



# DENALI

## Literary Arts Journal

*“Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in a human situation.”*

*— Graham Greene*



Greetings,

Experience is never one-sided.

In that nothing is free and night cannot last all day, everything is appropriate and timely. Just as even goodness needs glitches, every mishap has resolution. But the burden of stress makes more profound an impression upon its removal than upon impact. These multi-sided truths are what kept me sane and chasing my tail along the most recent trip to Babylon (a.k.a. Southern California). Kudos to a complete trip.

— *brookstrongbergland*



## Denali Staff

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Managing Editor	Eli Trompeter		Heather Edwards
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Literary Advisor	Bill Sweet		Jessica Parsons
Technical Advisor	Dorothy Wearne		Anna Skilton
			Bill Sweet
			Eli Trompeter
			Dorothy Wearne

## Contributors

O. Gabriel Avila-Mooney  
 brookstrongbergland  
 Gloria Biersdorff  
 Stephanie Billinger  
 Aaron Braaten  
 Sharon Braaten  
 Pam Dane  
 Joy Davis  
 William Draft  
 D'laney Ford  
 Lanie Grace  
 Michael Hanner  
 Pete Helzer  
 Kale Houppermans  
 Casey Jarman  
 Sam Karp  
 Keli Osborn  
 Sarah Paredes Sumner  
 Jessica Parsons  
 Tedd Pomaski  
 Gabriel Powell  
 Matt Ralston  
 Bonita Rinehart  
 Austin Sabin  
 Gabe Schroeder  
 Tony Sondag  
 Eli Trompeter  
 Leif Van Wagenen  
 Jennifer von Ammon  
 Ken Zimmerman

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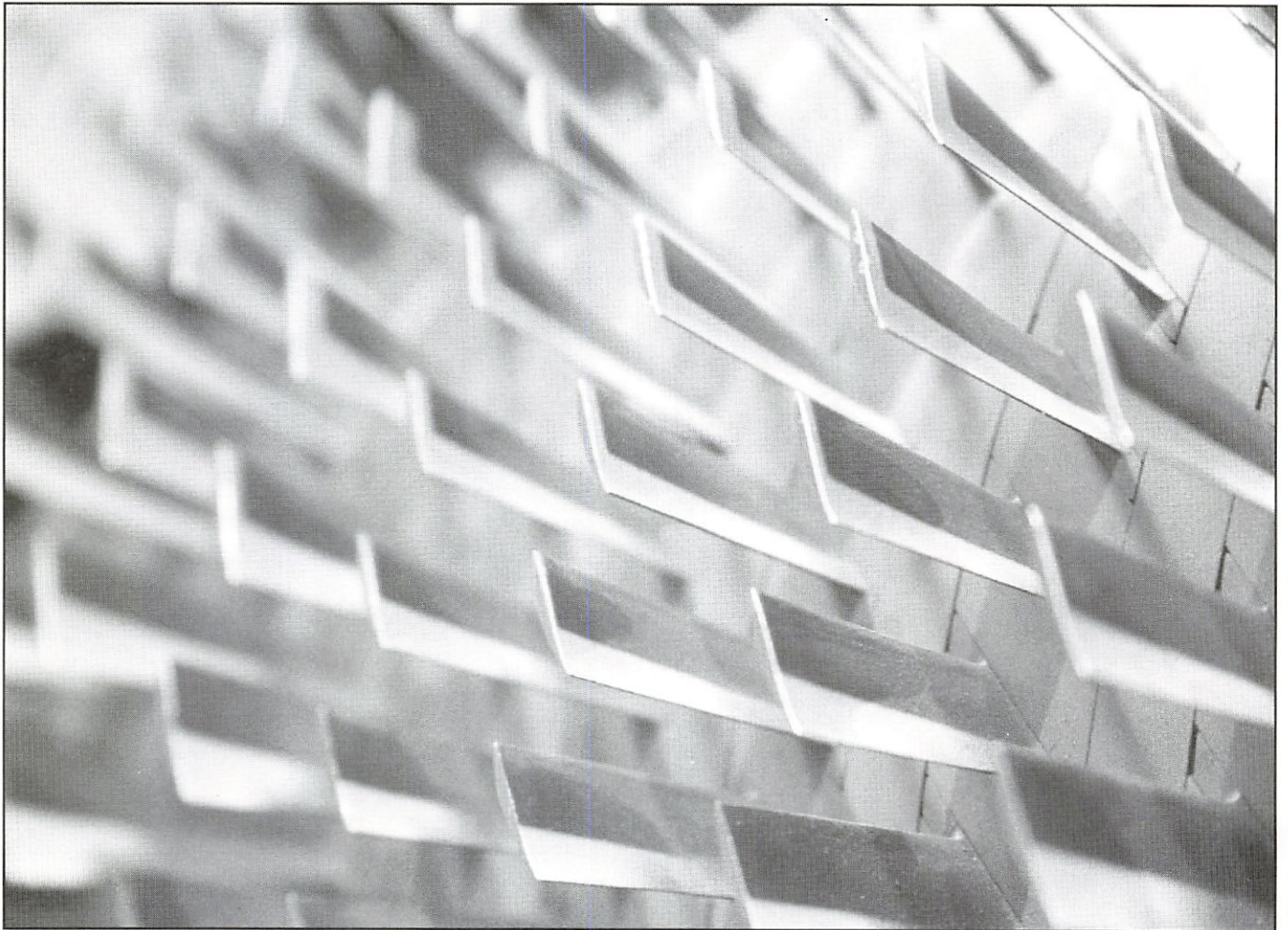
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## Dearest

It's raining here tonight.  
I'd like to spend years with every drop.  
It's a shame I cannot.  
While they have seconds,  
I have years to fall.  
Sorry friends, I must be on my way.  
I'll meet you in the puddles,  
when I come stumbling home.

— *Casey Jarman*

photography by Sam Karp







photograph by Kale Houppermans

Life or ambition,

I hold him back  
fearing submission  
more than success.

— *Eli Trompeter*

## Love Letter

I could write to you a poem –  
a sweet, pulpy mess of words,  
juice squeezed and strained away.  
Pith, white and bitter,  
in the confession, too.  
A concentrate of words  
scribbled on paper,  
tucked into a book  
you'll never read again.  
Hidden in a pile you'll come across  
weeks, months, years from now  
and wonder  
why I never told you.  
Forgetting  
I just did.

— *Keli Osborn*

## Mute Witness

Are you afraid of the dark?  
I am. I shudder that I'll get it all wrong,  
blurt someone else's lines,  
say the reckless thing and spoil  
what passes for honesty  
between us.

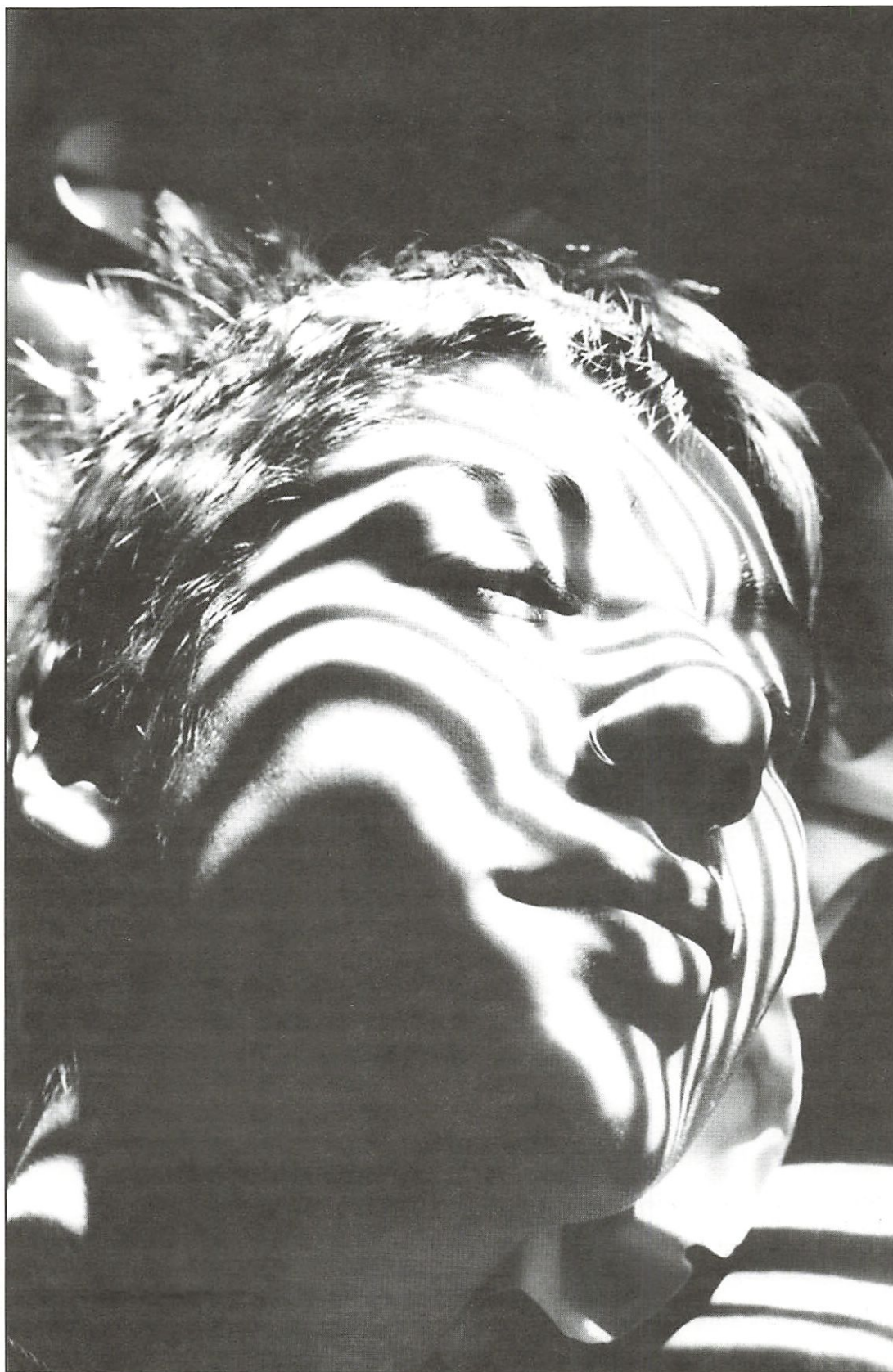
(Untold, truth becomes a lie.)

I have birthed two perfect babies,  
and two before their time.  
What I know, what I feel,  
is growing like some eager child inside,  
dropping lower and lower,  
earthbound.

She will have to come out.  
Truth will want her say.  
Perhaps she'll arrive stillborn,  
lips together, eyes open.

— *Keli Osborn*





photography by D'laney Ford

# The Squirrel

I killed a squirrel yesterday.  
I had driven into town for a cigarette,  
(I've been trying to quit smoking forever it seems,)

My eyes glazed over,  
And tired and frustrated I thought only of tobacco,  
I dropped my shovel,  
Climbed in my truck,  
And headed into town.

For the squirrel to die we had to cooperate,  
To both be in the same place,

And a couple of miles outside of town,  
I and my new unopened pack of tobacco,  
We, rounded a corner,

He, the squirrel, (or, she, the squirrel,)  
Chose that moment to cross the road,  
In front of my truck,  
To meet we.

For the squirrel to die we had to cooperate,  
To both be in the same place,

If I had bought a peach in the grocery,  
Or bounced a ball in the bowery,  
I would have missed this appointment.

Perhaps if I had not dallied with Janice,  
Young and in heat in the apple orchard so long ago,  
My life would have been different.  
And the squirrel could have run safely,  
On the lonely road.

Or if I had become a sculptor,  
Or a shoe salesman.  
I would have been somewhere else entirely.

Dead in Viet Nam,

Or, Perhaps,  
The vice president of advertising agency in Maine.

How did I find myself,  
Driving on a fall afternoon  
Down a country road in Oregon

I can only speak for myself,  
I don't know how the squirrel's life,  
Could have brought him (or her) to the road,  
Before or after my truck passed;

But I should quit smoking.

— *Michael Hanner*



1945

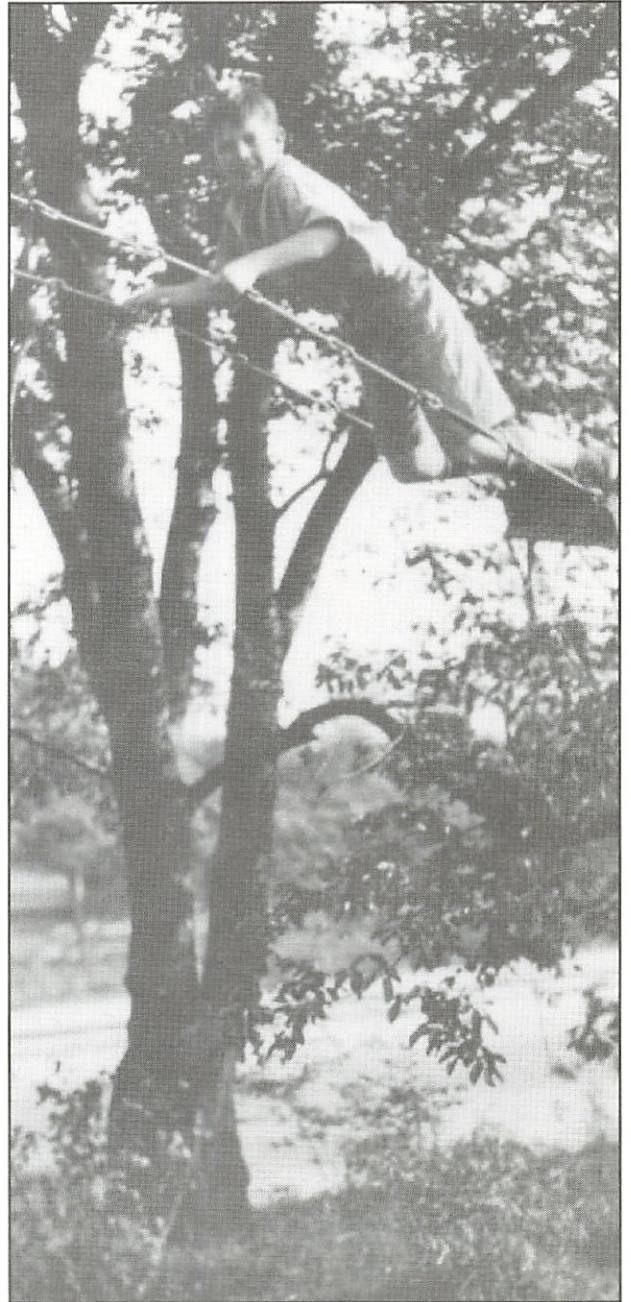
Milk came in glass bottles  
with cream on top. Old ladies  
came to call  
wearing tie up black shoes,  
in hushed voices talking about old Ben  
Struck by lightning.  
His wife saw angels  
carrying him away.

Sheets like kites  
caught in the breeze held by wooden pins.  
“Don’t put your fingers in the ringer.”  
Mary Edwards did.  
And the records played.  
“Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, how he could love”

Rain poured past leaded glass windows and  
I played house under the dining room table.  
Teddy’s shoe-button eye got lost  
Aunt Ina had an outhouse with three holes;  
small, medium and large,  
Just like the three bears.

Pansies grew in the yard,  
deep purple and white.  
Old men came to the door looking for handouts.  
We hid behind the curtains until they left.  
I climbed my tree and peeked through the leaves  
And the radio played.  
“Can a woman over thirty-five find happiness?”

— Pam Dane



Marshall family collection

## Poster Child

Let me be the poster child  
for your revolution  
I can put it all on  
or I can take it all off  
I can smoke it  
eat it  
bathe in  
or tattoo it on my skin  
I'm eager to please  
ready to be seen  
it doesn't matter who they see  
as long as they see me  
I'm not picky  
I'll do just about anything  
put me in ads  
make me your whore  
pose me next to fake friends  
or slap me naked on the back of a horse  
I can smile  
I can cry  
I can stand in the snow  
donning only my underwear  
just feed my sick fascination  
with the youth of today  
because I'm desperate to be loved  
but more so  
I want to be an Abercrombie girl.

— *Stephanie Billinger*





*Police Brutality Protest* photography by Sam Karp

## The sweet scent of an orange

When you don't care or haven't  
noticed in awhile, your skin  
begins smelling like a year of  
unwashed blankets, a pungent and  
musky front containing yourself.  
You begin to understand  
metamorphosis and dis-ease

I understand dishes that scatter and pile  
the countertop with trails of red  
wine and garlic, and underneath  
the sink, behind a cabinet door  
the rotting peels of oranges  
could decay the young  
nostrils of a child

But I only know of a cat whose senses  
are too powerful to expose the mundane  
smell of oranges. He is only  
interested in the shadow of a once-  
stringed mouse now inhabiting  
and incarnating the hole  
of some old brown shoe

Some old brown shoe I've been hiding  
under the cuff of my pant  
for a year now, I've watched my  
neighbors take out their trash  
and even move the whole  
can to the street. I'm always amazed  
how we find responsibility

Each week someone comes and  
takes it somewhere, I pretend to stare  
while spreading crazy glue to the  
sole of my shoe, sliding  
dirty socks and dirtier feet  
into a dark place I would  
never place my mind

But I forget quickly in the windowsill,  
in the kitchen where I have learned  
to blow rings of smoke to  
distract the feline. I have  
a foot in the sink and a  
fist on the bottle, wondering if  
I could ever make money writing  
poems about fresh, delicious oranges.

— *Aaron Braaten*



## Best feeling of the day

A steady stream passes through a man  
and underneath the curdling skin,  
just beyond the morning blare  
he is thankful.

Thankful for that one last drink  
too soon to last night -  
grateful because somewhere he knew  
that long years of bladder expansion would  
force his swaying legs from collapsing,  
and keep the skin of his arm tightened  
to a protruding muscle holding his frame  
still against a bathroom wall.

For those few minutes he could bare it  
all with pride and release. For a moment  
a dumb smile with tranquil eyes  
would fall on a face of pure clarity  
and balanced understanding.

Because somewhere he knew -  
after flushing  
there isn't much more to look forward to.



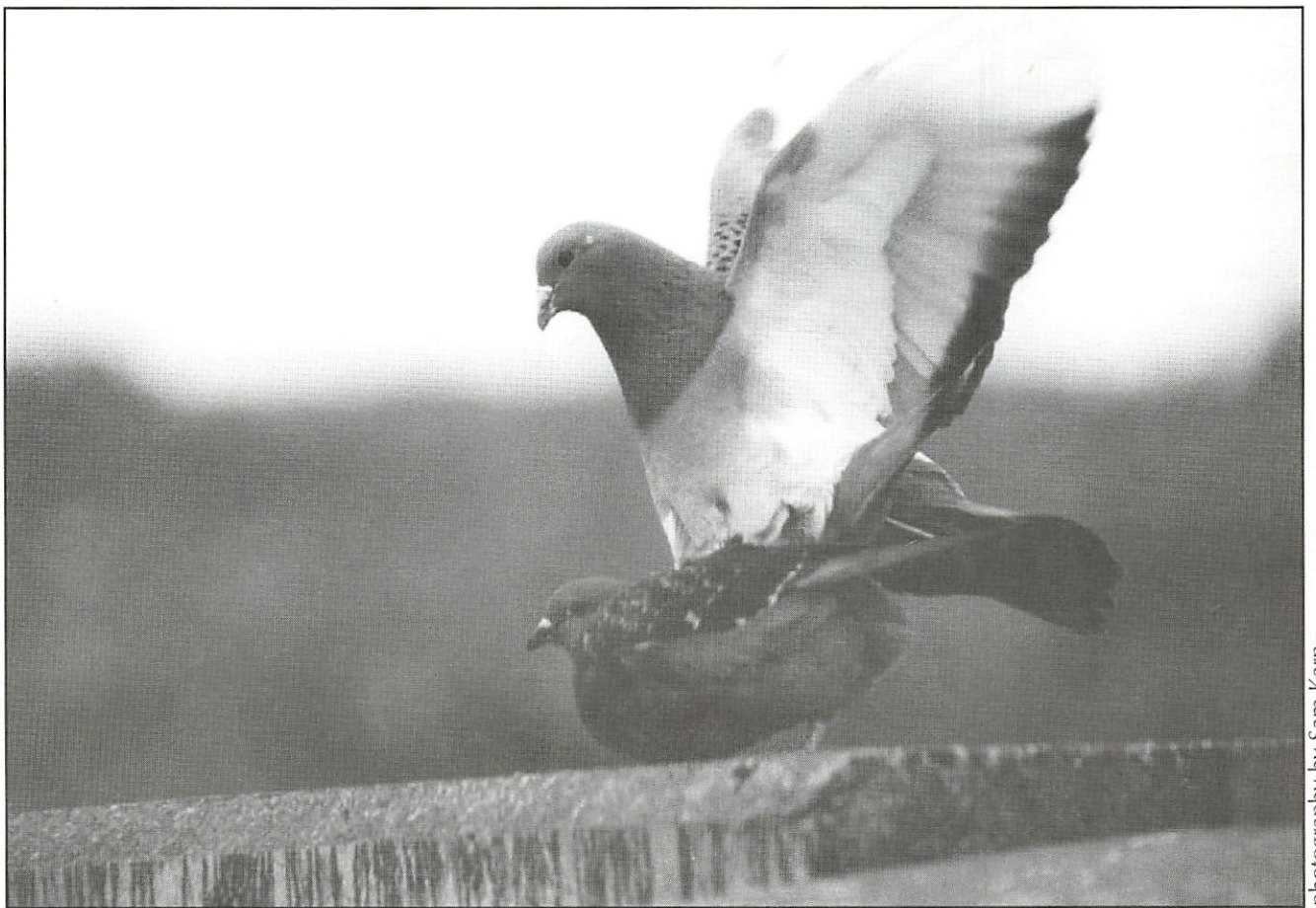
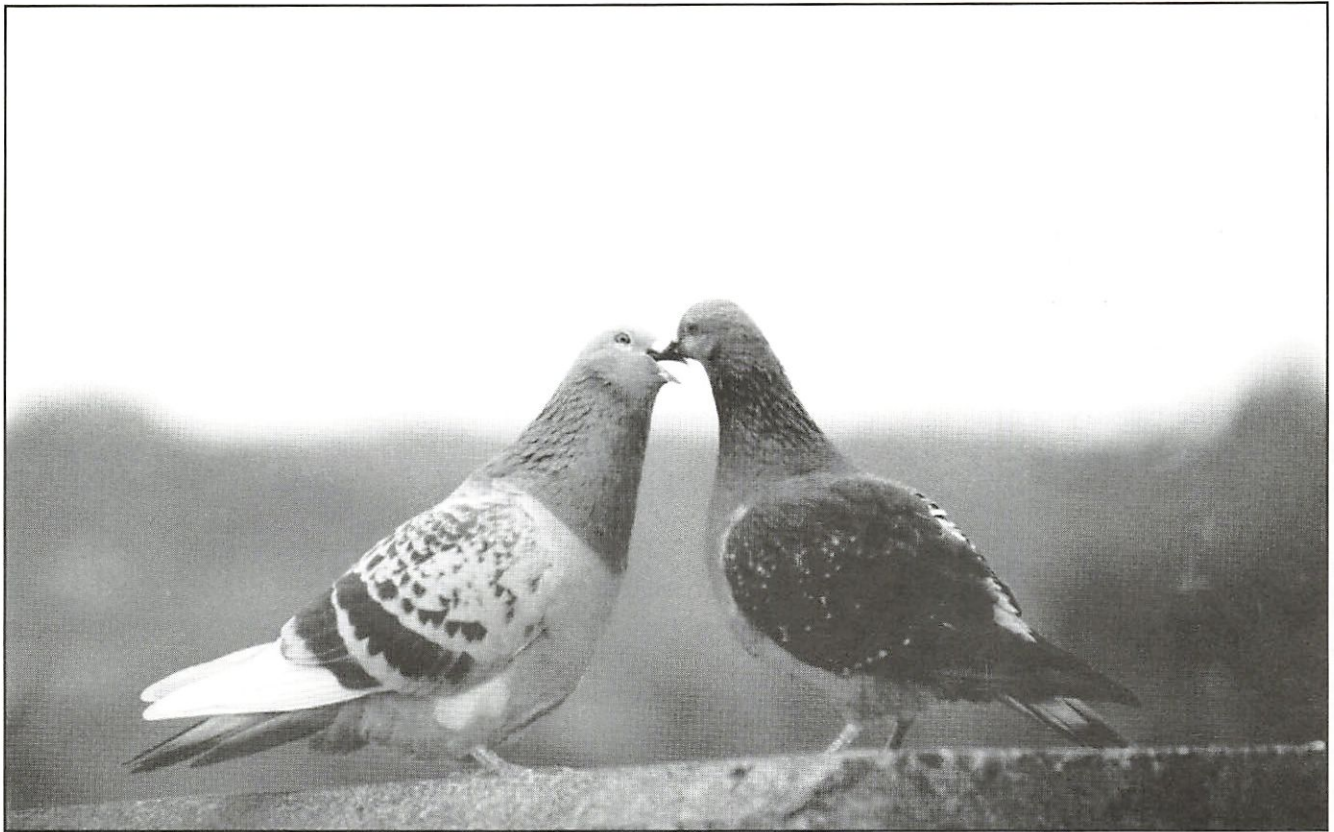
photography by Kale Houppermans

## In the Darkroom

Your pigeons fluttered  
in fingers and quick flights  
of resin paper, between  
light and image,  
the drummer and the girl.  
you changed the timing  
from 6 to 5.6, for fun.  
I should have thrown you down  
on test strips, forced  
your ocean profile  
back on you,  
to calculate within seconds,  
to take out to light  
on a tray.  
Then I would be the one to say,  
*Do you like it? Either  
you like it or you don't.*  
And the rain song vertigo,  
the white confusion of wings,  
the tideland of your composure  
would calm to film beneath me.  
Your hands, not mine, would  
seek the threshold of black.  
Your eyes, not mine, would  
speak the perfect value.

— *Gloria Biersdorff*





photography by Sam Karp

## Spare Parts

He had no family  
and friends were old or gone  
or both.

He'd hum Italian stanzas  
swooping the roar of the vacuum  
back and forth over the  
worn blue carpet.

Each night for twenty years  
each year getting longer,  
carpet getting older.

Sometimes they'd ask him  
if he'd like  
to do anything else. Work  
outside or down in  
maintenance.

Don't know how to do  
that, he'd reply, this suits  
me fine. Scratching his  
balding scalp he'd ask his  
leave and  
go back to work.

The first heart attack got  
them thinking - liability they  
whispered.

Until the day he came to work, same  
as always - five minutes early - and  
they said they couldn't keep him,  
had to cut back, trim the sails they  
said.

He took his severance. Went  
back home and put on his  
one good tie.

Fixed the ceiling fan,  
and kicked away the chair.

Next day the new guy showed up  
five minutes late. He  
was young, and nobody  
said anything.

— *O. Gabriel Avila-Mooney*





Graffiti Alley by Austin Sabin



# Dishwater -

## *From Trailer Park Dreams*

Each day frightfully unsure.  
    some the first, and some  
the last but always not enough.  
Until finally, sleeping in  
    tattered flannel, on one  
mattress all springs and  
thin prayers, I know.

The best times pass  
    unnoticed, drowned away  
in the passion for laughter.

The subtle virginity of  
    battered eyes and fearful  
glances rides silently  
    on the way to white  
trash eateries. Hands clasped  
    stoically in baby's fingers.

On dirt roadways, behind supermarkets there  
    are always voices, deafening.

Neighbors screaming curses, throwing  
bottles, slamming warped and lonesome  
screen doors.

Each payday cheap beers all guilt and  
worried shame. Baby  
never playing with St. Vinny's eyeless  
    dolls, just crying  
and silence.

Home nights with arms all  
    shadowed aching, I enter.  
Quietly sit and watch.

Your shoulders slumped, head  
    hanging, the thick tips of long dark  
curls moistened in brown  
    soapy water, dirty dishes lost  
    in bubbles clinging  
teardrops.

A moth's  
shadow flutters through the  
    curves of your worn dress.

I approach silently, placing my  
    callused hands on the  
curve of your marble neck  
    gently kneading  
weary moans from your lips. And you  
    laying your wet and wrinkled  
hands on mine, whisper

“Why, can pain be gentle?” and I  
knead deeper, the memories  
    of days passed by,  
    memories of children's  
torments, screams of lovers  
    darkness and passive blows  
of violence.

— *O. Gabriel Avila-Mooney*





photography by Gabriel Powell

## Explaining Clear Lake

I search for words to say what numbers never show:  
these Forest Service glossy charts, a flower list,  
display board graphs of annual amounts of snow,  
a lecture on geology, chronology of lava flows.

My daughter, eight, her blond hair tossed in streaks  
about her face as the boat slides between the shallow reeds.  
I lean my back and row. A rusted oarlock moans and creaks  
with each determined dip and pull.

I tell her to imagine rocks, rumbling like a train  
derailed, cascading down the mountain side.  
Her face tells me these words do little to explain  
this quiet air, the red maple splashes in the hills.

Below this lake, leafless trees hold tall and still,  
untouched by wind or snow for three thousand years,  
roots held in a silty tomb. Now, as water shadows mill  
beneath the bow, a ripple spreads across this quiet sheen.

I tell her to imagine plumes of steam, molten rock, and fire,  
water filling the valley, ascending slowly up the trunks of fir.  
She points down. I stop rowing and we watch a ghostly spire  
of an ancient tree slide beneath the dripping oar.

— *Pete Helzer*





photography by Kale Houppermans

## Perfect Choreography

We were spineless sea creatures  
in a tidal pool,  
waxing and waning  
with the silver dollar in the sky.  
Rising and lowering  
with the pounding rhythm,  
swaying in the calm beneath the surf  
with the slow, fluid motion  
of watery grace.  
The rhythm rests ...  
We dried out  
for an hour or two  
before the belly swelled again  
and rushed back toward  
our tidal pool.  
Again we were spineless  
directionless,  
in a sea of ebb and flow,  
pushed and pulled  
without resistance;  
All self-consciousness gone.

— *Joy Davis*

## lessons to unlearn

it is difficult to breathe  
i remember this feeling —  
i was a child  
outdoors  
and suddenly i realized  
others did not see as i saw  
the light within  
the space between dancing molecules  
the sound that is seen  
the thoughts of a flower  
the identity of a cloud  
the community of leaves  
upon a tree  
the color that has no name  
the sounds that are heard once  
in all of time only once  
yet never forgotten  
i was alone  
and i knew  
that if i gave the barest hint  
that i saw  
that i was different  
they would hunt me down  
and kill me for the blind hate  
those who see  
and so i stilled  
my heart shifted its rhythm  
put on the disguise  
and made myself forget how to breathe  
in unison  
with the cascading stars

— *Bonita Rinehart*





photography by Eli Trompeter

shall i write to you

shall i write to you she asked

no  
i don't want to see words  
worn and frayed  
from a  
trip half-way round a wounded life  
i want  
the lips through  
which they form and pass  
to glimpse the tongue that  
presses sound to words  
propelled by breath from  
beneath the breasts i want  
to smooth  
as they rise and fall  
casualty to words' imperfect  
trajectory

— *William Draft*

## An Archaeology of Love

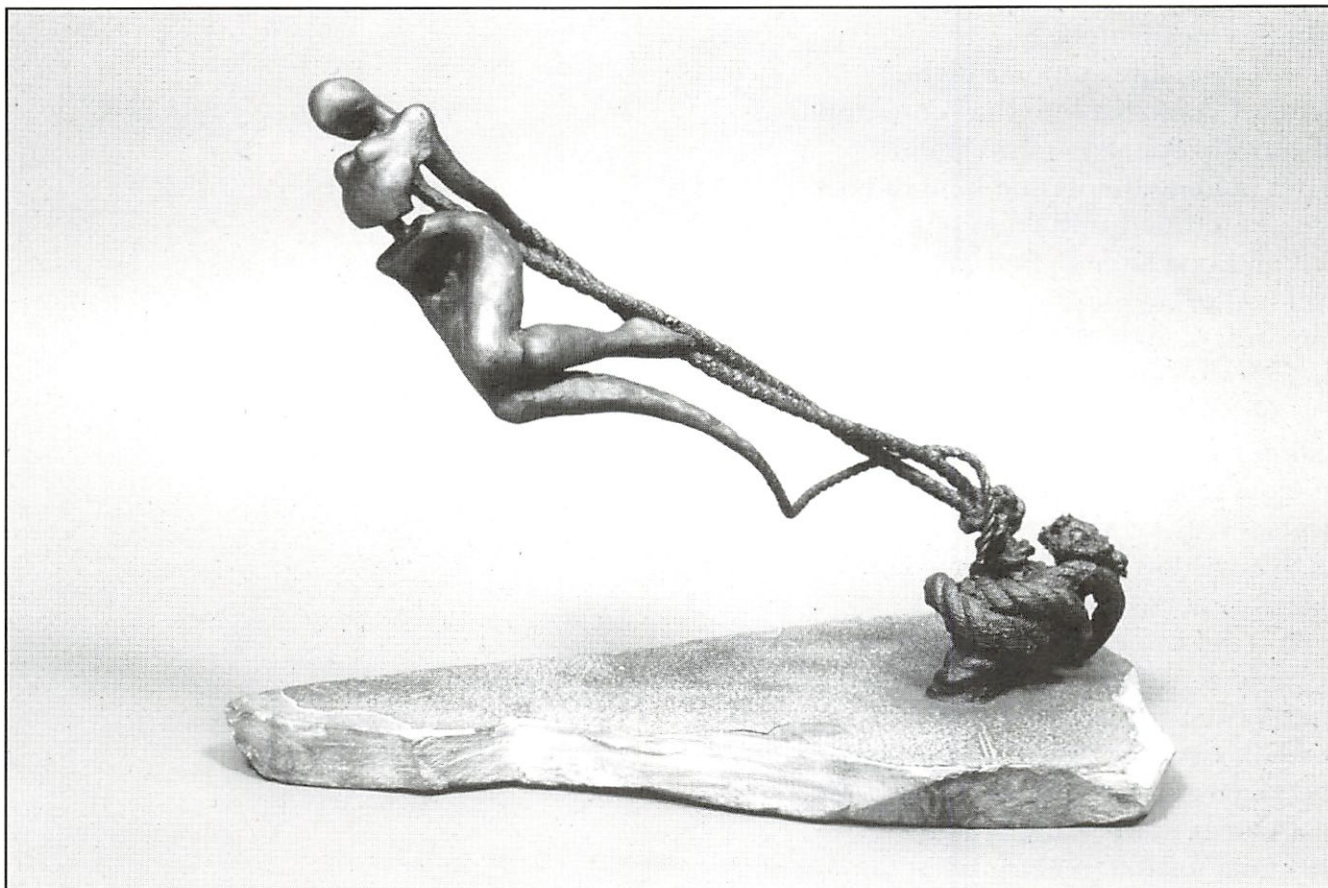
I'm dismembering you again, taking apart  
fragments of a body entire, piecing them  
back together in new form. I dig up remnants  
of bone particle, crisp like paper, and humor  
turned powdery dry like dust surrounding the bone.  
Your body crumbles to tiny stones in my hands,  
I roll pieces of misshapen pebbles through me.  
Gravel slips around my fingers. I am a worker  
on an intense archaeological dig — back bent  
knees etched in red ground.

When you leave, I'm left sifting silt, earth dust  
looking for you amidst a smoky rubble.  
Brown arms, smooth torso, strong legs.  
Your hands, the most revealing fraction  
of you are lives of their own, marked  
by knuckles that have known hard labor.

I'm doing my research on you, retrieving  
pieces of you from memory that have become tangible,  
the way your love has developed texture,  
knobby and rough like raw linen. Somehow  
this categorizing feels just, my way of  
bringing you back to earth, minimizing your size  
and significance piece by piece, limb by limb.  
With a sifter and brush in hand, I can  
take you apart or piece you  
back together, with the indifference  
only thousands of years can provide.

— *Jennifer von Ammon*





Tartiva bronze sculpture by Tony Sondag

wearing out my hospitality

i do not like this poverty  
such an unwelcome rude guest  
he uses up the sugar  
frays my towels  
leaves pills on the sheets  
coughs through the night  
disturbing my nightmares  
throttles the bird singing  
in the pine tree  
outside my window

— *Bonita Rinehart*

## Last Splinter

The fire needs to be lit  
in the chill, late summer night.  
When I come back to the room hundreds  
of tiny slivers cling to my palm  
from holding the wrong kind of bark.  
One at a time I pull them out,  
but an hour later something's  
still bothering me. I rub  
the arch of skin between my thumb  
and forefinger as if craving  
the sting of this last, invisible  
splinter, the sudden imposition  
of experience, which cannot be  
argued with or wished out of existence.  
Is this wisdom, stuck in my skin,  
nagging, persistent, annoying,  
a chill the fire can't chase away?  
I think of walking home that night  
in the rain, the flashlight's beam  
a weak circle of yellow in the soaked dirt,  
my shirt stuck to my back and your  
last words in my ears. It took  
this long for me to learn what you meant.  
Our bodies are hard masters. For them we  
sweat and sleep, the twin betrayals of illness  
and pain repaid with the whisper of skin  
against skin, the rich taste of red wine  
on the back of the tongue. Finally  
I turn my hand to the right  
angle of light and find it,  
silhouetted there. Knowing  
the sweetness is in the release, I wait  
another moment, then grasp between  
fingernails and slowly pull it free.

— *Ken Zimmerman*



## Always Getting Away

In dream I came close to what was lost.  
I could almost reach it, there in the gone  
dark shaft of the past. Always rain, always  
a fly slapping against the window glass.  
If learning comes in stages, forgetting  
falls in layers the same: the edge  
of a sandstone cliff slipping into the sea,  
breath escaping into air, so we spend  
our lives trying to draw it back  
into us, what's always getting away,  
so that words like death or belief seem  
no less real, no further from touch  
than hammer or lily or silk. Like the future,  
the past is always nameless, eluding  
our grasp, though we blame the rain,  
or a dead car battery, the expense, the risk,  
bad taste or luck or timing for what fails  
inside us, absence accumulating weight  
on the scale of memory. I wasn't the first  
or the last along that path, our steady steps  
up the steep hill beside the waterfall. That night  
we sang while an ocarina whistled like a mad  
lost bird, mysterious and sad. Next day  
the songs were still there, under  
roots exposed by eroding duff, trapped  
in thin crevices in the rock. Turning back  
I could almost hear them: echoes  
of a sound that never was, beautiful fossils  
of imaginary beings unearthed by the constant rain.

— *Ken Zimmerman*

untitled

give me my notebook  
give me blankets for the cold  
give me a moment's fruit to drink from  
under the new hot sun  
give me a floor and a roof  
give me a desk and an oil lamp or the patient year-long moon  
give me three books  
give me old ghosts to sleep with and a Leonard Cohen song or two  
give me a bar of soap  
give me a stream washing its rocks clean  
give me a Sterno stove but keep those sweetened beans  
give me curries and thick stews  
give me rich meats and raw fish  
give me fibrous beams of sunlight  
give me a guitar  
and an anvil in my throat  
give me an old black bear to share his sad orange eyes  
give me one brave crow  
give me anonymous millipedes  
give me cities of ants so I can start each day like Thoreau  
on my hand and knees  
watching the warriors  
take my pen  
give me the deepest trees  
give me creaks of wind in my silent stadium  
give me the joyous twisting nations  
give me a patch of faithful blackberries  
give me clusters of mushrooms  
give me that deer, startled, lunging for the wild wall of the world.

— *Gabe Schroeder*



## Pantoum

For you my daughter, like this;  
the evening star over Shanico!  
Every fragment has meaning,  
even pieces I can't explain.

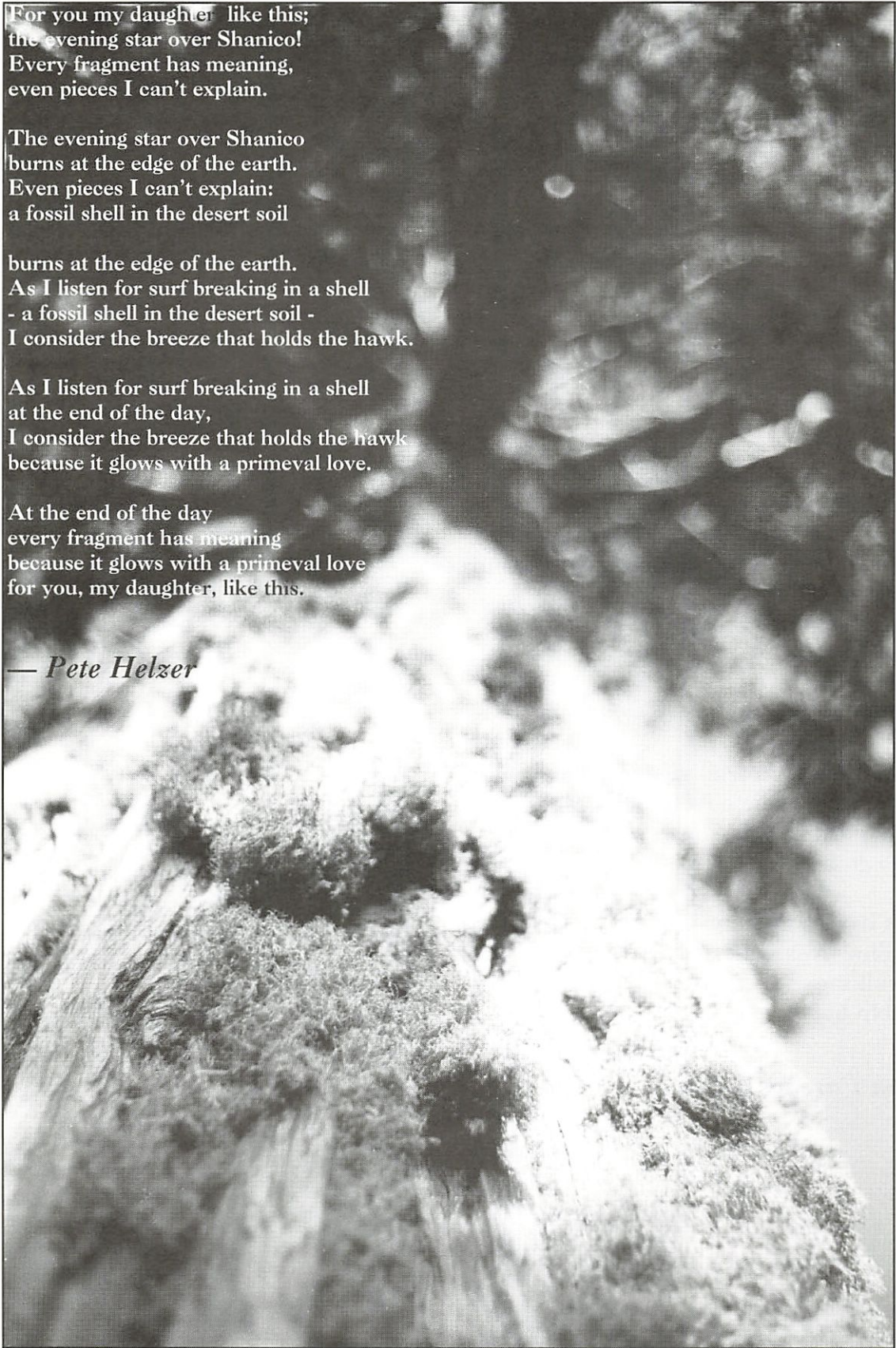
The evening star over Shanico  
burns at the edge of the earth.  
Even pieces I can't explain:  
a fossil shell in the desert soil

burns at the edge of the earth.  
As I listen for surf breaking in a shell  
- a fossil shell in the desert soil -  
I consider the breeze that holds the hawk.

As I listen for surf breaking in a shell  
at the end of the day,  
I consider the breeze that holds the hawk  
because it glows with a primeval love.

At the end of the day  
every fragment has meaning  
because it glows with a primeval love  
for you, my daughter, like this.

— *Pete Helzer*



photography by Kale Houppermans

## Nursing Home

It scared me almost to tears, my first day here  
The smell of unwashed, limp bodies,  
liver spots and heart medication.  
These halls are empty.  
Empty but my timid shuffle,  
empty but her cries:  
“Help me! Help me!”  
It fills my ears  
like some violent rock ‘n roll  
Her whispers pounding my head  
into headaches, nausea, dizziness-  
I can’t help you

Five a.m.  
Pots and pans litter the kitchen  
Egg white oozes from my elbow,  
toss and scatter at my jerky movements  
Nothing’s smooth at this hour except the purees...  
The toothless eaters  
with their thickened juices,  
thickened water,  
smooth brown pastes  
I hesitate to call food

They line the hall in frail zigzags,  
scoot along on plastic covered chairs  
She looks past me and says,  
“I wanna go home.”

She bites her lip fiercely  
and her blue eyes water.  
I keep walking,  
I can’t help her.

— *Sarah Paredes Summer*





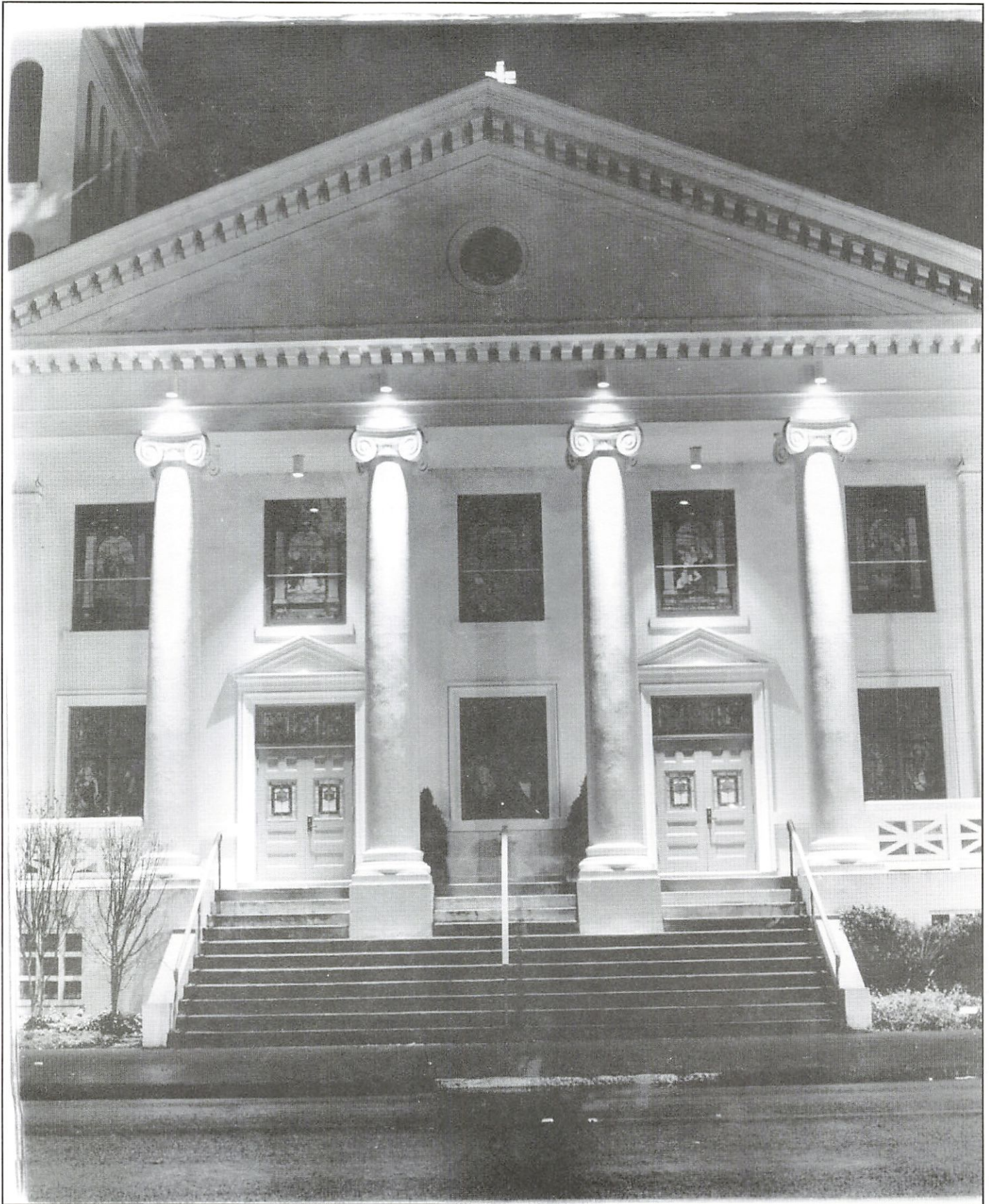
*Absence* by Sharon Braaten

## nothing here for Sandburg

the fog does not come in  
like house cats  
curling up cozily beside the fire  
it thunders down the hills  
a pack of wolves  
tears the meat from our shining bones  
and rings us with the howling

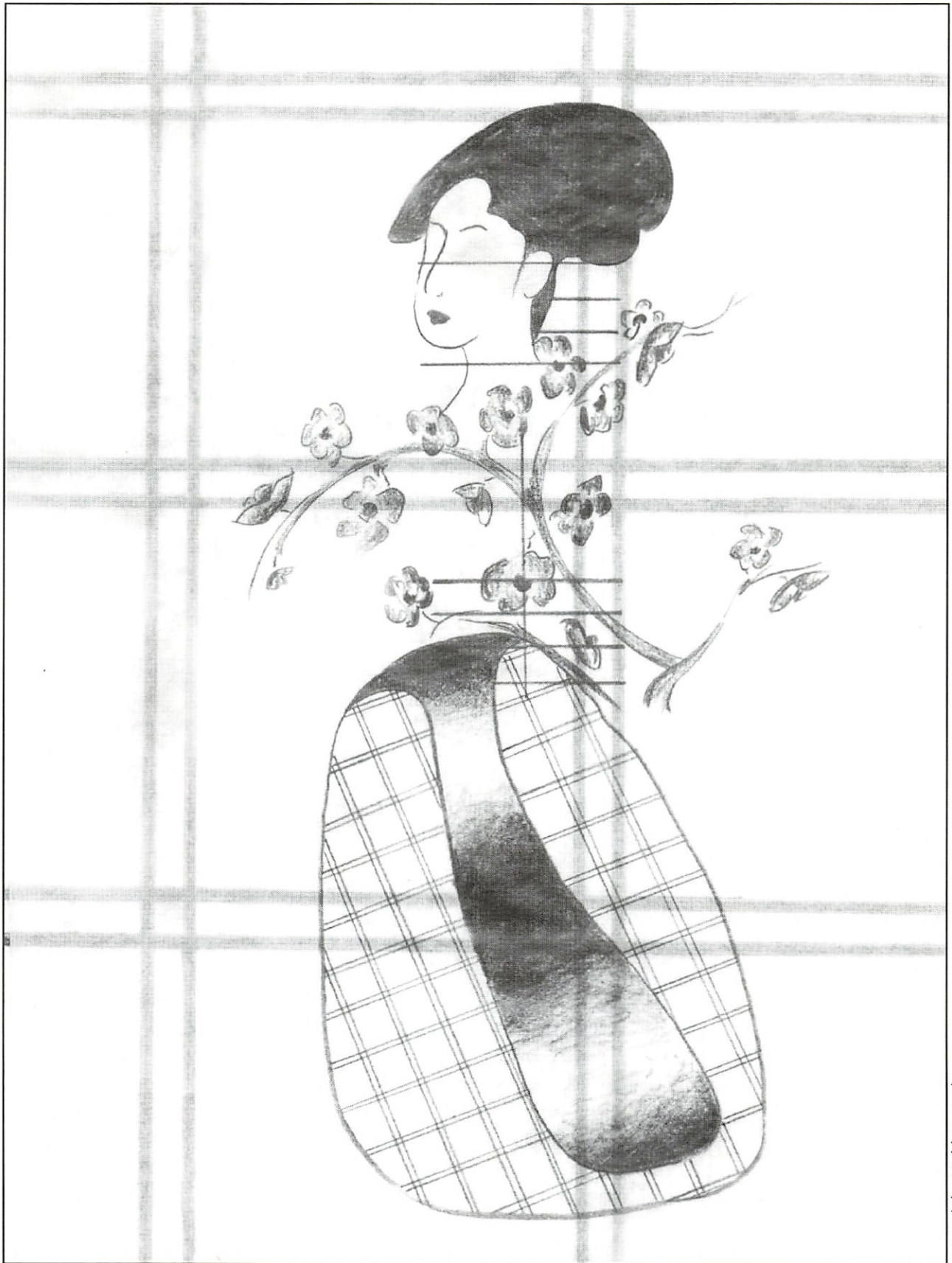
— *Bonita Rinehart*





photography by Matt Ralston





artwork by Tedd Pomaski

# The Sofa

– conclusion from the fall term issue –

*By William Draft*

Shame about the sofa.

Pearl's speech was slow. She thanked them. But, no, everything was fine. Her eyes were a little strange.

Back at her house Pearl tried to work herself through the hurt. Tried to pull herself off the jagged edges of the something that was broken.

No matter what has happened between me and Kelley, I've got the boys to think about..

Was it me? No. I just wanted to see that things got done right. He shouldn't have been so quick to tear up my sofa. Well he was doing the best he could. Maybe I should have got him to measure the doorway and the sofa before I bought it.

Better get to work; can't stand around feeling sorry for myself.

Stooping to pick up the newspapers off the floor, she thought about Kelley coming over after work and putting down the linoleum for her. He'd been so careful. Such a nice job. Kelly has such good hands.

Using a damp mop, Pearl picked up the little bits of trash and grit that had somehow escaped the newspaper.

I don't know why I thought Kelley would be so different. I guess he was kind of different, with those little surprises, nice gifts and lots of sweet talk. Then again as far as sweet talkin' goes, a woman gets lot of that these days, especially if they think you don't have anybody. Well he didn't try to push himself on me. No rush to the bedroom. He said we could take our time about that. Damn if I didn't start thinking it was taking too much time. The little smile in her head just barely broke the surface of her melancholy.

When I told him about the boys needing shoes for school, he didn't say much, but he heard me. The week before school started he said he was going to give me a rest from the boys and take them downtown. He took them downtown alright. Took them to a movie, and brought them back with new shoes and book bags. That was a real nice surprise.

Maybe I just pushed too hard, I knew his pride was close to the surface. Those men, get them around their friends and a woman either stays away or tiptoes in. Just can't go slammin' around, pointing fingers and giving orders. "If she wants it to work, a woman had better work at it," that's what Gramma Strick used to say.

Pearl took a break, and had a sandwich and a glass of milk.

She got the boy's bunk beds up and the lamps working by using an extension cord. Somehow she managed to get the boy's scarred up old desk into place. It passed through her mind to ask Kelley to refinish it when he got a chance. The boys would like it if he let them help.

Finally exhausted physically and emotionally, Pearl spent the better part of an hour in the tub. The warm water was a balm to her jagged nerves.

Later, wrapped in her nightgown and robe, she went to the window for one last look at the sofa. It was soaked through. Ruined.





photography by Sam Karp

The clouds had given up their claim to the heavens and stars now ran freely across the inverted bowl of the sky.

Pearl slept in one of the bunk beds. Her and Kelley's bed was too heavy to put up by herself. The sun was well up by the time she woke up. Sleep had helped; her spirits were lifted a little.

Pearl went into the kitchen and had a cup of coffee and a slice of toast before braving a look into the front yard.

Limping to a stop in front of the house was the old red van, Scrappy driving, Eddie in the middle and Kelley looking a little shamefaced on the end.

Pearl tried to harden her heart.

Kelley approached her slowly, looking like he was ready to bolt and run at the first sign of trouble.

"Kelley I..." Pearl started.

Kelley cut his eyes to the cab of the truck. Quietly and earnestly, he said, "Pearl, please, we'll talk about it when we're alone. Please just go in the house and show them where to put it."

"Put what?"

Kelley put his index finger to his lips, "Shh." As gently as he could, he gestured her into the house. This time Pearl went. She went to the middle of the front room, folded her arms and waited. She could pick up a few of the words going between the men.

"You sure, Kelley?"

"Damn right I'm sure, this sucker's a foot shorter, it'll make it."

It fit. Dusty rose, same style and pattern, just a foot shorter.

She showed them where she wanted it. Right there, under her beautiful bevel-edged mirror.

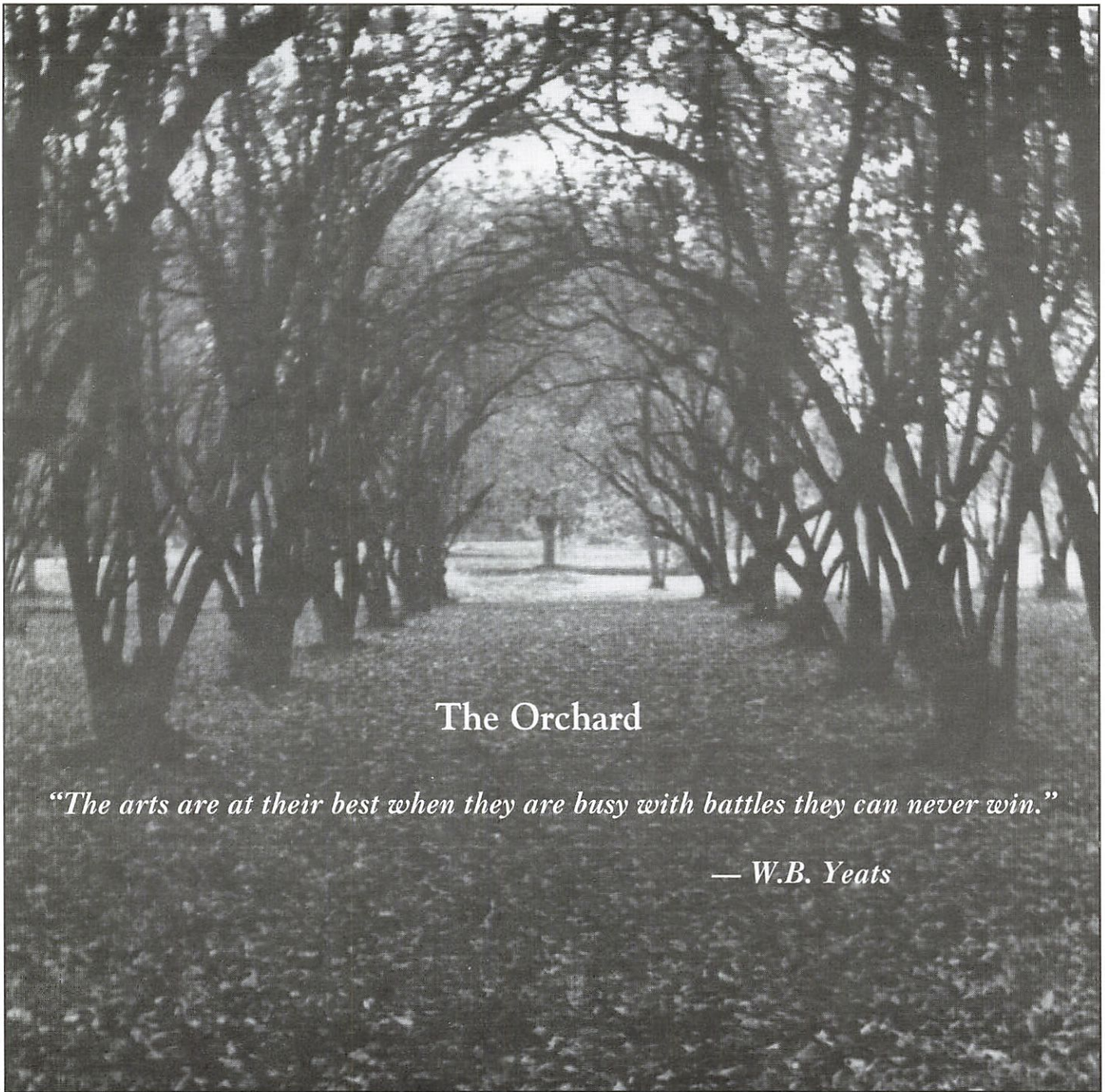
Kelley told Scrappy and Eddie he would catch up with them later.

Pearl was looking at Kelley's back, absently running her fingers along the arm of her dusty rose sofa.

Kelley, turned his face to her, "Well, Suga'?"

"Yeah, Kelley."





## The Orchard

*"The arts are at their best when they are busy with battles they can never win."*

— W.B. Yeats

There was a peach orchard about a mile  
from the house where I spent my boyhood.  
I can't remember anyone pruning the limbs  
and most of the peaches just fell and rotted  
attracting swirls of yellow jackets.

Mr. Ackerman once butchered a cow in the adjoining pasture  
and left the head for his dogs to gnaw through the winter.  
With the first thaw of spring, it grew ripe and shimmered with flies.  
By August it rested still and tooth-white  
in a dappled field of daisies.

At the end of baseball season  
my friends and I would visit that place.  
The skull became our catcher.  
Each boy in turn would stand like Denny McClain or Catfish Hunter,  
check an imagined runner, then hurl a curve-ball peach,  
and raise a fist in victory with every juice-splattering strike.

Once, my senior year, on a night before the blossoms fell, I returned  
under a luminous moon and saw - for the first time - the henna brown curls  
of a woman's secret hair. In celebration we ran hand in hand through  
that midnight meadow - delirious with love - until I stubbed a toe  
on that damn skull and hopped around - naked - on one foot, repeating  
"Jesus tits! Jesus tits!"

As luck would have it, she was a Christian and therefore  
deeply offended. I drove her home trying to pardon myself  
by telling her how very much it hurt,  
then limping a little  
as I walked away from the porch.

Sometime after my college years Mr. Ackerman died.  
The orchard and skull together were bull-dozed  
into a great pyre and set aflame. On the same land sprang subdivisions  
and a medical clinic. No cows are permitted, and in August the ground swirls  
with the buzz of weed-whackers, and the faint smell of exhaust.

But it follows me still, that skull. After thirty years it  
floats above me as I lie beside my wife.  
We are all entitled to an idiosyncrasy or two.  
That is why I take my rest with a bowl of peaches  
on the stand beside my bed  
just in case - once again - this apparition  
dares to dip within my range.

— *Pete Helzer*





## Swimming Scars

Gravel rolls under my feet  
as I step toward the body of water.

My scar is new, just formed  
today, rinsing away the pain

that came with the wound,  
leaving me with stories to tell.

The water looms over me, this lake.  
Small ankle hairs rise as evidence

like surface spiders, sensually volatile.  
How far will I enter this water, naked?

I'm almost there, I call out,  
unsure of my listeners. Thumbs

slipping into the embroidered hem  
of my panties. I toss hesitation

into a hamper and run forward, without  
casting glances down

yet knowing my scar is still there.

— *Jessica Parsons*

## Bob Dylan

Bob Dylan  
playing furiously in my brain  
in the kitchen  
Mama curling around the corners  
cabinets and Formica singing along  
I am so young and  
in love with Dylan

Bob Dylan  
baking in the hot August sun  
We are  
He is  
standing like an electrified memory  
brought to life  
We are  
He is

Bob Dylan  
looking and sounding like the sounds of Mama  
in an auditorium  
beside a besieged fan  
brought back by demand  
my sense of security  
my need  
to be  
young and in love  
with Dylan  
We are

— *Lanie Grace*



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The world, you must remember, is only just becoming literate.

— *Aldous Huxley*



photography by Sam Karp