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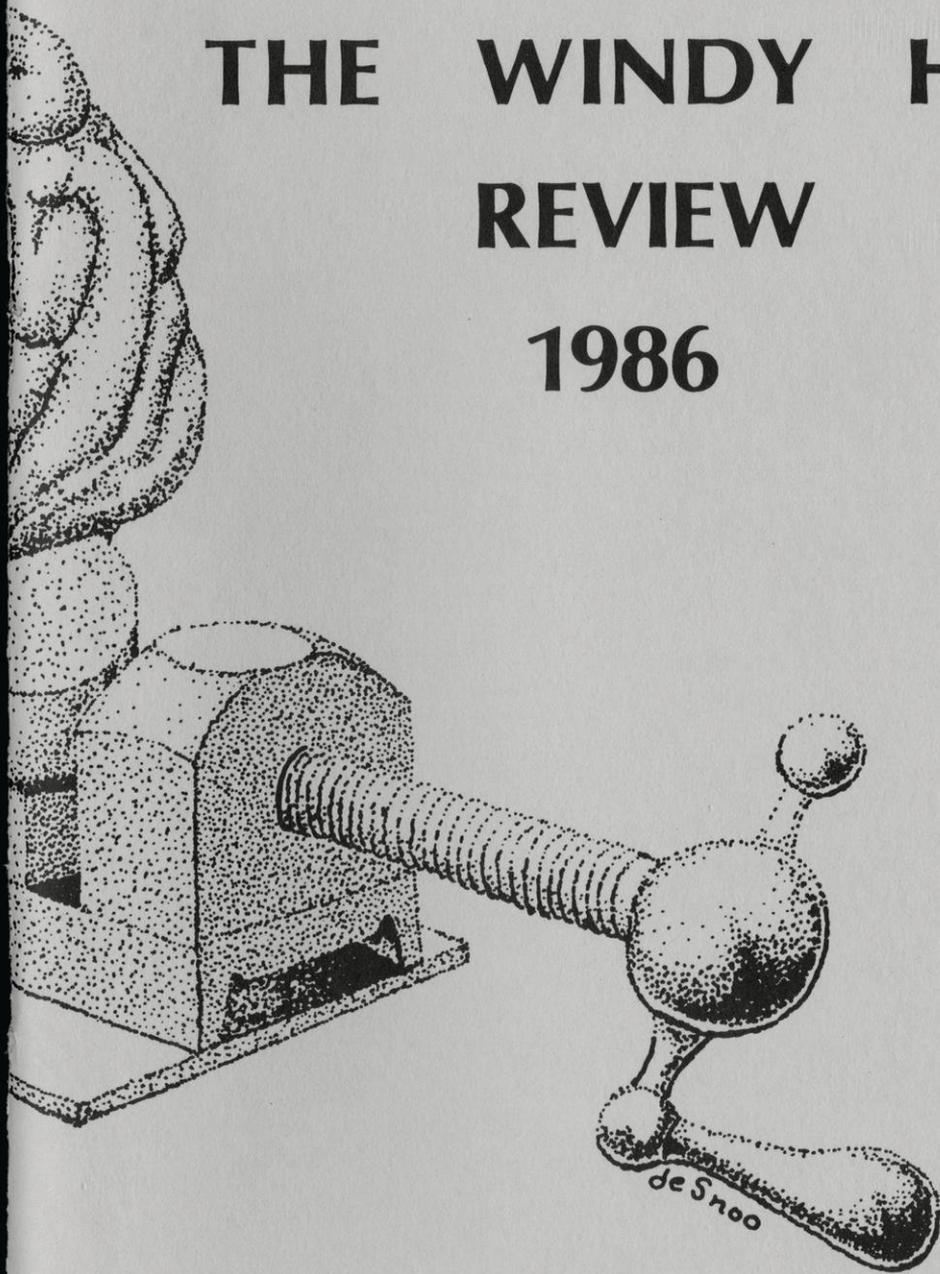
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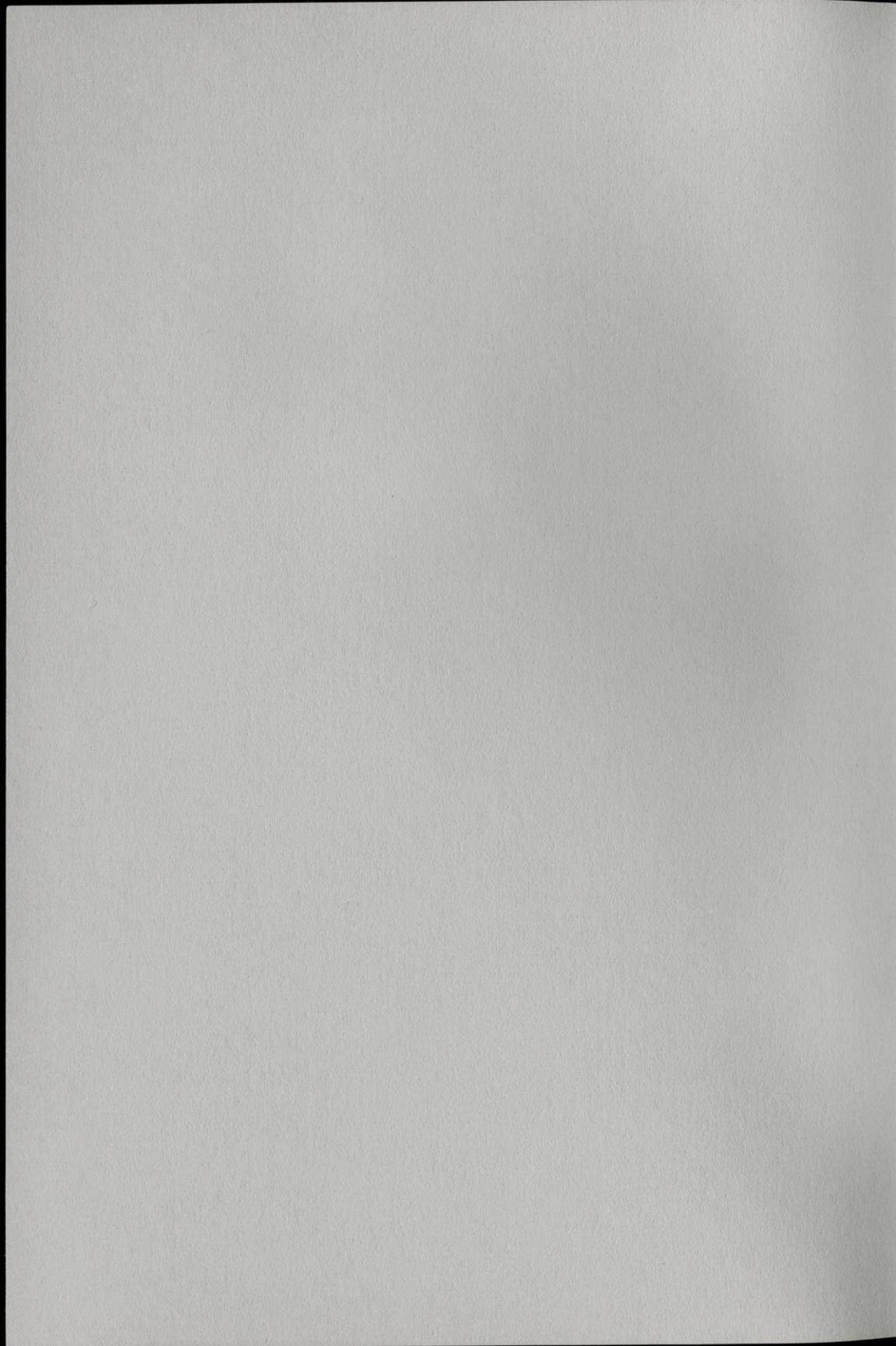
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**THE WINDY HILL
REVIEW
1986**





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REVIEW

UW-WAUKESHA

1986

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The editors would like to thank
all those who contributed. We
regret not all submissions could
be printed within the limits
of space.

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A special thanks to Lynn Paque for coordinating
the printing.

First Morning

Rustlings from the bedclothes
Slightly stir the silence
Of early morning
Nudging me into
Quiet wakefulness.

Startled suddenly
By memory's flood
My muscles quicken; pain
Pulls back,
A crushing, cramping wave
Receding into reality.

I am awake.
So are you.
Two entities separate
In blankets and
In bodies.
Two hours ago
You were me.

Julie Dickson

Memory: March 1976

The ice hugs the limbs and branches today
holding in a tension alien to the trees
themselves.

I am reminded of a time like this,
when the ice crept in in the very same way.

The wind swept through, causing the trees
to sing about their frigidity.
Their tinkling voices were almost pretty--
but not.

They sang of torture, of aching cold agony.
They sang of the want of something
that was to come, though not one knew when.
Some of them broke.

Strangely some broke at the points I would
have thought the strongest.

Nothing was ever meant to be that icy,
that rigid.

Yet for that span of time
nothing . . . was.

Julie Dickson

Spring Storm

I walked
and watched the storm come
black waves tumbling across the sky

 leading
was a horse-drawn chariot
 of ancient Rome--
 only there were no colors

I watched
the chariot turn into a charging bull
 head down
 running towards me

 then disappear
and become one of the black waves

From inside I listened
to the lullaby of water hitting glass
and stared out

 mesmerized
by falling rain

I blinked
and the grass turned green

 green like the water
 in a sunlit pond

Jeanne Hein

Fall

Red, orange, and gold boughs
reach out like flames
gasping--
for breath--
as gusts of wind
rob them--
scattering their leaves
across shaggy lawns.
Hovering clouds
grow dark--
and angry.
Frantic blackbirds gather.
Their cackling sounds
fade--
in the howling wind.
The old fragile man
stares out the window
and waits.

Mary L. Oleinik

Study for a Party . . . Two Guys at a Party

The tall and hidden kid; blonde on the edge of the nest,
And the shorter, more rock remote; a fuse to be smudged out
By the tap of a blade.

From there, readliless of danger, the heathen, smoking angels
Doubt even their stake in parading and start to hate
Do the salty smoking travellers

Oh to love you, plus the nature. The black moons on the
Balls of your feet. The moon smidgens, the smidgen size
Of a penny. The commas on the stock market, the state of
Numbers, the dirt on the patterns above.

Here and somewhere agone, comes Secret's blue time of Fabulous
Bland men and women who can pull their wool sleeves
And tell the Autumn truth. Spilling in the heat their beers.
Talking so loud the house and architecture were boring...
Fresh feet toppling pictures on the color tv
Dance, dance Abicuss...as Ancients dealt with Abicuss.

All form, Action word.

To the tune of damp starseated sweat and deep wet well, with
The aversion of the 1950 forgetful alcoholic.
Archive singsong fashion history of a father; 1950's justaparadox
I too young for these rapid, blueless Greys.
When these Greys die, the whole shipful'll smile.
No History at this party.

That tone must sit down with all it's oath and growth...
AAAHHHH... too giant too is that clot that killed father's
Pride. (Their father's poker partied too, with sheets on their
Heads, bottles of beer, mothers laughing)
Law is just drink and wait for words to trigger the putty
Thoughts and the torch of a roach.
Two individual Greys say:

-Party's over let's go. Maybe go for a ride...

No, a drill into leafy broad horizons
In a stained Grey Thunderbird that flitters
And tells me in the mist and smoke and mystery of goat hair clouds:
"Just another history..."

The two and everybody pose as just another history...
The whole party.

October 83 + December 85

Scott Zieher

Legal in D.C.

(for Jim Hazard)

We were eighteen,
Illegal in Pennsylvania,
Legal in D.C.

Mike's brother, Jay,
A sophisticated 20,
A sophomore at Mt. St. Mary's
(Where, I assumed,
Mike would matriculate),
Arranged this journey
For our benefit
To the 18-year-old
Drinking capitol.

Four of us
In a '56 Bel Air convertible
Whose right door was
Hermetically sealed.
A night passage
Down Route 1, from Philadelphia,
Through Baltimore,
To instant manhood.
Not to see the monuments,
Nor the federal buildings,
But the bars.
To get drunk legally.
No phony i.d. cards necessary.

Azaeleas and Dogwood in bloom
Will go unnoticed.
There will be unseen cherry blossoms.
Who knows, Yuri Gagaren
May sail overhead
All by himself.

From the radio
We are lead in chorus
By Baby Ray
Ray-moaned Charles,
The first person,
To my knowledge,
To whose music
The word "soul":
Has been applied.
We are the Raylettes:
"Hit the road, Jack,
And don't yuh come back
No more, no more, no more, no more."

Jay tells one of his father's stories,
Of a classmate at Notre Dame
(Where I had just been accepted)
Whose turd went from one corner
Of a Life magazine two-page spread
To the other.

Crewcut and Catholic
In John Kennedy's town,
Ready for Jay's itinerary,
We warm up
In some Georgetown establishments,
Then drive to a place
Called the Turn of the Century.
As we walk toward it,
I overhear Jay's sotto voce
Comment to Coleman,
"You can grab ass in this place."
His eyes roll,
And he clutches his groin,
A luxuriant gap-toothed grin
On his face.

Our waitress wears
Torn mesh nylons
From which
Her thigh bulges invitingly.
We consume a few pitchers of beer.
Coleman's hands are at the ready.
He misses on several passes
But finally sinks
His stiff fingertips
Into her right buttock.
She turns fiercely,
Stares at him,
Then heads straight for the bouncer.
We are gone.

Sage that he is, Jay suggests
We get something to eat.
Into a corner tavern
For sustenance
And more beer.
While I talk to Mike,
Coleman slips the roast beef
From my sandwich.
I bite into white bread and mayonnaise.
I peel it apart
And plant the triangle of white
On Coleman's laughing face.
He wears it out of the restaurant, singing,
"We will fight, fight,
We Friars,
Fight until the game
Is through, rah, rah."
We join in on our
High school song,
Swaying as one
Down the street.

In the car
The urge is communal.
Jay stops at a gas station.
We pile out the driver's side
And wait at the locked bathroom
Sly and sober,
Jay gets the key
And the toilet
We three seniors
Get the sink.
In the dark
We relieve ourselves
In a brotherhood,
Our urine mingling
Amid sighs and splashing.

There were other bars
But the memory of them
Is drowned in beer.
Other songs and other jokes
Lost to memory.
In the dark well
Of the back seat
The pale green dashboard light
Is my beacon.
I am part of three conversations
Or none at all.
I can't tell.
Coleman rolls the window down
And blows his lunch.

I sleep in the medical student's bed,
Unaware of being short-sheeted,
And awake to a cow heart
Staring me in the face.
I feel it only fair
To wake everyone else with it
Coleman has a two-tone face,
Pink and a white not of roast beef
sandwiches.

We break fast
On aspirins, orange juice
And coffee.
None of us, I guess, manages
A Life-sized crap.

In a quiet moment
Jay looks at me
With a solemn smile.
There's news.
Coleman, hungover but
Still irrepressible
Says that he and Mike
Will enter the Augustinian Seminary,
Will become the Friars we sing of.

I am dazed.
I am abandoned.
I say, "You're kidding,"
But know it's the truth.

Back in the back seat,
Bleary-eyed, with queasy stomach,
I fall asleep
On Mike's shoulder.
Around the double ding
Of gas station bells
A dream is wrapped.
Two hooded monks
Carrying skulls
Walk toward the cold walls
Of a stone monastery
I am in the bell tower
Trying desperately
To get their attention.
I ring the Angelus
But they don't see me.

I stretch my rubbery,
Illegal legs outside the car,
Back on Pennsylvania turf
Where the blue laws reign.
My heart is still banging from the bells.
I breathe deeply to soothe it
And inhale gas fumes.
With shaky steps,
I walk around the car.
There it is,
Encrusted on the passenger door,
Coleman's barf,
The lumpy residue of our evening,
His song of farewell.

Steve Tighe

Dog

The knees bend like spurs
Spun round from the
Rattling steps, shake off
The wood-stove fever
Stored from the
Floorboards through the
Night, race past the pump
To the edge of the
Cleanshorn field where
Only the day before an
Army of corn held sway.
Now on tiptoe, now
Trotting gingerly row to
Row, the pink tongue
Flagging, the keen eye
Swerves to the suggestion
Of movement, surveys the
Swath of harvest slack-
Jawed. The creatures of
The plain are dazed in a
Changed world, but he who
Sleeps on a burlap sack
Where the cinders spit is
Proud to the tooth: I am
I, he thinks, dog, and
This is my country, and
This the might of my
Accomplices.

Michael Finley

Triangles Prisms Cones

From a distance all we were were
big blue wheels;
we called them "our reasonableness,"
we called them "true circles,"
living in the world
and spinning with love.
It was our only course,
like the rudderless boat's,
to see land,
any land.

I was bound in copper coil,
you were a fire of slippery jewels.
From a distance we
were static electricity,
living in love with the stock-still world.

Crying under our floorboards
was our silver pyramid,
penned inside our walls were
ancient bulls
in bas relief.

Our flags were sins on lascivious oceans,
our word for regret was
"a whirlpool of blood, turning in space."

It sped on.
The dot
which was so small at first
became what it had to become,
a collapse into feeling.
Item broke down into item of light,
each one new and unknown.
It was "our home,"
a wave of slow motion,
which was all our lives forever.

Michael Finley

A Day at the Lakes

The water hills are
High today. Water
Hills meaning us, how
We break up the
Surface of things,
And make the lake we
Rise from more
Interesting.
Something burning and
Electric with
Insistence is in us,
Scratching, tapping
In our skulls. Some
Unnegotiable body of
Water rocks us in its
Arms, and in the
Distance collected
Like blue waves
Between us the man
Kisses deeply and
Longingly wife, and
The lightning
Sticking in our heads
Makes fire, each
Inhalation fills the
Sail, borne aloft by
A hand so strong the
Boat and sea obey.

Michael Finley

Poem

I watched and sighed in cool belief
While they with despair and
Transparent sleep lay in the road
pressed thin by rain,
Their fragile folds arrayed in
Neat yellow patterns kissed by red.
Their voices emerged; I could hear

Through tough clouds of leather laughter.
I choked on thick veils of
Muddy sky, listening to the faint
Teardrops collide from
Shadows unkind to savage

Strands that bruised the skies.
When the echoes exploded
Silence invaded, creeping,
Unyielding, it followed my
Heels. I stared unfeeling but with
fixation by dawn's quick blade
Cutting the throat of night.

Terry de Castro

The 79th Street Restaurant

White aproned philosopher stands
behind the counter
and counts
the drunks
and people
last leaving the night
for sleep.

Hoping for
no fights
no last hangings on of
alcoholic courage.

She who wears the apron
places the cup of coffee
in front of him.

The shaved head of
the man
means more
than safety,
more than
protection.

From the back it looks mean,
but she who wears the apron
sees him
as her father.

The bushy eyebrows red
The curled mustache red

No sirens tonight
no need for worry.

Just food to cook
and dishes to wash.

Bruce Hutchins

Ann

When Yesterday's forever is Tomorrow's broken heart
And the bliss to meet feels the pain to part
Be bold enough to set your love free
start a diamond search in the moonlit sea
And as twilight clouds go floating by
see hope and fear enthuse a sapphire sky
For the fair and the brave who blushing unite
like the moon and wave when they meet at night
By the tear that shows when passion is high
as the raindrop flows from the heat of the sky
Time blows away the courage to fail
Young dreamers cast off or never set sail

Paul Koniecki

They write alike and cheap is best, I thought,
Til wedged between a break in walk I spied
A pen, whenafter upon paper I had tried,
Became the tool my penning soul had sought.

It came to me--Its worth could not be bought;
Its body straight and firm unhampered by a clip
Let flow a line of black, no glob nor drip.
Oh, Parker Pen! Companion to my thought.

Now I sigh to say I let it drop--
Though many times before it seemed was gone
This time for good. Its loss I still bemoan.
Bought and writ and tossed, the others flop.

I could not match my friend with any other ball:
To love and lose, 'tis best not love at all.

Julie Dickson

From the back it looks mean,

but she who wears the apron
sees him
as her father.

The bushy eyebrows and
The curled mustache and

No airs tonight
no need for worry.

Just food to cook
and dishes to wash.

Bruce Hutchins

Sonnet

As great white gulls among the waves do fly
And try so ever skillfully to pluck
A tasty fish from plentiful supply,
The fisherman does also try his luck--
But elsewhere. Hands, because experienced,
Are worn from heat and match a weathered face.
His teeth are stained, but strong from holding nets.
The fisherman, and people of his race,
Are first in knowing seas. Their lives and lives
Before them, nourished from the water field
Of blue, know also dangers lurk and hide
Beneath the surface. Winds not known to yield
Can rise so quick and turn the calm to waves.
The water covers fishermen's mass graves.

Jeanne Hein

iii

The road feels unkind to feet
now used to the yield and spring
of grass. My mind returns to the woods,
to the narrow trails beat
firm by forest creatures. May great
and noisy oak cracking passages
must open to them, hidden
and waiting. By their
faintest ripples!

Claire Wroblewski

Pissonnet

This most refreshing feeling brings me bliss.
Its source lies here within my outstretched hand.
What joy flows unimpeded in a piss!
I thrill to write my name in snow and sand!

When young, I often went outside to whizz.
(Rebellion is a form of youthful power.)
To some, that domination adds the fizz
That carbonates the ale of golden showers.

Another youthful mem'ry floods my brain.
(I'd guess that I possess a yellow soul.)
The fun I had directing my own rain
To sink dad's cigarette butts in the bowl!

This poem's done. To end I'll not slip up;
I'll shake off droplet-words, and now--zip up.

Dennis Held

Ripples

i

Belly-down on the wooden pier
with my hair a web on reeds,
I study the inconstant shape
of my face, a shifting of
features
to the small rippplings of fish
beneath the surface. My real face
shifts with
thoughts. You are silent.

ii

The meadow waves and froths
about our knees. We wade
through the grasses.
Small insects
ride our shirts as if we were
tall masted ships.
You and I are drenched
in the setting sunlight.

iii

The road feels unkind to feet
now used to the yield and spring
of grass. My mind returns to the woods,
to the narrow trails beat
firm by forest creatures. How great
and noisy our crashing passage
must seem to them, hidden
and watching. Do their
faces reflect our rippplings?

Claire Wroblewski

How Fish Formed the First Chapter of the National Rifle Association

Ripples

cast after cast the worm
came off

trolling the bottom a rock
or weeds ripped it free

another fish, I swear a fish
whose mind divined more than its sea

teased the hook, chewed
the worm loose bit by bit

again I'd turn to my dad
and curse or curse alone

re baiting the hook
tossing it back

seems I went fishing some
days for nothing but

learning for sure
they are down there

and they love to strike back
I spent dozens of dollars

over the years for fresh worms
and to replace hooks

the fish either had bent
or slimed-up

I bought the new flashy baits
and those wiggly plastic worms

I fished the same lakes again
my tackle and me set on revenge

so I hauled up more weeds
caught the metal plugs on rocks

and heard the line whine "snap"
my rod empty of fish

over time the damn critters learned
to tug hard on the plastic

and thrill me all ready
for a big catch at last

just to find one more
imitation worm bitten clean through

(I did, now don't get me wrong,
secure several good sized pike and bluegill

but sat at home most days
eating stew)

well, to hell with all that, I declared,
grabbing a baseball bat

I waded right out into the river
waiting for a fish I could clobber to swim past

wound up so galdanged black and blue
my feet sore, bloodied, cut-up

by all the stones and rocks
I stepped on and slid off

I quit, I said, and practiced
sitting in my boat with a book

while the waters around me churned
and the fish approved

sure glad I don't have me a son, hell
what would I do

couldn't teach him much about fighting
that's for sure

I'd probably go out and buy him a gun
say "Boy,

if you want to eat decent
you'd best learn how to shoot."

Paul B. Dyer

Crimes of Passion: The Fan

Please do not be upset,
I only want to get
to know you better,
better than the cold,
impersonal stories of some
tacky gossip magazine.
I wish to lie beside
your warm naked body,
to be with you,
alone; without that other
man, who you are
supposedly in "love" with.
I am the type of
person you will probably
find with great offense.
With that, I, myself, take
great offense. One of
these days very soon,
I will step out
of the cold and impersonal
shadows, the shadows of life,
and run a jagged piece of
glass from breast to breast.
My cup will then runneth
over, not of wine, but the
sweet, thick, trickle of blood,
with the slightest mixture
of your sweet milk.
Your life will then be
in the shadows, and I
will have you for
myself, and myself only.

Stan McCormick

A Shattered Dream

There is so much hurt in the world
People laughing at others
People criticizing others
People killing others
If only love were to exist
What a wonderful life it would be

"It's a beautiful sunny day, the sun can even
be seen on people's faces. Harmony is all among us;
like musical notes of a finely tuned composition.
There's a string section, and wood-winds"

"But don't forget the percussion--or the brass"

the dream is shattered

Evil strikes thru the night
People angry at each other
What a wicked world it is
Where the brass sets off the bombs

suicide

a dream

shattered

Stan M^cCormick

The Chaser

"Hi ya, Jack."

"Hey, how you doing, Pete? The usual?"

"Yep."

"If there's one thing in life I can count on, it's got to be you, Pete. Nice to know I'll have at least one customer on Friday mornings. How's it going at the plant?"

"Nothing new. They wanted me to go on first shift, but I turned it down. The old lady has me hooked on soaps, you know?"

"Soaps? You, Pete? Come one, you're pulling my leg."

"Well, I'll not really as interested in the soaps as I am about my wife's obsession with commercials. She really cracks me up. Picks all the commercials apart. It really is comical."

"What do you mean?"

"She sits there, you see, and she has this notebook and pen all ready. Whenever she sees something that pops her cork, she writes it down. She's even mailed a few letters to the companies that make the stuff."

"No kidding? What does she say about them?"

"One time, she wrote to that baby shampoo company. You know, Jensen & Jensen. Anyway, she said something about the nerve of those women to admit in public that they not only buy cheap shampoo, but that they dump it in their kids eyes."

"You're right. That is pretty funny. Do they bother to write back?"

"Yeah. She's gotten a few form letters, thanking her for her comments and interest."

"Surprised they bothered writing."

"She's pretty funny, Jack. Once, she wrote a letter to a laundry detergent company. She said, she could relate to the woman forgetting the fabric softener, but when it gets to the part about her sitting naked in the tub, and some guy says, 'Forget the fabric softener?' She couldn't buy that."

"I think you're pulling my leg again."

"No, no. Here's the funny part. She told them that the product was appropriately named, because the woman sure was bold to answer him. I really laughed over that one."

"Humph. Ready for another beer?"

"You bet. Sure tastes good. Now, why couldn't the old lady pick on beer commercials? Maybe they'd send some free samples."

"Does she get free samples?"

"Not so far."

"Hey, Jack, how about a nice cold one?"

"Sure thing, Pete. This one's got your name on it."

"Thanks. Remember what we were talking about last week?"

"Commercials?"

"Yeah. The old lady wrote to another shampoo company. Swill, I think."

"Yeah, so?"

"Well, first they wrote a nice polite letter, same as usual. But, then a case of the shit comes, UPS."

"What a deal. Must have been some letter."

"She told them that any commercial showing people dumping half a bottle in the palm of their hand, was a shampoo she'd never buy. So, they suggested she try the product and thanked her for her comments. Can you beat that?"

"Price is right. Ready for another one?"

"Yeah. Maybe I can talk her into complaining about beer commercials."

"Hi, Pete. How you doing? Anymore UPS deliveries?"

"As a matter of fact, we did get another package yesterday."

"Can't wait to hear this one. What was it? A case of tampons?"

"Real funny, Jack. I wouldn't even know if she uses the stupid things, let alone complains about those commercials. I do know, that she bitches about the douche ones, though. Wrote to them and said the commercials should only be shown after nine o'clock. Says kids shouldn't be exposed to such nasty stuff."

"Boy, your wife sounds like a real gem alright. So what did you get this week?"

"A case of toilet paper, that's what."

"Toity paper, huh? Let me guess. Charming? No, umm, Whiteclod? Kittenell? Okay, I give."

"Geez, you got me all mixed up. Now, I have to think about the letter she wrote. Oh, I remember, it was Bunner. You know, the stuff that talks to kids in the closet."

"Hell, toilet paper is toilet paper. Guess it doesn't matter what kind it is, as long as it's free, right?"

"That's right. I don't get it, though. I always laughed at her. I mean, her letters and complaints always seemed so stupid."

"Don't complain. Keeps her off the streets, doesn't it?"

"You don't understand. Give me another one, will ya?"

"Sure, Pete. What's to understand?"

"Well, first the letters were all form letters. The last few, were signed in ink. Now, packages of free stuff. I just don't get it."

"Ah, have another beer and forget about it."

"You know, Pete, I kinda look forward to Friday mornings. I can't wait to hear what that zany wife of yours is up to now."

"Let me have a beer first. I really need one today. I tell you, Jack, it's getting hard to live with that woman. You know, she's getting a swelled head over all the attention she's been getting."

"What attention? A few letters, a few free cases of junk?"

"It's more than that. Two days ago, some joker flew all the way here, just to talk to her. Some advertising agency in New York!"

"Oh, oh. Did she go and insult some bigwig? Or did she complain about commercials once too often?"

"No. It seems she wrote a letter about cleaning products. All kinds of them. The type when the neighbor walks in and says not to use the old stuff, but to try the new improved. The wife said, 'What do you expect the woman to do? Throw a whole bottle of the old stuff out, just because they've improved the product.'"

"Honestly, Pete. Who in the world pays attention to that kind of junk on TV. Know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean, but apparently, that guy from New York, well, he knows what she means. She has another appointment with him, for lunch next week. Give me a beer, and a shot."

"So, how did her lunch date go?"

"It wasn't a date. It was an appointment. She made that perfectly clear. I told her I didn't like the idea of her having lunch with this jerk, but she refused to let me come along."

"So, tell her to quit writing her stupid letters. Tell her that you don't like the idea of her going out to meet this character alone."

"I did. Says I remind her of one of those commercials where the guy sits in a chair and the wife is redecorating. I didn't get it, but she says, 'figure it out.' How do you like that?"

"Sounds to me like the lady is getting out of line. I think I know what commercials she's talking about. First, his moose head gets replaced with a chandelier. Then, his stuffed chair gets replaced with a dainty one . . . Hey, how about a shot and a beer chaser?"

"She's been walking around like she's on cloud nine. I'm telling you, Jack this guy has her acting like a grouse doing a mating dance. I can't even talk to her. I tried, but she says she's too busy working on her ideas."

"What ideas?"

"Ideas about other stupid commercials. She's sketching outlines to improve a bunch of different ones. Things like, the neighbor who comes over to borrow something and then gripes when it's not her brand. I don't know. It just doesn't seem that important anymore. I used to get a big kick out of all this. Thought it was funny. It's not funny anymore."

"Gotta straighten her out, Pete. That's all there is to it."

"Pete, old pal. Looks like you could use a nice cold one. Ought to pick that lip up before you trip over it."

"Jack, you're really full of them, aren't you?"

"Hey, laugh it up. It's Friday."

"Big deal. When I got up for work, there was a note on the table. Get this. She went to a 'dinner engagement.' Never said one word about it when I went to bed in the afternoon. Not a word."

"That guy from New York still hanging around?"

"I guess so. Know what else? I called on my lunch hour and there was no answer. Now, where in the hell could she be at three o'clock in the morning?"

"Sound sleeper?"

"Maybe. How about another beer and a double shot this time."

"You trying to mess me up, Pete? This is Monday, not Friday."

"Give me a glass of whiskey and don't forget the beer."

"So, did you straighten that wife of yours out?"

"Straighten her out? Did I, straighten her out? Jack, you're not gonna believe this one. Turns out this advertising agency in New York handles all kinds of products. Most of the old lady's letters went to that agency. They sent this asshole to feel her out. He decides to offer her a job in New York as, hang on to your hat, Jack, as a commercial consultant."

"Wow, Pete. You serious?"

"Serious? I'll tell you how serious. Offered her forty grand a year to start. I can't believe it. I just can't believe it."

"Whew. That mean you're moving to New York? Hell, that's more money than you make at the plant. That's great. I can't believe it either. Christ, to think that we've been making fun of her. And now, she's going to be a big executive in New York. Boy, if that isn't a kick in the drawers. So, when you leaving?"

"Ain't."

"What do you mean, 'ain't'?"

"Well, she saw this commercial on TV. Some lawyer that handles divorce . . ."

Sue Spiering

Woman

Hot and dusty, she sits barefooted in the sand,
grinding meal at the foot of the great temple.

Encased in corset and lace, she embroiders
dutifully, alone in the king's courtyard.

Beside the oven, she works the dough
into bread, for the men behind the library door.

Book-laden, she plunges into the cool, sacred
depths of learning . . . and
unbound and unbidden, she emerges at last.

Carol Perszyk

Tending Fires

The flames danced and reached their fingers towards the sky. The dry leaves and branches crackled, sending showers of sparks into the air for a short-lived moment. The woman watched the flames, mesmerized by the multitude of patterns and colors. The heat billowed out, warming her body like the embrace of a lover. Her face flushed, and droplets of sweat formed on her forehead and the back of her neck. Every few minutes she broke the spell and added more brush to the fire, watching as the flames attacked it ravenously.

A hand reached out and grasped her shoulder from behind.

She swung around.

"You startled me, Kurt."

He smiled crookedly, looking past her at the fire.

"Eric's not home," she said. "He's working at the store all morning and then going right to the game."

"I know; he told me."

He idly picked up a branch and poked at the fire, smiling at each new eruption.

"How come you're doing this, anyway?"

"I don't know. It's such a beautiful day, and I felt like being outside. I thought maybe I'd surprise Dan by getting this mess cleared away before he gets back from his trip."

"You have to be real careful with fires like this," he said, his eyes caressing the flames. "They need to be watched, tended--you know?"

"I guess I didn't realize how much work I was getting myself into."

Turning away from the fire, she bent to pick up the rake. Denim stretched taut over slender hip.

He stood by silently, watching her movements through narrowed eyes. When she turned back toward him, he quickly looked back into the fire.

"How are your folks, Kurt? It seems like ages since I talked to your mom."

"They're okay. . . I could give you a hand."

"That's really sweet of you, but aren't you going to the game?"

"No."

"I'm really surprised that a boy with your build isn't on the football team."

"I'm not really into things like that."

"I sure wish Eric was a little more like you. He's involved in so many things and always off somewhere. If I remember correctly, you two used to be inseparable. You were such a little devil. Do you remember the time that old Mrs. Kelly accused you of torturing her cats? Well, boys will be boys. If she could only see how shy and polite you've become."

He had quietly moved away and was already gathering up some of the brush, feeding the fire.

"Okay, partner," she said. "But I insist on paying you for your work."

The sun rose higher in the sky. Smoke filled the air around them like a shroud. They worked efficiently and silently, she raking and

gathering the brush, and he continuously adding it to the fire.

"We're doing great," she said. "At this rate we should finish long before dinner.

He appeared to be totally absorbed in watching the fire, as if there was a cryptic message contained within the flames. He had removed his shirt, and his broad back glistened with sweat. She laid her hand gently on his forearm.

"Hey, kiddo, are you in there?"

His jaw tightened, pulling the corners of his mouth into a grimace. Her hand slid absently down to her side.

"You looked like you were a million miles away."

"I'm okay."

"I was just saying that we'll be done in no time. I suppose you'll want to get home and get cleaned up for the dance tonight."

"It doesn't matter."

"Don't tell me you don't have a hot date?"

"What's the difference?"

"Kurt, I was only joking. Doesn't your mom ever tease you about girls? I thought she mentioned that you had a new girlfriend."

"That's all over." His hair fell smoothly across his eyes. "She was too immature...they're all immature."

"A man of the world at eighteen, hmm?"

"I wouldn't say that," he muttered. "They're just. . . different, not like you."

He threw a fresh supply of branches onto the fire, and it erupted in a single, climactic moment.

"Well, I guess it's back to work," she said. "I can take a hint."

Their work was almost finished. The pile of brush had dwindled to nothing, and Kurt was tending to what was left of the fire. She gathered up the yard tools and stored them safely in the shed out back.

When she returned, Kurt was once again holding a branch, idly poking at the disappearing embers, trying to coax them into one last burst of flame.

She stood quietly next to him, flexing her shoulders and rubbing the small of her back, where her blouse had separated from her jeans.

"Make sure it's completely out."

His sidelong glance changed, and he looked fully into her face as he brought his foot heavily down upon the embers, crushing the remaining life from them.

"You got to smother them real good."

A drop of sweat worked its way caressingly down between her breasts.

"Come on, kid," she said. "I think we earned a cold drink."

The phone was ringing when they came into the kitchen. She answered it, motioning for Kurt to sit down.

"Okay, Eric," she said. "Just be careful and have a good time."

She listened for a moment, smiling and shaking her head.

"Don't be silly. I don't need my car tonight, anyway. I plan on spending a quiet night with a good book. Just enjoy yourself and don't be too awful late. I'll leave the back door unlocked for you."

She hung up the phone and headed for the refrigerator.

"You kids," she laughed. "Always unpredictable. Eric's going out to eat with his friends and then going right to the dance.

He sat at the table like a waxen image, seemingly lost in his own thoughts.

"Here," she said, setting a can of beer down in front of him. "I guess you deserve this; you worked hard."

"They drank, a silent toast to a job completed.

"How would you like to have dinner with me?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"Not a very exciting prospect, huh?"

"It's okay."

"Just be sure to phone home and clear it with your mom. I'm just going to shower real quick and then I'll be right back to get it started."

She headed down the hallway, unbuttoning her blouse. Hesitating, she turned and looked back into the kitchen.

"Help yourself to another beer if you want one. Just take it easy, Sport, because I wouldn't want to be accused of corrupting you."

He watched her walk back down the hall, his eyes smoldering. He crushed the empty beer can in his hand.

She returned, clean and freshly dressed, and found the kitchen empty. The crushed can lay on the table like a forgotten memory. She called his name. She looked out the window and saw the black scar where the fire had been.

"I didn't even pay him," she said to the empty room.

She moved around the kitchen, her movements simple and unhurried, occasionally stopping to stretch her tired muscles. After preparing her dinner, she ate in silence and watched as the daylight faded into shadow.

She curled up in a chair, prepared to spend the rest of the evening reading. The uninterrupted quiet of the house enveloped her like a fog. This, along with the hard work she had done, soon took their toll. By ten o'clock she found that it was impossible to keep her eyes open any longer. Moving habitually through the house, she checked to make sure that all the lights were out and that she had left the back door unlocked for Eric before she finally undressed and got into bed.

She slept deeply for what seemed like hours, stirring briefly when she heard Eric coming in the back door. She was almost immersed in the blackness of slumber again, when she felt the mattress shift under an added weight.

"Dan?" she whispered.

A hand grasped her arm cruelly, turning her around. Her nightgown was pulled up over her face as a knee crushed her hip. She choked and caught the acrid odor of smoke.

Julie Mosca

And You Call Me Woman

And you call me woman
And you plaster my likeness
All over your walls
In your workshops and your lockers
In your bedrooms and sleazy hotels
Or you stash me away in your chest of drawers
Under your dirty linen
Furtively, at times
Boldly, at times
You stare at my woman parts
With lust in your eyes
And hatred in your hearts

And you call me woman
And my body is your target
My face means nothing
It could be any face
Or no face at all
Just so the gaping hole that is my mouth
Remains
For you to enter and defile
Cramming your hatred down my throat
Assuring my silence awhile

And you call me woman
And you ply me with your plastic smile
You lure me to your den of lies
Promising me riches
You bind me to your bedpost
Or a stanchion
Or a tree
And plunge your hatred into my nakedness
For your pleasure
And my pain

And your name is everyman
And power is your game
I am the pawn
You roll your loaded dice
And call the shots
You manipulate
And dominate
Masturbate and penetrate
I am the object of your obsession
The receptacle of your hatred and your rage
And your aggression
And you call me woman

Rose Czerwonka

Photograph of Bill

Bill sits on a barstool
like most of us, there,

But,
once in awhile,
 he seems to sense more life
than the rest of us.

He stares, silent,
at his glass
and mulls over
a life time.

At times like these
he drinks his beer
like reading Aristotle.

Sometimes I understand
the thirst he
 tries to kill.

Bruce Hutchins

My Daughter

I made meatloaf, so she ate cold pizza, and then
she listened to Madonna. I like Mozart.

Faded jeans made her comfortable, but
I wore a skirt and blouse.

Carefree, she sped away on her ten speed,
leaving me puttering behind in the kitchen.

I cleaned the cupboards and washed the floor,
while she spent the day shopping with her friends.

And when she was gone, she bought me a cookie
that said "I love you" in pink frosting,

But she ended up eating half of it.

Carol Perszyk

Claire Wroblewski

First Birthday

My heart jumped a beat today
remembering the day
you passed from me,
becoming a universe of your own.

Julie Dickson

Swing

Web wrapped

the swing settles into
rust

the glider stilled
by grass grown
tall
and wild,

winds emptied
of rhyme
and song.

I still expect to see
Brian
full cheeked, his hair
a sweeping blur,
feet kicking
clouds.

Cheeks once sweetly rounded
have thinned.

Legs,
stretched and muscled,
leap
and run
and carry him
distant.

He speaks in strange
and solemn tones.

"Momma, I'm growing up."

And I smile.

Claire Wroblewski

Mothers and Daughters

"Hard times when Momma
had to be alone," she said.
Like the twelve times
her womb quickened
to the fierceness of life,
and of those, six
bore futility. Helplessness
spent in black crepe streamers
over doors, windows and the
small wood coffins in the parlor.
The Herdas had hard times too.
Lost the wife and children
to T.B. The old suitcase doctor
(black battered suitcase on the
table), mixed his brews,
flakes for fever, poultices to purge,
doses for dreams and little else.

"Hard times, when she had
to be alone," she said.
Like the rivers
of angry red scars down her
legs. A dancing child of two
delighting in the sweep
of long hair as she pirouetted
in the summer kitchen.
Pirouetted. Spiraled into
a scream, falling into the still
smoking cauldron of lard
soap. An old healer, hitched
his team and whipped them to a frenzy
to reach the screaming child's
bedside. Took her cries
to himself, called out to his
God in words that rushed from
his faith like the burning rivers
down her legs, swayed over her,
chanted and cursed and called upon
his God to stem the flood.

"Hard times," she said.
Like when the neighbor
got bit rabid. Chained
him to a tree. The tree was three
children, fingertip to fingertip,
wide around the trunk. Children
sunk hands into the grooves
cut by his chains, "eight, nine,
ten, ready or not . . ." flicking
into a warm summer's night. Their
shrieking echoed his long thin
screams, entangled in the tree
like a kite string.

"Hard times," she said.
Like laboring in the fields
and her belly filled to dragging
with child,
chafed by coarse cloth
and heaved the hay til her
breath rasped and an old man
passing by in his wagon
hauled over to scold pa.
And then the times of silence
would come upon her like
nightfall. A slow fading
of light and pa who spoke
only of necessity,
would spill whole hours of
conversation into her
empty lap, trying to reach her.

"I understand, Momma," I said.

Claire Wroblewski

Hands

In the hollow
of my hands
cupped about yours
there is a stirring
a small creature
contemplating flight.
I ache,
knowing if I set it free
it will falter
 fall
bound by its infirmities
as we are bound,
you and I,
by your illness.

I do not remember
your hands
 young
 or soft.
They were strong
capable hands
that held secrets
like the prompting
of sweet yeasty rising,
or the quelling
of childish
 fears.
My hands are like
my memory of yours.

These are your hands
 not mine,
your reassurances
uttered in my voice.
Still, these are my fingers
spread across your cheek,
trying to stem the flow
 of fear
like some dreadful
childhood parody.

I see my son
sitting at a distance
 quiet, watching.
His hands, folded
in his lap,
are young
 and soft.

Downtown desk slaves
 suffer pressure panic
 parched lips wetted with
 dollar bottles of sparkling water
 for health
 and status
 all day elevator eyes down
 avoiding gazes of other
 clones bound
 in junior accounting executive polyesterpinstripe uniforms
 and eleven-dollar respectability flags
 cinched tight
 around skinny-fat rigid-weak necks

while

the real artisans of the earth
 sow seeds, till dirt
 quench genuine thirst
 with ground water
 smile, wave to neighbors
 from John Deere tractors
 ruling their kingdoms
 wearing loose cotton flannel denim and
 a dusting
 of the soil
 from which we take
 (for granted)
 our sustenance

Scott deSnoo

The John

The Virgin Mary
lives within
a small glass box
on the lawn owned by
the guy
next door.

No rain
or air
can reach her there.

But I know something
he can't know:

she can't get out
of the small glass box
on the lawn owned by
the guy
next door.

I guess
he bought
her too.

Dennis Held

To a Lover Far Away

Your letter arrived today,
in pieces,
in a plastic bag,
complete with a note attached
to the effect of:

Sorry.

It got caught in our machine.

We process so much
this is bound to happen.

Signed:

The Postmaster Himself
(to console me?
as your letter now cannot do?)

Jeanne Hein

Dog

Loose-tongued canine, you hound
 the dusk with relentless remarks
 content to hear yourself howl
 until hoarse.
 "Guff" reads the tag at
 your throbbing throat.
 Tail-tucked torso, you rail;
 bent on convincing the moon
 and your mother
 you brag.

Julie Dickson

Mare

I.

In the hours of deep dreaming
I sit awake,
aching to slump back
into dreaming.
The mare is quiet
for now.
We sit out
the colic together.

II.

She nickers
softly, her breath
pooling into
my cupped hands,
her muzzle questing
and cool,
like the night winds
that stir
the damp hairs
from my neck.

III.

We fall into
silence.
Frog and cricket
and the low susuration
of wind in the grasses
fill the space
about us.
I strain to learn
the language
of night.

IV.

I begin to know
what sleep steals
from me.
The meadow
breathes
with the winds,
its grasses pressed
beneath each exhalation.
Fire-flies
dust the bowed
blades
like a shattering
of stars.

V.

The mare is moon
blanketed and
so long
so quiet
have we remained,
that the tiny
fire-lit creatures
have nestled
in our manes.

We are alight
with the night.

Claire Wroblewski

Nocturne

When saints blew jazz in joints on market street
saturday sax sang night songs mourning
children taught to pray to preserve
the follies of their fathers' traditions
tried and failed and maintained for fear of change
and good girls in kitchens with babies kept kings
in their castles as duty demanded
and mothers feared children who grew beards
or breasts and said "No"

and children who said "No" grew
louder and blew joints in jazz on hotel street
singing "wake up and Change, america"
while blue-coat counter criminals broke heads
to the tune of an old march
with polished buttons and boots that follow
rules unquestioningly out of respect
named fear of blame if change is bad

but angels chanted to the beat of heads
and holy light fell on vacant lots
of minds on main street
that sought to free dark-age slaves
of ignorance

and progress swallowed tradition as
overstuffed leaders in overstuffed chairs
of power declared
niggers and gimps and dames
Human Beings
and being human became noble
as strong men tried to feel and to share

but polyester prophets at country clubs contemplated
polyester profits in baby-boom markets
and saw the power shift dollar by dollar into
wheat germ, wheat bread, incense and drugs
and they changed their markets but they didn't change
and a secret order of senators bent sweating
over pages on mahogany desks
and mass-advertising-media specialists
in sheeps' clothing snapped pudgy pink fingers
and said "cool" and "right on" and "power to the people"
and proved just how easily the people forget
and are fooled
by the promise that the world has come of age

and the children of the children who dared
to say "No" are taught to say "yes"
by a one-eyed box with no soul and
convictions deep as a wall
while the tears and sweat and blood
of a generation gone
happily mad
dry to dust in a flood
of designer jeans, rock videos
ill-begotten dollars
and nonsense

Scott deSnoo

