ECLIPSE

number iv

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AARON'S GIFT by woodjack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcut by Dennis Whitcopf</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etching by Vance Studley</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN THE MIRROR by David Linkstrom</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcut by Ronald Shultz</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROW DAMN YOU by Dixie Thomas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Doug Edge</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSPENSION by Lewis Kruglick</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Robert St. Vincent</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTUMN FAREWELL by Lewis Kruglick</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo by Howard Gold</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASQUERADE by P. Drew Kampion</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem by woodjack</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Ronald Schultz</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE FACE OF A CLOWN by Frederick McRenolds</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPPERMINT LAUGH by David Linkstrom</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by John Brandi</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELIXIR by Edward I. Brand</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Robert St. Vincent</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WORST BAR IN TOWN by Don Gere</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Robert St. Vincent</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LENGTH OF INSIGHT by Paul Thomas</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engraving by Dennis Whitcopf</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo by George Woytovich</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVERSATION by George Hansen</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Mike Grotzki</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A NEW DAY by Andrew Wallace</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.H.L. TO T.S.E. by Edward I. Brand</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etching by Vance Studley</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collagraph by Dennis Whitcopf</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO A GRASSHOPPER by Joyce Lincoln</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing by Irma Miller</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT WAS TOLD TO ME THUS by Lewis Kruglick</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem by Michael Allin</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AARON'S GIFTS

A smiling faced boy
brought me some red

flowers. Quietly
i took them with out

a thankyou be
cause they were
dead. woodjack
IN THE MIRROR

I saw you in the mercureous blue of the mirror, with the supple shade of sea-rain at your cheeks.
It was the darkness of morning; moving curtains and the first bird.
Your thighs are white under your dress; a glimpse of polished stone, perhaps, a naked light-bulb on my eyelids.
Your uneven hair dripped syrup down the velvet of your shoulders, a wisp touched your breast, this running rogue of my eye, that lights, a fleeting cat's paw, and away.
I know you spoke to your eyes in the glass; maybe you'll find the words in the bed tomorrow.
You rubbed the wool of the spread with your hand; five snakes of the coral reefs
The potter's bowl is molded, turned— a thousand bits of clay come together to curve and dip and rise again, your face:
your subtle face of freshly plucked rose-smell in the mirror half-way across the room.

David Linkstrom
Crow Damn You

By Dixie Thomas

I’m Suzie. If you know me you know my brother. If you don’t, I’ll tell you about my brother. He’s about four foot tall and slobbers all the time, because his tongue hangs out. He’s stupid. I don’t like to call him stupid but everybody does. He stands around and makes funny noises when he tries to talk. You can understand him if you try real hard. He’s always making noise. He thinks he’s cute. He’s always trying to be friendly. That only makes people look at him.

Mary Ann Jones said he had warts on his tongue, but they aren’t really warts. They’re cracks. I beat her up for saying it. I got detention for an hour. You ain’t supposed to fight on the school grounds.

I remember one time on Saturday afternoon, we went to town. We always went to town on Saturday. Daddy would go to the stock yards and Mama would shop down town. You could smell the stock yards, especially on Saturdays when they had an auction. You could smell it even in the stores. Mama wanted me to take my brother to the movies. I always ended up taking him to the movies on Saturday afternoon while Mama shopped. I always had a fit.

“Oh Mama! I don’t want to take him. Do I have to? You’re the only one who can make him behave. I can’t control him. He won’t behave for anyone but you.”

If you know my Mama you know why I ended up taking him to the movies. She’s pretty big. I was only ten. She has a way of setting her lips, you know that she’s mad. How could I argue with her? She always made him behave too. She’d hit him along side the head. He’d kick, bawl and yell, but he’d do what she wanted him to.

She gave me thirty five cents, I knew that it wasn’t enough. I told her, but she sent me with a swat. When I got to the theater they told me that I needed another nickel. This happens every Saturday. You’d think after awhile that Mama would learn. I went back and found her in the A.D. Department Store, in the yardage section. She wondered if I had gone to the theater or was I telling stories. I insisted that I had, it costs twenty cents apiece, we had only seventeen and a half cents apiece. This happens every Saturday. It’s always the same. Well she finally gave me another nickel and complained about me eating too much candy.

I kept hoping all the way to the theater that I wouldn’t see anyone that knew me, but almost everyone here did. They remembered my stupid brother. I tried
to forget but remembered everything. I even stepped on the cracks in the sidewalk. "Step on a crack, break your mother's back, break your mother's back, break your mother's back." I looked straight ahead and down. I didn't look at anybody. Of course they all stared. They reminded me of the cartoons where the men's eyeballs pop out on springs. "Mind your own business you old hags." I was gonna stick my tongue out, but I didn't. It must have been a funny sight. Me dragging him while he gawked around and made noises. He sounded like all sorts of animals: pigs, chickens and cows.

When we got back to the theater, the girl looked at him sort of pitying. I almost started to cry, but went inside instead. Then he had to go along patting everybody we passed on the shoulder. He was grunting and snorting, trying to be friendly. I kept yanking him forward, he fell down once. Then he started to jerk around, snorting and stuff like that.

"Ah wawaawawaawawaawawaawwa heeeee, ahhh eeeeeaaou!"

"Shut up stupid!" I kicked him sideways on the shin, I hoped that it would hurt.

"Eeeeeioooouw! Damn! Suuz Waa!" He leaped ahead and galloped whinnying all the way. He held his hand behind his butt, swishing it angrily, back and forth. When he was safely to where I couldn't reach him, he kicked backwards, snorted and pawed the rug, like a mad bull. Backing up slowly he frowned till his eyes nearly met. I pretended that I didn't see him and snuck up and took his hand. I drug him to a corner where no one was. I even pretended that the hand that drug him was not mine. I walked real fast, but he gaped and gawked at all the people. He smiled at his own hand as it bent backwards over his shoulder. Everyone stared, snickered, pointed, nudged one another and whispered. I found two seats and pushed him into one, then hid in my own. It would be dark. Maybe no one could see his sagging jaw, his squinty eyes, his puffy face or his tongue that hung out and dribbled slobbers all the time.

Scooting down in the seat I flitted my eyes back and forth, then the theater darkened. The previews started. The heroine was so beautiful. While the music played I wished that I a beautiful lady with pretty clothes and long black hair, were riding across the prairie with the handsome hero. Of course he would die for me if I asked him to. The movie would be playing next Saturday.

Beside me my brother made mouth explosions, helping horses hurry, jumping squealing. Guns! men! animals! He unhinged his jaw and jerked it back and forth. Hiding behind rock heads, aiming a finger gun, he killed each bandit, hero and indian, a slow painful death. Then he screamed and died for each of them, one at a time, moaning in his seat. I hit him with my elbow, hard in the ribs, then sunk deeper into my seat. I hoped that no one would look around, but they did.

"Shut up!"
“God make him shut up!”
I reached my foot over and kicked him hard. He bawled like a calf, with no tears. “I don’t know you! I don’t know you! Oh God please, I don’t know you!”

Someone was there. If you two don’t be quiet I’m gonna throw you out.”
“See! What did I tell you? Now if you don’t shut up I’m gonna spank you with a stick . . . . and it’s gonna hurt!”

He was quiet for a while. Then the cartoons started. He scraped his foot on the seat in front of him. Kicking, rubbing, scraping, bumping. The little chicken hawk set lots of traps for the big fat rooster, and caught him many times but the rooster always got away and gave the little hawk a fatherly pat and much long-winded advice. Then my brother crowed and clucked. He crowed just once, long and loud. Then everybody called for silence as he flapped his wings to crow again.

“Shut up back there!”
All around faces, roaring, jeering and screaming.
“Be quiet!”
He had an audience and hollered all the louder.
“We can’t hear the movie!”
“Shhhhhhhhh!” I joined the cry of the mob.
“Throw them out!”

On the screen the rooster crowed. Then my brother sounded like the little chicken hawk, jumping around in his seat. He was practically on the floor flopping around. I closed my eyes, then it was quiet. A shuffle of feet. When I opened my eyes my brother was gone. The rooster flew up onto the fence, flapped his wings and strained his neck. The cartoon ended before he could crow.

The usher was there again. You’d better go, your brother is outside. Don’t bring him back to this theater again. We don’t want him around here.”

I knew that I had to sneak out, find him, take him back to Mama. He was my brother. I decided not to tell Mama because she’d be mad. She wouldn’t believe me anyway.

The bright sunlight made the chrome on the box office seem to grin. He was squatted, leaning against it. He grinned too. A slobber strung onto his dirty jeans. He got up, shook his butt, stomped, snorted and frowned. The heat made wiggly lakes in the street, as I made my hand mechanical and drug him behind me to find Mama.
SUSPENSION

If I carry my death with me,
then I have lost notice of its presence.

A dog jumbled up in the middle of the road is utterly singular,
and the wake returns the living to motion.

The bird’s wings fold and hurling down the rising air realizes the last moment in a study of stopping.

Lewis Kruglick
AUTUMN FAREWELL

Outside it is trying to rain.
(I have taken copper candlesticks and checkered tablecloths for my eyes.)

I waited two hours in the kafenion with Athens and purple clouds, the lace veil of autumn, and sounds of the lottery sellers shouting, "I have."

The brandy was warm in my mouth bearing his footsteps of small comboloi beads striking concrete.
(I have taken mint vases and rusted coins for my shelf.)

"I am leaving tomorrow," my voice was hurried and the girls' thighs damp on Lycavetos.

Later we walked home the first roasted chestnuts of October filling our hands.
(I have taken violet islands and white cities for my books.)

We listened to jazz and bouzouki comparing the length of the tone of our lands.

"Autumn is best for remembering," he said, and slowly a rider came topping the trees with the wind in his feet.

The sky opens its legs and I enter, the rain is grey. (Athens/oct./63) Lewis Kruglick
Masquerade

By P. Drew Kampion

They sat on the sofa looking intently at the dish of peanuts and wondering why no one had come yet. He couldn't help noticing that there were more blue balloons than green, but she'd worked hard on them and he didn't want to start criticizing now. Besides, with two hundred feet of sheet strips wrapped around him it was hard to move at all, least of all blow up balloons. It was hard as hell being a mummy, especially a quiet one. He was very hot sitting there in the bare living room and the sweat made the cloth wrappings sticky and he itched in every inaccessible part of his body.

"You make a terrific Cleopatra," he said, looking up from the peanuts and trying to forget the sticky itching. His words were mumbled through the moist cloth in front of his mouth.

"Thanks," she answered looking up briefly at his face and then back at the peanuts. "You make a marvelous mummy."

It was a very plain room in a very plain apartment. A sofa, three chairs, the table with the peanuts on it, the stereo, and a few lamps. The kitchen was at one end; there were plates of food on the table there and a few thin metal chairs around it. Not a hell of a lot, he thought, as he scanned the sepulcher of his mummified interment and settled his gaze on the wall of books. Christ, but who needs a lot. I've got her.

You've got her and you have to keep her but it wasn't the way you wanted it to be and now it's too late to change the whole damn mess and you're screwed and tied to her in a matrimonial bandage as tight as the rags around you till the last day of mutual respiration so tough and like it because you asked for it and you got it and you know how you told her you'd have to make the best of it and now you do so tough.

"Why aren't they here," she asked. "It's getting late and I'm a little worried. Do you think we gave them the wrong time."

"We gave them the right time. Don't worry, they'll be here."

"This is the twenty-first isn't it? There must be some reason for their not coming."

"It's the right day and it's the right time and they'll be here, so don't worry, okay?"

"All right, but I wish they'd get here, I'm not very comfortable."

"You think I am?" he asked, lifting a swathed arm up in front of her.

They both looked back at the peanut bowl and after a few minutes she reached for one. He watched her hand stab into the heap of brown kernels and
extricate one. Damned for all eternity, he thought, and listened to her chewing
it into oblivion.

He stood up and went to the bookcase and reached for a book, but his hands
were immobile, blunt cloth and he turned away and looked at his wife sitting on
the sofa watching the bowl on the coffee table. God, what a mess they made of
things. One goddam accident and it was all screwed and he had her and there
was no way of getting out of it. Lover turned wife. He was beginning to think
that she had been a better lover than she was a wife.

Sitting in the car and what a view and a great night but kind of cool and
you would like to sit closer. Warm under here and soft but lots of trouble
and then there was her hand and the rest of her so scalding and soft and
wanting. Take her; he did: for a long while till they were still and wet with
the sweat and sorry for it before they were really even done.

"Do you think it's because of me?" she asked
"What's because of you?"
"That they're not here. Do you think it's because I'm pregnant?"
"Millions of women are just as out of shape as you are."
"But not two months after they're married."
"What about two months after you're married?"
"Well they must know something's a little wrong."
"Wrong; what's wrong with having an amazing ability for producing
children four months within the prescribed limits and have them come out just
as good as any of their nine-months babies? You should be proud and extravagant
in displaying your awesome talents."

She smiled at him through her make-up and he remembered why he loved
her and why he hadn't minded so much when they had had to get married. And
he remembered how, when he had talked to some of their friends and invited
them they seemed unsure and hesitant, one waiting for the other to decide
until one of them had said that sure, they'd be there.

"I wish they'd come, though, I really do."
"They'll be here; don't worry about it. Want something to drink?"
"No," she said, "It'd ruin the make-up."
"Sorry."
"Why don't you have one," she suggested.
"I'm not thirsty."
"You usually are."
"Well, I'm not now, okay?"
"All right, but I thought you'd like one."
"I wouldn't so shut up about it, okay." All the time she was making a real
issue out of every goddam little thing and he was getting just a little bit tired
of hearing the same mediocre triviality rerun and rerun and rerun.

"I wish they'd show up," she said after a silence that he wished didn't have
to end.

"Shut up about that too, okay?"
"God you're really in top form tonight, aren't you?"
"And you can take your sarcasm and shove it." He walked away from the books and into the desolate center of the room. He only liked the bookshelves, the rest of the room depressed him and was useless. It was her part of the room.
"If they're not here in five minutes, I'll take these wrap around band-aids off and go read a book."
"That's about all you ever do anymore; read a book."
"I like to read."
"I know, it's all you do. You ignore everything else."
"Like you, for instance?"
"Yes, like me. You could spend a little more time with me, talking to me. Trying to be a husband to me would be a pleasant change."
"Well maybe if you'd consider acting like a wife I would consider acting like a husband."

She looked up at him, his mummified anatomy, and she wanted to scream and scratch and throw peanuts and break glass, but she only cried. He almost went to her but changed his mind and walked out the front door, and closed it firmly.

It was a second floor apartment and he stood in front of it in his wrappings, staring down at the court area and the pool and watching the reflections of the lights from the opposite apartments in the water. The rectangles shifted spasmodically on the surface of the water, yellow and alive. The night was cold on his sweat-soaked body.

He got too frustrated with her too easy and he picked on her too much. She was really a fine wife and it was his fault about the fights and the arguments. He wondered what she was doing inside; if she was still crying. Why was it it almost made him feel good when she cried, like that was the idea and that was how he wanted it to be: she crying and he watching, waiting for her to stop, to take advantage of the temporary superiority he had won. He supposed it was compensation for the way she always made him crawl. He didn't know if she did this on purpose, pushing him as hard as he could be pushed, but that was the way it always turned out. It was like when they had been going together and there were times when he wanted her very much, not really to make love to, but just to hold her and be needed by her, and she would be cold and ignore him or merely be trivial with him so that he was twisted and frustrated so deep that he couldn't stand it. Then he would force himself on her and she would become angry and there would be a fight, usually ending in his departure and then, later, his submission. When she cried like this, though, it was as if it were her turn and he was the one that had maneuvered her into submission.

He waited out on the porch, anxious to be inside and to have the whole thing smoothed over, but waiting because he did not want to make the appearance that he was submitting to her, but that he was merely being understanding by returning and she would see this and love him for it. Then it would be all right.
He tried to think of things, the book he was reading and the significance of it, but there was really none and all the critics who had said that it was so great were merely talking through their hats because the author had a good name with the readers and they wanted to keep their own good name and the best way to do that was to flatter the good names so that your good name would be associated with theirs and you would last as long as they did. But he didn't give a good god damn about the significance of the book because it was really a rotten piece of material anyway and it was pretty evident that it was for money and the critics and bookshelves and not really for reading.

It felt good to criticize something, somebody, besides his wife, and then he thought about two kids he'd seen earlier and one had a brace on her leg and didn't seem to mind it. It made him think how he would mind having it and how sorry he was that the girl had to have it. She was a blonde girl and she had blue eyes. His wife was like that: a little blonde, blue-eyed girl. But his wife didn't have a brace on her leg.

After he had thought and passed a sufficient amount of time, he went back into the apartment, but she wasn't in the living room, and when he checked the bedroom she was in bed with the covers pulled high over her head. The costume was draped over the chair by the bed. He stood in the bathroom unraveling the cloth and watching her, but her body did not rise and fall with her breathing and he knew she was not asleep, but was waiting for him to come to bed and to make it all right. When he had all the cloth off he slipped out of his other clothes and got into bed beside her. Her body was very hot against his and he rolled her over so she faced him.

"I guess they're not coming," he said.
"I guess not."
"I'm sorry I got mad at you before."
"So am I," she answered.
"Let's try to get along better, okay?"
"Yeah, oh sure," she said.
"I mean it. We made a mistake but we can do our damnedest to give that kid a good home. All right with you if we stop these stupid arguments?"
"It's all right with me; do you think I like to fight with you?"
"No," he said, pulling her body to him, "of course not." He could feel the rounded softness of her belly between them and knew that it had come to them because it was best that it should come to them, and then he was glad that she would have his baby and he wasn't sorry it was coming so soon. He held her tightly and after a while she whispered to him and they became very lost in making it all right again.
i called her politely on the phone.
she answered with a loud HELL oh?
i hung up woodjack
THE FACE OF A CLOWN

The face of a clown is weeping
From the heavy embrace of ridicule
Shameful is a shadow of bitterness
roughly falling across a painful mask

Hate is vomited in hollow laughter
and men grow old seeing reflections
As the beat of a wrist watch conducts
the march of empty-eyed inmates

Happiness is a same colored rooters flag
thrashing mechanically for an unseen team
Epileptic smiles curse forever payment
a teenage virgin grows welted stretch marks

The mildly formed child of twelve years
selling apubic treasure for attention
and people are kind to an orgasm
a fat washwoman weeps into jellied sheets

Somewhere an echo returns silent fear
to ooze down the stack of faceless cards
and oil dryly a rubber foundation of beliefs
Where protest is drowned by human weakness

Frederick McRenolds
PEPPERMINT LAUGH

So much the same,
with a peppermint laugh deep in your thighs;
a little girl's carrousel glints in the moon,
grinning and turning with colorful kisses,
stars in the sky, blues and reds of
mid-summer's love-making, hung there to dry
The carnival came, with the wind for your hair
woven in the wood of the lion's cage,
setting up tents on the old, unplowed field,
and nickel tickets to clutch in your hand.
So many people shouting your thoughts away,
too much to do, too much to see
in the colors that ring like songs in your ears:
here, there; animals, people; calling, smelling;
and the dust in the air like the taste of sweet wine.
Clowns and calliopes smiling their sadness
and cellophane candy to fill up your pockets.
Then, the next day, when the train has gone
transparent papers, so much the same,
tell you a fairy tale at night in your bed.

David Linkstrom
ELIXIR

Out there
Where the trees leaned,
Leafed heavy with last summer's growth,
Standing bent and motionless
In the sweltering heat,
Naked now in coated ice
The pavement below frosted,
Glistening from the poled light
Whose shadow pierces the frost
On a strange street
Somewhere in Paoli,
By the old stairs
Leading up from the station
Where the train heavy in
Its frosted irons
Has worn deep tracks in the earth
I caught a glimpse of her.

I had seen her before in many places
Once in my mirror
And I had turned away abruptly
Turned away not knowing,
I see her only in the Past
Clearly.
In the Now, I dare not look,
I fear my feelings.
I must talk with her
But bow
Say hello one time
Speak as Saul did
Smile or nod
Save a tear and touch her
Touch her ever lightly

What if she were me
And I she wandering about
Seeking each other in all the lost
Corners of my searching mind
By the sweet remembrances of all the past
Lonely hours —
In streets and closed speeding trains
Out the window
Past the stairs
And only left to view the last step
Upward and then gone —

In Seattle by the sea
Where the wet heavens cling to the
Earth and raincoats slick
On the bus seats I looked out
And saw her standing alone
I almost cried out
But on we moved
Before I rose
And she was gone again. 

Edward I. Brand
The Worst Bar In Town  By Don Gere

To walk in the place is to enter some sort of perpetual embarrassment. One customer and one keeper of the inn. He is always on the phone and the customer plays two games of shuffleboard by himself. Against himself. I just want to say excuse me, for intruding on the loneliness.

It is a brown sort of place that sort of steps up to you and says nothing
It is a sort of place that is too dark and too cold
It is a place that looks empty
It is puzzling

The beer is not the best or the tastiest or the least expensive or the biggest or anything that beer is supposed to be
But everything in the world could never make this place any better, for everything in the world is here. For one man who lives his life in loneliness and wondering about how many customers he will lose to the place across the street this is the whole-world. And to walk in is to accept the world as it lives for the man on the telephone. Not by choice, but out of necessity for to do otherwise would make the dirty ceiling come closer and send you scurrying to the floor in search for the new tomorrow of the sawdust.

The man on the telephone will always ask if you want some and if you answer sarcastically enough he will put the phone on the popcorn machine and pour you a beer with too much head on it . . . His hat is funny and it has two hat bands. The popcorn has ants in it . . . tomorrow will lose another customer but the man at the shuffleboard table will never stop trying to get a hanger because the board is too slow and the third customer will always stick his head in the door to ask just what is going on . . everything you are is here and you are in the worst bar in town

the man returns to the telephone and tells it to get better and goes into the little kitchen to eat his sandwich . . . He is ugly and his forehead is pushed in so you always look at it. Never be condescending never tella good joke never be nice never win at the shuffleboard table never like the smell of the beer never stay too long never think about this place because it makes you sick and it makes you feel sorry for the man on the telephone and the man at the shuffleboard table and yourself because you don't understand what is going on in the first place because you have never been where they are going because you would never lay it on the line like that in the first place because you couldn't anyway and you probably think that youre better off too. How do you know slob?
This place is dirty and no fun and crappy looking and rotten and small and
totally unstimulating and embarrasses you because for all your facade of learning
and sophistication and intellectual awareness you cant swing here and you cant
get with it and you cant be phony here because what it is that this place is is
completely real for everyone except you because this place is your inside.

Mine too.

For all the mighty efforts of our mind we remain slaves to the fact that we
are not capable of loving what we are nor what it is we are about nor the sign
above the cash box that says WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE SERVICE
TO ANYONE — WHO WANTS US TO . . The man behind the bar just came
in and the man on-the telephone is eating his sandwich and the customer playing
shuffleboard two games at a time against himself whistles and we are the third
customer paralyzed from the ears up standing in the worst bar in town . .

You are witnessing life at its most stunning and magnificent heights and
you cannot for the life of me love it so you might as well accept its existence
We are witnessing faith at its fullest when you see the pushed in forehead and
the till with four zeroes across it and the dirt on your shoes because that ugly
man life that is on the telephone lives only to open his doors for you and me
YES WE’RE OPEN always

The man that just walked in behind the bar is dead and the shuffleboard no
longer makes the rolling sound of dance wax and the customer playing two
games at the same time against himself is nailed to the floor because he won
but you cant tell which game and this is what happens every time we walk in
this bar . . . the little silent movie will start for the price of the beer and the
man on the telephone will watch the customer playing shuffleboard two games
at the same time against himself . .

But he wont be the third customer anymore as we dont know what is going
on or where to begin or that living is what people do for each other or that the
bar we just left was complete as we will never be or that this funny inexpressible
feeling which rests on the roof of our mouth is a tear.

All I know is that’s the worst bar in town and I wish I didn’t have to worry
about it
All I know is I left everything I ever knew in that bar
All I know is the place needs something
Goddam, that’s the worst bar in town . .
THE LENGTH OF INSIGHT

But I knew when I was young
That green hills don’t grow.
My friends and I, with our bright, rubber balls,
Burst to the litany of cocks on the wind,
Till, brilliant as the sun, we hillocked home at dusk.

The fingers of sand were fine words
To the robins in our feet, and we danced,
Beating, blazing, in the flames that we caught
And rolled into mud statues with hysterical bellies.
From the trees, we threw stones.

I was home in the mouth of my mother’s back door
When the dinner-bell dried out
The sweat in my shirt.
Later I would sit by the chair with a book
And learn,
That green hills don’t grow.

Paul Thomas
CONVERSATION

In the dry, green ashes,
The pine smoke whistles
And curves its lecherous fingers
to the thick log.
While you, my friend,
Poke paper into the childish flames.
Later, on our backs,
We lit cigarettes and talked
Of the way our women crackled
In our palms.
Or we sat without words
And spoke of the wind
And dancing figures
That we wanted that night.
In our eyes.

George Hansen
The end of the room in which Donald sat was warm and bright, lit by a large lamp on the desk before him. Behind him, the room darkened away into gloom, ending and focusing suddenly in the harsh blue glare of the television. The set had been on the same station all evening. The channel controls might as well have been welded. Meriam always watched it, but he paid no attention. He only had it on because the room seemed to function normally that way.

Donald read, leaning forward over the desk, kicking at the leg of the chair with his heel. He smoked carefully, keeping the smoke out of his eyes and never particularly conscious of how long the cigarette was. A mild stench gathered in the grease on the dinner plate shoved to one side of the desk. Four dead butts squatted on the plate, one directly on the ragged chop bone, the rest in the oily green water left by the spinach. He read and smoked, and a clean-shaven woodsman knelt among the trees behind him and fired.

A blue plastic wire snaked around the corner and over the threshold into the room, ending in a sky-blue telephone on the floor before the television. It rang, and he pushed the cigarette into his mouth; he had to squint around it as he searched in a drawer for a pad of paper and a fountain pen. With these in hand, he stood back the chair and put the cigarette out on the plate. He turned and walked toward the phone, blowing smoke as he went. He squatted on the floor, put the pad of paper in front of him and turned the sound on the television all the way down. He watched the action before him for a moment, as though the ringing of the phone was only a faint buzzing. It rang for perhaps the fifth time, and he unscrewed the cap from the pen and laid it down beside the pad. He lifted the receiver about an inch and a half above it cradle and said very sharply and loudly.

"'Ellow!" He listened to the answering shriek, identified it and brought the phone into proper conversational position.

"... that ever again," said the voice at the other end. "Do you hear me? Not ever again."

"Hello, you old harridan. I thought it might be ogres." As he spoke, he put the cap back on the fountain pen and buttoned it into his shirt pocket, wedging the receiver between his ear and shoulder.

"I'm serious. Don't ever. What if it had been the hospital? That's just not very darn smart." She seemed quite upset.

"I really got to you, hunh? I'll bet you were just settling back to have a nice, low-volume, conspiratory little conversation with your eldest son, right? Well, forget it. I'm the least worried of anybody, and I don't need any support, moral or otherwise. And if the doctor couldn't think of anything important enough to keep me at the hospital, I can't think of anything important you can tell me."
“Now just a minute, Donald. You just wait a minute, please. You don’t even know why I called. I just—”

“No, but I will soon, come hell or spiritual ground glass.”

He lit a cigarette and reached across the television for the waste-basket, set it beside him, tipped his ash into it, and reapplied himself to the telephone.

“... there’s also a very good list in the back of any Bible. Which might be a good place to start, by the way. I’m sure Meriam has one around there somewhere, even if you don’t.”

“What, a Bible? Just back up a second please and tell me what it was we were discussing.”

“You’re going to have to have a name for the baby. I really think he’ll appreciate it, anyway.”

“What makes you so damn sure it’s going to be a he? Psychic discharge, or what?”

“That was only a figure of speech. But you must begin to think about these things now, Donald.”

“Oh, I’m sure he’ll wind up getting a name, all right. After I’ve seen the little bugger, Meriam and I’ll have sort of bedside—”

“What was that word please, young man? don’t think—”

“Bugger, Mother, bugger. Not the kind that has to do with animals, which would be a buggerer. Anyway, we’ll corks out a name when we get that far. What else?”

“Well, now, your uncle and I were talking—”

“At the country club?”

“What’s that?”

“At the country club. With old judge Van der Meer. And he just happened to mention that he had a new theory of baby-naming which involves reading the convolutions of the inner ear, and—”

“Now please, Donald...”

“You think I’m kidding? I know that group. Uncle Toby’s the worst of the lot, too. You shouldn’t even talk to those bastards. If God came around to give the Final Announcement, they’d lite out for the ouija board to see if they couldn’t do a little advantageous dickering.”

“Donald, please...”

“O.K. Sweetheart, talk. But loud, please, I’m involved.”

He leaned back back on his elbows on the floor with the receiver lying on his stomach. Before him, the beardless mountaineer fought to the death with a thoroughly committed but undernourished Indian at the edge of an abyss.

“Well, at any rate, we were discussing what all we thought I should say to you about the upbringing of children. I mean, what kinds of advice I could give, what I can tell you about...”

Her voice came to him like cracked plastic, and his attention was drawn away to the silent action before him. Occasional phrases came through to him, but they had nothing to do with the action on the screen, so he ignored them. At last the mountaineer stood at the edge of the chasm, his arm about his beautiful wife,
gazing with infinite compassion upon the lump of buckskinned gore which was
the broken body of his majestic foe on the rocks far below. Donald eased the
still-voluble telephone onto the floor beside him, stood up and stepped to within
a foot of the front of the television. He fumbled purposefully at the front
of his pants for a moment, but he seemed to think better of it, for he zipped
his pants again and dug the fountain pen from his shirt pocket. He unscrewed
the cap once more and, pushing the nib of the pen against the upper, left-hand
corner of the face of the set, he began to pull out the fillingbar in the pen's side.
As he pulled it out, he drew the pen across the glass, going from left to right,
emptying the pen, lowering a ragged blue curtain across the final act of the
drama he had been watching.

When the pen was empty, he dropped it into the waste-basket beside him
and sat down. His mother was still speaking over the telephone as he picked it up.
"... don't suppose he was much of a father to you. But he was a fine hus-
band and a good provider, and he never claimed to be anything more. He set
a good example of a fine, upstanding catholic gentleman. It's about time you
took such things seriously. I know Meriam doesn't appreciate some of your
wild antics, and it's about time you settled down. Putting all those match-heads in
the disposer was very cut, I'm sure, and probably made a fine volcano, but—"

"All right, Mother, just shut up a minute now, will you?"

He stopped to light a cigarette, but the phone was silent until he went on.
"Now about the sink; Meriam's mother gave us the house to do with as
we pleased, and I payed for the matches. So that has nothing to do with you.
And I, don't want any excuses from you about the way my father raised me.
I never even knew him. But I'll tell you one thing. Thanks to his 'good example,'
I know exactly how not to raise a child. He thought of me as the household
daemon, and that's the way he treated me. And that's no way to produce a human
being.

"But let's get down to the truth of the matter. Meriam and I conceived the
child, and we'll raise him. We've made some plans and we've come to some really
beautiful and insignificant conclusions, which add up to the fact that we're
about to make a life-long friend. And if you're very, very lucky, we may introduce
you to him some time, but I doubt it. Meanwhile, you just keep your dead hus-
band's immensely over-rated spirit and your own personal emasculation techniques
the hell out of our lives. Do you understand me, Old Woman?"

To his total amazement, the line had gone dead. He hung up the phone and
sat for nearly half an hour, thinking, smiling and shaking quietly. Then he
cleaned up the room and did the dishes, drying them very slowly, looking at each
fork and plate carefully, as though he were looking for his own name on them
somewhere. And just before he went to bed he turned off the television and
turned it around to face the wall.

At about dawn, he began to dream. He was getting ready to go camping in
the mountains, but he had no-one to take with him. Suddenly a very small, very
plump, short-haired, black and white puppy bounded into the bedroom and
licked him madly. He picked the dog up with love and tenderness and hugged it to him, fondly feeling the intervals between its toes. There were four intervals on each foot, but he didn’t do the mathematics necessary to determine the number of toes involved.

Finally the puppy wriggled away and bounded from the room. Almost immediately, a very small child stumbled toward him, a child not over a foot tall, naked, coordinated, and speaking to him with a remarkably well-controlled vocabulary, words of pure love and affection, blurred slightly by youthful commitment. Again he felt for the intervals between toes and, although there were six per foot, he couldn’t have been more pleased.

Suddenly the child bumped a pudgy fist against his nose, and he realized that wrong had been done. He had to chastise the child. He carried it through the house to the closed door of what he recognised as his parents’ bedroom. But somewhere within him was the deadly conviction that the room belonged to someone named Margaret, and that the room behind the door was terribly frightening. With his back to the door, he held the child facing away from him at arm’s length and announced with distinct ominousness, “This is Margaret’s room.” He felt behind him for the door knob, opened the door and swung in a complete circle, giving the child only a quick glimpse of a room which was not as he had remembered it, not at all as he had remembered it. The child screamed and withered to dust.

Almost immediately he was back in his bed, and his father was standing over him, counting off on swollen, decomposing fingers each of the things Donald had done wrong to the child, from the way he had lifted it and loved it to the way he had finally frightened it away to death. The old man spoke with such controlled violence that the snapping of his jaws knocked rotting bits of flesh from his cheeks. The old man went on and on, hammering, hammering, filling the gaps, taking account of everything point by point, never dealing with the whole of what he had done, which might have been ignored in the light of tiny fires in each action. But all had been detected with squint-eyed triumph, and each bit of fire had been stamped out. And yet it was all truth, all resolute condemnation, and he knew with an absolute certainty how he must make his child, and from the utter depths of silent, cold fright came release. The still-shaking memory of annihilation swept all clean, and left him with the absolute knowledge of propriety. His own up-bringing had been a poor fire laid on a bad bed. But now all was slammed away, and on the knifed-clean granite face was room for him to build again, his own clean fire. All memory of minor triumph and tragedy was swept away and he was left virgin and clean. He waited for his child to come to him.
D.H.L. to T.S.E.

This cheap adulation
This tinselled idolatry
Laced with intellectual arrogance
Is far less digestible
Than the insincere
Grindings of a whore

Edward I. Brand
to a grasshopper

esquired; Summer's cognizance
pivot the head
the eyes.
cleansing bearded limbs
deceives the meadow
on oil-
less hinges;
mechanical sensorium
of
ferocious grace;
ersatz Winter's cricket.

Joyce Lincoln
IT WAS TOLD TO ME THUS

He is as cragged with
rot and open wounds
as his bare foxhole
bleeding jungle rain.

That last night remembered
one of touching:
slim body warmth
of rare-bird mating
in mid-december.

One can assume
that Modigliani
would have been pleased
at the poses she struck
to give him pleasure:
repeated, long-necked
birds dancing
hurried leisure,

and he, with an eye out
towards unity of form,
made into a still-life
of all her fears,

Lewis Kruglick
reminders about returning, all cold parts of her body burning to say her father’s stories since he came back living from Europe’s trenches.

It was all be carried with him of his own: a few feathers of winter, and her vague sense of dread;

so that somewhere between his last scream and its silence he tumbled from his wife’s bed.

And it is absurd, of course, that Andromache tells Hektor how to play at war.
My weeping willow
Dances when the wind blows;
Sometimes
I
Can still hear the music.

Michael Allin