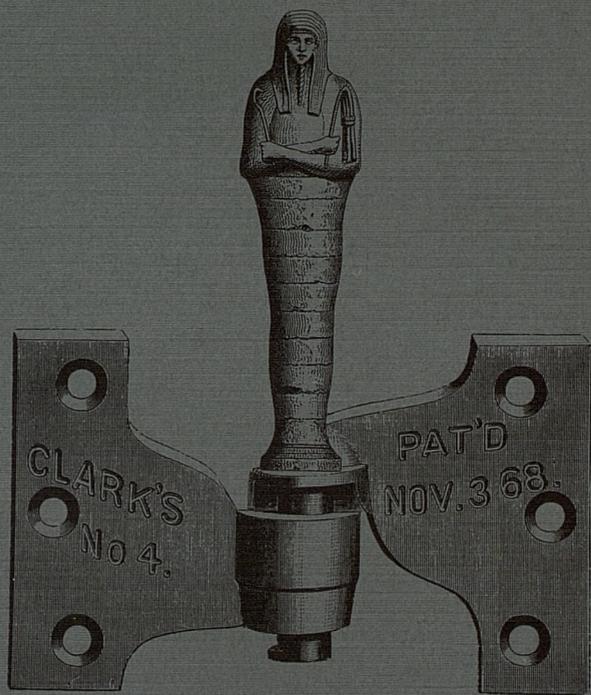
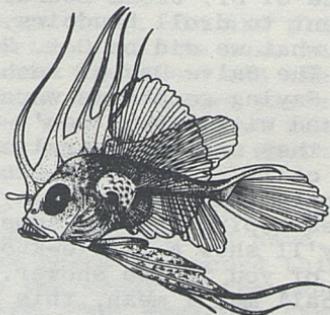


WR:97





US-ISSN: 0043-9401; Editor: Marvin Malone; Art Editor: Ernest Stranger; Copyright ©1985, The Wormwood Review Press, P.O. Box 8840, Stockton CA 95208-0840, U.S.A.



"THE WOMAN WHO MARRIED A WHALE"

This poet read from something she'd translated from the Muck-Tups, a tribe near the Boring Strait, so I dozed off.

In a dream I was at the wedding and while ray and marlin stared, I asked --  
Where did the groom get his tux?  
What were they going to do on their wedding night?  
How?  
Where would they honeymoon, Sea World?

Then instead of vows like hers the whale sang from his Greenpeace album, "The Nomad's Relief," and I saw the future in her adoring eyes:

She at the shore near 5:00 as he swam home from work. Her day? Shopping, a nap, phone calls, a swim. Then his: "Those Drastic Fathoms." Some nights she'd mount his brow, they'd speed through breakers. Usually he'd sleep close to the shore as he dared and she, blocks away, on the side of the bed nearest him.

I woke to The End and the poet who wiped my eyes, clasped both my hands in hers and said, "You've just made me the happiest woman in the world."

## THE AUDIO PORTION

I used to be on a media retreat ("Father, forgive me but I have a tiny Sony in my otherwise bare room."). Now with time on my hands and knees I go around the channels a lot. I need to see who's kissing, just like the only part of the museum for me these days is Fooling Around Through The Ages. If I don't watch t.v., Missing You fills my mind like patients in the office of Dr. Jesus Lourdes. Today Channel 7 went to droll boudoirs. I still think about what we did on Oct. 24, now called Pass The Salve Day of recherche calendars. Saying goodbye we were once again bedecked with lust. Can't you love me back (as they say in Australia)? Or at least call? I have the phone right here and I only take my hand away to graze the air waves hoping that on some obscure channel they'll show a little-known documentary of you in the shower. If you don't, call me, I mean, this simple poem could go on forever just like we did before we stopped.

## RALPH NADER

As he helps her off with her coat he says, "This style gave 100 rhesus monkeys blisters under their arms."

She tells him to relax: the kids are asleep. He has to check. Sure enough! Pajamas that burst into flame if any 3 yr. old lights up for a post-Grimm smoke.

She hugs him, anyway. His suit is so sincere. "Do you like me, Ralphy?"

"That bra causes hypertension in test animals."

"I love your hair."

"You want a Corvair?"

"No, I want love."

"The FDA. We're checking. So far the mice are acting odd. Some have swellings and want a VISA card. Anyway, it's late. Duty calls: the ozone layer, lead-

free paint, my little room, don't  
use the phone, that plastic  
causes cancer of the ear, okay?  
Goodnight."

#### ROVING BOY

A nice name for a horse  
even though he spent his whole life  
bound to an ellipsis of dirt.

Black-type 2 yr. old and plagued  
by injuries at 3, he came back  
to win his tightener and then  
a middling stakes, two yards  
past the wire going down like Grendel  
had come up out of the earth  
to seize his hocks.

This is not in memoriam: he did  
not touch me as others have.  
But I am moved to record this  
because yesterday at the paddock  
Carl said, "Why couldn't that bastard  
have died 20 yds. earlier. I had  
Various Others big."

No one said anything, least of all  
me. Carl often has good information  
and I am not a roving boy. I am  
here for good and I need a winner.

#### WRITTEN ON SPOTLESS GAUZE

Jesus, I miss you tonight.  
Now -- does that sound like prayer  
or a love poem? Good guess!  
The prize is me or you can go  
on and try for the layette.  
Others certainly have. Remember  
the one with white picket fences  
in her luggage? So you haven't  
had as many lovers. Yours have  
been beauts, especially that runt  
who broke your heart. "Do you  
have reservations, Ms?" "Lots." More  
Chardonnay? Or maybe a trip  
is the answer. SCREWING IS FUN  
ON AMTRACK. I've been dying  
for you nearly 30 minutes now.  
That's about my limit these days  
packed in ice as I am, having  
barely escaped from that burning  
cottage with my life.

## SMALL ELEGY

Here is your handwriting.  
What a noise it makes this  
morning. You are turning up  
everywhere. You would like  
what I'm planning for the house:  
One of those ghostly globes  
(a lamp) and some bamboo  
to lead water to the azeleas.

The Japanese who run  
the nursery remember.  
Seeing me, they drop  
everything. His wife touches  
my arm. Mr. Nomura hides  
his dainty trowel. "I know  
what you need today," he  
says, "something for the shade."

## SCOT FREE

Today in Vocabulary II a guy asked  
what vulva meant. It was a dare  
and I took it, marching to the big  
dictionary, reading that it was from  
the Latin meaning covering as in,  
"Hey, wake up. You're hogging all  
the vulva." But everybody shrieked  
that it meant External Female Genitalia!  
"So what. It's just another noun,"  
and I explained that any scary word  
could be defused by saying it over  
and over. "All together now: vulva  
vulva vulva vulva vulva vulva  
vulvavulvavulvavulvavulvavulva."  
The room throbbed like a Corvette.

It was fun for a few minutes  
and even those in the back wearing  
boxing gloves weren't taking notes  
in their New Testaments. Then we moved  
on to words that would be on the quiz.

Today I heard that a lecturer in  
psychology was reprimanded for showing  
a Rorschach slide he identified as Lesbian  
Mule Deer. But for now, I seem to be  
in the clear.

-- Ronald Koertge

South Pasadena CA

MAD APRIL

I put a new drum belt  
on the gas dryer,  
the big gray steel drum  
reminding me of one of  
Max Ernst's surrealist elephants.  
Wrestled it all back together  
and screwed back in the screws  
and when it was done  
and it worked again  
my wife seemed actually  
pissed that it was fixed;  
now she'd have to stay up  
until midnight doing laundry.

I walked out to the car  
with my big black toolbox  
and put the box in  
the car trunk. It was  
like summer out,  
mad April summer already,  
and the air smelled crazy  
and good like it does  
on summer nights in California,  
and I could hear gun shots  
and police sirens far off,  
but not so far off as I used to,  
and I knew the neighborhood  
was changing.

LAST DAYS IN L.A.

We were broke again  
so I went and got a  
half a tank of unleaded supreme  
and then walked into the  
AM-PM MINI MARKET  
and charged a carton of  
rocky road ice cream  
a diet Dr. Pepper  
a package of fig bars  
and a six-pack of Coors.

It was a new store.  
I'd never been in there before.  
I didn't like the look  
of the people behind the counter.  
They looked like genetic  
defect material.

The one guy had a tiny  
head and a huge body.

His forehead was flat and  
his eyes were beady and his  
cheeks were round as apples.  
He looked crazy or retarded.

He was picking up a little  
mexican guy while some  
under-aged slut laughed  
like a hyena.

I didn't like any of them.

I wanted something to smoke  
but they didn't have any  
pipe tobacco. All the cigars  
looked bad; cheap and they  
had silly names. I didn't  
think I should get cigarettes.

He rang it up and gave me  
back my card and I took the  
bag out into the rain and  
started my car and drove home.

I think it's time I got  
out of Los Angeles.

#### GREEN SOCKS

Somehow or other  
over the years  
I've managed to pick up  
several pairs of  
green socks.

I also have my share  
of orange socks  
baby blue socks  
and one pair of  
sheer, see-through  
tan socks.

I'm not crazy  
about any of these  
and have always pushed them  
to the back of my underwear drawer  
in favor of the dark blue,  
dark brown and black pairs.

Of course, the blue, brown  
and black socks wear out  
while the green, orange and  
tan socks stay like new.

I haven't bought a hell of  
a lot of socks over the past

few years, and as a result, I'm running awfully low on the ones I like, the dark ones. But I always have managed to find at least a single pair to put on at any given time.

Until lately. Now, every morning, all I can find are the goddamn green socks. Every time I look at my feet, I'm in green socks.

Two weeks running, green socks every single day. People at work are beginning to think I've got a thing for green socks. Just shows how misleading appearances can be.

#### OVER THE HILLS TO MEXICO

A 30 year old photograph hangs over my desk. It shows my brother and me standing along the side of a movie theatre in Tijuana. We've both got on wide brimmed sombreros and leather sandals. He's six; I'm three.

The day is very hot. The sun is beating down. It must be noon as our shadows are right under us.

The sidewalk is covered with decorative tiles, and a festive design is painted around the base of the wall. Two empty cases of coke bottles are stacked up against this old movie house wall and around the corner you can see the hood and front fender of a late forties automobile and some buildings across the road with Mexican billboards painted on their crumbling old sides.

I remember the day that this picture was taken, and I

remember how a few minutes later  
I began crying. I thought  
my parents had abandoned me  
in Tijuana. They'd  
only gone up to the ticket window.

This is my favorite  
photograph of myself.  
Someday I'd like to go find  
that movie theatre but I  
know I never will.

#### ME AND HOWARD HUGHES

Listen, I've got a great start on a receding  
hair line, a real Howard Hughes look, I mean  
it's high now, getting way back there, like  
one of those guys you hear about, those old  
guys who make it through, who never give up  
and somehow carry on, and they all wonder how  
he does it like that, never realizing that  
there is very little choice involved and  
that it's either this and merely this or  
nothing.

My clothes are getting pretty shabby now,  
especially the cords, they're worn smooth  
at the knees and the shirts are just poor  
old shirts like you'd see on any ordinary  
working man, just plain old ragged shirts,  
the socks are thin with holes in the heels,  
shit, it's all worn out now, but this is  
no great plan of mine, no new attack on the  
arts, shit, it's just the way things are.

-- David Barker

Salem OR

#### THE BLIMP EXPLODES

a t.v. commercial and a simple twist of fate have  
succeeded in doing for me what i'd always feared would  
be my greatest task and failure as a parent; namely  
to convince my little seven year old that god was  
either dead to the world or had never existed;

the commercial involves two nuns driving down a road  
with a goodyear blimp following them; they console  
each other on their dangerous journey with the

thought of how good and safe it is to have it there always, floating just behind and over the shoulder; my little girl saw the commercial and asked me if that was god; i figured this was as good a place as any to begin lessons on the preposterous inventions people have envisioned for creation; i said yes;

at first i was afraid i'd made a real mistake; everywhere we went she would constantly twist her head about looking for the blimp and ask "daddy, where is god?" i'd usually shrug my shoulders or reply "not around here apparently;"

and then occasionally at baseball games or watching football on t.v. we'd see the blimp and she'd say "daddy, there's god!" "yes, honey" i'd say "god's real big on sports;"

it was the simple twist of fate that saved me from eventually having to straighten out the malicious and fallacious aspects of my theological lesson; we were watching a show on t.v. covering the great moments of the twentieth century when the hindenbergs filled the screen; "god" screamed my little girl "a really big god;" i pulled her in close to me; when it exploded she was terrified and threw her arms around me; "god blew up, daddy" she said; "yes, honey" i said, patting her on the back with my consoling hand "that was the last of the really big ones;"

the next time it arose was when we were driving down the 405 freeway where off to the side is a vacant area with a goodyear blimp secured to a platform centered in it; "daddy" she asked "why is god all alone by himself?" "protection, honey" i said "it's sort of a zoo;" "is god one of those endangered species?" she asked suddenly; i looked over at my little girl looking up at me as if finally demanding the real answer; "yes, honey" i said; "god's a dying breed"

#### SAFE INSANE

i've often wondered how safe and sane i am; does one establish the other; i live in seal beach in a tract home with my parents; i feel very safe here but have real doubts about my sanity; after all i'm twenty-six and entirely unable to support myself; i haven't even a realistic notion of how; even in elementary school i began to recognize my lack of career objective; i wanted to be a trash man; i am a trash man except that it seems to be my vocation to create it; at least my father thinks so; i just finished a play about my father and mother;

i suppose it's about me too; she gets drunk all the time and screams and finally tries to kill us but she can't bring herself to do it so instead she kills the republican mayor around the block for complaining about our barking dogs; she kills the dogs too; i showed it to my father; he asked me not to show it to my mother; don't want to give her any ideas he said; it's the 4th of july; i just heard an announcement on knac; there are no fireworks allowed in seal beach; not even the transportation of them; and that included the safe and sane variety also; seal beach; a nuclear weapons storage center and depot with a cute little beachy community coating; probably the hottest firecracker on the west coast; i'm glad to know people are looking out for my safety and my sanity; i've never felt so much at home

-- Murray McNeil 3

Seal Beach CA

CÉLINE BLUES for Ma Rainey

One day, about a week before Christmas, I think it was 1961, on a Friday afternoon, I sat on Santa's knee for the last time, in Southland Shopping Center. The day was cold, but not snowy, and my mother bought me a chocolate milk shake topped with a big cherry at the Woolworth's counter, and I looked out the big plate glass window and saw Santa walking down the sidewalk, and when he saw me, smiling, he smiled back bigger, and waved, and when that shake was gone, Mother took me to the little red hut with the frosted windows, and I told Santa what I wanted, but I don't remember what.

Kids could get their picture taken with Santa, for a dollar I think it was, but Dad was out of work, so that day lasts just in my mind, Santa handed me a candy cane, just as I started to come down from his lap, and turned his head just then, to be polite, and pulled down his beard and sneezed, which kept me up that night.

When I got up the next morning, probably about ten, that would have been a Saturday, the television said Santa would be making a Grand Appearance that afternoon at three at Southland Shopping Center, which I couldn't understand since I thought he was already there, but I wanted to go anyway, because television would be there, but couldn't since Dad was out of work, and so I sulked along the frozen street, feeling sorry for myself and wondering how Santa could pull his beard down, just to

be polite, and I thought how great it would be, like television said, how the Santacopter would come down from the sky, dropping all kinds of wild and good candy all over the kids, and even the cars, and maybe everybody would be happy.

Then Paul came running up with wild grief eyes, and said how Santa was dead, on television and everything, with his beard hanging on a high-line wire.

All I could do was go home, and be sick, and watch the T.V. news that told the Santa-man's real name, and write a poem:

When I grow up  
I wanna be a great big cloud  
so big even the dogs will bark at me  
that's what I wanna be.

#### FIRST MORNING

grey through blue morning curtains  
no glint off brass posts  
dawn and both of us tossing  
strange how sleeping's such a  
more private thing than sex

-- David Breeden

North Liberty IA

#### ONLY IN AMERICA

A couple who'd lived together five years before working up to tying the knot, decided they'd liven up their tardy honeymoon by spending it in a video motel featuring a full library of erotic tapes. My friend who knows them says they were so satisfied with the whole experience, they returned to the place for their fifth anniversary. One of the tapes available was called "Honeymoon Fun" and they were really in the mood, so they whipped her on. Quite the sentimental journey. They were watching themselves.

## CAMBODIA

You buried your children alive? Your wife? How could you do it? The man who came to my girlfriend's class had an answer. "Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were about to enter the area. There was nowhere above ground to hide." Together the family dug the holes. The man did the burying. Tubes of hollowed bamboo brought air. He disguised all traces, and vanished. Soon the Khmer Rouge were poring over the ground. Suppose they found what they were looking for? Would they simply plug the tube up? Might they thrust something down it? To live in Cambodia then was to think of those things. Worst to imagine was that he himself might be caught. He would die knowing his children were waiting for him, unable to lift their arms.

## THE COOL GUYS

One night in the locker room after school -- I think I was twelve -- the cool guys were holding court, and I didn't leave. It was great listening, pretending I could belong; maybe I thought I was learning something I'd someday be able to use. I remember the biggest saying something about the gym lockers, about how narrow inside they were. I notice everybody's looking at me. Next I'm screaming as they cram me in, metal creases slamming against my fingers, against the front of my face, against that ankle, same ankle, over and over. It would be better if I fit but I don't fit and I can't see and I also can't breathe and my spine's bent. A lock clicks. Good thing throats seeking air make that sound, that sound we rarely have to hear while awake. "Get him out of there." The door is opened. I have cool guys apologizing to me. I can't hear them. The jackhammer in my chest drowns out everything.

## VIETNAM

Once when he was a kid they put a turtle in a tree. The thing had a shell anyway, that was the line, so somebody shinnied

up there lugging Mister Turtle with them in a bag. The guys picked a huge tree so it wouldn't matter that the turtle had its claws and head withdrawn; the kid just balanced the shell across the width of a branch. He then climbed down, careful not to shake the trunk. We've all been that cautious.

They expected a lot of excitement. After a minute or two the turtle tried to right itself. It fell a long way through leaves onto the grass. They weren't sure if it was dead. It kept itself retracted, and one kid said it must still be alive. That night they left it on the ground, to see if it would move. The next morning it had only moved two feet. Maybe somebody'd picked it up and set it back down again. They left it. It was still on the spot the next day. One kid wanted to smash the turtle with a hammer. "At least we can see if it's alive."

#### NOWHERE

He was a snot-nosed kid with glasses and a heinie haircut. His parents were poor and fat and ugly, and they were bored with being poor and fat and ugly, but ragging on the snot-nosed kid sometimes gave them a few seconds' relief so they kept at it, kept trying the experiment one more time making sure it worked and it did, it always did. The snot-nosed kid, if they ragged on him enough, had a way of heading for the back door and jumping on his bike. His mother had a way of shuffling to the screen door behind him. "Where you going?" "Nowhere." "Well don't be gone too long." Down the alley on the next block was a garage door with a scene of mountains painted on it. The mountains were chocolate and purple colored. A seagull flew across the foreground. Dots that might be mountain goats peppered the slopes. The snot-nosed kid with the heinie haircut liked to rock back and forth on his bike seat as he stared at the world that contained the mountains. He liked to think that a man with some cans of paint had changed that door into what he was staring at.

## LITTLE BUGGERS

I pluck one out, dump him into a teensy plastic cup from the new dispenser above our sink, and head for the yard. "What you got there?" drawls my dad from the chairs where he and mom hover behind sunglasses. "Chigger I think." I am working at Y Day Camp and this came from my crotch. Dad gives me a grin like I've never seen. "Well, kid. Where'd you pick up the crabs?" My mother removes her sunglasses. "I don't know, Dad. Honest. Really." Mother I think believes but wants me to shut up, before her mind changes. "Let's go out to the garage," my father says. I ask what for. "You want to get rid of those things, don't you?" He starts shaking up the Raid can. "Dad," I protest. It's 1970, Calley's going to be pardoned, Chappaquiddick's just been put on the map. The joke is, I'm still a virgin.

## KING FOR A DAY

It took forever. I figured it would. Measurements were taken. They swept off most of the broken glass.

I'd been wearing my seat belt. I wasn't bleeding.

Do you know the human face well enough to pick out the people who'd step over you on the sidewalk?

I know those. And finally, finally, I'd done something worthy of their fascination. They were in a hurry, they were all in a big hurry, but they'd slow down for me.

Damage. Major damage. I'd helped bring about major damage. That was something. You bet.

A rift in the clouds. A face shining through. Didn't you see it? Didn't you recognize it? That was Elvis, man. You hear what I'm saying? That was Elvis.

-- William Marsh

Minneapolis MN

GAGAKU

demons tip tophats  
tophats both white & black now  
grey  
now pink  
now gold

they could change color all day long  
birds sing outside as I  
write this morning  
I now hear them chirping  
almost frantically

gagaku musicians play on the  
phonograph

demons now gulp down  
their tophats  
as they swallow a new  
one appears on their  
heads  
and they repeat the  
meal

I have mastered the art of staying away  
from all poetry readings  
all poets  
and except on quite rare occasions  
all bookstores

I go to the library  
often

demons give me a slanted eye  
a kind of leer

now they wink at me  
I see angels too

flying around like honeybees

**STEVE RICHMOND'S**

**for jim callahan ....**

GAGAKU

a little sweat trickling  
down over  
right ribs

at work  
writing poems  
and if not poems  
writing writings

they are flouncing their skirts  
one demon I know who hasn't been  
around in months  
is flouncing her skirts

write about friends and  
throw what I write away

write about demons  
and send these poems  
or writings  
to editors

wince at my own imagination  
it is like a black stage  
long rose colored satin or silk  
pleated curtains hang down on either  
side

an auditorium  
where the seats are empty  
and then filled with  
rambunctious demons  
applauding waving arms and claws up  
and about

GAGAKU

tonight if I'm  
fortunate  
I'll burn a thousand  
or so  
poems of mine that  
don't work for  
my eye

it's xmas eve 81

GAGAKU

there's a cat  
    waiting to be fed  
    he's chased the birds  
        away  
    I fed him once already  
        and now he's here again

he's a beauty  
    three colors  
        a lucky cat  
    a striped brown and white tail  
one of my cunts called  
    him a money cat  
    and now he waits for his meal  
    I better feed him  
    I can use  
    the company

GAGAKU

the faustian man is supposed to  
have the best chance here on  
    earth

the others get ground under  
    fast

I've let my  
    beard grow  
to approach the  
faustian man

as the hair on my face grows  
I notice more the  
fine breasts of women

this does not explain  
fags with facial hair

I try to picture demons with hair on faces  
but it does  
not work

their faces are blurred  
almost vacuous  
I see their black or royal blue  
unshining robes quite clearly  
but they lack clear flesh

they move  
or their robes move

GAGAKU

I live in  
a neighborhood  
of dope addicts

I live on  
earth

I live in my poems  
here I create life

life of snails and honeysuckles  
and lilies  
and a fig tree

birds I feed each morn

maybe I'm too proud  
demons nod their heads  
up and down up  
and down

how they shake their heads  
up and down

now side to side  
no  
they signal

but I don't think they are  
now telling me I'm  
not too proud

now in circles they  
revolve their heads  
round & round

now they hold their heads  
absolutely still  
and stare at me

blink their eyes

long lashes  
with a bit of powder blue

makeup

GAGAKU

I'm writing these poems on old  
green paper  
I'd rather be using white  
but I'd have to go to a store  
and buy white paper  
all I have is old green  
and some old blue  
paper

even less significant  
I see a blurred image  
of a demon group

I call them that  
it might be a bunch  
of innocent kids  
girls and boys  
playing jumprope hop scotch  
4 square tether ball

but no  
it is demons  
in black unshining cloth  
waving hatchets at each other  
first playfully  
then there is spattering  
blood all about

and they are  
laughing  
now weeping

GAGAKU

as the demand increases  
if the price stays the same  
the quality decreases

this from one producer  
it's then other  
producers enter  
the field

advertise better quality  
it's then demons clang  
cooking pans  
together at the bottom of  
each pan  
it's then demons clang the bottoms

of cooking pans together  
white enamel pans

large thick teeth wide  
in width  
off white colored like  
most human teeth  
changing colored tongue  
their pointed stuck out tongue  
first flicks the left corner  
of mouth on the outside  
then switches to right  
corner of mouth

pointed tongue  
red healthy tongue  
moist

#### LIFE IS MAGIC

sometimes  
    bad magic  
    but always  
        interesting

even if I am not always  
                    interested

life is never boring  
    though I  
    am often bored

only the  
    boring get bored

life is  
honest poetry

Pound was right  
but I am a  
    jew  
        how can I say  
            Pound was  
                right?

very right  
    I am a little  
        left

THE POWER OF POSITIVE  
BULLSHIT

one of the problems  
they say  
with aquarians is that  
we are too  
optimistic  
for instance  
today  
the sky is  
pure  
clouds wonderful  
baudelaire  
clouds  
today I am going to write  
many  
poems and  
to prove  
myself true  
here  
is the first

GAGAKU

one critic  
for the la times  
said he didn't like my work  
too little coverage of the  
page  
and he was the editor of the book review section  
how can I make a living at this  
if I antagonize his  
views?  
there  
a baby demon  
cute thing  
looks like an ordinary human infant  
why do I call it a demon?  
because its teeth sharpen to points  
turn to actual daggers  
daggers silver shining metal blades  
protruding from that  
baby's mouth  
pointed down  
pointed up  
a mixture of up pointed and down  
turned blades  
baby with knives in mouth

## THE DEMON

takes off its hat  
tips it this way  
out falls a white  
dove  
to cement sidewalk  
red ribbon about its neck  
little bright  
orange tongue  
sticking in  
and out  
gold (tiny)  
chains (decorative jewelry)  
about either ankle  
rings (mini)  
upon each three talons  
the demon  
waves a black cape  
red silk on its inner side  
now a blue scarf or sash  
is waved through air

## GAGAKU

I have time to write  
so much time  
those who complain  
of a time lack  
too busy  
to create  
those are idiots  
here I've time  
to see demons grimacing  
and laughing  
showing greased  
yellowish shining teeth  
they twirl for me  
wear satin multicolored  
ragged gowns  
here I've time  
to see them  
and I  
do

JIM CALLAHAN

he used to put out hors commerce press  
behind his torrance house  
in a little backyard bungalow

I sold his products through my  
earth books & gallery

small poetry books  
by wantling and  
assorted prison convict  
poets

he would visit at the shop  
and several times  
I drove down to torrance to  
visit him

he was silver haired  
soft spoken  
a true gentleman

he tried to influence me  
to influence bukowski  
to join AA

then jim died of a heart attack  
I believe  
this all happened many  
years ago

buk is still going strong  
drinking and writing  
and fucking and smoking  
lots of cigarettes

GAGAKU

they are washing their robes  
their socks  
their tennis shoes  
they have blue hair  
light silverish blue  
they are  
little old lady demons  
still with healthy  
fangs

ALL

I was doing  
was exercising my  
imagination

I would have gone for angels  
but they were  
well covered in  
botticelli  
michaelangelo  
swedenborg

instead I went for demons  
they had been covered too  
best by fuseli in his  
painting NIGHTMARE

rubens' satyrs were  
close but  
a bit  
overdone

mine were  
waving arms under black robes  
robes like shadow  
and their arms  
were white bones  
really  
with flesh  
appearing and  
disappearing  
but bones  
white and constant  
then vanishing  
too

quickly changing creatures  
changing faster than I could  
describe here  
in my poem

I tried to keep up with them  
but I knew  
my poem could only be an outline  
a sketch

I WRITE POEMS

about demons  
water the plants  
clean the oven

such a clean oven now  
in a dirty kitchen

a demon waving a fan  
its claw (right claw)  
about a thin bamboo handle  
a multicolored  
fan  
made of feathers  
seeming parrot  
feathers

it has  
teeth  
the demon not  
the fan

pronounced pointed  
teeth  
yellow shining  
enamel

wet  
teeth  
that move out  
from its mouth  
and curl with  
its claw (right claw)  
about the thin  
bamboo handle  
  
it waves its  
fan with teeth and claw

#### GAGAKU

they bounce balls  
basketballs  
and white softballs (baseballs)  
the softballs bounce higher than the  
basketballs  
  
now they catch the bouncing  
balls  
in their big open mouths  
and swallow them  
  
the basketballs in their stomach  
make them appear  
pregnant  
  
the softballs caught in  
their throat make  
them appear to have  
mumps or  
goiters of the throat  
or something  
worse

TYPEWRITER CHECKUP

        a poem  
    to check  
this typewriter  
    out  
  
old Smith-Corona  
    steel keys  
    not plastic  
  
        much quieter  
        than my Royal electric  
  
a muffled sound as I thap these keys  
    no motor running  
  
    like if all the cars on freeway  
        were sail cars  
            instead of motor cars

GAGAKU

it makes a difference now  
it didn't in  
the last poem  
    but the last  
        poem had  
typos and was  
extinguished

I've thousand of poems  
from these hands  
I know what I do  
I see  
demons carrying pans  
and tiny pianos  
white keys black keys  
sharps and flats  
and harmonies

I see their teeth  
white enamel  
shining moist glistening  
ivory-like

we could take their teeth  
for elephant tusks  
use them for chess  
pieces

-- Steve Richmond

Santa Monica CA

## CROSS COUNTRY

I adore watching cross country running races in England in winter: all those rather ugly, wiry types dashing through huge freezing puddles, over slippery grit hills, and across large muddy fields. It reminds me of the First World War and changing diapers. But the air is refreshing!

And it's great when contestants collapse from exhaustion in the filth. What must their mothers, wives and children think? And all to finish, say, twentieth among a thousand or so contestants over a ten mile course, risking getting permanently lost in the woods too. I never want a man like that.

When I finally rebel against cross country events I'll find a rather handsome, fat man on a trampoline or something in a sterilized gym so we can have a testtube baby.

## LIBRARY BOOKS

I stay in my apartment a lot because I am trying to finish the books I borrowed from the library. I'm worried because they are overdue and I'm scared the librarians are out looking for me. So I keep studying the words but I have this compulsion, as Dr. Smith says, to have my eyes go the wrong way and my hands turn the pages backwards, and so far the stories make no sense at all. This may be modern and avant garde but because of it I'm in a lot of trouble and may have to leave by motorcycle, wearing my lucky helmet. And I just hope God lets me do this if necessary and that I don't have the compulsion to drive it backwards because motorcycles don't have a reverse gear.

## DRINK

The first time I got drunk was Christmas Day when I was 13. I poured myself a glass of the red wine and found it so tasty I'd gulped down half the bottle before I could stop myself. So I refilled it with water and felt so wonderful I went to the bathroom and washed my hair for the first time in two weeks.

This became the pattern: clean hair, good booze (which quickly became daddy's whisky and

mummy's gin) and water bottles for them. At first mummy & daddy said it looked and tasted different -- maybe there was a new distilling process or maybe it was the aftermath of Christmas and too much brandy-soaked pudding. But they never suspected me, because they figured I'd turned over a new leaf: I was now cleaning my fingernails, washing my face, washing my clothes and even putting polish on my shoes.

So mummy & daddy have continued drinking water, getting just as drunk but feeling much happier and less worried about appearances, and I am becoming more like their old selves every day.

#### RIVER BED

I ride my bike to the L.A. River bed each week to pan for mud. I love mud but I don't want too much because then I'd just worry. If I find say a thousand dollars worth of mud a month I'm content and can buy some clothes and save for a car and a vacation.

Of course, you have to purify and dry the mud and trim it before it's ready for the market, and the best way to do this, I've found, is to keep it under the floorboards for ten days, then test it by licking a little like a lollipop, then rubbing my face with it. And if my face and tongue don't break out soon it's pure, so I put it in my backpack, get on my bike, and luxuriously ride it down to the mudsmith, who is a very dirty man.

#### BREAKAGE

My foot has recovered from being broken and ruining mummy & daddy's Easter vacation, and mummy & daddy have untied me -- so long as I'm careful never to break anything again, and with the certain promise they'll hang me by the toes for six months if I so much as fracture a fingernail.

I take this all very seriously, each morning awakening to check my whole interior for damage, humming benign tunes so my knee say won't suddenly shatter as I gingerly get out of bed. Then I dress with great deliberateness, hold on to the padded walls, hobble down the padded stairs and chew my padded breakfast thoroughly before swallowing -- because mummy & daddy would probably kill me if I choked, especially as the summer vacation is getting so near.

Walking to school is a nightmare of cement and cracks, curbs, aggressive pedestrians and cars coming from so many directions I'd faint if I were less afraid of breaking my nose. But the real obstacle course begins at school -- classmates patting me on the back or just waving their arms dangerously near, desk lids trying to snap up my fingers, slippery wood floors, hard steep staircases, doorways, chairs, books, paper, pencils, windows and teachers.

Still I do have impulses to do the opposite of mummy & daddy's wishes, and right now, as the going home bell sounds with sufficient velocity to crack my skull, I'd like to take an axe and with it break every bone in my body.

#### OBSCENITY

Whenever I call a friend I have this desire to dial the wrong number and be obscene. I never do it but as I talk to my favorite people, cracking jokes and praising them, I make lewd gestures, take off my clothes and squeeze my breasts and roll my eyes in ecstasy. So I guess when they call me they do the same thing, because I'm not so unusual and could be a very good telephone operator because I have a clear, cultured voice, even in the middle of an orgasm, and can put my clothes back, clear my throat and brush my hair with the promptness and grace of the Queen of England. The pay is good too, I hear, so every time I rip my panties passionately I can join the long line of men and women buying new ones and thinking with the ferocity of perfectly normal geniuses of new ways to be obscene and get away with it.

-- Nichola Manning

Long Beach CA

#### POETIC NOISE

On St. Patrick's Day  
the New York Post  
was printed green  
and I got fired.  
It was a Wednesday, payday,  
and I got paid and fired  
and I stumbled out of a gray windowless warehouse

into drizzling and puddle strewn Brooklyn.  
I folded the paycheck into my pocket  
and I looked at three P.M. Brooklyn  
with rain on brick, rain on tar,  
gouged holes in the street, rubble barricades  
in the doorways of condemned buildings,  
dead objects in piles, Haitians standing  
against brick tenement walls under ledges  
out of the rain.

I walked to the subway.

I stood at the top of the stairs  
and gave one last look.

Cars went up and down Eastern Parkway.

The Bank was closed. The check cashing place was open.  
The numbers hole was open.

A cluster of black men stood in front  
of the yellow numbers storefront.

The words Bolitas and Combinations  
were written in red across the yellow.

Under the awning of the deli stood more  
black men. It continued to rain.

I went down into the subway.

I took the B.M.T. to Atlantic Avenue  
where I changed to the Double R.

I rode for an hour until I was in Queens.

As I opened the door I knew the place was empty.

There was an onion on the table. No signs of life.

I walked through the narrow railroad apartment.

I threw my coat over a chair.

I sat down in another chair.

It was dark, the apartment was dark and I felt myself  
get suddenly weak as the cars hissed and swam by  
downstairs in the street.

My next door neighbor, Ed, started singing.

I listened through the wall as he sang three notes.

There was something he was trying to do with those three  
notes

and I listened for it but it wasn't working.

He seemed to be trying to ascend a scale.

Then my downstairs neighbor started playing his piano.

It was loud and slightly out of tune.

He lunged forward, arrogantly, stood on a chord,

I think he was standing on the keyboard,

then his left hand tried to create some rhythm.

He kept missing notes. He kept slipping.

I stopped listening.

Then my wife came home and I went to greet her.

We kissed. She held a paper bag of something that she  
put down on the table beside the onion.

I told her I was fired and she said she thought it was  
great.

She said we could drink, we could stay up all night, talk,

lay around and smooch. She smiled like a child.  
I held her face in my hands and kissed her.  
"You don't have to go to Brooklyn anymore," she said.  
We both nodded solemnly.  
Then someone knocked on the door and she opened it and  
it was Ed, the next door singer. She let him in and  
they started  
to talk.  
I went back to my chair and couldn't hear what they said.  
It became night as they talked.  
The cars went by and the rain stopped.  
Ed went back to his apartment and my wife came in.  
She smiled, bent down to kiss me and then sat in my lap.  
We listened to apartment sounds: movement, pipe noises,  
floor boards groaning under weight, distant televisions.  
I don't have to go to Brooklyn anymore, I thought.  
I can stay in Queens forever.

#### THE MAD WOMEN OF UNEMPLOYMENT

They really want me to get a job.  
One of them, a fat one, an ugly squat New York type  
middle aged wench, a bitch, a foul thick slow  
serious dull dumb purposeful slob of a woman  
once said to me at an interview:  
"Where do you get off?"  
in reference to my suggestion that I was looking  
for a job that might pay more than the 5.40  
an hour she was offering me as a stock clerk  
in Chatsworth.  
And she was serious and reasonable and smiling.  
She really wanted to know where I got off.  
I contained my anger. I vibrated.  
I didn't say  
anything.  
She filled out some little cards and papers  
and then sent me to the interview  
out in Chatsworth.  
I vowed to myself as I drove the stupid  
monotonous streets  
that if she fucked up my unemployment  
and if my checks stopped coming through  
I would kill that little bureaucratic hog-woman.  
But my checks came through anyway  
and I didn't have to kill her.  
Another woman looked up into my frowning face  
as I handed her the forms she'd asked me to fill out,  
and she squealed in protest, looking at the forms,  
that I wasn't eligible for an interstate claim.  
She was in agony. She had the face of a little girl,  
stupid with fear, trapped beneath the filmy horror

of a decaying old hag.  
She didn't remember me from ten minutes before  
when she had handed me the forms.  
I vibrated but didn't explode.  
I was humble, I'd do whatever she said.  
I wanted to cause her horrendous pain.  
I wanted to be the cause of her excruciatingly  
deliriously horrible and painful death.  
But I just calmly and meekly asked her what forms  
I was supposed to fill out.  
I waited quietly while she flailed about in her own  
confusion for a few minutes until  
she got it all figured out.  
As she handed me the new forms  
I saw in her dead eyes that she remembered me from  
somewhere.  
  
I refuse to feel sorry for the bitch.  
All I want is my fucking money.

#### MORNING SICKNESS

"This is totally disgusting!"  
She's standing in a drooping black bathrobe  
in the middle of the kitchen, her belly hanging out,  
and her face buried in her hands.  
I look up.  
"I feel awful. I'm sick!"  
She goes back into the bathroom and closes the door.  
I roll over on my back, stretch, yawn,  
try to guess what time it is.  
It's after eleven, for sure, from the sounds outside  
and the sun.  
"This is horrible!" she moans, doubled over on the toilet.  
I decide to go look at the newspapers on the corner,  
maybe she'll go to sleep while I'm gone  
or kill herself or something.  
Then the phone rings.  
I answer it, expecting money and encouragement.  
A sniveling voice comes over the line:  
"Hello?"  
"Hello."  
"Hello? Is Pagen there?"  
"She's on the toilet."  
"Oh. Could you tell her that George called?"  
"O.K." I hang up.  
In the kitchen all is chaos. I step around it and look  
out the window,  
down through the fire escape and into the back yard.  
The Puerto Rican kids are singing bible songs and playing  
with a pregnant dog.  
"George called," I say into the bathroom.

"What did he say?" she says.

"Nothing."

I open the refrigerator door and gaze in.

"I'm going down to look at the headlines," I yell, letting the refrigerator door swing shut.

"Get me some laxative?" she pleads.

"What kind?"

"The chocolate kind."

"O.K." I say as I slip on my clothes and escape down the stairs.

As I push through the front door of the building, daylight confronts me.

And it's ugly, really ugly and loud

in Queens

in August.

And everywhere I see women with children, many children.

And I see pregnant women too,

proud, waddling and protruding

and I want to kill them all, crush their melon bellies with a tire iron

while their greasy husbands inflate with rage.

Then I stumble across the parking lot, between cars.

A beat-up Cadillac drives by, full of family.

I can almost hear their conversation with the windows rolled down

but I try hard not to.

-- Douglas Goodwin

Los Angeles CA

## MY BIG FLING

it was a bad night

one of those

where all the talk

only makes it worse,

uglier and uglier.

I was never one

who cared much for

"discussion"

anyhow

so I slammed the

door

got into my car

and I was

on the freeway

radio on

driving north

into the

big town.

I still knew a

few girls

from the past.

I got a motel

on Sunset Boulevard

opened the bottle

had a drink

undressed

took a shower

came out

turned on the black

and white tv

got on the bed

and had another  
drink.

then something came to  
me,  
I decided that any woman  
an old girl friend  
or a new one  
only meant more of  
what I had gotten away  
from.

I didn't turn on the  
lights, it felt good  
in that dark room,  
it was quiet, far away  
from any war  
of any sort.

I stayed on the bed  
and watched the tv.  
I had never cared much  
for tv  
but watching  
all those people  
with all their desires  
and all their troubles  
amused me.

I watched and I had  
two bottles and I finished  
one and I started the other  
and I watched tv.  
I felt like a boy who had  
run away from home and  
had found  
his first room.

when the second bottle was  
emptied  
I slept.

when I got back  
at noon  
the next day  
I didn't expect her  
to ask me if I had been  
fucked  
and she didn't.  
also, I didn't ask  
her  
and I didn't care.

she was quiet.  
the screaming was  
over.

and two or three days  
later  
talking easily about  
it  
we found out  
we had watched the same  
tv programs,  
the only thing was  
she said she didn't  
like them  
and I said  
I did.

and we left it  
like that.

#### THE MAN AT THE PIANO

the man at the piano  
plays a song  
he didn't write  
sings words  
that aren't his  
upon a piano  
he doesn't own

while  
people at tables  
eat, drink and talk

the man at the piano  
finishes  
to no applause

then  
begins to play  
a new song  
he didn't write  
begins to sing  
words

that aren't his  
upon a piano  
that isn't his

as the  
people at the tables  
continue to  
eat, drink and talk

when  
he finishes  
to no applause  
he announces  
over the mike  
that he is

going to take  
a  
ten minute break  
he goes  
back to the men's  
room  
enters  
a toilet booth  
bolts the door  
sits down  
pulls out a joint  
lights up  
he's glad  
he's not  
at the piano  
and the  
people at the tables  
eating, drinking and talking  
are glad  
he isn't there  
either  
this is  
the way it goes  
almost everywhere  
with everybody and  
everything  
as fiercely  
in the hinterlands  
the  
black swan burns.

#### THE MIRACLE MAN

in this neighborhood  
about 4 blocks north  
and 2 south  
sits a small house  
paint peeling  
and  
weeds growing  
in the front  
yard  
and  
all about this  
house  
are  
other houses  
with  
perfect  
green lawns

trimmed hedges  
flowers  
and  
polished autos  
sitting  
in the drives.

"I like this  
guy," I tell Linda,  
"I'd sure like to  
see him, you know,  
what he looks  
like."

"I've seen him,"  
says Linda.

"yeah? yeah? how?  
when?"

"twice. and each time  
it was the same. he  
was just sitting in  
his window and he  
had his hat on and  
pulled down low  
over his eyes."

"beautiful," I say,  
"beautiful."

I keep  
driving by  
hoping  
to see him  
but  
I never do.  
anyhow,  
for me  
he's the salvation  
of this neighborhood.

it's when people  
all  
get the same  
that  
it gets  
useless

and  
here's  
this saint  
without  
a  
name.

## UNLOADING THE GOODS

it was  
after 8 hours as a stockboy  
wearing a green smock  
and pushing my wagon full of goods  
through the aisles  
listening to the complaints  
of the neurotic and sexy sales girls  
that I came home to my place again  
and she was gone  
again.

I went down to the same bar  
and there she was sitting.  
she looked up and all the men  
moved away from her.

"take it easy now, Hank," said the barkeep.  
I sat down next to her.

"how's it going?" I asked.  
"listen," she said, "I haven't been here  
long."

"I'll have a beer," I told the  
barkeep.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"for what?" I asked.  
"this is a nice place. I  
don't blame you."

"what is it with you?" she asked.  
"you're acting crazy."

I drank my beer slowly.  
then I put the glass down and walked out.

it was a perfect night  
I'd left her where I had  
found her  
even though her clothes were in the closet  
and she'd be back  
it was the ending  
I was making it end

and I went into the next bar  
sat down and ordered a beer

knowing  
that what I once thought would be hard  
was easy

and I got the beer and drank it  
and it tasted better  
than any beer

I had had  
in the two years that  
I had known her.

MESSAGE

I've been sitting in this  
room for hours  
typing, and drinking  
red wine.

I thought I was  
alone here.  
the door is closed and  
the window.

now a big fat fly  
ugly and black

sits on the edge  
of my wine glass.

where did it come  
from?

so silent  
like that.

that's the way  
it might be  
with death.

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

AN OLD FASHIONED BARBER SHOP

except that there are never any lines,  
it takes me back to my youth.  
all barbers are politically to the right  
and i can tell this one hates the sight  
of my beard and long hair and threadbare blue jeans.

he hates it even more when i say,  
"just cut the hair back to two inches,  
and the beard and moustache as short as  
you can get without shaving me.  
i don't care how i look,  
and i don't want to be back in here  
for four months."

he has me in and out of the chair  
in five minutes.  
we discuss neither politics nor  
religion nor sports nor anything.

he shows some pique  
when i tell him he hasn't gotten the moustache  
quite short enough.

if he charges me seven bucks,  
i tip him a buck.  
if he charges eight bucks,  
i pocket the change.

i consider our relationship a paradigm  
of a pluralistic society.

## ANDROGEN MISANTHROPY

the same god who gave to some boys  
the gift of extra sex hormones  
attached the side effect of acne vulgaris  
to assure that they wouldn't get laid.

## THE THIN PINK LINE

the nice thing about a single girl  
is that she has the time and place  
to be with you.

the nice thing about a married woman  
is that she doesn't.

this is also the bad thing  
about them both.

## THE ULTIMATE OBSCENITY

a minister calls the talk show  
to brand the epidemics of herpes and a.i.d.s.  
a visitation of the lord upon us  
for our promiscuity and perversions.  
he does not exclude the innocently infected  
dead children.

when the talk show host attempts to characterize  
the minister's god as "vengeful,"  
he rejects this term,  
biblical though it may be,  
in favor of "just."

## NOT EVEN ACNE, WHICH GOES DEEPER

there is literally nothing more superficial than a tan.

## THE KIND OF YEAR IT'S BEEN

we're well into december  
and i finally had something happen  
worth celebrating,

so i sliced my thumb  
on the champagne foil.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED////////////////////////////////////

Lyn Lifshin's Blue Dust, New Mexico, \$4.50 fm. Basilisk Press, P.O. Box 71, Fredonia NY 14063. † Bill Marsh's Free Air, \$1 and Dale Houstman and William Marsh's Negative Input, \$4 fm. DePRIVATION Publishing, c/o Marsh, 627 Ontario St., Minneapolis MN 55414. † Gerald Locklin's fear and paternity in the pauma valley, unpriced fm. Planet Detroit, 8214 St. Marys, Detroit MI 48228. † Kirk Robertson's Two Weeks Off (illustr. by David Barker), \$5 and Gary Short's Looking Past Today, \$3.50 fm. Duck Down Press, P.O. Box 1047, Fallon NV 89406. † Judson Crews' Voices From Africa and Live Black Lusaka, unpriced fm. Poet, Mountain View #381, 2323 Kathryn S.E., Albuquerque NM 87106. † Lyn Lifshin's Madonna Who Shifts For Herself, \$3.95 fm. Applezaba Press, P.O. Box 4134, Long Beach CA 90804. † David Barker's I Laughed & The Devil Laughed Too, unpriced fm. Nolo Contendere Press, 1175 Market St., N.E., Salem OR 97301. † Gerald Locklin's Why Turn A Perfectly Good Toad Into A Prince, \$5 fm. Mt. Alverno Press, P.O. Box 2283, Paradise Station CA 95351. † Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel's Going Steady With R.C. Boley, \$2.50 fm. M.A.F. Press, Box. 392, Portlandville NY 13834. † Robert Sward's Half A Life's History. Poems: New And Selected, 1957-1983, \$7 fm. Aya Press, P.O. Box 303 Station A, Toronto M5W 1C2 Canada. † Sanford Dorbin's Shelly's Ode On Architecture, unpriced fm. Press of Redwood Groves Forever, P.O. Box 1106, Willits CA 95490. † Todd Moore's D.O.A., unpriced fm. Crawlspace, 908 West 5th St., Belvidere IL 61008. † Lynne Walker's Big Red, unpriced fm. Poet, 4015 Overland Pkwy., Toledo OH 43612. † Second Coming Anthology: Ten Years In Retrospect, \$6.95 fm. Second Coming Press, P.O. Box 31249, San Francisco CA 94131. † Benny Andersen's The Pillows (short stories), \$7.50 fm. Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson St., Willimantic CT 06226; from same source: John Carey's Hand To Hand, \$3.95 and Jørgen Gustava Brandt's Selected Longer Poems \$6.00. † Poets' Voices 1984: Social Issues By Contemporary Poets, \$6 fm. San Diego Poet's Press, c/o D.G. Wills Books & Coffee House, 7527 La Jolla Blvd., La Jolla CA 92037

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED////////////////////////////////////

William Gilson's Old Poems, unpriced fm. Wickwire Press, 290 Harvard St., Cambridge MA 02139. † F.A. Nettelbeck's Americruiser, \$4.95 fm. Illuminati, 8812 Pico Blvd., Suite 203, Los Angeles CA 90035. † Frank Polite's Letters of Transit, \$3.95 fm. City Miner Books, P.O. Box 176, Berkeley CA 94701

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US-ISSN:0043-9401

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Cover: Thomas Wiloch  
Westland MI

P R I C E : \$ 2 . 5 0

E D I T O R : M A R V I N M A L O N E

US-ISSN:0043-9401