

ALEMBIC

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Photographs
Henry Golembeski



All We Said

*Every word,
very worthlessly,
dropped,
down,
down,
like, loose, leaves,
 leaving,
 life
to be crisp,
but dead,
everything we said,
all we said.*

Daniel Francazio

on the common ground

this time is not for a mild
unsettling of spirits this time
of year russet
flaming trees

i take the path down
to where the woods
rise up blazing
giants
to where the stream runs
through the center of things

i am the invader
squashing mushrooms as i
move looking
for a place to winter
and you are the hunter
who comes out of the
night ripping the hearts
out of squirrels with a passionate
hand

but we are blind
we are hiding
behind our blindness
tearing up roots trying to save
ourselves
searching on the common ground

Kathleen Mele

Oaks

Oaks stand guarding sacred earth,
Never flinching persistent in their work,
Extending branches phalanx forms,
Hoofed scouts warn of thumbled invaders.
Barbarians raping the valley with every step,
Tearing her from womb to breast,
Uprooting her treasures of spruce and pine,
Leaving her as barren winter's dead.
Laughing they leave her . . .

Thomas Moses

Encounter

behind
the screen
your eyes like his would sink
low as despair
how can i compare
all of that glass moon
inside of me
about to break
mis-take?
that smile just curved
 enough

to inspire
fire
where
the ashes
of the last
one lie dead
not one red
ember among
the black.

Debra Prevey

Nuts

The squirrel is thick and rich in fur.
When he runs his tail undulates:
Brown cascade tumbling for nuts.
Hoarder of the winter he pauses
Clutching an acorn in his paws, little globe
to tanic acid in his shrivelled paws.
Is this the way my kyke calling friends
See me, a Jew shrivelled to the economy of my skin?

My cousin is five years a Jew.
How old can she get before she becomes
a threat to someone who thinks
Jews are strange, wormy with age
Prophetic vultures who will outlast all other men.
Jews die like everyone else. We all
Know we've seen the pictures, but really
How long does she have?

I drive home from work seeing death:
The bodies of squirrels splashed by tire
Treads as black as boots and just as firmly
Rooted. The motorist racing to a second
Hand. Not conscious of the season of the squirrel:
Stockpiling for the winter. The motorist not
Concerned with seasons but only getting home, and
We all know squirrels are shall we say
Expendable with their greedy eyes?

Dora Schaffer

I

The winter coated science museum squats like a toad
upon the green sea ice of the Charles.
Bare branches line the banks
as the fish move slowly, myopic eyes wide
always staring. . . .

I have dreamed I was a fish many times.
A mackerel running south towards warmer waters.
Once I was chased by a whale and swallowed whole.
The huge teeth slammed like a bear trap
as I laid on my side gills flared and red
I felt the warmth and counted my ribs. . . .

On windy nights I saw myself
riding out a hurricane aboard a tuna boat
green waves crashed the gunwales.
The tall, thin poles lashed back in the winds
like the antennae of a lobster.
I tied myself to the wheel,
and when we sank I lay quiet on the bottom.
Where the sharks plucked out my eyes
red coral glittered in the green light
of sunset on dark waters. . . .

II

I remember visiting a psychiatric ward.
Passing the barred doors, the screams,
the white jacketed doctor stared
from behind black horned rimmed glasses
asking, "Can I help you?"
I hurried past and met a girl
carrying a doll.
Her eyes wide like cow's.
"Where's my mommy? Is she coming soon?"

Nobody remembers the fathers.
All that remains are pictures in a photo album
of their return from the war.
Empty faces
their hearts snagged on the barbwire of Bastogne, Guadalcanal.
The day they came home the pigeons sat quiet along the dock
and stared. . . .

III

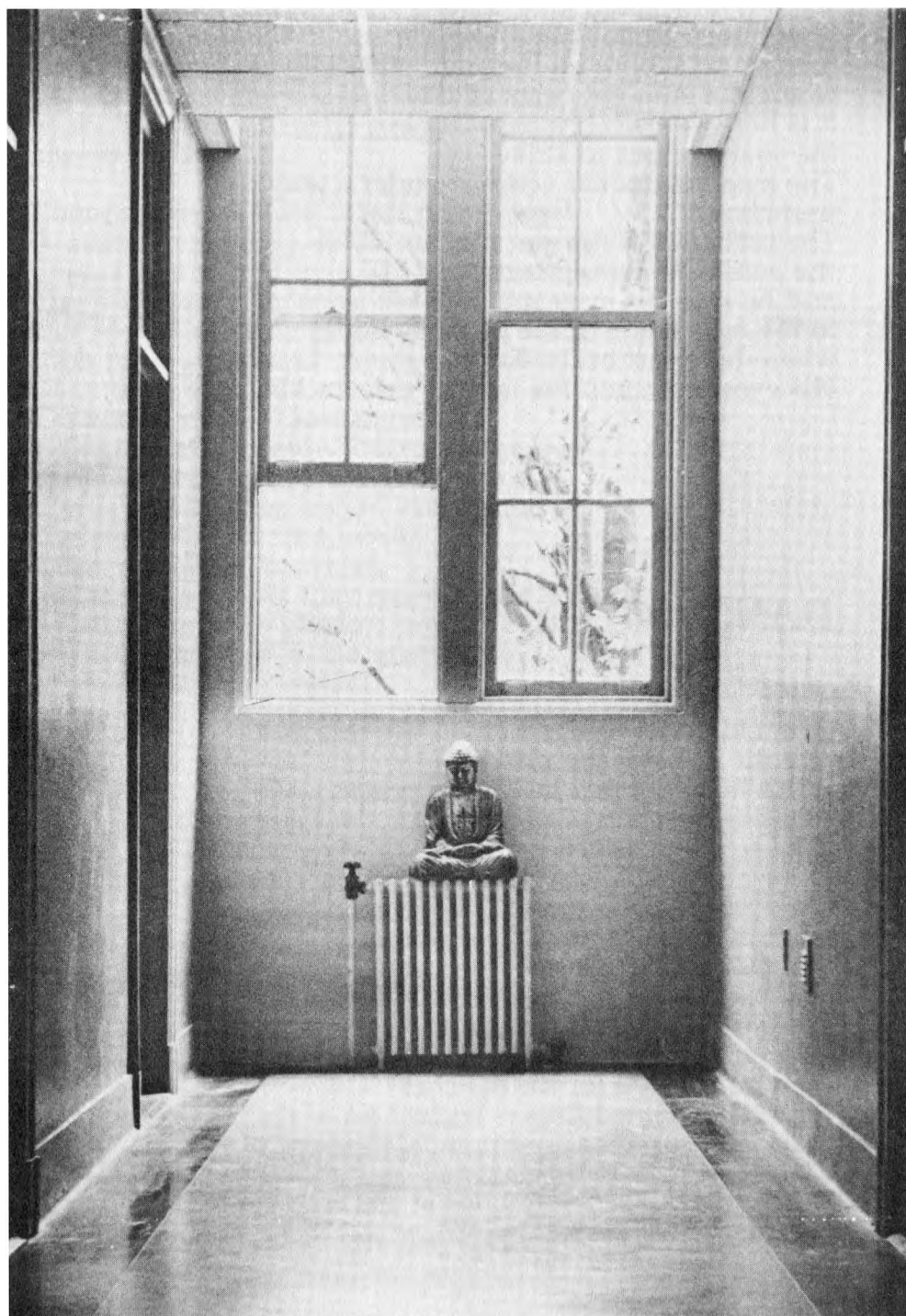
I have seen these things and know
there is no silence on the southern mountainside
where the sunlight beats all day.
It is here the falcon makes its nest,
the snake poises to strike.
The meadow mouse scurries under a gray rock
trembling.
The brilliance of the sun blinds
the eyes of the mountain goat,
and he rubs his eyes and runs
to the cool shade of the northern side
where his heart beats slower.
His eyes rest upon the mother ewe suckling the lamb.

Joseph Osborne

DANCING

The old priest trudged down the cold wet
granite steps of the prison
With his mind still inside the prison walls
mulling over the electrocution he had garnished.
The smell of singed hair burning in his nostrils
kept his mind aware of his complicity
And his parched throat begged for a
shot of salvation, but none was to be had.
He pulled the collar of his coat up tight against
the back of his neck
To gird him against the rain.
He slipped a cigarette between his lips
and he reached for his matches
His bible-stained fingers latched on to the soggy
pack and his eyes caught gods' message of
Salvation to man emblazoned on the cover
"Arthur Murray really hops at 155 w. 52nd Street!
So can you. Enroll Now! "

Mark Casey



With Love

Tearing down old walls you find
 A child crying;
 His mother has gone shopping.
The dog licks his face, they sit by the window.
Yellow walls, toys monopolize the floor.
 (Don't cry, she'll come back.)

You have left, other people steal your tears.
 Mother sits in a black leather chair.
She thinks of the cut on his face, chickenpox, scraped knees.
 The dog sits with her, late; after father goes to sleep.
 She hopes he will come home for Christmas.

So your late night friends have left, you lock yourself in;
 Think back to when it was easy.
Your mother put your games in the closet,
 And you take new ones out.
When the ends get frayed, and the snow falls
 You will go home, it's only natural.

William Godin

Devotion

(for MEHER BABA)

You were so quiet, we weren't sure if you were still playing.
They don't understand, imagine, cows.
You know no bounds, I don't understand.
Beyond what you see, it just isn't American.
It doesn't matter,

I take solace in the dried ink,
 in the tree and in you.
There is a sunrise tomorrow,
 I just know.

William Godin

The Wind Under the Rocks

The wind under the rocks carries
the end of summer. The locusts
relay the end in morse code
across the cornstalks, bent straw
scarecrows, ears peeling
to reveal the fat
naked gold of overripe kernels.
Though the radishes split long ago
revealing innards woven with brown
worm paths and went to seed with the poppies
whose fluted cups of seed still
wait on brittle brown legs for release

The crickets will not believe
But hum at the torn red fingernail moon.

April Selley

A Feather

to Mr. Jackson

(written by an eight year old friend of the
Jackson family, Melissa)

I saw a Little feather.
And all the worlds shine.
I saw this when I was fine.
Now from all Little feathers I
can tell you right now,
that I don't Know How
 this Little feather
 did that, but right
 This minute, this very minute
 I went home.

Thinking of the Little feather which Looked
Like Foam.

Morning

for Candace Burnham

It was so quiet —
the porch was the coolest part of the house
and the smell of morning hung light.
I slipped on my jeans and sweater;
barefoot, softly —
(the floor creaked!) —
I walked outside
and washed my face at the rain barrel.
The grass was so cold my feet hurt
and dew soaked the hem of my jeans.
I sat on a rock near the water's edge
and watched Bristol waking up —

I knew how God feels.
Bright, yellow lights;
mothers making pots of coffee
and children fighting for the bathroom
splashing water and towels
finally,
coming to breakfast on doughnuts and milk.

Even the seagulls were going to town —
crash-landing on the State Street dock,
they waited for the six o'clock ferry
with bundles for the natives of Prudence.

Soon the sun appears.
The sky fills with pinks and blues
like the walls of a nursery.
I am sitting on a huge baby, I think,
and listen to a far-off buoy
clang softly through the mist.

The wind shifts.
Perhaps I will sit until the dew is gone.
I will watch the day from here —
the burning midday,
the soft cooling of afternoon
and the fireflies of summer evening.
Someone might even see me —
a little brown speck against the green.

Ana Margarita Cabrera

City

I heard St. Patrick's sound its bells
deep from the belfry's (Gothic)
throat

while blue pigeons pecked at the marble
feet of Hercules in the park.

I watched phony blind men stoop on cold
granite curbstones, holding small tin
cups and crouching with June
beetles in the black shadows of the high

rises. I heard the screaming of a Turbo
train blowing her shrill whistle over
the trestle; the hot
breath of chow mein spilled from a Chinese
restaurant

I saw Chicano kids playing stick ball on
asphalt in front of gray, blistered
tenements as the aproned grocer cranked
down his green canvas awnings; the pawn
broker unlocked his shop.

And I was flesh with the city
my hair tangled in telephone lines
the pulse of the subway, my heartbeat
Caught in the teeth of street
jargon, reading the poetry of ghetto
prophets scrawled on gas
station walls and the gospel
of the New York Times.

Patricia Vient

Walking

in the twilight of the evening,
as we walk down trash scattered streets
exchanging loves glances
only time keeps us apart.

Clara McKnight

My Father

Like clock work
 he gets up every morning at five.
He lights the fire under a tin pot.

He walks through rooms
 unfeeling in his routine way.
 then
sits at a broken table in the dingy dark
 drinking bitter black coffee.
Staring off into space dreaming of living.
Slowly he stands, pulls on a heavy coat,
 blows at his hands, and walks
into the semi-dark.

Clara McKnight

be's that way

Things die
 shrivel and are forgotten
be's that way

Friendship runs
 hides under crisis never to be found again

be's that way . . . yeah . . . be's that way sometimes
 you use
 I'm used
 more use

 see ya tomorrow
 be's that way
 like a storm you wiped out trust
be's that way . . . be's that way sometimes huh?

Clara McKnight

Selena

Selena rises a new menstrual phase
slyly over the graveyard spying
the cat in the alley

looking for its dish
while the old man in his stinking
brown suit hoards peppers again
and the boy brings the paper

and i lean against the fake
candles in the window (there's stained
glass around the edge) and watch
her soar above the shadows

twitching the windows
now is the time for reparation
when the daystar departs and we
feel the dusty gloom as the wind stirs
one brown leaf into the bare twig

i think of running into the kitchen
and sealing her into

a paper bag
but i'd like to fork
the yolk out of her
eyes (how classical will
you be then Selena)

Ann McDonald

Blues

The bay is full with blue fish. When they make their silver
 slicejumps
you can see their skin
crack in the light.

At night when the water turns black satin
you can hear them tying velvet
bows with their tails.

You can watch them do the death
 wiggle on the decks of cruisers
and sportsfishermen with the ripping
lures the men call rag mops
knifing down their throats.

And the fishermen are elated and the decks
are bloody while the blues throb to turn
inside out. Their last divings
the spirit in peristalsis; riding
out from the blood harness, writh-
 ing, snapping to a tremor
a slender twitch, then just a hum.

The endless circles of their eyes spinning back into the black
 waters where fire will fix
them into the head of another creature.

The fishermen drink another beer. They don't
want to think about eternity: the ark
of the blue fishes' bones or the shadow of the fish
rising above the ensigns, floating toward
 the hemorrhage of lapis lazuli
it spun out from: the endless
poem the bay is a single tear in.

Jane Lunin

*A dandelion strikes me
with infinite possibilities*

This open-mouth gaze
at the trembling greenness of willows—

the yellow wants to drink
enough sun to sprout one
more petal
a perfect cup of slender fingers.

The dandelion can be food if you're willing
to forget yesterday's
fields of daffodils
and taste the sweet songs a mother makes
singing her son to sleep.

It can be the communion —
a little girl whose stiff white
veil will not stay on her silky head,
that golden pledge
always ready to receive wandering
guests disguised as lost

angels, dandelions do not die.
They fade into whiteness
and float on
a mid-afternoon breeze
or the breathy wet wish
of a sputtering child

who sleeps in a glass
greenhouse with no dead,
no dying flowers only

lively beds of dandelions
and a secret river
flowing from its source in the sun.

Patricia Slonina

