
dust them away with a palm frond.

—*Quinton Duval*

Reprinted from (*Guerilla Letters*, Quarterly West Press, 1978)

## SONG

Today Diana walked through the graveyard  
While it rained and grew dark and death  
Had an advantage. She sang aloud  
Lies of pain, physically she hurt  
For love. Tonight when her body  
Is closed in flesh and she holds  
Her limp and dreaming man closer  
Than the hunted air she'll  
Not remember the future again,  
But will wish and comb her hair  
For the attention of being and be  
Beautiful fruitlessly.  
Men will watch her skip  
Sideways through the stones and  
Ask themselves for peace.

—*Joseph Walker*

## SEEKING BUDDHA ON THE NIGHT SHIFT

by *David Cowan*

It was a short report. "Mr. Amaretti is doing well, vital signs stable, three days post open heart. He has been up in a chair for fifteen minutes twice during the day and tolerated it well. He is still asking for pain meds frequently, and it's time to start cutting him back. Heart rhythm good, no problems.

"Mike Salisbury, ex-high school football star is, of course, still on the respirator. Head dressing dry and intact. Slow heart rate. No response to all but painful stimuli. Right pupil blown . . . 6-8 millimeters in diameter, left 2-4 millimeters; both react slightly to light. Just a matter of time.

"Eunice Parker is still having PVC's, or extra heartbeats. Should have gotten transferred yesterday, but Dr. Wallace is out of town and the covering physician doesn't want to make the decision. She's bored and whiny. Dressing's off her abdomen, and the incision looks fine. Her jaundice is clearing up. At eight, she's entitled to a few PVC's.

"The other old lady, Marybelle Atkinson, ninety-one, is driving everybody nuts. Disoriented. Uncooperative. Yelling for her daughter all day . . . her daughter died six years ago. Hip's doing fine, though. Should be transferred tomorrow, thank God. Got three milligrams of Valium IV at ten P.M. and is sleeping. Good luck.

"Willy went at two forty-five, just thought you'd like to know. His blood pressure bottomed out, and we could barely maintain it with a Dopamine drip. Dr. Horn said to let him go, so we discontinued the drip. He went V-tach, V-fib, and out in a few minutes. His wife was there and took it pretty well, I guess. That's it."

Joanne Newbury, charge nurse on the night shift in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit, shut off the cassette recorder on which the PM shift had taped their report. Two other RN's, Peter Mobley and Moricia Steepleton, sat at the round table in the tiny report room. Peter looked half asleep.

"So, old Willy's gone," he mused, staring at his fingernails. "I won't know what to do without him to pull his covers off and shock the visitors." He sighed.

Moricia took a last drag off her cigarette, stubbed it out, and stood up. "Another night spent in the service of humanity." She squeezed out between the wall and the table into the bathroom, in which there was barely room for a toilet, a sink, and a Kotex dispenser, and closed the door. Joanne and Peter could hear her peeing, but it didn't matter.

The report room was made even smaller by a high row of lockers against the far wall. Scuffed and stained white shoes lay haphazardly on the floor against them, and a pair of pantyhose hung over the open door of one of the tiny cubicles. The room smelled of old cigarette smoke, burned coffee, and sweaty feet.

"How'd you sleep, Peter?" asked Joanne. She was a plump, pinkfaced woman with graying hair styled close to her head. She wore wing-tip glasses that were attached to a silver chain encircling her neck, and she was undoubtedly somebody's grandmother.

"Terrible. I got two hours before the Jehovah's Witnesses hit me. I was so sleepy, I didn't realize my fly was open til I saw the looks on their faces; I didn't even have to yell at them." He chuckled.

"I just put a sign on my door, 'Day sleeper, knock at your own risk'."

"Yeah, I've been meaning to do something like that. I ought to do that. God, am I tired, and I've got three days to go."

"Don't worry, kid, if it stays slow, we'll let you take an hour's nap."

The toilet flushed, and there was a sound of running water, then paper towels being pulled from the dispenser. Moricia emerged, smoothing her uniform. The white fabric clung tightly to her slender body and made her tanned skin seem even darker. "If we don't get going, we'll never get done," she said, moving towards the door. "Come on, Peter, get the lead out. You'll never learn to be a red-hot ICU nurse in here."

Joanne slung her stethoscope around her neck and got up. Peter groaned and trailed them into the hallway. The sound of the single respirator hissed into the stark corridor, and the monitors could be heard faintly, each with its own beep-beep-beep. Moricia stepped on the black rubber mat before the entrance to the Unit, and the two heavy doors swung inward. Over the doorway was a sign: SICU. NO ADMITTANCE. Authorized Personnel Only.

Moricia headed for the coffeepot located in the medications room at the near end of the large, rectangular ward. Eight beds were arranged in an elongated semi-circle against three walls, and opposite the automatic doors were two rooms, "quiet rooms," with one bed each. The quiet rooms were for isolation of

infectious patients and obnoxiously noisy ones. In the middle of the Unit was the nursing station, raised six inches on a platform and running half the length of the room. It was surrounded by a parapet of desktop with two entrances and had a bank of monitor screens and EKG readouts at one end, telephones and office supplies at the other. It looked like a small fort. Two PM nurses sat at the station with their feet propped up on empty chairs, reading. A third nurse had gone home already.

"You're in for a slow one, gang," said one of the PM crew, looking up from her book.

"OK with me," Peter replied. "Last week was busy enough to last me quite a while." He squeezed into the tiny med room, rubbing bottoms with Moricia as he reached for a styrofoam cup.

"Oops, pardon me," he mumbled, filling his cup with muddy coffee.

"We've gotta stop meeting like this, Peter," said Moricia with a feral grin. She reached quickly for his ribs and dug in without mercy.

"Oh God, stop it! Stop it! I'll spill my coffee!" Peter laughed and tried to twist away. Moricia shrieked and his coffee splashed onto the medications counter, inundating an already soggy donut and several medications cards. "There, Goddammit, look what you've made me do!"

Moricia laughed, watching a blush creep up Peter's neck to his forehead.

"Aw-w-w, did Peter spill his coffee?"

"I hope it's not going to be THAT kind of night, Moricia. No water fights, no electropaste down my neck, no salt in my coffee, and no rumors of a bus and train accident . . . just let me take care of my patients and read in peace. OK?"

Moricia picked up a wad of paper napkins and started to wipe up the coffee. "I can't be responsible for my actions when it's slow."

"Well, try," Peter said as he inched carefully by her, holding a new cup of coffee out of her reach.

"You and Moricia are cute together," said Joanne as Peter came out of the med room. She laughed as he rolled his eyes.

"All right, you guys, let's go," exclaimed the PM charge nurse, "we want to go home. I've already read three magazines, stuffed all the charts, and stocked the bedside lockers, and I'm bored to death."

Joanne grunted as she mounted the step to the nurse's station; her arthritis had recently settled in her knees.

"No questions. Go on home."

"Gladly. Ann, you want to go for a drink somewhere?"

Ann started to unwind herself from her chairs, laying down her

book. "Sure. Let's go by the E.R. and see if we can scare up some company." She picked up her sweater and purse and stood up.

"Good idea."

They stepped down and walked towards the doors. Ann turned as she got to the rubber mat. "Goodnight, folks. Don't work too hard." She laughed. The doors hissed, creaked open and shut, and they were gone.

Peter felt a tightness in his stomach as the responsibility of the next eight hours settled down on him. He had worked here since he had gotten his license seven months ago and had seen most of the things that went wrong with the acutely ill. It could happen fast, and if it was serious there were always the questions: Could I have prevented it? Did I catch it as soon as I should have? Did I do the right thing? He stepped onto the central platform and automatically scanned the cardiac monitors. Without thinking, he noted the heart rates, regularity of the beats, and lack of obvious intruded beats.

"Want another cup, Moricia?" Joanne, want some coffee?"

"Sure. It's going to be a long one," Moricia replied, running her finger down a list of morning lab work, checking for goofs.

"I'll take a shot of Maalox, Peter, if you don't mind. Coffee's been hard on my stomach lately, but I know I'm going to need some before morning."

"Why don't you just take Maalox in your coffee, Joanne?" Peter laughed.

"I've tried it. Yech!"

It was an hour before the initial patient check was done and the first nursing note charted. Each patient, whether he wanted it or not, got a complete going over: level of consciousness, pupil size and reaction to light, skin color and warmth, quality of pulse; listen to heart, listen to lungs, listen to belly. Check hand strength both sides, look for rashes and bruises. Check any dressings for drainage and IV sites for infiltration . . . an infiltrated IV can put a half a liter of fluid or more into the tissue around a vein. Make sure all the right bottles are hanging and dripping at the right rate. Check oxygen flow rates and monitor alarms. See if your patients peed in the bed. Change their position so they won't stiffen up, rub their backs and any place that might be prone to pressure sores. Any pain? Slip 'em some morphine or demerol through the IV tubing. Nighty-night. At least until the next check in two hours or so. Then write it all down in the chart.

Peter had taken Mike Salisbury, so he checked the respirator settings, emptied the condensed water out of the hoses and suctioned out the tracheostomy tube that formed a passage for

the machine into the young man's throat. Suctioning hurts. Mike stirred a little as the sterile tube was passed six or eight inches into his trachea and then withdrawn while hooked up to the vacuum line at the wall. Peter examined the traces of thick, whitish mucus for discoloration and infection, found none, and threw the suction catheter away. Mike settled down when the respirator resumed its slow, rhythmic influx of oxygen-rich air. Peter stood back and looked at the muscular body that was beginning to waste away. The once deep tan was fading to the same color as the triangular patch at the hips, and the eyes were taped shut. Without his eyes taped, Mike would stare at the ceiling, unseeing, until his eyeballs dried out. Peter shook his head.

"What a shame," he said quietly.

"You said it," said Moricia, who had come up behind him. "What a body."

"Jesus, what a thing to say! The least you could do is respect his modesty."

"What modesty? His EEG has been flat the last two times they got one. Boy, he really messed himself up in that souped-up car of his." Moricia leaned close to Peter's shoulder. "Come on," she whispered, "don't you ever get a little turned on by your patients? How about that cute little sixteen-year-old appendectomy in here a couple of months ago? You checked her belly an awful lot."

"Maybe a little," Peter shrugged, "but I don't stand around drooling like you do."

"I don't drool. I'm too professional for that. A glance here, a peek there, and 'here, let me fluff your covers, sir.' I think it's normal, you know, just to see what they've got."

"You're disgusting!" Peter said, making a face. Despite the dim lighting, Moricia could see that he was blushing again.

"AHA! You DO take a peek, don't you! Don't you!"

Peter busied himself tidying the equipment.

When they were back up at the nurses' station, Moricia started to bring it up again, but Joanne spotted a joined pair of PVC's on Amaretti's monitor. She reached over and stabbed the readout button, saying: "Oh dear, what have we here?"

The finely graphed paper peeled slowly out of the machine and a hot needle made delicate tracings on the lightly waxed surface that passed underneath. The PVC's looked like two drunken soldiers trying to pass unnoticed in close order drill; a string of them together would indicate a deadly cardiac situation. Peter stared at the monitor screen as the tape piled into a heap on the floor.

"No more so far," he said, fiddling nervously with his pen.

Joanne and Moricia examined the strip with the PVC's closely, marking off minute distances with calipers, calculating the origin and the extent of the threat.

"Well, I don't know." Moricia tapped the calipers against the desk top. "I think I'd wait and see if he has any more. What's he up to, anyway?"

Peter jumped up and walked over to Amaretti's bedside and noted the easy rise and fall of his chest, brushed the backs of his fingers against an arm and felt the warm, hairy flesh. He walked back to the station.

"He's sleeping." Peter plopped into his chair. "Any more?"

"No. I think that's it." Joanne leaned back and regarded the monitor. The tape readout had been shut off. "His potassium was 4.1 this morning, and he hasn't peed enough to drop it much. We'll just keep an eye on him. One more coupling like that and we'll let him have it with Lidocaine." She smoothed back her short hair. Tension began to dissipate as the green squiggles continued to bound evenly across the screen.

Two A.M. came and went without incident. At two-thirty the supervisor came around to see how they were doing and to drop off some paperwork.

"Slow night, huh?" she said, glancing around. She didn't like the Intensive Care Units. Too many complicated machines, too many crises, too many people dying. And the Unit nurses were such Goddamn elitists.

"Yeah," Moricia said with a yawn, "wish we'd get a nice juicy accident or something. No, I'm just kidding."

"How's the rest of the house?" Joanne asked.

"Pretty quiet. One of the patients over in Medical ICU expired. Old chronic lunger, no code. By the way, Peter, they'd like some help getting him to the morgue."

"Yeah, sure. When do they want to move him?"

"Whenever you're ready."

"OK."

"Thanks." The supervisor turned and walked out the door with a mild sense of relief.

"I guess I'll go up and help transfer that body. Something to do, anyway."

"Alright, Peter. Have fun." Joanne smiled and picked up her knitting, glancing absently across the set of monitor screens. Their fluorescent green glow and regular motion were hypnotic in the subdued light. She stared at them for a while then turned back to her handwork with a yawn.

Hal Graves looked up from his writing as Peter came in. "Thanks a lot for helping out," he said, tucking his pen in his pocket. "He's just too big for me and one of the girls, and he

may be too big for us, but we'll have to do it."

Hal was gay. He was open about it, wore a small gold earring in one ear, and brought his lover to the staff parties. Nobody minded; he was very good at ICU nursing. He had worked six years as an LVN and had been an RN for three. He had a sixth sense about patients that had baffled many of the doctors, and it wasn't uncommon for Hal to buttonhole a respected Cardiologist and say: "Look, something's going on with Mrs. J., and I think I know what it is," and he would tell him. It would be foolish not to listen, and most of them did.

"What do you think?" Hal went over and pulled the curtains aside, revealing the sheet-covered body lying on its back. It rose to a rounded hump in the middle, and the right foot stuck out from under the clean linen, waxy and white. There was a small luggage tag tied to the big toe.

"God, he looks big. I hope we don't have to lift him up to the top locker."

"Me, too."

Peter wheeled a guerny over and untucked the bottom sheet along his side of the bed. There was a sheet already on the narrow cart.

"Want to take him on the bottom sheet?" Peter asked.

"Yeah. Let's get him over to the side of the bed, first, then we can haul him onto the guerny."

They worked the sodden corpse to the edge of the bed, then maneuvered the cart up to him. A gurgling belch came from below the sheet, and Peter jumped back several feet. He recovered himself immediately and looked sheepish. "Shit, I hate it when they do that."

Hal laughed. "That's OK, man, just a little air in his belly. Gives you the creeps, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, really." They reached over the cart and grasped the bottom bed sheet. "You ready?"

"Yup. One, two, three."

They strained on the sheet. The shoulders slid up on the cart, but the buttocks seemed cemented to the bed.

"GodDAMN, he must weigh over two hundred pounds!" Peter moaned.

"At least, and it's all in his butt. Let's get some help." Hal pushed through the curtains and returned in a minute with two women, a tall, black RN and a lumpy-faced blonde aide.

"Hi, Mac; hi, Nancy."

"Hi, Peter."

"Hello, Peter." The tall woman smiled a little. "You staying out of Moricia's clutches, these days?"

"It isn't easy, Mac, it isn't easy," Peter grinned.

**"OK, troops," Hal directed, "let's go."**

The two women climbed up on the far side of the bed, on their knees, and grabbed handfuls of the bottom sheet.

**"On three," said Hal, "one, two, three, LIFT."**

This time they were able to pull the body onto the cart.

While the women climbed down, Hal flourished his right hand and bowed. **"Thanks a lot, ladies."**

**"Any time, honey,"** said the blonde. They brushed aside the curtain and left.

With Hal at the head and Peter at the feet they wheeled the guerny out of the unit, down the hall, and into a freight elevator. They got out in the basement, turned right, right again, and then down a long corridor to the morgue. There was a small, rhythmic squeak from one wheel that echoed off the cement walls as they went.

When they reached the morgue, Hal pulled a key out of his pocket, unlocked the door, and switched on the light. The room was small, with a stainless steel autopsy table in the middle and cabinets lining one wall. In the cabinets were jars, and in the jars were what were considered stirring examples of pathology: ruptured hearts, calcified livers, clogged up pieces of this and that. In a particularly large jar was a nearly mature fetus, upsidedown. The place was cold and reeked of formaldehyde. Opposite the cabinets were the two storage lockers, laid alongside the wall, one on top of the other like two huge aluminum coffins. It was a tight squeeze to get a guerny between the table and the open pull-down door of the locker.

**"Oh, no,"** said Peter, opening the bottom locker, **"there's somebody in here."**

**"How about the top?"** asked Hal.

Peter shut the bottom door with a muffled thump and opened the top one. **"Nope, this one's empty; at least we won't have to stack 'em on top of each other."**

**"I don't think the guerny will fit in between the top locker and the table with the pan pulled out,"** Hal said dubiously. They tried it, but with the long, steel pan pulled sideways on its runners, there was no maneuvering room.

**"Look,"** said Hal, **"I've done this before. What we do is close the locker, transfer him to the table, pull the guerny out of the way, open the locker, pull out the pan, and heave him in from the table. How about that?"**

**"Sounds OK. I wish they'd get a hoist in here; somebody's going to mess up their back doing this."**

They closed the locker and wheeled the cart beside the table. Untucking the sheet under the thin mattress, they slid the body over onto the steel surface, which was easier than pulling it off a

bed. When the guerny was out of the way and the locker open and waiting, they stationed themselves, Peter at the head and Hal at the feet, to swing the corpse over into the pan.

"Ready, Peter?"

"Ready as I'll ever be."

"OK. One, two, three, UP."

Peter was gratified to feel the weight budge, then slip smoothly off the table, but as the body began to pass over empty space, it started to slip. There were two sheets stuffed underneath it, and Peter had one in each hand. The heavy torso parted the two pieces of linen like tissue paper, and the head hit the concrete floor with a dull crunch. The legs slid off of Hal's end and followed with two muffled slaps. Peter felt faint.

"Oh . . . oh . . . oh my God," whispered Hal. His jaw was hanging open, and his face had gone white.

Peter took a step backward, reached for the corner of the autopsy table, missed, and sat down clumsily on the floor. "Jesus Christ," he said hoarsely, "I feel like I killed him."

"Killed him?" Hal said in a small voice. "Killed him?" He started to laugh. Then he shouted with laughter, doubling up and slapping his thighs.

Peter looked at the grey, flabby face staring up from the floor and chuckled. Then he, too, began to laugh, bouncing up and down on the cold floor like a sitting jack-in-the-box. When one stopped to wipe his tears, he would look at the other and start up again. After a while, Peter crawled forward and felt the back of the corpse's head, then around the sides. There was a big, soft indentation where it had hit, and the skull was split nearly to the forehead, under the skin.

"Oh, God, what am I going to do? When they do the autopsy, they'll think the nurses clubbed him to death."

"Yeah, he was a pain in the ass," said Hal. "Let's see if we can get him into the pan, then we'll think about it. And make sure you've got one sheet this time. God, what a clutz."

When they were ready, Hal asked him again if he had one sheet.

"I've got one sheet, already. I'm sure."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure, I'm sure."

"You're really sure?"

"You want to take this end?"

"No, let's go."

They heaved the body up and balanced it precariously on the edge of the pan. Hal managed to get one leg in, but Peter was suffering.

"Hurry . . . I can't hold him much longer. Oh, God . . . don't

let me laugh.”

Hal worked the other leg in, then turned around and put his shoulders under the massive buttocks and pushed up. “I hope there’s nothing to leak through this sheet,” he grunted. Inch by inch, they got the torso over the lip of the pan until they could push it the rest of the way easily. The arms were tucked under the cover sheet, but the body still hung over a little on each side. When they had pushed the pan back into the cooler and snapped it shut, they looked at each other.

“What are we going to do, Hal?”

“Well, I figure it this way. He died of heart and lung problems; what do they need to open the head for? It’s not a legal case, so just forget it.”

“Forget it?”

“Forget it.”

“No accident report?”

“That’s right. If it’s important, they’ll find you.”

“Well, OK.”

“You do what you want, but that’s what I’d do.”

“OK, that’s what I’ll do.”

“Just don’t go noising it around, that’s all.”

“Oh yeah, for sure. My lips are sealed.”

“Right. Well, thanks for your, uh, help. I’ll take the guerney back.” Hal grinned. They turned out the lights and shut the door.

“Guess I’ll wander on back to SICU.”

“OK, Peter, try not to look too guilty. See you around, Clutz.”

Hal headed off towards the freight elevators, but Peter went to the passenger lift nearby; the car came almost as soon as he rang for it. He got on and pushed the button for one, but when the doors opened he stood unmoving and stared out at the deserted lobby. On impulse, he pushed the button for eleven, the doors slid shut, and he was carried without stopping to the top floor of the building. He strode to the stairwell, climbed the flight of steps that led to the roof and opened the door. A cold gust of wind whipped his uniform as he stepped outside. Shivering, he walked over to the fence that ran along the edge and looked out. Streetlights made a regular pattern of glowing, white dots, and traffic signals changed from red to green, amber to red, without purpose. The lights fanned out and spread up the hills surrounding the city, winking in the changing air currents and making the huge basin seem filled with fallen stars. Peter took several deep breaths, turned and walked slowly back towards the stairwell.

Two weeks later, he was asked to help transfer a body from the orthopedic floor to the morgue. As the supervisor walked away, she muttered half to herself, “And don’t drop him like those other two jerks.” Peter felt a thrill of fear and then began to laugh.

## **DROUGHT**

The cattle bowed almost to breaking  
moan loudly for each lost horn  
The sky doesn't hear

Strung in a circle the birds  
make a dry flight  
We have open palms for a prayer

The clock marks  
the heat of the grass  
The wind barely brings several drops of rain

The feet cracked and bloody  
can kill everything on the road

Forming a black threat the ants  
bury themselves deeply  
The late rain begins to fall  
We have opened our houses for the flood  
The rounded body pains me in water  
My dead bird doesn't fly  
I can open the window  
and shout till madness

—Radovan Pavloski

Translated by *Bryce Conrad and Zoran Anchevsky.*

## WRESTLERS

They fly out from the dream  
Like pure silk of energy  
Chased by the blood's lament  
They sneak everywhere with lit torches  
How difficult it is  
To keep balance with the heavenly bodies  
And to sing

I do  
What the gods forgot  
During the world's creation I didn't escape

In my soul I saw myself taller than the mountain  
And broke  
The weave of rivers  
In the crop.

—Radovan Pavloski  
Translated by *Bryce Conrad and Zoran Anchevsky.*

## **CLAY BODIES**

Slap, knead, and squeeze  
until all the bubbles disappear.  
Then gently roll the clay into coils  
placing each new one  
upon its old neighbor.

Around the weaving circle  
a clay form emerges.  
Its wide old woman's bottom  
curves more gently toward the rim.  
Securely attach a handle  
on its scored side,  
gone now is its symmetry.

Massage thoroughly the body,  
smoothing any new cracks or old wrinkles.  
They disappear, the shape  
of one drinking vessel appears.  
Through leather-hard stage to bone dry,  
it must remain untouched.  
Then underglaze, fire, overglaze, fire,  
open the kiln door to find,  
the clay body survives, unbroken  
its glossy gaze shines success.

—*Helen Hart*

## **TONIGHT ANOTHER LOVER'S MOON**

Tonight another lovers moon  
is pressing honey kisses  
on my lips,  
and the poems that come  
are sweet and thick  
like spittle,  
and they drool and drip  
and dribble down my chin,  
so I catch them with my tongue  
and pull them in.

15/10/78

—*Alayne Ronnenberg*

## **CONFIDENCE NEEDS OUR EYES**

We have thought across from each other  
over intimate diplomatic tables in cafes  
staring at cup rims,  
pouring half ourselves out,  
sipping at our other halves  
like desert birds  
sip dew,

took walks under ivy buildings,  
down park streets ending on bench seats,  
talking, always talking,  
never stopping the old lines from  
coming out like fat insurance agents  
leaving another client confident  
that accidents can be prevented  
by paying high premiums on platitudes.

confidence needs our eyes.  
we have walked to so many places  
and have talked about so many things  
but have gone nowhere  
near ourselves and have said nothing  
too eagerly.

—*David Scott Lenton*

**AFTER ARGUING AGAINST STANLEY'S AND DIANE'S  
CONTENTION THAT POETRY MUST COME FROM  
DISCONTENT**

Whispering to each handhold, "I'll be back,"  
I go up the cliff in the dark. One place  
I loosen a rock and listen a long time  
till it hits, faint in the gulf, but the rush  
of the torrent almost drowns it out, and the wind—  
I almost forgot the wind: it tears at your side  
or it waits and then buffets; you sag outward. . . .

I remember they said it would be hard. I scramble  
by luck into a little pocket out of  
the wind and begin to beat on the stones  
with my scratched numb hands, rocking back and forth  
in silent laughter there in the dark—  
"Made it again!" Oh how I love this climb!  
—the whispering to stones, the drag, the weight  
as your muscles crack and ease on, working  
right. They are back there, discontent,  
waiting to be driven forth. I pound  
on the earth, riding the earth past the stars:  
"Made it again! Made it again!"

—*William Stafford*  
Reprinted from ("Tendril")

## ASSURANCE

You will never be alone, you hear so deep  
a sound when autumn comes. Yellow  
pulls across the hills and thrums,  
or the silence after lightning before it says  
its name—and then the clouds' wide-mouthed  
apologies. You were aimed from birth:  
you will never be alone. Rain  
will come, a gutter filled, an Amazon,  
long aisles—you never heard so deep a sound,  
moss on rock, and years. You turn your head—  
that's what the silence meant? **You're not alone.**

The whole wide day pours down.

—*William Stafford*

Reprinted from ("Handbook")

## **PACIFIC AND ONE CITIZEN**

Wet December wind rolls  
off the Pacific  
pulling flame from match-head.

Uniformed men mill  
in the plaza square  
anonymously drunk.

Flesh for money outside  
all night tattoo shop,  
murders secretly occur nearby.

Neon day-night flashes  
colored rain down into  
this port of private shadows.

At the bus stop  
no one is going or waiting  
for home.

2-78

—*Gary Russ*

## LEGEND OF THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK *TAO TE CHING* ON LAO-TSE'S WAY INTO EMIGRATION

When he was seventy and frail,  
The teacher longed for rest and peace.  
For once again goodness was on the wane in the land,  
And evil was getting stronger by the day.  
And he buckled his shoes.

And he packed only what he needed.  
Not much. But still there was this and that.  
Such as the pipe he smoked every evening.  
And the little book he always read.  
And a supply of white bread.

He enjoyed his last glance at the valley and forgot it  
As soon as his path turned toward the mountains.  
And his ox enjoyed the fresh grass,  
Chewing, while carrying the old man,  
Who was not in any hurry.

But on the fourth day, high up in the mountains  
A customs official blocked his path.  
"Any valuable goods to declare?"—"None."  
And the boy who led the ox said, "He was a teacher."  
And this explained it all.

But the man in a jolly moment  
Asked, "Did he find out anything?"  
Replied the boy, "That gentle water in motion  
Will in time conquer the mighty rock.  
You understand, it's the hard things that succumb."

To waste no more of the waning day  
The boy edged the ox on.  
And the three were passing out of sight near a black fir,  
When suddenly our man snapped into action,  
Yelling loudly, "Hey you, stop!"

"What's this about the water, old man?"  
The old man stopped, "Are you interested in it?"  
Said he, "I'm just a customs official,  
But who conquers whom that interests me too.  
If you know it, then speak!"

Write it down for me! Dictate it to this boy!  
Don't just take something like that to the grave with you.  
After all, we do have ink and paper,  
And an evening meal to boot, I live over there.  
Well, is it a deal?"

Over his shoulder the old man glanced  
At the man. Patched jacket. No shoes.  
And his brow one big wrinkle.  
This was no conqueror—of that he was sure.  
And he murmured, "You, too?"

To reject a polite request  
The old man felt too old, it seemed.  
For he said aloud, "Those who ask  
Deserve an answer." Said the boy, "Besides, it's getting cold."  
"All right, we'll stay a short while."

And down from his ox climbed the sage.  
Seven days the two of them kept writing.  
And the customs official kept bringing food (and now  
Cursed only quietly at the smugglers during this time).  
And then the work was done.

And the boy handed the customs official  
One morning eighty-one verses.  
And after thanking their host for a small souvenir,  
They soon disappeared behind that black fir into the mountains.  
Now tell me: Can anyone be more polite?

But let us not only praise the sage  
Whose name is engraved on the book *Tao Te Ching*.  
For one must first pry loose the sage's wisdom.  
Therefore let us also thank the customs official  
for t'was he who made the sage reveal it.

—Bertolt Brecht  
Translated by *Karl Simon*

## WHITE NOISE

Is big, not ever waking up. Is just buzzes.  
Parts of bodies pulling backwards. On Ocean Avenue  
he's sitting with it pouring out all over  
his body through the air.

What the family used to drown  
him in. His little white  
paper napkins with their English rhymes in slow cursive,  
riding in his pocket  
from the public library, stone lions moaning some  
pearly wet stuff, all the way  
to the subway hole. White linings  
in both pockets. Tube life  
trusting to the black. Who would know him ever  
in his secret dollars.

Banks with three names and that woman's hand  
passing under the glass to him the small green book  
between them with its rows of numbers,  
white pages making the humming sound.

He liked it familiar.

Even hate could buzz and then it wouldn't hurt,  
if you pushed it into the white.  
Now words all over the subway cars.  
Someone's hand had put them.  
To put into the world. How did they,  
in the noise. It was pouring through him. Sometimes, from  
the outside too,  
in voices so tightly stuck onto each other.  
Stamps with French and Egyptian words glued  
to white envelopes. In shut canvas bags.  
At home they laughed, kept the big eye always  
open with its voices falling out, pouring furniture  
and used cars. It was who you knew  
made you big on the eye.  
He was not seen by it.  
He tried to explain this to his son whenever  
the phone call came. Something he remembered  
from when it was early. To try to save his son  
from that pulling. He couldn't stop.  
White was like fog  
and chattered. How did you know  
which face you could look at?

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES . . .

**Joanne Harris Allred** . . . has been a graduate student and teaching assistant at Chico State University. She is originally from Utah and is presently completing her first volume of poems, *Widows, Crones and Refurbished Virgins*.

**Tina Brophy** . . . says, "I'm 19 and a junior at CSUC, majoring in Journalism. After graduating I would choose to write without restrictions—my main concerns being philosophy, poetry, and experience."

**Clark Brown** . . . is best known for his novel, *The Disciple* (Viking Press), but his short fiction has appeared in literary magazines across the country. Besides being a member of CSUC's Creative Writing staff, Clark is also a utility infielder for the "Pests" softball team.

**Bill Cirigliano** . . . says, "I know Joe and Kathryn in Healdsburg, Winton and Marie in Antioch, Bill and Linda in Aptos, Lynda S. in Wash. D.C., and I'm having a wisdom tooth pulled Tuesday."

**David Cowan** . . . grew up near either the woods or the ocean, went to private schools, dropped out of college. Attended the wars, drifted. Went back to school, drifted. Got an LVN license and worked nights, Intensive Care. Came to Chico to get an RN, got into English instead; a very good decision.

**Quinton Duval** . . . teaches in the CSUC English Department periodically. Published widely, Quinton's new chapbook, *Guerilla Letters*, has just been published by Quarterly West Press.

**Susan Fitzpatrick** . . . is a graduate student at CSUC and a former contributor to *Trial Impression*. Her short story, "Mendocino," appeared in our first issue.

**Kathleen Fraser** . . . the well-known poet from San Francisco (whose newest book of poems, *What Am I*, is excellent) visited Chico last semester and read at the Literary Guild's Wednesday Night Poetry Reading.

**Debra Greger** . . . is a new member of the CSUC Creative Writing staff, and has been published in such well-known magazines as "The Nation" and the *Seneca Review*.

**Helen Hart** . . . says, "I am in my junior year as an art major. Creative writing is my minor. My first love in writing is children's stories, and more recently I have experimented with poetry writing."

**George Keithley** . . . has had several books of poetry published, including his *Donner Party* epic, published by George Braziller. A member of the CSUC Creative Writing staff, George is also the lead-off batter for the "Pests."

**David Scott Lenton** . . . says, "I have lived in Chico for nearly four years and am part of that white, urban exodus which chose to escape the milieu of the major west coast cities by moving to small, white and quasi-provincial college towns. I am an English major nearing graduation at CSUC and have been trying to write poetry for about two years."

**Alayne Ronnenberg** . . . is a senior transfer from the University of Iowa, writing again after too many years of silence, precipitated by maternal joy. Alayne is planning on grad school in Oregon next year.

**William Stafford** . . . won a National Book Award for his book of poems, *Travelling Through the Dark*, has been published in every notable literary magazine in the country, and is our most distinguished visiting poet for the Fine Arts Festival.

**Lloyd Stensrud** . . . is a twenty-six year old writer and conceptual artist who has published poems in the United States and Canada. His plays include *Giant Camera*, which was performed at the 1974 San Francisco State Experimental Theatre Production Association's *Dada Cabaret*. Lloyd's *Schwell*, a xerox/collage magazine, recently had its premier issue.

**Gary Thompson** . . . has been in Chico for four or five years now, teaching Creative Writing mostly. His poems have appeared in such leading periodicals as the *Chicago Review*, the *American Poetry Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*. Gary also plays a mean second base for the "Pests."

**Joseph Walker** . . . says, "I am a graduate student in English here in Chico, and have had ten poems accepted for publication in various small poetry magazines. I have also given readings each of the past two years through the Literary Guild."

**Julle Wixson** . . . is a sophomore at Chico State, tentatively majoring in English. She comes from Zenia, a ranching community in the mountains of southern Trinity County.

*Trial Impression* was set by Pat Weir on a Compugraphic in 10 and 11 point English, printed on 70 wt. Artemis Text by the Duplicating Center, C.S.U.C., bound by Inland Bindery, Sacramento, CA.

