10-1-1989

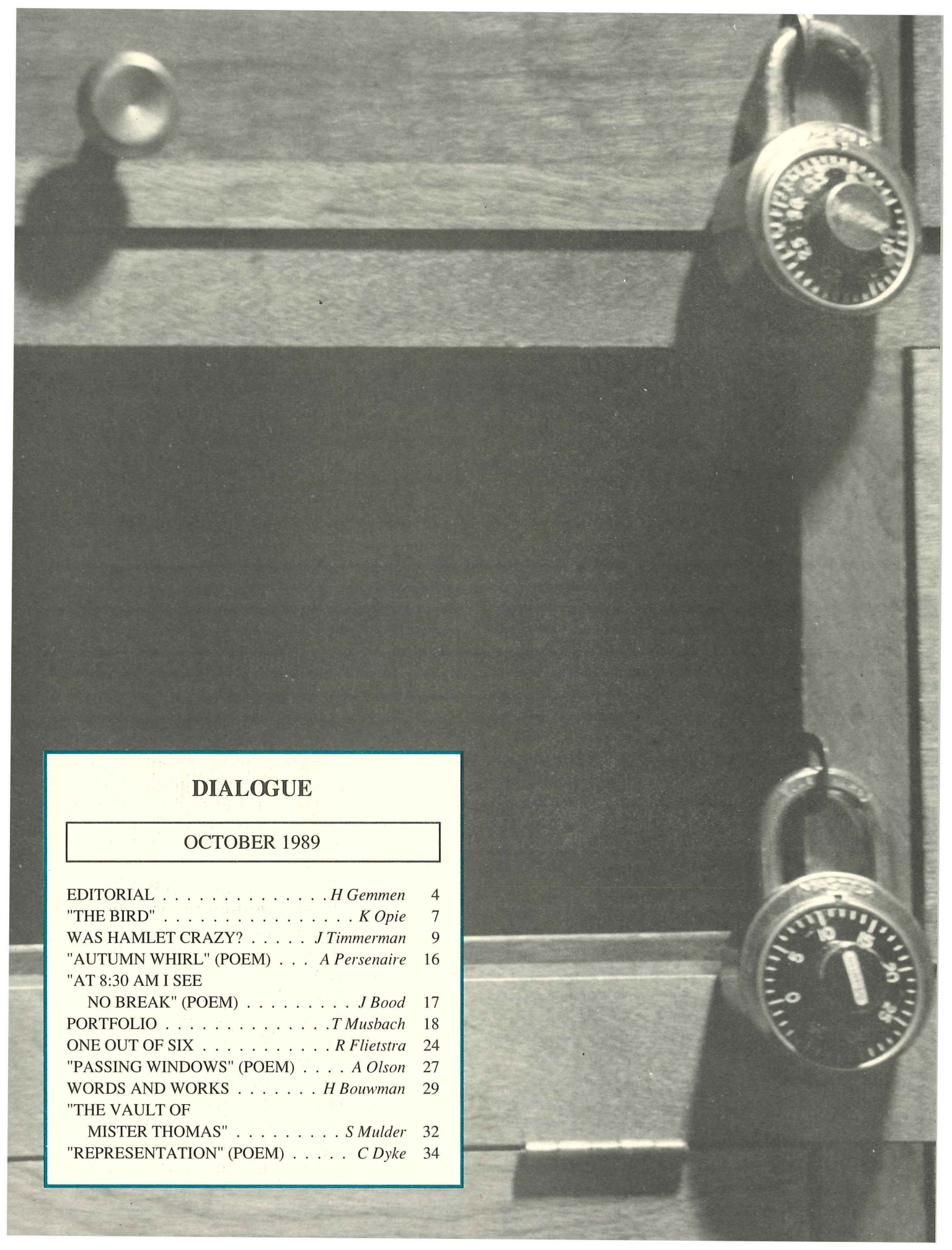
Dialogue

Staff and writers of Dialogue

DIALOGUE

OCTOBER 1989

ABOUT THE COVER: Computer art by Robin Jensen. The print, which depicts jazz pianist T.S. Monk, is part of an award-winning composition.



DIALOGUE

OCTOBER 1989

Of Peas, Toads, and Icons:

An Editorial

My father can cook two dishes, and both are unappetizing. Their names are not enticing, either. The first dish, "creamed peas on toast," is prepared by heating a can of green peas in a white sauce and then spreading the concoction on toasted bread. Perhaps this dish is well-known in the Christian Reformed community; perhaps other Christian Reformed students have sampled creamed peas on toast for themselves. It doesn't matter. Creamed peas on toast is not tasty.

The second dish my father can make has an odder name, one which is less indicative of the ingredients but more telling of the cook's culinary imagination. The entree, "toad in the hole," is prepared by cutting a hole in a slice of slightly-toasted bread, placing the bread in a skillet, and frying an egg in the hole of the bread. Though serviceable for any meal, a toad in the hole tastes the best for breakfast.

These recipes were prepared only on Sundays, and in time they became part of the family heritage. Aside from the two recipes, there was a ritual performed on Sunday which, in its time, joined the canon of heritage. My father would stand at the foot of the stairs and play taps on his cornet to rouse his heirs from their napping. We'd pull ourselves from our beds as quickly as possible, because he'd stop only when all of us were at the foot of the stairs with him. If we were ornery and wouldn't obey, he would play his cornet in our bedroom.

Although these stories are good to tell for their own intrinsic worth, there is an ulterior intent to my storytelling. Yes, the tales are meant to delight the reader. Lampooning the foibles of our forebears is fun, even though we jeopardize our inheritance. But most stories, or at least, most *good* stories, impart some sort of wisdom to the reader, some kind of insight into the reader's world. They offer up their wisdom underhandedly; nothing scares a reader away like a sermon. Many good writers work consciously to put wisdom and delight into their stories, for they realize their readers look for entertainment in fiction before they look for instruction. In simpler terms, a writer baits the story with delight and the readers swallow it, but at the same time they also swallow a message.

In the hallway leading to the balcony of my church at home there is a small alcove. Inside is a display, protected by glass, celebrating "A century of God's grace"—in 1981 the church commemorated its hundredth birthday. The display consists of two scale-model churches, one of the white wooden church which was built in 1882, the other of the present-day brown brick structure.

Two summers ago, after a morning service, I showed these icons of my congregation's heritage to two German visitors and a Dutch guest, primarily to show them what an old American wooden church would look like, and secondarily to show off the craftsmanship of the church member who made the models. My three visitors, all members of Reformed churches in Germany and Holland, were impressed with the detail of the models. Although the stained glass in American Protestant churches is not as inspiring as, say, the stained glass of Notre Dame, my European friends still found something to admire in the stained glass of the miniature church.

But the icon in the display case receiving most of their attention was the orange Matchbox car, parked by the east door of the brick church. That, I explained, was a joke. The former minister of our church drove an orange car, and frequently parked it by the east door of the church. Some clever parishioner put the toy in the display case before it was locked, and the toy had been there ever since.

It would be more appropriate, of course, to update the joke by replacing the orange toy car with one like the current pastor's car. The younger members of the congregation aren't able to appreciate an allusion to a minister they don't remember, even though that minister had baptized them. Perhaps a church custodian will unlock the glass display case and change the toy, to keep the humor relevant. That orange toy car has become part of the congregation's heritage, as it is displayed in the case, but only those who remember the former pastor can appreciate it. The rest must wonder how inheritable a heritage that holds little relevance is.

As for my family heritage, the culinary canon of peas and toads has been shattered. My father has learned that his efforts in the kitchen are not appreciated; he knows his place. The ritual playing of taps is no longer observed either. Somebody poked a pea down the mouthpiece of the cornet, and it hasn't been playable for years.

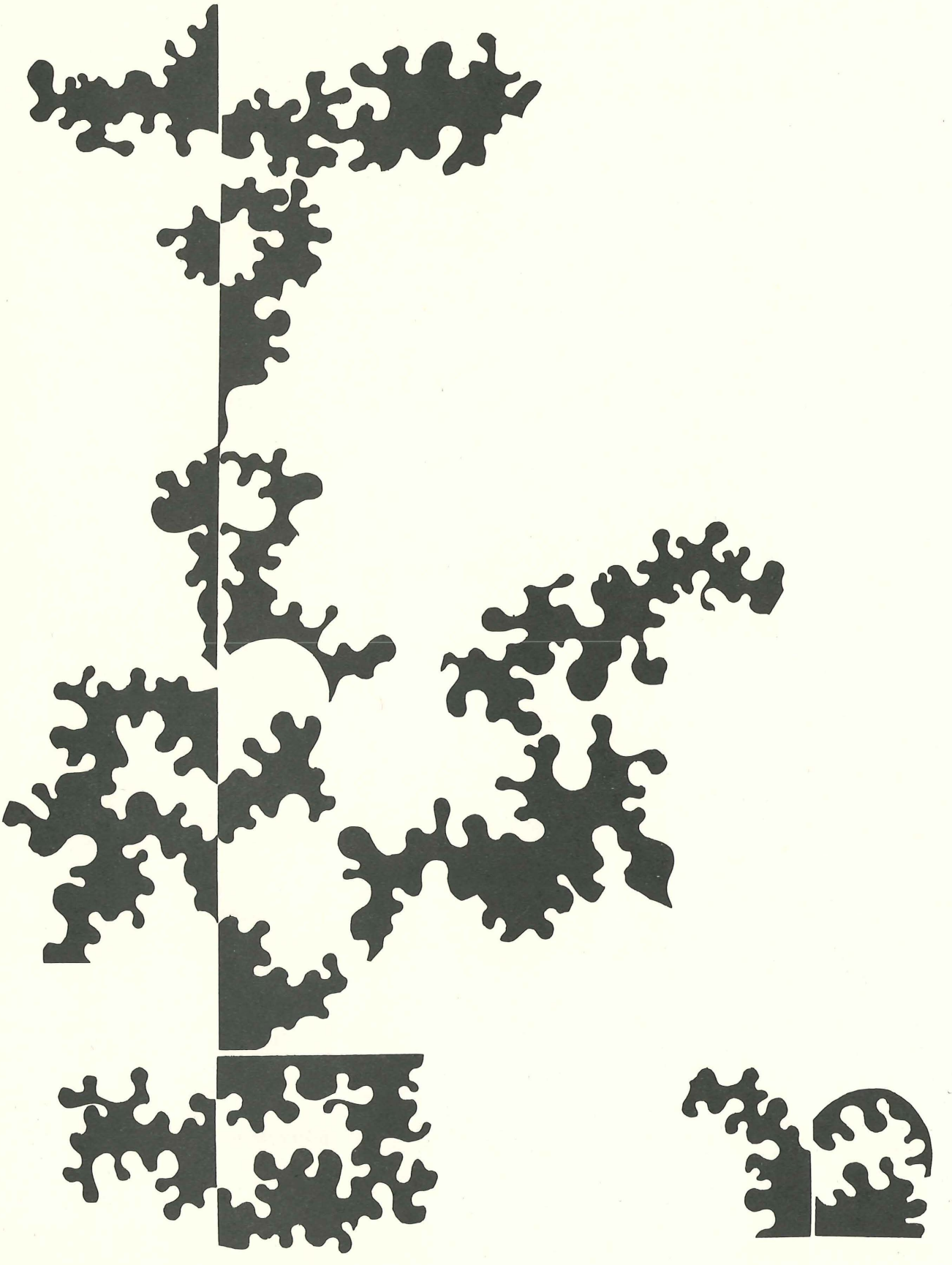
It interests me to note how the elders locked the two scale models behind glass, while the pew Bibles and Psalter Hymnals, which include the Reformed creeds, are left unprotected in the sanctuary. Were they afraid someone might tamper with the models?

We shield our heritage behind glass, too, to protect it from tampering. Outsiders can look at our heritage, but they cannot truly know it as long as it's locked away. Its duration is guaranteed this way. What we don't realize, however, is that by locking our heritage behind transparent glass, *we* can't get at it either. We can't examine it for flaws and we can't appreciate it as an expression of the Reformed worldview; all we are left with are dusty icons. Until someone shatters the lock that protects our heritage from scrutiny, we can't even take it in as our own.

—HG

Dialogue is a journal of Calvin College art, literature, and commentary published monthly by the Calvin College Communications Board. Address correspondence to *Dialogue*, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49546.

The editors welcome inquiries, contributions, correspondence, submissions, works of art, poems, short stories, term papers, essays, plays, and doctoral dissertations of any length. We reserve the right to edit, but will do so only with the author's prior consent and approval.



Melissa Allor Destruction of a Square *Construction Paper*

The Bird

by Kris Opie

Thursday before my afternoon class, I was sitting watching a video. I was sitting dumbly watching TV because it wanted to talk so badly and so did I. I had sympathy for it, so I listened. My roommate had just left or I probably would have listened to her.

Something dark flew across the top of my line of vision. My body stiffened and my mind said, "Bat." My mind was wrong. My eyes were quick to point that out. "Bird," they said. I relaxed.

"Hey! Bird! How d'you get in here?"

Even though I had decided that a bird was better than a bat, I didn't like this bird. It was big and black. I just knew that at any moment it was going to quoth "Nevermore" at me. I stared at the bird from my chair in the next room. Instead of quoting Poe, it was throwing itself at the living room windows, something more real and more disturbing than gothic poetry.

"Calm down bird. Stay there. I'll open the doors."

I went away from the bird, through the kitchen, and opened the back door. Then I slid into the living room and pressed against the far wall. I stared at the bird. It wasn't black. It was brown with lighter specks. His feathers were ruffled, and he seemed to pant. He really wasn't that big, though. He just didn't belong inside.

"Come on, Bird. Go out the back."

He took flight at the sound of my voice. He flew past the closed front door to the window at the base of the stairs, where he flapped and banged, hanging on to the curtain rod with his feet.

"Don't go upstairs, buddy. That looks like the right way, but it isn't. Just stay put, and I'll open this door."

I went for the front door. He flew up the stairs.

"I said don't go upstairs. No one listens to me. I don't even listen to me."

I propped the front door open with the chair we have for smoking on the porch in the summer. The chair kept sliding, so I put a brick in front of the chair.

I went to the foot of the stairs and called up, "Bird, come down and stop flapping like that. You're going to give yourself a heart attack. Do you know how fast birdhearts beat?"

He was by the window at the top of the stairs. I crouched down and headed up the stairs. He flew down the hall. I looked around. He had disappeared, and every door was open. I checked the bathroom and closed the door. Then I looked in my room. There he sat, on my window shade, panting. I closed the other two bedroom doors and went back in my room.

"What are we going to do now, Bird?"

He flapped at the shade. I heard a noise in the living room, so I flew downstairs.

"Dianne! Hi."

"I forgot the video tape I have to return to my sister," she responded.

"There is a bird inside, so I opened both doors."

"Oh, I wondered about that. Where is he."

"In my room."

I started up the stairs. She grabbed her jacket to catch the bird with.

Why hadn't I thought of that?

When we got to my room, I pointed to the bird, who had started flapping again. Dianne stood there, holding her jacket.

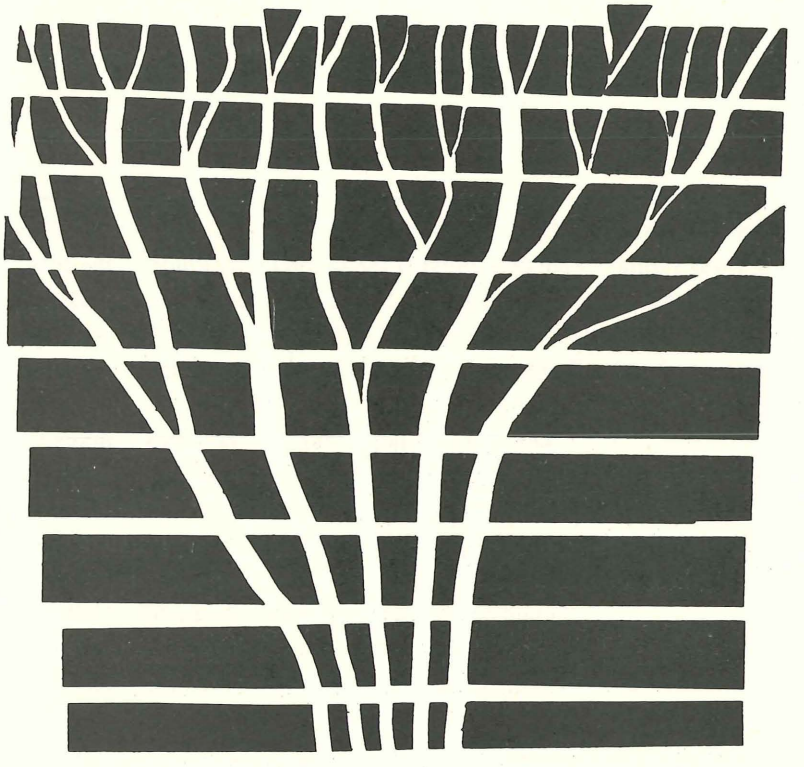
"Come on, birdy. Go downstairs," she said.

He flapped. I stared. Go ahead grab him, I thought. Just don't hurt him. Dianne must have realized she wasn't helping. She moved towards the bird.

He took flight, flew downstairs, and disappeared. We ran down the stairs and looked around.

"It must have flown out the door," Dianne said as she walked out.

"I hope so." I searched the air again, casually glanced at all the windows, then shut the doors. I looked around for any post bird damage. He hadn't even left a feather.



Jeffrey Keller Reconstruction of a Square *Construction Paper*

Was Hamlet Crazy?

On Going to Grad School

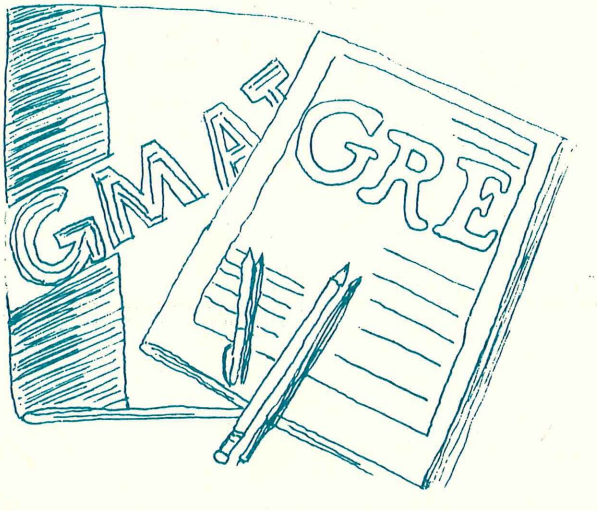
"Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio."
–Hamlet

I am pleased, but am also intimidated, by the renewed interest among my students for graduate study. I don't know if this interest is exclusive to English majors with the generally sunnier forecast for college level teaching jobs in the 1990s or whether it is more widely spread. The September 20, 1989, *Chronicle of Higher Education* predicts that by 1997 there will be only seven candidates for every ten teaching jobs open. It appears to be a good time to consider grad school. Increasingly, I find my students stopping by my office to seek advice about grad school. What is it like? How do I get in? Which school should I go to?

I am pleased by the interest in my own chosen profession, which I consider a noble and rewarding one. I am intimidated because times have changed dramatically, both culturally and educationally, since my grad school days. I remember those years as some of the very best, the headiest, most pleasing of my life. I was doing, nearly eighteen hours a day, what I dearly wanted to do. I would hate to do it again. I think very little about those days, being much too busy with present demands. I don't know if "what it was like" for me will be at all what it is like for students today. Nonetheless, just this once I force my way back to those days, trying to recall once again what it was like.

I probably should have been more intimidated, more fearful, about the whole grad school scene than I was when I graduated from Calvin College in that laid-back year of 1967. I was now taking courses with the very people whose works I had been researching through all my upper-level courses at college. The authors of articles in scholarly journals and of books I had read were now standing in front of the class. Furthermore, I was entering grad school in January, a whole term after my Master's class. Having spent a half year in Europe between high school and college, I entered one of those oddball midyear rotations that forever after prevent one from attending alumni reunion luncheons.

So I felt some anxiety upon entering grad school. But not fear. Surprisingly, because so many others in



by John H Timmerman

my Master's class did. The kind of fear that clenches the stomach and unlatches the knees. It was sometimes an almost tangible emotion in the classroom. My freedom from it was due in part, I now understand, from the fact that Calvin had prepared me exceptionally well for grad school. The preparation was not solely in knowledge, for there were many students who had had far more courses, who knew more, who were far brighter than I. But the preparation I received at Calvin gave me a clear edge in several areas.

First, like any Calvin grad of that time, I could not escape learning how to write well. It had become subconscious, intuitive. We knew how to structure an argument, use research, make a point in clear prose. We had been forced to do it in practically every class for four solid years, while many students at other schools were taking computer-graded exams. Second, we had a preparation in philosophy that many schools couldn't touch. It was not just the philosophy courses, although those were priceless. It was this sense in nearly every class at Calvin that the subject matter counted, that it had a reason for being important. Third, we garnered a rich background in religion, could not escape it. Literature simply cannot be properly understood apart from a religious sensibility, and already in the sixties there were students coming out of undergraduate Milton courses who couldn't find the book of Genesis in the Bible if they started at the beginning.

Moreover, while I had some first-rate teachers in grad school, none of them ranks in the top four I have ever had. One of the four was a high school teacher; the other three were teachers at Calvin College. Either in sheer brilliance or pedagogical talent, none of my grad school teachers, although most of them were widely published and recognized authorities in their fields, held a candle to these four in pure teaching. As a teaching assistant, I found myself modeling The Four rather than anyone at grad school.

One of the most memorable teachers I had in grad school operated under the pedagogy of intimidation. This was in the first course I took. I cringed during the first session, silently begging the man not to call on me. I was still cringing at the end. We admired the man's brilliance, loathed the person. He was immaculate in all matters but his language. His expensive gray suits fit him like warm fog, and he paraded a head of white hair, sprayed hard as diamonds and tailored according to *Gentleman's Quarterly*. In class he was not a gentleman. His technique varied—lecture for several periods, then a sudden switch to Socratic method, which remains in my estimation the meanest form of teaching. The teacher holds all the guns, any student is a target. The teacher fires questions until he exposes error or simple foolishness. I recall this teacher telling a student who was being quizzed on resource materials concerning a Shakespearean drama, a procedure during which a student was required to summarize different arguments in published research and to show strengths or weaknesses of them, that his assessment was "The stupidest _____ I've ever heard in my life. Quit wasting our time." The man breathed profanities in the classroom.

After lacerating a student in this fashion, the teacher would move across the aisle, calling off a name from his seating chart. "Miss ___, can you redeem Mr. ___'s abject failure?" If you failed there, you never forgot it.

I prepared doggedly, coming to each class with my notes and outlines like combat gear. I never seemed to have studied the right points, and felt more lost with each class period. That, I now realize, was his purpose. The day he did call on me, he happened to be dealing with a group of plays he had published several articles on. I had studied those articles of his for a research paper at Calvin. I simply told him how right he was. He agreed with me.

This was the same teacher who had charge of a 30 point essay on the Master's Comprehensive exam. The question was every bit as mean as the classroom: "Was Hamlet crazy?" That was it. Thirty points. We all knew we were being put up, deliberately insulted.

Reflecting on it now, I think I understand his pedagogy. Teachers have to bear with all kinds of nonsense, most of it in faculty meetings, and have to try to make sense of it. They have to distinguish between fluff and wisdom. I am convinced there are better ways to do it. In my teaching career I can count only a handful of truly mean-spirited students. I have little patience with arrogance or laziness in the classroom. Nothing is worse than a lazy student who is also arrogant. Yet, I have also found that my students frequently sparkle with a keen wisdom and penetrating insight. A teacher's task, I believe, is to make the students look better than they are, to give them a direction rather than a devastation. That is an attitude shaped very much by that Shakespeare course in grad school. I must confess, however, that I learned Shakespeare.

Preparing for that class was like living a Stephen King novel. But there were other courses with their own outrageous demands as well. The pressures of the workload, the sheer number of hours simply turning pages and outlining, and the constant pressure to perform took their toll. Although I started grad school

in midterm, I heard the stories of those who had already dropped out. The major cut-off would be the Master's comps in June. Although I had only had a half year in, I decided to take them. Uncle Sam was regularly turning down my draft appeals and by April I was reclassified 1A. This meant that the Army had a hook in my life and was just waiting to reel me in. Hamlet knew about such crazy alternatives. If I could just pass the comps, I could get admitted to the Ph.D. program, even though I still had to pass the second-year Master's proseminars and thesis. Admission to the Ph.D. program, I reasoned, would diminish my appeal to the U.S. Army.

The added pressure lay in the fact that by 1968 the bottom was falling out of the job market. I still retained my membership in the Teamsters, and was fully prepared to be a Ph.D. driving a Peterbilt. The effect on the Master's comps was this: of approximately 100 candidates being tested, only a dozen would be invited on for the Ph.D. program. The others would probably get M.A.s, but that's it.

The workload careened into overdrive. In college already I had started speed-reading, which in my senior year I abetted by self-hypnosis learned through seminars at the mental hospital where my wife worked as a nurse. It was an effective, if ruthless, studying technique. I had perfected it to the point where I could induce a state of intense study, come out of it after precisely 50 minutes, take a ten-minute break, and go right back in. Prior to exams I spent 20 minutes inducing the state to acquire recall. The sheer amount of material the brain can store and recall is phenomenal. I was a walking automaton. But it got me through the comps.

Then everything crashed. I received my induction notice on the very same day I received my congratulatory notice of invitation to the Ph.D. program.

If Hamlet wasn't crazy, the system was insane.

Two years later, after 21 months in the Army, I picked up grad studies again, my mind a wasteland, "dry sterile thunder without rain." And more scared than I had ever been during the last 21 months of military service. I knew fear. Correction. I felt I no longer *knew* anything. Speed-reading? Self-hypnosis? I didn't even know how to read. I *could* assemble a stripped-down M16 in the dark in 60 seconds flat: not a very good survival skill for grad school.

My wife and I arrived in back at Ohio University two weeks before the start of the term. When I was overseas we had spent every penny we had meeting twice in Hawaii for R&R. Worth every penny too. I got $464.00 separation pay in Alabama and headed north. In Birmingham, at 5 p.m. rush hour, the car transmission blew apart. Two days and $370.00 later we continued. We arrived with a handful of change in our jeans. Our landlord, an English professor, held off the rent for a month, letting me work off part of it on his farm.

I was now in the Ph.D. program, but still had to finish a year's worth of M.A. requirements, including a thesis. To get a jump on things, I got the book list for the required course in bibliographic methods, a crossover M.A.-Ph.D. hybrid. The first book on the list was Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. In two weeks of nearly steady reading, eight hours a day, I had covered less than half the book.

On some days I covered only a half-dozen pages of *Sartor*. I was a zombie, stripped of civilized abilities, and I wanted to weep for my ineffectuality. I had never wanted anything but this—this study, this profession. And I felt that two years had robbed me of a lifetime. I never thought of quitting, but I honestly didn't know how to go on. It was a gray world.

My first class, in the late summer session of 1970, was the first term of that two-term bibliographic methods course, one of those horror courses in grad school. There were thirty-five students in it, all of them trying to get a jump on the fall semester, some who had tried it once and failed, all of them looking, to me, bright, eager, energetic. I felt a million years old. I felt like Hamlet's ghost, there and not there.

"Preparing for that class was like living a Stephen King novel."

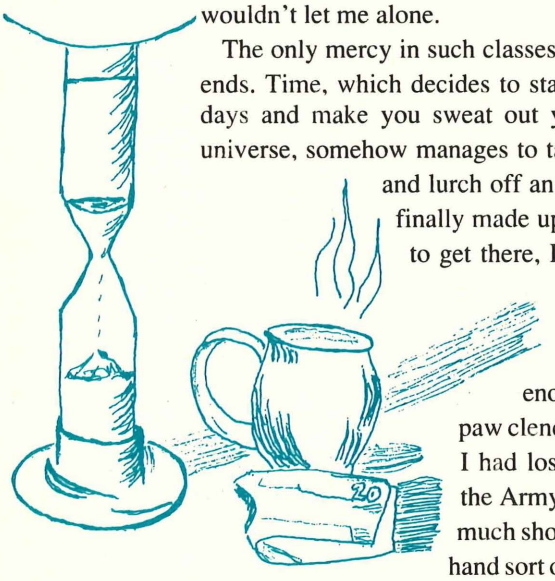
Bibliographic methods was taught by a burly man named Bernie Fieler. It may well have been the most important course I took in grad school. That was because of Bernie Fieler.

Fieler was a massive man, with chiseled, hard features above a coal-black beard and a body that looked carved out of Mt. Rushmore. He didn't so much wear clothes as drape them over his body like rugs to be beaten from the inside out. He had played several seasons of pro football before getting a Ph.D. in Renaissance studies. He had a glare as disarming as a shotgun blast. He also happened to chair the graduate department in English. His course in methods was notorious, the separation point where you discovered that you were in the right place or whether

you wouldn't be better off selling junk bonds.

I had learned, by the way, that it was Bernie Fieler who had engineered my unusual midterm assistantship three years prior. He had taken a risk on me, pulled some strings, and I often wondered why. I had never met him to thank him. I generally avoided things and people I was scared of.

I sat in that first class, side row near the door, and felt this man's eyes on me throughout the period. I stood out from the others, hair still too short from Army cropping, skin still burned to the color of pipe tobacco from a Southeast Asian sun, body thin as a rail. No wonder he stared at me. I was accustomed to meeting the eyes of stern officers in the Army. But not this. They seemed to be accusing me. You don't belong here. Two weeks to read half of *Sartor Resartus!* Get out! I shriveled in that seat. His eyes wouldn't let me alone.



The only mercy in such classes is that the period ends. Time, which decides to stand still for a few days and make you sweat out your place in the universe, somehow manages to take a deep breath and lurch off an hour. When time finally made up her ornery mind to get there, I darted from that seat, desperate for the door.

Not quick enough. I felt this bear paw clench at my shoulder. I had lost forty pounds in the Army and there wasn't much shoulder to grab. The hand sort of enveloped me. I turned to find *those* eyes, beneath brows as thick as shag carpeting, boring into mine. Then, incredibly, the hand grew an arm and it wrapped about my shoulders in the semblance of a hug, and he said, "We're glad you're back. Welcome home."

So was I glad. *Sartor Resartus* eventually became the subject of one of the chapters in my dissertation.

Bernie Fieler is dead now, felled by a coronary at age 48.

The rest of my grad school education was pretty straightforward, probably without interest to anyone who isn't turned on by bibliographic methods. I learned how to read again, and enjoyed what I read. The magnificent university library, situated on the highest point of the hilly campus and marvelously endowed with research materials, helped tremendously. I found a desk by the window on the seventh floor of the library, overlooking the Hocking River Valley, and commandeered it for the duration. I would have shed blood for that desk.

Having lost two years to the Army, I was anxious to be done and pushed steadily four terms a year for the next three years to finish, but never again with the rabid intensity of the first year. I learned how to parcel time, even when there was never enough. For a full year, three hours every morning from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m., five days a week, went to Old English. Old English was *the* major hurdle for doctoral studies, and this particular course was taught by a crusty, aristocratic easterner who dropped your grade if you missed a class. He refused to let me change the time of my exam when my wife delivered our second child the night before. I literally went straight from the delivery room to the examination room. I coaxed my wife through Lamaze by reciting Beowulf.

There were good teachers and bad teachers; generally the bad were more memorable. One teacher in Historical Literary Criticism wore a long face made out of damp cardboard and chain-smoked during the entire three-hour session of the class. He spent ten weeks on Sanskrit aesthetics, and in the final few weeks took us from Plato to the Renaissance. Modern Literary Criticism was taught by a teacher who resorted to holding the class in his apartment, serving wine, cheese, and crackers to force Gadamer down.

The good teachers often possessed a rare if sometimes cranky brilliance, and there were several of these. I had picked out my dissertation director, Roma King, while I was still in college, and although I vacillated for a semester on whether to switch to medieval studies, I contracted with him to do the dissertation work. I couldn't have made a better choice. Initially he wanted me to edit a volume in the Tennyson Variorum edition he was overseeing. He was invariably polite in his peculiar drawl that rumbled somewhere in his chest like a swamp at dusk. I can remember that voice: "Would you be inclined to edit a Tennyson text?" I declined. He gave me huge amounts of freedom. There seemed no limit to his knowledge, and he deftly steered me into promising areas then left me alone to find my own promise fulfilled or wanting.

Unless they were abject failures, and I experienced little of that, the quality of the teachers was far less important in grad school than in college. We were after what they had in their heads, and in some cases that was enormous. The joy of grad school, once past the competitiveness and tensions of the first Master's classes, arose largely from interchange with fellow students. There were several I didn't like. The hippie, for example, who examined his forearms for bugs during Romanticism seminar. I never saw any bugs on him, although he smelled like sewer gas and sat alone

He saw some imaginary ones, which he would pick off and squish decisively on the seminar table. With many, however, I experienced a bond of comradeship and fellowship I have seldom experienced since and that I fondly recall.

Most of us shared a kind of informal, unregistered, and seldom-noticed poverty. Most of us had applied for food stamps, and discovered that as students on scholarships we didn't qualify. For entertainment we pooled resources and played pinochle. We walked to classes together, carrying our own thermoses of coffee. Occasionally we would carpool the seventy miles to Columbus, Ohio, and spend the day stalking tobacco shops. We received enough free samples to keep our pipes stoked for a month.

This genteel poverty was not unpleasant, but was embarrassing upon occasion. As a teaching assistant, I owned three pairs of pants: one to teach in, one to study in, and one for dressing up. Fifteen minutes before the 8 a.m. class I taught, my teaching pants ripped through the crotch, a good ten inches of ventilation. I did a tight-legged run to the department store across the green, talked the manager into opening early to sell me a pair of pants I didn't have money to pay for at the time.

Like Thoreau, we learned that luxury is a state of mind. Cleaning out a drawer the other day, I found an old checkbook from those days. Tidy and neat those minuscule amounts: a dollar for gas, five for groceries, that sort of thing. It was a good life.

We were all in this together in lifestyle but also in academics. The fact that I preferred to study alone rather than in study groups did not ostracize me. We learned from each other in those grad school classrooms, respecting hard work and intelligence and loathing the dilatory. There was no place for the dilatory when it came to writing a dissertation.

I understand now that my dissertation was little more than a union card, a 450-page trial to make the grade, to gain entrance to the profession. That passage, however, was attended by the dissertation defense, something best compared to a trial in a court of law. The candidate gives a nervous lecture for forty-five minutes or so, then the committee and guests get the opportunity to cross-examine. Depending upon the degree of your crimes, and there are always some, the exchange can go quite pleasantly or rather meanly. It was not just a formality. I recall during my defense year that two candidates failed the examination, whereupon it was back to the drawing-board for another year. But there is also the fact that by this point most candidates have considerable classroom experience, are not very easily intimidated anymore, and have learned some skills in deflecting criticism or weaseling out of it. There are two tricks to this game. First, select a dissertation director in whom you have confidence, someone who can assist you during the examination. Second, select a topic arcane enough to permit you special knowledge but germane enough to let others think they are learning something. All in all, the whole process was probably worth the new sport coat my wife bought me.

When I finished the defense, I packed the dissertation in a file and swore I wouldn't look at it for twenty years. Even then I had this sense of the sad plight of professors who are forever "revising" their dissertations for publication. I think I would be profoundly embarrassed to look at it now. Just a union card, but for all that it was a wonderful, heady experience. I wrote every word in longhand at my desk behind the washer and dryer in a corner of the kitchen, then hammered it out on my old Smith-Corona.

Because I was trying to finish grad school in a hurry, I had already submitted my dissertation proposal and had begun work on it when I still had to take doctoral comprehensives. Comps were merciful at my grad school with its heavy emphasis upon seminar training, a mere eight hour written and two hour oral. Still, one of my friends in grad school blanked out on comp day. He left the exam room weeping hysterically, after a full hour of doing nothing. He got in his car and started driving and didn't come back for a week, leaving behind a wife and infant daughter who leaned on us for support. My school was a merciful one. It didn't much mind insanity as long as it didn't get out of hand, and it let him take the exam at a later date. Just one of those things. Many schools would have canned him.

Still, the pressure affected everyone. Literally hundreds of books from courses and reading lists were carefully outlined and sprawled before me day after day. I memorized over a hundred lines of poetry and nearly as many of prose to quote on the exam, and used nearly all of it. Study groups were plentiful. As on the master's comps I went solo. If I made mistakes, they would be my own. I didn't want to sound like a dozen others. Never have, never will.

Some fifteen of us took the exam on a Friday. As it turned out, they allowed us ten hours for the exam. We were supposed to have two weeks to prepare for the orals, to bone up on obvious errors and try to undo the damage. On Sunday night I received a call from my committee chairman asking me to come in for my orals on Tuesday. My heart sank. Surely I had done so poorly that the committee was dumbfounded and wanted to get to me, and get rid of me, as soon as

possible. I started calling friends. Nobody had ever heard of an oral scheduled that soon.

When I looked at books, the words swam before my eyes. I was exhausted, unable to take another thing in. I was also a vacuum, having given up everything I had to the exam. I had planned to take a full week off to recover, then start boning up for the orals.

I dressed in my best (only) sport coat and best (only) tie Tuesday afternoon. I couldn't do a thing about the hole in my shoe except remind myself to keep my feet down.

For almost two hours the committee quizzed me almost exclusively on a long answer I had written on Charles Dickens. Something to do with his vision of art. I remember having suggested some things about moral and Christian ways of considering art, some things I had learned years before in Philosophy of Aesthetics at Calvin College, some things that I believed in then, and continue to believe.

"I dressed in my best (only) sport coat and best (only) tie Tuesday afternoon. I couldn't do a thing about the hole in my shoe except remind myself to keep my feet down."

The committee chairman congratulated me on a safe passage. The written exam was superb, he said. In fact, the views on the written exam, he declared, were so provocative that the committee wanted to find out more about it. Thus, the early oral.

It was a revealing event to me. I would guess that at many institutions with their hermeneutical mafias exercising rigid control over critical interpretations, any speculation on moral criticism would elicit laughter or irritation rather than interest. Yet, why couldn't they have told me the situation on Sunday, I wondered.

So that was what it was like. Good, heady excitement. Nurturing and testing of courage, convictions, and intelligence. Immersion in something you love deeply, and if you do not love it you have no business being there in the first place. An inescapable sense of adventure—not that it always mattered desperately but adventure nonetheless. Ample rewards for ample efforts. Preparation for a noble profession. Exhaustion and exhilaration intertwined like dirty dancing. But lessons? Advice to give to others from that deeply, intensely personal experience? I'll try six items.

First, at one point or another, in slightly different words perhaps, I have made the following point with every one of my advisees at Calvin College: God is calling you to a career, but it is *you* whom he is calling. The person is more important than the program. Always.

In making grad school choices, that translates to your selecting the school that is right for you. Not because of a name, a reputation, even a curriculum.

In the United States today, there is a small stratum of truly exceptional, world-famous, elite graduate institutions. Maybe twenty of them. Earning a Ph.D at any one of them will guarantee recognition, perhaps a job. It won't guarantee a thing about your future success. Grad school is only a stepping stone, after all, and there is something sad about a teacher who clings to his or her graduation from such an institution as his or her one achievement in life. Your career in the profession is going to depend upon your intelligence, your personality, your ambition and creativity.

A second level of graduate schools is comprised of about thirty to forty institutions, maybe less than that based on your own degree of selectivity. These institutions have rigorous demands, fine curricula, fine teachers, and excellent resources. They are current on research and programs. They simply lack the honorific status, conferred usually by money and age, of the top twenty. These secondary instututions will give you a top-flight graduate education. Generally, they permit a bit more flexibility and a more humane education. Their teachers generally don't lord it over students, although any institution, right down to the tiny Bible colleges, can have its demigods, tyrants, and petty taskmasters.

A third level of institution is comprised of the rest of them. Their programs are less-well established. Their curricula have soft spots, usually in such scholarly detail courses as Old English, bibliographic methods, or critical theory. There may be greater risks in attending them.

Let me emphasize here, however, that your choice isn't always determined by the institution, but by your needs and expectations. You are devoting a considerable portion of your life and your talent to that institution. Therefore, I advise students to attend an institution where they can be their own persons, rather than merely students at an institution. The fact of the matter is that some graduate schools will try to shape their students. The prevailing views of literature, and consequently the curriculum, are quite different at Johns Hopkins than, say, the University of Illinois. The differences range from theory to practical items such as class size.

I am fearful that many graduate schools have lost the humanizing characteristic that I enjoyed. One of my colleagues remarked to me recently, "I think of the deadening isms which govern our discipline today." In my day, theory was something one endured for the love of the literature; now it almost seems that one endures literature for the sake of the theory.

The size of the graduate program is another consideration. When I enrolled in grad school, one of my closest college friends enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Wisconsin, which in the late sixties was a hot institution for English studies. Nearly all of his Master's courses were held in auditoriums where 350 candidates listened in mass assembly to a scholar lecture, his image magnified by closed-circuit televisions scattered around the auditorium. Inhumane letters he experienced and sent me. At the same time I was enrolled in Master's classes of ten or twelve students. The largest class I had as a grad students was the Shakespeare course enrolling 35 students. The average class size was around twelve, a deliberate design of my graduate institution, and one I felt at home with.

Something changes profoundly in your education, it seems to me, when you move from a small unit thinking together to a mass assembly of lecturer and listener. The former honors the person more than the program. For one thing, the teacher associates ideas on papers and exams with ideas expressed in class. Your ideas count. You have the opportunity to test yourself, developing a way of looking at literature.

A second criterion for selection seems to me to be geography. A university is shaped internally and externally, by its programs and by where the programs are performed. This may be as simple a difference as an urban or rural locale. Granted, for some people it matters not a whit. To me it was tremendously important. I am ill at ease in cities. I need space; sky and fields and flowers. For me, southeastern Ohio was a chunk of paradise. I could have found no better place at that time in my life. We lived on farms tucked back in the foothills, neighbors to farmers and not a few moonshiners. The tremendous beauty of the countryside was a constant solace and restoration. My wife and I were back to earth people, gardening, composting everything, believing that a rind is a terrible thing to waste. This place was home to us.

On the other hand, colleagues of mine who have attended, for example, the University of Chicago, can't understand this attraction. They need the hustle of the subway, the clash of street noise, the soar of buildings, the panorama of many people.

Finally, it is an individual choice, but place is a part of a person. It shapes you as surely as a curriculum, and should not be ignored.

Third, whatever the locale, a university should have a thriving intellectual life abetted by special programs. I would pay attention to guest lecturers and special events. In an age of financial retrenchment, many universities have cut corners here.

For me, it was an essential part of the grad school experience. Noted scholars frequently made guest appearances in classrooms, for example. My graduate institution happened to be one of the first in the nation to offer an academic M.A. and Ph.D in Creative Writing; that is, all the traditional graduate academic work was done, but all seminars and theses were creative writing works. The faculty boasted writers of national reputation. Stanley Plumley headed the poetry program and brought nearly every major American poet then living to the campus at one point or another. The poet and novelist Hollis Summers was not only my teacher but a friend, who had us over for dinners and did not mind what the children did to his spacious home. Jack Matthews and Daniel Keyes, both of whom helped start the program, still teach in it despite having earned enough off their novels and films to retire comfortably.

Fourth, recognize that in grad school you are acquiring knowledge and skills that may vary widely from those you will use in teaching. You probably will not prepare, for example, for the one course that nearly all new Ph.D.'s in English have to teach—Freshman Composition.

I have no regrets and no disappointments about graduate school. I have confronted realities about the relationship between graduate school and teaching in the years since. In college already I wanted to concentrate in Victorian studies. Apart from a substantial detour into medieval and Old English studies in grad school, I kept to the main path pretty well, taking the Master's thesis in Romanticism and the doctorate in Victorian. I have never taught a course in either area, and I realize with some regret that it would now be virtually impossible to get back into it. My first teaching position concentrated in American Literature, and there I have been ever since, with a third of my present teaching load and about 90

"My wife and I were back to earth people, gardening, composting everything, believing that a rind is a terrible thing to waste."

percent of my scholarship in the field. Such adjustments were not at all unusual for new Ph.D.'s of my time. You passed yourself off as a specialist in whatever the job market demanded. I would have taught biblical tracts or urinary tracts if I had to.

When I forecast for graduate students today, I see a far greater possibility of teaching in an area of graduate specialization. One blessing of the opening job market will be greater selection and, consequently, a better chance to teach in areas of graduate specialization.

A second benefit of the more open job market will be better salaries. Throughout the profession, entrance-level salaries are already rising to attract new teachers. By the time you graduate with a Ph.D., there's a fair chance that you may be making as much as your neighborhood mechanic.

Fifth, begin your preparation for grad school during college by taking as many courses in your major as possible. I don't pretend to speak for all majors here, but I am concerned about English majors taking many modern courses to the exclusion of historical and major author courses. Most Calvin students with serious designs upon graduate school could and probably should be taking five courses each semester rather than four during their junior and senior years. This would permit them to take the less-frequently taught courses, and also allied courses in history and philosophy, for example.

Sixth, affirm and stick to your Christian principles in grad school, both in Christian living and academic living. You have to have some reason for living larger than a simply intellectual one. If you enter grad school convicted of where you stand spiritually, you'll walk out of it a better person. This may sound simplistic until you recognize the fact that the work load and pressures can rip you to the core. You need a place to stand before you just do something.

If that sounds like advice your mother once gave you, your mother was right.

My final advice, then, is to reflect as much on yourself as a person as to reflect on the university. Who you are is thoroughly as important as where you'll be.

Autumn Whirl

The leaves flutter and chatter
Their incessant song.
Each dancing to a rhythm
Of tangoes and waltzes.

The dancers are prompted by whistling winds.
Wildly flinging, swooping, dipping.

'Til some wearily droop,
And take their last waltz.
Circling and twirling
To a gentle flutter,

On the ground.

The sound of music
Still in their veins.

Ardell Persenaire

At 8:30 AM I See No Break

An inch already
and more comes down
to mix with slush.
Decarie, bumper to bumper,
accidents of course
and buses jammed to the walls
spray muck onto pedestrians

It's cold . . .
seems someone is punishing us
for the sins of a murderer.
Colder tomorrow
so I'll stay inside.
The sins of a murderer
on a cold day
make it bleaker still.
More snow in the air.
Sunday will be worse.
I can't dance outside
it's cold . . .
and Rachel Pratte won't sing anymore.
It's cold.

John Bood

PORTFOLIO

by Tammy Musbach

What is art? I'm sure everyone starts out these essays by, if not writing that question, then thinking of it. As a Senior I am really starting to decide what the answer to this question is. It is a relative and somewhat subjective thing. Each individual carries his own experiences which form his opinions and biases.

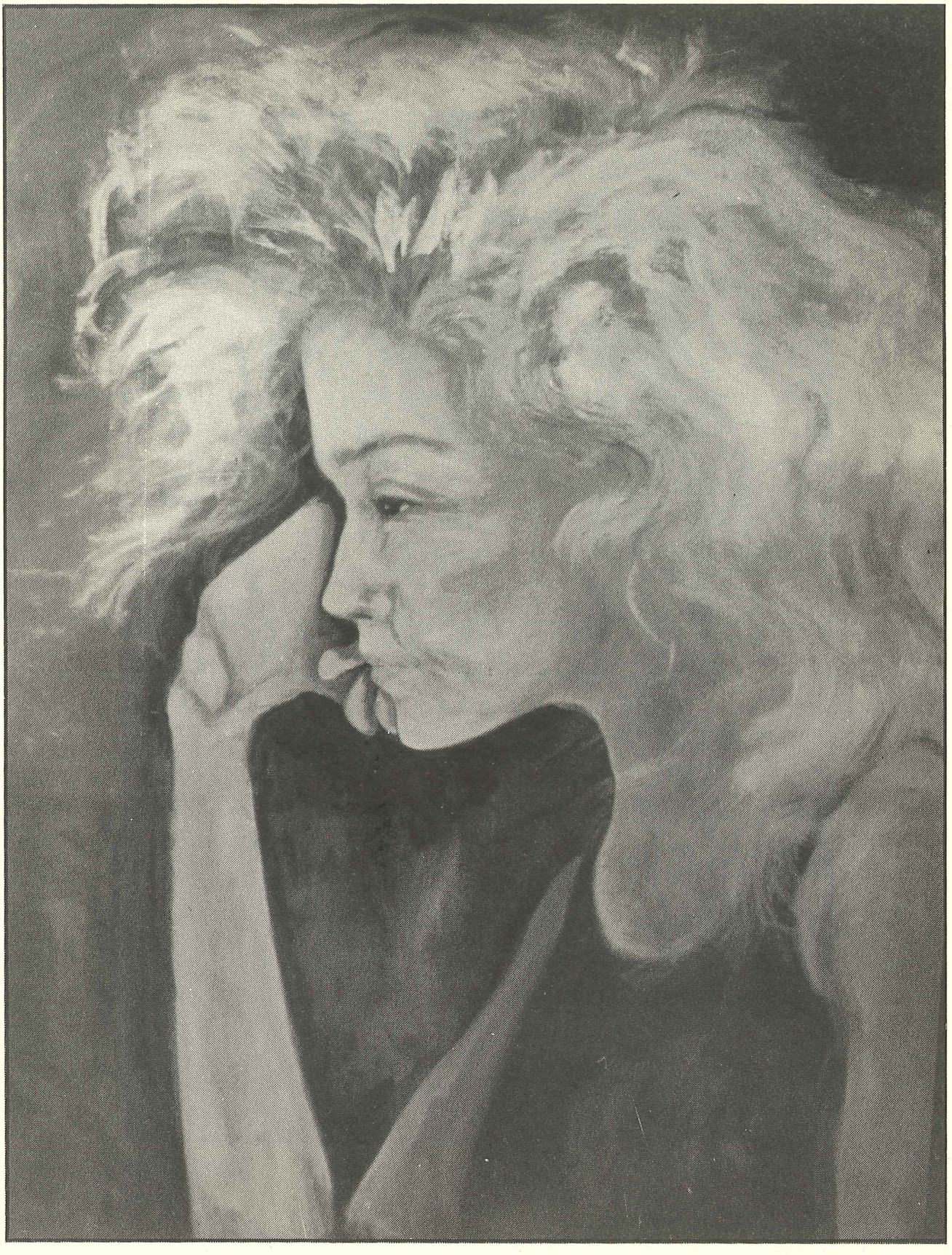
But I don't want to talk about philosophy because I'm too young to be that serious or set in anything. My philosophy has been simple up until now and so I won't try to delve any deeper than necessary.

I am very much into realistic drawings/renderings. I have never had "something to say" and then manipulated my art to achieve that goal. Rather, I let the art speak for itself. To some, this may seem shallow but quite frankly, I don't care what other people think or say about art, because half the time the poeple who look as if they know a lot, or tell you that they know a lot, don't know anything. And besides—who isn't shallow?

If viewers like my work for any reason, that's fine. If viewers don't like my work, that's fine too. I'm not going to depend on someone's opinion or lack thereof to determine whether my work is valid or not. This is the 20th—the late 20th—century. There aren't any guidelines any more. Artists need interaction. Don't get me wrong, but my work will keep coming no matter what consensus or opinion says.

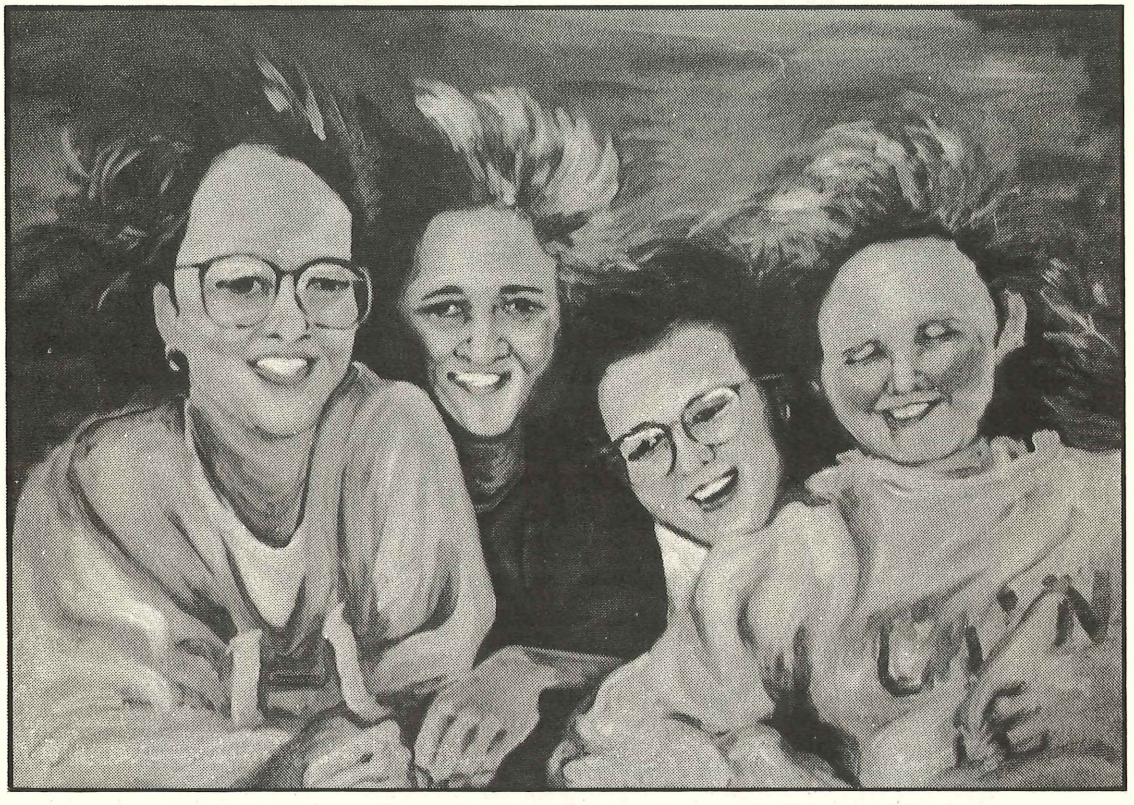
I am an artist, I do art, a writer I am not. I hope that someday my work will be able to speak for itself, but that may not happen until after I'm gone.

Untitled 1989 *Lithography*

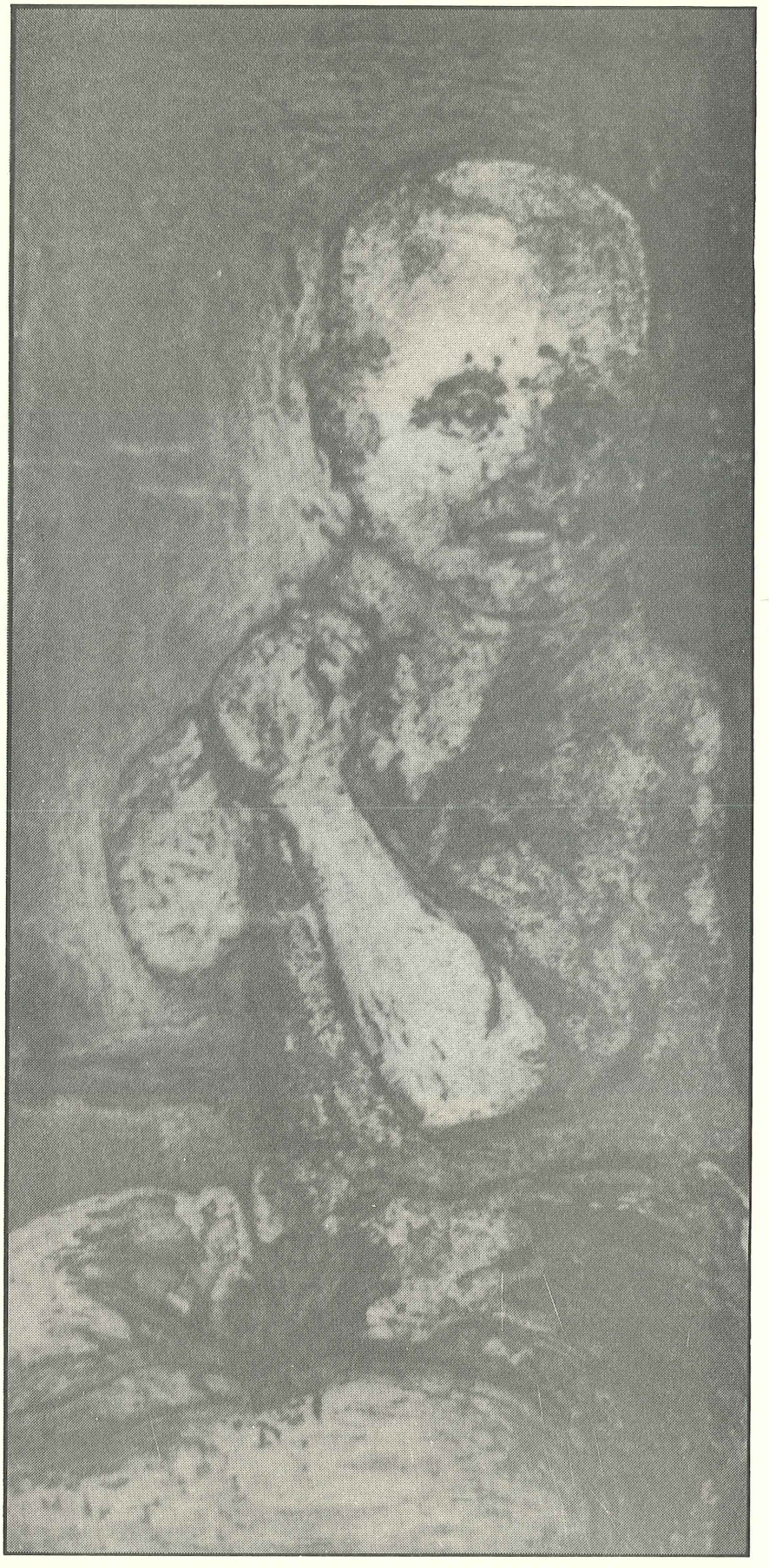


Untitled 1988 *Acrylic*

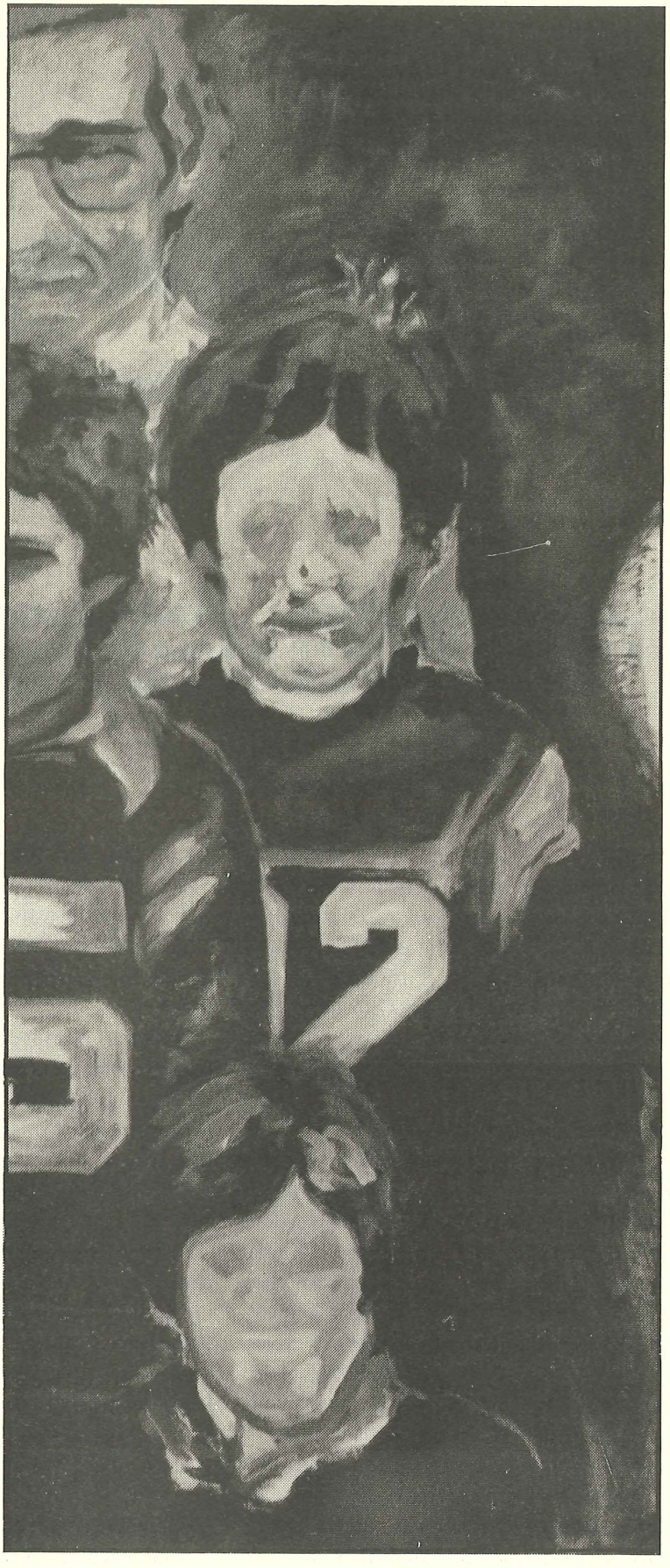
La Jeune Fille 1987 *Lithography*



Untitiled 1988 *Acrylic*



Dirty Kid 1989 *Intaglio*



Untitled 1988 *Acrylic*

One out of Six

by Rebecca Flietstra

The Lord *said to Moses and Aaron . . . "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean until evening."* (Leviticus 15:1, 19)

I'm glad it's no longer popular to completely ostracize women during their periods. Otherwise, I would probably miss a quarter of my education here at Calvin—probably without monetary reimbursement. Yet, although "the curse" is no longer regulated by biblical law, it still receives a lot of negative press. Mention "menstruation" to any guy and he'll automatically relate horror stories about PMS bitches and "the rag." Mostly true stories, I'm sure, yet they're certainly not the whole story.

The whole story is untellable. Each woman's experiences with menstruation are different. There is no "normal" menstrual cycle, no standard reactions that each woman feels every single month. Therefore, I can only know how *I* feel and how *my* body changes throughout the cycle. From there, I can try to reasonably speculate about other women's cycles. Yet, although I cannot share the entire story, I can share my own—beginning with last year's histology report, which was a report on the study of tissue.

A histology report for a biology investigations course may seem a strange place to start, until you realize the organ under study was a mouse ovary. Whereas I found the subject fascinating, my male neighbors in the apartments found it amusing. During the final days before my presentation, my roommates and I heard the phrase "a hellish nightmare" (their term for menstruation) several dozen times. Yet, while we were already irritated after the second use of the phrase, we waited until later to voice our angry opinions.

Four of us met for supper at the Commons. Immediately we began to denounce our male counterparts, dredging up every past offense. "Men! Why do they think it's macho to make fun of women?" "How come they only think about women in terms of the physical?" "Don't any of them know what chivalry is? At least they could be polite."

At the height of our tirade, a male friend asked if he could sit at our table. We allowed him to join us, but did not alter the conversation. "Next time the subject comes up," I vowed, "I'm going to ask them if they think I have my period right then or not. I'd like to know what they'd say—if they really could tell. If they'd really dare to guess." I gained momentum: "And, if you really stop to think about it, nearly one in every six females on this campus has her period at any given time. I doubt they're aware of that."

John quietly pointed at each of us, then mentally counted in our two absent roommates. "So the chances

are very good that whenever I stop by, someone in your apartment should have her period. Hmm, interesting."

"Well, actually, we have it that. . ." my roommate stopped and the women started laughing. John smiled hesitantly. Did he guess that our monthly cycles coincided—a common phenomenon in female apartments and floors? Or that we were all experiencing our period at that time?

My biggest fear as a young teenager was that it would show. I would leak and my male classmates would notice or, even without any spots showing, they would just *know* anyway. It didn't help that the boys also liked to believe they had such discernment. During the fall of my ninth grade year, a group of them found a sanitary pad. The rest of the day they spent randomly accosting girls and asking, quite innocently, if the pad had fallen out of their purses. Each flustered response was evaluated and, more often than not, the girl was determined to be "on the rag." I decided to avoid their part of the hall.

If they had asked I would've honestly, although quite self-consciously, said no. My menarch, my first menstruation, didn't arrive until the spring of that year. I had started to worry on my fourteenth birthday. What if I never got my period? Would I keep the barely developed, and quite recently acquired, female figure, or would it degenerate? Was it cancer? I had been told once that cancer could interrupt the monthly cycle. Was I going to die?

After all these fears and confusion, my first period was no big deal. I went to the restroom halfway through the school day and noticed a small spot on my underwear. I didn't think much of it. It was just a small brown spot, not the gush of red blood I was expecting. Four hours later, in the bathroom at home, the spot hadn't grown much; still, I started to be concerned. After a hurried conference with my mother, she determined that I finally had my period.

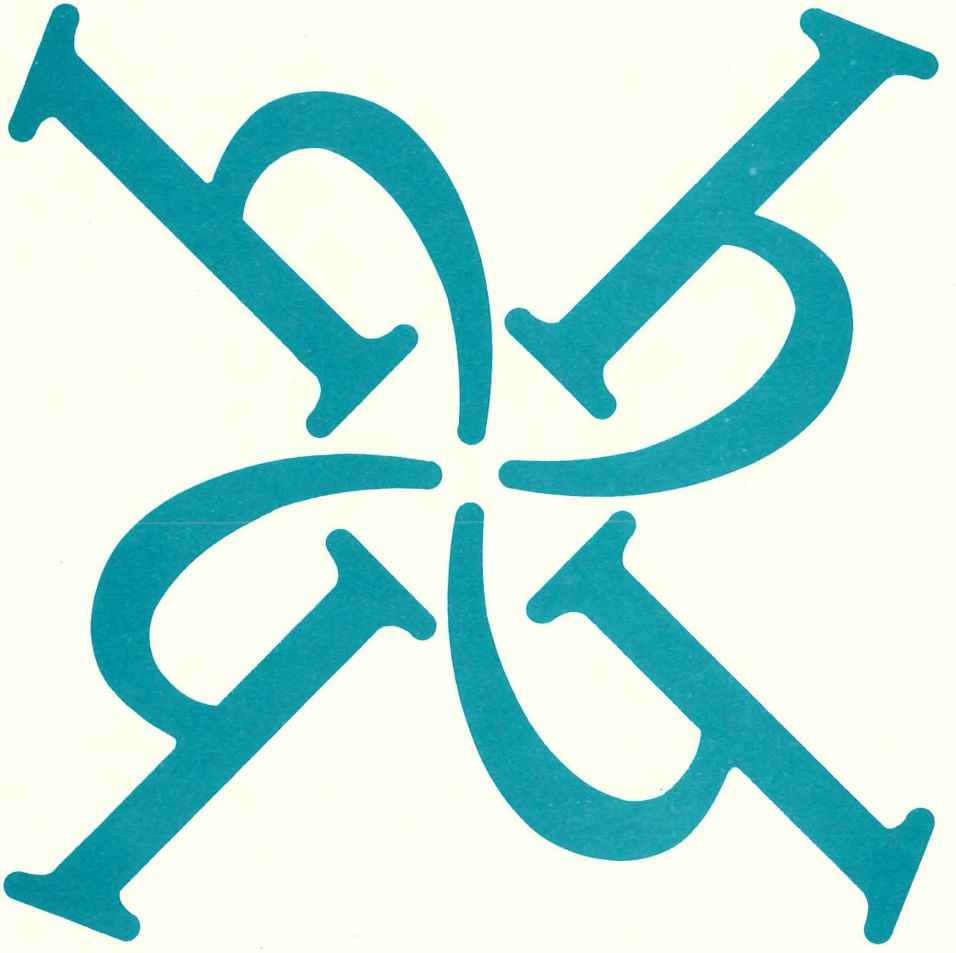
That first period didn't seem very real. In fact, I have a hard time remembering the rest of it. I do, however, remember my second period. That one was everything every friend and every book had warned about. I couldn't sit; I couldn't stand; I couldn't walk; I could only be uncomfortable. And I could yell at God. I told him several times that Eve had been no more of a sinner than Adam—and certainly the punishment passed on to her daughters should not have been so harsh. And if menstrual pain were such a necessity, he should've created me a man, thank you.

I no longer wish I were male. Freud may call me a liar—but I'd rather have my period than a penis. (Indeed, Ashley Montagu, a male feminist, argues that men are jealous of women's ability to conceive, and have surrounded menstruation and pregnancy with taboos to compensate for their deficiency.) Maybe it's the feeling of surviving it each month and being convinced that no man could ever handle it as well. Or, possibly, it's because my cramps are less intense and I now know how to use tampons instead of the diaper-like pads which made me feel like a waddling duck. Even more importantly, it may be because I am no longer a shy, insecure teenager but a self-confident woman. Confident and comfortable with and about my body—that is, until men start cracking jokes about PMS and cramps. I'm never sure how I'm to proceed. Do I laugh at and scorn my womanhood? Can I deny such experiences exist? No and no.

Yet, in this society, where men are the standard for normality, I seem to be caught between denying the influence of my menstrual cycle or admitting inferiority. I find neither option to be acceptable. To quote from *First Monday in October* (a movie about the first female Supreme Court judge): "Haven't we outgrown those fears about the periodic instability of the female of the species? Eggs are not the seeds of insanity; a woman can think and ovulate at the same time . . . . Somebody with the capacity to bear children is gifted, not crippled. A uterus is like absolute pitch—some people have it, some don't." Amen and amen.

Menstruation is that profoundly simple. It's a natural and necessary cycle, not an imposing, life-threatening disease. It's true that it is often painful and can cause mood swings, but I've also known men who've been angry for weeks, and even months at a time, not just five predictable days. Furthermore, there is evidence that men also experience life cycles. Doesn't it seem advantageous to be cyclic rather than unpredictable? Should it really matter that a woman's cycle is more obvious? Or that females experience the full range of emotion, instead of the boring self-control men like to believe they maintain? Isn't it wonderful that God would allow women to experience life as a sine curve, not as a simple x=1?

With gentle sarcasm, I ask, "Would you rather live life as a straight mediocre, or experience some extraordinary highs?" Are you aware that one out of six fertile women are in the menstrual stage of their cycle as you read this sentence? Do you think you could pick them out? Do you think I'm one of them?

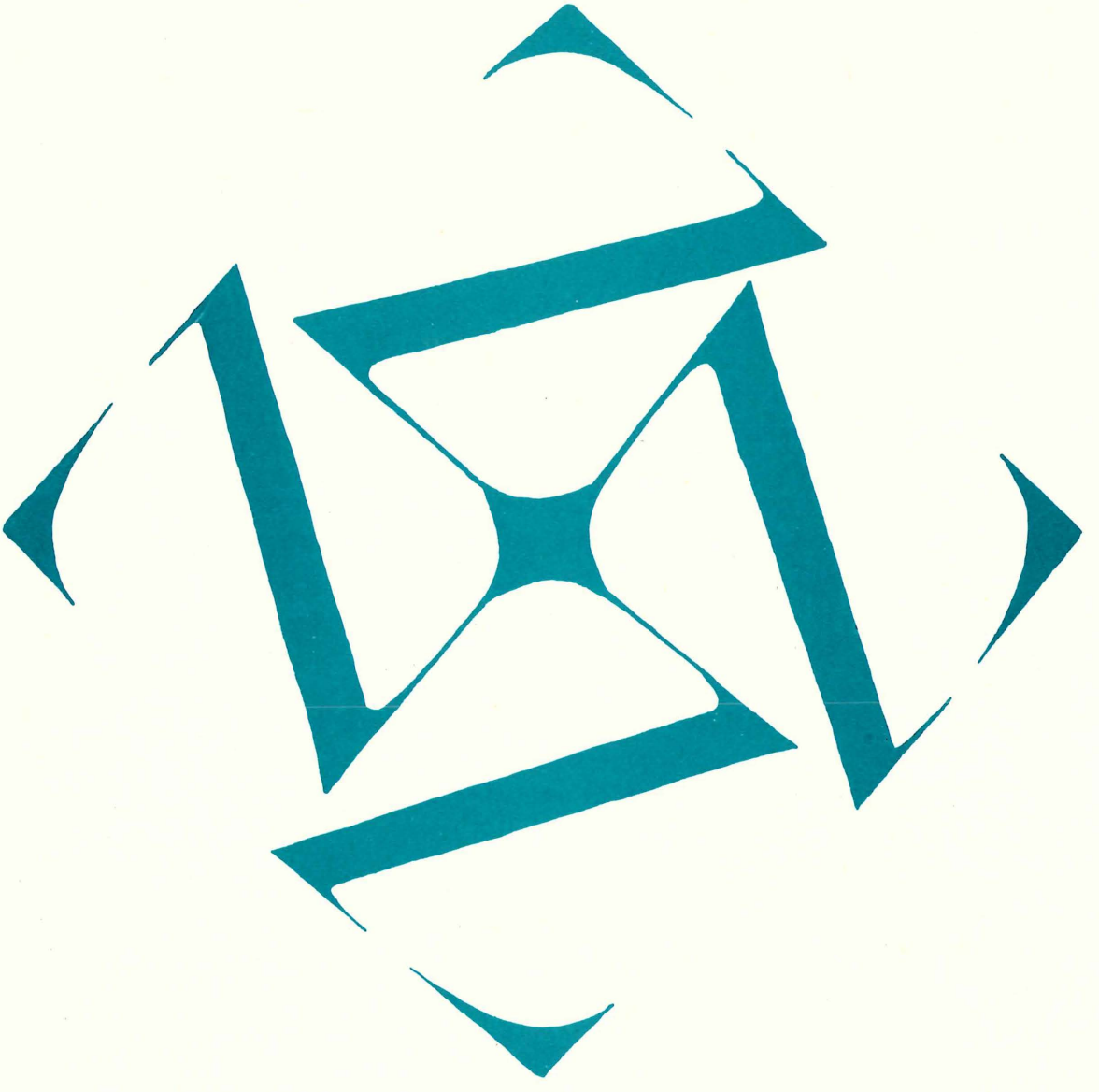


Carl Hoerth Typography *India Ink*

Passing Windows

I feel if I could step through this window
and the glass would slide smoothly over my skin
and close behind me an impenetrable wall
If I could shake the facts like drops of water from my body
and the tumid river of knowledge would flow on
and drag soul-empty people into dizzying eddies
If I could tiptoe along the tops of the trees
and the wind would come quivering
and wrap itself around my arms and legs
If I could sink down while my mind uncoils
and the sand would swathe my head
and insulate from life's aberration
If I could in part
and in peace
I would rest.

Amy Olson



Matthew Van Zomeren Typography *India Ink*

Words and Works

Pseudo-Sonnets

by Heather Bouwman

Last fall I was told to write a paper on love poetry for an English class. I wanted an excuse to take the time to write a poem without having to feel guilty about skipping homework, so I decided to make poetry my homework—to write a love poem of my own to include in the paper.

Deciding on the form of this poem was simple. I had just written my first "pseudo sonnet"; I was anxious to begin a second. A sonnet, as you probably know, is a poem of 14 lines in iambic pentameter (five stressed syllables and five unstressed syllables per line, alternating), with a fairly complex rhyme scheme. A pseudo-sonnet ("ps") is exactly what its name implies: a "sort-of" sonnet.

There is not a set pattern for a pseudo-sonnet; rather, the form changes for each individual poem. For this particular poem I used five strong beats in each line—five "crests" which the reading voice would naturally emphasize—and I paid no attention to the "weak" beats. (Therefore, the rhythm of this poem is a kind of pentameter, but it is a far cry from being iambic.)

The rhyme scheme was very loose. There were two rhyme words (*you, eyes*) and one "refrain" word (*hope*). I mixed them indiscriminately.

Then I handed the poem in with my essay, as an example of a contemporary "hopeless love"—a bleak kind of moment-to-moment love in a world which may destroy itself soon. And I forgot about the poem for several months.

Inside this riddle-ridden world, there's you
And me and nothing that we once called hope.
Your head resting on my lap . . . and your blue eyes . . .
And what if tonight this rolling earth dies?
What if right now, as I finish writing these last few
Lines, the world grinds stop, then who
Will read us? –If the world will die, then we know hope
Is dead; for who then could love our love brand new?
And you . . . you smile, and wind your hand up to
My neck, and pull my braid, and say "I hope
You never cut it." And I look into your blue blue
Eyes and think you're not just handsome—you're wise
To limit us to wishes; and if I could only redo
Everything, I'd love you more than where hope lies.

But this summer, as I sat in church one hot Sunday, I drifted off a bit. And suddenly I saw it differently: this was not meant to be a hopeless love poem, but more of a question. The sermon was lengthy, and when it was over. I still didn't have it all figured out logically. But I did have some rhyming words running through my head, the most prominent of which was *rabbis*, and I had a part of a phrase: ". . . when this muddy, smutty world crucifies/ Itself in greed . . . what can love do?" I was again anxious to write.

The first draft had a very strong six-line ending image. The first eight lines were, however, weak, mainly because the ideas they expressed were extremely repetitive. A sonnet form, which because of its brevity is an ideal framework for economy, simply does not allow for this sort of repetition. I had realized this soon after writing the first draft. What I did not realize until that Sunday in church was that the thrust of the poem was wrong as well.

We had company for dinner that Sunday. I began writing when everyone was gone, and wrote all that evening and finished about a week later. The result was a drastically different poem.

Inside this riddle-ridden world, there's you
And me and nothing that we once called hope.
Your head on my lap . . . and your breath: subdued sighs . . .
And what if they're wrong? Maybe—an evil surprise—
Love can't beget anyone or anything. So is it true—
Did Christ arise in love only and not hope?
If this muddy-smutty, cruel world crucifies
Itself, then has love done any good? –And me and you?
Oh I moved—you wake, and smile and wind your hand up to
My neck, and pull my braid, and say "I hope
You never cut it." And I look into your blue blue
Eyes and think you're not just handsome—you're wise
To limit us to wishes; and if I could only redo
Everything, I'd love you more than where hope lies.

From the first draft I kept the beginning and ending image of the poem, the image of the woman sitting and thinking while her lover sleeps with his head resting on her lap. What I changed was the woman's thoughts. But this, of course, changes the meaning of the unchanged lines. Hope is a different entity in the second draft. It no longer lies in the grave. Hope is different, love is different, the characters are different; this is a new poem.

Someone (but I can't remember who) once said that a poem is never finished; it is only abandoned. For now, I have abandoned this poem. Perhaps someday I will come back to it. Maybe this Christmas, as I open my last present, or on my birthday, when I turn 21 and immediately become immeasurably wiser, or maybe just on an unimportant, dull afternoon I'll remember this poem, and I'll realize it's still all wrong and I'll go back and rewrite it again.

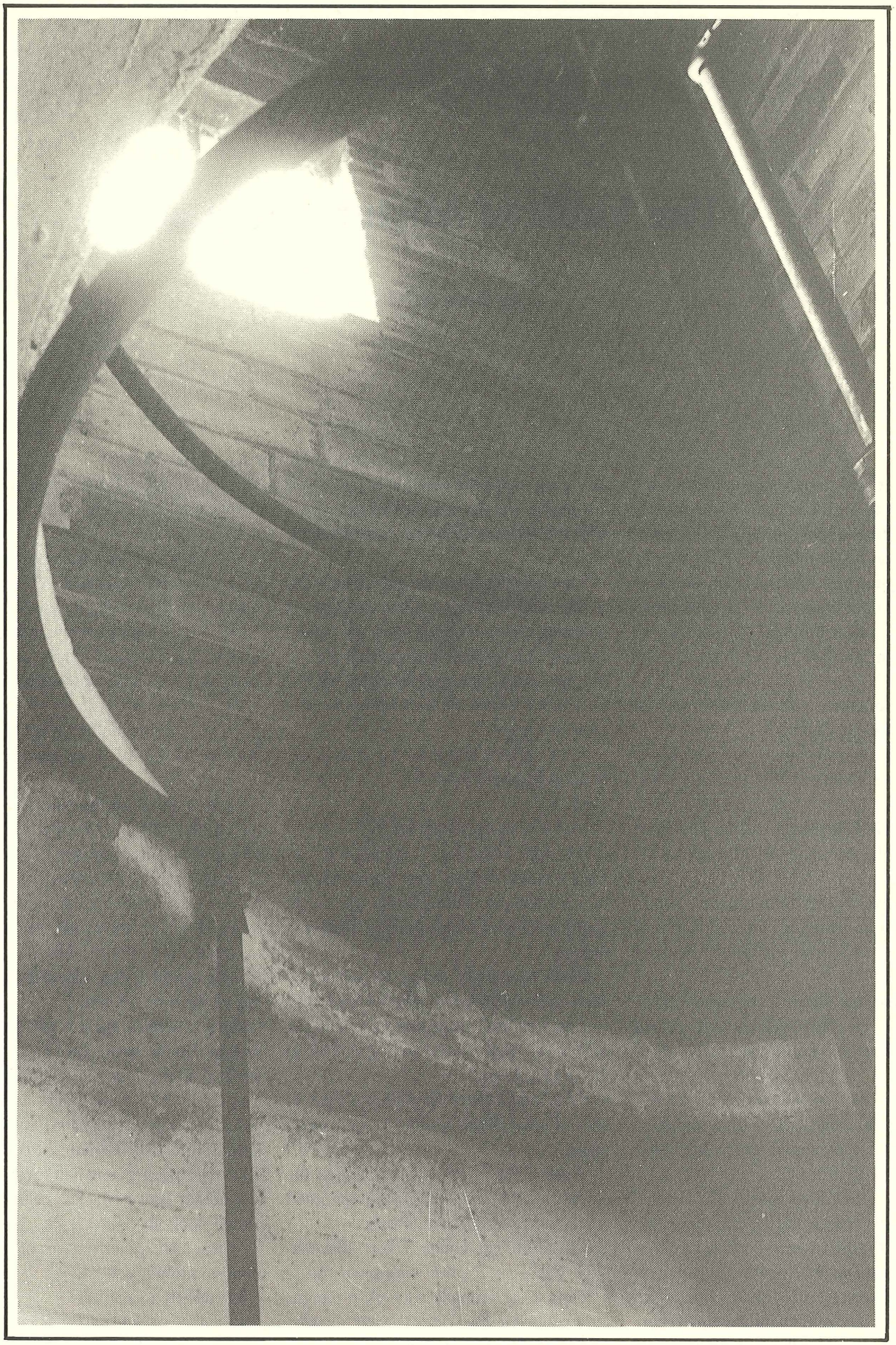
And maybe not. Maybe I'll never go back. There is a time to abandon, too. Maybe, just maybe, this poem is "done."

Which brings us back to the *real* question: what is this which I have created? —What, exactly, is a poem?

For the writer, the meaning of the final poem is imbedded in how it reached that final form. Ultimately, the product lies in the process . . . and in the changing convictions of the poet's own mind. When I look back on p.s.II's evolvement, I see how my own thoughts and ideas differ now from what they were less than a year ago. But not only is the process of writing equivalent to a kind of "conviction change chart" for the writer, it is also (and always) an art. My second version has a different thrust than my first version—contains different convictions, if you will—but above all, it is in my opinion a better poem than the first version. It is "better art."

For me, the meaning of my poem lies not solely in the final draft, but also in the first draft—and mostly in what came between the two: the waiting, the sitting in church, the composing on the beach and in my room, the going to work with different lines running in my ears—in short, the meaning for me lies in my own life. I'm afraid it can never mean the same to a reader.

But not to lose hope. For although it can never mean quite the same to you, it *can* mean differently. And this is, at least in part, what makes a poem.



Marlene Guter *Photography*

The Vault of Mister Thomas

by Steve Mulder

Metal scraped stone, and another fell into place. "Yes, well I've 'eard some migh'y strange things about this 'ere Thomas gentleman and his daughter."

"Now, you know I've 'eard of these things too, and I don' think there's anything to it. If a man wants to build himself something, then let 'im, and don't le' it be none o' your business."

"Well, but 'ave you seen his daughter anytime recent, Dylan?"

"Hey you two, quit talking and start working, so we's can get this here done this week."

Another fell into place, and mortar leaked out from the side. The trowel grated on the gray bricks.

"I'm tellin' ye, my friend, there's something strange going on 'ere. And wha' of them bars on all the windows? 'At's not normal."

"Is if you're worried 'bout these robberies 'round 'ere. He's well enough off, and needs t' protect 'is home just like the rest o' us."

"He's no' like me, 'at's for sure. I'd never be able to do wha' 'e does for a living."

"And that's why you're 'ere makin' these low wages, Walford."

"Ah, to 'ell with ye, man."

The walls rose from the scrapings and groans of the three men who labored under the insistent sun. The new walls relied on the whitewashed bricks of the main house for support, and leaned into an inside corner of the horseshoe that was the shape of the house. Level by level the squat structure grew, until the shadow of the house covered it, and the men slowed their work with the absence of the day's direct light.

A horse appeared at the gate, which one of the men opened to allow passage. A booming voice emerged from the rider's coarse black beard as he dismounted heavily. "So, Jones, 'ow goes the work? Will i' be done by Friday, or are ye going to need more workers?"

"Yes, Mister Thomas, by Friday afte'noon, I should guess."

"Good."

"And 'ow was it today, sir?"

"All right. Poor boy 's scared stiff, an' tried to run when I go' the rope on 'im, but 'e went withou' flailing abou' too much. Can't see John killing old Roy Stephens, though."

"Well, people go' to pay for what they done, even when full o' Whi'e Horse ale."

"Yes, yes. Well, you gentlemen going to ge' back to work, or am I paying ye to si' in the shade all day."

"Of course, Mister Thomas, we'll ge' in an 'our more for ye before we can' see no more."

"Good." The great figure rounded the corner toward the stable, and the men stood and leaned over the pile, lifting.

"I'm tellin' ye, Dylan, I don' like tha' man. There's somethin' wrong wi' 'im."

"Only thing wrong is 'e keeps 'is daughter away from you. Doesn' want 'er marryin' a smelly stonemason wi' no money."

"Watch tha' un. 'S cracked. That's not all of it, though. I don' even see Gillian with Gerallt anymore. And 'e plans on marryin' 'er."

"He better ge' the father's permission first. I wouldn' want to face Mister Thomas in any kind o' fight, words or fists."

"You two keep moving your lips and I'll 'ave to stack some o' these on yer 'eads. Get goin', 'e's prob'ly watching us."

They lifted and scraped, as the falling gray of twilight melded more and more with the hard gray of the stones.

Thomas stood on his porch and looked out at the wall of trees that blocked his vision of the surrounding hills. He thought the seclusion good for him—even though his nearest neighbor resided almost a mile away, he felt his trees protected his home, his creek, his valley. He didn't want to lose what mattered to him, especially considering all the time involved.

The key opened the lock and he entered, breathed in the stale, silent air, and closed and locked the door behind him. He heard a noise in the sitting room, and walked casually toward it, his hands involuntarily jerking into fists. Gillian sat by the window, reading, her long hair creating a veil around her bent head. She heard him and did not look up.

"Those American wri'ers are goin' to ruin your mind, you know."

She turned a page.

He walked back to the foyer and removed his boots, hoping supper was almost ready. She had been so withdrawn lately.

Suddenly her steps echoed in the hall, and he turned to see her standing there, book in one hand, and a faded picture in the other. "'S mother's birthday today."

"I know." He saw the familiar face in his daughter's every day. Of course he knew.

She watched him curl his toes in his socks. "I though' maybe we could do something. Go out an' . . ."

"No!" Her eyes jumped up to meet his and then darted downward again. "No. You must understand tha' I love you and cannot allow you to ruin yourself. This is the way it must be."

"Bu' you know I'd never 'urt you, father. I only wan' to . . ."

"Yes, I know wha' you and that boy Gerallt want. I know 'ow you plan be'ind my back! No, Gillian, I can't allow you to abandon me."

He started to walk past her toward the stairs, but her hand on his shoulder stopped him. "I know wha' you must feel, father. All those years with 'er, marriage, and moving in 'ere, into a family." He stared intently at the door of the stairway. "And I was too young when . . . . I didn't even really know 'er. And then for 'er to . . . ."

He heard a small sob and turned to her. Her eyes, now moist, were locked on his. "She should never 'ave done that, father. I don't know why she did! But please don't punish . . ."

Thomas pushed her away. "Don't tell me wha' I should do! You just listen to your father or I'll teach you 'ow." He waved a fist at her, and turned away toward the door. As he climbed the stairs he yelled back, "I expec' supper ready in ten minutes!"

She should never have done that, father. His thoughts reflected sarcasm: no kidding, dear daughter. And how do you think I feel about your dear mother, who abandoned me during that November storm? Who turned my grief into shock and anger? You think I enjoyed that? Especially with all the relatives around, waiting for the expected, and learning from that damned will that good old Liz took her husband down into the ocean with her. Yes, I can see her grinning at me through the waves still, laughing at my loss. Well I'm not going to let her win. Not when I've spent over twenty years building a new life here, on my own, despite how I married into this place. Success, reputation, security. That little bitch isn't going to ruin all that. You expect me to sink to the bottom with her while you, her baby and incarnation, is carried away on a golden ship I paid for? And now eighteen and all grown up, eh? All excited about the inheritance and your scum Gerallt and a new life for yourself, eh? No, my dear daughter. No, I can't allow that at all.

He returned from the pub just before midnight, still laughing occasionally to himself as he entered his house. It was quiet, and halfway up the stairs he remembered. He descended again with a sigh and went into the kitchen to get it ready, where some broken glass crunched under his feet. Then he opened the back door and stepped out into the cool night, breathing in the clear air. He didn't hear the crying anymore; it had stopped after the first three days. He walked over to the barred window and looked in at darkness. "Hey. 'Ere's some food if you wan' it." He shoved the plate through the opening, again commending himself for its design. "You all righ'?" He heard a movement, like feet scuffling on the dirt, but no response. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he looked the vault over, checking each wall and then the bars. Still solid. Better be, considering the price. Could've been smaller, he thought. She doesn't need to move around much.

He grunted a "Night" before entering the house again. The headache had begun already, and he went immediately to bed.

He awoke to a full morning light that came through the window in sword-thrusts that jarred his skull. He rolled over and submerged his head under the blankets, but his pounding head would not allow further sleep. Grimacing, he got up and threw on some clothes.

The air was stale and quiet downstairs, and he went into the kitchen hungry and thirsty. Particles of dust raced and collided in the rays from the window, and as he drank some water he squinted out into the yard. And then he saw the bars, leaning out away from the wall, sharp ends glinting. The glass crashed onto the floor and he sprinted to the door, throwing it open and hearing the wood crack against the counter.

Five of the bars were broken and bent away from the black hole that was once his masterpiece. Their sharp ends were covered with parallel scratches that named the thief. Something boiled within him, and he threw his hands onto the destroyed bars and roared into the stillness of the morning. Countless birds fled from his trees and left him alone.

Alone, the bitch. All the fury of fiery hell screamed up his spine and shot out of his mouth, despite gritting and grinding teeth. And now he felt the full impact of what dear Liz had done to him, and he attacked one of the bars, bending it slightly. A small stream of blood coarsed down his arm, but he felt nothing on the outside. He only heard the pounding in his skull, as his thoughts coarsed wildly outward: I could see them together, sailing out in that boy's small boat, laughing at me, at me. And Liz swimming up out of the depths and joining them, laughing, filling the air with their damned laughter, their joy at beating me down. Down and out of what's due. Out of my home and back to my wanderings, begging for rotting bread and fish along the coast, always wondering where I'll sleep, and finally not even caring. Me, the only one who did care for Liz and Gillian, before they abandoned me, before they took my life. No, my dear bitches, there's no way I'll let you do this. When you two return to claim your home and throw me out into the stale darkness, I'll be waiting. Waiting to show you who deserves. Who will not leave my home, my life, your death. Waiting.

The glass crunched under his feet and he went down, down, into the musty walled darkness where something scurried quickly away. Down and around to get it and throw it above him, and miss, and try again, and miss, and, screaming in his silence, find a chair and tie it, hard, pulling and creaking. And then the other end, like he knew, around and tied, hard, no slips. Pull and creak, but no slips. Victory, my dears. Standing and placing and thinking *black cover* and not caring and seeing their cries and anger and knowledge that I have won that I have won that they are done and the chair sent sprawling away my dears.

Representation

Thoughts flow through my mind
some never cease
cutting deep canyons
indelible
exposing their constancy
through life's weathering

other thoughts scurry
so temporary
drifts on a sand dune
now here
now forgotten
tiny details
micro ideas
born without a life
Did I kill them?
did they silently fade . . .
Facts treading away on tiptoe
before I realize they're gone

my prayer
canyons made by pure rivers
clean, clear, cool
not muddied by modern pollution
wisdom as their source
truth as their course
perserverance the goal

drifts of worthlessness
the useless becomes the temporary
the heavy baggage of life
becomes shifting sand
selfishness
anger
prejudice
greed
jealousy
all gone with the next breeze
leaving the canyons to testify

Chery Dyke

START

Yep—begin here, you eager little beaver, for a year of fun and glory!

Wardrobe provokes apartment riot

–$200

Get job eating leftover pepperoni at Little Caesar's

+$10 and +40 lbs.

Flattened by fulsome Faculty Fumbler on Football field

–2 HP

****

ALL STOP HERE and

PAY

amount due: $6790

****

Pledge drive for on-campus Tower of Babel

–$50

You Graduate!

Oh happy day—if you've got any happy points left!

It's Time to Play

SENIOR CIRCUIT

It's easy to master! Here's how to play! 1. Choose an icon from another, more financially secure boardgame. 2. Start with $6790, your parents' VISA card, and 10 Happy Points (HP). 3. Players proceed around the board in a clockwise fashion by rolling a die to determine movement. 4. First player to win the game wins.

Accepted by Harvard Grad School. –$12,000 x 6 years, +3 HP

Termites infest your wooden shoes

Transfer to Tollboothing College, Dordt Campus, full fellowship +3 HP

VISA bill from last four years arrives: have cardiac arrest or go to start, –5 HP

Float away during Airband Concert –1 HP

Unlucky game piece

-1 HP

Fester in your own phlegm

-2 HP

Pick up shiny penny from floor

+1 cent

Security catches you squashing chipmunks – $50

You think this game isn't funny –110 HP

Skirt or pants ripped off during all-campus dance, –1 HP

Dialogue rejects your poem –1 HP

Find mate during church service +3 HP

Prof plagiarizes your term paper, wins $1,000 prize -1 HP

Underclassmen infest your leather shoes –1 HP

You spontaneously combust!

Sit through infinitely long lecture, lose a turn –1 HP

Roommate eats your biology project –2 HP

Write thesis on "Life, the Universe, and Everything"—or something like that. Don't move from this space until you've finished!

A Gemder Siblings Game

© 3:00 AM

Volunteer for Psych experiment; consider yourself a rat for rest of game

Prism rejects your photo: "we can't believe it's *human!*"

Run screaming from GRE's, -$70, –2 HP. Go back one space and reconsider.

CHOOSE NOW: Grad school or job. What'll you do when the brouhaha's over?

–2 HP either way

Gain college-wide fame from singing "Dust in the Wind" at existentialist chapel service

Forced to take interim course "Upholstery, You, and the Opposite Sex" –1 HP

Fall asleep in Coffee Shop with mouth open; smokers think you're an ash tray –1 HP

John Calvin speaks to you in a dream: become a Catholic