



ALEMBIC

CONTRIBUTIONS

POETRY

Edward McCrorie	Toolmaker
Thomas Delaney	After Sitting in a Bar
Mark Piva (ed.)	Death by Spinach
Audrey Fontes	Rape Poem
Paul Trainor	The Supplication of Fall
Francis P. McAleer	Saul Alinsky's Disciple
Michael McKeldon Woody	Underground Scenarios
Henry S. Monti	Knight Street
Debra Martin	untitled
Thomas Delaney	The Looting After the Madness
Anne Dolan	untitled
Jane Lunin Perel	Bass Head Washed up on the Shore of Galilee, R.I., July 16, 1975
Donna Lapre	untitled
Mark Travers	Place
B. McDonald	untitled
Patricia Slonina Vieira	Pettaquamscutt: the wintered river's song to Spring
Arthur Costigan	Poem for Providence College
Debra Martin	Banana
Dj Gamage	Birthin
Katie Foley	Poem
John MacKay	Housekeeping Duty
Audrey Fontes	untitled
Dj Gamage	Dance of Selves

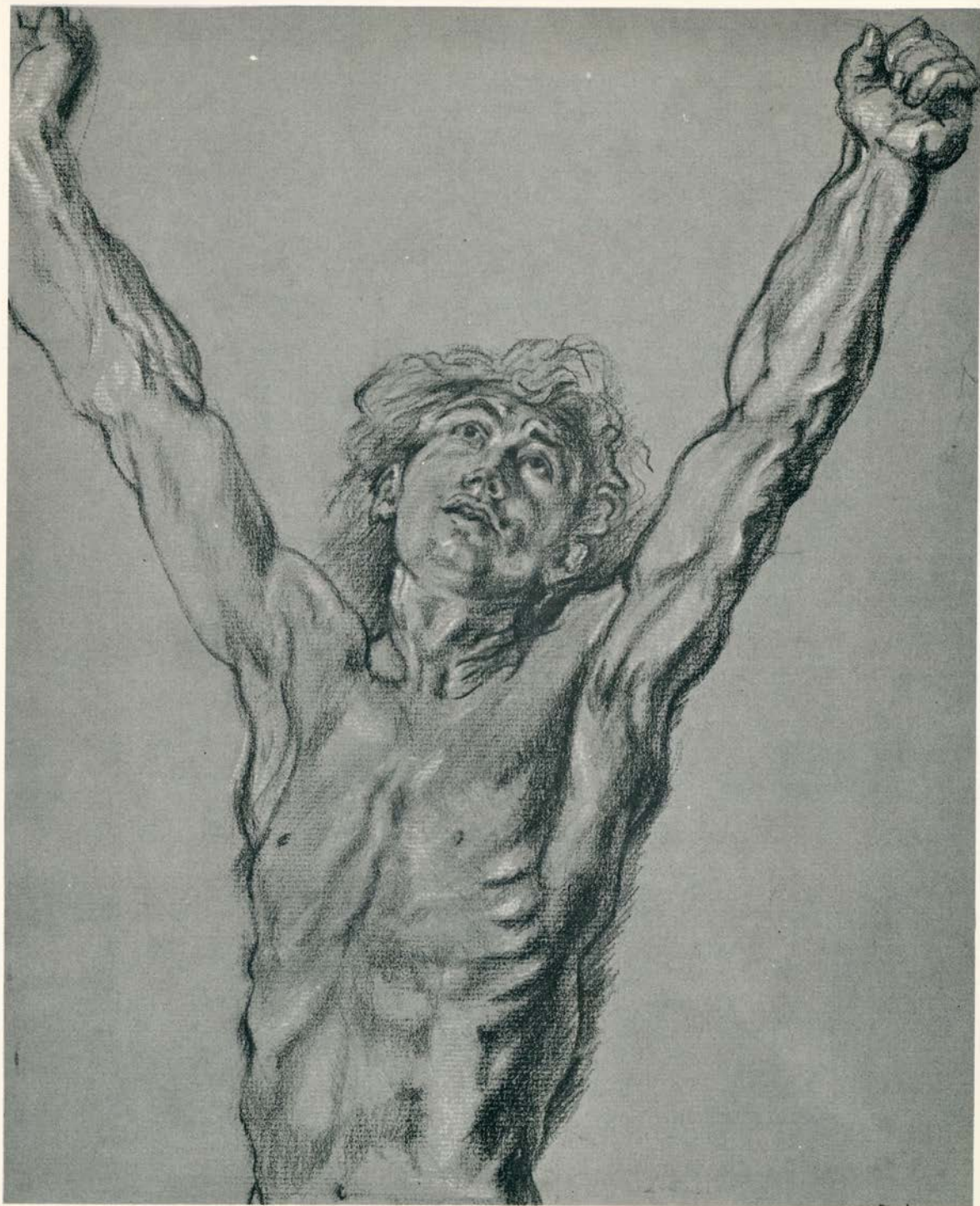
GRAPHICS (by order of appearance)

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D. Lyons
Kevin Gormley
Marguerite Donnelly
Fran
julie kearns
Daniel Lund
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D. Lyons
julie kearns
Dj Gamage

Fūryū-no hajime ya oku-no ta-ue-uta

The beginning of all art:
a song when planting a rice field
in the country's inmost part.

Matsuo Bashō, 1689
(translation by Harold Henderson)



Toolmaker

He takes a chair in the front row
with his poor hearing.

His eyes a precise
micrometer's wink.

His shop closed down.
A federal project died.
The man is seventy.

Teaching down to his knowledge
and skill, I am uneasy.

My lines are a bird's
bones on the blackboard:
Beowulf's funeral, Lear's daughters.

His fingers get lost
in the verse numbers.
A classmate helps.

It's hard to turn his notebook pages
singly.

Misses a class one night —
from sickness? No, he says,
just tired of his children
prodding him out.

He takes his chair in the last
class, the pen quavering still,
then it comes down,
hard as a stylus,
and cuts new syllables.

After Sitting in a Bar

I think that I am descended from gypsy dancers whose
dusty feet tapped on dry earth
in vacant lots the breadth of Europe
Long woman in the dark night with
her men
and
her turnings
and her vague boredom which
springs
from too much travel
I am descended from gypsy dancers from
beneath a new moon
beneath a new turning
but not here where we have turned
our bar into heaven and I am as
stone greets water

Death by Spinach:

A Group Poem by Dimensions of Art, Spring 1978. Based on the Exercise of Trying to Imagine and Express How You React to Being Forced into Eating a Hostess' Cooking, when you cannot abide what she has prepared.

I go upstairs to the bathroom,
Sweating through my underwear.
Perhaps I could feign an allergy, and
Explain that my experience with the drug culture
Has caught up with me, or (to prove it)
Take the hostess into my confidence
And inform her that on the way to her home
I had an encounter of the Third Kind
and have been forbidden to eat;
And that I hate to eat and run, but my grandfather died
And the family is holding a conference.
But — Svelte Sylvia sought to seduce me to eat her spinach souffle;
And I reached to receive my final meal.

RAPE POEM

with thanks to
Marge Piercy

We can't
drive open-windowed
doors unlocked
through a sweaty
caution light or
red light
that's on the wrong side
of the dollar.

This safe house a
cage, while the quiet cement
walks
cooling its back
absorbing the night like
sunshine.

Do your guts squirm
at the thought of
hot breath,
 flashes of threats
 of pain
 blood dripping
 dripping
 dripping

with semen
down your inner thigh
 alone
 alone
at night.

Who hears the screams
of a nurse in
a parking lot

breast tissue torn
open thighs pulled
back to pull apart the
groin
muscle so tight
so tight.
Head lying on dried
oil, black,
black
as the sky she called
to
black as the
fear she kept close
for all open hands
became weapons.
Can't you see how our
mind can never
I repeat
can never
I emphasize
can never
set our bodies free?
Dress up for your protector
in pink
laces
bits of breasts and perfume.
You can not, have the night
You can not, belong to the night
You can not
abandon your sexuality.
Helpless nymphs
will we ever be free?





"The Supplications of Fall"

Love —
winter's light
in the dendrites

A sunset
condensated
at dawn.

My skin
circumscribed
by yes.

You
and me
after
the rose-fall.

SAUL ALINSKY'S DISCIPLE

You have been with Saul Alinsky
Cleaning up the back yards of Chicago.
Escaping to Cuba (buried in a boat's bottom),
You spent months cutting cane, rolling Cuban cigars,
and talking to the natives in Havana.

The romance of radicalism has over-taken you.
You fight for the eradication of poverty.
Many have had such a cause before —
Federal, state, and local governments.
But for you the war is not over
As long as one is denied his human rights
By those who think themselves the better.
The war is not over.

UNDERGROUND SCENARIOS

As plants do so men
grown downward into earth
wallow in the black.

Our well-lit places too
will crumble and like
me claw the dirt
to scramble beneath it.

I

Born here
I live and will rest here
one of the sleepers under
the great scar.
The seasons disappear but for
a grimy summer that steams
around my head
spits at me in sleep.

I horde new candles
the light casts long thin
shadows about my face,
many shadows.

My beard and hair hide them
they lay buried in my pillow.

II

My face erupted
I choked on flames
charred hands peeling away
skin still smoldering in the dirt.
Darkness springs fully armed
from my twisted lips.
These black tunnels my city sidewalks

sewer rats send love letters in my sleep.
Peopled trains rumbling above
a patched face greased in steam
I curse the hollow gleam of a candle

III

Veiled in mourning I wait
below the ulcer writhing in gray agony
through a familiar stench.

My hour swirls above me
and beckons with padded feet.

On tiptoe

I pirouette through twilight avenues
on the precious snow
in drifts about paralytic stone.

Snow fills my lungs

I ride a gust into a nestled
hillside outside the city
flakes galloping in jerks around me
the sky lazily falling apart.

We rest before crawling back

before the brooding sun climbs to devour us.

IV

The dawn ridicules streetlights into submission
rouses me from tangled sheets;
buildings offer us to the streets.

In the afternoon swelter I
try to ignore the mud-caked hands
bursting from my pots
the dirt-filled cracks in the floor.

Knight Street

Daddy making the B.L.T.'s
Eating on boxes.

With yankee doodles
Three in a pack,
The cupcakes stuck to the wrapper.
I ate them all.

He was young then,
Maker of tricycle races and magical boats,
A child.

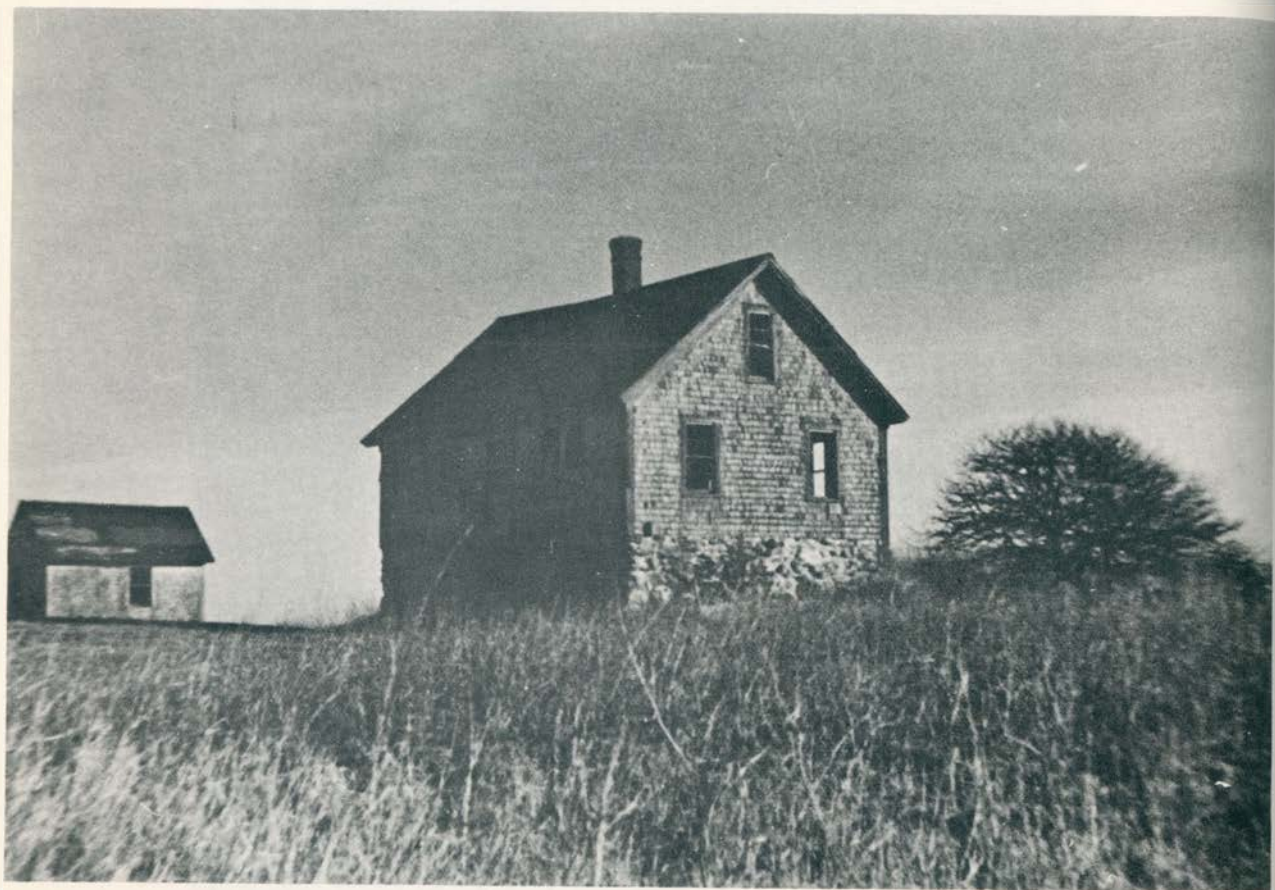
I was a child.

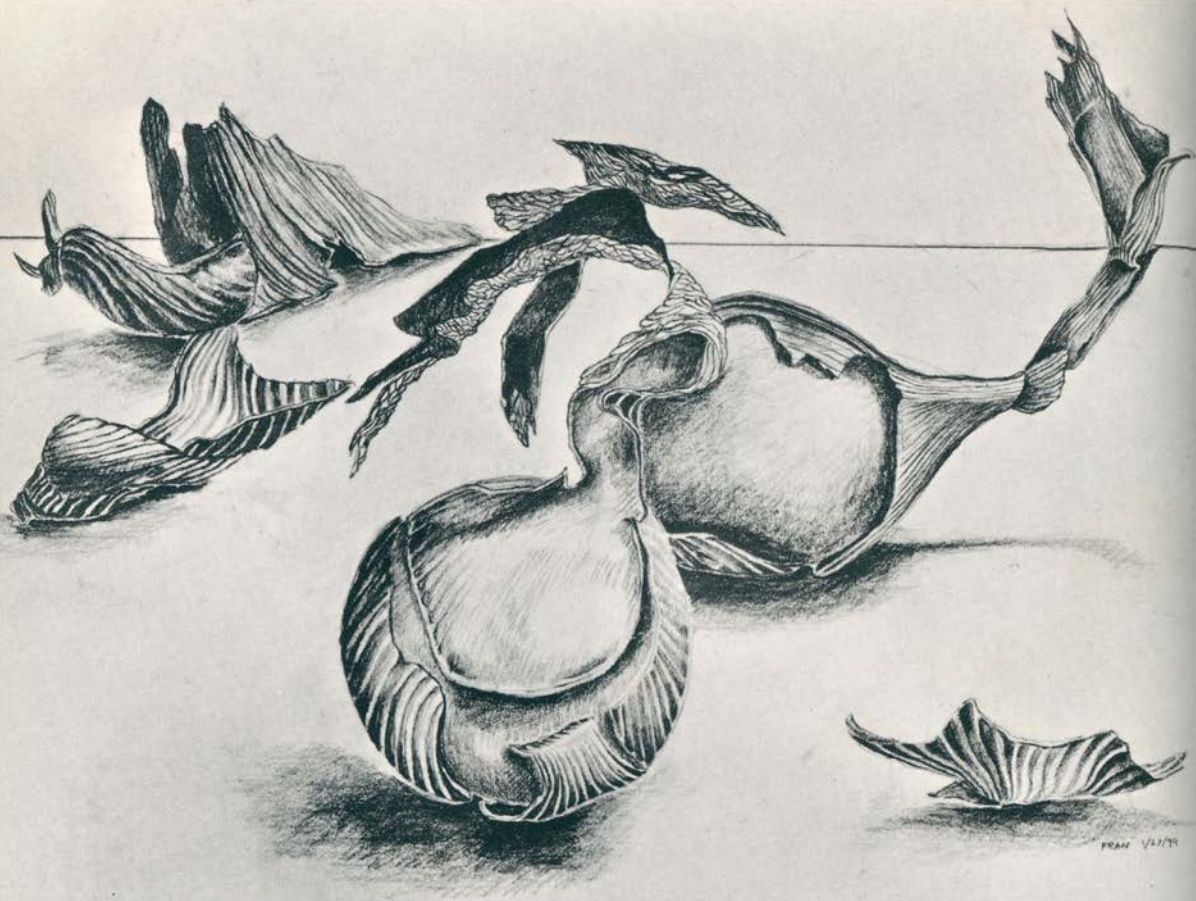
The launderette closed for lunch,
We sat on boxes together.

Watching the people go by
Thru the store front window:

It was a treat
To eat when Dad was cook.







FRANK 1/27/79

the looting after the madness

in the season of new hauntings old ghosts
rise from new shadows
new beasts emerge from
dark cocoons
ghosts and beasts companions
in the waltz through blackness
this blackness is
like the shame you must sometimes feel
it is like the shattered glass piercing the seamless flesh
it is like the looting after the madness subsides in
the paralyzed soul. an old item. a new value.
it is the sad memory of our tongues into the ear
into the mouth into the indecipherable language
when new scars become a new body
when a change of the meter becomes an end to the poem



Tired Annie.

At night during the still
hot summer you can hear
the old stretched lion all the way
from the park zoo to my striped bed-
room. That's about a mile-long
roar — a runaway breeze from the afternoon
concert.

Annie got pushed into a wall
of snow
next to the clear path.

It wasn't funny — not to Annie,
tired with her wet cuff and bottom and the
hurting chuckle ('cause it wasn't funny) —
Annie huffed.

It was dusk and a dimming winter
breeze circled the path and the zoo
was a long way away
but you could hear the
lion
caged
pouting.



***Bass Head Washed Up on the Shore at Galilee, R.I.
July 16, 1975***

You roll out on the blunted tongues of waves
washed up from the white mouth of foam.

Head of a bass

 lopped off and eyes

 plucked out. Pure

white inside and coral pink of the severed
gills. Housewives slave years away for your immaculate
whiteness. Salt water driving the meat of your head
whiter still into salt itself.

We stop

 with the thump of your landing by

 our feet. The heart

stops on your snow meat brilliance; the whiteness that
eclipsed Moses as he fainted on the desert
before he crossed into Midian for new life.

And here you have landed shucked and ripped
still swimming in your death

your slow Midian.

Oh Mouth when we knelt down to you and peered inside
your tongue leapt in the water like the tongue of a strong
woman, the jaw tough as her pelvis.

I loved you, sucked out one, the utter emptiness of you
poised to take life in. I thought of
my Mother who hung onto life this intensely.
Her heart fiercely beating despite
the swelling nets of cancer
swallowing her deeper.
How she held herself unmistakably herself
launched within the inescapable devastation.
Before I left her for the last time she kissed me on the mouth.

I don't know how long we stared at you, Bass Head
the waves licking you
over and over. When we walked back to the car
and finally let the seagulls have you, I turned for a last
look. Your fire still blared white.
Your mouth still kissing the mouth of the Emptiness.

Jane Lunin Perel

*The editors hope Jane will understand the borrowing of "Bass Head," a long time favorite of theirs,
from *The Fishes*, by Jane Lunin Perel and James Baker.

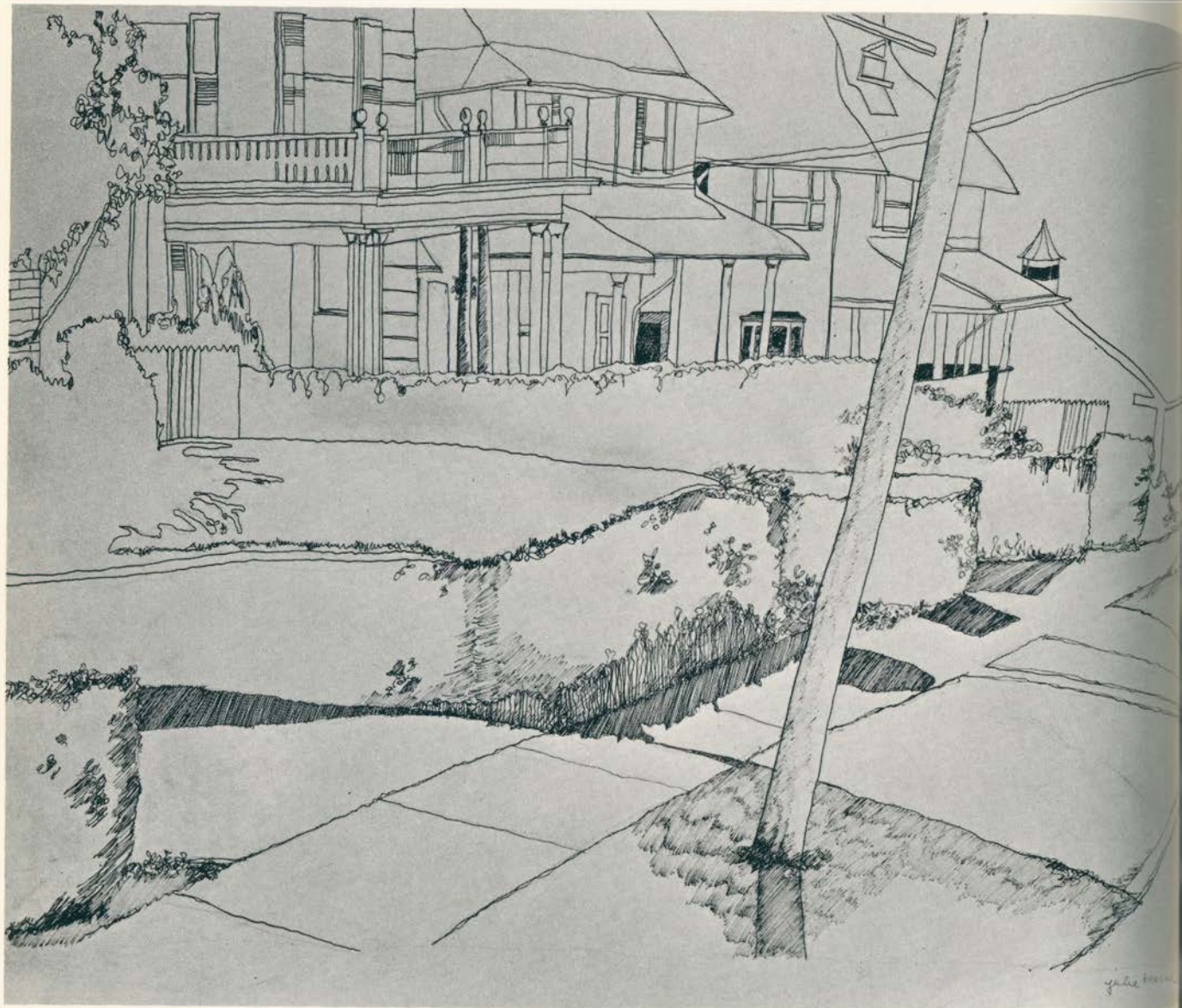
tiny green fir trees
standing knee-deep in the snow —
stiff little soldiers

Donna Lapre

Place

My place is among
slivers of pine
left by the old whittler
who has cut a pointless
sword for his
grandson.

Mark Travers



gale 1911

come . . . stand straight in this corner.
Breathing your stare
Drinking the shadow cast. I hear you closely.
For once
Can I cover you with leaves, under a windy sun?
Brushing your eyes clear when the crowds have passed.
Guilt, burnt in autumn flames
hungrily gobbles the fear that
I AM SELFISH.
Never letting mother finger my hair
afraid that I will stutter, be moved, because she
loves me.
And you, I pull stretch faceless your warmth.
A thumb without a print, I make you lineless
knowing that if you had died,
there would be hyacinths never shared,
rotting rootless on my fingertips.

Pettaquamscutt:
the wintered river's song to Spring

Winter holds the boats at bay,
while you, Spring, want a little boy
to fish with

even if he uses paper-clip
hooks and frayed kite string.

It's the spirit you're after,
the song —
not so much the symbols.

While old men winter-oyster
in my blue blood waters curdling
cold, they are really thinking of your sunset
rainbow bonnet and not the grosgrain
ribbon grip I wind about
their rubber waist.

And small houses with shuttered eyes
are watching!

I'm telling you, waiting
for the first day
you flounce in

unannounced

un

expected

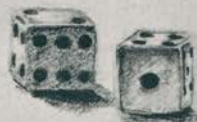
overjoyed at fooling
everyone again.

Come, put on your rippled cape,
the bright one fishes follow.
I've a boat grounded since autumn,
ready to take you sailing with ice,
teased like all of us melting

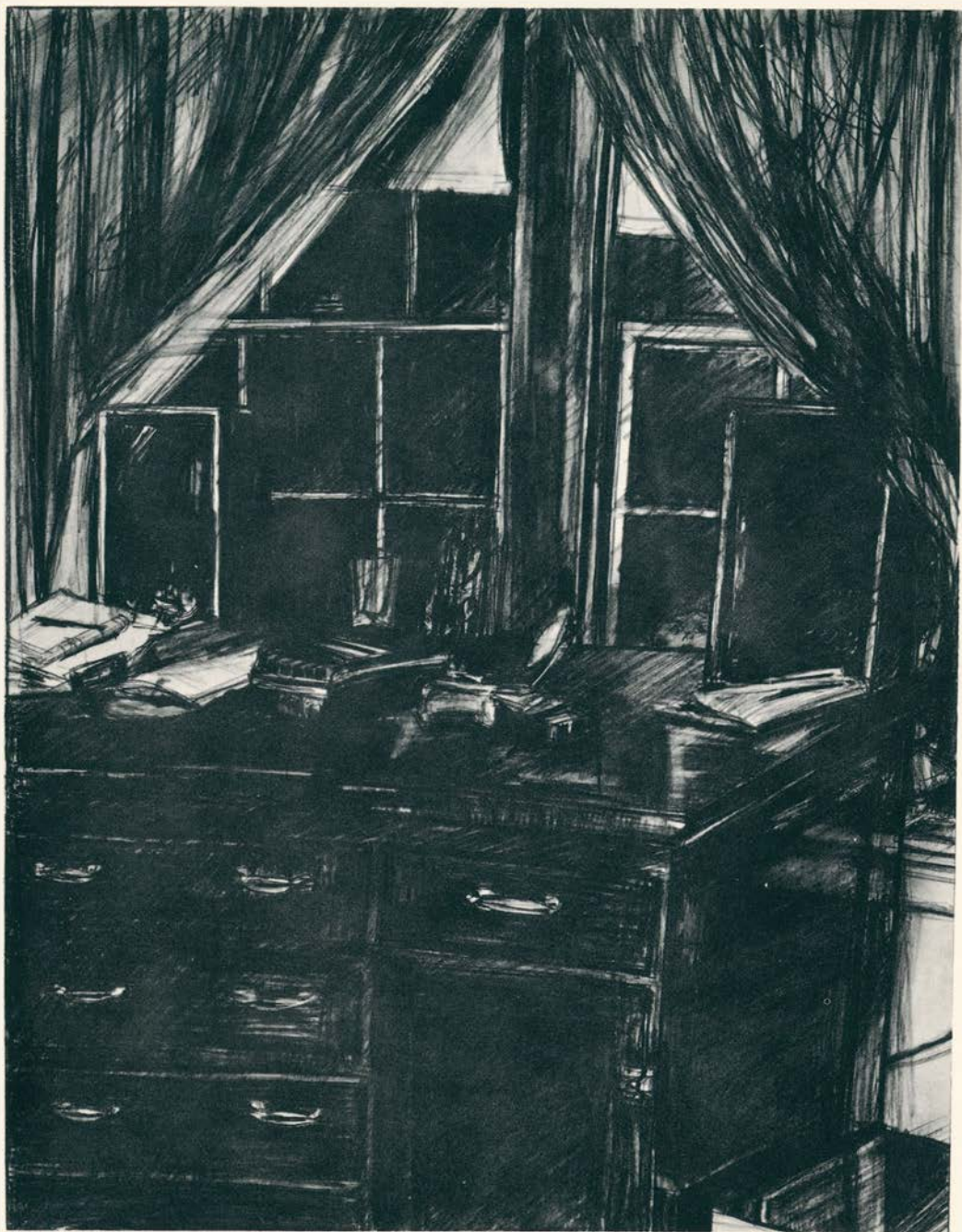
into your flowing charms.

Always reluctant to promise actual arrival,
you 'pencil in' our plans,
choosing to confirm a later date

with you salty
greening kiss



1/17/2004



Poem for Providence College (Philosophy)

My friends,
you may appreciate this, but not the world.
These words may tie me to you
like a cincture around us.
This is all that matters.

But you
truth, remain standing
unkind and unchanging
like a granite
slab.

My friends,
what holds me to you is some slip of air
that touches our face,
one hug
of breath from all there is.

But the fire trumpeted out of the mouths of dogs
is cold ashes.

They say:
Do not pass go. Do not
collect the two hundred
harpsichords that are the truth as much
as sunshine and white wine
are the truth. Do not
know the meaning of venetian blinds
or Art Deco, or toothbrushes.
But do know that
liquid wonder
has been hardened
and crusted on the inside of an oven
or sepulcher.

Know
that the breath of my friends and I
will blow away
the ash statue
you have made of truth.

Banana

New yellow
Moon a
fingernail Sliver your
sun-smoothed
skin ripe a
girl you
show your
bruises as
you
are
undressed —

BIRTHIN

For shame.

Your grandmothers toiled in the blazing

Sun and you sit whining toes

Cold blue so you

Say. You could hit a few more

Keys Great Gramma squatted in

Fields nursing unyielding hard

Earth and

Type a few more words

Child

Heavy with child.

Creation from nothing. Order from

Chaos Honed to

Perfection so blue her eyes She birthed

Eight boys never stopping, always

Tilling, with her coarse hair and skin

Parched, cracked like the back of an old

Naugahyde chair She was thirty

Give birth.

Yes, the rain is warmer in the

Spring, on the skin. It is

Easier then and it is

Late so you

Say when you open your

Eyes and turn on the

Light all the magic

disappears

Poem

Today I saw God driving
a mail truck down Eaton Street
And I, having a heart of
confidence, asked him if
he had something for me.
He replied, "No, your message
was giddy and
decided it needed to fly,
so it rides on
the wind."
I went home and wrapped
myself in thread,
hoping to weave words
to fit my existence.

Housekeeping Duty

Gentle shepherd,
Strive to control this fertile growth,
Scattered in the explosive joy of birth.
Guide home these many noumena
to the molten Brahmin-grinder.
Inflexible arms hold you at bay,
giving them safety,
as a mother covers her brood.
Need cunning to keep others from refuge.
Gather them lest they bury you, this
Chinese army in its eternal march.
Take up thy water-sieve for gathering
"The Tarriers" is the song of modern Orpheus.

Papa Fontes Papa Fontes
goes fishing.
Papa Fontes
has a
hard big belly
and grayfox gray silver
fox hair.
Papa Fontes
complains, and picks raspberries;
and asks
if I saw the
sun set
last night
over the highway.

Dance of Selves

Darkness lingers only and aphonic ghosts
Keep my company after the movement ends. You
Have left I
Go on, colossus in the shadows, applause in vacuous
Stage echoes
and we would be open and fit inside one another as echoes
Like thunder. But more like the sudden silence after the
Thunder has passed Our ears
Still expectantly tuned to the roar fill with
Ringing emptiness
and we would be open and fit inside one another as echoes
Like the song
Ending as we enter it leaves two
Notes suspended for a brief, amazed instant in self-conscious
Dance. Never mind the talking too loudly the never
talking enough. It was not
What I meant to say



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