

1977

## Reflections 1977

Wayn Blankenship

Becky Bost

Suzette Thompson

David Putnam

Barbara Wray

*See next page for additional authors*

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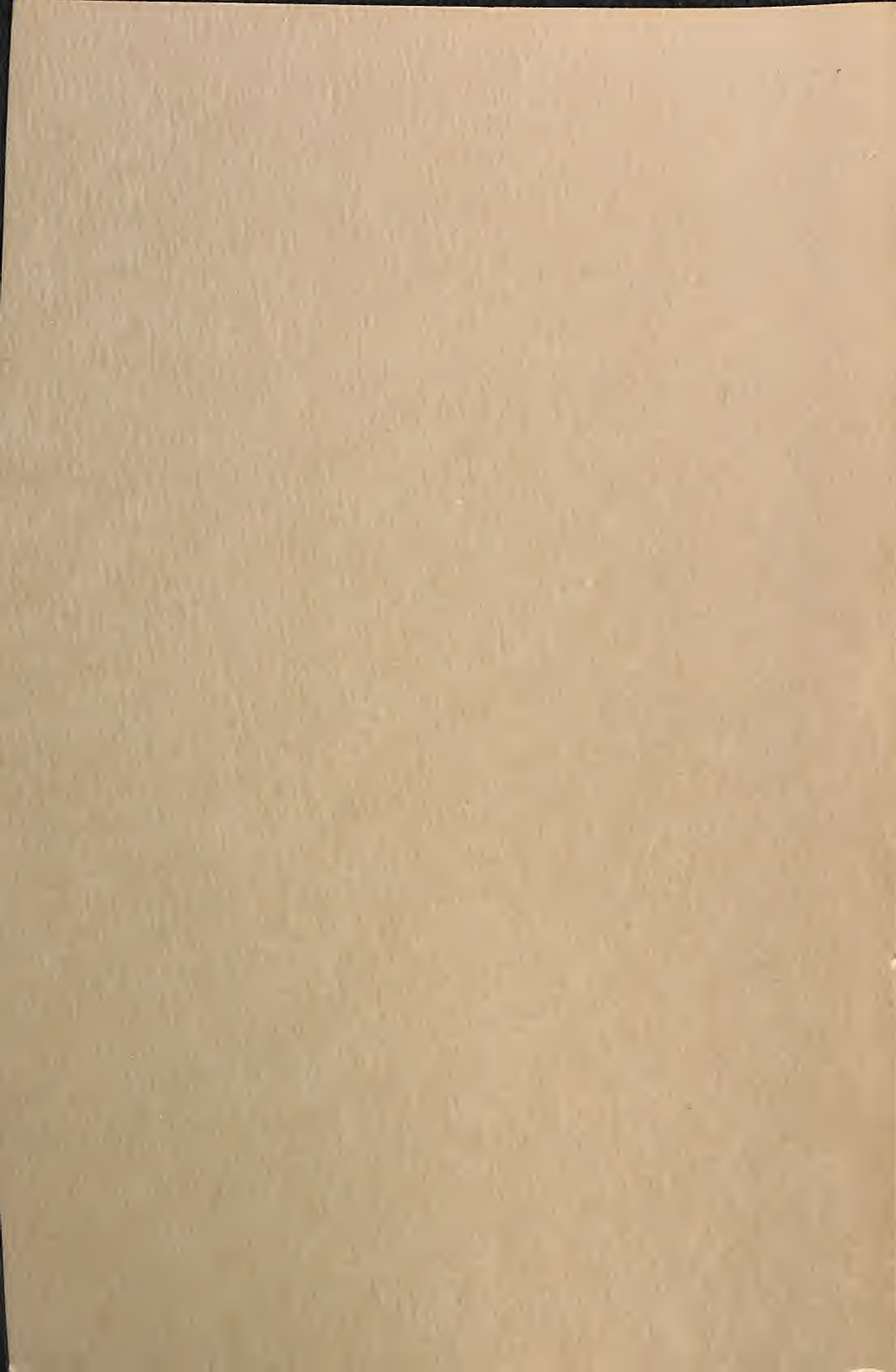
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**Authors**

Wayn Blankenship, Becky Bost, Suzette Thompson, David Putnam, Barbara Wray, and Charlotte Hughes









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Wayne Blankenship, President  
Becky Bost, Vice-President  
Suzette Thompson, Secretary  
David Putnam  
Barbara Wray  
Charlotte Hughes

typists: Donna Yates, Becky Bost,  
Barbara Wray  
faculty advisor: E. M. Blankenship

Art appearing in this volume includes a sampling of Scenes from the Nineteenth-Century Stage in Advertising Woodcuts, collected by Stanley Applebaum (Dover Books, 1976). These illustrations range from the comic pantomime of HUMPTY - DUMPTY (cover) to the melodrams of the British and American theatres.

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## THE EFFECTS OF NATURAL GOODNESS ON FROST

Those crazy ghosts came  
out again  
last night. Only this time  
many had changed colors and they  
were not quite equal (at all). The body  
temperatures of some were quite  
higher than others. Some I knew as  
protection from nightmares (of inverted ice  
cream cones with fangs and beetles  
w/ absolutely no teeth.) While others  
used to be on  
sale at the 5 & 10.  
One actually rode by me  
on a skateboard  
and I could see where  
Mother had put my name  
at the bottom  
the day b4 summer camp.

Tommy Swinney

## UNWASHED JOY

Turning from faded blue eyes tired  
of staring into poverty's  
blank eyes and wrinkled face,  
from buzz of flies hard at work  
over dirty dishes,  
from baby's feverish whimpering,  
and layered, soured smells,  
I pushed the ragged, sagging screen door open  
and stepped into the warm sunshine,  
and drank the fragrant air in gulps  
to flush my lungs, wondering where seven children  
could find a shred of warmth or happiness.

At the end of the dusty path  
where it climbed the hill to the road,  
I saw a small, blonde, laughing boy  
silhouetted against the setting sun,  
clutching in his dirty fist a long, frayed string,  
a leash for the laughing, mongrel puppy  
that ran beside him,  
looking up into his face,  
and then I knew, for I remembered  
how warm puppies feel and smell,  
and what a big hole they can fill  
in the heart of a hungry boy.

T. Max Linnens

Once I lived?

in a wHOLY BLAck world,  
safely ensconced between Malachi and Matt.

Then some GO o d,

from a temple within,  
drove me from warm lies and the worship of Pat.

Forty days,

in a dry desert mind,  
debating Descartes and realizing that

TRUTH  
IS  
MY  
GOD  
!  
.  
.  
.  
?  
.  
.  
.

Damn you Nietzsche!

Once I lived?

in a dry desert mind . . .

Robert B. Setzer, Jr.

When a life is spent mainly in getting ahead,  
Cultivating the taste for the fine things,  
Searching the records to make sure that nothing  
    is missed  
Developing poise, polish and finesse  
Feeling sure that the life was directed toward  
    ultimate meaning,  
Then it hurts to have a young fellow with apparent  
    authority  
As though he understands the essence of all the  
    past by the way he feels  
Say that you've spent your life in a bundle of  
    lies.  
And by the look in his eyes you know that he means  
    it when he says  
"Step down old man, you've had your day.  
Make room for the new generation  
And don't think that they'll be limited by accepting  
    what you've always believed and worked to secure."

E.M. Blankenship



## GROWING UP

Euphoria.  
Happiness and laughter.  
Tiptoeing across today,  
Away from yesterday, into tomorrow.

Sorrow and pain.  
Childish jealousy  
Lying in wait to pounce upon its prey  
and destroy the beauty.  
Somehow I know I should fight back.

Unperceivable notions,  
Battling within my mind,  
Turning my mind into a battlefield.  
Always an unknown soldier dying.

Grace McDonald

# REST HOME RECITAL

Poised fingers  
and dignity  
caressed like an old gown

Hesitant tones of Clementi  
in stiff reverberation

Myopic eyes search for applause  
and an old carnation reblooms.

She bows  
And Aphrodite has returned  
from the sea.

Joyce Brown

12 am orange juice says  
welcome to a not-quite-morning world  
shared by more than three.  
"kiss me" a voice says.  
I look uhround & find only  
a small radio, looking  
like the teeth  
of Amos 'n Andy sitting  
on a smaller table.

Who are you Artful dodger and where  
did you leave the toothpaste?

I look around and find  
I am all alonely. B4 i awoke  
someone turned the window on. I  
see several anteaters strutting through  
a vacationing neighbor's house.

Proud...b-u-t...blank.

Must I stare?  
Call the police? or  
bake a cake?  
Gotta do something so  
I slip into my meet-the-boss shoes,  
light several emergency flares,  
and run to work like a flaming  
angel.

Tommy Swinney

## HOLOGRAPHY

We see someone touch a match to the model ship and it burns slowly, reflecting in the large tank of water. On deck, cardboard silhouettes of the ship's crew dance about frantically...

They move in centaur-fashion, pasted to the backs of June bugs set in motion by the heat.

We see only human shapes with arms outstretched, against a background of flame. They jiggle from one end of the dying ship to the other like figures projected on the walls of Plato's cave... Here is the REAL, clearly perceived on film...

Three movie cameras record the event.

... Even after scorched beetles wind to a halt, the cardboard torsos continue their panic, as Cecil B. DeMille remarks that such a scene seems odd, of course, minus the audio (screams, etc.).

He knows nothing of real suspense, or of Kafka...

Wayne Blankenship



AC-DC

(for my student, Martha Breakfield)

What does one do when  
switchers of lights switch seats  
to keep from switching lights?

Especially when Teacher urgently learns the name of  
Breakfield, of her who ever broke  
from light to dark and back again--

Then driven by wild loss of connection  
in newness of names and terms to looking for her  
furiously Martha are you there and where and why

And even to punning upon her name oh she has broken  
fields of magnetism  
and violated every physics principle  
by name alone

but then that's probably how she got it!

And then sits knowing, medievalist that she is,  
and due respecter of genetic heritage,

that Martha's 10th great-great  
in 1540  
probably did the same,  
flippantly refusing to light old  
Henry's hundred candles  
for all those wives

Betty S. Cox

## CONCERT

Flirting with death  
a moth tied to a flame  
caught like Billie Holiday under its glare  
sings a song for a long gone lover  
who only came to visit  
on Christmas  
and eclipses of the moon  
left her  
putting out the light  
gliding the darkness  
knowing only night-rhythms  
counted in searching wing-beats

Suzette Thompson



DREAMS (Liverpool, London and New York., 1869).  
Act I: a modest room in Mainz; the German cavalry officer Harfthal consoles his wife (and their ward Caroline Lindeck) as their son Rudolf leaves for England to study musical composition.



## THE SWING

Jim Taylor

The boy appeared to me so suddenly that I have not upon reflection been able to ascertain the precise moment I first saw him. I had been living for some weeks in the small apartment located in a sparsely populated area several miles from a major city on the east coast. My rooms (for there were but three) lay in the back of an old house and faced a small clearing enclosed by numerous austere oak trees and densely tangled underbrush. The old couple who lived in the other part of this dwelling had, according to their custom, fled to a warmer climate for the season and had been more than eager to rent to me for a paltry sum this almost unused portion of their home. My recent fortunes having slipped precariously, I found the cost ideally suited to my financial circumstances. But I think that, had I needed no other reason to leave the city, I would have done so without regard to my economic situation. For you see, I am a man of great sensitivity and taste, a person whose cultural appreciations demand a serenity and placidity afforded only by isolation. It was thus that, over a period of time, I had become increasingly dismayed by the incessant clamor of the metropolis and could conceive of no way to escape the rude blaring of automobile horns, the droning of airplanes, and the interminable noises of construction work than to seek a rural retreat.

My present residence was, therefore, chosen to minimize my interpersonal relationships. I had seen enough of the perfidy of men to realize that continued intercourse with humanity would be of no benefit



to me. I positively shunned company, returning to the city only upon occasion to attend concerts or to consummate business matters. Gradually, however, even these infrequent trips virtually ceased, for with each return to my former home I found it impossible to shut from my ears the maddening dim reverberating from every building and rising from every street. And, invariably, former friends would insist upon my presence at parties where the clinking of glasses and the low, bee-like hum of conversation resembled the senseless rumblings of some inventor's mindless machine. I accordingly ended my ties with the duty and secluded myself in my new residence, where I was surrounded by innumerable recordings of the world's greatest music and shelves of the finest books. As the city's sounds had assaulted every nerve in my body, the strains of Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart were a balm to my frayed sensibilities. You can understand my situation only if you, too, are a man of culture and refinement. The decision I made was the only logical choice, the only way I could maintain my sanity in a world suspended from a giant, jangling chain.

The abrupt appearance of this child was, consequently, a most unexpected and puzzling invasion of my privacy. I have noted the seclusion of my domicile; indeed, the nearest neighbors were all of a mile removed. I first noticed the boy early one evening during that peaceful time when night is completing its seduction of the day. I had for some reason parted the curtains drawn over a window facing the clearing when I noticed a small, grayish figure silhouetted against the approaching dark. So astounded was I to see this miniature form that it was several moments before I became conscious that the figure was striding with purpose toward a strange object which had been mysteriously erected in the clearing. Upon closer observation, I discerned that this object was a small swing set of the type commonly found in the back yards of families with small children. As I continued to

gaze, my fears not yet having equaled my perplexity, the boy climbed into the seat of one swing (for there were two) and began the pendulum motion associated with such an action. His activity had continued for fifteen or twenty minutes when he walked away, vanishing as suddenly as he had appeared.

This process was repeated for several consecutive days. The child always came at the same time, left at the same time. Even rain did not halt his ritual, nor did the lad change the grayish garb in which I had first beheld him. In all the days I observed this strange creature, I do not recall that he ever was joined by other children or that he was upon any occasion led there by some adult who could have been his parent. He was abjectly alone, I remained in my apartment during his intrusion, assuming that he would tire of his monotonous play and leave me to my music and my books. I continued to watch him, however, with increasing apprehension because of the singular peculiarity of the affair and because I wished to summon courage enough to speak with him. Odd though it may seem, however, we never upon any occasion exchanged words.

For some days thereafter I dismissed the boy from my mind and ceased to observe him, choosing instead to retreat further into the womb of my isolation. One particularly damp evening, having just set aside Mr. Kafka's Penal Colony, I detected an indescribably eerie noise outside my window. This sound, come as it did amidst the enchanting swells of Beethoven emanating from my stereo, was exceptionally startling. I arose in annoyance and proceeded to the window. In the clearing I beheld the same small figure that I had spied upon previously. His appearance was unchanged; and he was, as before, swinging methodically, rhythmically. But now there accompanied his visual presence a creaking, screeching sound that increased in intensity as I endeavored to identify the source of my displeasure. It was obvious that the noise



was coming from the clearing, and my suspicions were confirmed when, once the boy had departed, silence returned.

Oh, how can I describe the horrible events that transpired in the ensuing weeks? In remembering these events I have often wished for the release of death as a respite from my purgatory. The next morning I ventured a few feet from my apartment to examine at closer range the swing set. As I had suspected, an ugly, dull, reddish coloring of rust had completely marred both the metal support posts and the chains. The strident din of the preceding evening had no doubt come from the corroding swing. I dared not draw closer, for some presentiment of doom impelled me to hasten back into my dwelling. I waited in agitation for dusk, hoping that for once the child would spare me his presence. But fate decreed otherwise, as I had feared. My ears, acutely sensitive, soon detected the rising crescendo of the same repulsive sound. This time, though, it was much louder, much more penetrating--like an incessant caterwaul. I closed my ears in agony. The noise pierced my body and ran through my nerves until my very being throbbed. I fancied that my bones, like a fine glass, would splinter under the strain. Then he was gone. But he returned night after night. I huddled in the remotest corner; I tightened the windows. But the infernal racket seemingly thrived on my attempts to suppress it. I somehow witnessed this misery for three more days. The limit of my toleration was reached that third evening when, in accompaniment to the initial sounds I became aware of a dull thumping. I stumbled to the window and noticed that the boy, swinging with uncommon ferocity, was lifting the support posts from their flimsy foundation and crashing them back down again. I slept but little that night, so tossed was my mind, so spent was my physical being.

I knew that I must act to alleviate my suffering. You must understand that by nature I am of a gentle disposition befitting my refined

tastes. But somehow I had to drive the boy away to restore blessed silence I had once enjoyed. The child must be discouraged from further activity within the bounds of my sanctuary. It then occurred to me that only pain would serve my purpose. I did not want to harm the boy seriously--only to inflict some minor injury upon him. And what would be better than to use the accursed instrument of my own torture. I happened to know that the old man who owned the house kept a number of tools in a shed beside the house. That day I procured a file from his supply and, conquering my dread of the swing, made my way into the clearing. Beginning near the top, I began to cut the links until on both sides only a slender portion remained. My hands, tender from a life devoid of manual labor, were cut and bleeding; and I was emotionally and physically exhausted from the effort. I returned to my apartment to await the uncertain evening.

And then he came. The damned clamor commenced and I forced myself to listen. Soon there was an abrupt termination of the sound followed by a dull thud and the muted clang of metal striking metal. I sat frozen, anticipating the child's departing footsteps. But I hoped in vain. I then peered through the window into the gathering gloom and fixed my eyes on the clearing. Imagine my unspeakable horror upon seeing a still, small form motionless upon the ground. I recoiled from the sight as one who has, against his better judgement, glanced into the underworld. With a supreme effort of will I quit my dwelling and made my way through the moonlit night to the clearing. The child lay there grotesquely, his neck twisted, and I imagined that his half-opened eyes gazed accusingly at me. He must be dead. What must I do? The body could not remain visible. Without fully comprehending how, I found myself with the old man's shovel, digging a hole beneath the swing. To this crude grave I consigned the body. I then threw the broken chain into the woods.

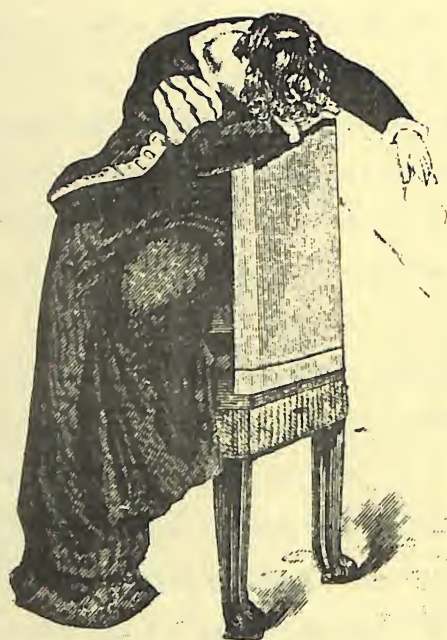


My guilt was beyond measure. I feared discovery and was positive that someone would seek the boy and trace him to my residence. But when the days passed without a single inquiry, I was soothed by a certainty that the foul deed would never be connected to me. I once more began to enjoy my former pursuits. I revelled in the serenity of my music, the instruction of my books.

It was shortly before Christmas, as I remember, that, having returned from an unavoidable trip to the city, I prepared after dinner to engage in my nightly routine. Just as I placed several records on the turntable, there rang from without the screeching, nerve-shattering din of former days. In a frenzy I tore aside the curtains and beheld the empty seat of the swing gliding back and forth against the darkening sky. I swooned and upon awakening was greeted by an ominous silence. Hurrying to the clearing, I frantically began to shovel dirt from beneath the swing. The child's grave, before my incredulous eyes, was vacant.

Subsequent days gave me no relief. Each evening the sounds returned, the swing made its riderless arc. I began increasing the volume of my stereo to drown out the horrifying noise from the clearing. This continued for an interminable period until I gradually noticed an abatement, a diminsing of the volume. Eventually, I was able to spend my evenings free of all auditory intrusions. Now, I no longer hear the grating of the rusty swing; but I also cannot hear my beautiful music. Physicians tell me that I have sensorineural deafness.

My records are encased in dust. But I still have my books, haven't



Every seven years, they say the composition  
of the body is changed completely.  
The memory of the cells is a marvelous thing  
to help one retain his identity.  
But my cells don't remember so well any more.  
Rather than take their places like good  
soldiers.  
They go to sleep and desert their useful  
purpose  
Leaving all those remaining on the field  
discouraged  
With little zeal to fight a useless battle.  
They wait their turns to be brushed away  
Or to be washed into the sea on another day.  
Eventually death is sure,  
But it's not so sudden.  
Usually it's not a one clip, that's all,  
But rather it's a gradual thing  
That sends out its warnings in advance  
Why should one ever fear it  
Since he has had all of his life  
to get used to the idea?

E. M. Blankenship





TRUE TO THE CORE; A STORY OF THE ARMADA, by Angiolo Robson Slous (London and New York, 1866). Act I: Plymouth Hoe on the Devon coast; although Martin Truegold, pilot, innkeeper and beacon guardian, has been drugged at the instigation of the nefarious Jesuit Goeffery Dangerfield (and Martin's bride Mabel has fainted). the beacon is lighted by the wild Gypsy girl Marah.



# CAN YOU SAY?

What was that song  
so liked by you  
to make you call me  
into the kitchen  
to dance?

I'd like to think  
it wasn't the song at all  
that made you want to hold me  
on your arms  
and twirl me about  
while our pancakes smoked  
unnoticed on the stove.

But still, I wonder,  
what was that song?

Teresa Tippet

## TRESSES OF GOLD

A sea of gold shining in eyes  
the body of the brown bark of  
the deep and oppressed  
lies in the sunset.

I can gaze only a moment  
at these strands of straw  
rippling with infinity.

To die with the wonders and  
confusion of her depth, and  
gasping to her never ending  
length.

For the golds of my future  
are only to see what is  
hidden beneath the tresses  
of golden bleached blue.

Debbie Pierson

## VIRO BEACH RETIREMENT

...Enter the cast of an Esther Williams movie (ca. 1950) swimming to the music of the Blue Danube

\*

...Activity therapy enters the water to make seals, or coelecanths, of old women breaststroking in perfect formation.

\*

...or pirate costumed, walking the plank into a ring of lily pads. Diving past the sequined water of the pool into the sensory deprivation tanks, the undersea caves, into the weightless, painless ocean.

\*

...hovering near the bottom so gently undressed and ravished by James Dean, surfacing with an eye patch and sunken chest full of milky white chlorine.

\*

...Through the applause, one old sister wearing white gloves turns to me and says..."Every year I buy myself a new leg, but this year I'm going to Hawaii!"

Wayne Blankenship



FRANCESCA AND THE COP

Francesca at sixty tried for a driving license,  
Art, dance, sculpture,  
photography, architecture, all these she knew;  
but painting most (a hefty hunk of  
three boroughs knew her scope  
of reverence for Giotto and Matisse,  
not to mention her own fine murals  
stretching from johns of dumpy duplexes  
to the Metropolitan  
or of her march for suffrage)

but cops did not: and for two days Fanny  
studied how to show a right  
and clear a can.

The cop, now past turns, had reached his colors,  
and dreaming issuance of beer more than license,  
intoned of Fanny what the color was (he did not  
want a spurt where death was due):

And she, her gray-haired head bent  
eight degrees to left--  
(caught, incidentally, by 3rd Precinct's chiaroscuro  
as well as any pitcher by Vermeer)--  
replied:

It is, sir, a mite past Chinese red,  
not quite incarnadine,  
and yet (here the head bent  
more decisively)  
perhaps, after all, tomato red  
inclined to southern tangerine.

Looklady whatthehell'sitgreen  
orpurple blackorwhite

Red, she said,

And Fanny drove him mad

Then self away.

B. Cox, 1977

## VIGIL

She sings her mother's song of sorrow  
With the pain of her own life added for edge  
Lifting her voice in translucent innocence.

Keening for the wayworn traveler,  
For the way worn travelers of yesterday and tomorrow  
That deliverance will come.

Child of God awaiting palms of victory  
Daughter of hope wringing out despair  
Descendent of dreamers singing eternity.  
That voice must have wept at the Tomb.

Joyce Brown

a good friend  
of mine loved  
to lie like a  
roller coaster  
in  
the  
dark.  
Gone Now: his last words  
"i'm dead."

Tommy Swinney

I  
bet you  
(sometimes) dream in  
symphonies.

The closest i've ever  
come was  
dreaming about  
eating an  
old  
piano  
in  
a  
Sunday  
School  
room  
with  
a  
tuning fork.

Tommy Swinney



Sitting, listening to philosophies, religions  
endless, one thousand and one ways  
to find God and heaven.  
My mind grows tired of such limitations.  
The mind is infinite and through these  
philosophies and religions  
My mind grows, evolves, loses physical,  
gains spiritual,  
Advances Advances Advances  
to pure energy and thought,  
And my evolved, spiritual, energy ball;  
God if you wish  
Aches and aches and wails with the longing  
For the simple feeling of cold crisp air  
entering lungs.

Michael P. Cox



MAZEPPA; or, The Wild Horse of Tartary, by Henry Milner (London, 1831). Act II, scene I: Mazeppa, tied to a wild horse for presuming to love a polish noblewoman, is borne through the Dnieper region.







## DELIVER US

Ron Rash

The coat and tie he had worn to church were now in his hand. He carried them into the bedroom and carefully laid them on the bed. Returning to the dining room, Doctor Caldwell took his chair at the head of the table. The family's negro servant, Davis, entered with the meal she had prepared while the family had been at church. She placed the steaming dishes of food on the table and quietly disappeared as the youngest of the family's three children recited a prayer from memory. The plates and bowls of chicken, rice, beans, corn, gravy, and rolls circled the table slowly. An apple pie lay untouched at the center of the table. The plates filled, the family began to eat.

Doctor Caldwell had just begun to eat the piece of apple pie that was to be his dessert when the telephone rang. Resigning himself to the inevitable he quickly took a drink of tea, wiped his mouth with a napkin, and answered the phone. The caller was a nurse at the county hospital five miles away. The doctor spoke briefly into the phone and hung up. Caldwell's wife held out the car keys she had instinctively gotten when the phone had rung.

*"What's happened? It looks like they could at least let you eat dinner."* Her voice was the voice of a woman rarely able to enjoy her husband's company without interruptions.

Caldwell began to walk towards the door, his voice low and distracted.

*"Something's happened to Miss Rachel."*

She trailed him as he walked out of the house and into the carport.

"Is it serious?" she asked.

Caldwell opened the door to the Buick, closing the door as he slid behind the wheel. He rolled the window down as the engine roared to life.

"Very serious, I'm afraid." He paused. "She will probably be dead by the time I get there."

The look of impatience disappeared from her face. She watched as the car backed out of the carport and disappeared down the road.

Driving to the hospital Caldwell reviewed his knowledge of the woman who would be dead when he reached his destination. Her given name was Rachel Carson, but he and everyone else in the town knew her as Miss Rachel. This despite the fact that she had been once married and later widowed after six months of marriage. The union had produced no children but she did not need any, for in a way she had adopted the town.

She was a small, wiry woman barely five feet tall. The skin was wrinkled and loose, but the spine was erect. It seemed as though the old, tired skin had been nailed to the rigid skeleton. The sagging features a direct contradiction to the sturdy cross-like solidity of her skeleton. The small blue eyes had not dulled with age and were sharp and piercing. Her head was covered by a short crop of incredibly white hair which in turn was almost always covered by a black tattered hat that served as an obsolete symbol of her widowhood.

She lived alone in a large, once proud house that now looked as old and worn as its inhabitant. The house was bordered by the cemetery of the town's oldest church on one side and a vacant lot on the other. The center of town was only a few hundred yards away.

Her contemporaries were now for the most part memories and names on tombstones, but Miss Rachel was still a dominant force in the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Since Caldwell could remember, she had been his chief rival in

giving the people of the town medical advice. Miss Rachel had a cure for every possible ailment, from warts to "female problems" as she put it. She dispensed her "prescriptions" with equal fervor to those who approached her for advice and those who tried to avoid her. He had heard the story many times. It has to be true, he thought. The mayor sick with the flu and Miss Rachel catching him on the street and he not thinking quick enough. Or maybe just too sick to think. Nodding his head as she recited her "prescription" as if it were some magic chant. The mayor nodding his head, not even listening; wanting to get away from her as quickly as he can to get in bed. Then she playing her trump card.

*"Can you remember it?"*

The mayor nodding yes thinking thank God. I can get away now. I've appeased her. She looking at him, then speaking.

*"Say it back to me."*

And the mayor, a big man who once nearly killed a man with his fists, cornered, knowing that escape now is impossible.

*"I'm sorry Miss Rachel, I can't quite remember it. I..."* His voice trailing off. She then looks up at him triumphantly.

A little woman barely five feet tall who never weighed more than eighty pounds in her life, her voice authoritative, vindictive.

*"Well, you're not going to have to remember it because I'll give it to you myself."*

A tiny liver spotted hand grabs at a burly, hairy wrist and closes around it. She leads the mayor down the street to her house as if he were a reluctant child. The mayor, helpless, looks from side to side at the smirking faces that watch from a distance. Disappearing into her house, the mayor comes out alone after a few minutes inside. Later, in the safety of his bedroom, he tells his wife that it was the vilest tasting liquid that had ever touched his lips. Then he says that if



the flu doesn't kill him Miss Rachel's care surely would.

Yet this was only another outlet for the motherhood that had escaped her. Most of her energy was directed towards a code of morality (her's) for the community. No one could quite remember when she had begun her crusade, yet few questioned her right to do so. Some believing, as they were sure she did, that she had been appointed by providence to look over them. She was a devout Baptist and was the oldest member of the town's largest church. Yet it was here, and only here, that her power had declined. While she once had as much power as any deacon, she was now resigned to leave most of the church's decisions to the congregation. Perhaps feeling that God would keep them straight inside his house if she kept them straight the rest of the time. So she sat alone in the balcony on Sunday mornings, the only person who ever sat up there since the church was rarely more than halfway filled, isolated, as if needing to be physically as well as spiritually closer to God. Sometimes not even being seen by the congregation, she often arrived late and left early before the concluding hymn and prayer. No one even dared ask her why.

She had been the one who had sat in a chair beside the ballot box ten years before when the town had voted on alcoholic beverages. She sat there from the time the polls opened at nine o'clock in the morning until they closed at six that evening. Looking, no, glaring, Caldwell thought, at every voter who approached the registration table to pick up his voting slip; unsmiling, grim. The men coughed nervously and tried to avoid the hawk-like eyes that seemed to burn into their souls like lasers as they disappeared into the voting stall, but all the time felt her eyes upon them as if the screen was not there at all. Giving up, they would sigh and mark the "no" square with an "X". Then they stepped out of the stall with the unfolded ballot as if carrying a flag of surrender. Placing the ballot into the box two feet from where she sat,

they left the building as quickly as possible as if escaping from the lair of some deadly and ferocious beast. Outside, the men huddled about as Red Gentry, who owns the town's hardware store, says: *"I don't know how, but if I'd done it she'd have known."*

The other men nod and chew their tobacco steadily. Red spits at the courthouse wall and resumes: *"Yes, sir. I could have folded that thing a hundred times, could have taken that damn voting box into the stall with me, but it wouldn't have mattered; she'd a known sure as I'm standing here."*

Red spits again, looks towards the courthouse entrance and speaks, his voice filled with resignation: *"Oh well, if a body's thirsty enough twenty miles ain't too far to go for some beer. Besides, if it did pass she'd probably be sitting out in front of the stores, daring us to buy it."*

Red looks at his watch.

*"Guess it's time to get back to the store. This ain't no holiday for anybody but her."*

That had not been her only victory. Years earlier, right after World War II, she had berated and intimidated the town council to close down a small dance hall on the edge of town. Barging through the door, quoting scripture, she had interrupted a meeting of the town's councilmen to vent her outrage upon them for their lack of action. After thirty minutes of debate (if indeed it could be called that) the council gave in and agreed to close down the establishment. The only condition was that Miss Rachel must get a majority of the town's signatures on a petition supporting the action. The following afternoon the petition was returned with the necessary number of names. Included were the twelve signatures of the town's councilmen. The dance hall became a warehouse.

But now she was seventy-five years old. The hip she had broken



two years before still caused her a great deal of pain whenever she walked to town or church. Her trips had become more infrequent to town, but progress had made much of the walking unnecessary. Instead, she used the telephone she had had installed five years earlier. She would call mothers and scold them when she saw their daughters wearing short dresses and their sons smoking or cursing when she made a visit to town or watching the children from her porch as they passed going to and from school. They would avoid her gaze when they could and conformed to her standards of behavior when they couldn't just like their fathers, grandfathers, mothers, and grandmothers.

Doctor Caldwell entered the hospital room and immediately saw he was not needed. Sam Hampton, the county coroner, was looking out the window of the room. He turned from the window and spoke: *"I can't believe she's dead Doc. I thought she was immortal."*

Caldwell picked up the medical chart that lay beside the bed and began to read. Looking up from the chart, he turned to Hampton and said: *"I don't understand it. She..."*

Hampton spoke before he could continue.

*"Yea, I know. She bled for an hour at least, maybe two before she called the hospital."*

He looked at the lifeless body and said: *"The cut wasn't that bad. She just happened to hit an artery. She was probably just peeling an apple or potato and the knife slipped."*

Hampton took a pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

*"Maybe she thought it would stop after a while."*

*"Sure,"* said Caldwell, *"but after a half-hour, hell, fifteen minutes, she had to know. She had to know it wasn't going to stop."*

Hampton lit his cigarette and spoke: *"Didn't she think of herself as being a doctor of sorts? Maybe she was just too stubborn to admit she couldn't stop it herself."*



Hampton paused as he inhaled and exhaled the cigarette smoke.

*"She was a stubborn woman. You and everybody else that ever lived in this town knows that."*

*"True," said Caldwell, "but she wasn't a fool. She might dabble in cures for colds, but she knew better when it was serious. Every time she was really sick she came to me."*

Caldwell stops, thinking to himself: *"No, that couldn't be it. She was no fool."*

*"Well, I don't know Doc, but if that ain't it, I guess I'll never know. But one thing's for sure; it's going to have a lasting effect on us."*

Hampton throws the cigarette butt to the floor and grounds it into the tile with his shoe.

*"Oh, yeah, you want to hear something else just as crazy?"*

Caldwell nods.

*"When they went in the house she was in that old rocking chair unconscious with some kinda home-made bandage wrapped around her hand, soaked in blood."*

Hampton looks at his watch.

*"Damn, it's nearly one o'clock."*

*"Go on, what about her?"* Caldwell's voice is slightly impatient.

*"Oh, yeah," says Hampton. "There she was, in that chair, maybe already dead, maybe just barely alive, dressed in her best dress and wearing a hat. Can you beat that."*

Hampton pauses and attempts a laugh.

*"She knew she'd be going to the hospital so she dressed up. I swear, that woman was something else."*

Hampton looks at his watch again.

*"Well, I'll see you later Doc. I got to get home and eat dinner. We're having chicken."*

Hampton walks out of the room and disappears down the corridor. Caldwell turns and looks at the lifeless body a final time. The pallid face giving no clue to his questioning mind.

Two days later Miss Rachel was buried. The church, only a few hundred yards from her house, was filled as the town paid a final tribute to the woman who, as they now see it, had tried to make them a little bit better than they were. Flowers surrounded the casket and threatened to engulf it completely.

Reverend Collins began the ceremony with a short prayer and the choir followed with several hymns. After the choir had finished, Collins began a eulogy of sermon length. This was followed by three more hymns and a final prayer ten minutes in length. The service was the longest in the town's collective memory. As if it seemed they wanted to hold her in their midst till the last possible moment.

Caldwell sat in the middle of the congregation with his wife and children. Although his eyes gazed up at the preacher, the words made no indention on his consciousness. Several rows behind him a baby cried.

The service over, the casket was carried out of the building and to the cemetery that bordered the church on three sides. The congregation trailed the pallbearers and their burden. The freshly dug earth accepted the offering and the rite was completed. Two negroes in overalls began to fill in the grave. Caldwell remained motionless beside the grave as the rest of the congregation began to depart. As he stood there he thought: *"I will never know. I will never know and maybe it is best that I don't."*

Just then someone, maybe Collins, was ringing the church bell in a final act of mourning and Caldwell thought: *"Sunday."*

Then he said it aloud, slowly: *"Sunday. It was Sunday."*

The two negroes who were filling the grave paused and looked at



him blankly. Caldwell did not notice. The two men resume their task.

*"Hampton. Hampton said she had her dress and hat on. Had her dress and hat on. I see it. Just sitting there with her dress and hat on. Some kind of bandage wrapped around her hand, having to know the bleeding wasn't going to stop. Watching it taint the cloth. Feeling the blood, flowing out with each heartbeat. Just sitting there and waiting until it would be allright. Allright because she had fulfilled. Because...because she thought we expected it of her. Expected it of her!"*

Caldwell looked at the two negroes.

*"How many curses can one land have upon it? How long will it be until...never. It will always be with us. Always."*

Turning from the two men he walked rapidly away from the grave, away from the cemetery, the church, and the sound of the ringing bell.



## ROUGHING IT

*Backpacking across cold Antarctic wastelands, this penguin is helping scientists study its unique ability to walk great distances and without food for up to four months during the harshest days of winter. Science Year Book, 1975.*

Ha! I see you do not believe this:  
you do not believe this study in black-and-  
white (on white) with his brilliant  
yellow backpack  
topped by a 12-inch antenna

You think backpacks are for college kids  
sightseeing Europe or climbing Big Sur

but he's there, all taped up

to disclose to you

how to walk (forget the Concorde)

and not eat

So: who's interested in this? --  
polar Jesuits?

Betty S. Cox

## RESISTANCE

*An autopsy on the mummified remains of a Chinese woman buried 2,100 years ago revealed a surprising amount of information about her physical condition at the time of her death....Lady Ch'eng had blood type A, had borne children, broken her right forearm, suffered from tuberculosis and gallstones, and eaten melon shortly before her death. One of her coronary arteries was almost completely closed by atherosclerosis....Science Year Book, 1975.*

There is positively no privacy in this neighborhood, and we really should complain to the Committee on Intergalactic Social Relations: consider the above.

Do we ever know Lady Ch'eng!  
Watch:

"No, Sir Ch'eng, no problem at all!  
Type A is rather common, and we can make  
the transfusion easily."

"A-1 right, Fu, Elu, Ching, Chung, Lee,  
Tiu, Siu, and K.O., let's all  
sing Happy Birthday to Little Fi Nal."

"Quick, Sir Ch'eng, come quick: your lady  
broke her arm picking up chopsticks when the  
kids threw them down because  
she watched a sunset instead of  
surfing with them to Tokyo."

"If only I could breathe some fresh air. Can't  
you and your friends smoke those alligator skins  
outdoors?"

"Ouch."

"Even though I've had 29 pieces, if nobody wants  
that last piece of cantaloupe, would you pass  
it to me, please?"

"Honey, this is something more than the feminist  
movement at Neanderthalia. I don't care a thing  
about hunting! I tell you, I feel constricted  
physically."

Friends,  
if you don't want children's IQs seen,  
your eighth divorce known,  
your liver bile registered with the  
University of Wyoming (because you  
sought the doctoral program in English)  
or your D in childhood posture shared

with potential employers

do not be content with efforts on the local level:

don't die

Betty S. Cox



MUTTERANCES FROM LOST CHILDREN OF THE WORLD  
(as they receive education)

I RISKS

Poxviruses, which cause diseases characterized by small sores, have been isolated from many wild-animal species. This one, magnified about 25,000 times, led the researchers who found it to write that they "...suspect that the elephant may also harbor a poxvirus." Science Year Book, 1975.

Now, children, you may go out to play a while  
but avoid all elephants: one may harbor a poxvirus

what will we do next I ask the minute we squeeze  
penicillin to the convenience of iodine  
bugs outsmart us

our two white Persian cats I can speak for; I  
carefully picked flea by flea off them this morning

the only trouble is I can no longer speak for my hand  
which said hi to an elephant on TV last evening

## II SHAPE OF THE WORLD

...earth is more pear-shaped than previously assumed. The diagram is based on data from satellites. Science Year Book, 1975.

Do you fully realize the shape we are in?  
That diagram makes it look as if a  
space giant (troubled, seeing a shrink regularly)  
held us in his hand and 0000mashed  
at Peking and Newark;  
and then, not content with pyramiding the North Pole  
and wanting to show us how things are in  
Kojak's world,  
knee-d us from below.

Further, imagine us turning in this condition:  
what can we do but wobble?  
In spite of all that neat swirling and moving,  
the spinning around four ourselves,  
the hiking out around the sun, tilting and all that,  
and the ever-outward shoot for heaven-knows-what-  
reason,  
we must be wobbly.

Now, then, that's the day, I say, when  
nobody dares bump into a file or  
leave trousers on a bed-post;  
Certainly it's the day a man's wife argues  
with him over Wheaties or football  
or he loses the bid for the bridge

Now some say they know a nearer and  
liquider reason  
for wobbling

but mine is more exotic  
and predicated on Science Year Book, 1975

and besides have you by now quite realized that in shape  
we're very like  
the stuffed and weighted clown  
that tots beat on, then laugh at,  
as he wobbles  
wobbles

w

o

b

b s

l e

### III DREARY, BLEARY, WEARY

Doctors in Detroit found mummified beetle larvae in the eardrum of an Egyptian mummy, buried 2,700 years ago. The autopsy was conducted by a study of disease causes in ancient Egypt. Science Year Book, 1975.

The above conditions produced the word ear.  
No wonder the man became a mummy:  
    who'd want to go on with that in his head?

All that desert, all that river,  
all those pyramids,  
all the rest of the continent,  
all chances of stowing on Egyptian ships,  
or riding on Caesar home to Rome,

and the thing crawls into him.

Now it came about like this, hear?  
Somebody put a bug in the American ear  
    (see your newspapers)  
    about understanding diseases better

if we knew those of an Egyptian mummy

And then to find one thear!

Say, doesn't this violate  
the Privacy Act?

Betty S. Cox







THE CHILD STEALER, by Charles Gayler (N.Y., 1866)  
 Act III: the thieves cellar; at the left is former  
 dealer in stolen children, who unwittingly sold her  
 own daughter years ago; in the center, the sailor  
 (who loves the grown-up daughter), fighting a duel  
 with the villain, is treacherously plunged into a  
 trap leading to the river.



## PRAYER OF THE PARALYTIC

Don't stare at me  
as if I were a zombie.  
I cannot speak,  
but I still think, and feel, and hear, and love.

Speak to me,  
don't talk about me with the doctor  
as if I were an object-problem,  
but a person whose warmth and love you've shared.

Speak to me  
the words you know I want to hear,  
like "Cindy made an A in math today"  
and "Jimmy lost a tooth"  
and "there's still hope".

And touch me,  
for I am not a leper  
to be shunned by wife and children dear.  
Don't you know that touch is still  
the highest form of communication  
known to human beings?

I would touch you  
but leadened arms and hands  
will not yet follow  
the longing of my heart.

Please touch me  
lightly with your hand.  
I will not ask that your lips brush  
my twisted face.

T. Max Linnens



## THE SAGA OF MACHOMACHINE

(for Xefox 7000, without love)

### Stage 1: Plight

With micrometer calipers they measured  
1500 fingers,  
Fed us into machines for pressures of thumbs  
(we were killing off MachoMachine,  
which, however,  
dismounted no knight,  
balanced no globe,  
forklifted nothing,  
but only photographed)

while we  
were average professors of average height  
and average weight  
photo-ing average things for average students  
at average times in an average building

BUT

the Keeper of Machines pronounced us  
GIANTS, GRENDELS, JOVES, AND TROLLS:  
and thus, "It is positively necessary that  
each reduction button complete its job before  
another is pushed or all will jam."

FURTHER,

we had unsettled the Great Chain of Being,  
which rumbled down displeasure to all known hells  
and caused the tenth concentric circle  
to slip and arc and slide into third  
(complaint formally registered with the  
Intergalactic Policy Committee.--  
summit set on Sirius in 1990).

MEANWHILE

the Xefox stands,  
guarded by one slight girl,  
knowing no more than we,  
but ever watching fingers, fingers,  
fingers.....

## Stage 2: Fight

Ready? OK:

Typical day:

What are all those dots?

*Oh, only a few! No, lots and lots!*

*Don't be concerned--just watch that thumb!--  
or you'll make 7000 numb and dumb.*

Why in the world should I not worry

About a machine with dysentery?

And the machine's labors make more noise

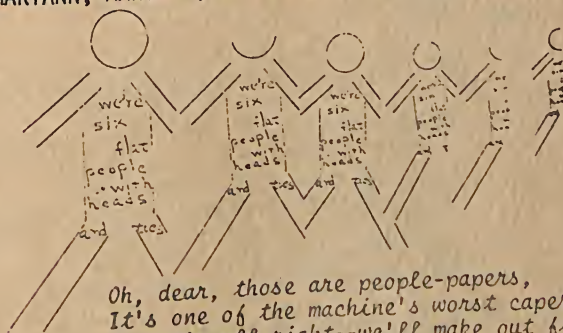
Than my mother's, and she had 16 boys

*Please don't panic, Dr. Cox,*

*It's a minor thing...called foxy-pox.*

*Uh, Miss, there...you're moving too far in,  
Better watch out...better...watch your...chin.*

MARYANN, MARYANN, WHAT ARE T H O S E ?



*Oh, dear, those are people-papers,  
It's one of the machine's worst capers.  
But it's all right--we'll make out fine--  
(Only 86 more are still in line).*

## Stage 3: FLIGHT

Thank you, Dr. McGraw, for permitting me a few minutes.

AHEM. Uh,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

you will recall that we asked you to restrict  
the force of your arms,

particularly the fingers, mainly thumbs.

And for a while, things went pretty well.

But now we have some...uh...~~fresh~~....

fresh difficulties.

We are losing things. Uh, as a matter of fact,  
we're losing people.

One now is gone from Math, one from Music,

Two each from History and Religion,

And I'm afraid we've lost the...uh...entire  
English Department.

This, of course, is a ~~pressing prob~~...a problem,  
and we will do the best we can  
to ~~smooth things out~~ work things out in the  
Fall Mail Room.

Of course, as you know, it takes a long while  
to solve all matters

~~Involved in~~  
~~issuing from~~  
~~connected with~~  
~~entailed in~~  
~~engendered by~~  
~~contained in~~  
~~tied in with~~  
~~RELATED TO~~  
uh....

to solve problems.

AHEM.

NOW, THEN,

We have taken the following major steps:

We have purchased a John Deere heavy-duty  
power shovel  
from Hamrick & Sons Founded 1875  
to control the pressure of your fingers  
(which will be carefully gripped as they  
approach the target) and thus  
keep the arms threat under control

We have acquired helmets from the  
Oakland Raiders to protect faces,  
particularly chins,

And we have had flown in from a Rome tannery  
all-leather gloves 27 hides thick.

We realize that this is not altogether satisfactory,  
but until we have things down ~~that~~ pat  
and the machine better knows how to  
~~absorb take in digest~~  
comprehend what you want it to do  
we'll only have ~~diminishing returns~~  
serious trouble  
without your utmost cooperation.  
In time, all problems  
will completely  
disapp....

Betty S. Cox



## STEPHEN'S SONG

I don't need the box you're building  
Can't trade this one for yours  
'Cause all of you are killing  
Everything I ever was

Days are only mysteries with no magic cure  
Strung out one to one; and I never can be sure  
How it all got started or where it all will end  
And I can't slow the wings of freedom beating  
in the wind

The rivers once so deep are drying in the glow  
And loving's just a memory I had so long ago  
The fires of fear burn hotly and ever flicker  
to a flame  
The fires will still burn on, but I won't be  
the same

The madness in my soul screams that I must leave  
Before the heat of fear destroys my freedom's  
wings

Jean Tate

## PREDELICION

"And I, a smiling woman, I am only thirty"  
Sylvia Plath  
"Lady Lazarus"

There is no sedation for the darkness  
I prevade the coldness of the hour  
And sighing, crying  
does not stop the dying  
or knowing of the mind

The bark falls from the winter trees  
snakeskin tracks stretching like blood-roads  
in the snow

How brief the shudder  
the weeping, a beautiful insanity  
prelude to the blackness of a moving clock-hand

The wish staggers  
through fogs of fascinating terror  
I will not think of hymns. The words have crushing  
clarity.

Suzette Collins Thompson

