

harbinger
1986

H A R B I N G E R

Stephens Magazine of the Creative Arts 1986

HARBINGER STAFF

GENERAL EDITOR: Deborah Pursifull

LITERATURE: Lisa Lennon Record
Gretchen Wahl

VISUAL ARTS: Ruth Gilmore
Sidney Musgrove

BUSINESS AND PROMOTIONS: Karen Wulfratt

FACULTY ADVISOR: Leslie Miller

HARBINGER is a magazine of the literary and visual arts, anthologizing the works of current Stephens College students. Published each spring, HARBINGER is edited and designed by students. Subscription rates are now \$5 for one year, \$10 for two years. Subscriptions, manuscripts and correspondence should be addressed to: The Editors, Box 2084, Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri 65215.

Manuscripts are accepted in the fall of each year for publication in the spring.

HARBINGER is printed by General Printing Service, Columbia, Missouri.

VISUAL ARTS

PHOTOGRAPHS

LISA CUMMINGS, 13

SCOTT HINZE, 14

LESLIE MAXTONE-GRAHAM, 15

SIDNEY MUSGROVE, 38

LISA CUMMINGS, 39

CONNIE PARRACK, 56

IKUKO HATA, 57

IKUKO HATA, 58

DRAWINGS

LOIS BARON, 25

RUTH GILMORE, 26

SIDNEY MUSGROVE, 27

LESLIE MAXTONE-GRAHAM, 47

TIM BAKER, 48

NAGINA FARUQUE, 49

COVER DESIGN

RUTH GILMORE

LITERATURE

KIRSTEN OLSON

- How You Came to Me Not Unknown, 7
- Isadora Duncan in Fireplaces, 8
- Caricature on Leave, 9
- The Moral of Teeth *or* Overbite, 10

REBECCA JELSEMA

- Same Rains Fall Again, 11

STORMY STIPE-LOWREY

- Poem to My Father, Twenty Years After His Death, 17
- Poem to The Young Man at His Desk, 18

BEE NEELEY KUCKELMAN

- Grandma Said, 20
- A Two-way Confessional, 21
- from* The Window Poems, 22

LISA LENNON RECORD

- Machinery, 29
- When There Are Chives, 30
- Bun in the Oven, 31
- A Woman in the Garden with a Parasol, 32

D'ANN BRALEY

- Waiting, 33

GRETCHEN WAHL

- Redolence, 34
- Brave Geraniums, 35
- Camille Monet, 36
- Character Sketch, 37

LAURA PITMAN

- The Brown Petticoat, 41

DEBORAH PURSIFULL

- Passion Play, 51
- Once When it Was Hot and You Decided Not to Wait, 52

SHERYL SIRKEL

- Riding the Train to Some Italian Town, 54

SIDNEY MUSGROVE

- Found Poem, *from* THE CUNNING OF HISTORY, 60
- Iowa Heat Lightning, 62



HOW YOU CAME TO ME NOT UNKNOWN

There was a woman.
She caught fish with her bare hands.
She pulled you out and gave you
topaz grown from the sand.
You opened your mouth
and red leaves
piled on her feet.
She divided you
and hid you in the shells
underneath the sea's foam.
You listened to her blood rush.

ISADORA DUNCAN IN FIREPLACES

My mother played piano.
And I, Isadora
would watch my spirit
float away in a thousand forms,
an audacious tart with Beethoven,
a pixie blown by the winds of Chopin.

I danced naked at the beach
while my mother chained herself
to knitting needles.
She made caps for money
and when she could not sell them,
I costumed myself in the red one
and went into the streets
in search of her escape.

Our house caught fire.
I mimicked the flames
with the arch of my body.
Mother stared solidly into the blaze.
She leapt only once,
when the piano peeled away
from its legs and twanged
into a crackled chord.
When the song had ended,
curls of homey dust rose in adagio
and followed my lead.

My spirit had found its most delighted form
in fire and lightning.
My dance ignited in sparks.
Now I spring past myself into your light.
I am your blink and your grasp
your leap up from the kitchen table,
the turn of your head to your lover's voice.
My spirit is the static of your negligee
as the material clings.
I cling and you are lit.

THE MORAL OF TEETH *or* OVERBITE

He.
He done it to me.
He done me.
Why he done me?
He done me lucky.
He done me with teeth.
So I lucky with teeth.
So I so.
So here.
Here with teeth bite happy function.
He hug with teeth.
Happy me here.
Me here with teeth.
He hug tug war me teeth.
Teeth tick.
Click tock.
Teeth flick.
He teeth me teeth.
Where teeth?
He.

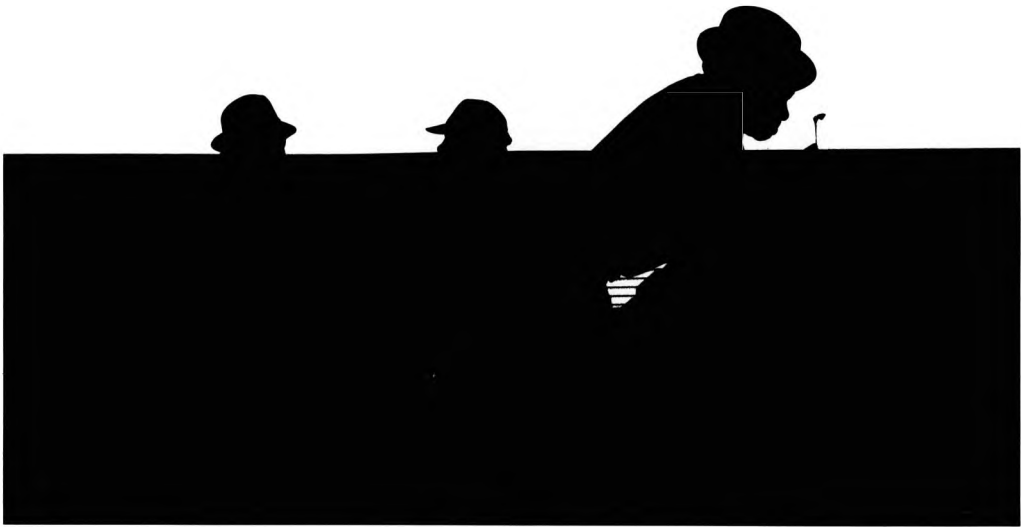
CARICATURE ON LEAVE

His black and efficiently small suitcase
is open on the dining room table.
He folds three pair of socks air force tight
and tucks them in. Cigarette packs are layered
over underpants and white T-shirts.
He sits down with black coffee and looks forward
as far as the wall will take him. His legs are crossed.
He appears unfeminine. A one-eyed cat comes
to have her ears pulled between his toes.
She purrs at him with her blind side,
then jumps onto the table, licks his arm,
crawls into his suitcase and curls herself tight.
Since his packing he has not taken his eyes off the wall.
The shower is on in his bedroom. It is his wife.
The coffee is drained. He drops the cat on the floor
and zips to leave. At the door he yells "Goodbye," to the woman
who is still dripping in the bedroom.

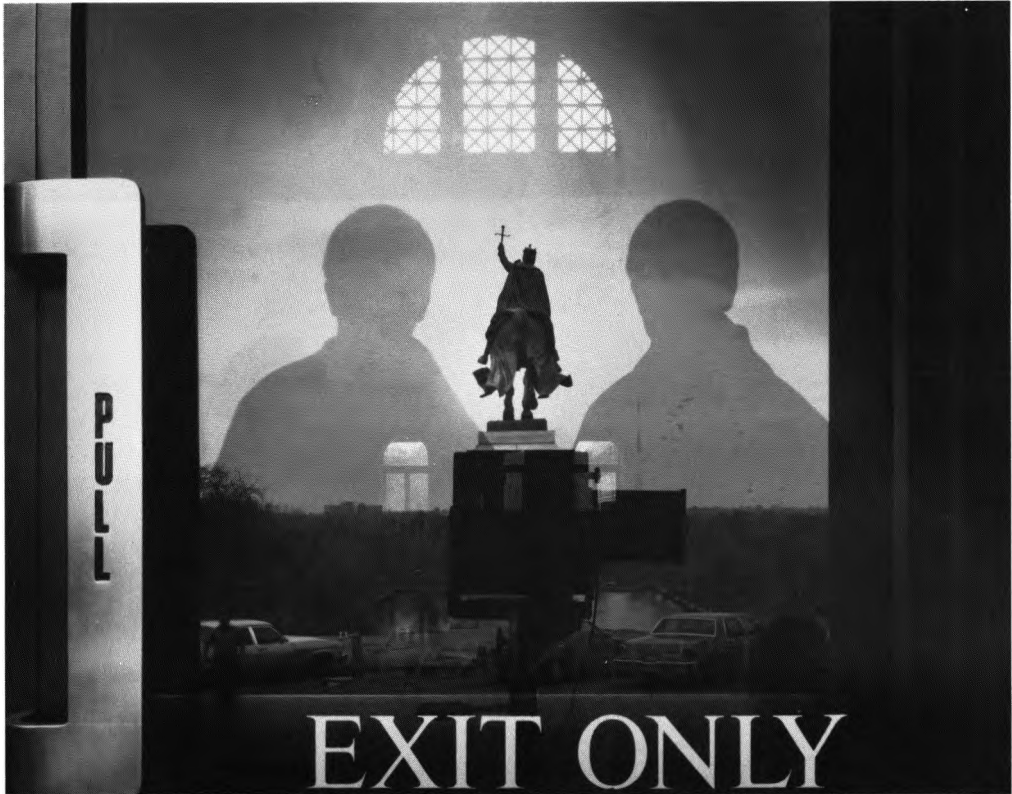
SAME RAINS FALL AGAIN

Suffocating in this room,
dark and sad as wizened lily.
I cannot burst free too soon.

Same rains fall again,
pouring pale green,
distorting genesis and alchemy,
playing tricks with masks and yellow glue,
commedia dell'arte tinged with rue,
steady melancholia,
ineluctable as stone and sea.



Lisa Cummings



Scott Hinze



Leslie Maxtone-Graham



POEM TO MY FATHER,
TWENTY YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

I slide poached eggs from my spatula
onto the small rounds of children's plates.
Every tender, white mound is your face;
the farm hound howls at an old schoolbus
that takes my sisters into town.
I have heard it happens: we begin to only remember
remembering things of the past.
But Mother does not know I don't still have your face
in its form against the pine bedrail, mine beside it,
our faces sleepy as the pale skins of poached eggs
she brings to us on crumpets of toast.

I spread the plates at our breakfast table;
my husband and children break the thin whites,
let loose their yolks with the tongs of forks.
They lost me at the stove,
when the eggs began to color in the water:
I am five again, in the wide stand of your bed,
imagining your face the olive angle of mine,
your voice a deeper sound of me.

POEM TO THE YOUNG MAN AT HIS DESK

From the roof I've seen your window, lit in a side of stone,
your shutter panes open as the awnings of shops
where I buy vegetables, meats; the black-eyed butcher
slices thin strips of liver for the woman before me,
his blade still red when he cuts my pork.
This city is red, left red from the dry of summer
rising, rising in the smoke of a tobacco factory
I see from the roof, curing the yellow-green of leaves.
I hang clothes at the height of this city, on lines
that twist into each other in a November wind,
air pushing into the night, in through the mouth
of the window at your desk. You do not write
but figure, drumming your hand
against the black curl of your head. I watch.

A woman above you lights her kitchen,
pulls a towel from the sill and is gone,
her blinds shut and dark, gone to a child
she dries, his body creasing in the tight clean
of soap, rubbed down him by her;
your mother washed you, peeled potatoes
for tortillas the round of her pan,
dishes of peppers and meat on the side.

Tonight, a man has come to me
bringing apples and raisins for a milk soup
he stirs in my kitchen; my wooden spoon
moves like the pencil in your hand.
I tell him his broth is white as the paper
you work into; you mark the sheets
like these raisins the thick cream,
losing their form in the boil. I cannot see
what goes onto your page; the garden is wide
between us, a dark drop below the stone wall
where I rest my baskets to watch you.

He mixes dry tuna in a bowl of baked onions,
says I should hang the clothes and be done.
“Why do you watch him when he thinks he’s alone?”
The fork drives into chunks of brown meat
with the power of drills breaking earth.
I talk on, imagining all my plates,
glasses, bowls crashing against the stone tile
of the floor, my lover bleeding in anger,
my blood warming as I talk: “One night, he smoked
‘Nobels’ with a friend, sat to the side; I saw
only his hands, moving as if the other man were deaf,
crossing into each other, circling, rising, and then flat
while the friend talked; but I followed only those hands,
one leaving my window-cased view, then
coming back to a clay ashtray on his desk.
You will see if you come with me.”

He put wine and food before me, silent,
as was I in seeing apples and onions break
in the dim light of one bulb above us,
throwing the white of your hands into my face.
Now, he is in sleep, the pillow, quilt,
burying all but the fine umber of his hair.
I see your window, mine,
open to the arms of our mothers,
towels covering us like blankets;
and I imagine you, me, obsessed
with coloring every page of a fat book
in strokes smooth enough to have been printed
while other children rolled marbles
down the cart ramps of entrance gates,
our mothers knowing, even then, to feel lonely for us.

GRANDMA SAID

that we should never ever
walk upon the top of the little cave out back,
because we might fall through the ceiling.
But she didn't say we couldn't run,
so when Grandma wasn't looking,
we raced across the hump.
One day the hand on Grandpa's wall barometer
pointed right down to the floor.
The sky turned green and black
and we went down in the cave.
We sat in wicker chairs
and watched the jars of peaches
flicker in the candlelight.
We stayed inside till Mrs. Pitts
hollered through the heavy door
and said the storm was over.

Grandma also said
that we should never ever walk upon a grave.
When I accidentally stepped
on the edge of Grandpa's grave,
Grandma gasped and groaned, "Oh my!"
I felt the ground begin to sink
before I jumped away,
afraid I'd fall into his cave
and find him sitting in a wicker chair
eating peaches and perhaps
he'd ask me if the storm was over.

A TWO-WAY CONFESSIONAL

Every night Grandma soaked her feet
in a blue and white enamel pan.
I liked the suction sound when she pulled off
her black old lady shoes.
Her face relaxed like rolled-out pie dough
as her feet sank into the water.
After the soaking, I'd wait outside the door
while she took her bath.
It was a two-way confessional.
One night I told her Sue Ann said
Marybelle and Edgar took a shower together.
They were married, but not to each other.
Grandma asked if I was sure,
then splashed a lot and muttered, "My, my!"
Then she said, "I never liked the color of this room.
I wanted baby blue, but when Grandpa found a sale uptown
and bought this bilious blue, I didn't say a word."

from THE WINDOW POEMS

EAST WINDOW #1

Auntie Morris lived next door with Daddy Morris,
who mostly smoked cigars.
No children, just a cat named Bubbles.
Auntie Morris sang on sunny days:
“Jesus wants me for a sunbeam
to shine for him each day.”
On cloudy days we heard her purr:
“Here Bubbles; come, Bubbles Baby.”
She took me with her once to church,
and walking home she warned,
“When Nigger Bertram comes to prune the pin oaks,
you had better stay inside.”
Auntie Morris tried to teach me two more things.
First: not to twist my tongue if I should say,
“I slit a sheet. A sheet I slit.”
Second: Women’s bodies should be hidden.
She always said to come in without knocking,
but one day when I did I saw her naked in the bathroom.
Her green eyes caught me, causing her to hiss, “Mercy sakes!”
She tried to hide her bumpy body.
I mumbled, “Mama’s making apple dumplings.
I’d better hurry home to help her,”
and never even saw
what Auntie Morris thought I shouldn’t see.

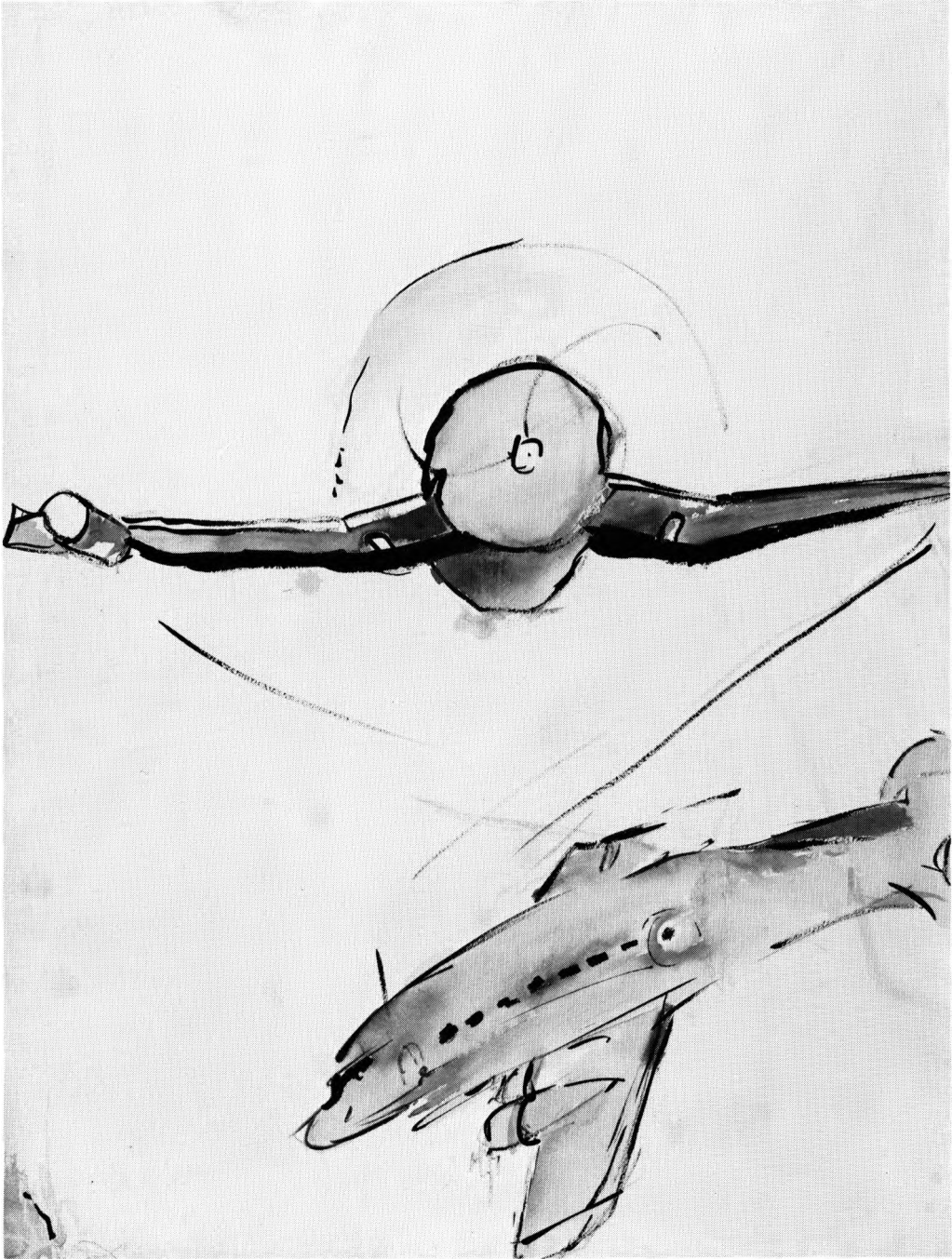
WEST WINDOW #2

Widow Beckett lived next door.
She was a nice cackling old lady.
Her husband died of a heart attack on the post office steps.
Purple 3-cent stamps flew everywhere
as he rolled down the stairs.
There was a fishpond in her backyard.
We were afraid some neighbor kid,
searching the bottom for frogs or pennies,
would be found dead, floating face down.
The cold water in her icebox tasted like bananas,
and I hated her joke about the woman who was so ugly
that she looked the same from both ends.
Widow Beckett didn't look so good herself.
When she had her house remodeled,
I watched from my darkened room one night.
The painter sat on her back steps for several hours
drinking from a sack and smoking little cigars.
About midnight he slipped sideways down the driveway
and the widow never knew he was there.

SOUTH WINDOW #3

At the back of our garden
was the combination barbecue grill and trash burner.
Behind it was where red-haired Billy Shurburn kissed me.
Sometimes we played basketball.
Once when I was hot and sweaty,
I went to take a bath.
Billy talked to me from underneath
the bathroom window. He couldn't see in,
but he got scared and ran home anyway.
He liked to tell me about the cowboy cupcakes
his mother made for him before she died.
We both belonged to Stamp Club at school
and sometimes got together to lick and paste
the latest special issues in our albums.





Lois Baron



Ruth Gilmore



Sidney Musgrove

MACHINERY

I could sit at this bar all night,
with money enough for drinks
and two packs of cigarettes in my purse,
watching you spend your last dollar fifty
in a 60's cigarette machine
that suddenly failed you.
And while the smoke of your last drag
hangs thick around you
as the women used to at last call saying
I'm still here, you return,
not to me, but to the bartender,
asking, telling of the machine
over there, where your smoke still lounges
as if it will give testimony.
And for that moment,
when you turn to go back
with the refund in your hand,
I know you as an idiot
when recalling the past regulars
of a restaurant I worked.
They always went back to the machine,
some licking the quarters
as if to tell the coin slot, "It's me,
Billy Light, like in 'B. Light's tuna salad'
right here, on the menu."
They always returned to their table with nothing,
making me promise to call the company
and get that fixed,
and asking me, the hostess, to spare a couple.

WHEN THERE ARE CHIVES *FOR SMR*

I cut new chives from his window sill garden,
two stories high above August dried tomato plants
and matted zucchini leaves wet from the rains
that now water these herbs along the sill.
I always assumed people cleaned their gardens
in the late autumn, but he leaves it to February rain,
the promise of decomposition.

He is always suprised that I sit in his kitchen
filling his grandmother's china cups
with the fresh tips from chives for a garnish,
but that's all I will bring to the mess of a kitchen:
clippings from a window sill garden
so unlike the greenhouse my mother neatly filled,
with the soft scents of green onion,
and nightly sent me to while she made dinner:
You must eat everything because you are thin echoes
in water draining through a colander.

I could do nothing else for her but eat
and watch how gently she prepared each thing
and listen to the cracking, the tiny chops,
and the clean steel of jars unwinding.
I always believed this to be enough—
the whole give and take in a relationship.
But he wants to teach me to cook before he leaves
to a job in the late heat of August—
he wants to leave behind something permanent.
This is right and it is plenty I think to myself
knowing how the hour will pass—a complete repast
whereafter, I will disassemble the place settings
salvage what's left over and begin to clean
just after the dishes have soaked awhile.

BUN IN THE OVEN

Once in every year
Martin bakes bread, crisp as egg shells
on the outside, soft as bananas in the middle.

He mixes from his wife's recipes
that were passed down from many mothers,
and he makes his own additions
and he names them Martin Buns.

A WOMAN IN THE GARDEN WITH A PARASOL
(after Renoir)

Buttered yellow, with sun glazed
as warm sugar, across her umbrella

making a two-toned face, with paint
so thick it covers female features.

Her dress, black as a habit
mocks a waist line so slim

there could be no children in the garden.
But the frock, blue-black,

holding spots of lint on velvet
allows fine greens outlined with blue

yellow, to finger her gown as she stands
among sun-hit colors, in black

with a parasol of yellow.
To her back, the blue to white sky

mixes graciously as it reaches the horizon
then bleeds to trees, light in their green.

She stares ahead to lush greens shadowed by blue
yellow and I work a way for her to walk:

filling out her waist, seeing sorrow,
dropping the parasol for the shade.

WAITING

All these poor dandelions are
for only a moment whole, fluffy, white,
dead and more beautiful that way.

But it's inevitable.

This wind or even slight breeze
will strip them, bald them
slowly or all at once reduce them
to small, bare green stems only taller than grass,
unsuccessfully hiding their shame under conspicuous grey caps.
So they stand, stiff and regrettably tall.

REDOLENCE

The redolence of lily
of the valley rises,
rises from three delicate
stems of bells, framed
by green leaves,

standing in a fluted
stemmed liqueur glass
on a bedside table.

It rises and mixes with
the smell of water in
styrofoam pitchers, pine
cleaner and new plaster.

The lilies stand in red
water which will rise
through green veins
and stain the bells pink,
although this has not yet happened.

BRAVE GERANIUMS

Brave geraniums germinate
in a terra cotta potta soil.

Brave geraniums,
tall balls on green poles,
really red.

Geraniums bravely stay outside,
all winter, in a pot too heavy to move.

Snow covers the dead plant
in the terra cotta pot.
But next spring . . .

brave geraniums germinate
in a terra cotta potta soil.

CAMILLE MONET

Obviously occidental,
blonde with blue eyes,
she waves Japanese fans
with hands as delicate.

This painting is oriental
in nothing but props:
straw mats and paper fans,
a red silk kimono

which hides her body
under its dragon.
Its sale merely
stirred their creditors.

CHARACTER SKETCH

Jerry Harlan lived in a small white house in Fort Worth. He was born in a hospital about a mile away from there, and he had lived there since he married his wife Lucy after he came back from Korea. He and Lucy had three little girls right away, and then he had a vasectomy. He is now the head mechanic at Six Flags. It is a job he takes seriously. People can die on theme park rides. He tells his men that every day, and in his little office he has newspaper clippings pinned to the walls. "Senior Killed at Disneyland Park." "Woman Miscarries at Astro-world" — although Jerry thought she was foolish to be riding the rides. "Boy Killed at Bell's." The last was particularly gruesome. The fourteen-year-old was on a roller coaster and he stood up. An electrical wire sliced off the top third of his body. The coaster, of course, went on. A roller coaster can't be stopped. Jerry often wondered who had been sitting next to the boy, his best friend, his sister, a stranger, no one? He had sat next to people who were killed, but you expect it in a war, and you don't at an amusement park. "But, on the other hand," he would say, "there are certain times and places where it don't make sense to stand up."



Sidney Musgrove



Lisa Cummings



THE BROWN PETTICOAT

Little girls were supposed to be seen and not heard. But what did I care about social expectations? I was only five years old—a dimpled midget with a pale blonde pixie, delicately dressed in powder blue organza, layers of startling white, starched petticoats, ruffled anklets, and shiny Mary Jane's. They said I was a doll. They said I was sweet. But they didn't know about me . . . not yet. You see they hadn't smelled my breath.

I guess I must have been about three when it all started. My father babysat when Mom went to evening church services, and although he wasn't much for playing games, he could be enticed to tell stories. Since I was so darned cute, he couldn't say no, and I became sole audience to nightly, command performances of fantastical, wild tales. Dad would seat me in the library, slide shut the doors that led to the living room, take out his pipe, and solemnly begin. That pipe was quality entertainment. I was fascinated by its smoke. Of course since my mother was a devout church-goer, she hated the very idea of smoking, so Dad generally smoked outdoors or when Mom was gone to church.

One Sunday night after the Ed Sullivan Show, Dad lit his pipe and, as usual, I was right in his face. I loved it when he blew smoke rings. They looked like pillowy Christmas wreaths, like angels' haloes floating toward heaven. Well, on that fateful evening Dad asked me if I'd like to try to make some rings myself. His invitation was meant purely as a joke, but he didn't have to ask twice. Dad was forced to change strategies. He probably thought this was his chance to demonstrate how repulsive smoking is, and he found me to be an eager accomplice. With the elegance of a Ted Mack magician, Dad held his pipe aloft as though it was some type of mysterious phenomenon. He explained how the tobacco was grown, cut, and aged, how to store it, how to pack the tobacco into the pipe, what happened when you lit it, how children should never play with fire . . . Finally he got around to the smoking part. He said, "Just suck in through the little hole in the stem—*real* hard. Then hold it in your stomach."

Now keep in mind, I was only three. To a naive, trusting child his instructions made perfect sense. I eagerly grabbed the pipe, did exactly as I had been told, turned green, and damn near passed out. It was at this precise moment that my mother returned from evening services. For some unknown reason, Dad quit smoking his pipe shortly thereafter. I guess he didn't like pipes that much, because he immediately switched to cigarettes. I think they were Lucky Strikes, but I can't be sure. I wasn't allowed to be around when he smoked them. But I did watch him from my bedroom window. Dad sat alone by the barbecue pit, smoking. He looked pensive. When he chucked in the cigarettes, I figured it was because smoking was too lonely. It did appear to be a solitary habit. No one else in the family used tobacco at that time. Or so I thought. I soon was to discover that the "ancient ones" had their own recreational habits involving the mysterious brown weed.

When I was four, my parents sent me on a vacation to the country. I split the summer between farms belonging to my great-grandparents and my great-aunt and uncle. I was shipped off to my great-grandparents first. Mama and Papa were quiet people who didn't say much, so most of the time I just sat on their front porch and watched Papa whittle. I don't think he ever made anything, but he always had a stick in his hand. Sometimes he'd go into the house and get a newspaper. It was generally a very old one. He read me headlines of news dating back to World War I. On rainy days there was even livelier entertainment. When storms forced us indoors, Papa would crank up the phonograph and play tunes like "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" and "We Take Our Hats Off to You, Mr. Wilson." It was very educational. Papa had a lot of posters, papers, records, and memories of World War I. He seemed almost obsessed with war. Although he had never been a soldier himself, he treasured war memorabilia of all kinds. Papa even kept the sword his father used when he fought for the North in the Civil War. He was proud his father had battled to keep our country united. I guess being a United States citizen meant a lot to him.

Maybe that explains why Papa chewed Union Standard. He kept it in the cubbyhole of an ancient oak desk. When he wanted a chew, he'd slip off with the pretense of picking up a newspaper. He would take out his carton, remove a brown, cellophaned square, slice off a plug, and slide it between his cheek and gums with a pocketknife. The tobacco never even touched his hands. I know. I watched through the screen door.

When it came time to move on, I was sad about leaving my great-grandparents' farm. My great-uncle was really nice, but he was almost deaf, and it was difficult to communicate. I had to yell so Walter could hear me, and sometimes my squeaky, midget voice screwed up his hearing aid. But my great-aunt stayed indoors a lot, and since I was supposed to be soaking up sunshine, I reluctantly attached myself to my uncle. I found him to be a gentle giant, and followed him everywhere. We did chores together, chopped wood, picked corn, strained milk. He even let me drive his team. I had a much better time than I imagined I could. I enjoyed Walter's quiet strength—and the tractor rides! Walter would tenderly place me on the fender of his old Ford and off we'd go. Things got even better when I noticed a green, red, and white package protruding from the rear pocket of his overalls. Red Man! I couldn't help myself. I cautiously slipped my thumb and forefinger into the pouch . . . he didn't notice. That stuff wasn't half bad! Walter liked it best blended with Union Standard—he kept it in the glove compartment of his pickup truck—but on the run, he chewed it plain. From that moment on, I chewed it any way I could get it.

By the end of that glorious summer I was a healthy, tanned four-year old, who could chew and spit. My brother taught me how. He came to the farm on weekends and helped me gain respect for the skill involved in the art of expectoration. It's not as easy as you might think. First you have to curl your tongue into a trough, so you can gather juice. Once you get enough juice, you put the tip of your tongue under your two front teeth, slam the middle of your tongue against the back of these same teeth, and push. The juice will squirt right out. It helps if you have a gap between your front teeth. Mastering the process of precision spitting is fun and comes in handy. Trust me.

When I returned home to the watchful eyes of my parents, my lifestyle calmed down somewhat, but the value of the lessons I learned in summer school never left my mind. Even though I no longer had access to tobacco, I continued spitting, and at the tender age of five I decided to come out of the closet. I simply had to let them know I wasn't "Miss Perfect." My days were filled with a constant search for a subtle way to tell them, and in late autumn, my quest came to an end. I discovered, as the old saying goes, that I didn't have to look any further than my own backyard.

There was an old man who lived in a one-room, tumble-down shack in the lot behind our house. I wasn't supposed to associate with him. "He drinks. He spends most of his time at the pool hall. He's dirty." Emil was

really just a nice old man who had lost everything: his money, his family, his place in the world. I liked him. It wasn't just the fact that he was taboo. He treated me like a person, not a kid, and patiently listened to all the childhood problems I dumped at his feet. He was always available and willing to tell stories, to shoot craps, to play cards. And most importantly, he brought me candy. Emil probably had to do without many small comforts to buy candy for me but it made him happy . . . me too.

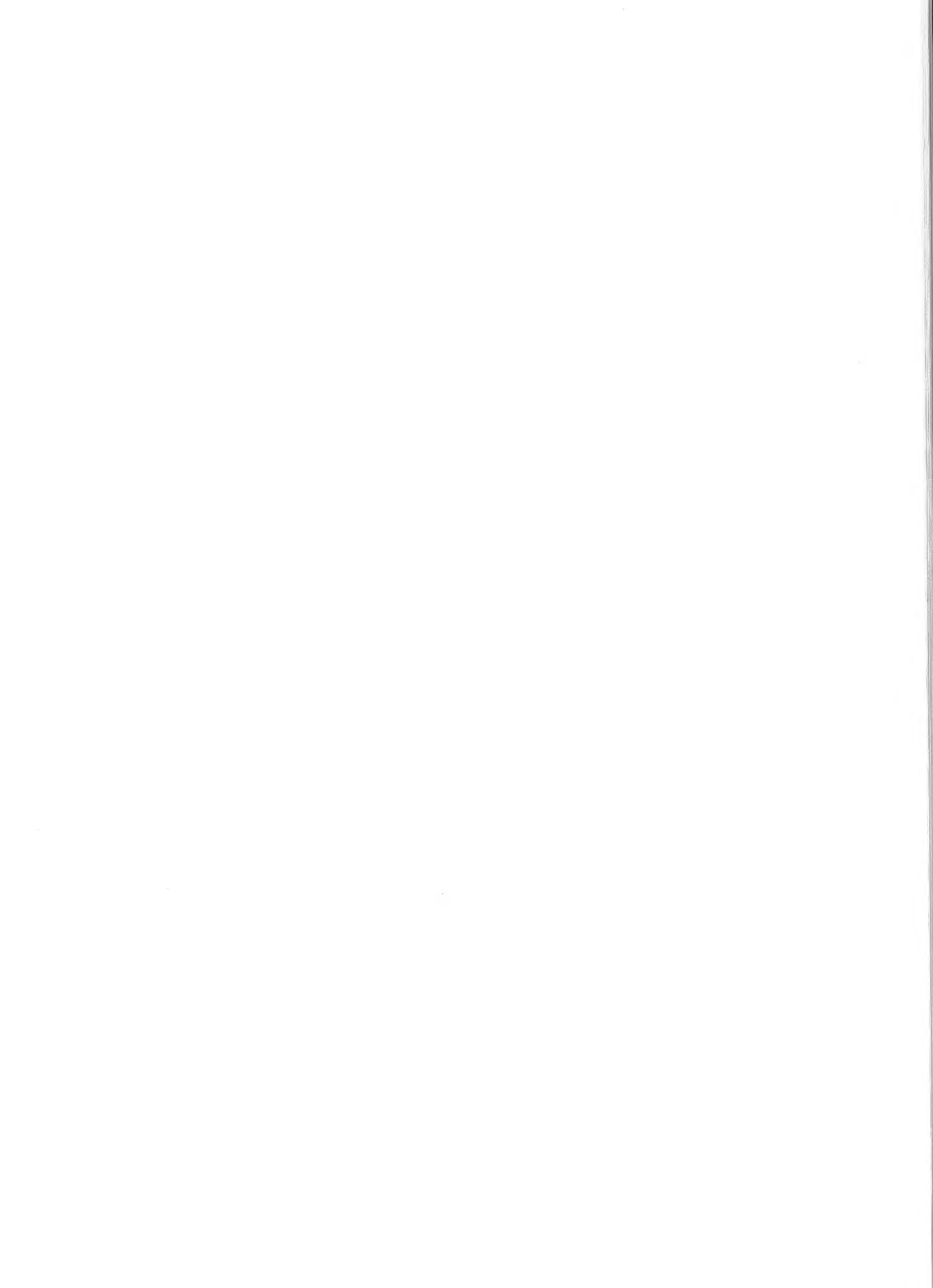
One evening he came into our yard to talk with my father. I knew my mother wouldn't approve, but I approached anyway. Emil said he was sorry; he hadn't had enough money to buy candy that week. I said that was okay. But he felt bad and tried to make it into a joke. "All I have is some chewing tobacco. Want some?" he asked, extending a bag of Beechnut. I saw a golden opportunity, but was I ready? I decided not and politely declined, telling him I preferred Red Man. Then I heard the two men chuckle as Emil reached into his jacket and produced a pouch of —OH NO—Red Man! It was a dare, and I'd gone too far to chicken out now.

Without stopping to think of the consequences, I boldly slipped my fingers into the bag, took a small pinch, and shook off the excess. With the ease of a pro, I dropped the tobacco just inside my left cheek. My father watched in stunned silence. Emil turned red and coughed nervously, thinking how my parents would never let me visit him again. But as I sat there and chewed for what seemed an eternity, wondering what was to become of me, it became apparent that I had a more immediate problem to deal with. You see, my mouth was quickly filling with tobacco juice. I was in big trouble now. I had a choice to make and I made it fast. Not wanting to waste a good spit, I frantically searched for a target. My eyes were drawn to an empty oil can, standing by the garage door. I narrowed my eyes in concentration and muttered a silent, irreverent prayer to ensure success. The next thing I knew, tobacco juice shot like an arrow from my mouth. It hit its mark. Slowly, I turned to face my father. His shocked eyes met mine. I swear, he looked a hole right through me. Then he looked at Emil. The suspense hung on the evening air. I couldn't take it. Why didn't he just go ahead and assassinate me and get it over with! I sat in painful silence, waiting for the wrath of God to fall on my head. But what was this? I listened in disbelief to my father's outburst of laughter. It was a belly laugh! That laugh was contagious; it cleared the air. Soon Emil joined in, then me. Emil

rewarded me with a pack of Doublemint gum. He'd been holding out on me the whole time.

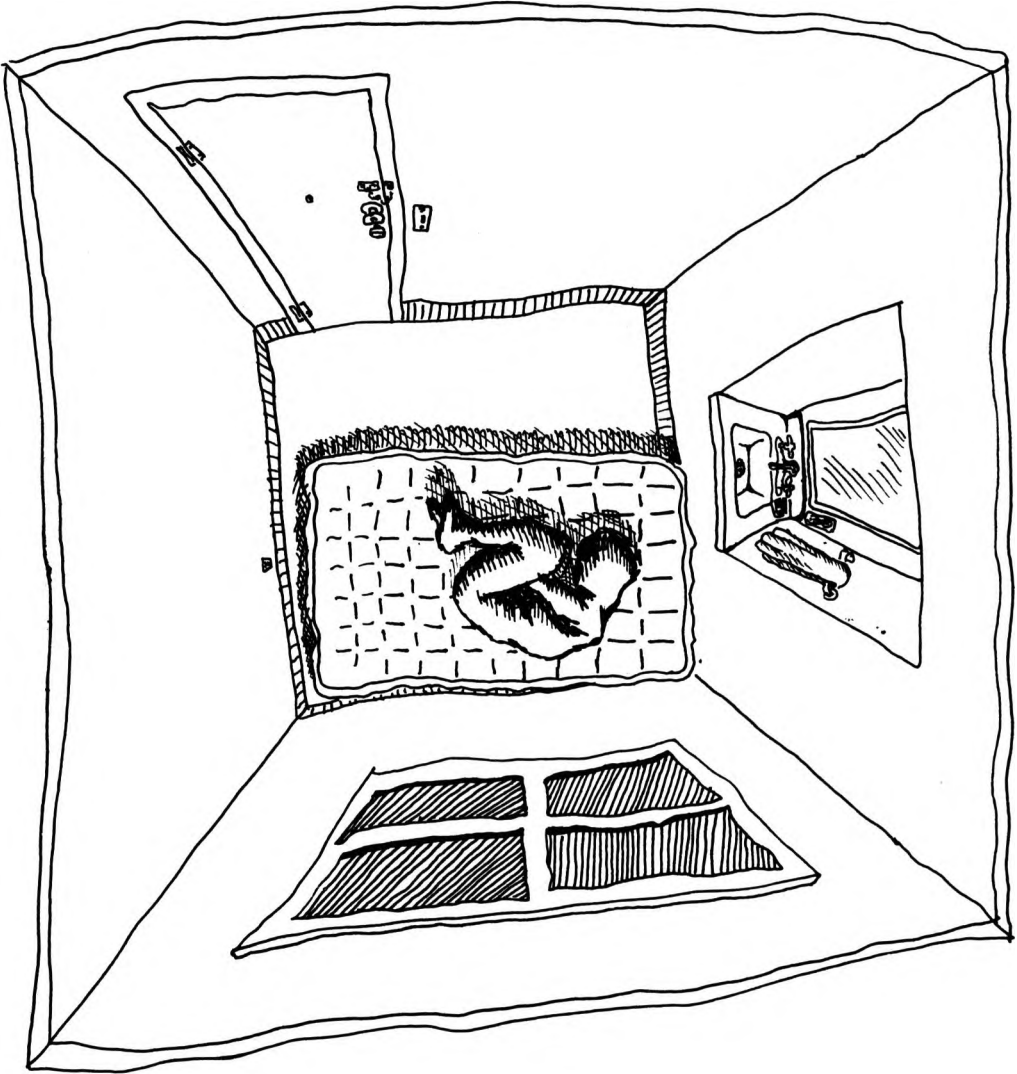
It wasn't until later that evening when I was lying in bed that it occurred to me what had really happened. I had tasted the forbidden fruit, found it to my liking, had been discovered, and hadn't even been punished. All children dream of such a sweet moment, and it had actually happened to me! I sensed that somehow my life would never be the same again.

As I snuggled into the cozy nest I had constructed with my covers, I caught a glimpse of a ghost-like silhouette hanging in front of my closet door. My petticoat, the uniform of feminine conformity, floated helplessly in the night. I knew then that even though it would once again find its place on my body, my petticoat would survive merely as a costume. You see, neither my parents nor Emil would ever admit I wasn't an angel, and angels must be properly attired. The thought of my private masquerade pleased me, and I fell into a deep and peaceful sleep.

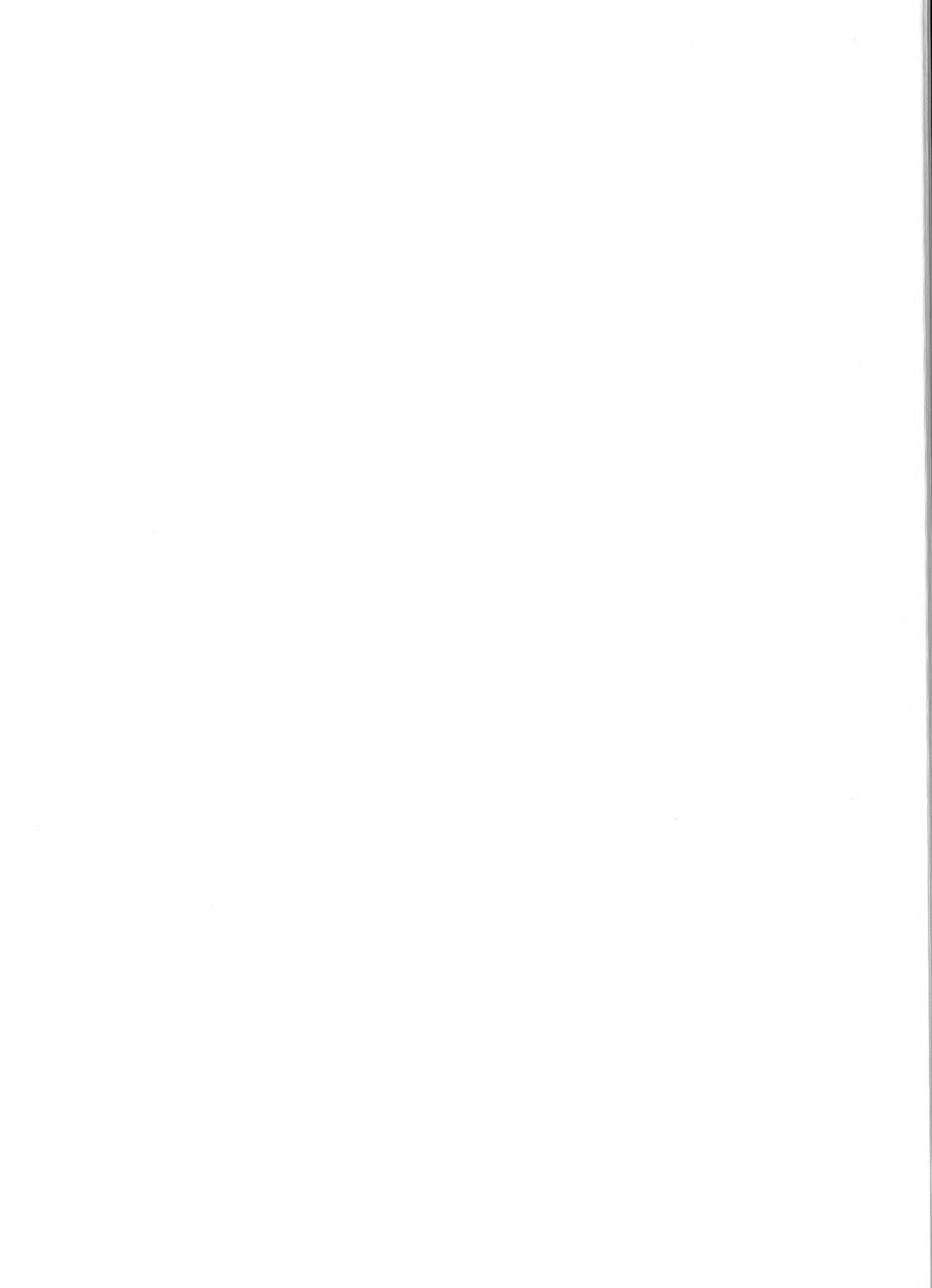




Leslie Maxtone-Graham







PASSION PLAY

The other children whisper and wait.
When she comes, slow and smiling along
the broken sidewalk, they rise as one
from the weeds. All grip heavy branches
of goldenrod except for the tall boy
who has a sharp stick. He waves it,
points the end at the yellow-haired girl
whose front teeth cover her bottom lip.
She says nothing, turns and runs.
The children shout and follow.

At the mouth of the lumbershed they pause,
then shuffle into shadow. The silence is hot
and loud. The children drink the cruel air,
filling with the stink of their own flesh
and salt. At the far end, the girl squats
in red sawdust, sucks her fingers.
One child laughs, sharp and sweet.
The tall boy spits. They move toward her
through broad shafts of light falling,
falling brilliant from the gaping roof.
A circle begins quietly. One reaches
with a flowered branch to brush
the terrified skin. The stick stabs.
Her fingers wet and waving like small flames,
the girl shivers to the reeling red floor
and all the branches descend again and again.

ONCE WHEN IT WAS HOT AND YOU DECIDED
NOT TO WAIT

(after Ai)

You keep me waiting in a truck
that's not even yours, the hot sun
falling through the dirty windshield.
My skin sticks to the cracked vinyl,
brick red like your hair, and I pull
each shaking leg away, a peeling sound.
My hands rub the pattern pressed
on the backs of my thighs, a map
of dotted flesh, a rough decision.
I wait because you promised
to bring me a sandwich with meat
and I dream of this for hours
or longer. I forget how many times
I doze off, dreaming of my house.
I go in, looking for Ma Lake
but can't find her, only hear her
voice in some other room. Piss ants
are everywhere, and rough pinecones
from the tree out front are scattered
on the wooden floors. Then I smell
smoke and at first I think
it's Uncle Ray from Georgia
smoking those stinking cigars,
back for the summer, but it's worse,
there's a burning here and the house
fills with flames that climb
the edges of the blue gauze curtains,
licking, hungry, and Ma Lake screams
from the back porch. Screaming, I wake up.
There is sweat where my legs are stuck
to the seat again. A fat man leans
in the window, asks if I'm all right.
I stare at the moisture on his upper lip
and wonder if the house is gone now.
You are still gone and it's late.
The fat man leaves and I get out
of the truck, walk to the corner, wait
for the light to change, then cross

to the K-Mart on the other side.
In the magazine section I see a paper bag
half-full of yellow popcorn, crumpled
in a ball on the floor. I walk
to ladies lingerie, eating the popcorn,
brushing the salt from my fingers before
I touch the pale panties, pink and green
like mints piled high in a round bowl.
All of this makes me thirsty and I look
for a water fountain but the one I see
doesn't work so I go back outside where
the sky is dark, bottle-green, heavy
with rain, I smell it in the wind that
lifts the popcorn bag from my hand,
pushes it down the street in a rush
so it looks like that bag has somewhere
it needs to be. The rain comes then,
slides after the bag, hissing
as it hits the still-warm sidewalk,
flattens the paper and popcorn, melts
the remaining salt. The truck is gone.
I think about hitching back home but
instead I sit on the curb, lean my head
back to catch the rain on my face.
It mingles with traces of salt left
from the hot afternoon sweat, slides
down my cheeks and into the corners
of my mouth. It tastes like tears.

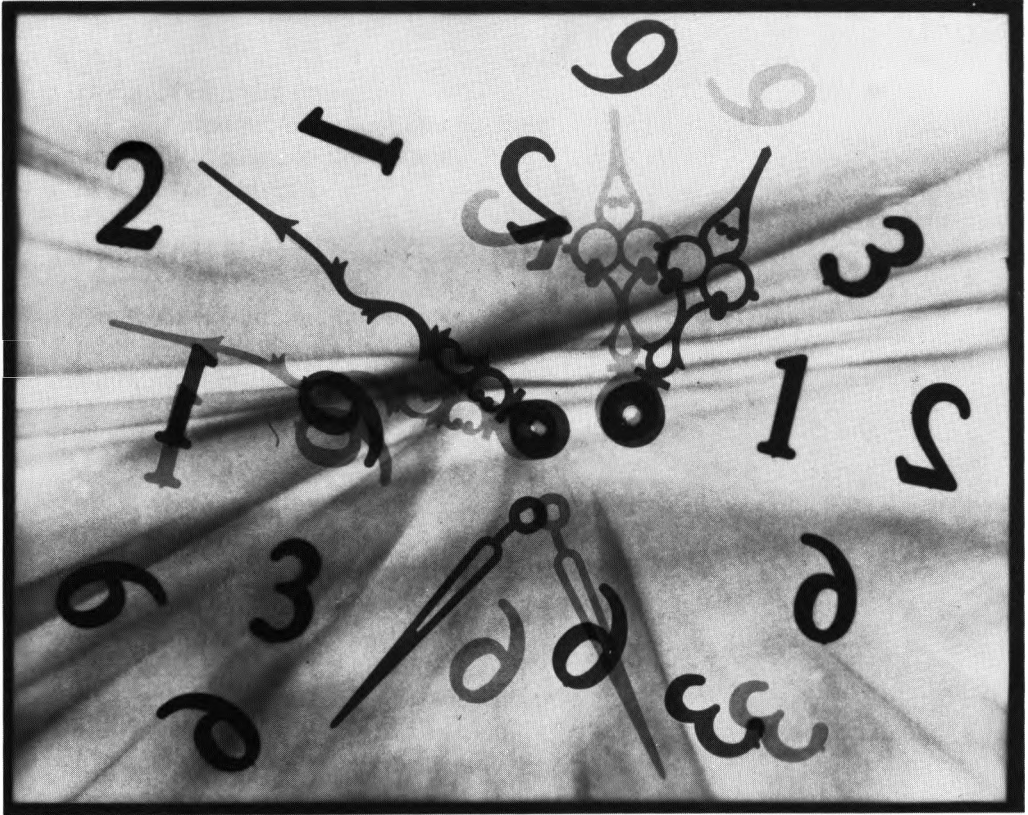
RIDING THE TRAIN TO SOME ITALIAN TOWN

Drops of rain slip down
the cool window, one slides into another,
they roll together, to the bottom
of the pane and wait.

Beyond this pattern
grey sky fades into earth.
Grape vines lean on slender rods
pushed into thick soil.
Vines stand in silhouette
against the sky. It is still
except for the easy rain, and the leaves
that bob when drops grow heavy.

A drop jerks past my eye.
I follow it, and realize I have
returned out of the field.
Now, there is the close air
and the aftersmell of cigarettes.
The family across from me speaks Italian.
Now, there is the rhythm of the train,
a country—a life clicking through its wheels.





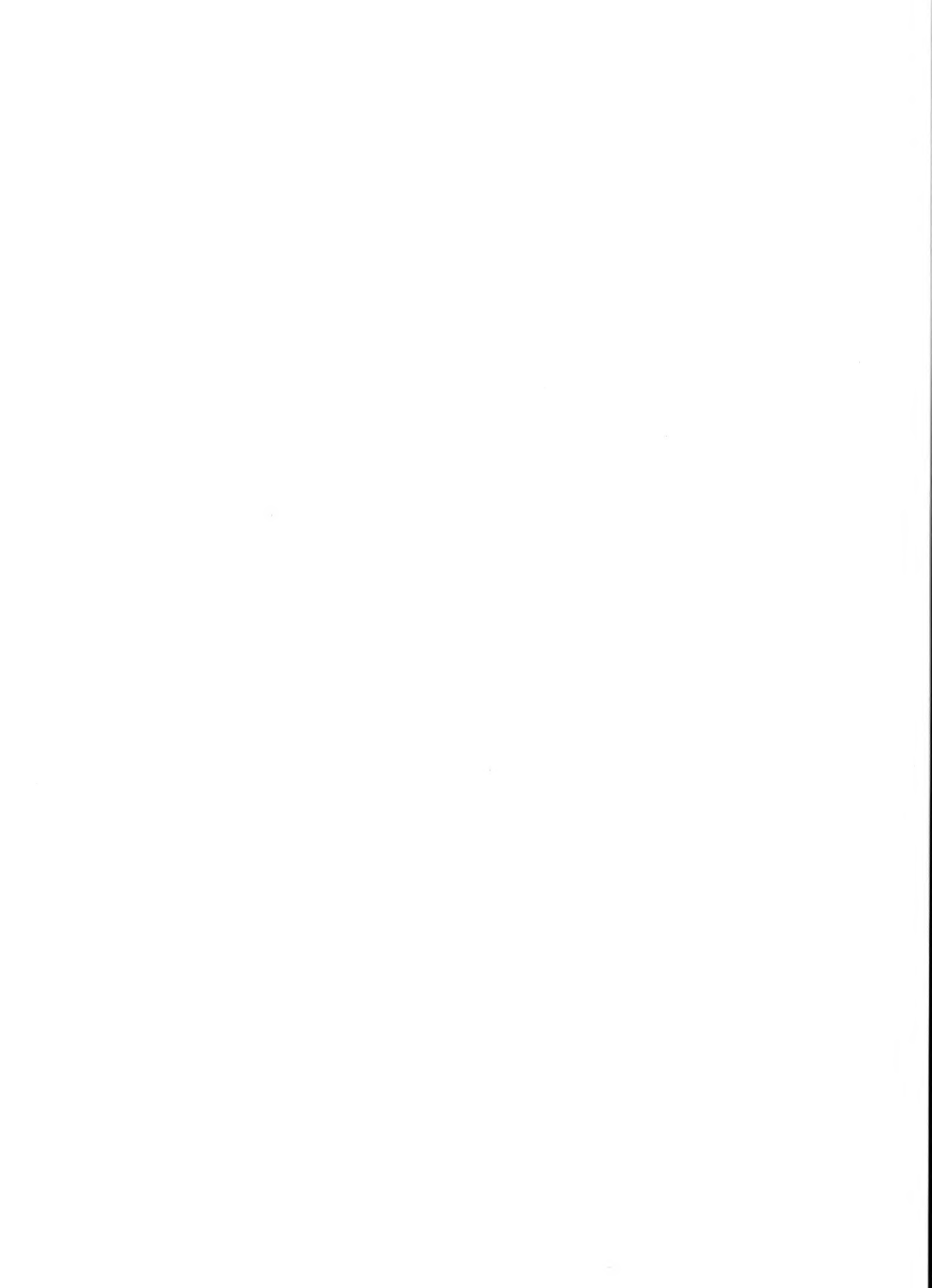
Connie Parrack



Ikuko Hata



Ikuko Hata



FOUND POEM

from **The Cunning of History** by Richard Rubenstein, p. 17

We who live
 in the post-
 World War II era

Have seen the birth
 of an altogether
 different
 moral
 universe.

Perhaps the new universe
 was expressed most
 succinctly

Not by a German
 But by a Briton,
 Lord Moyne, the British High Commissioner

In Egypt in 1944.
 When informed by Joel Brand,
 a Hungarian Jewish emissary,

That there was a possibility
 of saving
 one million
 Hungarian
 Jews

From extermination at Auschwitz
 through Adolf Eichmann's infamous
 "blood
 for
 trucks"
 deal.

Lord Moyne replied,
 "What shall I do
 with those million

Jews? Where
shall
I
put
them?"

Lord Moyne
and his government
understood

That Hitler's "final solution"
was the most
convenient way of solving the problem

of disposing
of one group
of surplus people

For themselves
as well
as for
the
Germans.

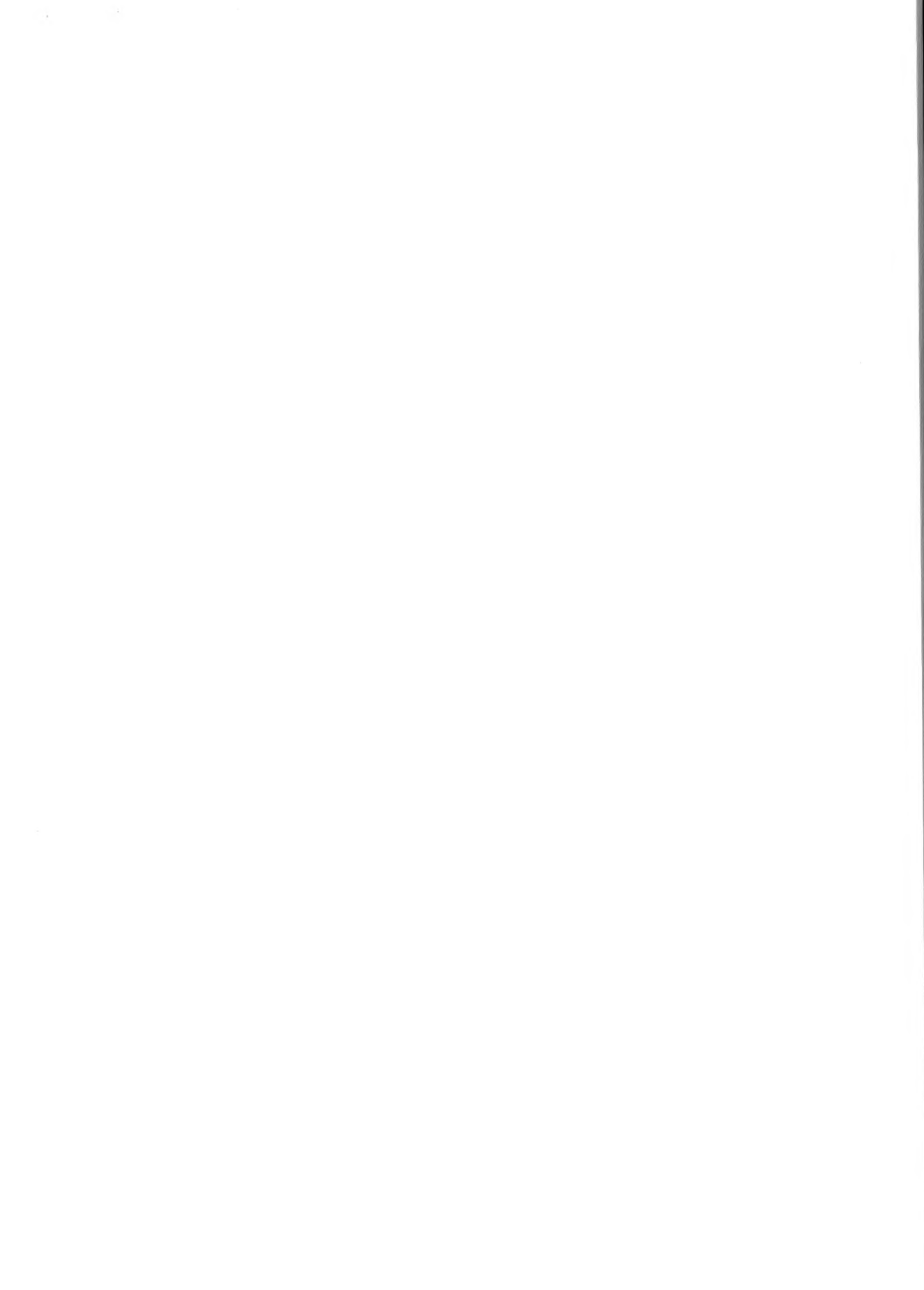
The British government
was
by no means
adverse
to the "final solution"

As long
as the Germans
did most of the dirty work.

IOWA HEAT LIGHTNING

July 4th, sitting on the roof
watching a distant storm instead of fireworks,
Lisa got scared and left,
muttering a story about how when she was young,
and even though it rarely lightnined in California,
a bolt once struck the swingset
in her Beverly Hills backyard.
She had grown tired of me anyhow
and my stories of last summer,
my Iowa summer of electrical storms.
Sitting on the dock with Ron,
I counted falling stars in August
while his naivete grasped for images
of a world spun throughout cool nights,
far away from his hometown of fish smells.
Rebecca always bitched about that smell
and compared sex to golf
while having a fling with a man twice her age.
On nights of her absence
I would lie in her bed
and write on her walls.
On mine was the message, "Playing golf, don't wait up."
Over Oreo shakes at the wharf
we laughed about our two roommates,
one who missed her boyfriend so much
that it wasn't until the end of the summer,
when everyone else had been to bed with everyone else,
that she looked at another man;
the other: Virgin. Catholic. Good.
Every night in her own bed with a rosary,
she was proud of me for spending my nights
reading to Tim as he tried to sculpt faces,
spending more time picking bugs out of clay
and explaining to me what art really is
and that 'shrooms contain a chemical
already found in your body
and that it rarely lightnings in California.

On hot nights we slept outside near the fields.
Carrie swore that she could hear the corn grow.
By midsummer she had grown tired of my insecurities
and never quite understood
my time spent with Tina
chain-smoking in the children's theatre
or floating on styrofoam in the flooded fields
with two young boys who named a lake after me
and who were always just around the corner.
Their age caused Mike to worry about my morals
while I worried about the end of the summer
when it was all too easy to remember
the first weeks in June.
Lightning seemed to come every night then,
with cool evenings and too much drink.
A man took me to his room,
lusting after supposed virginity.
I remember that all I wanted to remember
was how the wind blew the curtains
and how rain sprinkled in on awkward bodies
and how he played with my hair
like the lightning played across the sky.



\$5.00