

rinsing the shingles on the roof, front and back,  
and the house, it being morning,  
stretching its big dry shoulders into it.

"Like it?" the rain wants to know.

"Sure enough," smiles the house, with wet hair.

— Donald Schenker

Berkeley CA

MAGGIE & JIGGS

OR A SUGGESTED CURE FOR TWO CASES OF NECROPHILIA

My wife & I were watching this old  
Ronald Coleman movie on late-night t.v.  
when she said:

"Look at his bu-TI-ful eyes, look at that bu-TI-ful  
profile. It's hard to believe such a handsome man  
is dead & gone."

"Christ Almighty," I said, "what do you expect?  
That goddam movie is sixty years old.  
They must ALL be dead by now."

Then I went out to the john & took a good leak  
& washed my hands & got another beer from the kitchen  
& filled a bowl with more pretzels.

When I got back again, Ronnie was talking to this blonde  
who was wearing some kind of low-cut negligee  
& I said to my wife:

"Jeez, look at those bu-TI-ful boobs."

"Insect," said my wife, "have you no respect  
for the dead & departed?"

"Hell," I said, "let's take a tumble in bed  
while our bodies are still warm."

AS I SNARL BACK AT HER EYES IN THE DARK

The first time I saw her  
she was crossing a Venetian square  
wearing gilt-edged Slavic wings  
that were not even wet coming in from the rain.

Her face is a blur now,  
but the eyes were green & I remember her voice:  
"Have you ever read Alexander Pushkin?" she asked.  
"Oh yeah," I said. "Sure, sure."  
& I bought her a glass of Pellegrino's Marsala.

We went north to the mountains & read Pushkin together;  
then we went south again & lived on a canal  
that reminded her of Petersburg before the revolution.

One night when her Slavic soul barely flickered,  
she said: "Amore, you will not understand this ..."

but I did, I did

& then she went home to Sausalito, or some such place  
where there were still Russian tea rooms  
& I didn't hear from her for years  
until somehow she found my number & calls me at 3 A.M.:  
"I am living in Venice, California," she says,

"in a motel off the highway. I am divorced,  
my daughter works in a whorehouse  
& my son is currently on drugs."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I say.

"How is it with you?" she asks.

"I have taken up needlepoint," I say.  
"I am very good at butterflies."

"There is this red neon sign," she says,  
"right outside my window. It keeps me awake all night."

"Turn to the wall," I tell her.

"The light flashes on the WALL," she says.

"Close your eyes," I suggest.

"That's all very easy for you to say,  
isn't it?" she snarls & hangs up

& I decide to request an unlisted number in the morning.

#### THE NEANDERTHAL MAN

We just came in off a night patrol  
& were sitting around the command post at dawn  
drinking coffee laced with a little grappa  
when our new lieutenant