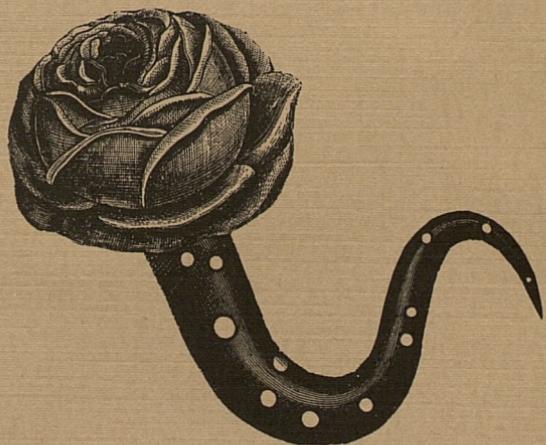


WR: 87





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DOGS: A FABLE OF THE VIETNAM WAR

One day the dogs came. There were four of them, and they walked purposefully into the company en masse, unannounced, and sat down in front of the messtent, as if they had been summoned for a terribly important mission.

There was Shorttime, snow white, arrogant and promiscuous, who gravitated immediately to the officers' hootch; and Blackdog, the shaggy, low-to-the-ground fighter who stalked the company and liked the motorpool workers best; Ky, sandy and sheepish, wily and refined the interpreters took him; and idiosyncratic, loud-mouthed Shaky -- minus a back leg -- the N.C.O.'s favorite.

Each group patted and caressed and fawned over their dogs. Soon, they occupied all the men's waking hours. And the dogs followed their masters closely, sniffing at their heels, waiting for orders.

Eventually jealousies and fist fights broke out. And the dogs began fighting too. Even Shaky hobbled into the fray. They snapped and growled and snarled.

One day they left as they had come. They all walked off together, single file, as if they had finished their important work and were needed no longer. They moved down the dusty base road, off the end of the base like off the end of the world and disappeared.

The Americans watched them go and were sad for weeks. The Vietnamese never even noticed they were gone.

-- Rick Christman

Mankato MN

FROM FANTASTIC INCIDENTS, UNDER THE LISTING FOR
SIAMESE TWINS

A Siamese twin was accused of setting fire to an orphanage with the intention of murdering everyone within. His brother was proclaimed a hero for having saved half the children from the flames. The criminal twin was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead. Lawyers for the defense appealed the decision on the grounds that the innocent brother's well-being would thus be adversely affected. The sentence was reduced to life in prison. Again the defense protested that in such a case, an innocent man would be wrongly punished. Finally, medical specialists were called in, and a delicate operation to separate the two men was performed. The operation had complications, and the brothers were set to rest, both in critical condition, in twin beds in the same hospital room. When the doctors and the police returned, they found one twin resting comfortably, propped up against his pillow, reading a magazine. The other twin lay freshly dead, his face a vivid shade of purple. "It's God's justice," said the surviving brother. The doctors nodded gravely, and pulled the sheets up over the dead man's face. The remaining twin left several days thereafter, and was never heard from again. Years later, the doctors wondered, in which bed had they put the murderer, and in which the innocent man?

POSTCARD FROM THE FIELD: HOT COAL WALKING

Having a lovely time here in the islands, examining primitive cultures, documenting creation myths, taking notes on everything. I've even been learning the ancient art of walking on red-hot coals. The natives have been most helpful: when they're not showing the missionary's wife (the missionary died several years ago) their wide selection of coital positions, they take great delight in encouraging my progress. Have ruined three pairs of boots so far, but the experience has been well worth it. Leaving soon for Alaska to spend a month with the Eskimos. I hope to trace the origins of the snowcone. Back for the fall semester. Much wiser.
Yours truly.

PLEASE BARGAINING

i remember bargaining with god
as a child: "if you please
let me have this or that,
i won't ask for anything ever
again (for a long time)."

sometimes these deals transpired:
a broken window went unnoticed
or a serious lie was believed.
sometimes they were partially
delivered: a walk as opposed to
a strike-out or a hit
in the big game.

this nonsense was always
so humiliating -- like borrowing
money from an older brother.
just one more reason to be glad
to have transcended the limitations
and superstitions of childhood,
though, i must say
that if you give me
the girl in that lingerie ad,
i'll never ask for anything
ever again.

PARTY FAVOR

it was a typically gloomy affair:
little groups of intimates
gathered in mutually exclusive clusters,

so the hostess (who'd invited me
for just such an occasion)
asked me to liven things up.

"hey listen everyone," i said
drunkenly, "there's enough despair
and sadness in the world already."

people immediately began to resent
my interruption. i could feel
them snapping shut like clams.

"what i mean to say," i stammered,
"is that the hostess has asked me to
tell you you're all fucking bores."

FROM FANS
SIGHTING
a roar of unified outrage swept
like a rumor of v.d. through the room,
and i was shown roughly to the door.

the next day the hostess called
to thank me: the party
had been a huge success.

I LIKE CRITICS

i like critics (this is
my first published poem)
they tell me which books
to detest without reading,
which films i'll like
and maybe see.

i like poetry contests,
and film festival prizes.
i like n.e.a. grant judges.
i trust, respect, and admire
editors everywhere: i believe
in their sound judgment.

critics have helped me
to become a better poet:
of course i'll subscribe
(i've enclosed a little extra,
also a photo of my wife
in the shower).

this is my submission,
my art.
judge it well.

A PERFORMING SEAL

After years of love, patience, and reward-motivation training, he had finally taught a seal to understand human language and commands, and to perform so many human functions as to make the seal the principal celebrity of the entire circus menagerie. People would come for kilometers around to see the seal compete with chimpanzees in gymnastics, or do such tricks as "eat lobster newberg with a knife and fork while dressed in an expensive evening gown," or "drive a porsche around

a swimming pool." Imagine the trainer's surprise when he found his seal, clothed in a full-length polar bear coat and adorned with a diamond necklace, performing unnatural acts with a stranger.

-- Greg Boyd

Sepulveda, CA

PLUMS

Suddenly, toward the end of summer, they are everywhere, huge black love-bites on Sunday morning skin. Bulging with the sun's heat and puce colored, like fleas black with borrowed juice, they are piled in mounds, a giant's caviar.

So rich their blush is a paling: blue.

One doesn't eat them. Break the skin and suck. They go down in a slurp: black oysters; a liquid titivation of the tongue; a perfumed embalming, stiffening the spine with pleasure; Cleopatra's dying kiss, asp stung.

Mind the stone.

CHERRIES

One of the pretty discoveries of Marcel Proust, chimérique de son thé.

Polished inside the tree as they course upwards through the limbs to their spring réclame, they are the color of drops scattered by wounded curassiers in gaudy uniforms on rolling green 18th century battlefields.

One thinks of ancient lacquer, of the snub noses of Chinese schoolgirls in February snow, of Amazonian nipples mother-of-pearl lustered by War's wet mouth.

Bloodknots holding the huge whiteness of Manet's Christ.

PEACHES

Clustered in a walled garden, nude Persian houri bending over a well.

All pink and yellow and dimpled and juicily cleft as Renoir's dappled baigneuses, oeils-de-boeuf d'or.

Or aspiring odoriferously, they lie heaped in pyramids like sun-warmed Aztec temples.

To eat one: cunnilingus with pubescent cherubim.

And then the gardener's grandmother in the wrinkled pit.

CELERY

Parading with queenly aplomb under acres of gauze, these pale Islamic ladies stalk in serried rows in their dim seraglio, blanched, elegantly ribbed, straight limbed, bottoms delicately flaring, heads capped in brightest green.

Crisply responsive as Pope's Belinda, there is no better youth than their fresh dignity, no cooler heart on which to prey. Older, stringiness sets in: Mme. de Stael to Virginia Woolf; wild green eyes and flaccid flesh, a string of dental floss between the teeth. Pablo Neruda's "crack-bodiced" guest, striding like turbulent scissors.

In autumn there are clouds of tiny seeds, fragrant black sperm of the stalk's ribbed lightning.

TOMATOES

On fire escape even, where they will grow in a coffee can.

Sprawled in the sun, they bulge irregularly, ungirdled, decorating the vine like pregnant women on tenement steps.

How they cleave from the knife in great disks, spilling yellow tears in shimmering gouts.

Smooth as the inner flesh of thighs and fingerable,
they must be twisted from the tough stem. In the
mouth, a melting firmness, resisting penetration like
convent bred whores.

The color of Giacomo Puccini's dreams.

BROCCOLI

Bright green sprouts just in from the country,
stretching ridgy adolescent limbs in their first silken
covers. Coquettes pubere de province lying between
great golden wedges of grinning lemon.

Brassica oleracea italica: Colette's wild Italian
progeny, arms akimbo, nodding vivid heads.

Ahh ... green Roman candles, rising to ... ah ...
pretty extinction in the black cave of the mouth.

-- William A. Fahey

Northport NY

DODGER FANTASY

Someone mentions a bar where
there are, "whores so old
they remember the Brooklyn Dodgers."

My skin prickles with excitement
when I ponder paying a price
for my peculiar fetish.

While I swing for the fences,
she will chant the line-up
of the 1955 champions:

Campanella, Newcombe, Hodges;
Gilliam, Reese, Robinson;
Amoros, Snider, Furillo.

THE FOURTH SHIP OF COLUMBUS

For those of you who know
the earth is round
yet still cling to the brink

Remember the fourth ship
that went with Columbus
on his first voyage

Which we never hear of
because it sailed off
the edge of the world.

-- Gary Short

Virginia City NV

GHAZAL: 1

I read the paper, hot August, getting drunk early
before the heat makes even drinking seem an effort.

In Detroit, a man gets beaten to death
with a six-pack of beer.

My wife in the kitchen clatters pots and pans:
"your turn to do the dishes, fatso."

In the street, a wedding party drives by,
horns bleeding.

I drink until the pull tabs
sound like bullets.

GHAZAL: 2

Once driving around a corner on two wheels
I felt all life tilting toward another world.

A guy I pinned in 15 seconds in gym-class wrestling
shot someone 15 times last week.

A woman who wiped spaghetti from my face
slipped in spilled gas and went down flaming.

A foaming dog chased me down the street.
I hopped a fence, got down on all fours and snarled back.

When I squished a rabbit in my driveway
I smiled because it was not a child's head.

GHAZAL: 3

A man without hands dances in the aisle
jerks his arms like machine guns.

In the corner a man soaked with sweat
kicks and chops at the wall.

In the backroom an Indian bleeds
broken glass from his forehead.

The bartender keeps the heads of his pet dogs
mounted behind the bar.

Men shuffle their feet like angry bulls.
It is too dark to see the stains on the floor.

-- Jim Daniels

Warren MI

THE MAN WHO SET THE FIRE for Russell Edson

A man comes running into the room screaming that the room next door is on fire and that everyone must get out right away. Everyone goes into the room next door to see if the man is telling the truth. When everyone finds that the man is not telling the truth everyone continues what everyone was doing before in the new room. The same man bursts into the new room screaming that the room everyone just left is on fire and that everyone must get out right away. Somewhat skeptical, everyone leaves the room and returns to the old room. When everyone again finds no fire everyone continues what everyone was doing before in the old room. The same man rushes into the old room screaming that the room everyone is in will burst into flames in exactly 3 minutes and that if everyone wants to be saved everyone will have to get out right away. Everyone bursts out in incredible laughter. Everyone continues what everyone was doing before the man first entered the room. The man now runs down the hallway and returns with

a can of gasoline which he proceeds to pour all over the floor. He lights the gasoline, stands back, and screams to everyone that everyone must quickly move to the room next door where he will soon be showing home movies of the fire. When everyone does not listen to him, he exits as everyone in the room is burned to death. Next door, the man who set the fire is watching the home movie with tears in his eyes since he unexpectedly fell in love with one of the women who was burned to death.

THE HYPOCRITE

The house cat had been chasing the house mouse around the room for hours until it finally trapped the mouse in a corner of the room. All of this time, the house bird had been watching from its perch in a cage overhead. There was nowhere for the mouse to go but upward since the cat had blocked off every other avenue of escape. The bird, realizing it was the only one who could save the mouse from being eaten, quickly flew down and snatched up the little mouse as the outraged cat did sommersaults trying to reach the bird's cage where the mouse was now safely lodged. "Why did you save me from the cat?" asked the mouse of the bird. "Because I identified with your predicament. Cats not only eat mice, but also birds. Did you not know that?" asked the bird of the mouse. "I did know that," replied the mouse, "but I also know that there are birds that eat mice, and I am truly hoping that you are not one of them." "To tell you the truth, I am one of them," replied the bird, "and it is also true that I plan to eventually eat you myself, but the main reason why I saved you was because I sincerely felt sorry for you, having to go through such torture before the cat was ready to enjoy you. We are not so barbaric. When we want a mouse, we just swoop down and lift our prey off its feet and devour it immediately. We do not taunt and tease our prey nor inflict any kind of torture on our victims. We are as honest and fair as a predator can be." The mouse was now sitting there with a terror-stricken expression on its face. It took one last look at the bird, then jumped through the bars of the cage onto the floor where the cat was now waiting. After an hour of being chased around the room, the mouse was finally cornered and eaten by the cat, while the bird just sat there on its perch with a scowl on its face.

-- Jeffrey A. Z. Zable

San Francisco CA

THE MAN IN THE PIPE

The man in the pipe knows the meaning of narrow and round. After lying still for hours, he believes he is buried. His fears are shoveled dirt and rising water; darkness he already has. The light at the end of the tunnel is not a Vietnam joke to him. He slithers more than crawls: snake or eel, he would do well to grow scales. His children will do this better. In time the pipe will seem almost as wide as a tunnel carved for insistent cars. Evolution is more truth than beauty; unless they swerve, the cars sense nothing of the walls.

CLOSET CHILD

Though I am locked in, my life is not soundproof. I can still hear voices and footsteps through the door. There was a time when I knew the source of each voice. Whether or not I knew the words did not matter. Tone, after all, is important. Long ago I recognized the footsteps. I knew the shape and color of the shoes before that. Now I understand only the lights and the hand that feeds me. Although this room is cleaned while I sleep, I am not touched. But I am clean. The room and I are one. When the debris of a day or week is taken I feel my body grow light. This life is privilege. Like the huge beasts in a public cage, I am still master. I need only to roar to believe it. The hand does not appear; the lights go out. They are driven by the terror that pushes crowds back from the bars. If they knew my secret, they would envy me; if I could explain it, they might bow and enter, sitting with me and howling to keep themselves sealed and dark.

-- Gary Fincke

Le Roy NY

INDIAN SUMMER MADONNA

unexpectedly hot
but she doesn't stay

KALEIDOSCOPE MADONNA

never gives you
the same shake
twice

MADONNA OF THE POT ROAST

THE HOTEL LIFSHIN

is tough
if you don't
give her
enough time,
keep her moist
and simmering

she's not
expensive

can now be charged with
becoming discriminating

BEAVER MADONNA

SPLIT INFINITE MADONNA

puts something in
the way of
simply being

MADONNA OF THE BATHROOM

makes you flush

BALLET MADONNA

LET DOWN MADONNA

doesn't believe there
are sweet things
in life that don't
make cavities

likes things precise,
and formal, with
rules, grace
definite positions
she's in control of

MADONNA OF THE MAIL

CAT PEE SMELL MADONNA

is intense
you can't ignore
or get rid of her

is stuffed and
licked after

SALAD MADONNA

EXTENSION CORD MADONNA

takes your juice
farther than you
imagined it could
go

she chops your chives,
skins your scallion

LOOSE MADONNA

has broken staples
in her bed

MADONNA WHO KNOWS SOMETHING IS UP
OR DOWN WHEN

dearest on letters
changes to just
plain dear

JOGGING MADONNA

pulls your tendon

NIGHT DEPOSIT MADONNA

gets you winded
makes you

her slot opens in
the night but you
can't get what you
put in her back
until morning

ache gives you
pain and strain
gets yr
achilles' heel

-- Lyn Lifshin

Niskayuna NY

A FAT LADY

a fat lady is sucking the strawberry jelly
out of a doughnut like marrow
from a bone she eats six egg
omelettes her forehead perfect
as a block of cheddar cheese the fat lady
in the circus is becoming
thinner fat peels off her arms
like lemon rind she may even lose
her job already her boss tells her not to
be so lazy to work harder
at keeping herself like a butter
cookie dusted with powdered sugar a fat
lady looks at her ankles as though
they are swollen with goldfish
a fat lady tries not to let her
thighs spread into two continents
on a park bench a fat lady watches
her two young daughters squeeze
their skinny bodies into pink
bikinis a ring of vanilla ice cream
around her lips

MADONNA OF RAIN

"Be wet
with a decent happiness."

-- Robert Creeley

Why people stay
inside after
all it's

only another form
of water
rushing to meet
the earth.
Do they run
from their sinks,

showers, do they
strangle their hoses,
drain their pools

and lick
their lips in public
to prove they can

throw away all
their sponges,
towels, their glasses

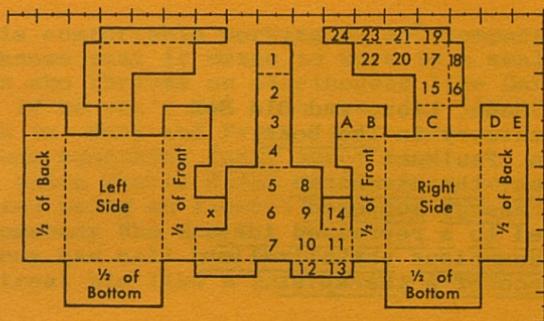
and pitchers?
It's as though
they are afraid

of what their own
bodies are filled with.
Stick a camellia

in that man's
mouth and he's useful
as a vase.

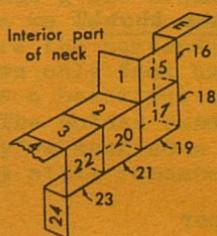
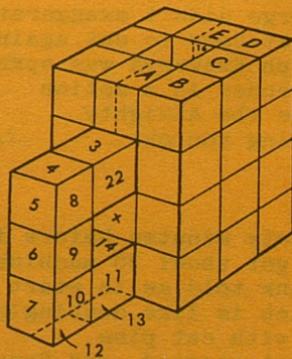
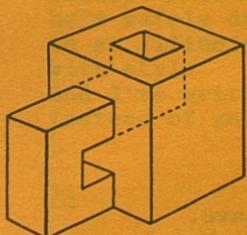
-- Susan Cobin

Los Angeles CA



JIM KLEIN'S

BLUE CHEVIES



Interior part
of neck

Units 15-24
make $\frac{1}{2}$
of neck

i.

I thought of Boon, Lion, and Old Ben
fused into statuary in The Bear,
a story by Wm. Faulkner
and abreaction: the discharge
of emotional energy supposed
to be attached to a repressed idea,
esp. by the conscious verbalization
in the presence of a therapist.

My own way had been to take
my therapy out into life
and whip up a manic whirlpool
sufficient to drive away all the safe people
and attract the dangerous
(including Terry
who came from Bethlehem PA)
and then to conduct a tournament
until no one was left
except Terry, Susan, and me.

*

George called yesterday to say
he had some bad news. For once
George didn't exaggerate.
I sat down to eat again.
Ralph Krawczyk was spraypainting
a fender in a motion
like the Almighty
wiping you out.

*

Twenty minutes before it was time to leave,
we got about 20 machines in from Clifton Metal.
Frank told me to start cleaning them up with solvent
which is like daubing out an elephant's asshole
with cat piss.

I got started, and Gary saw me.
"That a boy! Way to go!" he shouted.
"I like a man who jumps right in like that!"
I said, "Frank told me to,"
but he didn't hear or didn't care
or maybe I didn't even say it.
The point is where does he get leave
to speak in silver dollars?
Gary signs the checks:
and all of a sudden he likes a man
who doesn't use too much toilet paper

who is comfortable working in 35° temperatures
who knows what it means to work in a small shop
a man who thrives on carcinogens like Gary does
even if he won't die rich some day like Gary will.
Truth is, Gary and Frank like a man
who has something funny about him
like being Puerto Rican or Black or young or old
or even being an alcoholic ex-English professor
or somebody Who Has Big Feet
so they can call him Gunboats!
And treat him like a pair of big shoes.

*

Johnny giggled at dogs
'cause they never take baths.
Walking out of a restaurant one day
Johnny threw his money away,
then the guy the money struck
beat him up
and Johnny got busted
for fighting. That was
a giggle too.
I was so square
I never realized
he had memorized
all his extemporaneous
poetry. Now
he's safely drowned himself
in an Illinois irrigation ditch
with style
and I've written a poem
instead of going to his funeral.

ii.

We had stayed up all night.
Terry went to sleep at 6:30 A.M.
driving through the middle
of downtown Passaic.
We had a \$20 breakfast at Tommy's
then we went to The Golden Bear
where the bartender has a red beard
grown only from hairs below his jawbone.
It's a beautiful beard.
In The Golden Bear
they've seen some things.
They still remember us.

*

We're getting closer,
I like his taste in music now.

He borrows a dime for the phone,
we slap our hands together,
he does it out of rhythm
but we do it.

It's not enough tonight,
I enclose one of his mitts
between my two hands
like a fluke in a bun.
He bangs my two hands
with a green tray.
Not enough, we must bang
our beer guts together,
my 34" and his 56".
It's so much fun to be babies.

He picks me off the floor,
now I'm going to pick up Ronnie,
necessary to bend my knees
to get ahold of this maybe 260-lb. man.
Surprisingly, I have him
way off the floor,
hold it a minute longer.
This is a good trick,
have to do it when girls are in here.

*

She was glad to see me
and gave me supper,
we were butter and jam
spread on her son,
she told me more about his father
than she ever told him.

There were black nailheads in the table,
the tiny kitchen floor was uneven.

We talked across the corner
of the table until midnight,
she knew me as well
as she knew her own sweatshirt,
I answered like a duck call.

"I've read a lot of literature,"
I said,
"I've read a lot of literature
and I think I know what
you're offering me."

*

We laid ourselves on the grass to dry,
we made ourselves a (self-licking) pretzel,
we became the rollers we passed through.

We made ourselves a (self-licking) pretzel,
we laid ourselves on the grass to dry,
we became the rollers we passed through.

We made ourselves a (self-licking) pretzel,
we became the rollers we passed through,
we laid ourselves on the grass to dry.

iii.

Terry pulled on his gloves slowly,
he began getting out of the car slowly,
then he lunged back in
and began lifting haymakers at me.
I set my head dreaming on his sternum,
Susan in the backseat went berserk,
she drove this winner of hundreds of barfights
halfway back across the sidewalk.

*

My father told me once
about a man who jumped out of a hayloft
and caught his wedding ring
on a nail
and lost his finger.

*

At potluck suppers my father used to
pile up a plate with two slabs of meatloaf,
scalloped potatoes, orange jello with
carrots pineapple and walnuts in it,
two black olives, carrot and celery sticks,
three or four devilled eggs and
a big yawn of chocolate cake and
set it atop
the fingertips of his right hand.

Then he'd fold it slowly back past his hip
rotating it back slowly
until it was past him
going magically out over
up past his shoulder
still moving somehow all the way to
back down and flat again.

No one else tried.
The good people of Brookings
probably thought
you had to be clergy.

*

My father is holding a football for me
to kick with the wrong foot
for a photographer
on the front lawn of 908 5th Street
Brookings SD
in about three inches of dead leaves.

In Brookings his favorite joke was:
"Why did the ram run over the cliff?"
"He didn't see the ewe turn!"

He wore a big wide brown tie then
with the links of a tan chain laid out
and wound around and around.
He'd start to tell that joke
and I'd get bored
and look at that beautiful tie,
I didn't know what ewe meant.
After a while I knew
but I was still missing something.

iv.

Terry is the kind of guy
when he hears about a fight
he changes his shoes.
Terry swung on Susan and spun
on his heel and walked slowly
to the bus stop
and rode the public transportation grid
to Washington DC.

*

Men play pool the way they are.
The way they thrust their butts out,
the way they aim, then shoot and
miss the 3-ball is so nakedly them.
It'll be how they talk, shave
and think: no doubt how they screw.
Men playing pool the way they are.

*

There is some kind of confused oedipal situation here.
It's a costume party and everyone has come as himself.
The hostess wearing a tux has just taken a flash picture up the dress of the passed-out host and detained me by the bed for just one kiss.
I have consented, taking off my dark glasses but not my hat.
The kiss is a goldfish on the windshield.

*

Women are people who smoke.
My wife smokes Kools, Susan smokes Parliaments, somebody else smokes Tarytons, somebody else Marlboros, and there is another brand I can't name.
And when they come, they check the ash tray to see who's been here.

v.

When he hit her she fell backwards like a flat of stage scenery and would have hit her head on the curb had she not chosen in the choreography of the thing to land just above the knee of my right leg: the only part of me still sticking out from under the car: a leg she had once examined by an early morning light in a happier time and pronounced perfect.

*

There is no doubt that Dr. Klein established a rapport with his students and, in fact, amused them with his passing comments. However, at times he interrupted himself in mid-thought and failed to return to his original point. As a result, some vagueness developed. Finally, since a formal lecture was not an appropriate part of Dr. Klein's presentation, a summary near the end of the period might have been useful to the students.

*

Once upon a time there was an English professor who couldn't sleep with anyone but former students. He thought it was sick. They kept thinking he was smart and he wanted to be stupid. He wanted to be called Jimmy, but they called him Klein. He asked another professor, who had been a Marine and an advertising executive and whose knowledge of the world was greater than his, about his problem. "No problem," Terry said, "if you were in business, you'd be screwing the secretaries wouldn't you? At college there are co-eds so that's who you're screwing." At least he didn't sleep with A students. He felt very healthy about that; in fact, he had turned his car around and taken a girl home when he found he had mis-remembered her grade.

*

These complaints are minor. The major problem rests with Professor Klein's lack of professional manner. He often makes jokes in class (e.g. Did you hear the joke about the English teachers who ran a whorehouse? They kept making the girls do it over and over until they got it right!). Comments of this nature are numerous. Professor Klein thinks little about making jokes in class pertaining to sex, and, at times, its relation to English (e.g. how disastrous it is to miss your period!).

vi.

I picked up passed-out Susan
and carried her into a real estate office.
Ladies from the beauty parlor
were screaming at me.

Maybe they thought I was Terry.

The real estate agent began helping with Susan;
he gave me a maroon baseball jacket
for my torn shirt.

It didn't do any good,
the beauty-making ladies were screaming at me,
the two cops unloading
were like two freshmen,
one walking toward me
hand fluttering between his billy and his gun.

*

Her husband, she's so embarrassed,
she has to break in and tell him
his thinking is so full of
stereotypes -- not all black people
believe in voodoo --

but he out of the blues,
"Children shouldn't be spanked,
they should have their fingers
cut off and their parents should order
Colonel Sanders fried chicken
and give them the terrible time
of fingerless
fried chicken eating!"

*

Driving with a beer bottle
between her legs,
she introduces them
as two of the Olympic sprinters
from Tennessee State.
I light two cigarettes at once
but the kissing in the backseat
intrudes on us.
One of them says, "You
can't tell a book by its cover!"

Back at the softball game,
Plummer and I sit
in Plummer's Austin-Healey 3000
with the case of warm beer
and wait for them to lead us to the party
in Shelbyville.
As the men play softball under the lights,
Plummer and I sit drinking warm beer
and Plummer tells about the cornsilk pussies
of pubescent blondes.

*

If you're guilty, shut up.
But if you're innocent, talk
and keep talking and sometime
it will make sense somehow
because no one can invent
a labyrinthine shawl of truth
the way truth knits itself.

Terry was never arrested,
in fact he came to my trial as my witness.
We pretended we had been fighting over Susan.
The Clifton cop testified
that I had been barefoot, that
there was an empty fifth of vodka in the car,
and that I had threatened to kill him.

*

I work as a poet in an attic room,
there is a green rug,
there is a telephone,
there are four desks
(mine and three empty).
This is my office.

This room is in a house,
which has become a college bldg.
If anyone were so reckless as to ask,
"Is there a doctor in the house?"
on a good day he might get seven.

Sometimes I wonder:
this is Rutherford,
maybe WCW was once in this house --
maybe he even lugged
a box of Xmas decorations
for a friend
into this attic room
where I am working.

*

Did you know a backdoor window
subject to a tapping forefinger
tapping lightly, and even more lightly
but slowly undergoing a significant internal change
like a penis beginning to feel hopeful,
tapping tapping lightly lightly lightly
but actually striking harder and harder
until a perfect circle of glass pops out:
Did you know a backdoor window
could have an idea like that?

*

Man and daughter and dog
clatter down into the stadium.
He steps into the running
awkward and blowsy, learning to breathe
again, watching his daughter

and the dog; his awkward thoughts
spin him around the track:
here,
this afternoon
is all there is
or ever will be.

viii.

Terry left for Paris today.
Before leaving he gave me
a yellow, an orange, a maroon,
a tan, and two navy blue sweaters
(one navy blue is v-neck,
the other requires repair
in the left armpit;
I tried to buy the orange one
for \$12 once
but his wife wouldn't let him) --
the Terry who visited me
in Greystone one Sunday afternoon
and got carried away singing
with the man on the portable piano,
this Terry has left me
in charge of his affairs.

*

Home by way of my office,
past your house,
your Chevy with a note
on the windshield.

Until I loved you
I never knew
there were so many
blue Chevies!

*

The term "self-continuity" was not one of the writer's concepts when this study was begun. It emerged from recognition of what seemed to be lacking in these patients that the rest of us have -- the feeling of somehow going on in time -- the feeling of being essentially the same individual as one was yesterday and will be tomorrow, but recognizing that one has changed since childhood and may go on changing. This feeling is seldom put into words by any of us except possibly

when we fear the end of the self, as in death, but it is implicit in our looking back over the past and forward to the future. Our pasts and our futures are living realities to us, and the present often seems most significant, not for itself, but for the way it enables us or forces us to reach forward. Hence we want self-respect and self-enhancement. Hence we are concerned with the approval or disapproval of others.

Postlobotomy patients appear different from us and like each other in just this respect. They appear to lack (though in varying degrees, to be sure) any strong feeling of self-continuity.

It will be noted that the phrase used in the hypothesis is "capacity for the feeling of self-continuity," much as one would say, "capacity for the feeling of strong emotion." These capacities may be interrelated in some complex fashion.

*

I got an electric train
for Valentines.
As it runs around the track,
it makes a passing shadow
on the lower walls of my bedroom.
I let it run all night.

--- Jim Klein

Rutherford NJ

THE GRAND CANYON

Georgi stays at the hotel on the rim.
Half a mile down, David shouts,
"Pick it up, hard-asses!
We aren't little girls!"
I know he is remembering
his patrols on the Mekong.
He counts off fifty paces a minute,
like Stillwell coming out of Burma.
We all laugh as we pass
the candy-butts ascending on their mules.
At the bottom we make camp
by the fast green Colorado.
Barry gets to be the dishwasher.
In the evening light
the pink folds of the walls
pulse with surface heat.
As we drink whisky around the fire,
women are never far from our minds.
The next day we walk to the waterfall
where David stands naked
under the pouring water.
Coming back, Barry misses his jump
and falls in the stream.
On the third day we start up
Bright Angel Trail.
"Let's go, pricks! Get it up!"
The hot water in our canteens
tastes of plastic.
Close enough to see
the windows of the hotel,
Barry slumps beside the trail.
He wants us to go on without him.
"Get up before I kick you up,
you pussy," David says.
Barry spits,
then slowly stands,
and together we all keep walking.

WE BUY OUR COUCH

Crazy Bargaining Eddie
cruises forward in hush puppies.
Veering between Elaine and me,
he displays "your tuxedo model,"
"your flamestitch loveseat,"
and "your sectional sofa."
When he tells the prices, I ask myself:
Has the Mafia grabbed the couch industry?

What are twenty yards of cloth
and a few boards worth?
But I can't make a couch,
and we have no place for friends to sit.
Elaine and I have fought for months
without guests.
Eddie asks, "You checked out the mall?
We beat Dayton's. Hundred bucks.
Same stuff exactly."
He's right, but I can see
he isn't happy.
He wishes he had a department store
so he could put his furniture
in delicate make-believe rooms
instead of shabby rows.
Besides, the nice stores make better dough.
Is it his fault
he's Crazy Bargaining Eddie?
He sits with me on an overstuffed green divan.
He knows I want to buy and get out.
But Elaine balks. These couches aren't right.
She has dreamed of having one
since she was a girl.
They mean something
I can't understand.
"We've looked long enough," I say.
Crazy Bargaining Eddie averts his eyes
while Elaine agrees.

REMEMBERING THE TIDY TOWN LAUNDROMAT

Machinery has driven us bozo, that's clear.
Why else would every house in this neighborhood
have a washer-drier used just four hours a week?
We all look normal enough, in our clean outfits,
but we've lost the guts to wash together.
I remember my old laundromat in Palo Alto.
It was easy enough, I tell you,
to learn not to put your hand
in the SpeedQueen with the spastic agitator.
Where else would I have met
the nice old lady
whose T-shirt read, "Sit on it!"
Where else would I have learned
the correct response to, "Cochino,
deme todo su dinero, pronto!"
And where else would I have become friends
with the man with half a face.
No more reaching under my chair
to find a petrified village of chewing-gum.

No more notices of spaniels missing.
Goodby to the co-eds washing their underwear.
Wrongly have I cut myself off
from the dangerous and the grotesque
and the merely sexual.
Everybody where I live now
is too proper, I say.
Why can't we share our machines?

-- Hunt Hawkins

Tallahassee FL

PARKED

sitting in my car
on Catalina Avenue in Redondo Beach
I see a fellow of 19 or 20
riding his bicycle upon the sidewalk.
he wears sandals and blue shorts,
slows down, stops, puts one foot down,
sits upon his bicycle seat.
it is 4:30 in the afternoon and
he is tanned a deep and even tan,
his yellow hair and mustache.
his face is smooth
unmarked by pain or experience.
then something animates him
and he pedals off.
another crosses the street,
he must be 21,
very large of chest, blond,
blue-eyed, very tanned, wearing
green shorts and sandals.
it is a Tuesday afternoon.
he stands a moment
looking down the street.
his face is the same as the
other face:
untried, without purpose.
a long cigarette is in his mouth.
he finally enters a liquor store,
comes out a moment later
holding a can of Bubble-Up.

these are the kind my parents wanted
me to be
the kind my country wanted me to
be

the kind the girls wanted me to
be.

I start the engine and back out of
there
thinking about
Leo Durocher, James Cagney,
Rocky Marciano, Two-Ton Tony Galento
and Dutch Van Gogh.

PARTS DEPT.

first moved into this neighborhood
was having trouble with the Volks
went to this place for parts
thin German fellow with one arm
missing (had the other sleeve,
the empty one, pinned neatly
down by the waist)
was told to come back the next
day, the part would be ordered.
came back, the part was there,
paid and left.
drove on in, said: "Linda, a
really strange thing happened.
went in one day and there was
one arm. came back and there
were two arms. the other arm
wasn't fake, it had natural
fingers and all that. it's
not understandable."

later driving near the area
Linda wanted to see the man
who had one arm missing and
then had two arms.

drove down 5th street, the
building was not there.
drove down 6th street:
nothing.
San Pedro is not a large
city, at least the downtown
area is small.
drove up and down all the
main streets, the building
was gone.

hung a right and headed for
McCowan's: remembered the cats
needed cat food.

CARRY THE DRUNK WITH THE LITTLE LEGS

he fell down a stairway as a child
and they had to operate on his legs
and when they were done
his legs were about half the length
they were meant to be
and that's the way he grew into
manhood.

with those very short legs
he hung around the Paris cafes
and sketched the dancing girls
and drank very much.

(it's strange that most of those
who create well seem to have some
malady.)

he was subsisting on his paintings
many of them used by the cafe
as advertising posters
when along came the beautiful
and terrible whore
and he painted her
and became involved
short legs and all.

she, of course, was hardly faithful,
and one night, defending her
faithlessness

she told him about his legs.
that ended the affair.
he turned on the gas jets
then shut them off
to finish a painting.

he was a little gentleman.
at least he was in this movie
I saw.

he liked to wear a top hat
and he sketched his things
while drinking;
doing it like that
cutting through the odds,
he had it down tight and
clean,
he sketched all the dancing
girls
that would never be his,
and one night
he got it all down and
done,
tumbling drunk down a
stairway
little legs whirling

he became involved with that
other
terrible and beautiful
whore.

NO CHANCE IN POMONA

on a half-mile track in a mile and one-sixteenth race where they go around twice from out of the chute another jock got thrown today just before the first turn where he was stepped-on once by a passing horse. he was an unknown Mexican jock wearing orange silks and he was flat upon his back, bleeding from the nose and not moving.

and nobody moved toward him, although he was near the rail and the horses that were then on the backstretch would have to come through along the rail where he was.

there were some moments when everybody waited for somebody else
then a few got tired of waiting, a very few, 3 or 4 men jumped the fence and the outrider rode up and sat there on his horse, then the horses were coming around the curve and into the stretch and the men, some of the men, grabbed the jock by his legs and dragged him a little out of the path and the horses ran by just inside of him.

by the time they got the jock into the ambulance the winner-to-be came down the stretch the 2nd time and crossed the wire at 16 to one as the ambulance pulled away toward the track emergency room and the longest shot ran by around 3rd or 4th or 5th but not on the official charts of that race:

it was the horse without the jock:
the crowd had figured it right,
but not quite.

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

CARNIVAL AT FALMOUTH, MASS.

I come to see the freaks.
The hawker howls
in rhyme
a 60-watt Shakespeare
biting off the heads
of havana cigars
he scares old ladies
into fits of giggle

the Amazing Bona Lisa
turns into a skeleton
and yawns
with dull drugged eyes
she stares at lawyers
and fishermen
drunk

while cowlicked offspring
chatter like cartoon monkeys
gather around the alligator boy

behind a trailer
I watch a 40-inch
man stroke the thin
girl's thigh

he looks at me
and laughs

BLACK & WHITE

There is a movie
in her hair.

Everytime she moves
I see Greta Garbo
kicking Charlie Chaplin
down the street.

When she sleeps
by my side
I smell popcorn
hear the muffled laughter
of balcony lovers
and search black strands
for the title of this film.

THE RE-EDUCATION OF JAMES ZOLA

remove
these stale images
I want to forget
that elephants
are large
and grey
and wrinkled
give me an elephant
with the colors
of a cat
with the strut
of a teen-age
dancer

-- James Zola
Columbia MO

TO REPEAL THE INVENTION OF SURGICAL NECESSITY

I love not only your sagging tits
but how they sag is love to me
not only because I sag too
but why they sag is our kid
with his wonderful runabouts
movement only emphasizes
the saggingness of beautiful things
which out of context
appear ugly not only
to the untrained eye but
to the fool whose tits can sag
& won't.

JUST PLANE HAIKU

New Jersey is green.
From the airplane I see it
Between parking lots.

Landing in Philly
Lets me think I understand
The nature of man.

Taking off from there
Is another story but
Not worth telling you.

-- Brian Gallagher

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

KADDISH

Flo was a big, good-looking, blond shiksa;
a registered nurse a hypochondriac
fell for and married, once she'd converted.
She played cards with other Jewish ladies.
They had no children, seemed quite contented.

Once Flo disappeared with the Cadillac.
Then she reappeared and what's more, she told
anyone who would listen where she'd been
and why: Flo was driving home from the store
when work on the road forced her to drive slow.

"I saw this gorgeous man stripped to the waist
digging ditches and told him to hop in."
Once Flo was broke, he left her. Her husband
welcomed her back. He died. Flo stood up, dressed
in black, in Temple. She's one of my saints.

BLACK SHEEP

A whole year before she died, my mother
handed me a package wrapped in brown paper, tied.
"This belonged to your Uncle Clarence...." "What did?"
"It's pornography, Michael. Please destroy it."
Before my father died, she'd never said a word.
I promised to throw it out unopened.
As soon as she left the attic I undid
the knot. Pornography? It was a joke book
from the Twenties, privately printed and rare.
I read it sitting under a naked bulb.
At once I knew where Paw got his best stories.
"What he stole," I mused, "he sure could make his own."

Uncle Clarence, my father's much older brother ...
"Son, we'll talk about that when you're older."
"Bubble, that's something you'll have to ask your father."
When I was young, I thought, like Duke, the bulldog,
Clarence passed away right after I was born.
Later, I believed he died much earlier.
Photos show like Nana he was unattractive,
small, had her voice yet did little with it:
no congregation gave him a grandfather's
clock or silver and though he never married,
"every dime he had he spent on women."
"He worked at the Store but he was no business man."

"You must have been four when your Uncle Clarence died."
So he too lived in Nana's big brown house.
I cannot recall once having seen the man,
much less hearing he'd shot himself. Was my father
sitting beside him in the Model A,
trying to wrestle the gun from his brother's hand?
Was it out hunting squirrels my father spied
Clarence's coonskin cap above a low stone wall,
aimed, and fired? I asked another friend
of the family what he knew. "If that's what
happened, Michael, your Dad got away with it.
Michael, your Uncle Clarence deserved to die."

-- Michael Lebeck

Coconut Grove FL

ON AVOIDING BANKRUPTCY

There's no free or
unconditional
love --
one has to pay
for
everything.

The situation
is really:
how much does one
pay in advance --
and how much with
each installment?

-- Sonia Topper Weller

Kiryat Ono, Israel

I TAUGHT HER TOO WELL

it used to be that when a john denver special
would conflict with monday night football
i would blithely announce, "oh that's all right --
i'll just catch the game at clancy's,"

and she would plead, "no, don't go out;
you can watch your dumb game
if it means that much to you."

now she says, "there's something i want
to watch tonight. if there's a game on
you can watch it at the bar."

and i protest, "but this is the first night
i've been home this week!"

"well look," i say, "do you anticipate
having any need for me around here
anytime at all this month?"

she says, "i doubt it."

so i stay home, put a t.v. dinner in the oven,
and, pen in hand, i try to ignore the rhymes
of "rocky mountain low."

A PIECE OF UNSOLICITED ADVICE

you, young man,
you the creative writing major,
if you must go to bed
with female creative writing students
(and unless you are sure you will be proud
of your performance),
try to limit yourself to those
who are very beautiful
but cannot write at all.

then, even if they write of you,
there will be a good chance
that what they write will never see print.

but, for god's sake,
avoid like the bubonic squirrels
the b-minus student.
she is apt someday to write a bestseller.

OFF TO A GREAT START

this young poet asked me to suggest some places where she could submit her work, so i copied down the names and addresses of a bunch of magazines i thought would like her stuff (which was really pretty good).

next time i saw her, i said, "did you ever send those poems out?" "oh sure," she said, "i sent them right away." "which magazine did you decide to send them to?" i asked. "oh," she said, "i just sent the four you said were best to all of them."

THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER: A MEDITATION UPON PATRIOTIC UTTERANCES

Stephen foster died penniless.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

LIT NOTES//

Seeking manuscripts: Cache Review, c/o Steven Brady, 131 Fishback, Ft. Collins CO 80521; Cream City Review, c/o English Dept., Univ. of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, P.O. Box 413, Milwaukee WI 53201; This Is Important (short poems only), 361 N. Park Way, Santa Cruz CA 95062. J The essential book for "who" and "where" is Index of American Periodical Verse: 1980 (edit. Sander Zulauf & Jandra Milkowski), \$29.50 fm. Scarecrow Press, P.O. Box 656, Metuchen NJ 08840. J Fans of James Drought will be pleased to know the availability of two "plays for voices" on audio-cassettes: The Wedding (60 min.) and Sonny Davis, Televised (120 min.); ltd. edit. of latter \$25 fm. Star-Light Productions, c/o Drought, 124 Compo Road N, Westport CT 06880. J Collectors of Charles Bukowski and Steve Richmond will need the ff. book: Charlene Runinski by Gretchen Willits, \$2.95 fm. Stance Press, 137 Hollister Ave., Santa Monica CA 90405. J New exchange magazines: Grimoire, \$4/yr. fm. Thomas Wilcox, 6501 Yale Rd. (#807), Westland MI 48185; Santa Fe Poetry, \$6/4 nos. fm. 115 Delgado St., Santa Fe NM 87501; Willow Springs, \$5/yr. fm. PUB P.O. Box 1063, Eastern Washington Univ., Cheney WA 99004.

CLASSICS//////////

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

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RECOMMENDED//////////

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