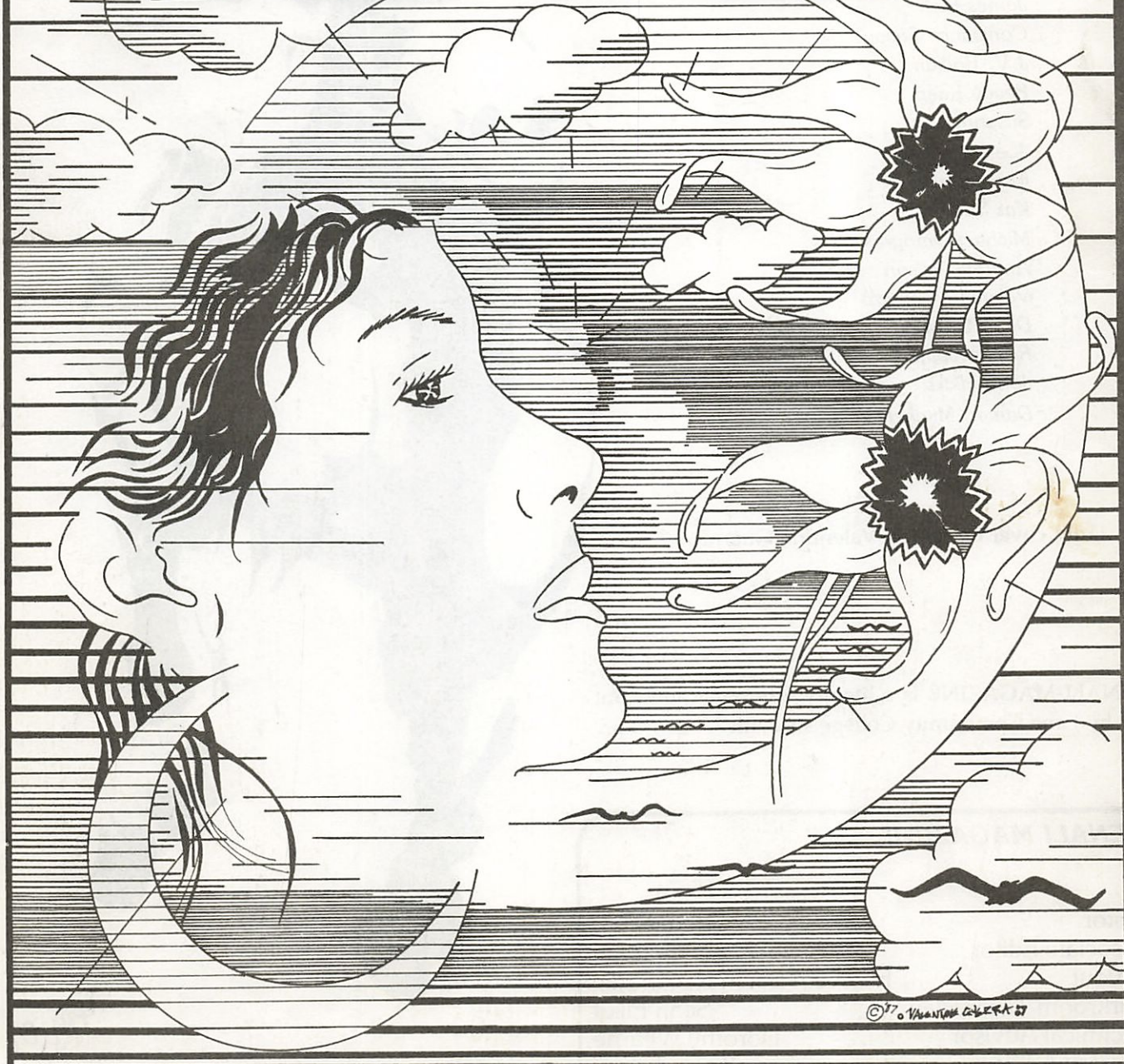


# DENALI



Spring '87

LCC



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### DENALI MAGAZINE

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EDM 87

- Damon Mitchell





**"American Road Trip - In Memory of Brad"**

- Andrew Nelson



# SUICIDE DIARIES

- Constance Savage

9-3 Monday

My room is white, punctuated only by faded green carpet and grey plastic meal trays. The blood is still pounding away in my ears; no razor blade or last dizzy moments on the floor have been able to stop it. My wrists are taped, tape snaking along both swaddled forearms.

The tricky part had been to slice the right wrist open after I'd cut the left wrist. I'd seen my pulse in big jets of red pumping out; it was the first time I'd been aware of having a heart, an internal organ functioning very visibly as the blood rushed out, a nauseating life beat. I'd always thought life would trickle away, ooze out onto the tiles with little rivulets of blood following the grouting. It wasn't like that at all; the stuff spurted out in defiance and I must have realized I was going to botch the job, because I started trying not to make a mess as soon as I saw how much blood there really was. I could see my pulse racing from fear; at the time I thought my body was trying to help me by emptying as fast as possible.

9-5 Wednesday

The night I tried to kill myself I had gone out to a show and no one had talked to me. I had been in a sea of couples fighting and drifting, and I had no one to leave or fight with and no one to wish I had never been born. I only had a dreary bit of a part-time job to scrape myself onto in the morning.

Now I'll have a routine of shrinks and more shrinks until I can leave for some terribly rehabilitating job someplace, with eyes watching for signs of the slip back down in each move I make. My friends will visit me, sad but without sympathy and full of pity maybe, or disdain. They'll come to see the girl who can't do anything right.

9-8 Saturday

How had even suicide gone wrong? Had someone phoned me or dropped by and found me? Maybe the whole night had gone by and in the morning some poor exterminator guy found me.

That would have been funny, me a big bug they almost killed. A big bloodied bug picked up and dragged off, another specimen to be put under glass. No use ripping off the bandages, I know I wouldn't do it right and I'd only get caught again.

9-11 Monday

Yes, yes fine, my childhood was fine, my life was fine, fine. I'm allowed to smoke now. I'm allowed to breathe in killer acrid smoke while the extremely competent, harried staff tries to figure out what made me want to stop ticking. Surviving. I got tired of just surviving. I got

tired of the little-ness, little jobs to get little amounts of money so I could make it through my little days. Life became small, pinpoint sized, and then it had been easy to throw away. Who misses a speck of dust? Some people are allergic to dust and it makes them sick; their bodies cough it out into a place like this hospital. Well, my life made me sick and I did my best to spit it out, but now I'm in here with all the other dustballs.

9-15 Friday

This floor - we don't call it a ward - has discreet wiring over the windows and a lot of rules posted on the walls. Bras must be worn at all times during the day by all female patients. No matches, keys, money or jewelry. No bobby pins, hair combs or curlers. We may have our shoelaces and belts, so it isn't exactly like being in prison, but it isn't all that different either. The most listless people get a lot of pills several times a day, and the drugs only seem to make them worse. I'm climbing the walls with boredom, nothing to do all day but write and talk and watch the loonies, and I don't get any pills at all. I wouldn't mind getting high right now, to blot out a day or two.

9-16 Saturday

When you get better you're allowed to have matches and a mirror and they give you a little dresser to put by your bed and keep your stuff in. So now I have a dresser by the bed that I'm expected to make myself each morning, and I may put on make up in my spare time. Interest in one's personal appearance is encouraged by the staff, as they think it means you're back to reality and don't want to look like a hag. Why they think anyone in a hospital full of nuts would care how good they look beats me.

9-18 Monday

I've been swiping pills out of little paper cups all weekend. No doubt I'm depriving those who truly want their helpful medication. I don't want to improve, I don't want to change my attitude and I want to feel high before I die this time around. I hope I'm not hoarding some damned synthetic hormones or something as useless as that. I can just see it. I'll take the pills and wake up with a beard or something. At least then no one would have to ask why I'm not happy facing myself each day. I pray these pills are paint thinner deadly. I pray I've snatched death out of those paper cups before they are whisked off to entire rows of attitudes, all steadily improving.

9-22 Friday

I flushed my pills. The thought of all those pale witch nurses rushing me back to a room without even a dresser by the bed was more than I could bear. Today



continued

my doctor said it was good to hear my sense of humor coming back. I hadn't realized that I said anything funny. No one here forces me to eat, so I can lose weight and look good when I leave, if I leave. I may as well leave a good looking corpse.

9-24 Sunday

Yesterday I went on a picnic with Mom. I don't think I heard a word she said, it was so great to be outside again. It must be hard on her, being a therapist and having a daughter who's so crazy, but she sure doesn't show it. Maybe she was just as glad to see me out of here as I was to be out. I assume she spoke with my doctors after I was back in my room. Funny how such a perfectly ordinary outing took so much out of me; I fell asleep on my bed before Mom came to say goodbye. I guess that's what a steady diet of boredom does to you.

9-25 Monday

I've been told I show signs of great improvement, and with another successful outing I can probably go home. Does that mean go to Mom's house? My rent for this month is all paid, but I don't suppose I'll be allowed on my own so soon. I feel about ten years old.

9-30 Saturday

Today I went to a movie with Mom. I must not be too crazed any more if they're letting me out after dark. I

talked with Mom for a while in the car and it was sort of comforting to hear her voice and the rumble of the motor as we headed back here. I will be staying with Mom when I'm released. I hope today was a success, whatever that is.

The trouble with making big mistakes is that from then on things you do are judged and evaluated. Every day of freedom is like the first day of a new job, walking on eggshells.

10-2 Monday

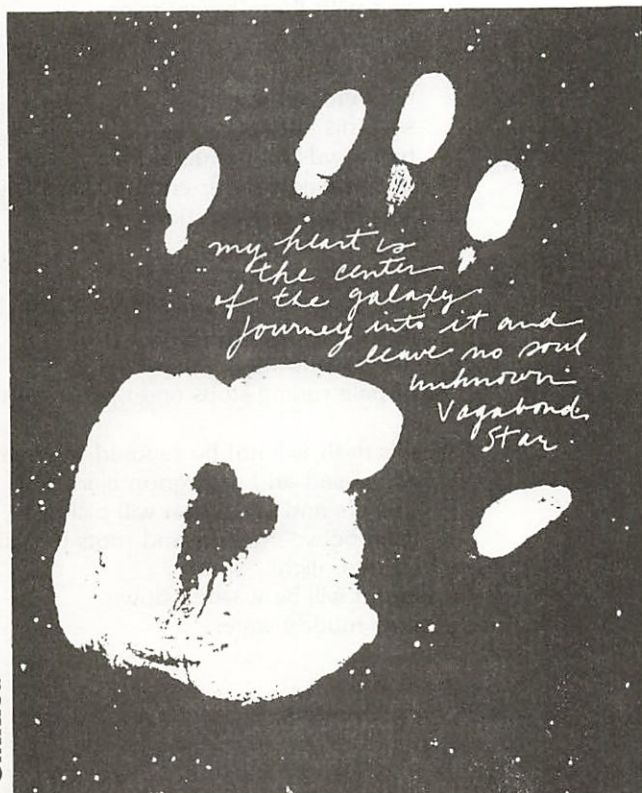
Today Doctor C. asked me if I thought my latest outing with Mom had been successful. I said I had had a good time. You better believe I had a good time, as these faded walls get old pretty fast. He asked if I was afraid to leave here, and that is a good question, as there is a certain anonymity to being insane that is comforting. But I do want to go home, and told him so in words that he could accept. Have I pulled a fast one, or has the staff here improved my attitude at last?

10-4 Wednesday

I'm home. It feels so odd not to be told what to do. I asked Mom if I could have an apple and she looked at me sort of funny and said "Of course you may" and I think that maybe she got a glimmer of how small and helpless I feel. I am confronted with so much now. I think that the only other time I realized the enormity of the world was when I slit my wrists.

- Dana Grossell

"Untitled"





### Malheur Flood

Pete French made the Malheur flood  
with his engineering skills.  
His dams, canals and ponds withheld  
water from other ranchers' cows

for his cattle. Then he rode to chase  
downstream neighbors off new land  
uncovered by his controlling hand.  
He rendezvoused with a pistol chip

from a lead mine and bit true grit.  
Before Pete's holdings were broken up,  
Ted Roosevelt came to shoot pelts  
of Malheur beings for his collection

but planned an act of preservation  
and higher stuff as President.  
That bull moose Ted nationalized  
the whole P Ranch from hot springs pond

to Steens summit and set aside  
cloud islands for birds to clown upon.  
Lately, grazing cattle have been  
renting birds' nest from the BLM

to make cow pies and T-bones.  
They've caused a little war to range  
between bovine owners and bird spies.  
But elemental water intervened

and took revenge like Sumer flooding in.  
Now Malheur, Harney make one lake  
that slowly floods ranches and nests under  
blue pastures profitable for white pelicans.

- Peter Jensen

### Chinook Up Fish Creek

this flayed hunk of prize meat  
that didn't end up on a plate  
or in an orca belly  
has come home to make love.  
abstaining from food,  
his anger has fed him  
up arteries and capillaries  
of the ocean's farthest reach  
into the forest,  
and with these heavy rains  
further still.

now empty of all  
save his desire,  
he crowds his beautiful torn queen  
as she wriggles her crimson flanks  
across the chosen shoal,  
over and over again,  
she releasing eggs and he  
clouds of milt before they're swept down  
delirious with fulfillment,  
oblivious to the pain  
of pale rotting stubs and ripped jaws.

this flesh will not be savored over candlelight  
with salad and sauvignon blanc.  
suckers and squawfish will pick it  
from between rocks and roots by rainlight,  
by moonlight  
and it will be washed down  
with muddy water.

- John Hicks



## Clipperton Inc.

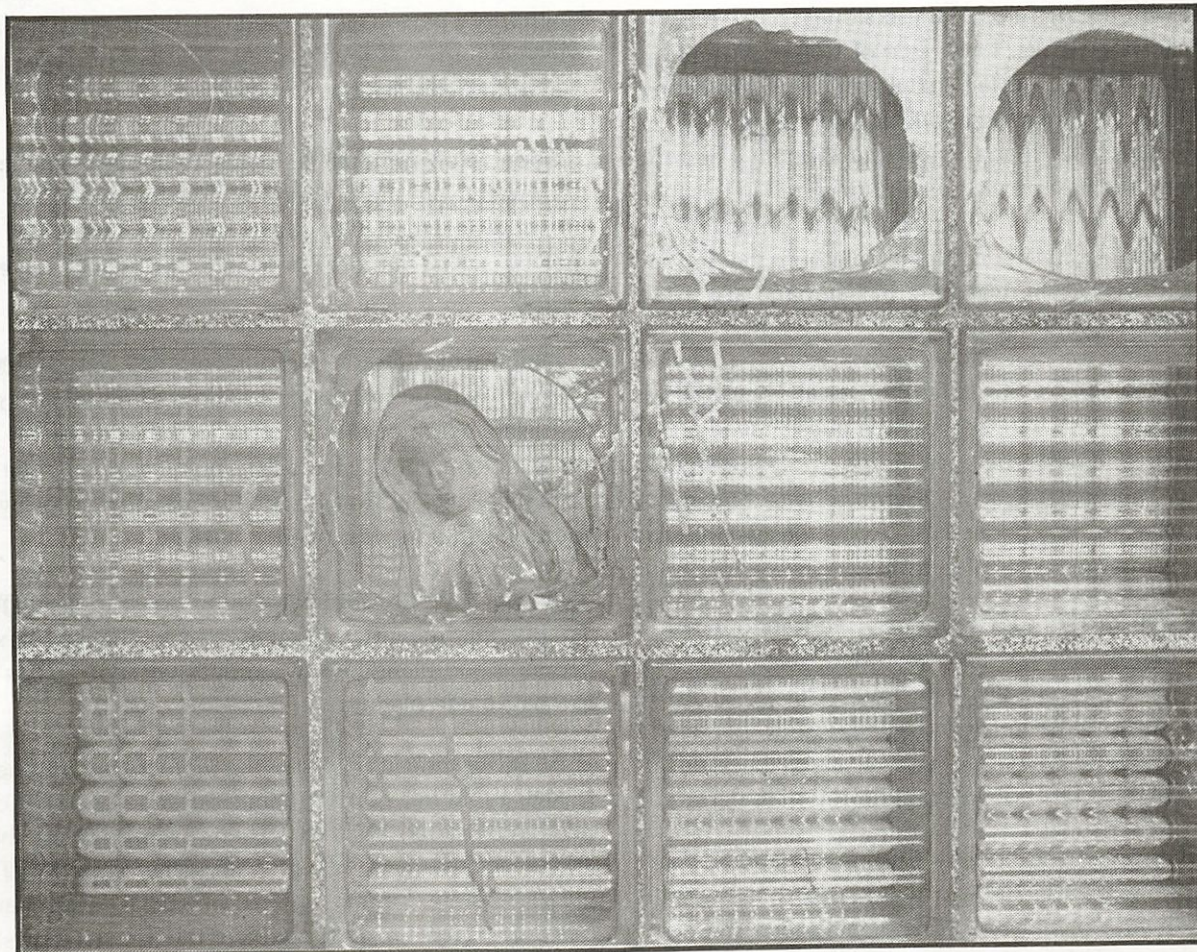
A shot.

The seagull convulses on the greyblack water; a small circle of blood stains the white feathers below its left wing. In and out of sight, shadowed by swells, it's swept further from the boat. In time, the struggle for flight will die, a crest will break and swallow, the seagull will drown.

More shots.

its about dinner  
but the cook wont feed us -  
irate again  
about the birds - says why  
dont we shoot each other...  
but no he says we cant understand,  
weve never heard of  
chopin faulkner  
have we he says -  
always monsters  
monsters...  
Says come in and eat...

- Nick McLean



- Andrew Nelson

"Vandals Gave Mary A Home"



# MOTHERLY LOVE

- Susanne Loy

As I recall, it was mid-June when Susanne walked into Hotel Heidelberg where I worked. Frau Siegel, my boss, introduced her to me and informed me that she would be working in the hotel for the following months.

I liked Susanne - in the beginning. Susanne was from America - it was all quite intriguing to me. I introduced her to my family, my three sons, and she was accepted into my family - this much, I offered her. I taught her to knit. We watched television and laughed together - ah, so many laughs! She would tell me stories of America - a land of which I dreamed.

I loved to hear her stories, as did my eldest son, Rolf. Soon his fascination with Susanne's stories turned into fascination with the narrator of these stories.

In the following weeks, I saw little of Rolf or Susanne. I had instructed both not to tell a soul that they were dating, and that if they were together in public, they should show no signs of anything more than friendship. I thought it best this way. Susanne seemed puzzled when I persisted in this matter. I felt I should not have to explain my reasoning for this, and I didn't. Simply, I wanted no one to fathom that my son would date this girl. She was here in Germany just a few months; then she would be gone.

Although I saw little of Susanne, she was all I heard of - at work and in my home. In the hotel, the guests raved about her eagerness and efficiency. At home, Rolf continually spoke of her, and when he was silent, he was thinking of something else to say about her. Rolf's obsession with Susanne became quite sickening to me.

Susanne defied my order of secrecy, and announced to all that she had received a "friendship ring" from Rolf. Rolf insisted it was an engagement ring. Others at work nicknamed me "mother-in-law." This disgusted me, as did Susanne. I stopped talking to Susanne altogether and informed all that she was not welcome in my home.

Many things about Rolf and Susanne disturbed me. Susanne's family owned a house in America - such wealth! I owned nothing, nor did Rolf. The wealthy and the poor simply don't mix. There was no reason for the two of them

to be dating, and it soon became obvious to me that Susanne was merely exploiting my son - perhaps for some emotional need or maybe even for that new shimmering ring on her finger. She had used me to worm her way into Rolf's life. My exhausting attempts to explain this scheming monster to Rolf led nowhere. Rolf saw a precious rose through his beguiled eyes; I saw a weed - its roots entwining, entangling, and enveloping - strangling its victim, growing, growing, and eventually destroying. This destructive nuisance could have been impossible to uproot - but not for me.

On several occasions, Rolf parked his car in the lot outside Susanne's apartment. This lot was restricted to "authorized persons." I wasted no time in reporting his auto which in turn, was towed away. This was not to cause trouble, but to end trouble - Susanne.

Soon, Rolf announced plans to move away from his home here with me to America. This frightened me. I asked him how he intended to pay for such a venture. Rolf insisted that by selling motors he owned, he would have ample money.

I knew which motors he spoke of; they were stored in my garage. Without hesitation, I had these motors, thousands, of dollars worth of motors, removed and dumped. I didn't want to contribute to Rolf's plans - for his sake. I can remember vividly Rolf's hurt, furious gaze at me when he found his motors destroyed.

Finally, the busy summer wound down to a sluggish fall. To me this meant more than just a change of season. Susanne had planned a two-month vacation at this time. I too had made plans.

After Susanne left, I seized the moment and phoned Frau Siegel. I told her horrible things Susanne had said of her - anything I could contrive. Then, I embellished this with stories of Susanne's "affairs" with some of the hotel's male guests. Before I hung up the phone, I had created for Susanne a new image to supplant the sweet image she had with everyone. Frau Siegel agreed that Susanne was no



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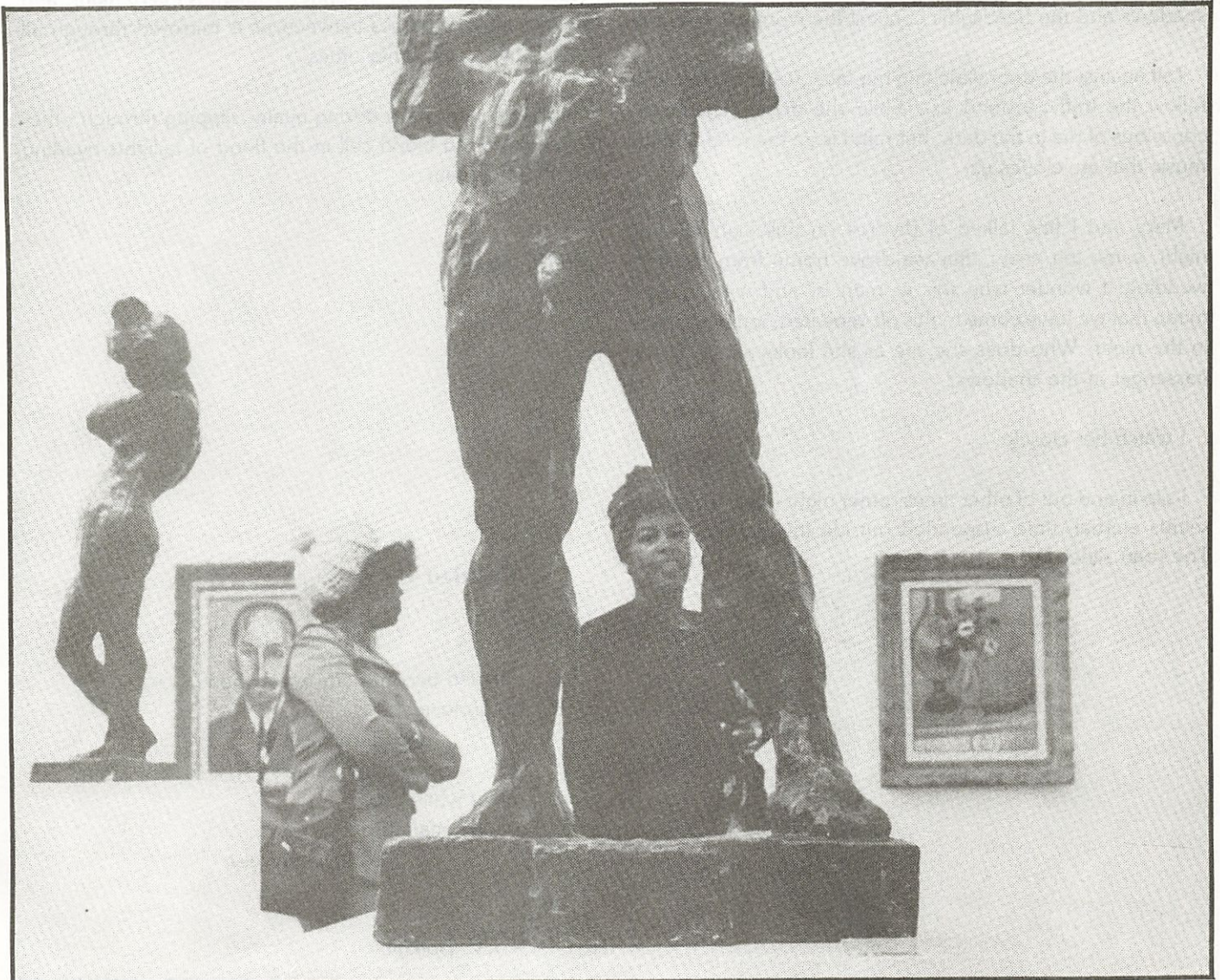
longer welcome in this town, and she arranged to have Susanne's belongings stored elsewhere. Frau Siegel planned to confront Susanne when she returned, to express this new disdain for her, and to escort her to the train station.

Two months later, Rolf came to my door. He looked deathly pale. He shuffled across the room to the couch and collapsed. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes red and swollen. Rolf drew his knees to his chest like a baby in his mother's womb. He mumbled in a pain-filled voice, "I don't understand. Susanne left on the first train. Frau Siegel drove her to the station. She never even called me." Tears streamed down his face.

I told him what I thought he should know: "She never loved you Rolf. If she had, she would not have left. She used you and now she is gone."

Rolf said nothing, but buried his face deeper into the pillows on the couch. Suddenly, Rolf pushed himself away from the couch. He clasped his hands over both ears, as if my words repulsed him. Then he stormed out of my basement apartment. Through my small window, I watched Rolf walk away.

The season was again changing. There was a piercing chill in the air outside and signs of snow would soon appear. In spite of this chill, the sun was bright; warm rays beamed through my window and rested upon me. But I felt cold.



"Untitled"

- Kaz Sussman



## SOUTH BOUND AGAIN

Looking across the darkened car at the interplay of shadows across a woman's face, I remember countless other occasions driving home after dark. The headlights stream by, tracking across the car as we flow south along 1-5. The darkness and the music and the flowing lights across her face camouflage who the woman is - if indeed she is one woman.

Perhaps she is Mary and we are recently married. Mary, determined to overcome a fear of driving at night, is driving home after we've visited her parents in Salem.

Perhaps it is Connie, and we are driving home from Portland, late one Saturday night after a concert. Again, the shadows and the headlights conceal the woman's features.

I sit against the door watching her face, watching her eyes follow the traffic around us. While she drives, she is unconscious of me in the dark; her mind is on the road and the music that envelopes us.

Mary and I first talked of divorce on this highway one night, some ten years after we drove home from a Salem wedding. I wonder who this woman is, and what does it mean that we have come to this oft-repeated, intimate space in the night. Who does she see as she looks across at the passenger in the shadows?

I watch her closely.

I slip in and out of other times, other night rides. The night seems eternal, time suspended outside this darkened car. The road slides by.

I watch her closely.

But always as we flow south, the lights slide and track across her face until she could be anyone, could represent either the past or the future. My feelings for her could be love, or indifference, or dislike.

Feeling the night, there is something of home for me in floating down the road after dark; watching the world outside the windows slide away behind me.

Checking traffic, she glances in the side mirror; our eyes meet. A quick smile carrying the warmth of a free standing fireplace identifies her instantly. Tonight is every night, and the warmth that passes between us is mirrored through all those other faces, other times.

Moments later I am dozing again, slipping through other times, like a red blood cell in the flood of taillights heading southbound again.

- Ron Robbins

## Untitled

tangled become our eyes when  
unprotected,

wonderwhat'she's  
& wonderwhathe's  
meet while our  
bodies make Love  
somewhere else

- J.V. Bolkan



## THESE PHOTOS

will not be on display  
with the party shots and grinning relatives.

They'll be kept  
in the top drawer  
beneath the underwear  
and balls of socks

with our old love letters  
and the ex-girlfriends  
I don't know about

to be smiled at  
when our bodies  
are puffy with age

Or on nights  
when we're home alone  
and not  
watching the movie.

- Elizabeth Bach

plum heat

banana bread settles  
heavily in my stomach  
my throat catching  
too strong almond-spiced apricot butter  
these ingredients cover my womb  
ovulating  
cover my dull ache bloated  
weight  
canning plums  
golden halves tiny in ruby-red  
opulence  
heavy in heat i feel  
the breeze from the fan  
under my skirt breeze  
between sticky thighs  
heat lightning flashes through the screen  
my hands de-stone plums the next day i find  
tiny knife cuts on my ochre skin  
heavy i plop quart jars of plums baptized with honey  
into the canner  
my breasts free beneath the  
loose light sweater pale green  
and new  
slow moving, inept i gather  
huge steel bowls of plums  
my belly leading the way softly  
bobbing in  
heat.

- regan lee



### **Cat In Window**

cat in window  
moon in sky  
making love

- regan lee

### **No Flowers**

In bed  
his breathing  
is familiar  
on her back

His hand  
will brush  
her shoulder,  
then move down

Closing her eyes,  
she is dancing inside herself

To the end of  
this song.

- Elizabeth Bach

### **The Time Between Working**

Move  
legs slowly  
trip  
on cracked cement

pallets  
forklift  
flies

scuff boots  
on packed ground

drive  
home

moon shine  
coyote howl

sit  
on floor  
roll cigarette

sun rise.

- Joe Ragsdale



## The Poet

*"Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself.  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)"*

- Walt Whitman

The poet is articulate,  
with a command of words above all else.  
The poet speaks for the mute, the dumb,  
yet the poet is dumb,  
the poet is stupid, and sometimes  
the poet sleeps,  
but when the poet is awake  
he or she must exude words like rain,  
like sunshine, like wind, like fire,  
like the earth, like an avalanche.  
The poet knows everything,  
poet is mathematician, philosopher,  
poet is laborer, drunk, musician,  
poet is socializer, lover,  
poet is all-encompassing.  
The poet is ugly, the poet is beautiful,  
the poet is a mountain, a river, a lake  
a tractor, a factory, a highway.  
The poet has long hair, short hair, no hair,  
the poet has pubic hair, breasts and vagina,  
balls and penis, the poet is an orgasm.  
The poet is conception, birth, growth, death.  
The poet knows fear,  
hate, violence, destruction,  
the poet knows love, tenderness,  
peace, contentment.  
The poet is an athlete, a slob.  
The poet is a performer, a shy loner.  
The poet speaks for everyone, knows no one,  
the poet is the conscience of humanity,  
and the destruction of humanity,  
the poet is painfully honest,  
and lies with every word.  
The poet is nonexistent,  
omnipresent.

- Joe Ragsdale

## Life On The Outside

the green hillside  
outside  
of my  
dark poetry  
appears  
to be  
very bright  
with happy  
smiling  
and in love  
people

- Anthony E. Smith

## Untitled

An artist, I think,  
Was at work tonight.  
With one quick swish there became  
The Moon.  
Just a dot or two, the stars.

An artist at work.  
Alone to make the night.

-Elaine H. Caldwell



### THE READER

How dare you say  
those words of silk  
are threaded into grace

And yet I sort  
A patchwork quilt  
The squares all out of place

Though long the words  
and few the knots  
that tie them into one

Without directions where to sew  
I have not yet begun.

- Peggy Keep

### This is how I feel:

It's like,

If I thought to touch you,  
my hands would explode into flame;  
If I tried to greet you,  
phlegm would bubble up, instead of your name;  
If I even dared to look at you,  
my eyes would melt and race  
like hot candlewax over my face.

- Joe Ragsdale

### Black Conscience

the crows have descended  
through cloud and fog  
from wherever they spent the night.

I have heard and seen  
their evening convocations  
falling down a salmon sky  
like metal filings drawn  
to a magic mountain.

this morning the raucous flock  
divides and subdivides,  
croaking missionaries bringing the gospel  
to each creek valley and farm.

if they only knew how their character  
has been impugned.  
as uncomfortable with them  
as with our dark brothers,  
we have maligned their blackness,  
their intelligence, like the coyotes,  
makes us uneasy.

our aspersions  
run off their iridescent feathers  
like rain,  
they won't go away.

- John Hicks



# **"BREATHE"**

Where do the leaves  
which travel  
on grey rainwater pond  
begin,  
to float on autumn wind?

Deep, dank, waning smell  
of decomposing vegetation  
rides the mist,  
heavily blanketing  
that which lives.

Skeletal branches  
reach across the eddy  
from where I sit;  
a leaf has dropped to the water  
to be swept downstream,  
leaving not the ripples,  
to reminisce.

- Steve Griffin

# **FUGITIVE**

in a fortress of fallen wings  
dwells the fugitive

in a labyrinth of mirrors  
down wind eaten halls  
through the ruins of memory

he wanders

amid the tarnished spoils of past campaigns  
an unfinished meal  
the unmoving fly

always

amid the endless rooms  
amid the sets of finished scenes  
dusty tables  
dank air  
he lingers

rehearsing lines he would have rather said

thinking he is safe  
far from bloodhounds  
and windy corners  
far from the locked room  
far from his relentless enemy  
in the safety of stone  
in eyeless corridors

he converses with himself

while assassins climb through shadows  
dreaming of paradise  
while the moon sets into a murky pool  
while the prodigal son wanders  
lost in a maze  
and the widowed night cries tears of dust  
that settle like dew on the tombs  
of nameless upturned faces

he stands on a balcony  
and contemplates  
the falling of a feather

- James Rich





**"Treefrog"**

- Michael Omogrosso