

MANUSCRIPT



Vol. XXX
MCMLXXVII

WILKES COLLEGE ARCHIVES
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MANUSCRIPT

A collection of poetry, prose and art composed
throughout the academic year MCMLXXVI —
MCMLXXVII

By Students of Wilkes College

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Preface

The Manuscript, now in its thirtieth year of publication, began as a small collection of prose in 1947 and has grown to represent both the literary and the visual artists of Wilkes College. The magazine is published by the Manuscript Society, which also sponsors the Manuscript Film Series and assists the English Department in co-sponsoring the readings of guest writers.

The Manuscript Society wishes to extend its appreciation to those people who have taken the time to contribute their creative efforts.

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Cover by Michael Weida



Winner of the Manuscript Prize for Poetry
Selected by the English Department

Great-Uncle John Finds a Thumb in His Plug Tobacco

He worked hard all week.
It was Friday
and the early morning soil
was teased with the rain.
After the cows were milked
and the chickens fed
he crossed the two fields
and a hill to the river.

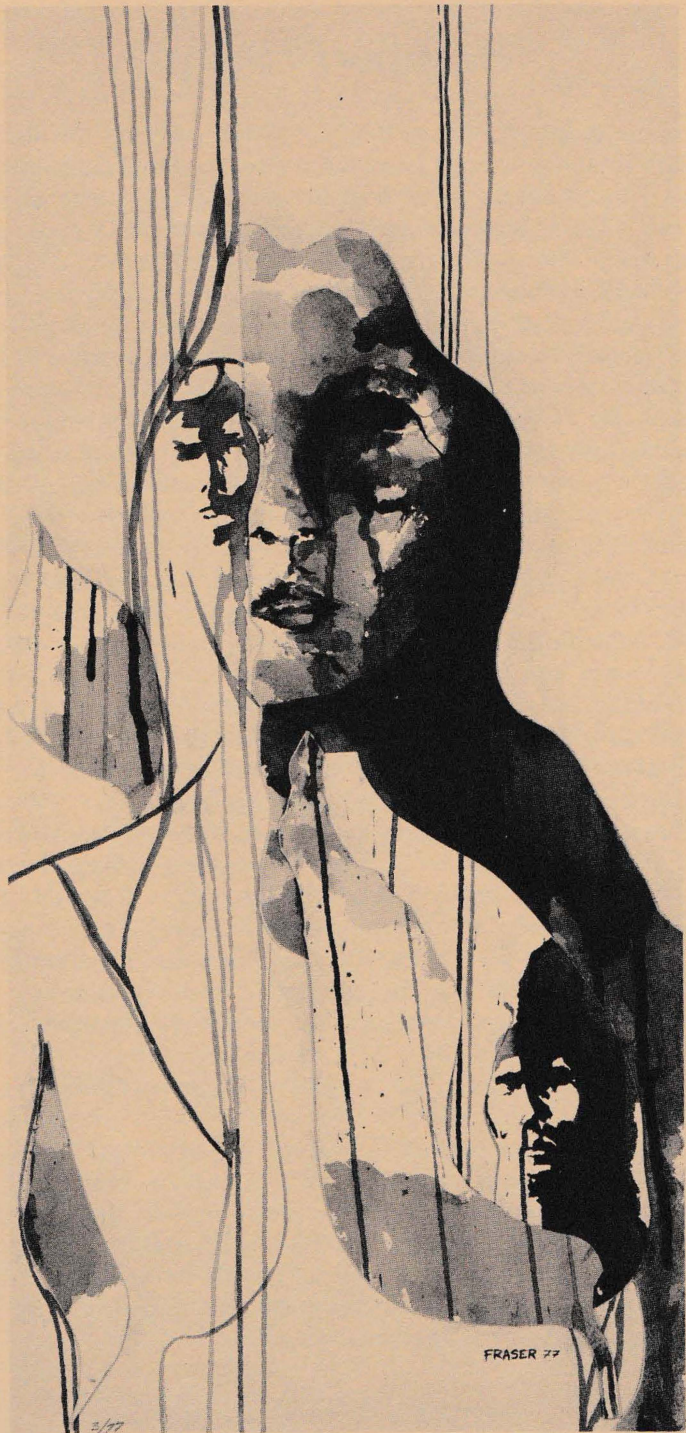
A mist rose from the water
A fish jumped
A squirrel said something
Deer left their prints in the soft soil
And there stood Great-Uncle John
At peace with his own piece of earth
Just like God and Thomas Jefferson planned,
Then he pulled out the plug.

Glenn Bradley

Scent, as the moon grates
Rind and pulp against the screen,
In drifts like snow fall.

Its scent like the mock orange,
White flower without a scent.

Judson Evans



David Fraser

Raspberry Soup

He was late. Jess had told me in the morning he would be home on time—promises he didn't make, he didn't keep and vice versa. I had held up my end of the day, swam upstream to the welfare office to tell them my story again, then told it again at the employment office. I'd looked into five patient unbroken Swedish faces and told them what I had—nothing—and what I wanted—peace. And asked them for the money their laws said they could give to those without work permits who were the wives of men granted permission to stay for humanitarian reasons. Then I progressed, for everything was a piece of progress, straight to the grocery store and there went into my trance, deciphering from the pictures and my jigsaw Swedish what was food and what was soap, what was raspberry pudding and what would turn out to be raspberry soup. For that night, I fought against the odds and produced a meal of hamburgers, home fries, salad, and Coca-Cola. I bought Jess a pack of Marlboros, made in Switzerland. They didn't taste to him like the Marlboros at home, but the package was the same.

And he was late, having promised me. Was it a new arrival or confusion in the ranks? There were variations on the old questions, as many as there were men: Why did I do it? Can I ever go back home? What do you mean—imperialism? Jess loved to see the dawn on the other deserters' faces when they connected the words he used to their deeds. It must have been a relief that there were some words besides the ones they knew too well. There were also words for the consequences, but they weren't used all that often by the men, more often by wives and girlfriends, and then we'd tuck them in again, glance around to see if we'd been heard. No one listened to us anyway, though my husband said the whole world was listening.

I heard footsteps in the courtyard, three flights below, then the light being switched on for the stairs. Then more footsteps. I wondered whether to start the meat cooking right away. The patties were waiting patiently and I was hungry. But when Jess came into the apartment—first the outside door, then the inside door to our double-doored, double-windowed apartment—he didn't look in the mood for a hamburger. He looked cold. His skin was red and shiny, and his nose was running. His eyes were rimmed in red, tears or cold I couldn't tell.

“What happened to you? Why aren’t you wearing a jacket?”

He went straight into the bathroom and closed the door. I sat on the bench in our hall and waited for him. It is unusual to run around Stockholm in January with no jacket on, and he had left that morning wearing one of the nicest jackets he’d ever had. It was old leather, broken in. In certain lights, Jess looked like Marlon Brando when he wore it.

“I got ripped off,” he said when he came out. He smelled of soap and sweat, and his flesh was still cold, like thawing meat.

“Who did it,” I asked. “At the Hub?”

“Why do you always think deserters do everything. No one rips anyone off there.”

“Honor among . . .” but I didn’t finish. Can you respect an act apart from the person who performs it? In this case, yes, the act was correct, but the people were not supposed to be criticized, as if they were on some other level of existence than myself. It was as if each one of these cases and Jess himself was a work of art I was supposed to step back from to see in its entirety, then step forward to see the detail, then admire at middle distance. But I saw with my eyes, and found confusion in individuals, searches for meanings in labels, men serving time as statistics rather than as privates. “Honor among lowdowns,” I finished.

“What do you think you are,” he asked, taking off his boots, peeling away his wool socks.

“Lowdown. It’s true,” I felt sorry for us both then, and sorrier because I knew there were people to feel sorrier for. “But where’s your jacket, Jess?”

“Innocent,” he smiled. “I’m innocent this time, baby. I was minding my own business.”

“Where were you doing this?”

“At Hötorget. The bus stop. On the queue. Lined up.”

“Like a good boy.” When Jess stopped resisting and volunteered for the army because he came to believe it would be a good way to organize soldiers, I’d said—The army is organized. Soldiers need disorganizing. You’re just being a good boy. You like joining up. But this after discussions up and down, nice impersonal discussions about whether this was the right way to do things. I couldn’t see myself as an army wife, but didn’t talk about it. I hadn’t, since I met Jess, been able to reconcile self-image with whatever shows on the outside. “I’m sorry,” I said. “What happened at the bus stop?”

"It's a ridiculous story." I followed him into the living-room where he began lighting candles. Jess knows how to make a room comfortable. He does it more by being in it than by lighting candles. I can light candles and be uncomfortable. Outside, it was pitch black and it had been dark since noon.

"I was standing on line and the guy in back of me started talking to me."

"In Swedish?"

"Sure."

"Then it must have been a short conversation."

"Ha ha." He rolled himself a cigarette. I'd forgotten to give him the Marlboros, but I didn't want to leave the room and prolong the suspense any more than need be. I had the feeling that something bad had happened. Jess looked tired the way he did after meetings sometimes, sometimes when friends got popped, when we ran out of money, when news of the war was bad.

"He told me that I was wearing his jacket. He told me in English to be sure I understood."

"But Martin gave it to you."

"He said Martin must have stolen it from him."

"Ah." I didn't know what to think. What would I have done—given Martin's address away, left it up to him? Martin was one of the most respectable people we knew, being Swedish, a university student, and a registered member of a political party. "So what did you say," I asked.

"I told him it was my property and he must have been mistaken. Then he told me there was a law in Sweden."

"A law. Something bad is coming."

"He said there was a law that if a person claims property and the so-called owner of the property can't produce written proof that it was duly and righteously his, it reverts to the claimant."

"The claimant. My Lord."

I wanted to say—Let's get out of this place. What was there for us here? The people were stiffs, the climate was suitable for rocks, it was dark half the year and light the other. There was no sense of anything I would want to do here but live out this bare kind of existing day I'd had and come home to wait for him, wait for this kind of news. Let's get out of here, I almost said, and was stopped only by the knowledge that there was nowhere else to go in the world. We had washed up on this shore and when we'd landed had been grateful enough.

"I didn't just let it go, you know," Jess said, sounding angrier. I could just see him in the candlelight which flattered the structure of his face and obscured his expression. I've been looking at his face for four years. I don't tire of it, but I know it. "I told him I thought that was the dumbest thing I'd ever heard. So we went to the police."

"Oh no."

"I know. I know." I hated this too. We never used to be this afraid of the police. We didn't welcome visits from them or to them, but there wasn't this sense of being at their mercy. Though of course we always were; they always had the power to put us places. Look at where we were.

"I didn't know whether to tell him to shove it or to call Bengt and ask him to come to the police station. Then I thought a lawyer might be more alarming. So I just went with him. And you know, there is such a law. I showed them my identification papers. I showed them my driver's license from the State of Massachusetts. And the police sergeant pointed to a paragraph in a book. He said if there was a way to get hold of Martin, I should do it. I even tried calling Martin then, and he wasn't home."

"So you gave him the jacket."

"Well for Christ's sake. What did you want me to do, go to jail for it? Form a committee? Get deported for a jacket?"

"I didn't say a thing. I don't know what you should have done. But it's cold out there. Oh forget it. There's other jackets."

"Sit down. There's more. I pointed out to them that there was a good chance I'd freeze to death on the way home and the sergeant saw it my way."

"How Swedish. They take away your jacket and then worry that you'll freeze and cost the state in medical bills."

"Who knows what they think. But he insisted the guy give me ten crowns to take a cab home."

"A free ride. That's just what your father said mankind liked better than anything."

I left the living-room and went out to the kitchen. I patted the hamburgers into firmer shape. The Coke would be cold now. I turned on the stove. Jess followed me into the kitchen and slammed a package down on the table.

"Listen to me. I haven't finished yet."

"Okay. Okay. I was just starting dinner."

"I took the ten crowns and figured, what the hell. I'll buy some beer for us. Take the bus home. I could survive some cold. And while I was waiting at the bus stop, what do you think happened?"

"Someone wanted your shoes."

"Close. The same guy came up to me and said he wanted his ten crowns back if I was taking the bus."

"What did you do?"

"It was weird." He was taking bottles out of the bag and setting them on the table. Delicious, tempting Swedish beer, the bottles dripping with cold. "I wanted to mash his face in. At first I wanted to. But I just looked at him and didn't say anything."

"And then what?"

"The bus came. Then it got to be all right. He just backed off from me."

"How did you look at him?"

He made a face and said, "Never mind. What's that for dinner?"

"Hamburgers. Don't you recognize a hamburger?"

I made the meal and we ate it. I poured bubbly Coke into my glass and Jess drank some beer. We sat there munching in our cozy kitchen, not talking. We were so much more American in that country. I used to hate hamburgers at home. After dinner we drank the rest of the beer and listened to some music. We had one of the best rock collections in Stockholm until it was stolen by someone who'd been to our house for a party. The other guy with him felt guilty and told us. Jess and I went after him but he got word and dumped all the records into a canal. A little high on the beer, we laughed at the loss of the jacket. Later, Martin called to find out why Jess had called him. Jess repeated the whole story to him and they went over it again. Poor Martin. Before he met us he believed there was nothing wrong with Sweden and the world that a little Marxist-Leninist thinking wouldn't clear up. Now he asks again and again—No, but is that so? All I ever tell him are little facts he never looked at before.

Later still Jess and I went to bed. We fell asleep, exhausted and warm underneath our quilt, holding on to each other, then drifting away. I like to sleep facing one way. He likes to spread out. Some mornings I've woken up with his arm across my throat.

In the middle of the night I woke up. I wasn't crying or having a bad dream. I knew where I was. I was in my little place with Jess. There we were and there we would be. I was only afraid.

What if a Swede came to our door and demanded everything? Was there a limit? Would Jess or me reach out and strike a blow for our candles and hamburgers? What did we have left to defend? At whose mercy were we now? I relied on Jess to be right and to know what to do. I have always been afraid he would go to prison for too long or that he would be badly hurt, but that night I was afraid in a different way.

Jess turned in his sleep and stretched out his legs. His arm touched my side.

Brave and true, he would begin to lose his hair. He would get a job in a social welfare agency and do linkage work between immigrants and Swedes. We'd move to a house somewhere out of the main city. I'd finally learn to speak reasonable Swedish. I'd give up trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and I'd have a baby. One day Jess would beat up some Swede in a bar and we'd go to another social welfare agency for therapy— Jess, the baby, and me. We'd learn to handle our problems better.

Maybe one day the war would end and we would both cry, I know we would cry. But we wouldn't go home. Maybe we'd buy a few bottles of beer or some wine and we'd get drunk together. Then wake up the next morning and continue.

Before I fell asleep again I thought maybe I would leave Jess and go back home. I wondered what it would be like to walk around the familiar streets, and I saw myself standing alone in front of a corner drugstore I hadn't seen in three years. Bring the boys home bring the boys home end the war bring the boys home. Jess, Jess, I could hear my future call, and then I fell back to sleep.

Laura Furman

Laura Furman served as visiting writer in the
Spring Semester of 1977.



Midwinter Wait

Joan Teno

It was not the hunt
that brought me here.
My weapons hang on the wall
of a lodge you have not seen.
But with time on my hands
and this seeming as good
a place as any
You see me here
and hide
behind your mother
behind a tree
And you blend in so well
that I might not have seen
you at all
Had I not been waiting.

Glenn Bradley

Full moon.

And the only other light
shines from a house
across the way.

Somewhere inside
a young girl
combs her hair.

Ray Klimek



Imaginary Landscape (A Farewell to First Loves)

Randall Bond

This is to be ignored

He walked to the corner to wait for a bus,
But the bus was there and gone.
He stood on the curb and wept for an hour,
And another passed unknown.

He, wrapped and ranting in a white sheet, chanted
To those that had died on that corner too:
“Where, oh where is our bus gone?
We’ve waited so long and are dying for it.”

He didn’t know he wasn’t dead; he wasn’t.

The dead didn’t answer him once,
Neither did the dead living.
They all were there and stood as wood.
That is, those that could stand did.
Those that could listen didn’t.
They just unjustly frowned him down,
Although they couldn’t see where he was getting at.

He, not knowing he wasn’t there in all,
Not smelling that them with common sense
Couldn’t see or hear,
Would not stop standing and saying for anyone.

Then he stopped.

After days of breathing hardly at all,
When he was ready to give up the spirit
(one not there for days),
Something turned and uttered, “What?”
He thought: “I’m not naught!”
Then he died, and the bus came for the rest.

R. S. Fabbrini

Self Portrait

Jack Kerouac is dead
and Ginsberg remembers
San Francisco as it was.
As for me, I smoke too much
and sleep alone.

Seamus

The Squirrel

The man at the door holds a cardboard box in his arms. The box is covered with a cloth, and from inside come feeble scratchings and squeaking noises. I am expecting the man, and I take the box gladly, and thank him. This is my second chance. Three years ago, on a Saturday, I had my first.

I work to support us during the week, so all the household chores must be done on the weekend. This particular Saturday I'm feeling irritable and pushed, resentful because my husband helps so little. (He did try, when we were first married, but it was hopeless; he couldn't even sweep a floor properly.) When I hear him coming I try to hide my impatience. I straighten up, turning away from the vacuum monster. Richie is standing right at my elbow, looking at something held cupped in his hands.

"There were three of them," he says, "right under the tree in the parking area. They must have got knocked out of the nest somehow, and no sign of the mother. I think a car ran over the other two, but this one's still alive. It doesn't even have its eyes open yet!"

"It" is a tiny grey squirrel. Only days old, it lies curled in his palm with a nearly naked tail wrapped tightly around itself, surely for warmth and perhaps for security. It seems sleek and healthy for such a very new baby, and breathes at a steady, calm pace. It is so new to life that it is not even frightened.

Richie transfers the squirrel to my waiting hands, and I send him to find an old shoebox and some soft rags. When he returns, I arrange a nest with my right hand while I cradle the squirrel with my left. Only when its bed is ready do I release it, depositing its warmth carefully among the fold of worn cloth. I am caught, I am enchanted, I am in love!

I know that getting them to eat is always the hardest part; those that do not eat, die. I rummage through cabinets until I find an old eyedropper. Then I heat some milk, adding a little honey to disguise its stange cow's flavor, and test it carefully on the inside of my wrist. Richie hovers, watching, then leans over me as I take the tiny form from the shoebox. The milk doesn't interest the squirrel at first, but I am patient. Finally he licks at the dropper, but he doesn't seem to be swallowing; most of the milk is puddling in my hand. Concerned, I apply the gentlest of pressures to the bulb, and am rewarded with an infant gulp.

By late afternoon, the orphan has fed several times. His condition should be stable, but his breathing seems labored. When I hold him, little milky bubbles form around his mouth and he begins to cough. I know he is very sick now; the situation calls for more skill than I possess. I remember seeing a veterinarian's office near our home. Frantic, I gamble on the doctor being in and rush there with my baby squirrel.

The vet seems mildly surprised both at my pet and at my agitation. He listens to my story and carefully examines the now-gasping squirrel. "It's going to die," he tells me evenly, "You forced fluid into its lungs trying to feed it. It has pneumonia."

I take my squirrel and my failure back to the apartment, and sit down to watch over one until it dies and the other until it is fully born. I never shed a tear until the struggling squirrel gives up and dies. When I do cry it brings a terrible pain, and even my young husband cannot console me.

I close the door and carry the cardboard box to the kitchen table, where I remove the covering and peer inside. In the bottom of the box, in a nest of old soft rags, three tiny white kittens squirm and lift their blind eyes light-ward on wobbly necks. I reach down and lift the smallest one in both hands. Only days old, it is so new to life it is not even frightened. It never ceases its demands for food as I hold it there, stroking it with one finger as gently as I can. Again I am caught, again enchanted, again in love! This time there will be no mistakes. It is a long time since the squirrel died in spite of love, and I am older, more skillful and more confident.

As I get things ready to feed the kittens, I think about how, that other time, Richie leaned over my shoulder. Our divorce was amicable, and I think he would be happy that I have this second chance.

Willie



“but grandma said . . .”

Susan Adams

Green Eggs and Ham

Sleet freezes freely
around my nearly frozen feet,
skimming softly off the sidewalk
into the gutter.
To the river.
To the bay.
To the sea. — pick one

Shit!!!
I just lost it.
You see,
 what happened was
there is this girl
 I've been watching
 from my window.
She passes about 4:30 everyday
I just glanced at my clock
 It's 4:38
She wasn't there.

Profanity is a sign of ignorance;
I can dig that (I will not eat them
in a box I will not eat them with a fox
I will not eat them Sam I am I will not
eat green eggs and ham).

They raised us on Doc Suess
Sgt. Joe Rock
instant everything
no free lunch
I feel threatened.

Glenn Bradley

CONTEMPORARY

How simple it now seemed: the rich were rich.

He had almost overlooked this before the other impeturable myths, e.g.

A few lines of verse to see us thru. Ah, what brilliance
yellowing
like Confederate 100's

Year by year.

But think:
in the slick magazines the slick

Blonds are oiled in the tub.
Rub-a-dub.

And they *can* write?

But of course
as in the old days we'd say: Because I can't do
anything

Else. Ah, the simple truth.

The rich *are* rich
and will often amuse us in the obscurely inaccessible modern poem.

Hugh Seidman

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Hugh Seidman served as Wilkes College's first visiting writer in the Fall Semester of 1975.

Fore-sleep

Sun's light dries
the sweat of rocks
polished by rain
the night before.

Rocks' faces shine.

Vacant nests fray
like an old woman's head
cradled by wrinkly-sleeved
neighbors growing old.

Petals' threads snap.

The earth molds
footsteps of a visitor
come thirsty to consume
the last measure of your love.

Nature's breaths lull.

Terri Williams



Siesta Tarde

Patty Steele

Ducks in a dark
Cool pond swimming
(south)
Away from the opposite shore
(winter)
Observe with great carelessness
The leaves turning brilliant
Colours and fall
Only to become brown,
And brittle —
Brittle
Is the day with cold
And winter's fine, lacey fingers
Reach out
And touch the ground
With foreboding white
As she threatens to grasp
The day, the season, the year
The time is near
This time is hers.

Keith Jones

Aftertaste

Dreams are
 sympathetic,
 and simple
With the cadence of a farmboy walking

 Complex,
 sometimes ludicrous.
I hate them
And the dusty film.

Glenn Bradley

It was an ancient building. Pieces of plaster fell from the wall each time the elevator stopped in its arthritic spasms. Each day as he stood before the door, there was a long wait, a sad ring at the "G" position on the dial, then some plaster on his shoulder. The door would open, and no one would come out. No one ever came out. No one waited to go in. He had lived there for weeks, never seeing anyone coming from or waiting for that elevator.

Then, one day, he saw a woman approach with a brightly-colored kerchief on her head and a little child, tugging at her violently. She had a shopping bag, which dragged behind as the child dragged her forward. This absurd motion made her look like an old spinster being pulled by a strong but tiny dog. But as she got closer to him, he realized she was quite young.

In his determination to meet a fellow being, he turned completely toward her and said, "Hello! I'm Jim Eckland. I live on the fifth floor."

The lady, closer now, looked at him with half-opened eyes. With a lower lip protruded and a cigarette attached, she opened her mouth, looking at the child.

"Bobby, would you stop pulling your mother's arm, and let her say hello. Oh, hello. My name is Eartha."

He was delighted to hear three words other than his own.

"Nice to meet you, Eartha. And what's your son's name?"

The child, still dangling from his mother's arm (this time, with feet off the floor), looked up at him with wide-eyed hatred.

"Oh, his name is Bobby. Where did you say you was living?" she mumbled.

"On the fifth floor, Apartment 5B."

"Yeh. I been there all right. A friend of mine used to live up there, but she had to get out 'cause her husband died."

She looked up at the arrow and pressed the "up" button. There was a pause. The arrow didn't move. The child screamed in that unknown baby dialect which, it seemed to Jim, could only be understood by mothers of this world. Before the child could get a second blast out, its mother slapped its head, turning its face red. The red face opened its mouth in a silent, body-jerking cry. The child was quiet.

Jim asked her, "What did he die from?"

"Who?"

"Your friend's husband!"

"Oh, him. He fell out an eighth floor window."

"I thought you said they lived in my apartment."

"They did. But the girl that he visited was on the eighth floor. And his wife found it out, and one day she was waiting for him in front of the girl's door. I heard that he ran out to the fire escape, and his wife ran after him. After a while, the police arrived and found the body in the middle of the alley. And no one asked any questions either. I heard he slipped on Mrs. Bottlemeier's ferns, but some of the neighbors knew better!"

Both looked up at the arrow, which was finally moving down.

The red face of the child was white again as the elevator creaked to ground level, blessing the odd trinity with plaster.

R. S. Fabbrini

Sad Achilleus

When the sickly moon's
brooding brow hangs
heavily on the sea's rim,
Complusive sobs shake the waves
into heart-swells of compassion.

White-tipped fingers caress
the moon's teary face,
Kindly bearing the heart-felt burden to the shore.

In pulsing rhythm,
her pale light caresses
and bathes the waves
in gentle recognition
of her own reflection.

She touches the white-shouldered waves,
and lightens the burden they carry.
One gives the other sympathetic embrace.

Debbie Yakus



Variagated Coniffers

Jean C. Reiter

Atlantis Revisited

Eight years later:
House FOR SALE,
Day glo letters tacked
To a shingled bannister.

Too logical a stance
Living across the road,
Studying the baldheaded realtor.
Guided tours begin at five.

Dusk hides the strained walks
Whose mortar, like lines
On my grandmother's face
Scatter in all directions.

My feet are heavy,
Thick tongues of grass
Lace my shoes.
The distance narrows.

A mock orange, no longer
A specimen neatly coiffured,
Splits like a Palm Sunday palm
Held firmly in a young girl's hand.

Gladioli no longer cover
Sharp cinders left from the base of an old garage.
Scattered zinnias dot the ruins,
A lost Atlantis revisited.

Brian Boston

You're in my mind
like so many candles
scorching here and there
Holiday candles and . . .
birthday candles burned low
a painful warmth.
A semi-sweet glow
like the first summer
that fails in its magic,
that slides by
like beads on a string:
an abacus, no maze.

Love me for my effort
if for nothing else.
It is the highest compliment
within my capabilities;
It is a patchwork quilt
sewn by arthritic hands
inflamed, ignoring their own heat
victim of a fool's pride.
But, pointless though it is
take it with you on winter nights
when the wind blows cold
and you need something to burn you.

Glenn Bradley



Carol Husa

Poetry fettered, fetters the human race.
Nations are destroyed or flourish in proportion
as their poetry, painting, and music
are destroyed or flourish.

William Blake — Jerusalem

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