

HOBART's PARK



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Davidson College

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HOBART'S PARK

Staff

Editor	Aida Fayar Doss
Managing Editor	Marshall Waddell
Poetry/Fiction	Nancy McNair
Essays	Ann Tutwiler, Andy Miller
Artwork	Gia Partain
Photography	Whit Yelverton

Editor's Prerogative

This issue of Hobart's Park marks a milestone of sorts in Davidson's literary history. For the first time, the college community will be able to read several of the prize-winning stories and poems from the annual Vereen Bell writing competition.

Jim Robertson's first place story "You Always Was A Pretty Boy," appears in this issue. Several of Sue Dehoney's poems, for which she won second place, were printed in the last issue of Hobart's Park. Four others are printed in this issue. Minor Sinclair and Jeff Morrow shared third place. Minor's story "A Road Has No End" was also in this winter's issue. Unfortunately, space considerations did not allow us to print Jeff's story. Cathie Chester and Connie McLean were both awarded Honorable Mentions and their poetry appears here.

And finally: an admittedly personal and shameless plug for the magazine. We've got something good going here; let's not let it die. Davidson needs a quality magazine to showcase its creative students. Keep those manuscripts and artwork coming...and refer any questions, criticisms, help, or praise to next year's editor—Eddie Harrison!

—Aida Fayar Doss

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Copy breakers throughout the magazine are by Gia Partain, Bun Walter, and Marshall Waddell.

Black

I would (like to) be black. If I were black
I would give
the Black Look and sport dark skin
on my arms.
My fingernails and palms and smile
would strike stark
contrast
to my dark.
When I bought black person's cosmetics
they would enhance it
With black charms
to win
black girls.

There would be a black butt
perched over my black legs
(which would run fast-
er than white
ones) and I could dunk.
I would have rhythm and soul and funk,
know the black step and dance it.
My head would sprout black curls
that would not comb.

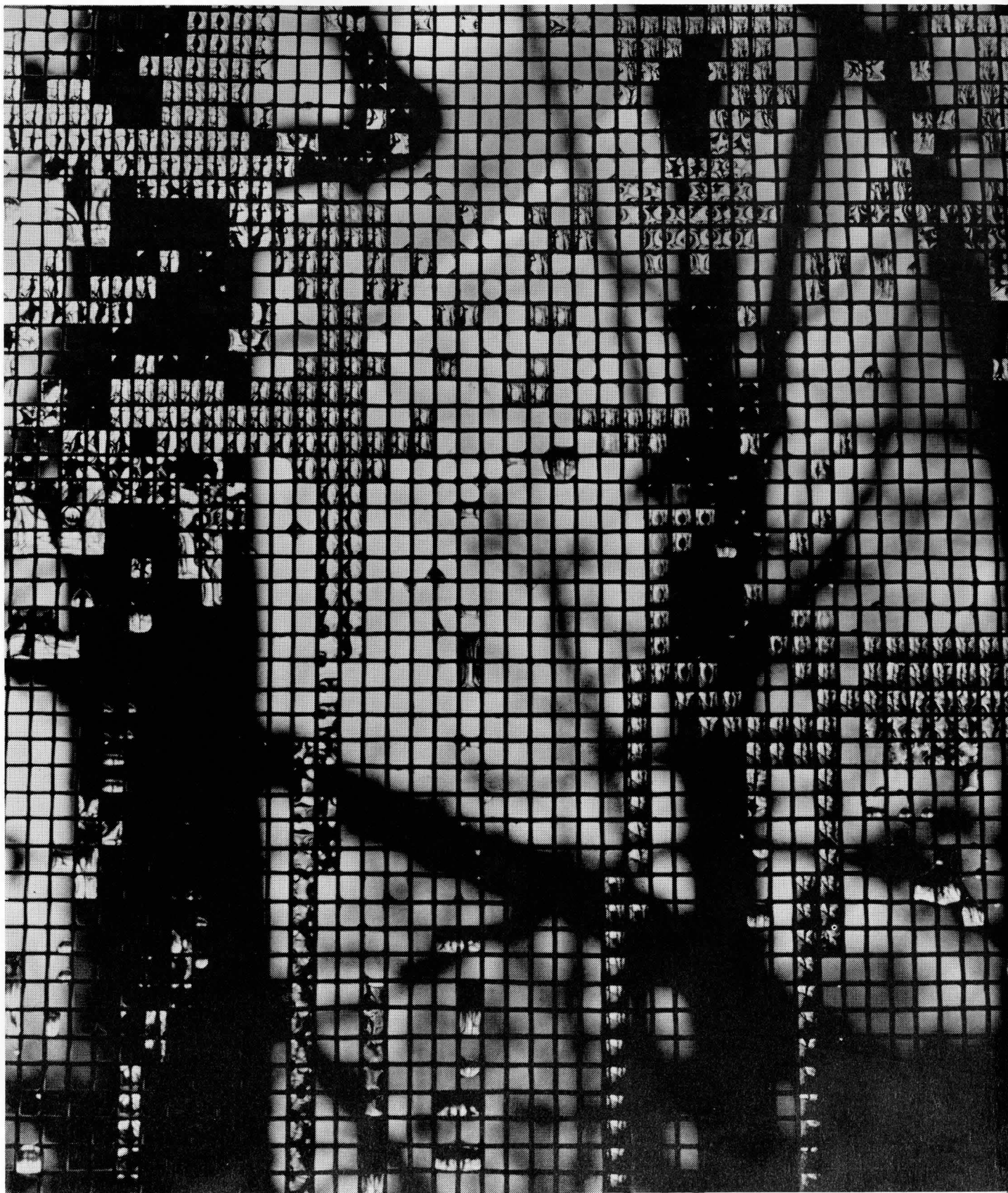
But I would speak right
and have the black thing
sing
be street wise
have brown eyes
branded
as Black.

I'd live
in a black home
and have the re-markable style
of the race and lean in my strut.

And I want to be left-handed.

—David Banks





Window No. 1

John Highsmith

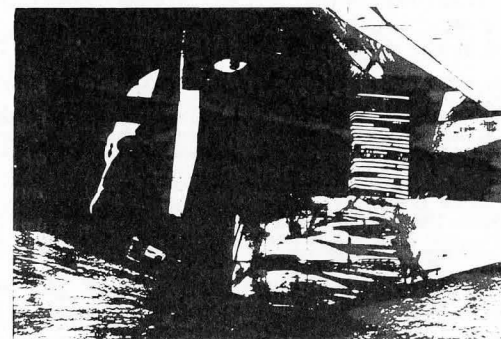
Hobart's Park

You Always Was A Pretty Boy

You lookin' good, Nathan. You always was a pretty boy."

I smiled as Leila told me that, although I feared it would come out as more of a half-twist on my lips. She had always admired my looks and told me as much. The room closed in on me with its bare clutter; Leila's oldest son John, who lived up in Indianapolis now, had given her a huge oak music console complete with a built-in imitation fireplace that took up most of one wall and jutted out toward me. The plastic red coals turned slowly while July burned outside, and the console's glow made it hotter. A lone air conditioner sputtered in the next room but the cool didn't reach me. Leila wasn't even beading yet. I thought about asking her to turn off the console hearth but decided against it. Instead I asked her how she felt.

"Well, my blood's been low lately but I'm doin' all right. Ticia's what I got to look after. She don't eat nothin' and fixin' to look skinny like she thinks you got to look startin' high school. Now that makes me feel old!" She chuckled softly as children laughed and squealed outside. I looked out the window and saw them across the road, small arms and legs and hands somehow hanging on to a fast-spinning tire swing.



"I told you not to swang on that ol' rope! Now lay quiet on the couch while I call your daddy and see what he says do." My left elbow burned into the muscle surrounding it. I wanted to move but it hurt so much that I lay still like Leila told me. Crying hurt but I cried anyway. Mama had gone shopping and Eliza wasn't even walking yet. Leila swished back in too long a time.

"Your daddy says he'll carry you down to the clinic at lunchtime, so take these aspirin and drink this Co-Cola." She placed a washcloth on my head and gave me a look to make sure I was all right. I nodded and another nerve screamed as I did.

The back door slammed. A tall goateed black man, probably thirty, filled the doorway. "Oh, Reuben, this is my boy Nathan." I nodded self-consciously and tried to look relaxed as he mumbled something and shot me a quick, check-it-out glance before disappearing into a back room. She had told me a lot about little Reuben over time, how he'd been a good student but dropped out to join the Navy, seen Nam and then moved to Indianapolis too. Up there, she said, you could make good money. She'd made good money, too, baking pastry at the E-lite Cafe until it burned in fifty-six which put her out of work for too long though big Reuben swept up at the clinic when Mama hired her to clean house and take care of Nathan Bedford Forrest Stone, newly-adopted infant son.

"Your mama's your mama, don't ever forget it, Nathan." Leila lectured me on that point repeatedly when Mama went shopping, but my parents rarely discussed it. Leila drilled Eliza on the same subject as soon as she could understand. I'd tease Eliza and say Leila was really her mama but one day Leila caught me saying it and she just stared and I never said it again.

Smoke poured out of a house in town that we could see from up on the hill with the binoculars I had gotten that day for Christmas. Everybody wanted to look through them. Faint horns and sirens, almost whispers, teased our ears and I tried to follow the fire trucks with the glasses but my friends kept jiggling my arm for their turn so I never got a good look. Late in the afternoon Mama got a call that kept her motionless for a moment, and I wouldn't believe that the smoke had come from Leila and Reuben's house. They got out in time with all six children and Ticia just a baby but that old shack was gone. Mama called some people and Eliza started grabbing clothes while Daddy just sat back real quietly, smoking his pipe and reading "Fortune" and I turned on Championship Wrestling. Soon they left for Leila's and Daddy fell asleep in his chair and I cut off the T.V. Two years later the City Council condemned four blocks of shanties in that part of town and Daddy built two

office buildings near where Leila and Reuben's house had stood.

It surprised me that Leila had moved so long ago to this tiny government house wedged in with hundreds of other 235's on the edge of town.

"You know I'd still work if I could, Nathan."

I nodded.

"It's just that I ain't got nobody to carry me up to your place from out here and your mama don't like to drive half an hour to get me. I don't blame her. And too, my blood's been low."

I nodded, looking directly at her. She had tried to fix herself up, or so I thought, but she fit poorly in her yellow print dress with flowers on it. The dress tugged at her thick shoulders although it had no sleeves, and now droplets of sweat oiled her wide face. Little Reuben appeared again in the door.

"You need anything, Mama?" he asked, looking at me blankly. She smiled as she shook her head and the beads danced.

"Behave now, heah?" she yelled as he vanished and the back door slammed. Having him home pleased her—she said it made her feel younger to have two children at home—but he'd leave Friday and Ticia would follow him before she knew it. It seemed to worry Leila; probably Ticia's good looks would take her away from her mama long before Leila thought she would go.

It was women that Ticia would look like some day, pretty women, that big Reuben had messed with, as well as others who just liked him, according to Mama. Leila knew he'd messed with them; she must have told Mama a lot more than I heard, but I'd hear her mutter about how he was low down and fooled with trash and she'd leave him tomorrow if it wasn't for the children. Still, he'd always waited on her in a beat-up white Plymouth down where their house used to be to take her home after I dropped her off. Reuben would slouch in his seat, sticking up a hand and sometimes sliding his face into a smile. Then he would drive off with her, and how could she leave him then?

The flowers curled, wrinkled as she rose out of her chair to fix some iced tea. "That's an awful pretty dress you got on, Leila," I said.

"Why, thank you, Nathan." She looked genuinely pleased, and I felt a natural smile crossing my face.

"I bought it a while back but it's cool for summer," she yelled from the kitchen. Ice clinked into glasses and it cracked as the hot tea washed over it. She

returned with the tea and for a moment we sat back quietly, almost like enjoying small talk that lets you drift, half-listening to other people's thoughts, when even slight motions of air will cool you much more than usual if only you'll let them. Then somebody glides by in a certain manner and that air gets sucked away, or sometimes a phrase stuck in the middle of a sentence does it, sometimes at the end.

I looked up from my bowl and there it sat on page one. White scrap metal lined the wet tracks that



glowed in the car lights. They hadn't identified the woman yet but a wallet said the man was Reuben. Part of me wanted to stop eating, but the flakes weren't soggy yet so I finished. His hand kept sticking up in my mind. Had that sliding smile eased Leila into the car instead of some girlfriend? Mama tried calling but the phone was already busy. She tried again in a few minutes. Still tied up. She was planning to go to Birmingham for the day and wasn't leaving until she got through to Leila's house but I said I'd find out and besides she really couldn't miss that sale. She left. I dialed the fifth, even the sixth number and then hung up.

The phone rang. Leila rose up out of her chair and went into the kitchen. The coals burned brighter in the console now, or maybe the room just felt hotter. Two overstuffed chairs, the console, a battered coffee table with a ceramic lamp on it, and a loveseat ate up

the room. This was her best room. The small window opposite the console magnified the sunlight, catching the thin rug in splotches. Maybe that's what made it hotter. Still, the room wasn't bright. I heard Leila hang up the phone and I wiped my brow.

The dull yellow in her eyes had a clay color. She tried to look at me blankly like little Reuben had done, as if what she was going to say, and my answer, didn't matter one way or the other. Her eyes twitched slightly. She remained standing on short fat legs but I didn't get up. She held an aging Hav-a-Tampa cigar box with both hands. The box was not very dusty, just cracking on the edges.

"Nathan, I never asked you to do me no favors when I could do it myself. Your mama knows I always paid her back loaned money on time."

"I know, Leila."

"And you know I'd work if I could, but after Reuben nobody'd carry me up the hill though I don't blame your mama."

"You don't have to explain, Leila." Which one of us was sweating more?

"I guess you want to know what's in the box."

"Not if you don't want to show me, Leila, and you know that's all right."

"Here, see what you think." She shoved the box in my hands. I stared up at her but now she was managing little Reuben's look. The Hav-a-Tampa slipped away and sunlight caught flashes and glints that splashed the tight room and scattered the stillness.

Old silver littered the rug. For a moment it looked like a lot. "Where did you get all this, Leila?" I asked in a too loud voice.

"Been savin' it since before I married Reuben, for when we might need it. My mama gave me a little, and then an aunt some more. I don't know how I kep' it hid from him as long as I did. He'd steal it for drinkin' and trouble. No good at all. But the chillun. . ."

She paused, not finishing. I knew she couldn't finish. The son's gaze that she had mastered slipped away from me and then slipped away from her and she sat down.

I started putting the coins back in the box, picking them up at the edges like I remembered from my Mercury head dime collection.

"I know you know old money, Nathan." She watched me retrieve each coin from the rug, not possessively, just interested in how I touched the coins, lightly, probably the opposite of how Reuben had grabbed a silver dollar when she didn't expect it. The last coin finished off another row and I closed the lid: I stood up from my crouch and held the box out to

her.

"No, Nathan. Sell it. Get what you can. You'll do better than me." She looked proud and determined in a strange way sitting in her chair next to the console. She looked out the window so I walked into the kitchen with the box and flipped back the lid. I looked in the phone book and dialed the number. Five numbers, six. The back door slammed and Reuben walked by into a back room, seeing me completely and not at all. Seven.

"He'll give me seventy-five dollars, Leila. He should pay more, I know, but he won't, at least not over the phone. Said he'd need to see 'em before going any higher. He's right, you know. Most I could probably get would be a hundred, maybe one-fifteen." I wanted it to sound matter of fact, like small talk drifting, but instead I halted and then ran on too loud so that Reuben could hear. He would have heard anyway.

Leila stared at me and didn't say anything. I wanted to tell her that she shouldn't worry that the money wasn't worth more because soon it would rise and I would keep trying to find a better price, maybe in Birmingham, but in the meantime could I lend her some cash? I held the box out to her instead.

"I guess you didn't expect me askin' no favors when I called and I did want to see you while you were home, Nathan." She rose up out of her chair without looking at me.

"The price'll go up, Leila, and I'll check with you next time I'm home." The words jumbled together, clashed with my eyes, refused to float and rushed by her instead (didn't they?).

The eyes sputtered, cooled. The air conditioner gave up. She looked at the box attached to outstretched arms and hands and reeled it in from me. July only glowed now outside. I stepped out of the room and to the front door.

"Are you sure I can't help?"

"No, Nathan. It's all right. Ticia's older now and we can move up with John—no, with Reuben—if things don't get better. They been tellin' me that for a long time." She gleamed in the doorway, holding the Hav-a-Tampa box and gazing into me with that same look I had felt when she greeted me. "You was a pretty boy, Nathan."

"I'll be seein' you, Leila," I said, and turned from her eyes. I walked quickly to my car and the air refused to move. I waved at the glowing figure—the sun was just right for it now—and then took short breaths as I pulled from the curb and the yard and the burning console.

—Jim Robertson

•••

Untitled

Even with this rain the pavement's warm—
spilling up from the post-office doors
and down the street.

Streetlights are like stars tonight
that fall in rain-drops;
they splinter black and bright
against the asphalt.

In front of me,
two girls are running, dodging the rain;
it's odd I shouldn't know their names—
this town's so small in summer.

In mirrors made of darkened storefronts
I watch them run;
their tilted hips
and tilting breasts,
so much younger than mine.

Reaching the last window
and past the last streetlight,
they dive into the rain—
dive and disappear.

I turn and see
I too, am watched—
she, a woman in the glass;
we stand, and stare, pulled down by rain—
or tear streaked,
on the window panes.

She is heavy lidded,
heavy lipped; her body,
changing in every glass,
will always be breast and hips.

A corner of my brain is bent
with heat—
she breathes
—and these few weeks I've lived without myself,
as though there were nothing underneath—
I nod,
we nod, and walk the windows.

We stand each other to where the storefronts end—
to where the mirrors break, and I throw her down:
with the weight of our body, her voice, my mind—
I step out, again,
under rain—
I drown...

—Sue Dehoney



Petit-mort

a man, only,
would call it that—
my friend had said
—a 'petit-mort',
one's little death;
as if its worth lay alone in lack
or the end of all else:
a private apocalypse—

if so,
it would be
this little death
that could take your face from me
again and again—
turning it in to you
and taking you away
as far as death could,
ever.
but no—
in this aftermath I learn
precisely why my friend is wrong,
and why a woman
knows the petit-mort
who's seen a love die thousands
of tiny deaths;
they'll follow each other one by one
like a Penthouse dream...

why
now, alone at night
I'll die one sole small death,
and wake
these mornings,
having dreamt I remembered
how it is
at all,
one lives.

—Sue Dehoney

Hobart's Park

The Last Season

We've been up to watch the leaves change over,
three generations and one car;
the roads that fold toward Blowing Rock
are not too far
for us, or others.

It's long since we've been here last.
Now, important, and posted at the windows,
we're to catch the colors flying past
and call them for my grandfather.

He has brought winter with him here;
nodding between us, he stares
hard against his snowy eyes,
and blinks.

From drying corn
and dying kudzu
we try to squeeze sugar maples—
the colors we're used to,
but the frost that spreads around us
has changed fall's focus;
it honors eyes that only see
what cataracts leave behind.

Field on field of the paling vines,
leaves that blow to powder, and dust the road in wind;
these are the shades that fill our eyes
and choke our words as they begin.

My grandfather shivers through the afternoon:
What's left to do but lean against that cold,
to hope that we can warm him soon?

For if he should close his eyes,
just now, and sleep,
would the mountains breathe again
and color turn their leaves?

And if we should come back another year,
older, after other summers and springs,
would the road lead us anywhere but here,
to this feeling of what the last season brings?

—Sue Dehoney



May 12, 1980

since last I've heard from you

it's gotten very hot here—
the air is grey with it.
I've been watching your oak tree—
the one my arms won't reach around,
wilt, while the sidewalk softens
and pulls at my shoes.
I should say: Pedestrians!
Beware of the ground beneath you feet—
it's melting!

There's no one here though,
to be saved—
the whole town's gone to the beach today
but me and a handicapped horse.
And he'd volunteer a last promenade—
do himself in if he found a forked tree,
a ragged edged fence, a cliff—
or maybe if he'd known from the start
he'd be looking
but just wouldn't see...
his eyes were torn when he was small,
and for a scar he's worn his life through, and all—
he's worn it well.
But he's only a horse.

My eyes
you know, are green with grey
that rings them and the things they see—
lately though, the grey's gotten wide,
and I can't say I really see much that's outside—
but I feel what is left;
what's left's left to die,
all hope is out there, and how I'm to try—
and though I know no fear is the same,
I tell you:
I'm scared.

And it's hot here,
and hotter—
and I wonder,
is it this way where you—
where are you?

a post-script with news:
It seems that the horse's just done himself in—
and everyone's here, just back from the beach—
and you may want to catch me while my eyes are still
green—
they're changing,

reply—

—Sue Dehoney



Gia Partain



Untitled

I robbed an old woman's garden
taking chrysanthemums and asters
of gold, rust and wine
from the tangled mass
of dead grass before winter.
In the twilight she watched me
behind her frosted window pane.
Only the rust and wine were mine
and she waits for me on the sidewalk
every morning, sweeping magnolia leaves.
She pulls streams of gold
from the eyes of the man growing old
who rides his bicycle
back and forth
along the deepening lines in my hands.

—Constance McLean

nancy & momma

light always light from the
backseat of a car carrying 2
adults and 4 children
breathless to Cockspur Island
we are going blackberry picking
we were well-equipped
with buckets, nets, gloves, mosquito repellent, songs, and ice water
shouting over the hot wind
that rushes in the car — going to the beach,
the island — the road is lined
with oleander bushes that flash
red and white red and white
filing all the way to Tybee
march of majesty to 4 children and
2 flower-mad adults,
both capable of heartbreakingly beautiful and enchanting stories
concerning all possible histories and purposes of the magical bushes
awesome as they whip the wind with color
—forever the drive to Cockspur Island
watching bush after bush blow by
plastered to the back seat singing
girl scout songs at the top of one's lungs
—tunelessness forgivable for children—
holding one's hand out the window
to feel the wind jerk it, catch it,
maybe lose it;
and the colors of intensity that were
only summer, the usual, when young

—Cathie Chester

S. F.

a little tremor
waves the chicken wire
and a white ostrich, black ram, a goat with twisted horns
roll their yellow eyes
but no one comes walking across yellow-starred fields
with a knife

my plane lands with a tremor
in this country so like Greece
where a rumble can shatter off a city park
or send black cliffs dropping on the filming of popular TV shows
along the fabulous shore road to L.A.
This is the cult murder capital of the world.
—Would you wanna raise children—?
—But its a great place/trendsetters for/starmakers/make
it/buy;settle;Drive Ferrari;build a redwood solar by the sea—
money, foam, heavy salt fogs
eucalyptus smell and anise burning spiral blue beneath
reminds; teasing fragility of
a flower-covered white rock pile
—Baby you could only love it here—
under the piles we feed the guardians who caress this fickle stillness
from the city

walking downtown
saw seaflavored cotton candy
twist through wedding cake streets
brushing brown foreheads and smooth papaya mouths
of smiling natives
their feet unseen in soft clouds that wind and obscure past their shoulders—
but their hands flash out with a glitter
and they smile pointed smiles

was she the one/ who / no/ its only the German baker lady
she sells croissannts and sacher / but she's old/no/ not old
enough — just watch her hands

and this is Berkeley. street sellers sit and hawk
like creatures without legs — blasted, gums chins red
white eyes pinned to your collar
that corners wont unloose / why do you see them
that way? This is Berkeley

which god brings madness?
sun under cloud and the legless trunks reach out, tearing ankles
bite thighs rip genitals down to the pavement / colored chalk and
blood stread like silty come across callused palm
handprinted bodies rolling

red streaked centaurs shake laughing from the shoulder, rippling suncolored hair—
centaur stumps without horse bodies
headless horses run watering the bad rock beneath the streets
w/ blood

I wouldn't mind (so much)
but your neighbor
loaned his stereo, a bottle of Zinfandel, his smile—
butchered his white goat, goose, and rabbits
cut his wife in pieces and the red lights came to our back door
The dog got in the corpses bcaus
she came home stiff / her face dried blood
and I had to soak it out
points so sharp around her eyes they could have hurt / and they were
mixed pieces,
which throat she nestled in, licked whose blood ?

Come on/ baby/ safe/ safety lies in certainty
this sunny day, blue sky blue sea
my hand—its brown warm salty from holding
a little bite tastes sweet acidic — soft peel
this muscle beneath your thumb is live it jumps
like the 2 halves of muscle in your calf your certain legs
climbing before me up redblack ocean cliffs
your hidden blood, covered body and these internal cliffs
dumping their insides
cubes and sheets of splinters spill
as a cold wave slaps a glittering vein
waves suck & lick at broken teeth

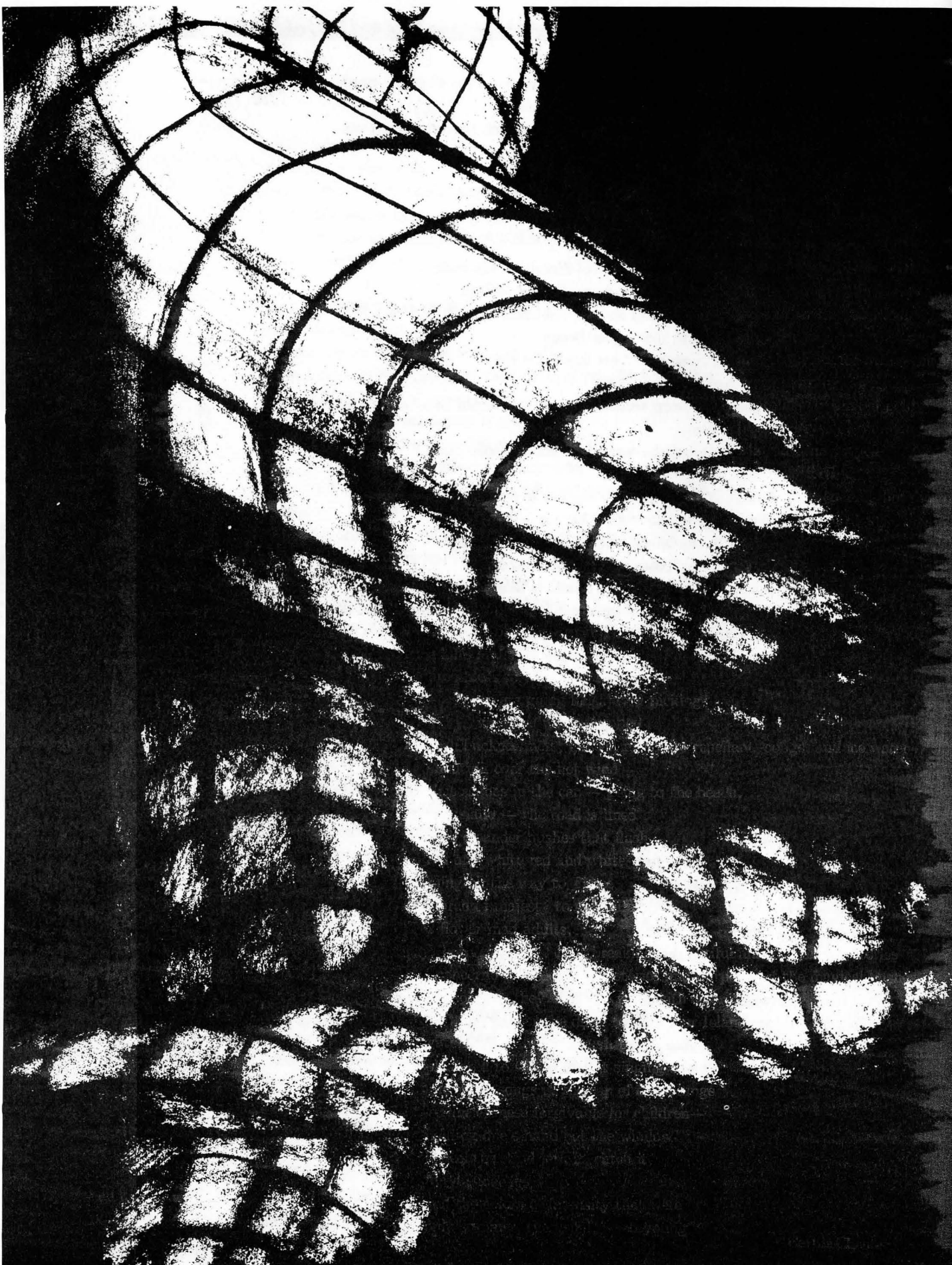
they pasture climbing sheep on these cliffs
sea sheep sacrificial
where is their keeper
the man who watched us up
his goat will watch us down

turn for me, your hand—these cliffs are concave
standing on the edge you're undemined

which god are you
standing black against the gold beating on these teeth / smiling in the wind
a smile in your yellow eyes
I couldn't hear it if the whole side crumbled
and vanished in that licking with a roar
the wind roars louder
blow arching over your shoulders, beating —you draw me to it
tremors drowned in a caress a slip a

shove into a louder roar

—Cathie Chester



The Gigolo

(listen
to the drums
beat)

Leaves of earth
spread over us

we walk on burnt skin
and then
her orange fires
make us hot to dance.

Milk maids shiver
beneath their mothers
warming
a cheek
on her bosom.

Later a pig spins
through the flames
and we may eat soon.

Each one of us is hungry.

Songs of bathing

I stretch
around me curls

I wave
to close my skin.

(the air is sweat)

I sing
I sing
of waves
of thighs
through loins
of songs
of bathing.

Six by Tim Bethea

The Harvest So

She places red flowers
onto the coffee table:

the chimes blow single
notes through the room;

her lover kneels
in the garden
pulling weeds

and drops
roll down his dark back.

October

spreads over a town
too small to handle
New Jersey sin

you are too fast
and you have no women

Good night
and drink up cups
of cheer

passing daughters
of fiery friendship.

The Toast

wake me
with a whisper on my face

wake me
warmly and lay your hair in mine

before our neighbors know
draw me up-side down
with your tongue

and pour me out of the sheets
and sweeten me with coffee
and drink me over toast.

Ginger in the Sea

While
the sea shouts
with her

she calls to
she calls to

she lays down again
and

her fingers wave
in and out of
sunlight.

The Living Symphony

1

Words

Words whirl in air
Thud into the plum-pudding
Wrinkled sponge of my brain
Waltz in the grey mist
Above salt marshes—and
Whisper behind mountain hemlocks,
Always elusive.
The ring of the moon is made of them,
Swarming around the glacial flower
Bittersweet bearer of madness
And meaning.
In the family room at ten
My sister and I weave webs of words,
Lacing the silver strands
Above the sleeping sunlight
From bookcase to coffee table
Till the room glows with our dreams.
Midnight conversations,
We toss words across the table—
Round red metaphors
Flung smiling
Into the spaces between us.
Alone, I string words,
Watery pearls on the clothesline at dawn,
Shimmering in fleeting perfection.

Words
Are the dizzying leap,
The dangerous voluntary vomiting
Of ourselves.
And still the wordsmiths labor
Longing for the Word
That stirred the universe
Announcing, from the dark and empty wastes,
The poem's commencement.

2

At the Pond

Though he was half-winged and absurdly fat
He was a King.
His royal stance—
Quick tilt of neck
Upthrust at my intrusion—
Parted the air.
Then, the procession:
His slow and solemn dance
In velvet orange slippers
Followed at a respectful distance
By his faithful concubine.
Two yards away,
He surveyed my alien presence
With grace, wound-stiffened,
Of an old warrior
Fragile in his majesty.
His measured glance
Locked into mine
With curious intelligence.
Ridiculous, to be
Intimidated.

But I left.



3

Puritan Flower

Dark seed stinks inside me
Nestles somewhere in my guts
Then, delicate tendrils trail
Up unseen avenues
(My esophagus sweetened with green)
Emerging: my hair entwined
They burst bright to bloom.
Thus does guilt make human,
Make good the movements of my life
In Calvinistic creation.
There is no controlling
Of the process. Too long
The stern old faith precedes me,
Pulses in my blood.
Clasped hands, wasted with work
Foreheads furrowed in tearful prayer
My grandmothers, my grandfathers
Rise in my heart: it comes again.

Scoff at it, rational ones
The guiltless generation, golden
In the California sun!
Say no good can come
From dark, squirming secrets
And cringing fear.
Your polyethylene flowers
Spring sterile from psychedelic soil
Unreal and beautiful.

Yet I have seen the maggots
And wet pink skin of earthworms
Around the roots of roses.
The trembling, luminescent hands
Would wilt without the dark,
Crawling soil, death-filled, beneath.
Nature does not segregate
The bitter from the sweet
They dance, in flower, animal
In water gazing at the sky
They dance, entwined, within our blood—
And ebb and flow our actions' tide.



4

Rosary

Today, the sea strokes shores
With our fluid fingers—gulls soar
Sun pours on ferns and stones
And burns in shattered glass
On highways—half worlds away
Fenceposts scowl guards sway
With drink—the prisoner awakes
To concrete walks and question marks
And in the single window
Clouds hug bars and sing.

It is Spring—the daffodils
Smooth, golden clarions, peer at earth
With quizzical expressions
The sky floats light as sighs
Of waking trees.
Do flowers appease
Burstings of darker, uglier things?
For despite strangling-sure cement
She blooms glorious again
Nature, consoler or indifferent
Shining through our excrement.

O dark-eyed friend—your heart that sees
The tears of children, lilt of sea
Sing the living symphony
Sing the living symphony

—Elizabeth Kiss

(Editor's Note: This poem was awarded an Honorable Mention in the R. Windley Hall writing competition for freshmen.)



Indians as a race

No, you couldn't have seen
surely not, I don't see,
of course you didn't,
how could you?

Usually by then I didn't
either, but the white casts
on both legs with the little hole
to pee through and the nakedness
in the sun caught my eye
as we passed by sweating.

A girl, I think maybe ten,
the cup beside her in the fine, taupe dust
—you know, the color of the skirt my mother made me
the trip—I guess she was alive
though I don't really know;
she didn't move

How could she? Yes,
I guess you're right, with the casts
She was still there
when we passed by on our way back
to the hotel as it was getting dark.
Of course, it's horrible
I don't understand who
would leave her there myself.

Someone told us the pimps
maim the children to make them better beggars
so I guess someone had broken her legs.
Well, I know. It's *awful*.
I suppose the Indians
who see it everyday
have grown too used to it
for it to matter much in New Delhi.

How could they? Oh, I
agree, to leave her there
in the hot sun all day
what *kind* of people
could pass by, without even stopping,
(I should have killed her then to save the time and pain
of dying) like I did

—Carol Loptson

I know about age

Age is no creeping wrinkle,
no loosening flesh,
no parched twig bones,
or even time.

Age is misconstrued
as birthdays and ceremonies
piled up in graves.

Age is not barnacles of experience
encrusting first form,
leaving harsh edges
and armoring scars;

no, my elderly
as you slip
into senior citizenship
(an awkward term in even poems)
and lose validity thus,

Age is not time, as you know
from some children's eyes
and watching forty-five years
pressed into faces
supposed to be thirty.

Age is not history, written up
in crinkled letters,
and torn edges
of photographs and yellowed satin,
or shoeboxes
of layered tissue and dead pressed memories.

Thanks to Elizabeth Arden
we all know the secret-of-youth,
shall I tell you the secret of age?
I know at twenty-one.

Age is only
wishing you didn't know
what you know too certain
now.

—Carol Loptson



Window No. 2

John Highsmith

Hobart's Park

New Delhi, November 28

At the end of August, during our Semester-In-India Program Orientation, our director had the eleven of us play "simulation games." For one game, we were assigned to groups of three and told to go to the local mall, introduce ourselves to people as Martians, and ask them questions on twentieth century Earth culture. In such ways did we prepare ourselves for India.

Three months later, I am listening to the ticking of Tom's travel alarm clock, in a room of half-sleeping people in New Delhi.

And if that isn't the most ridiculous thing I can imagine. . .

We are mildly sick. Our bodies are tired and filled with Asian parasites and bacteria, but it is our minds, filled with Asian faces and fine dust and crowded buses and too much Mughal architecture, that retreat to sleep and the quiet comfort of the clock; a clock ticking like the one on my grandmother's mantelpiece except this is on the bedstand in the Hotel Imperial and our grandmothers are miles away. So we smile, or just gaze towards the other beds and chairs. To other comatose victims. Each of us stranded on our islands of white sheets and rubbery cushions. There is humor in it.

Becky sees it. "This is funny."

We concentrate on well worn inside jokes, when we concentrate on anything at all:

"Is it raining?" . . . "Thank you," or

"We just hit four ducks."

Occasionally someone gets up to make the trip to the toilet. Someone says they want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white soft bread. It is twilight, and I think of the Hindu myth of Vishnu killing the demon on the porch at twilight: neither in day nor night, neither in the house nor outside. So our lives seem now---suspended; neither this nor that.

"Random."

It has become our tradeword in a culture and situation that sometimes makes no sense to us. "Random" temples, "random" souvenirs, "random" beggars. We are not warriors. We are not missionaries. We are not businessmen. We are not diplomats. We are not even tourists. We have no mission, no real reason for being here, and we are feeling it today.

"What time is dinner?" Becky is fidgeting.

"Seven-thirty." It is only five.

There are no real questions anymore. No more "why are we here?"'s. We've gone through all the questions by now, and the ones that are left we cannot answer.

We focus on the fact that we will, most of us, be home in three weeks, and then we will be able to eat hamburgers, pizza, and pancakes. And turkey.

"What I'd really like, is a package of cheese and crackers and a Dr. Pepper. That's my favorite latenight snack at Davidson." John, who has had a fever for two days, muses on, "Davidson really curls up, tucks itself in at night."

Those of us from Davidson remember how, in the middle of the term sometimes all the lights are out by two a.m., and only the lamplights on the brick walks stay on. Some of the dorm halls still are lit by their overhead fluorescent panels, but the halls are empty except for book piles, a few plastic cups half full of Coke, one or two phones, and the gray plastic trash cans at the ends of the halls, filled with *Charlotte Observers*, "Tab" cans, and "Ritz" cracker boxes. Even the campus dogs find lounges or halls, and curl up to sleep. Some nights in the spring, soft notes drift over the new grass from Oak Row, from the practice rooms. But mostly it is just quiet, as if everyone has gone home.

Conflagration

There once was an opulent nation
Whose people opposed integration.

It answered their ills

With fertility pills

And a tax break for micegenation.

Anathemas in the vicinity

Came from those who had lost their virginity

The problem's quintessence:

Increased concupiscence

Had led to a loss of identity.

To investigate government deeds,

A commission for citizens' needs

Made a sedulous study

Of most everybody

And found all the kids were cross-breeds.

—David Banks

May 12, 1980

Some of us go home for a while, and it is very quiet.
 "I wish I could see my brother." A whisper.
 "Your what. . ."

"I miss my brother." Bec's brother is like a twin, she's said. None of us have ever met him, though we know him well.

We look over the room service menu to find something like cheese and crackers for John. John notes they don't put egg in French Onion Soup anywhere except in India. They have a different conception of things here.

"Do you want to get the 'Imperial Gourmet Appetizers' for fifty Rups? Half a lobster. . ." John has expensive taste.

We order "Moussaka." What they bring has no eggplant, what they call "brinjles," in it; it's just some vague casserole. Names here do not correspond to our names for things, to what things *are* . . . in our reality.

Tom rolls over and coughs. He throws off the blanket. David wanders in. He has been sleeping all afternoon to escape the heat and he is drinking a glass of boiled water from the room thermos.

"What have you all been doing? Sitting here?"

The overhead fan spins, whirs. Time passes over us like the artificial breeze. It is not hot now; we simply have not bothered to turn it off. It was drying Tom's clothes which are strung over the clothesline stretched across the room. Besides, it gives us something to watch.

"... waiting for dinner. It's time for dinner," Becky sighs.

"No, it can't be yet. I'm not hungry."

I get up and walk to the bathroom. The hall smells like cleaning fluid on the dirty dark-red floral rug. The fluorescent light in the bathroom flickers on, like lightning after the darkness of the room. I blink.

I think of the small stone that hit me square in the back this morning as we moved through the crowded Old Delhi street around the Jame Masjid Mosque. One of the boys who was asking for rupees and "ball peens" must have thrown it. Another boy careened by Becky and David on a bicycle so that they had to jump out of the way, and pedalled on, laughing. Women stared from behind their heavy, black chadors. The men called softly as Becky and I went by, and snickered as we passed. Butchered lamb hung in the open shop collecting flies and dust.

I go for my bottle of Lomotil but I can't find it, or we have run out. I rifle through the jumbled piles, the piles that appear after two or three nights in one hotel.



Three nights ago at two a.m. in a fit of neatness, I culled and reorganized and packed my essential belongings into my small backpack. Now I can't find anything. Last night in the dark, without my contacts, I tried to find my soap to counteract the fear that the Indian dust and dirt would become permanently lodged in my skin, like a bad memory, if I left it on any longer.

It was dusty, very dusty in the Mosque area. This is a "volatile Muslim area," said Ram Varma (who we've nicknamed "Kazoo" after the cartoon character). The people here steal bricks from the housing project and store them in their houses for the riots. A few days ago, we're told, there was a demonstration against the takeover of the mosque in Mecca---the rumor circulating is that Americans were behind it. On the corners, guards with rifles are standing in small groups. Someone whispers "Foreigners! . . ." One young boy hisses "Get out. . ." We have been reading the papers.

Back on the bus, there is an inaudible sigh of relief.

We are strangers, and Indians are strange to us, though we realize it only occasionally. We have green skin and antennae. We are invaders, of a culture, and neither we nor they are vaguely comfortable with it sometimes. Yes, we are people; they are people. Most of the time we act like people, but sometimes we look at each other as cultural specimens.

We have come. We will go. This trip to India will have no absolute meaning outside the contexts of our individual lives, and yet it is somehow a part of that

pattern of our lives that we do not see. It is something each of us felt was important. But we go away not knowing precisely how or why. As we have no real questions anymore, so we have no answers either. We go away. We will go home.

We go to dinner at last.

—Carol Loftson

Author's note:

This is not, and is not meant to be, a summary of the Semester-In-India Program, or even a representative experience. It was written about one afternoon, by one person, on one evening. This, in fact, is the most hostility we ever encountered, and some people in the group didn't notice it. This low grade infection and lethargy was as sick as any of us ever got. It was one of the five or six most boring afternoons. It reflects my prejudices and judgments. It is a "Down" piece.

But for anyone contemplating "escaping" to another, more exciting place (not necessarily India); or for anyone determined to experience another culture from the "inside"---without prejudice; or for anyone merely curious how it felt *sometimes*, I think this has something to say. I was all those things and I learned it isn't all that way. I wasn't disappointed; I wasn't angry; I wasn't even afraid. What I was, was confused, and I know less now about why I went than I did before the trip. I don't see that as negative. It just means I can keep learning from that experience even after it is "over."

It was a trip to India, but it was also a trip with twelve other people---initially strangers---and I lived with them 24 hours a day for 99 days. It's harder to get away from a group like that than you might imagine, because there's really nowhere else to go. We all managed, and even made friends, and that in itself was a pretty worthwhile thing to do.

In fact, I think it's one of the most worthwhile things you *can* do at Davidson, even if it's hard to know why. Having as few illusions and as few preconceptions as I could helped because I guarantee, you shatter enough about yourself to fill a whole notebook and I did. It's a true learning *experience*, and the emphasis is thus---a rare find at Davidson.

We were a diverse, motley lot. But the one thing we all had was enough courage to at least see some illusions shatter and to *work* to a real *understanding* of the situation. That real understanding came hard, if at all. Sometimes it didn't, and that's what this piece is about.

—C.L.

Readiness School

A grim, black-headed lady—
 she had greasy hair yanked back,
 and white lips with a hooked nose
 to punch schoolin' and justice through the tender
 stalks of all of us.

Me an' my playmates.

There was a big mansion or castle
 with cool, frightening stones,
 and a dizzy set of steps
 swooping down to a basement or dungeon—
 a forbidden place.

It becomes clear now—
 A green rail and pretty leaves on
 The steps in the shadowy depths.

There were leaves, leaves, leaves,...
 you could bury yourself in it and die.
 And even caterpillars in the dust
 and you could find lightning bugs sometimes,
 to grin at.
 And always acorns.

We have nap-time sometimes
 and I always stay awake
 (my sister wet the bed)
 and Mis' Catinwold gets mad but
 it's all okay when Mommy gets here in afternoon.

And we played games in long, long lines—
 "Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Jackie Over!
 Red Rover, Red Rover, Won't You Please Sir Send
 Miss Beth Over!"
 —Beth loves me.

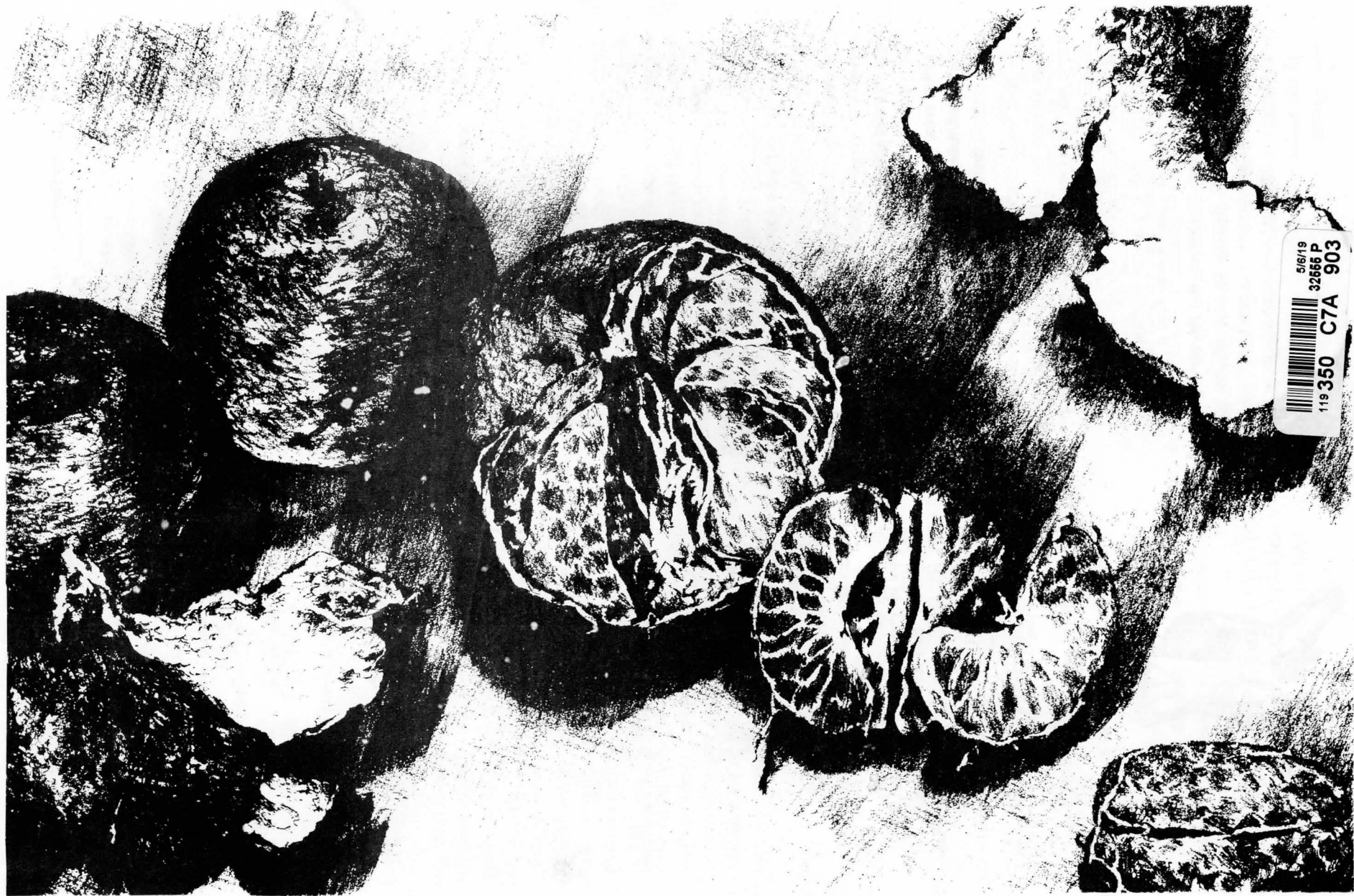
We laughed and cried on a long chain of days.

There's a secret cat—there is, I tell you.

—Eddie Harrison



Not For Outside Circulation



Paul Schultz