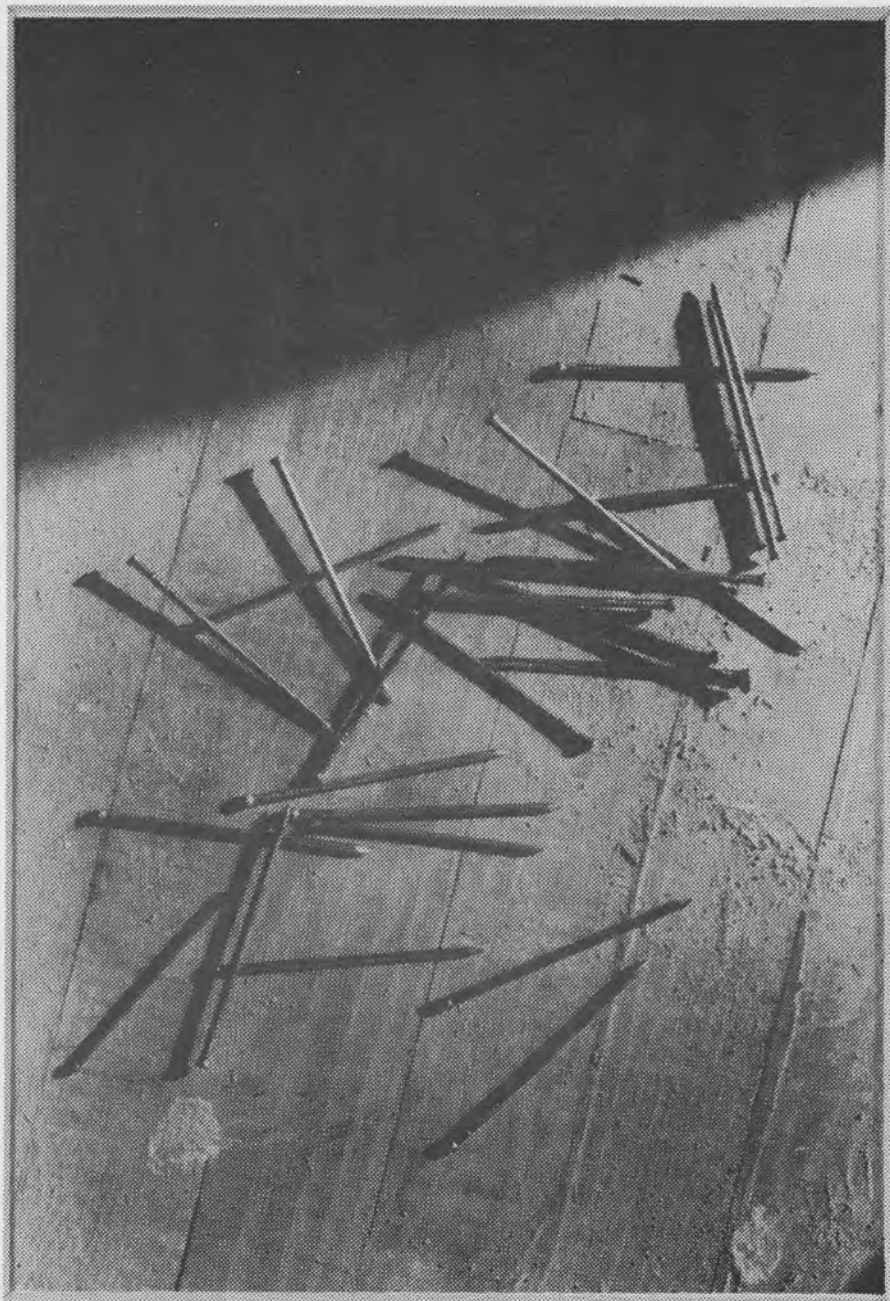


APOGEE '82



"Nails" by Mark Gross is the award winner for Photographic Excellence and is also representative of the Apogee's theme for 1982. Look beyond the surface of things--look at nails, for example, in a different way--and come away enriched, enlivened, and enlightened.

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Cover photograph, "Nails" by Mark Gross, winner of
Award for Photographic Excellence



CHARLES EUGENE MOUNTS AWARD
FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE

THINE ARMY

Let my sappers breach thy walls.
Let my light horse exploit you within.
My light infantry will guard thy flanks,
And let no intruder come near.
My commissary will satisfy you.
My chaplain will fulfill you.
Your body is a holy shrine,
That I have come to worship.

I shall make love to you,
By the light of the midnight sun.
My penetration will have the force
Of a Martini-Henry.
Yet be as soft and sweet,
As a sunset on the Afrikaan velt.
Ye shall feel the pleasures
Of all the ages.

My love is an Army,
Waiting for thy command.
My cavalry is in column.
My infantry is in formation.
Thy wish, my darling,
Will come true.
Thine fantasy, our reality.

-William H. Brown

PONIES

On the third Wednesday afternoon in January, after the Christmas rush and after the initial excitement of the first-of-the-year sales, he sat on the long-legged stool behind the check-out counter working a cross word puzzle in the newspaper. She was perched on the short red stool between the tie rack and sock display. She looked through a catalogue. She had not redone her face after lunch, and her cheeks were white except for the festered bump between her mouth and nose. She told him, or the counter, or the store in general, that she thought she had gotten out of bed too soon after the Bangkok virus. He told her maybe she had; why didn't she go on home. He could run the place by himself because there wasn't a soul on the streets, up one block and down the other, as far as he could see. He had on Levi's and a flannel shirt. With the toe of his pointed western boot he poked at the wrapping paper and bags under the counter. He told her he was ready for some customers--some lookers, anything. She said it was always this way at the end of January. Didn't he remember last year and the year before? He said he remembered it being slow, but not dead.

It's the damned economy, he was sure of that. Maybe the new president would be able to do something. Lord, he hoped so, because if things kept up like they were, not even considering the fact they might get worse, they would have to close down shop. Naturally, she would think things would climb. What did she know? She said if they would just hang in there things were bound to get better. She could look up the figures from last year and the year before. She could look

in the record book and see for herself. Why did she turn her head whenever he started talking facts?

He thought there was a lot she didn't understand about running a business. There were sales tax reports and quarterly reports, and inventory. Uncle Sam was always around with his grubby hands opened wide at this time of year. She wanted to know if he thought it would be a good idea to have a special clearance sale and get rid of all the winter stuff. He said to wait and see, and if things didn't pick up toward the end of the week, he might.

She said while they weren't busy, maybe it would be a good idea to go through the older merchandise and make a five dollar table. That should draw the customers. He said he would think about it.

He said he'd think about it if he wanted to. That was the way to run a business, wasn't it? Not hurry into anything but measure all the pros and cons. He told her if they had a clearance sale, they'd have to advertise in the daily paper and on the radio, and ads cost money. He thought that would settle it. He got up from his stool and walked toward the door. He said he was going to walk down the block to the sporting goods store to see what the fellows were doing down there, and he would be back in a little while.

She told him to wait a minute. Since he was going down there anyway, would he look to see if they had any tennis shoes on sale because the boy needed a pair. He thought, well why not? If he couldn't make money, he might as well spend some.

Thirty minutes later, he came walking back into the store. She was sitting on his long-legged stool finishing his crossword puzzle. Had he bought the shoes?

Hell, yes. He had them. What did she think he was, a forgetful ape? And would she please make out a check for \$25.95 to the sporting goods store?

She told him she would--only she wanted to see what he had bought. She opened the shoebox and looked at the shoes. Why in heaven's name did he get Converse canvas? Where did he think he was, back in 1959? Well, he could just return them and get something the boy would wear.

He wanted to know what was wrong with Converse. If they had been good enough for him, what was wrong with the boy wearing them?

Because nobody at his school wears Converse anymore, she told him.

And what do they wear? If she would be so kind as to inform him since he was out of touch with reality. He wished to God she had gone herself. He'd be hanged if he was going to take the shoes back and exchange them.

Well, she'd take them back herself, by God. She wouldn't want to put him out. Besides, he was so rich, he could afford to waste \$25.95.

If he would just stop babbling, she'd return them. She might as well go now. There wasn't a customer in the store to keep her. Yes, she'd go now and straighten out the whole mess, and if he got pushed while she was gone, he could just give out numbers. And if he wanted to make himself useful, he could straighten out dress pants.

Well, she could straighten the pants herself. And the sweaters, too, for that matter. She hadn't been worth her salt lately. He didn't care whether she had been under the weather or not; it was time to get cracking.

He watched the front door. Well, come on in customers, damn it. Maybe a clearance sale would help. She had been to have a couple of good ideas. The George Washington sale last year was profitable. But, he'd still have to think on it.

While she was gone, he got busy. The bell on the door clanged. He'd show her when she got back. Oh, Lord, he'd have the sales rung up and the money in the cash register when she ambled in. Things were breaking, and it was about time.

When she came back, carrying a different shoe box, he was waiting on three customers at one time. He was hurrying from the dressing room to the shelves stacked with jeans. And if it wasn't too much to ask, he'd appreciate her help.

Sure thing she'd help. Was there anything she should get? How about western shirts to match the jeans? And would he like her to catch the two customers who just came in?

They smiled at each other. Her cheeks were raw from having been outside. The cold sore did not show up so much now. He asked her if she would please get the boot customer a tin of mink oil from behind the counter. She said yes, certainly. She'd be happy to.

He was acting more like his old self now, she believed. Of course, he was never a grouch unless he was worried about business. That would set him off every time. If he'd only listened to her, she told him things would pick up. But, he was a worrier by nature.

He'd show her he was sorry he got so upset. He shouldn't have flown off the handle so fast. She couldn't help if things were slow. He opened the shoe box and took out one of the white leather Ponies. Well, if that was what the boy wanted, then she did the right thing.

Yes, he guessed she did.

-Alice Sink

WHERE DID THOSE DAYS GO?

An ancient storybook lies in the forest
Resting proudly on a moss-covered podium
With its yellowed face looking to the sky.

The summer wind turns its tattered pages
And whispers the age-old tales to the trees
As they shiver with excitement.

-Chris C. Booze



UNTITLED

A thousand paratroopers jumped out
Of one twin-engined piper cub
And they all landed on one blade of grass
On a downtown sidewalk in New York City.
A police spokesman said
That they all had on cocktail waitress outfits
And they were believed to be a terrorist
 organization
Called the Limpshooters.
If you can see the crayon that was crushed
 by the feather
In the doorway, then you would understand
Why I ate all those damned leftovers.
Why don't you tell me about those crazy
 lizards
Running around in your mind.
Eat five tablespoons of brake fluid
And see if you can stop coughing.
If that doesn't work
Try biting into a piece of clay
And chew it until your head feels like a
Pitcher's mound.
"All common knowledge is contained in one
 star."

-Richard Hand

A REVELATION

There is a great-winged weasel coming,
Flying out of his fiery burrow. O beware!
He's going to bite your babies,
He's going to carry off your sweet little
jewels.
O, he is the furriest of all.

But there is something to do,
To do at night: Wear a white nightgown,
Burn incense, sandalwood,
Say, "Hoobee, Hoobee, Hoobee,"
And write a letter to your congressman.

-Marion Hodge



LA MORT EN L'HIVER

Le travail du Dieu et la Nature, elle se leve brusquement des entrailles de la terre, elle domine la ligne d'horizon et attire les yeux de ceux qui sont arrivés pour monter. Une forteresse massive de granit, elle attend sans bruit les alpinistes avec une patience qui se moquer du temps. Au bas des falaises et loin dans la forêt, les grandes rochers sont répandus comme les blocs d'un géant ancien. Les saisons change, mais peu importe--elle est là.

L'été arrive, la brilliancé du soleil et le ciel éntincelant donnent un air d'anticipation à Moore's Know. La forêt est pleine de vie, les faucons encerclent le sommet pendant que des essaims des moustiques, des mouches et des abeilles ne donnent pas un moment de relâchement aux alpinistes répercutent et intensifie leur anticipation.

Mais l'hiver arrive, c'est un monde différent, tout est gris et silencieux. Le ciel est nuageux et lugubre. La Knob est comme une grande monstre attendant ses victimes. Il n'y a rien qu'il soit juste au monde. Où est Dieu maintenant?--un ami est mort.

-Vernon Hedgecock

TO A LOVED ONE

Meet me in the rain,
When tears go unnoticed
And laughter flows beautifully,
Perfectly into the damp air.

We can listen to the raindrops
Scrawling their age-old story
Into the vast parchment
Rolled out before us,
And quietly become part of the tale.

We can feel sad together
As we watch the merciless raindrops
Destroy a fragile, white lily blossom;
That of its own creation.

We can embrace and walk together
Across endless, green meadows
Feeling a love so strong, so complete
That it would carry us back to that day
At any moment in our forthcoming lives;
And later.

So, long after the endless, green meadows
are gone
And the raindrops forget their tales;
Centuries after our story is written
And we are both forgotten
Meet me in the rain.

-Chris C. Booze



STEINS AND STAINS

I hung my ear
over the lip of my
coffee mug last night.
From the ancient clay
I heard the Black Sea roar agin,
where I met you,
the heat enclosing
like the fine womb
of a Southern woman.
I waited for your
wet tongue to make
my knee jerk like you did
in Barcelona
and earlier against the
sandstone outside Jerusalem.
Not hearing your lips part
I turned to taste,
and spilled you down
my leg.

-John Moehlmann

FALSE NOTE AT A COLLEGE CONCERT

Dark and delicately beautiful
 You and your escort come.
Tastefully coifed,
Modishly attired,
A pearl gleaming from your ear lobe,
A profile exquisite and arresting,
With dark eyes that seem to suggest
Tragic possibilities.

 In sum:

You look like Anna Karenina--
But why, oh why, my pretty dear,
 Do you have to chew gum?

-Charles Eugene Mounts

ISOLATED IMAGE

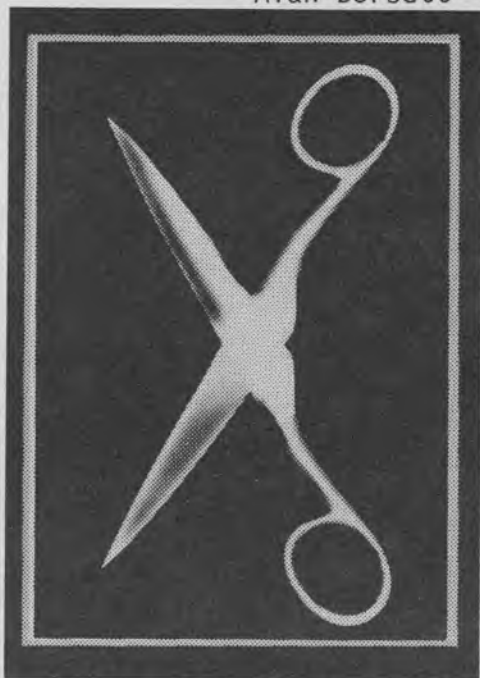
She cleaned carefully and fluffed the quilt
 knowing she would never return.
The broom in its closet,
 the bent woman locked the door behind her.
Contented--no one will ever know.
She trudged off into the crisp white snow.

-Lisa Stowe

ODE TO THE DOORKNOB

Probably man's greatest invention
Which has fallen prey to convention
But yet succeeds in its intention
And still commands such great attention
While some are curved, some have indention
Some few ornate, but not to mention
Some have a place for key retention
Said key when turned releases tension
And now the mind lives in suspension
Wonders about that next dimension
The doorknob surely earns its pension
Without it doors are poor inventions
Which would quickly lose our attention
And drop our minds from said suspension.

-Alan Dorsett



EL DESPERTAR DE UN INTELLECTO

Andaba ella con un alma vigilante por las estrechas veredas que se extendían hacia la enorme universidad. La vieja torre del edificio administrativo se elevaba alta, en un cielo vasto y eterno. Allá arriba en la torre se encontraban las grandes campanas, que al sonar, arcaicas y ruidosas, sacudían a cualquier espíritu errante. Al oír ella estas campanas, sus ansias de entrar por aquellas puertas altas y desconocidas, aumentaban y se convertían en anhelos profundos de solemne pasión.

Era la universidad una institución del intelecto. Entraban todas las mañanas por las puertas principales los profesores, que con sus papeles y malentines, parecían abogados notarios. Entonces surgían los numerosos estudiantes. Estos enmascaraban el recinto entero, como millones de hormigas aglomeradas; algunas extraviadas; otras marcando sus pasos.

Sentía ella al ser testigo de esta ciudad estudiantil unos deseos de entrar por aquellas puertas principales y satisfacer su sedienta curiosidad. Comenzó su corazón a latir de repente, con un ritmo acelerado y resonante. En sus venas sintió un impulso que la forzó a entrar en el edificio, como un hechizo que hipnotizaba su dócil ser. Sentía ella que su alma era desafiada por aquellos salones y estructuras que servían de sostén a aquel reino académico. Comenzó a subir aquellos escalones de mármol negro, mientras que el eco de sus pasos se hacía más evidente. Oía ella unas voces que venían de salones y oficinas; mensajes

de conocimiento y sabiduría; mensajes que llegaban a su mente como rayos de luz que iluminaban su intelecto. Sus pasos cesaron, y su alrededor concimiento. Entonces miró ella hacia arriba, y vió que las campanas habían comenzado a sonar.

-Marisa Firpi



BUBBLES

Nothing I want to say
You want to hear.
Words bubble up from
My throat--
Bursting out of my mouth.
Popping even before they reach the air.
Never floatin free
To rest where they will.
Only exploding inside my head;
Left to ferment, sour, mellow, age.

-Renee Henry Marsh

HOMO NOCTURNUS

The night calls me out
To where there are no godly devout.
I roam among faces
That come from different places.
Dead eyes and stoic mouths
Are bound by one dark cloud.
Shunned by daylight,
These creatures of the night,
These souls that wave no banner
Can be found at Al's all-nite diner.

-Warren Owens



HERMIT AGED

Sand, flung by the hand.

Hobbling to sand solid seawalls where ripple
ripples with a sigh

I go. And I know.

A shell laden on my back--

A shell too well;

A skeleton of love life lost in the sighing
ripples on the sand.

Counting, courting the coarse grains

The heavy shells. I know them lying

Under sighing ripples on the sand.

That feeble sigh among the husky grains of a
love life lost.

Hermits lost;

Crying salt tears under wet sand shell husks.

A ripple lying on the sand

Sighing its lie to my dying heart shell.

Lying--

A rolling ripple appears--

A gentle dry kiss from a chapped wind blow

that blew the swell

that swelled the wave

that waved and waved and waved

Warning to the shore shells.

It waved and waved and--

Its warning: a sighing wave.

My shell heart shaped by the crying shells and
sighing swells.

Hobbling the wet grained beach ground I
groaned,

A groan blown by the dry chapped, cracked
wind-lips

A hoarse groan blown with grain husks
To dry eyes that scanned the sand and did not
understand

This new ancient lost love land--
Land of husk shells jammed to grains of sand.

One aged hermit, no longer dry eyed by the
sighing ripples

And blown sand.

No one makes his lonely way among the husks
of shells, of sand...

And aged, the hermit understands...

The love lost plan
now sand.

-Pat Connelly

DUKE WILLIS

We'd parked us in a curve
outside in Richmond
just down the woods ways
from where the young Williams' kid
strangled that pup last year.

When I waked up under
the steering wheel
she was dead.

I weren't suspect.
I told the state cops that.
Told her husband that very night.
Walked square up to his porch screen.
Said, "I'm telling you three things:
Her last words before I fell asleep was,
'My husband's a no-good son-of-a-bitch.'
I don't have no hard feelin's 'gainst nobody.
I'll blow you away if you take angry,
I left. Didn't even look back.

She was a good woman.
I don't have no hard feelin's
'gainst nobody.

-John Moehlmann

WATERSNAKES

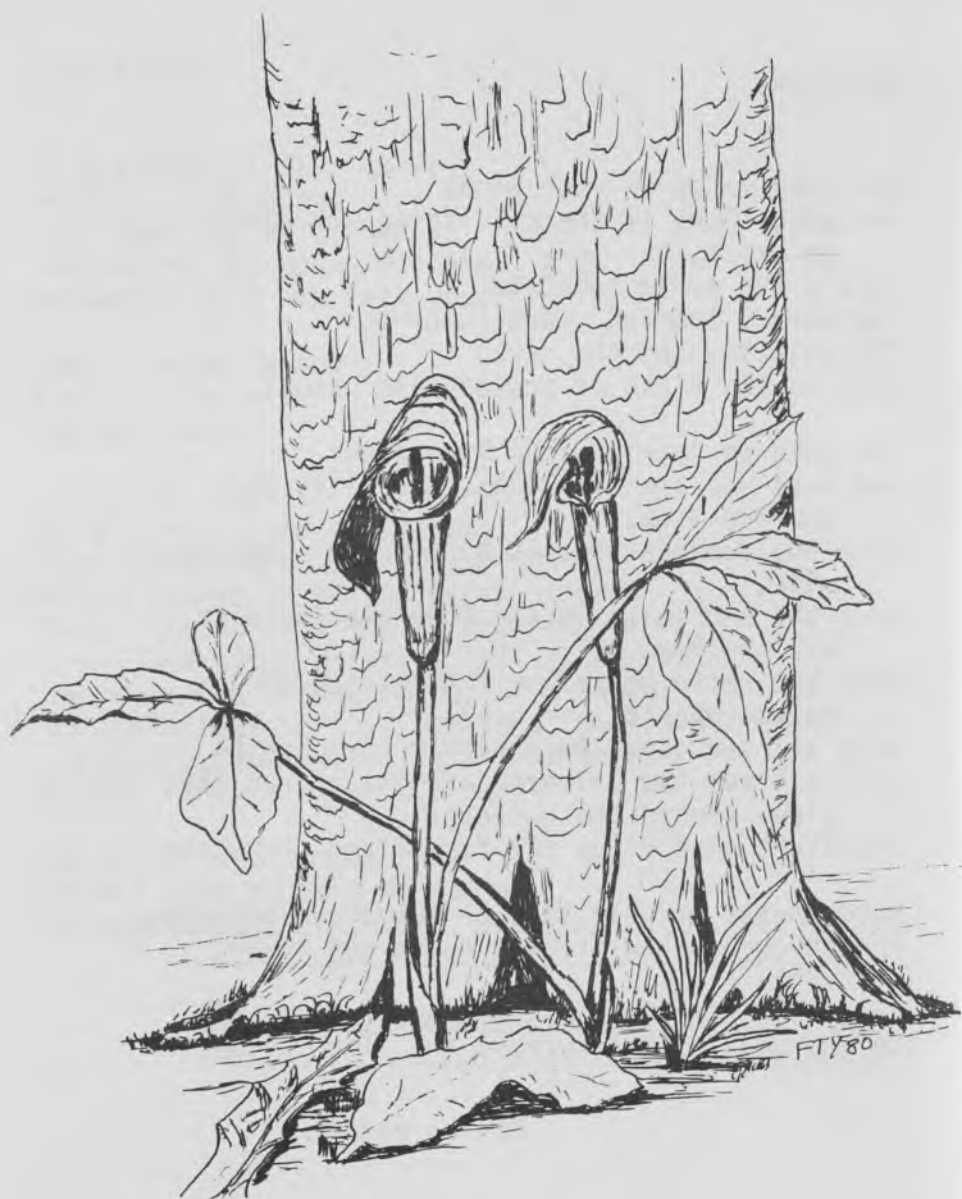
You take me up in your hands
And say, "Here is the wild thing who gives
me peace,
Here's the world complete,
The moist, teeming, fertile dirt,
The galaxies and the dark,
Here is the flesh of ecstasy and pain."

You take me in with your gray eyes
And here you are all sizes, the Milky Way
and the atom,
Here the woman's breasts hang heavy with sweet
milk,
Here the man walks in the Eden evening with
his brother,
Here the child hears her father, law and
metamorphosis,
Here all see glory necessarily surrounding
Here all see the universe and the nimbus that
glows around the universe,
The light that rings the finger and the stone.

Watersnakes wriggle through submerged branches
And through elbow-crooked roots and waving
roots--

They say, "The current carries or moves all,"
On the back of the current the light glides.

Marion Hodge



THE TOWN POET GERMINATES

I

A slanted tree bare of leaves with snarled branches: a hawk hoverin' over the lot, the ground where I've planted my garden.

I've watched Main for years, sittin' here on these steps--the only thing left of Old Man Brown's house. They finally came and tore down the house that sat abandoned before I was born.

But I can still sit here and watch the town pass by, or I can look across the street at the tree throwin' a shadow across my garden. They're buildin' behind the tree. The Gray Mansion stood behind the tree and covered the whole lot. Why didn't they move the tree when they moved the mansion? I've wondered.

Hoverin' hawk, do you think about the flesh you eat?

II

I still like Pete Gray. Once, he took me into the Gray Mansion. Yet he told me that while my father worked his jobs of haulin' beer and pumpin' gas, Mr. Gray would meet my mother at the back door of his mansion.

Pete also told me how him and my sister would sneak into Old Man Brown's abandoned house when they could've just stayed in his bedroom. When my sister started gaining weight, Pete wouldn't have anything to do with her. Well--she likes to eat. What of it? She also uses the bathroom, durn it... What the heck if she has anorexia and if she isn't able to work?

III

People call me weirdo, but I just walk to these steps every mornin' and figure what's best for my crowd.

Nobody calls me good ol' boy anymore: I quit working construction. I'm still a good ol' boy, for I'm the gardener. I set here watchin' the town go while my garden's growing.

The sanitation boys speeds down Main--probably have to unclog a line. The preacher hurries down Main: George Blevin's eat up with cancer. There goes the undertaker; he nods at me. I wave.

Once my buddy, the dope addict, sat here and asked me about gardenin'. I told him the miracle of makin' somethin' so pure from somethin' so dirty.

IV

Sirens, sirens. A-ouw, a-ouw. A coyote. A-ouw, A-ouw. Here comes the red flashin' boomer bustin' down Main:

"C.J. Blue! C.J. Blue! Your house's on fire! Hop on the back!"

"No, boys, I'm sittin' here watchin' my garden grow. I ain't worried."

"Hah! I reckon next you'll say you own Mr. Gray's offices bein' built there."

"The rows've been furrowed--the fertilizer done been massaged--the seeds've done been planted."

"Hah! Hah! Yourpapa's a sissy--your sister's a loony--your mama's a whore!" "But you put out the fires cause I'm the town gardener."

"Yeah. I reckon while you work your rows a dove'll swoop down and carry you up to heaven."

"A hawk'll carry me away; for boys, I'll guarantee ya, there ain't no doves in this town, yet."

-James Grose

WHITER THAN THE ABSENCE OF COLOR

A ghostly iridescence wakes me
A radiance unifying the outside world
As breathtaking as the frozen wind.

Still falling, silently growing
Cotton in the sky
Sugar on the ground
Whiter than the absence of color.

A sudden blinding flash comes
From a glimmer of sun
A small leak in the impenetrable clouds
Squint, see the world decorated with diamonds.

-Kim Higgins

UNTITLED

To write a poem that matters
 involves having lived a little
Having smelled the stench of a sycamore tree —
 on a dreary day
or having babies, maybe twins.
It means more than typing all day
 and listening to the midnight bells.
It means growing this seed
 this seed mustard seed,
somewhere between the heart and the groin
and filling it full as a bloated fish
with passion.
 Shoot that pompous ass with passion!
 Make him grovel at your feet!
Stuff him full of beet tops--
 and call it poetry.

-Charles Burton

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