

ALEMBIC



THE ALEMBIC

The Providence College Literary Magazine

Volume 68, Number 1

Spring, 1989

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The *Alembic* — literally, the term denotes a medieval mechanical apparatus used in distillation. For this magazine, the term connotes a figurative “distillation” of the collective literary and artistic talents present in the Providence College community. The medieval apparatus distilled each season’s yield of grapes and produced a refined and tasteful mixture of wine. This literary “apparatus” also attempts to collect and distill each year’s fruitful yield of creativity, in hopes of likewise producing a palatable artistic vintage.

This issue of the *Alembic* is honorably dedicated to Jane Lunin Perel, who has advised the magazine for sixteen years. Jane has unselfishly given her time, effort, dedication and advice to the many students who have worked on the *Alembic* over the years, and the magazine has certainly prospered due to her work. We wish Jane the best of luck and congratulate her on her promotion to full professor, but most of all, we thank her for the work she has done with the *Alembic* the past sixteen years:

We would also like to thank Mr. Donald Grant for his time and dedication that he has given to the *Alembic* over the years. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

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Pianowork

With fingers on
fingers he crouches and
caresses
pound pushes each
melancholy note from her
dark sloping
body smooth

And round she
holds his child tip —
toes with his fingers and
moans at his frus-
tration giving

Birth to his
song

Marcella Carberry

Black

Color the night
with a fat black crayon
Color it everywhere
so that
no one can see
where you went
over the lines

Jeff Devine

M.I.A.

the memorial place of black marble
whose war remains
I slow to be real but
without knowing why
see myself in the names but
without knowing why
cannot speak and no one else
musters anything above whispers
above a touch to the stone
some cry a dark day in october
leaves burning the colors of
a remembered summer

Jeremiah Ryan



The Lesson

Bent like an old dry twig
Fallen from a dead tree
The cripple boy
Made to snap under
The senseless stomping feet
Of shrill and piercing laughter
Instead stood strong

Ring around the
Rosy horror filled face
But he who could not
Circle sent
Me spinning to face
Our twisted sense
That his pride stood straight

As he turned to
Walk he didn't
Limp but swayed
Me as the wind a tree
Closer to being a man

David Pierpont

Barn-Blaze

Layed far away
Born in cold morning's mist
In a field of broken hay

Still i stand beams of wood and light
skin tints of singed sienna
of burnt ochre to bank brown
brittle my bones of weary wood
broken - my back slouches slow
dripping down - dented low
gravity gripping graveward

Weathering winds whip and rip
through cracked ribs
Young I was hammered and sawed
banged into birth
I grew wider and higher
seeing further

I went from being
a place for nesting birds and horses held holy
into a grave for a tattling tractor
rusted out red
churned and crippled down

Remnants of reaping machines
without return
or reward - banished and bored
sickly sickles and hoes
hickory hard
handles dust dried and slammed

Edges now rotted and flaked
sharp shines dimming rusted ruin
russet maroon to brown baked

My vane corroded - crooked
from killing rain
no longer squeeks spins winds songs
just stands so still
mocking muteness

But back then
doors did delight
swung open swirling sun wind
into me they used to run
working bundles
stringing the bales
while talking the tales

Matthew Bromson

Marijuana

Looking like a
pack of stray
dogs, scraggley
schoolboys get
stoned under a
graffitied tressle
Etched like
prehistoric
cave drawings
Pale blue smoke
sweet and pungent
swirls into
vast air, Rising
Vanishing, invisible
Inhale it, the
weed becomes the
rain, the sunlight
and the soil and
like flowers in
full bloom, young
minds yawn open
Laughter echoes
like a lone voice
in a canyon. Summer
sun sinks low
A bright burning
torch extinguishes
streaking the
sky with
watercolors, watching
in awe, Blinded
entranced, Feeling
long slender grass
wet under bare feet
Lost and intoxicated
The grass grips
and takes hold like
an undertoe, pulling
into the riptide
Losing sight of
themselves and
each other
Bobbing up
and down in
rough ocean
Unconscious
Unaware
Drowning
in smoke.

John Lipuma



Nota Bene

Palmer Bracebridge lifted the cold receiver and dialed.

"Hello?" a rough voice answered from the other end.

"My name is Peter Hamilton. I'm calling to ask if I can interest you in a subscription to the *Chicago Tribune*?"

"No, I already get the *Sun-Times*. Well Palmer, nine o'clock — nice of you to be on time. Tell me, what's going on?"

"8366 Surf Drive. Seventh floor. Eleven o'clock. Knock us both out and drop the bank notes into the garbage. Then place the papers on top of the table on top of the bank notes in the basket. Then leave."

"At exactly eleven. Got it."

"Oh, and, un, Steve," Bracebridge said coolly, "let's make sure we understand each other fully. You'll receive the balance of your pay tonight. Unless you tell me otherwise, I presume you have the key to the safety deposit box at O'Hare. Pick it up as soon as you leave the scene . . . and one more thing - don't botch this job. You're costing me a handsome fee. I expect a proper delivery. Anything short of that, and I'm not sure what I'll do. You understand me?"

"Yeah. A piece of cake," a rattled voice replied.

Bracebridge hung the phone up and began towards the front door of the house. "Goodbye, mom," he called to the back room.

"Bye, Palmer. Will you be on time tonight?"

"Have I disappointed you before? . . . God knows I'm not about to start tonight. See you then," he promised, stepping out into the bitter Chicago morning.

For the past sixteen years, Bracebridge had been employed by the First State Bank of Chicago. Today would not be an ordinary day at the office. Bracebridge's boss, John Sherlock, wanted him to take charge of certain bank notes. Sherlock had therefore set a meeting that day to distribute the needed information to Bracebridge who couldn't have cared less because today Palmer Bracebridge would rob the bank of \$15,000,000.

* * *

The elevator let Bracebridge off at the seventh floor. As he stepped out into the brightly lit corridor, a tall security guard approached him. "May I see some identification, sir?"

"Oh, yes, uh, just a second," Bracebridge replied as he reached into his pocket.

"It's alright, Dave," Sherlock explained. "I'm expecting Mr. Bracebridge."

"Yes, sir," replied the guard, returning to his post.

"Follow me, Palmer," Sherlock urged. The two entered an enormous conference room opposite the elevator. "Sit down, Palmer . . . let's get started." Sherlock picked up a black briefcase from the floor and placed it upon the desk. "Palmer, you've been the most loyal employee in the bank's history. I'm proud of your work. That's why I've chosen you to direct the flow of notes."

"Thank you, Mr. Sherlock. I appreciate your interest in my work. I hope to be the best you've ever had, sir," he lied.

"Now that's what I like to hear. What say we get down to business?" Sherlock said as he snuffed out his cigar. He opened his briefcase and pulled out a folder. "better get settled. We'll be here for a while."

"Yes, sir," Bracebridge acknowledged, standing up and taking off his coat. His watch showed 9:30 a.m.

* * *

"Do you understand how to cash them now?" Sherlock questioned Bracebridge.

"Yes, sir. First I bring them downstairs to the -"

"Fine. Let's take a break. It's ten to eleven and I have to make a phone call. Be back in five." Sherlock wobbled out of the room to the elevator across the hall.

Bracebridge walked to the door and peered down the hall. The guard was sitting at the end of the corridor gazing at a book. Bracebridge hurried as he placed the wastepaper basket alongside the table. He then set an array of scrap-paper on the table above the basket. He checked his watch. Five minutes. He rubbed his sweaty palms together as he scanned the lights above the elevator. He began to approach the elevator just as the doors opened.

"Oh, you've back already, sir? Sorry, I was just on my way downstairs to get some coffee. It's okay, I can wait, I guess."

"Go ahead, Palmer . . . better yet — hey, Dave?"

"Yes, sir?" said the guard, jumping to his feet.

"Would you mind going to the lobby to get Mr. Bracebridge a cup of coffee?"

"No, sir. I'll be happy to," the officer replied as he approached the elevator.

"Thank you very much," Bracebridge offered. "Oh, and, un, I take a touch of cream, if it's not asking too much."

"Not at all, sir. I'll be right back."

Sherlock and Bracebridge retreated to their seats. Bracebridge glanced at his watch. Two minutes.

"Now, about the bank notes," Sherlock resumed. He opened his briefcase once again and began to stack bundles of notes in front of Bracebridge. Bracebridge licked his lips and stared at his watch. One more minute. "Geez," groaned Sherlock, "I must've misplaced the other half of the notes."

"You're kidding! Uh, I mean, um, do you know where they might be?" Bracebridge's hands started to shake. His forehead began beading with perspiration. He looked at his watch. Thirty seconds. His stomach cramped.

"Yeah," Sherlock grumbled, rubbin his chin, "I think they're in this closet over here." He got up and proceeded towards the closet. He opened the door and searched the shelves. "Where the hell are they?"

Bracebridge sprang from his chair. "Can I help you?" he exclaimed. He looked at his watch. Five more seconds. His eyes shot over to the elevator. The doors parted and a man wearing a ski-mask emerged.

"Found 'em!" Sherlock beamed, turning to show his discovery only to be met with a nightstick.

Bracebridge exhaled, "Nice jo—." He fell to the floor.

Twenty minutes later he awoke to security guards and police officers swarming about the room. He could hear Sherlock's voice in the background. "All I saw was, uh, some guy in, uh, one of those masks with the eyes in 'em. Then he hit me. With what, I, uh, I don't know. That's all I remember."

"Fine. Thank you very much, Mr. Sherlock," replied Sergeant James Fellows. "If you don't mind, sir, I'd like to ask you some more questions later on — when you've had a chance to relax, of course."

"I understand," replied Sherlock.

"The officer then approached Bracebridge. "Sir, I'm Sergeant Fellows. Do you feel up to talking?"

Bracebridge glanced at the basket. Everything was perfect. "Yeah, I'm, uh, feeling alright. Shoot."

"Can you tell me what happened?"

"Sergeant Fellows!" another officer shouted from the door.

As Fellows turned, his foot knocked the basket on its side. Bracebridge's eyes were wide.

"Whoops." Fellows bent over to pick up papers from the floor and place them in the basket.

In an attempt to keep his cover, Bracebridge restrained himself from leaping to the papers. All he could feel was the sweat trickling down his body while every muscle in his body tensed.

Fellows righted himself, unaware he had just tampered with the hidden notes. "Yeah, Bob. Whaddya need?"

"Detective Harris would like to see you right away. He found something in the elevator."

"Alright, I'll be right there," he told the officer. He turned back to Bracebridge. "Now sir, can you tell me?"

Bracebridge slumped in the chair adjacent to Sherlock's desk. "Uh, yeah, um, well, I was sitting right here when — "

Bracebridge almost choked on his tongue as he watched a maid walk into the room and empty the basket. "Hey! Where do you think you're taking that?" Bracebridge exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, Miss. That'll have to wait. Nothing can leave this room right now," Fellows exclaimed.

"Look, sir," she said, "this is my last room today. I can't just leave this here over the weekend. Someone will be using this room and if the garbage isn't gone, I'll get fired."

"It's okay, Sergeant. I don't want to cause any trouble for the woman," Sherlock said. "Besides you've already fingerprinted everything in the basket."

"Alright. I guess it's not important. Go ahead, take it," the Sergeant sighed.

Bracebridge's face was pale. He had just observed \$15,000,000 vanish before his eyes. Before he could gather his thoughts, the maid disappeared down the hallway.

"Sir, is something wrong? . . . sir?"

"Huh? — No. Nothing's wrong." Bracebridge was confused. Everything had proceeded flawlessly until now.

As Bracebridge was leaving the interrogation, Sergeant Fellows approached him once again. "Excuse me, Mr. Bracebridge. You'll have to come to the station to fill out a report."

"Look, officer, I'll be more than happy to fill out the report. But right now, I'm not feeling so hot. With your permission, I'd like to go walk around for a while. Tell you what I'll do." He pulled out his wallet. Here's my card. If I'm not at your station in an hour, you'll know where to find me. Deal?"

"You got it," Fellows answered.

Bracebridge shot out of the building, down the street, and into a cab. When he reached his destination, the O'Hare Airport, he rushed to the "Air Rio" terminal. He flashed his ticket and sped to his seat.

"Good afternoon, mother," he said to the woman next to him.

"Hello, Palmer dear, how was work today?"

"Oh, alright. How's the cleaning business?"

Timothy J. O'Keefe

Our Claim

We didn't care whose backyard we scrambled through
never once a thought of whose private lawn we trampled
The land was ours and roam it we did
Walls, fences, bushes nor dogs could hold our free reins
obstacles we sought like monkey bars
while cutting a path through to our homes
 rolling down a grassy hill
 quick sprint to vault a river
 high jump to grasp a limb
 we threw in youth and loved our claim

John Mizzoni

Formal

A seam of
dynamite powder runs
up her leg
Explodes
into a cloud of satin
ruffle surrounding
the blackness that
adheres till her neck;
then creamy pearls
drip
and berry lips pout.

Kerry Anne Ryan

A Response to the Sub-Urban Coalition of “Mothers of Self-Pity”

I don't want to watch
your New York City
road map eyes
watch me
your

Eyes
glazed with envy and
reminiscence and

Would you

Blink at my
meticulously designed
face if you could hear the
screaming traffic slam
in my head?

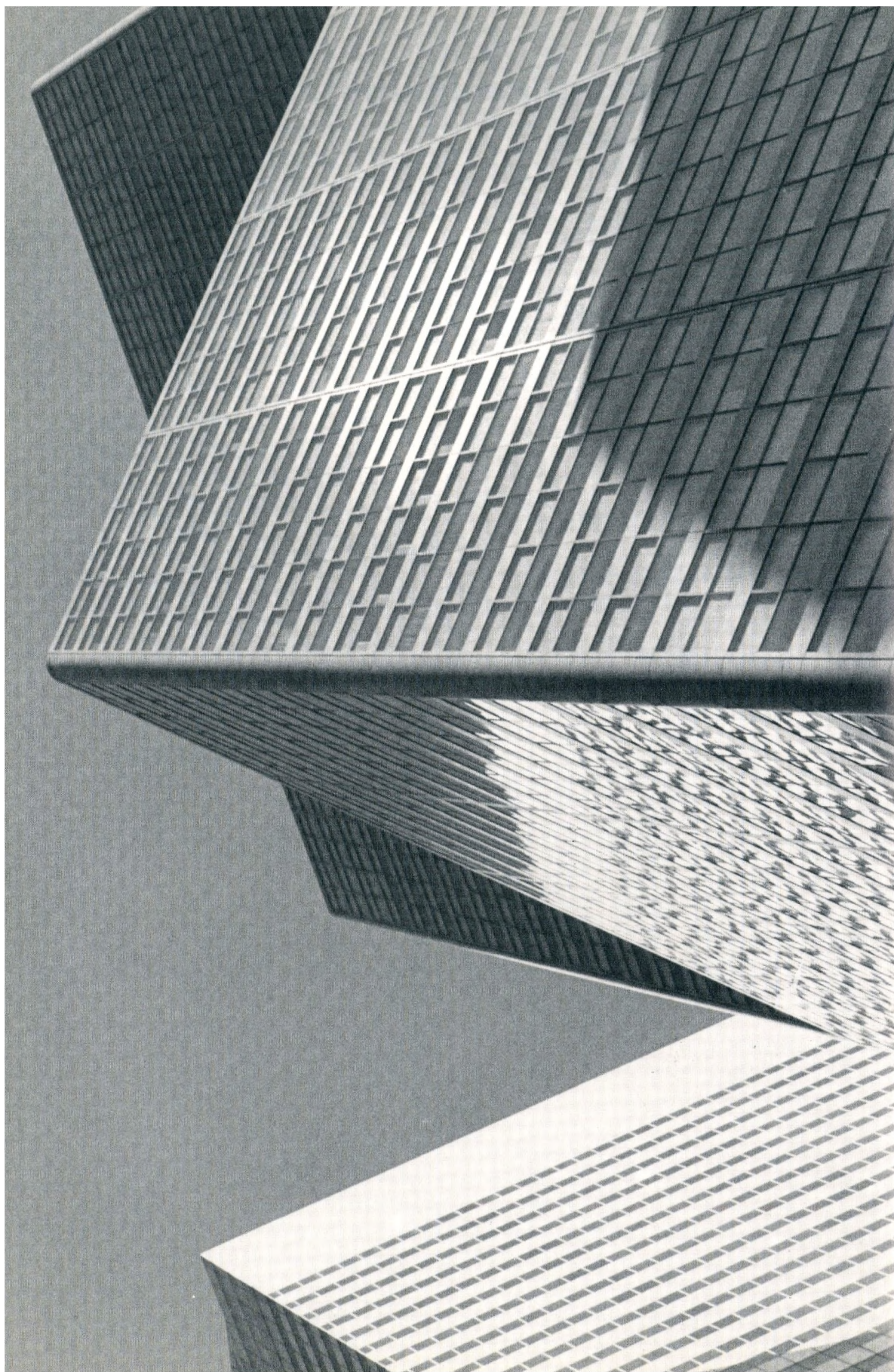
Marcella Carberry

Fine Dining

at the small round table
the mink coat toasts
the pure silk suit
with Dom Perignon
while
the small
child outside the door
fights
with a large dog
for a morsel
of chicken.

pink lacquered nails
nibble
a moist plump shrimp
while
the small
child outside the door
fights
with a large dog
for a morsel
of chicken.

Allison Emery



Easter Morning

A heavy black man
drank three bottles of
rubbing alcohol
that Morning. I
had to lift him
onto the stretcher.
His name was Charlie.

And the woman who laughed
although it hurt so much
slipped in a Port-o-John on
the golf course
and broke her leg.

And an old lady
cried for everyone else's
spoiled holiday
except for her own
so I smiled
As I wheeled her to the X-ray.

The nurse said she was going to die.

Jeff Devine

A Minor Pause

The sulken river drives deep
Like the blood that once fused our love long ago.
We clung close,
Making promises sealed in the night
And scattered like shards of fixed glass,
Lost like cut-wax lozenges.

In those crisp light days
When we were brighter,
We were happy, content as pickerels,
As red robins.

The water gurgles along, rolls over the rocks
And patters off so far away without forgetting.

Robert P. Toole

ALLITERATION

We run swiftly along the rocky shore
Holding hands, laughing loudly
As the sun sets the breeze blowing
Feels like a child's soft breath
Waterlogged and weary
We watch as
The sun sinks
Helpless into the horizon

Jennifer Preston

Gloucester Road

I smell the rain before I hear it,
see it, plashing down the pane,
melting my image,
merging grey buildings,
black taxis, red tulips,
red buses.

Round puddles on the table multiply.

A radiator sighs, rumbles to life,
and steam rises.

I raise my eyes (my standards),
trying to distinguish,
and yet, once again,
I lift a glass to you
alone.
Again.

Christine Best

Corpus Christi

Alone
Abandoned
Your body staggering in the
Barren, rocky soil under which
The heavens tore asunder
A hungry gap wrenched
The earth your blood spilled
To protect striking
Fear into hearts your hands
Stretched to save
The winds whip
Aimlessly beneath
A cold
Grey
Sky

Dina Barretti

Death Row

The cell
corroded cement worn
grey lit dimly smelled
like a wet burlap sack
soaked with the sweat of
the sentenced gone before

The hall
A hundred echoes down
of soul to mopped tile
vibrating in the steal
shanks which held me still

The others
drawn timeless faces
unfeeling in stare at
the walk of a ghost
sounding the way
they would follow

The room
it smelled like slow
death in there as
cold as a fresh grave
as pungent at the stench of lies

The chair
meshed in manacles
iron clad cold for
fastening flesh clammy wet
I sit

The switch

David Pierpont

North Station

I saw a weird, warted woman last
Night at North Station. Rather
Like a potato, brown and thick
Through the middle, clothed in
Subway scum. She just sat, watching
The passengers as if they were
Intruders in her home, hissing at
Them through her gaping mouth. Thin
Strands of hair hung tangled
Beside her cheek and long knotted
Fingers jabbed at those intruders
Who came too close. She saw me. She
Saw me seeing her. Her lips became
A sneer, but for a moment I
saw despair in her eyes.
Then, when the moment was gone, so
Was the look. She cackled and spat.

Elizabeth Daly



Demon in My Piano

A shiver Flashes through - as the light clicks off
I lay there - staring in my studio
I have to - to look at it!
At the mass sitting in blackness
Silhouette atop it - a cat and a sparkle
The hint of its awakening -
Thrusting into my straining stare
The moon's reflection in its eye
I wait - numb - till it wakes -
Wakes from its grand coffin
Now the moon throws its whips of white
They reveal it -
It of black wicked wood
With ivory fangs
and wire guts -
I'm drawn to it
My fingers ping then plunge
As my hands die colder -
Icy winds within each harmonic ring
From an angelic tip-toe to a laugh of thunder
Without a note off key
I just listen - in awe
As it plays - chillingly through me
I receive the glory
And the numbing pain that cuts
Cuts like a sword -
Forged from ice -
Each time colder
Driving deeper

M. W. Bromson

I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY LUCK

Out from the ordeal came silence. Substituted for intention, thunderstruck by a tongue. Otherworldly relief abolishing treacherous shouts, deathgroans, wind-whipped colored banners. All the more strange, then, since it is death constructs silence, death that climbs into silence as into the cavernous belly of a horse, strange that we come to worship silence as an aesthetic activity a gift, that we draw it to the heart of our spiritual zone let silence ripen there with its absence of gesture in the tireless night, silence's anniversary, of our penetration.

Forrest Gander

a 75 year old \$2.00 bottle of wine

I gathered grape crates off the sidewalk
stacked as high as I could see
but being drunk
that was as low as yesterday

The old man whose wine was sour
but pleasing to his taste
creeped a glance out his window fortress
to see who spoke to his wooden castaways

and seeing it was a young shadow
swaying to an imaginary song
probably wasted away in theory and love
he hrumphed and swallowed his life

Jeremiah Ryan

Romantic Interlude on 42nd Street

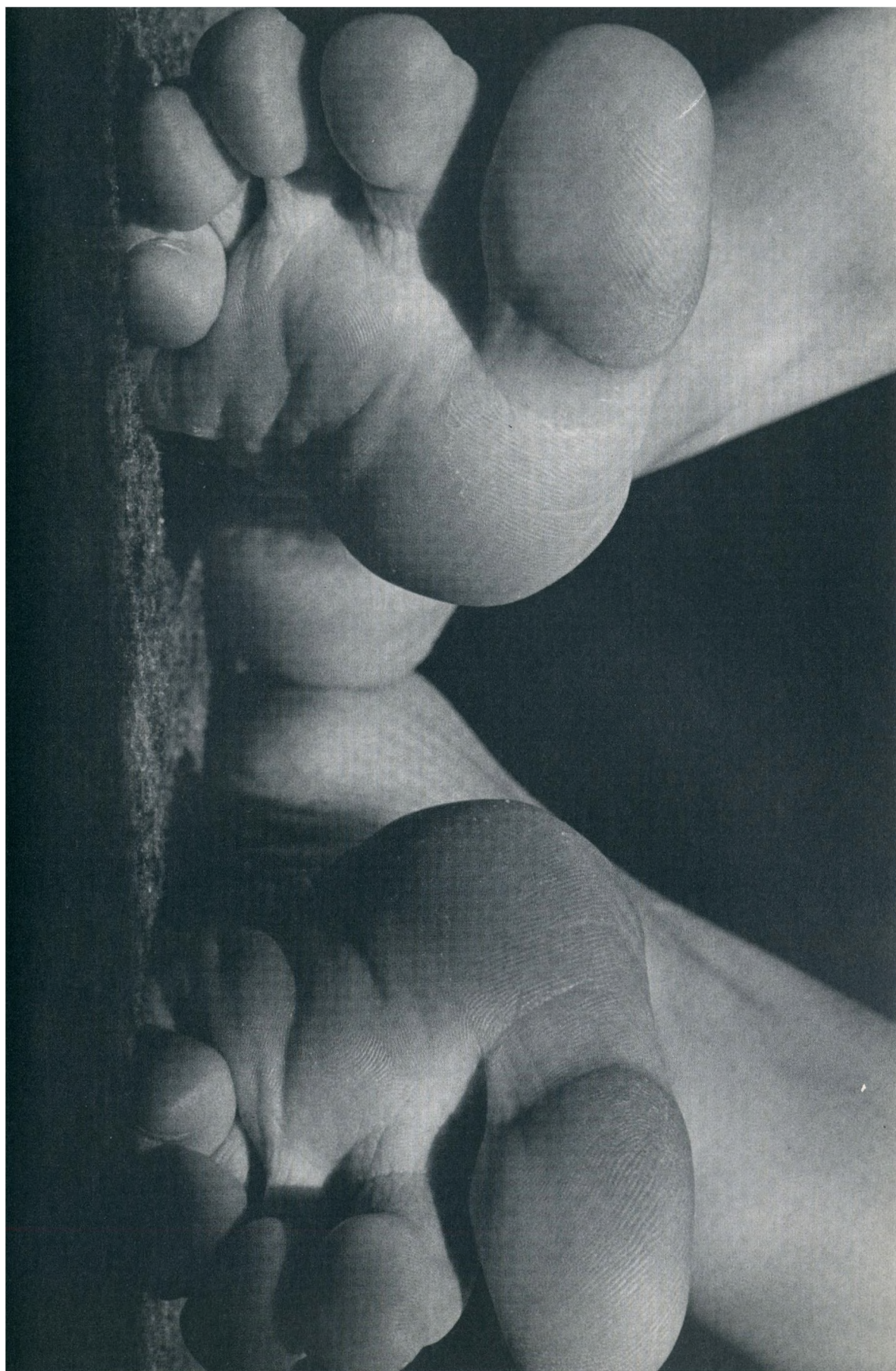
With greasy lips
pouting promises
ruby red (like her eyes)
she bats
her lashes false
at the rat -
like man
passing by.

His beady eyes glance
back
at overflowing breasts
and leather-wrapped hips.

He scurries
back
to her side
to her fishnet thighs.

His dirty fist digs
into his pants pulling
out the green
he squeals
grinning. She grabs
his green and drags
him out
of sight.

Allison Emery



The Hour of Electricity

"Hello my dearest."

"Hello."

"What's the matter today?"

"David, I keep coming to that place in the forest and then I blank out. I need to know what's there."

"I'll take you on a journey, Celia."

"Will you be with me?"

"I was with you then and I'll be with you in retrospection."

"You have always been so soothing."

"There's a light coating of snow upon the ground. It falls through the night sky like stars. Come inside. Come to your room, Celia. What do you see?"

"You've lit the candles."

"Yes, there are three. One in front of each window."

"It's cold."

"I've opened one of the windows a crack. It smells like old books. Your room is bare except for the frayed white curtains reflecting the Christmas glow from the candles."

"It's Christmas?"

"Yes. Look through the window. The wood that smells cedar. Children's hands sprawled in a fan at the bottom of the window, the snow blown and frozen upon it."

"Light."

"Light as the cold. Take my hand and lift your feet. Float. Breathe slowly."

"Please David, make a fire in the fireplace. It's awfully Cold."

"You are the cold. Come out of your room."

"When shall we go to the forest?"

"You must move through one image at a time. Reconstruct your life."

"You will stay with me?"

"I was your life then and am now. Of course I'll be with you. Breathe Celia, deeply."

"My hair, my fingers are like ice."

"Come to the livingroom. I made a fire. It should soothe you, but Celia, you'll never be warm. What do you see?"

"There's reflections of the moon and snow upon the faded flowers of the wall."

"It's quiet. Silence. The grandfather clock ticks, the only break in the peace. The fire moans a silence of its own. Light on the red velvet ribbons and the scent of pine."

"My diary is on the bookshelf. I'm going to get it."

"If you wish."

"There's a poem inside. You wrote that for me."

"Yes, love."

"To Celia. I love you forever, David.:

For you I should drink a violent herb,
and throw fits of pain upon our bed,
then comb your hair,
Queen Anne's lace,
swimming through burgundy silk.

Deepest of souls in the path of sweet, warm blood,
upon your shoulders will drape cloth,
of red wool,
for Christmas when shadows linger,
about the berries you've placed on the table,
hauntings of angels,
you shall always be mine.

"David, have I been injured in an accident?"

"Of sorts, yes."

"My life is within these pages. I'd like to go on with this."

"Of course, read it to me."

"All right. 'How I love the winter. It makes me feel like a child. I've decorated the winding staircase in the grand hall with pine boughs and red velvet ribbons tied in bows. David and I are going ice skating tonight. We'll have to be wary of the wolves, but I do love skating.' Here's the next entry. 'David pointed out the tracks of a rabbit in the snow as we walked to the frozen pond. He always notices the small details. He gave me a lovely, old-fashioned locket. He doesn't seem to kiss me very often anymore.' David . . ."

"Go on. I know it all. I lived it with you Celia, it's for you. Don't worry."

"O.K. He's spending more time in town. I love to be with him and dream but I don't know where he's going.'"

"Celia, you gave this to me so I could read it before. It's not new. I'm not upset and don't you get that way either. It's all right. Continue . . ."

" 'His eyes become colder and colder and the more I wish for his love, the more distant David seems. I don't know what's happening. He must be undergoing some inward conflict, some sort of horrid pain. Why can't he tell me? He has given me his soul, his life to take away my pain, my loneliness, my selfishness. I may not be as brilliant as he but I truly wish to help. I don't want to see him suffer. Why doesn't he speak?'"

"Why have you stopped? What's the matter?"

"Celia, go on. I will be here with you, for you, but you must discover your life by yourself."

"I'm losing it. The words are running together like water."

"Breathe. Feel the fire. Look at the book upon which its glow rests. Do you see that it is open?"

"Yes."

"Can you read it again?"

"Yes. 'I've tried to talk to him, to tell him that I love him, but his replies are always curt and disinterested. Is he bored with me? I think he finds me silly and unattractive now. I don't even think he loves me anymore. I'm terribly afraid. I almost wish something bad would happen to me so he'd notice me.' David, I can't go on."

"Dearest Celia, don't worry, you can."

"'There is someone else.' David!"

"Continue."

"He's admitted it to me. He loves her. I frustrated him because I withdrew into my own insecurities. I still don't deserve it. I feel like I want to die. When I turn to something, someone in my mind for comfort, he is there, laughing at me.' David, why? Why did you do this to me?"

"You had something I desired."

"I gave you everything. What did you want?"

"I got what I wanted."

"So then you had no more use for me?"

"You were still pretty. She was much more exciting, though, and quite beautiful herself."

"Who is this? You betrayed me. You led me to believe you were warm and caring."

"I gave you a lot, Celia."

"And then you took it all away!"

"You were becoming wishy-washy and afraid of everything. You made excuses for living in your own world. You're a sad day-dreamer, not who I fell in love with. You didn't love me enough to let me into your world, to become your world."

"I have you. You made me feel as though I was selfish. I told you my life story. You told me yours. All your feelings, your innermost thoughts. I gave you my dreams and my ideas."

"Yes, they were quite nice. You gave me your mind. Thank you."

I opened myself up to you. I let you know my most intense fears, my weaknesses. You said that you loved me, you gained my trust and then you got sick of me! You used me! You trapped me

in a cage you disguised with the word love and fed off me like a parasite and then threw me away!"

"Don't hurt me Celia, I was good to you. There's only so much nothingness from a person one can take. You gave me your soul but you isolated me in doing so. It scared you so you backed away. You couldn't trust me. You left me cold."

"I hate you. You are so selfish."

"What does that matter now?"

"Take me back to the forest. I need to know what's there."

"Go outside of the house. It's snowing still. There's the rabbit tracks, love. It's Christmas day. Calm down. The forest is alive with silver glow. The icy flakes chime in their crystallization like small bells. Come under the ancient, aching oak."

"My God! David you killed me! Your eyes are rotted meat, turning black. My body is cold and wet with blood. I'm dead! I can't stand my eyes, dead, staring up at me like that. Crawl away, David, with the steel blade in your hand, dripping my blood. You are the devil."

"You are mine, my dearest Celia."

David sighed and plucked off the electrodes attached to his temples. The fire fell limp by his chair, hanging down from the glass case in which was kept soaking in electrically charged fluids, the brain of David's murdered wife.

Krissie Glover



Last Light

Tintoretto waited for the last light
to bathe his model in molten
citrine, bathe her in opalescent
pumpkin. She shimmered
and hovered, the light lifting her solid
flesh with honey-drenched tongs.

Tintoretto wept when it was over,
that he had got it all wrong.
Now when she stretched and laughed no jewels
broke from her breasts and thighs.
Her black hair hung flat. Her uneven
teeth were dark, decayed.

They called him “Il Furioso” because he painted
with such force and speed. But no one knew
his curdled emptiness when he sat
head in hands. Only the smell of
turpentine revived him.
Cleaning his brushes

he stared outside at the courtyard where cats
screeched out their clawed curses and
the stars blared like tiny
disapproving eyes. The stench flowered
from the Venetian water as he slumped head
pressed against the opened window
vilifying himself for his pettiness,
“The Little Dyer” deriding himself through dawn.

Jane Lunin Perel

Peuter Image

Hung,
Long scraggled hair,
Embedded back,
By dry, blood damp thorns,
Driven deep as canyons.
Eyes,
Filled and piercing
Into every face.
His gaunt face,
Dry, cracked
Sun-bleached lips,
Which like a dove,
Hover in peace.
Frail shoulders
Carrying our weight,
Stretched, as the sinew
Of a deer
Across a rough wooden shaft.
Ripping spasms
Running from cold steel spikes,
Tearing warm leather,
Healing palms, outstretched.
His heaving chest,
That of a runner's,
At the end of the race,
Now sunken,
Concave as the looking glass,
Flowing blood and water.
Cloth from the waist
Hangs still
In the dead air.
Strong legs
Entwined and riveted
Spike our living flesh,
Sand smeared.
Darkness swallows the land.
This,
My peuter crucifix.

David Pierpont

Vivaldi's "Four Seasons"

As the music flows through the headphones

I am a boat drifting

in an endless sea

Gentle waves lap my sides like

the incoming tide reaching the shore

Birds fly above me

Graceful dancing

As the sky darkens

The storm looms overhead

Once calm waves

Smash against me and leap

over my edges

Tossing and turning me in a

Violent rain

Suddenly, silence

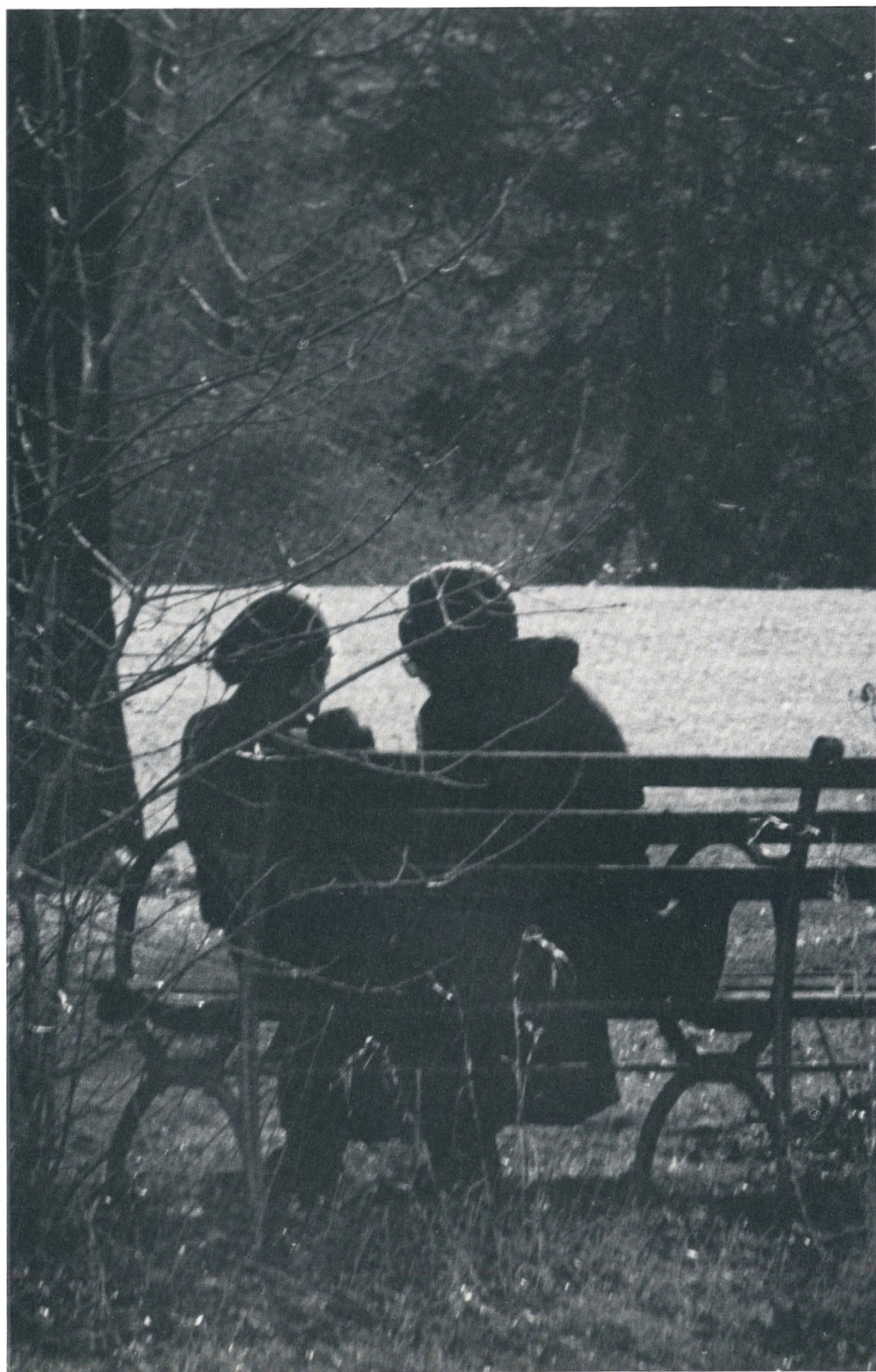
The sun a bursting flame

Seers the storm

Leaving me to rest on the

Quiet waters

Jennifer Preston



Concessions in the Night

In the cold chill of a winter night
After you spoke for yourself,
After we settled the tourniquet between us,
I walked a quiet walk home.
I thought about you and your little pauses,
The past few days spent together
And the way you touched me and laughed with me,
The way I planted some misconception inside you,
The way your voice iced over these ivory bones,
Reminding me I am, like the stars and arithmetic,
A silly man, ridiculous as ever.

Before, I felt silent and slight —
I feel alive again, next to you.
When I touch you, I feel and know you.
Too many days of rain and dark achings in the bone
Have sped by like a midnight train.
But they've faded, like the last trembles
Of some lost Roy Orbison song,
And I know only your eyes can hold my little things of error.

Robert P. Toole



Pleasant Pond

Sal and I went to High School together. I guess you'd say he was my best friend. Anyways, Sal never got along with his old man. He wasn't a bad guy, at least when he was sober. Like my dad, he hardly paid any attention to his son but sometimes he'd come home drunk and push him around and then throw him out of the house when he resisted.

Sal would then come over to my house. When we were younger we would walk up to Fletcher's meadows. Sometimes we'd sit and talk but mostly we'd just walk along tossing stones off into the woods.

When I was sixteen I got a truck. Then we went for drives. Usually we'd go up to Greenville, Jackson, or Caratunk. We'd grab a bottle or two and just drive. Sometimes we'd stop and sit somewhere.

One Sunday in May we went to this place called Pleasant Pond. Sal had woken up the night before when his dad began dragging him out of bed. He lashed out at him and managed to break free long enough to hit him back.

"I didn't mean to hurt him Ned, honest I didn't but I was so scared I . . . well . . . I . . . I don't know," he said later. I guess he hurt him pretty bad. When I got up he was sleeping on my back step. I asked him if he wanted to take a ride. He said yes.

"Dad's die too," he said after we were underway "don't they Ned?"

"Yeah" I said "I never really thought about it." Truth is I didn't really like to talk about it; It made me nervous.

Pleasant Pond was, the map said, off the highway a couple of miles up this dirt road. At the shore was a clearing with a couple of picnic tables and a boatramp.

We were sitting by the shore putting back a bottle of J.D. and staring off into the air when this black Ford with a camper on the back comes up the road. A Pudgy guy of about fifty jumped out and walked around the back. He came out with a tackle box and a couple of fishing rods.

"How do, boys" He said.

"Hello" I said back.

"You up here fishing?" He asked.

"Nope. Just hanging out." I said.

"Name's Joe Thibodeau," he said to me reaching out his hand.

"I'm Ned and this here's Sal," I said while shaking it.

Sal grunted hello and turned back to stare into the mountains. Joe put a lure on to his line and moved down the shore to cast. I watched him carefully. After a few minutes he changed the lure to a bobber and a hook which he placed a worm on. He cast it out and stuck the rod down between two rocks. He came down and sat next to me.

“You know it’s good to see some younger people up here. I always wanted to bring my son up here but . . . well I guess I never really took the time to and now he’s out on his own. Haven’t seen or heard much of him since he moved out.”

Neither of us said anything.

“You guys ever have children spend time with ’em. I didn’t and I’m sorry now.” Just then his bobber sunk below the surface and he got up to check it out.

He caught a couple of fish over the afternoon. We fried them in a pan that Joe had brought with him and we finished off both bottles of J.D. and a bottle of wine Joe brought with him. We didn’t talk much that night but one thing sticks in my memory: that one night it really seemed like it didn’t matter that Sal’s father beat on him and mine ignored me.

Dan McCullough



Parade

I marched along like everyone else
My eyes glued forward, my lips sealed.
left foot, right foot
A funeral procession.
On the corner
smoke filters through a vender's nose
Sausage . . . Shish-ka-bob . . . hot dogs
He shouts as our procession marched along.

Robots think green in gray flannel suits.
Yellow and black checkers scream by
left foot, right foot I continued to march
until despair caught my eye.

Misfortune lurked in a doorway
He seemed a victim of life
banished to the sweltering New York pavement
I saw and yet still I marched.

He was not part of this parade
merely an ornament of the street.
Invisible to most but not to me
And though I saw, yet still I marched.

Lisa Annunziata

Psycho-kitten Stomps out Noise Pollution

The hissing of orange leaves
shushing down the street
ended.

When a kitten,
slashed the shloshing leaves.
A psychopathic -
streetcleaner,
acting as if crazed on
catnip
although actually
doped on oak,
Silenced the wind.

Mark Tobin



