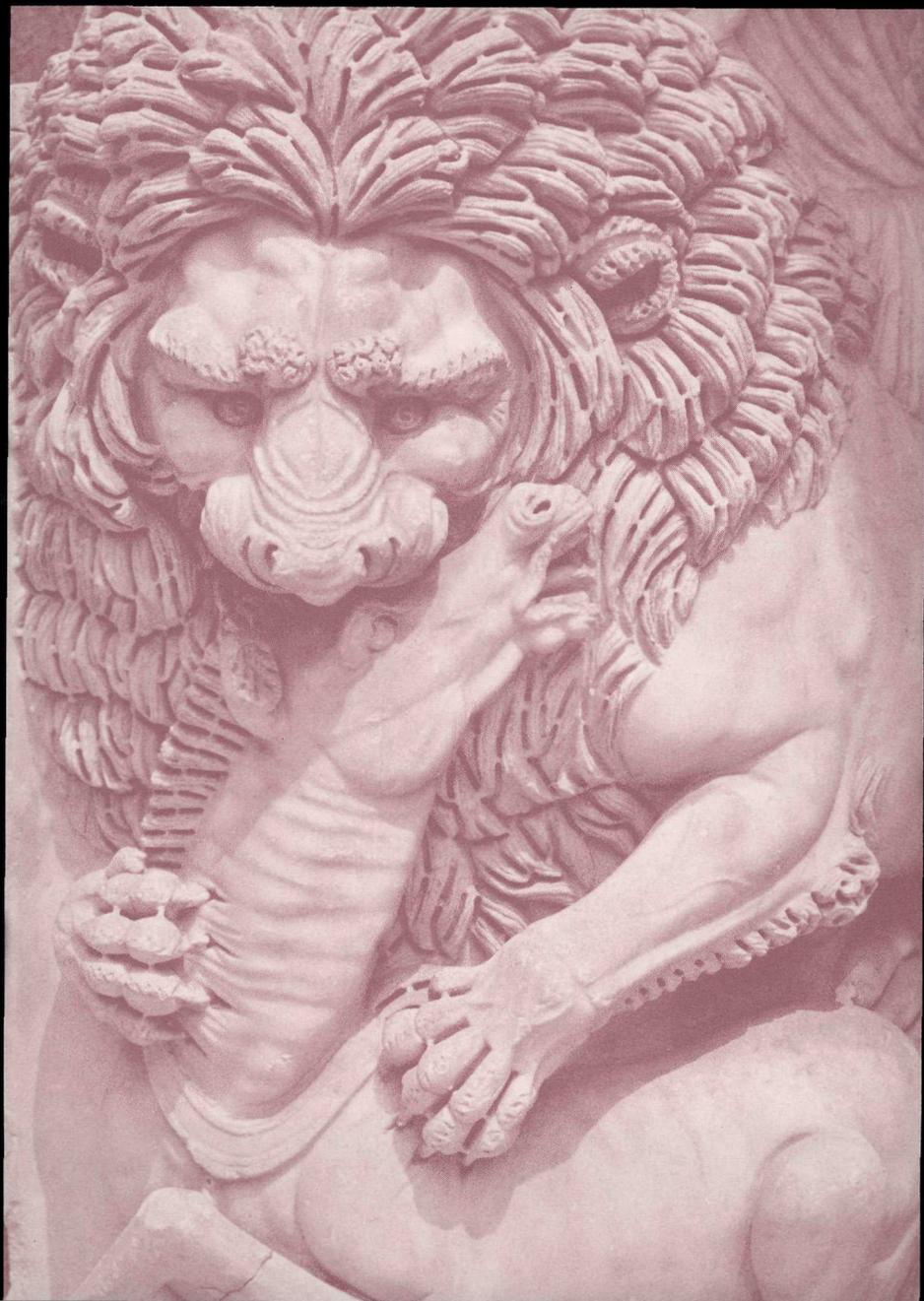


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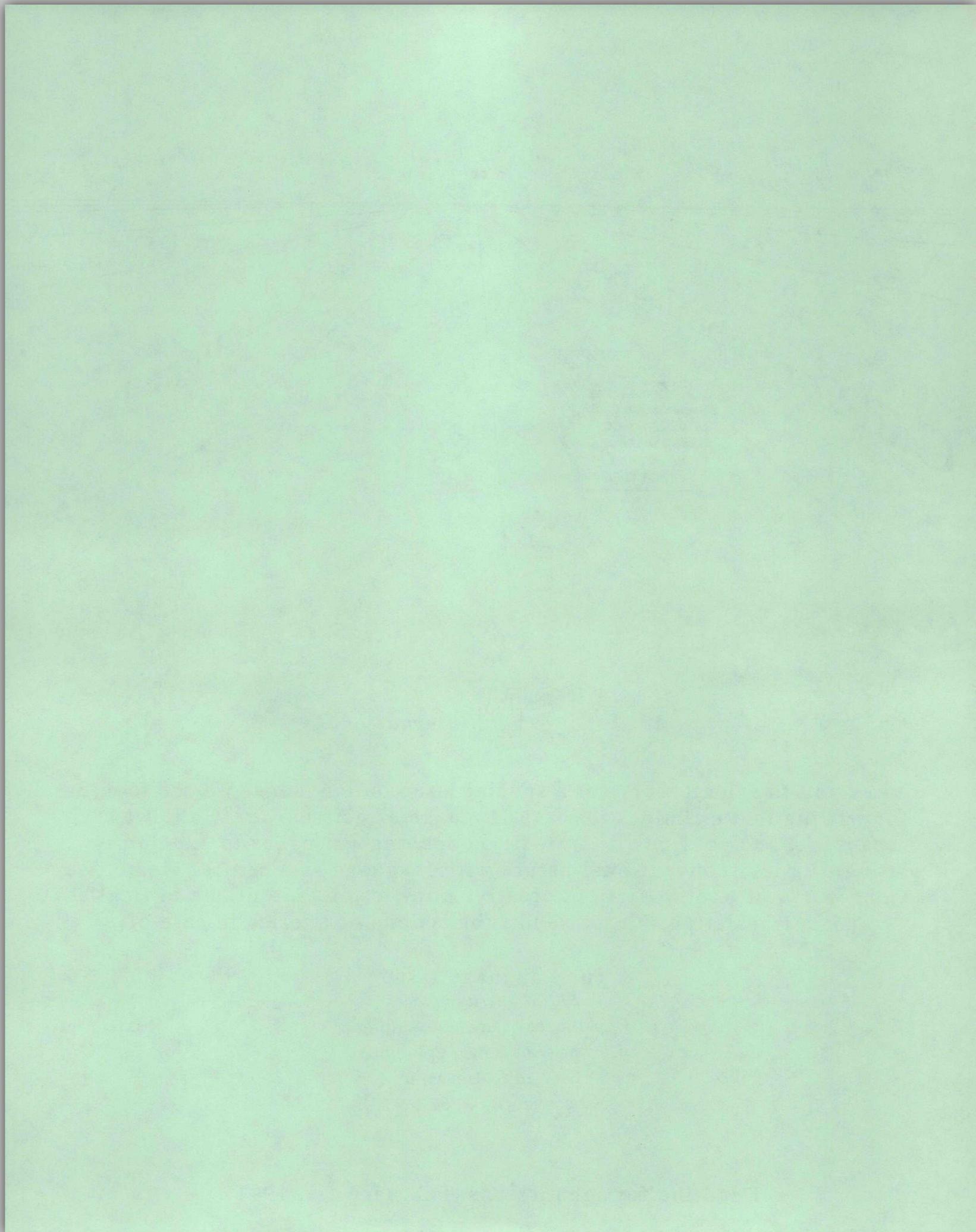
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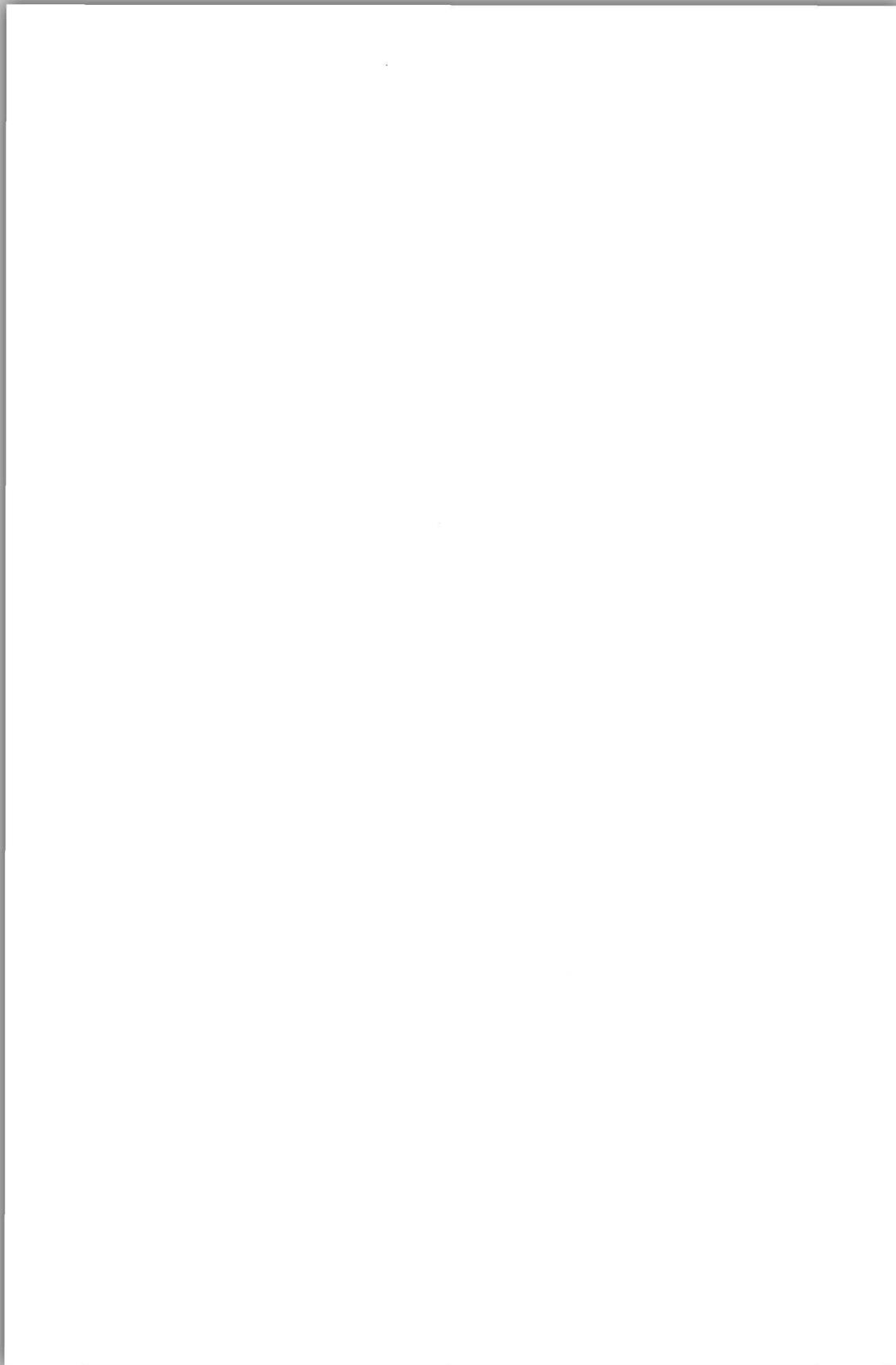
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Swan

Kenneth Harvey

1

On Saturdays, Clarence's wife Ursula sits at the kitchen table clipping coupons from the Post Weekly and carefully recording special grocery prices on the back of a brown paper bag. Her concentration is precise as she matches numbers to the sale dates and locations. Planning of this nature has always been a necessity. Sometimes Ursula walks over half a mile—as she did last Thursday—to save twelve cents on a loaf of bread.

On Saturdays, her husband Clarence retrieves an abandoned newspaper from the L&M Take Out at the end of the street before heading for the park with the couple's eight year old son, Danny. Some early customer always leaves a paper lying on one of the white tabletops with brown swirls to simulate the look of marble. Depending on the briskness of business, Clarence sometimes finds two or three newspapers. The cook in the kitchen watches him without a word through the rectangular serving hole. He watches and then dips his head as he lifts a wire-mesh basket of french fries from the bubbling fat and shakes it.

"Fries?" the cook shouts, staring back up. His body-length apron is white and clean, and his name is embroidered across the chest pocket, spelling LEO. He dumps the chips into a silver dish twice the size of a hubcap, then scoops handfuls of raw, cut potatoes into the basket.

"No," Clarence says, glancing up at the order board's changeable black letters and red prices. After a few moments of regarding the sign, he turns to face the cook. "Okay if I take this paper?"

Leo shrugs. "No difference. I read it."

Picking up the newspaper, Clarence strides toward the back of the room where another broadsheet lies open across a chair. He lifts that one as well and holds both papers in his hands. His eyes are nervous when they glance at Leo who is now closer to Clarence, but Leo is busy lowering a fresh basket of cut potatoes into the fryer. A cloud of smoke rises from the sizzling fat and is sucked into the wide overhead fan.

Clarence watches Leo's deliberate actions. The wiping of his hands in a

wet rag. The popping of a french fry into his mouth. The sloppy chewing. Clarence waits until the cook says, "Take it easy," and winks before going back about his business.

The rich smell of deep-fried food lingers in Clarence's nostrils. Walking toward the glass door, he breathes the smokey aroma. He pauses and turns, leaning against the door's silver handle and pushing it open with his hip and elbow.

This Saturday, his legs wobble as he steps down onto the concrete landing. The newspapers are tucked under his arm, but they seem heavier than his entire body, so he takes them in his hands and carries the weight against his stomach. At the foot of Field Street, he stares down at the headlines. The words mean nothing to him. They are lines of black and darker black and even darker, thicker black towards the top of the page. At times, he recognizes certain shapes of letters and words, but he cannot interpret them. They are familiar, yet beyond translation.

Clarence pictures Daniel and the new words that the boy anxiously tells his father each day when he returns from school. Although only in grade three, his son already understands more than Clarence. The boy talks knowledgeably about computers and brings home an armful of books from the library every second day.

Clarence smiles fondly at the newsprint, knowing that Daniel can make sense of the lines, make sense of the black, blacker and blackest. Daniel's mental progress, as well as his physical growth, amaze Clarence. At night, the boy sinks low on the saggy brown couch and studies an opened book on his lap. The idea that the boy can actually see pictures in his head from reading words on paper baffles Clarence. Clarence has trouble understanding when someone else reads words out loud, and he cannot see anything when he attempts to decipher the words himself.

Striding up the street with as much brittle strength as he can muster, he is halted by a shrieking between two unconnected houses. The outburst startles him and he peers down the gap where two cats—one leaping into the air and the other crouching low—hiss and flash their tiny, savage teeth. The shabby cats tangle in a blur before bolting off, one after the other. Bits of fur hang in the empty air, then drift to the dirt.

Clarence shifts his attention up ahead to the end of the block where a group of rowdy boys are gathered in the road. Several are dressed in jeans. A few wear T-shirts or sweat jackets zipped half way up, while others are bare-chested. They drink from tins of beer and kick a soccer ball up and down the street. One boy shouts flatly to another even though they are within whispering distance. Their words are dull, their tones deep and monotonous. Clarence cannot make out the words, until one of the boys shouts, "Look, Debbie's fucking head," and swings back his leg

to kick the soccer ball. The others howl and cheer. A boy of eleven or twelve kicks an empty tin into the air. It bounces off the roof of an abandoned car up on concrete blocks and rattles against the street. An older, taller boy—bare-chested and wearing a baseball cap—stumbles along the side of the street then stops. Unzipping his fly, he leans into a stagger, loudly hawks and spits before urinating against a fire hydrant.

The tiny stream collects along the curb and runs into the gutter, racing for Clarence.

Beyond the group of boys, cars whiz back and forth along Slattery Street. A car pulls off the main roadway into Clarence's street and stops beside the group of boys. The driver rolls down his window to ask a question. One of the boys leans in, swiftly taking something from his pocket. His hands move behind the windshield. Seconds later, he leans out and bangs the hood of the car. "Okay," says the boy. The car screeches away, blaring its horn.

Turning toward the blistered wooden door, Clarence pushes it open. He steps up and takes a deep breath. The smell of buttered toast saturates his stomach as he moves closer to the kitchen. His hunger becomes physical lightness—a desperate euphoria—when his wife places a cup of tea and two slices of toast on the wobbly kitchen table. Leaning sideways to check the imbalance, he tilts his head to the left, then to the right, before finally kicking one of the thin, steel legs. The blow does no good. The wobble remains.

"Stop it," says Ursula as she sits across from him, staring down at the thick fold of newspapers.

Clarence nibbles the toast and slowly sips his tea. He watches Ursula unfold the newspapers and flip the pages without looking up.

Daniel shuffles into the room, meekly silent. The toe of his sneaker catches in a tear in the blue and white linoleum and he stumbles slightly. Jutting forward, he clutches a battered tonka truck; a gift from his eighth birthday. Clarence had dug it out of a silver garbage bucket up on Freshwater Road during one of his midnight bicycle rides. The toy truck was practically new except for one missing wheel.

Clarence's bicycle is red with a blue plastic milk basket tied below the handlebars. In it he collects bottles, flea market junk, and sometimes, food, if it is in a wrapper and is not rotten.

Danny watches his mother awkwardly cutting a coupon from a large flimsy page. He spins a wheel on his tonka truck, glances at his father, then spins the wheel again.

"We going soon?" he asks, listening to the sound of his mother's scissors, shredding.

"Where to?" says his father.

"You know."

Clarence shrugs his sloping shoulders. Ursula glares up from the newspaper through thick-lensed eyeglasses. The left arm of the glasses is cracked around the tiny hinge and has been scotch-taped together. She straightens them on her nose and shifts her wiry, hipless body back and forth in her seat. Her hair is a tangle of orange, neglected curls and her lips are chapped and open. Before settling still, she licks the tip of her ink-smudged finger and stares at Clarence.

"Don't tease the boy," she says.

Clarence scans his wife. He sips the cooling tea and traces the tendons and veins in her throat. The printed button-up dress she wears is cut low in the neck and the protruding outline of her collarbone is hugged by her pink skin. Smiling, he shoves his tongue up over his front teeth, licking away the soggy smear of toast that has stuck there.

Ursula pokes her glasses up on her nose and snips with the scissors.

"Course we're going," he says, glancing at his son. "You know that."

"Don't worry," says Ursula. She looks at Daniel and nods.

The previous night, Daniel had heard his mother and father arguing and so this morning he is expecting some sort of change. When his parents argue, he always anticipates a little less. Things he took for granted are suddenly revoked. The hot water disappears. His nightlight burns out and is not replaced. The black and white television is sold. His recess snack is denied him. His food becomes plainer—a tuna fish sandwich with no mayonnaise for lunch, macaroni and cheese for supper and a cracker for dessert. The family will eat soup more often. He wonders what will be taken from him now—the trip to the park? If they take that away from him, he feels that the tears he has been holding in will flood loose and wet his face for the entirety of his life. He will run to school and never come home. They cannot take that from him. Fear taunts and confuses him, glazing his eyes.

Standing beside the table in the dim kitchen, he glances from his father to his mother. Clarence stares down into his tea and rubs his legs with one hand as if attempting to squeeze poison out of them. Ursula clips around the coupons without saying a word.

Fingers weakening, Daniel drops the tonka truck. His mother starts in her seat, jerks toward the small sightless window, away from the sound. Clarence looks at Danny and then at the floor without interest.

"Out of the kitchen," his mother demands, holding her rage.

Daniel stares at his father, but Clarence appears to be thinking of other

things as he absent-mindedly moves his empty cup along the tabletop and continues rubbing his legs.

"We're going?" says Daniel. "We are, right?"

His father smiles weakly, his knees and shins aching. Touching the top of Daniel's head, he braces his other hand against the tabletop and stands. He is a young man of twenty-seven and sometimes—moving like this—he imagines himself rising from behind a desk like the man at the unemployment centre. Clarence sees himself wearing a suit, but his desk is stacked with papers he cannot read. He is mortified that someone will discover this and fire him, so he sits still every day, remaining rigid and wordless, waiting, trembling.

For almost a year, the counselors attempted to teach him reading skills, but after much frustration and an eventual series of tests they discovered it was impossible. A perceptual disability prevents Clarence from learning beyond simple concrete observations. This is what they told him. 'Concrete things,' one of the counselors had said, knocking on the office wall with his knuckles, 'like this.'

The counselor did, however, teach him how to sign his name in an uneven scrawl of big letters with wide shaky loops. His name is a feeble pattern to him and nothing more.

Clarence keeps telling them that he wants to work, but no one will hire him. He is slow moving and has trouble remembering orders. There are days when he simply cannot get out of bed, as if he is paralyzed by a dread that he does not understand.

"We have to go," says Daniel. "Have to."

"Okay," says his father. "We're going."

Daniel runs on ahead, down the hallway that leads to the porchless door.

"Soup for supper," calls Ursula. "Keep watch of the time."

In the shadows of the bare hallway, Daniel glances back—past the slow image of his father—to his mother, but her attention is focused on stacking the pieces of clipped newsprint. A second later, she raises her hands and stares at her blackened fingertips. For some reason she laughs at the sight of this and—for some other vaguely fearful reason—Daniel races back into the kitchen and presses his lips with childhood force against his mother's bony cheek.

Before entering the park, Clarence bends down and fusses with the loose necking on Daniel's T-shirt. He does this because the walk has

tired him and also to satisfy a need to move closer to the child. Awkwardness plagues him when he is standing on his feet. He longs to ride his bicycle, to glide gracefully as the sights to all sides of him drift past. But when he is with Daniel he must walk. The chore is clumsy and exhausting.

Clarence pulls Daniel forward and hugs the small body. Then he leans back, smiling with black-edged teeth, as if revitalized.

"Who's Daddy's favorite little man in the whole wide world?"

"It's me, Daddy," pipes Daniel. He watches his father, his eyes tracing the gaunt features of Clarence's face; the sunken eyes and the hawk-like nose, the stubble and the short straight, oily hair.

Clarence's stomach growls and he feels faint. If he stands quickly, he knows he will tumble backwards. Thoughts like the murky soup they will have for supper blur his sense of direction. He is swimming through the top of his own head. But something is drawing him back into himself; his pulse as a series of cannon blasts. Moving on its own, his stomach tightens and pulls as if cutting itself open.

Slowly, carefully standing, he waits for an inner reaction, then feels something tugging at his body. His knees crack and he senses himself tipping sideways. When he looks down, Daniel is staring up, pulling at Clarence's hand and leaning into the park.

"Come on, Dad."

"Don't . . ." Clarence whispers to the whiteness tingling in his eyes, but then his vision clears and he is slowly guided along to the pull of his son. He sees the ice cream vendor up ahead and hears Daniel crooning, "Ice cream, ice cream."

Clarence searches his pocket for the shape of the coin and—between thumb and index finger—lifts out his only quarter and passes it to the ice cream vendor. The vendor takes it without word, then flips open the steel lid of the ice cream compartment. He is wearing designer jeans and a crisp, white T-shirt with the words 'Poverty Sucks' flamboyantly written in sparkling gold letters across the front. With a frown, the vendor stares down at the child and waits impatiently as Danny's eyes move with gleeful enthusiasm from one brightly coloured picture to the other.

Sitting by the pond, Clarence observes the sunlight shivering against the slow silvery rolls of water. The trees surrounding the pond reflect onto the surface and the image is calm and soothing.

Daniel eats his ice cream with passionate commitment. The sun has no time to melt the sweet fluid and draw it down over his hand. The boy sits beside his father and studies the water, then looks out toward the clear

center of the pond to the swan house.

"It's over there." His father points. The swan is hugging the opposite shore where a group of adults and children are tossing bread and cheezies to the solid, white bird. It floats effortlessly atop the water, suspended by a graceful buoyancy.

Daniel squints up at his father, then stands to throw his wrapper and ice cream stick into a nearby garbage bin.

"Where you going?" Clarence asks, but turning his head, he sees the purpose of the boy's movements and so he is silent.

Returning and sitting, Daniel says, "We need something to throw to it."

"He'll come to us."

"When?"

"Just wait. He'll come, like always."

The swan continues plucking food from the water. Clarence and Daniel wait silently in the calm sunlight. When the bird loses interest, it glides away and turns toward the father and son. The pond surface angles out and widens in an even trail behind the approaching swan. The smooth movements remind Clarence of the course of his bicycle. He wishes he could leave such an elegant trail behind himself.

Not a feather moves on the bird. Its long curved neck remains still and its delicate head is set with poise. Gliding close to the shore, it stares at Clarence and Daniel, and bobs slightly. Then, with little effort, it dips its head beneath the water's cool surface and reappears with a fish clamped between its black beak. The swan stares. Even the fish offers no struggle.

Tilting back its head to swallow, the swan's smooth neck jerks to the side and thrusts the fish into the bank.

The fish convulses in the grass as Daniel scampers forward to grab its flopping body with both hands. Slippery and snapping loose, the trout arcs into the air and hits the grass before sliding back and splashing into the water. The swan turns and glides away.

Crowds of people on the other shore are calling for the swan to come closer, move closer so they can hold it and squeeze its soft perfection until their stiff, prying fingers capture its elegance.

Daniel explains the story of the swan and the fish to his mother.

"Just like in a book," he says, beaming energetically.

Ursula looks at Clarence, her eyes widening with amusement behind the thick lenses.

"It got away," he says and shrugs.

"The swan?"

"It threw the fish up at us. It did." Daniel anxiously peers at his father and nods for confirmation. "Tell her."

"Yes, it got away."

"The swan threw you a fish." She laughs, lightly, weakly. "Go away from me."

"Yes," insists Clarence.

Ursula shakes her head and stands from the table, steps to the stove to stir the soup. Thoughts of the swan tossing a fish to her husband seem unbelievably humorous. The image of the swan fills every corner and edge of her imagination. Its feathers could stuff a pillow. The muscles in her neck and back soften as she envisions her heavy head sinking into such a pillow. And right alongside this comfort, she sees the naked swan, featherless wings tucked in. Savory dressing, gravy, sandwiches for two weeks.

Purring as the ladle circles in the soup, her imagination draws the swan closer and slips a moist strip of its warm, sweet flesh into her mouth.

Sweet Jesus! she thinks, wiping her lips with the back of her bare arm. The swan!

Daniel listens to the muffled combination of his parent's voices. His father keeps saying, No, but there is an element of uncertainty to the weakness of his insistence.

His mother repeats the same sentences; the same rhythm—pleading, yet pressing at the same time.

The voices are suddenly quiet and there is a silence so empty it seems as if something whole has been taken from the air.

Daniel lies in the darkness. He stares across his bedroom and out the window to see the sky's dark glow. Somewhere the stars are shaped like a swan. He has seen a picture in school. A map of the universe with a swan in the sky. And a fish too. There is a fish in the sky. He smiles as if he is party to some great, joyful secret that no one else could ever begin to understand. But he feels as if he understands, even though he does not know what it is that stirs within him.

His ears detect whispering; his father whispering to his mother. His mother says something without whispering, her words stern and final.

He hears his mother say, quite clearly and with determination, "Think of Danny."

The next night, Daniel hears the front door close later than usual. As if sparked to life, he throws aside the bedcovers and runs to the window. A small chain rests beside the window and he draws it closer before climbing up.

Leaning near the cool pane, he sees the street below. His father pedals his bicycle in the blue moonlight, effortlessly gliding to the end of the street like a thin, dark swan on black water. The block is empty and his father appears so tiny and lonely. Daniel wants to ask his mother where his father is going. He has a feeling his father is not off on his usual searchings. But Daniel is certain his questions would cause trouble and so he steps down and returns to his bed.

The sheets are warm and the room is filled with blue light. Daniel rolls over, facing the wall. He shuts his eyes but cannot sleep. Belief that his father is in danger unsettles him. A keen restlessness clears his mind. Tossing from one side to the other, he wants to cry out for his mother. He needs to cry out. But the image of his father keeps him silent. His small stomach is tight. With short, warm fingers he gently rubs it, then slips one finger into his puckered belly button. Pushing in, he feels a strange sharp sensation that puzzles him. It seems as if the tiny, shallow hole is connected to all areas of his body. He probes again, this time picking out a tiny ball of lint.

Staring up at the ceiling, he remembers the fish from the park. The taste of other fish he has eaten appears in his mouth. He opens and closes his eyes and pushes his finger into his belly button with less force than before until the sensation becomes lulling. And soon he is dreaming. Four chairs at a cluttered banquet table. His mother, his father, the swan and himself. Eating.

Clarence reaches high and grips the dark iron bars of the gate. He is amazed at how easily his heels fit between the bars as he pulls himself up. Once at the top, he lets one leg dangle over, then the other. First he hangs and then drops, his feet making a quick, soft wound before he veers off into a patch of trees.

As if by instinct, he checks his pocket for the knife. It is a small steak knife he has taken from the house. The sharp tip pricks him and he is startled by the point and by the memory of him slipping the knife into his pocket with the tip facing in. It has shifted. Perhaps in his climb over the fence.

The pond's faint ripples can be heard among the trees as he steps closer. The fresh sound of water in darkness sharpens his senses.

A thin asphalt path winds among the trees. Clarence stays to the left of it, watching for the guards. He hears footsteps up ahead, barely hears them before they are upon him. He freezes in the darkness, stiff, with his back against a tree trunk. The guard is dressed in a grey uniform and cap. Walking briskly, his wrinkled face studies the ground. He begins to whistle a tune but stops almost instantly. The beam of his flashlight is pointed down and he is scanning. Clarence assumes he is searching for dropped coins.

That's an idea, he thinks. But it is not possible. He has no flashlight and would most certainly be seen attempting that trick. He wants to turn back. Thoughts of Daniel overtake him. Ursula's words, "Think of Danny." The swan for Danny. But that is what he is thinking. His son adores the swan and this adoration seems to mean much more to the boy than food.

"They'll replace it," said his wife. "Of course they will," she insisted. "Think of the treat for your son."

Carefully moving on, Clarence's eyes adjust slowly to the absence of light. Within moments, he seems to see with a purer clarity in the darkness than in actual daylight. The dim, thick roots of the trees above the ground entrance him. The roots—as well as all of his surroundings—are brushed by tender moonlight. The grass is cool against his ankles and the blades tickle. He has forgotten to put on his socks. Finding this funny, he smiles as he comes upon the water. The pond is outlined by a faint bluish hue and he can make out the swan house in the center.

A flashlight beam brushes the water and Clarence drops to his back, remaining perfectly still. Footsteps sweep along the path above him as the beam skims the pebbled edge of the lake and continues down.

Clarence raises his heavy head and listens before sitting up. Bracing his hands against the ground, he lifts his behind, inching along until he is close to the water.

His eyes strain for sight of the swan. They search for whiteness in the night. The pond is a luminous purple, reflecting the changing midnight sky. Clouds are creeping in. The swan, he thinks, is sleeping beneath these clouds. The swan is sleeping. Of course, it is. But then a dim shade of white—more a grey than anything—startles him from the distance. Approaching, the grey whitens as it drifts toward Clarence. In the darkness like this, he realizes the overpowering size of the swan. It is huge. Its feathers are pure white and it remains motionless, staring. Then it glides close to the shoreline and suddenly—without warning—rises from the water. On wide flat feet, it stumbles onto land.

A hungry, honking cry drones from the swan's black beak. Clarence nods. If he understands anything, he understands that sound. He thinks of Daniel and remembers the knife. Reaching into his pocket, he tightens his fist around the handle, then stares expectantly up at the sky. The moonlight is so soft he feels it is killing him.

Linda McFerrin

Shinkichi's Tale

Shinkichisan
dipped his bucket into the water
at the Yunoichi Bathhouse.
All around him—other bathers—
the slow din grew rounder, rose to the ceiling.
In the water before him, his body floated,
large.
He'd had too much to drink
last night in the Akasaka district.
Sweat and flesh about him in the steam,
big men unwinding,
wanting to weep, Shinkichisan,
dipping his bucket,
lost them,
drifted, quite simply, away.
He was alone.
He did not think at this time,
“Ah, I have attained satori.”
That had happened to him once before
on a crowded Tokyo street.
He awoke off the curb,
and a bus had nearly killed him.
This time he was quiet,
alone.
Only the water was still there.
He had no clothes left.
He went about his business.
Some say they saw him that day in Tokyo Ginza.
Some say as far as Nara.
Many say that day he appeared to them,
but, strangely, nude—
a visitation.
Shinkichisan says nothing,
keeping his own counsel.
All agree they did not see him leave
the bathhouse.

Tsunami

I fear water.
Knowing this you
have built dikes around me,
levees, walls to hold back the floods.

A tsunami is a freak,
however,
something unexpected, a large wave
of inordinate proportions.

This is not what I dream about,
bridges disappearing beneath me,
kitchens filling up with water,
out-of-control cars driving themselves
into the Pacific Ocean.

Remind me: that the villagers close to the sea
build their homes of paper and wood for this
reason:

that the paper may be burned (should it survive us)
in offerings for the dead

and that the wood (who can anticipate good fortune?)
may save us.

Down Tomorrow's Pipe

Gail Anderson-Dargatz

It's September 3, 1946 and you sit drinking coffee so strong it stiffens the kitchen, waiting for the sound of the truck, Emanuel coming back from his rounds of the trapline. You see your girls through the kitchen window as they play on the pile of lumber and scrap plywood that is their castle. Margaret is calling shrill orders over them all. Today she is Pirate, General, Dictator, or King thrusting a plywood sword. "Get out of my house," she yells, "or I'll skin you raw."

Denise cries, "Put those words back in your mouth." She is Queen in the plumed felt hat that was your wedding headdress. Sonya is Joan of Arc or Florence Nightingale in a tea towel; she carries a ragged Raggedy Anne, her war victim. Little Pammy is only trying to keep up.

It's drizzling and there are nails in that lumber, and you think of throwing the door open one more time and yelling at the girls to get away from there. Go play in the hay loft. For Heaven's sake. But you don't. What's the use?

The baby, baby Linda, sleeps in the wicker basket on the other side of the stove. There's plenty you could have done with the day. You've thrown a dish cloth over yesterday's dishes. Linda's diapers stink in the bucket in the bathroom. The Coleman fridge needs refueling.

But instead you baked bath buns made rich with extra butter, and a pot of thick coffee for when Emanuel gets home, and you sat and ate the whole batch of buns hot by yourself and nearly finished off the pot with the cream you skimmed off the bucket of fresh milk. The buns are sitting at the base of your bowels in a painful knot. You know Emanuel won't say anything about the stink in the bathroom or the cup he has to wash himself. He won't say anything at all. That's the worst of it.

These days he's gone on the trapline. You pitch hay to the cows and the few pregnant ewes in the fences field and keep an eye out for sickness in the sheep that straggle down from the hills. There's the girls and the chickens and what's left of the garden. It'll rain from now to Novem-

ber and you'll be mucking about in the mud trying to find the last of the carrots and spuds to put in the cellar.

The apples are next, then the plums. They've got to be picked from the trees back of the house. The girls can do that much. But you won't let the girls near the stove to do the canning, not after Margaret set a pot on end and scalded Pammy's arm from shoulder to wrist and set them both off howling. It's too much with a baby and four little girls forever hungry and wanting and calling like a brood of starlings, and all in a four-room house.

Emanuel and that trapline. This morning he pulled one of the hares he caught and froze whole, fur and all, from the freezer and sliced it tail to ears into hard furry disks like earmuffs. He pocketed them, for bait. By the end of the day, even in weather like this where you see steam rising off the haunches of the horses, the rabbit Emanuel hasn't planted in the traps melts into balls of jelly flesh and stringy gut. There've been times when you've scrubbed intestines from the pockets of his plaid jacket. After a day of friction against his thigh, the smell is worse than the diapers of your baby.

There's a change in the noise outside. Denise's shrieks have turned to coy chatter. There's a man's voice but you didn't hear a truck. The Jap or the Norwegian, Tojo or Opheim, must be down from their cabin. Most times the two hired men come down as a pair. Sometimes they stink like the dried fish Tojo eats and the rotting canned fish Opheim calls a delicacy. Other times they smell like the wet sheep dogs they let sleep in their cabin. They always smell the peculiar, sour smell of old men too long without women. The ends of the Norwegian's moustache, already gone white, are yellow from the snuff he chews and spits on the floor, even here in your kitchen.

Every Sunday Emanuel is here to meet them. He tells them to pull up a stump and tells you to sit too, but you don't. Emanuel spoons lumps of melted cheese from his coffee. Tojo scrapes shavings off aji, that grizzly dried fish he keeps in his pocket, into the tea he makes himself. Opheim chews and spits. Sometimes the girls hover around the table and Tojo puts his hand on Sonja's head and does his W. C. Fields voice. He calls her his "Little Chickadee." Margaret stands behind Opheim, makes faces and pretends to spit; Pammy's the only one who giggles. Denise puts on your dresses and earrings and prances past the table until Emanuel gets tired of them all.

"Get," he says. "Or I'll skin you raw."

The girls scramble outside. You take the baby to the bedroom, tug the material of your dress away to feed her, and count the tiny flowers in the patterned wallpaper from floor to ceiling.

These men are the only visitors you get up here, and usually only on Sunday afternoon. Their voices come through the wall between long silences in slow, foreign rumbles, like the sound of the Pacific Great Eastern trains hauling cattle where the C.P.R. won't go, along the line miles below, the whistle carried up the mountain by the wind once a day, every day, except Sunday. These are not genteel conversations between friends over coffee and cakes; what they have to say doesn't demand an answer, and by and large doesn't get one.

"What say we try sugar beets."

"The Dorset ram screws like a preacher."

"Reads here there's fools trying them seedless hops back of Kamloops."

You remember Sunday afternoons when you weren't quite a woman, when you would sing for the pastor and his wife in your mother's parlour, There was the tinkling of spoons against blue willow teacups, slices of shortbread, and talk; real talk, about the weather and crops and the price of dress fabric in town. There was pleasant joking over the things the children did in Sunday school, and gentle chuckling.

He's coming in. It's Tojo or Opheim, you don't know which; they're both nervous little men who keep their hats pulled low. The girls are swooping around him like swallows. You move your hips more quickly than you think you're able. Quick! To the bedroom, close the door, sit on the bed, on blankets, magazines, and sweaters. Your heart flutters at your throat.

You hear a knock and the shushing of the girls, then another knock, and Margaret's voice, shrill and sharp, say, "She's hiding. She's in there. Hiding again."

You hear one girl's giggle, you don't know which, and Sonya, sweet Sonya saying, "Shut up. Shut up," and then, "Go in Mr. Akahito. I'll get mamma." It's Tojo.

The kitchen door creaks and too soon the bedroom door opens. You stand quickly and the magazines under you slide to the floor. It's Sonya. She says, "Mr. Opheim's sick."

Not now. Not until Emanuel's home.

"What does he want?" you say. "What can we do?"

There are times when you wonder if your body will keep breathing. Sonya waits in the doorway, tapping a foot behind her. The bedroom smells musty; maybe an orange molding in the corner under the bed.

"Well," you say, "let's see what we can do."

You nod at Tojo and pour him coffee, sit and sip from your cup. It's gone cold. Margaret pours herself a cup and seats herself at the table as if she's grown up.

"Put that back in the pot," you say. "There's little enough left for your father."

"So make some more," she says.

You stare at her. She can still shock you. Sonya dumps the coffee grounds in the sink and starts another pot.

Try to force a smile. You ask Tojo, "What's ailing Opheim?"

"He's not sick," says Margaret. "He's dead."

"Shut up," says Sonya.

"He ain't dead yet," says Tojo. "There's been an accident. Opheim's gone and got himself shot."

Denise says, "Daddy says Mr. Opheim can't even shoot a gopher."

"Be quiet," you say. "How bad's he hurt? You didn't come and bring him down by horse?"

"He's up there laying in the corral. I stuffed the hole up best I could and got him covered up. But this rain. I ain't no doctor."

"What he'd have a gun for?" says Margaret. "There a bear? Where's he hit?"

"It ain't fit for a young lady's ears. It ain't fit for nobody's ears."

You stand and say, "We'd best be getting up there."

"You ain't going no where and leaving these children. Where's Emanuel?"

"He should be here. He should be here now."

A few silent moments pass. Tojo drinks his coffee. Denise stands behind him pressing back the skin at her eyes to look oriental. Pammy giggles. Baby breathes.

"Well," you say, "We've got to do something."

Margaret stands and goes to the kitchen window. "Daddy's coming," she says. The girls swoop out the door and swoop back in chattering Emanuel into the house.

"That's enough," he's saying. "Enough." They come quiet and the baby makes clucking sounds. You hold your breath praying she won't cry. Not now. Mercifully she sighs and slides back into sleep.

Emanuel nods at Tojo and pulls back a chair. You have a cup ready for him.

"Mamma made buns today," says Margaret, "and ate them all."

Emanuel doesn't even look your way. "Get outside," he says. "All of you."

"But it's raining," says Margaret.

"Go play in the barn. Feed the chickens. I bet nobody's even looked in on them."

"Ah."

"Get outside," he says. "Or I'll skin you raw!"

You mop up a spill at the stove. You've fed the chicken's today; you feed them everyday. The prickly heat's running up your neck.

"What brings you down?" says Emanuel.

You pull open the tin and put cookies on a plate and venture a few words. "Tojo says Opheim's shot himself. We should be getting up there quick."

"There's more to this, what-you-call-her, situation than that," says Tojo. "There's some things that need to be said." His eyes slide up to you and back to Emanuel. Emanuel brings his head up but doesn't burn to look at you. He talks over his shoulder.

"Ida, go check the girls or something."

You nod although he can't see and close the bedroom door behind you. By now the room is dark but you don't switch on the electric light. You don't quite understand the generator. If too many lights are on at the same time will the freezer quit?

"What's all this about," says Emanuel. You hear them through the wall.

"He may well be dead," says Tojo. "He's got a hole the size of a cow's cunt, right here, and it weren't no accident. Not exactly. It was me that pulled the trigger."

"How's that?"

"He had my mare Lucy in the squeeze, pushed up against the rails. He's standing there behind her on a gunny sack of feed, going on at my mare. You know, giving it to her. God damn made me sick.

"So's I pulled my shotgun from my pack and came up side of him and pointed it at him. Told him to stop it. God damn stop it. Don't think he believed I'd use it. There he is grunting like a bear after blueberries. Then he stops sure enough. I aimed at his leg. I swear I just aimed at his leg. Shot off half my mare's tail; she damned near took the fence apart."

"You telling me he's dead?"

"He was gushing blood to beat hell. I stuffed him with my hankies and threw a blanket over him. Then I jumped on Lucy and high-tailed it out of there. I was scared so silly I nearly pissed myself. Weren't nothing I could've done. I ain't no doctor. Could be dead by now. Bled to death."

"Maybe. Maybe not. Let's get to him. Ida, get me an old sheet and that bottle of whiskey."

Emanuel hasn't bothered to raise his voice. You hesitate, thinking maybe you can pretend you didn't hear. But then there's a man out there, dying. You lumber from the bedroom and find the whiskey in the dish cupboard. The old sheets are in the flour sack full of rags under the sink. Emanuel is leaning back in his chair, watching Tojo talk.

"If he's dead, I don't see no point in taking it to the police."

"What're you telling me?" says Emanuel.

"Don't give me that look. I wouldn't go shooting Opheim purposeful. I meant to nick him. He moved is all."

"Then why no police?"

"You know they'd have my hide."

Emanuel grunts. "The Yellow Peril. Opheim'll want the police sure enough."

"He won't want no government. He's been running from the law ten years now. Something about some woman."

You stuff the sheet and the bottle in a gunny sack and hand them to Emanuel.

"Let's be going," he says.

They stomp out the door. The girls ring around the truck window, pestering Emanuel to take them with him.

"You stay here," is all he says and they're quiet. The baby starts crying, now that the house is quiet. The girls troop in. "Get," you say. "All of you, go play in the barn."

"We're wet," says Margaret.

You sink into the chair and brace your hands around the coffee cup. Baby Linda screams now, scared by the shouts of Margaret and squeals of Pammy and Denise; they chase each other around the kitchen table, tracking a ring of mud. Sonya puts a hand on your shoulder and tops off your coffee. She says, "I'll get baby."

You undo several buttons and lift baby Linda heavily to your breast right there at the table. Sonya stokes up the fire. The other girls run round and round the kitchen table. Margaret chants, "Mamma's got bare titties! Mamma's got bare titties!"

"Put those words back in your mouth," you say and reach out your free arm to slap her mouth, but she's too quick. Pammy picks up the chant.

You carry the baby to the bedroom and lay with her at your breast until the sing-song screeching of the girls falls away. You wake to the sound of the truck rumbling in the driveway.

The kitchen door is open. The girls have run out in the rain to meet Emanuel. He is alone, soaked, and his clothes are muddy. He stands for a time beside the truck talking to the girls and when he comes in they hover outside the door.

"Daddy's got to talk to mamma," says Margaret, louder than she needs to. "But we heard first." She begins to chant, trying to get the other girls to follow, "We heard first, we heard first," but her chant dies. They stand outside hugging themselves. Emanuel closes the door on them.

"I boarded up that old well," he says. "I don't want the girls going up that far no more. You hear?"

"What are you saying? How can I stop them?"

"Keep them down. You don't know what's up there. Grizzlies. I've seen one myself. Trapped a wolf last week."

"You trapped the wolf at the MacLeod gulley."

"Just keep them here."

"What about Opheim?"

"There's justice and there's justice. The business is out of my hands. I'll be going to town in the morning to get supplies and hire another couple of hands."

"For God's sake Emanuel, what happened?"

"No more questions. The thing's done with. I told the girls we got Opheim to the hospital and set Tojo on his way and that's what I'm telling you."

"Opheim was alive?"

"Enough."

You scratch the blotches on your arm and bite your lip until you taste blood. The girls pile in. You change the baby on the vanity in the bathroom and add another diaper to the bucket. You fry up eggs, back bacon and grill cakes and boil a pot of peas for supper. The girls and Emanuel get seated and eating and you stand at the sink drinking coffee. The coffee goes down the wrong way and you cough into your hand and suck back breath. Margaret snickers.

Emanuel says, "Go down tomorrow's pipe?" and slaps you on the back once, hard. He's only trying to help, you know, but it makes you angry. You wipe your mouth with a dish towel and take his plaid jacket outside.

The pockets are empty except for a few bullets and chucks of dry mud. You weigh the bullets in your hand; the rain glistens on them in the light from the electric bulb in the kitchen. You should have left a bottle with the baby and the baby with Sonya and taken that Margaret up the mountain and shown her what it was to bleed. No more games. She's be becoming a woman soon, you know the signs, and early too; earlier than you. You tuck the jacket under your arm and scratch the prickly heat on your wrist until the skin is raw.

Margaret sees you walk in and turns to Emanuel. "Mamma ate all the buns today. The whole pan. She's so fat."

Emanuel doesn't shush her. He's still eating. Sonya looks up, expectant; the baby is on her lap. Denise watches you with her fork in mid-air and her mouth open. Pammy tugs at a strip of bacon she's clamped on to with her teeth.

You talk to the table, stand behind Margaret and say, "Speak up, Margaret, I don't think your father heard."

Emanuel looks up at you, at Margaret, at you.

“I said, repeat yourself.”

Margaret turns, puts her hands on the back of the chair and looks up. Is she smiling? Her chin trembles. “I said you’re fat. Fat. Fat. Fat. Fat.”

Pammy picks up on the chant, “Fat. Fat. Fat. Fat.”

You clutch Margaret’s hand; her fingers slide free from your grip one by one until you are holding only her little finger, but you hold hard. You are bending it backwards; the finger is like a new branch on a tree, bendable, to a point.

She is on the floor. Emanuel is pulling your arms back. The baby is screaming in Sonya’s arms; Sonya is crying something out at you. Margaret is up against the cupboard, holding her hand and sobbing. Emanuel is hugging you from behind, holding your arms down, and your teeth are clenched. You can’t pull yourself free. You let your body relax and sob. Emanuel lets go, mutters, “God damn it,” and goes back to his plate. You go to the bedroom and pull the covers over your head.

You wake and it’s tomorrow and the curtains are hovering a little above the window frame from the breeze that’s blowing in off the slough. You sigh and yawn and stretch your arms. Out there’s a fresh morning, one to embrace with all the energy you haven’t felt in weeks. You tug the blankets off your legs, rearrange the white cotton nightie you’ve taken to wearing now that the Indian summer’s cooled off, and pull the window down. There’s dust on your hands from the window frame. You wipe your hands on your nightie and leave long black fingerprints there.

And you’re in the kitchen. The coffee’s burping and the girl’s are still asleep. The baby’s slept the whole night through and is dozing now as she noses at your breast. There’s a strange orange cat laying on the kitchen window ledge. He’s looking at you. You know the sun’s come up already, but behind the cat and sky is black. The cat leaps from the window ledge and you’re in bed.

The bedroom curtain is blushing pink; it rises a little from the early morning breeze that blows in from the slough. Emanuel is already gone to town; you can smell the coffee he’s left, and the house is silent. You wrap a blanket around yesterday’s clothes and open the bedroom door—the kitchen floor is ice under your feet, the baby begins to whimper—and another day swoops down to beat against your throat.

Harold Farmer

Dying Python

I have never seen one outside a zoo
except, one day, wriggling in a sack
on Bulawayo station. That fellow
toted his amiable companion
wherever he went, trip-switching
travellers into total alarm.

Electric circuit, parabola, arc
of extreme discomfort, swallowing
lizard or kid, the sly one
sustaining himself with a maximal
intake, not like us lesser eaters
committed to closet meals, clutching
our food by the mouthful. When he eats
his whole body heaves, susurrations
of rigour surround his vanishing
tidbit, his glottal nonstop, his gorge
wrenching bridges and trains into a ravine
of ravening, unlimited darkness.

The snake in the sack is swallowing gold.
Daylight for him is a distant memory.
Emeralds, too, and amethysts go down
the gullet of his life. Nothing is left to him.
The ruby light of his inner eye, secretive passion,
claims an ending of endings, and the sack gives
one final, convulsive heave, punctuating the station
with abrupt stares at luggage come to life.

Wires writhe and are switched off at the mains.
The engine, a blindworm, burrows hopelessly
into the corners of the night, the drivers and firemen
are lost in the rubble on the side of the track.
Nothing is pulling them. The sack
is an empty sleeve, a blind man's
black patch courting the light,
a cave without an entrance, a kink
in the cardiovascular system, begetting
not death or absence, but merely
luggage lying round on Bulawayo station,
the fancy handbags, the elegant shoes.

Gail Anderson-Dargatz

When the Body Starts to Feel

And so it begins: the scent of a child
comes up close and billows around me
like a sheet thrown over a clothes
line on a March afternoon. Peach

and powder, first sun, it licks up
one side of me and down the other,
a slow remembrance as if I left some
thing behind at the cafe, a glove

or a cigarette lighter;
maybe something dearer, my grandmother's
wedding ring left in the bunched paper
in the waste basket of the ladies' room.

Short Story With Footnotes

Joan Givner

Libby is convalescent from a major biography which has appeared three months earlier to a moderate fanfare and brouhaha. She plans to devote the whole summer to a concentrated effort of recovery. What she hopes to recover is herself, "to fold up in quiet and go back to my own center, to find out again, for it is always a rediscovery, what kind of creature it is that rules me finally, makes all the decisions no matter who thinks they make them. . . ." ¹ Her project is hard to understand for anyone who doesn't make a habit of total immersion in other people's lives for years at a stretch. But Libby knows how difficult the re-entry period can be because she has been there before.

On the whole, she is pleased with the book, her second one. It was not as ambitious as the first, but there was satisfaction in turning from a famous writer to one who had been consigned to the literary scrapyard. Nevertheless there are anxieties. The reviews are not all in and Libby is only too conscious of the weak spots in her book. She has not tackled the research in so thorough and exhaustive a manner. She wonders why. Are her powers of memory and concentration beginning to fail? Was the problem more stubborn this time or is there some other darker reason? Perhaps she has just not wanted to know more about her subject. She abandoned the search for the true identities of the adopted children, telling herself that the effort and expense was not justified by knowledge which was, after all, not essential. She has also been careless about dates and facts.

And there is something else. She was dealing this time not with one simple subject with but two people locked together in a life-long embrace,

¹ Katherine Anne Porter, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1965), p. 413.

a "double-edged narcissism."² Not merely Vivien, but Vivien-and-Faith. She has presented Vivien as clearly as possible but Faith has eluded her. She has almost erased her, rendered her shadowy, more peripheral than she really was. Libby knows that she has not begun to solve the riddle of Faith. Of course, it was hard to know where Vivien ended and Faith began, who was responsible for what. Take the destruction perpetrated by Faith on the night of Vivien's death. Her first act, almost before Vivien was cold in her bed, was to take all the diaries which were a record of Vivien's life and burn them in a great conflagration in the hearth in their home. Her excuse—that time-honored one: "I was just carrying out instructions." But was she and whose? If Vivien had wanted them burned why didn't she burn them herself? Libby strongly suspects that it was an act of vandalism. She thinks of Clementine Churchill destroying Graham Sutherland's portrait of her husband.

There are, she knows, too many puzzles remaining, too many passageways she had been reluctant to explore, too many corners she failed to illuminate. She cannot quite excuse herself, though her critics and reviewers will be unlikely to notice. She knows from experience that the reviewers rarely put their fingers on the real gaps, the glaring contradictions and absurdities. That is the consolation for the severe judgements. One can always think, "Thank God she didn't notice THAT."³

Reviewers have various reasons for not reading works carefully—they have headlines to meet, axes to grind, and longstanding grudges. She wonders at the habit of having fiction writers review biographies. It is like asking a fundamentalist preacher to review a book on the great vineyards of France. The problem is not so much that his palate is unsophisticated as that he hates the whole process from beginning to end, thinking it immoral and disgusting. Fiction writers are immensely threatened by literary biographers who they suspect will eventually get round to them and uncover in their works repressed impulses which they have spent a lifetime beating down. Accordingly, they coin words like "pathography" and

²Joan Givner, *Mazo de la Roche: The Hidden Life* (Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 15.

³An example: out of dozens of reviews of *Katherine Anne Porter: A Life*, not one noted the discrepancy between the statement that KAP gravitated towards homosexual men as lovers and the absence in the book of a single example to substantiate the statement. (The representative episode was excised as a result of the legal reading).

“bioPorn.” Libby counters with a word of her own—“biographobia”—the intense, irrational fear of biography.⁴

For all this, the difference between fiction and biography is not all that great. One hardly needs a savant to announce that the biography is “a novel that dare not speak its name.” Biographers and fiction writers share the same creative tension—that between the drive to make a spinal tap of the inner emotions and the drive to throw up a smoke screen and say “this is not I.” Ella Carter knew that when she warned a would-be writer, “Don’t be afraid of giving yourself away either, for if you write, you must. And if you can’t face that, better not write.”⁵

The difference between biographer and fiction writer is in the defence mechanisms. The fiction writer distances herself from the subjects on whom she heaps her own emotions so that no one can pin the connection on her. Similarly with the biographer.⁶ All biography is autobiography.

⁴Joyce Carol Oates has coined the word “pathography” for biographers of writers like Katherine Anne Porter, who take as their motifs “dysfunction and disaster, illnesses and pratfalls, failed marriages and failed careers, alcoholism and breakdowns and outrageous malevolence seems to be the guiding motive.” Perhaps allowing that the pathographies she lists (of Tennessee Williams, Dylan Thomas, Ernest Hemingway and John Berryman) have a certain amount of built-in dysfunction biography might diplomatically round off a consideration of its subject’s career when the career is more or less over, summarizing years of fitful dissolution in a brief space. . . . ”

Gore Vidal describes the attitude of the practitioner of bioporn to this subject:

. . . a contemptuous adversarial style seems to be the current norm. Despite the degenerate’s gifts, he is a Bad Person; worse, he is Immature; even worse, he is Promiscuous. Finally, he is demonstrably more Successful than his biographer, who is Married, Mature, Monogamous and Good.

Iris Murdock (*Telegraph Weekend Magazine*) says:

Biographers must be people with an urge to write, but who lack the full courage or skill to be novelists—so they take the structure of somebody else’s life and imagine a forceful psychological background for it. . . .

⁵Katherine Anne Porter, *The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1970), p. 442.

⁶Libby, on the other hand, sees as the true heirs of James Boswell, the writers of lives usually wrapped in a scrim of silence, or writers of aspects of lives uncovered by the “mag-

Libby is still deeply embroiled in the world of her book, the life of her subject. Eventually Vivien will release Libby as Gabriella did several years before, leaving her at first bereft and eventually free again. Then Gabriella and Vivien will stand together like framed portraits on her mental shelf, united like former lovers who have never actually met each other except in the heart of their shared love, but live there forever, forming a chain. Libby thinks of them as the survivor of many failed marriages perhaps looks for common features in earlier partners, seeking clues that will help her in future liaisons. She thinks that if she devotes herself completely to recovery it will be over more quickly.

Circumstances have conspired to offer Libby a gift of this empty summer. Sam is away in Connecticut with his Ecological Psychology colleagues. His absence gives Libby a holiday from reason. Her daughter Rifka is away too, sitting somewhere in the Middle West at the feet of her mentor, Jenny Wallop, submerged in literary theory. Sam calls each week at the same time in his methodical way and speaks of charge accounts, financial matters, and her health. Is she resting? Is she taking it easy? She can say, almost truthfully, that she is. Rifka sends cheerful postcards suggesting that her snout is still above water and that she will not be totally swept away by the tides in which she swims. At the end of the summer Libby hopes that when Sam and Rifka return in their solid flesh, the ghosts of Gabriella and Vivien-and-Faith will have lost all sub-

isterial" practitioners—Jean Strouse, Nancy Milford, Phyllis Rose, Louise DeSalvo and Elinor Langer. Their descriptions are true expressions of biographers' feelings for their subjects.

For sheer absorption, for identification, I felt as I had at no other time in my life except when I read *The Golden Notebook*, and the closest time before that was probably reading *Little Women*. A mysterious kinship linked me with this female stranger, as if not only our blood but the cells of our marrow were somehow matched.

Elinor Langer, *Josephine Herbst: The Story She Could Never Tell*.

Zelda's letters to her husband moved me in a way I had never been moved before, touched something in me that before those letters had been untouched. . . . I had somewhat innocently—if a passionate curiosity about another's life is ever innocent—entered into something I neither could nor would put down for six years, and in that quest the direction of my life was changed.

Nancy Milford, *Zelda*.

stance. Meanwhile she sits lazily in her garden. It is a Saskatchewan garden with sturdy evergreens that no winter ever kills, bedding plants in wooden tubs and that freak of nature—the monkey puzzle tree. A row of inedible radishes and carrots have been planted in an old sandbox as an act of defiance against all the forces that discourage growth—cold, heat, wind and hail. It will be a summer like no other.

This summer there will be no writing. There has been entirely too much writing in the last ten years, thinks Libby. Everything has been written down, transcribed, documented, footnoted, published, and finally reviewed. The residue—whatever has not been caught between the hard covers of books—has spilled over into diaries, notebooks and letters. Libby has written thousands of letters to Rifka alone. “I am drowning in a sea of paper,” thinks Libby. She feels that she no longer exists in the flesh but only in print. This summer she has taken a vow like one entering a Trappist monastery not to utter a word. She feels as Iago must have felt. “From this time forth I never will speak word.” It would be easy for Libby to be a Trappist monk or Iago and not speak word, for habits of silence have grown upon her. But writing is another matter, she thinks looking at the sharply defined branches of the monkey puzzle tree.

Around the eaves of the attic in her tall house, pigeons roost and clamour murmuringly. Closing her eyes, she hears ring doves in the live-oaks of the South. I translate everything, she thinks. Sometimes I don’t know if I am Ella or Vivien-and-Faith or where I live at all. When I die they will boil me down, press me out, make a book of me, label the spine with my name and set me on a shelf. People already think of me as a book begetting other little books. They don’t ask “How’s the family?” They say, “How’s the book coming along?” If I were caught in a criminal act such as shop-lifting, they wouldn’t take it seriously. They would say, “Oh that’s Libby. She’s probably writing a book and needed material.” I have become a book, but this summer I shall recover my personhood.

Summers. During such a summer in 1929, Ella left New York in a state of collapse after the unhappy love affair with Joseph Matheson. She was physically broken and the bronchial trouble that was a legacy of the early T.B. had flared up. Friends pooled their resources so that she could spend several months on the island of Bermuda, recovering her health and writing. But she wrote little and left the island despairing that nothing had been accomplished. In fact, everything had been accomplished, more than she dreamed of. For twenty years she mined what she had begun to imagine that summer.

Summers. During the summer of 1921, Vivien-and-Faith, relishing their newfound freedom after the death of Vivien’s mother, lived alone in a boathouse by a lake in Muskoka. The heat was overwhelming and

Vivien wrote little but rejoiced in Faith and imagined much. In the fall, Faith returned to her job in the legislative building in Queen's Park. Vivien stayed on during the cold days and wrote down what she had imagined. It was her first novel. The next summer they built a house beside another lake and there Vivien wrote *Bliss*, her second novel. The summer after that she started the Todminster series, beginning first with *Todminster Hall* and then never stopping until she had poured out fifteen more books and until death, which interrupts all that is mortal, interrupted the last one. But all that writing came out of the imagining during that first summer at Muskoka. And before that was the Secret Play of the summers in childhood, that was never written down but acted out endlessly beside all the lakes.

One summer when I was a child I was in heaven because my adored aunt, on whose time there were so many demands, was convalescing from surgery. They had removed some vital organ. Who knows which organs are vital and which are not? I think now it was a so-called female organ for which she had no use, being unmarried and dying a virgin. But this summer after the removal of her non-vital organ she was ordered to rest on a chaise longue in her garden. So my tenth (or was it twelfth or fourteenth?) summer was transformed from an endless mass of boredom to a time of enchantment. Everyone else during the day was taken up with mundane tasks. So we could sit and talk and read *Anne of Green Gables* and imagine things.⁷

All one summer after her life of Ella was finished, Libby thought with fierce concentration about the connection between them. Freud called the link between biographer and subject a "fixation" but what was it besides that? What is it that raises the biographer's blood-pressure? The biographer chooses a subject whose mental set is close enough to her own so that the living and telling of the story can absorb her totally. The subject is both muse and fictional representative. Johnson is to Boswell as Stephen Dedalus is to James Joyce, Esther Greenwood to Sylvia Plath, Miranda Gay to Katherine Anne Porter and Nick Adams to Ernest Hemingway.⁸

Libby had it all straightened out in her mind before she tackled Vivien. Now her theory is exploded because it is clear that if Ella is her fictional

⁷"I" says Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* "is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being."

⁸The works in question are *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Bell Jar*, *The Old Order* and *in our time*.

representative, Vivien could not be because Ella and Vivien are too unlike to reflect the same person. Not every biographer is a Boswell. The world is full of biographies written because A gave B boxes of papers and B with a maximum of industry and a minimum of passion put together a two-volume life. Perhaps Libby has written such a life. In fact, part of her purpose in starting the second life was to discover what happens to a work-a-day biographer. Does the passion click in somewhere along the way? Does the book get done anyway?

Some questions are never answered. Nevertheless they continue to be asked, being entered and carried along in the ledger year after year like outstanding debts. The outstanding question: So the relationship between Ella and Libby was the tension between their sense of themselves as traditional women, creative artists, professional women. . . what could possible relate either of them to Vivien? Or to Vivien-and-Faith?

On the surface, they couldn't have been more different. Ella was a husky-voiced femme fatale in the tradition of Mae West, Gloria Swanson, Tallulah Bankhead and various others. She was a celebrated beauty, loved by many men (and women), married four times and with countless love affairs. She was adored for her charismatic personality, her charm, her skill as a raconteur and no one minded that all her contes were about herself.

Vivien, on the other hand, was unattractive, awkward, angular, lesbian, absolutely monogamous. The single love of her life from the moment she saw her was Faith. She avoided the spotlight as much as Ella craved it. And yet. . . what about all the strange coincidences in their lives, what about the connections between them, what about the times they found themselves (almost) in the same places at the same time. Their paths crossed, their lives intersected, their careers ran parallel.⁹

⁹*Jalna* won the *Atlantic Monthly* prize in the spring of 1927 and the novel was published in serial form in the *Atlantic Monthly* during the next few months. Katherine Anne Porter at that time was in Salem, Massachusetts and she came into Boston during the summer for the Sacco Vanzetti protests and the execution. Like most writers she would have been aware of the large sum of money offered for the prize novel and would have been interested in reading the winning entry.

During this time Porter wrote "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" and soon afterwards wrote "The Fig Tree." It seems very likely that her strong grandmother figures, Ellen Weatherall and Sophie Jane Rhea were influenced by Adeline Whiteoak. Certain passages in Porter's fiction support such a thesis, notably the resemblance between Adeline Whiteoak's ritual last walk of the season that she takes for the last time before spring and Sophie Jane Rhea's annual ride on her old horse in "The Source."

When you consider the trajectories of Gabriella Carter's and Vivien De la Warr's careers, there are astonishing likenesses. Gabriella was critically acclaimed for thirty-five years during which time she produced exquisite short stories, lived in near-poverty. Finally at the age of 82 she produced a best-seller and became a rich woman. But at that point precisely, critical acclaim was withdrawn. Her changed image from brilliant artist to darling of the Book-of-the-Month Club was compared with the fall of that other American first lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, when she married Aristotle Onassis and became the darling of the Jet set.

Vivien became an overnight bestseller in 1927 and for the next years (35 exactly) was one of the most popular writers in the world. She was one of five writers who supported her American publisher during the Depression and from the age of 48 until her death at 82, she was a very rich woman. Critical acclaim, however, was denied her and she was alternately sneered at and mocked.

The novels with which the women achieved fame—*Island of Unwisdom* and *Todminster Hall* are similar. Both are self-contained enclaves, isolated from the world, microcosmic, and people with characters who are versions of their creators. The Master of Todminster and his brothers are all alter-egos of Vivien. Similarly, critics have noted the kinship of the characters in Carter's book in articles such as "Three Gabriellas on the *Island of Unwisdom*."¹⁰ And thought Libby, I share that

Like Margaret Mitchell, Katherine Anne Porter's ancestral home may have owed something to Jalna. The similarity between "Gone With the Wind" and "Old Mortality" published the same year has often been mentioned. I suspect that the real similarity comes from the fact that they were influenced by the same novel and that was *Jalna*.

It is curious to think that in the summer of 1927 Porter was in Boston and Salem trying to write about Cotton Mather but gestating the stories about the ancestral home presided over by the strong grandmother. Mazo was in Rockport starting work on the second novel, *Whiteoaks*, in her *Jalna* series. Later she came into Boston to be feted by the *Atlantic Monthly* people.

¹⁰When in 1927 and 1962 Mazo de la Roche and Katherine Anne Porter achieved the best sellerdom that allowed them to become the grande literary dames of their respective countries, they shared the same published firm—Atlantic Little, Brown.

After the initial excitement died down and they were able to use their new wealth, they decided to travel. Both went to Italy, visited Naples and spent time at Taormina in Sicily.

desire to bring all those fragmented aspects of myself together.¹¹

Libby knew that the mannerisms of subjects are contagious. Had she not for years fallen into Ella's bad habit of carrying on scribbled conversations with authors in the margins of their books? Had she not adopted her habit of writing endless letters, of writing up the same incident time after time with slight variations to different people? Had she not half consciously adopted Ella's vocabulary, her phrases and mannerisms of speech and expression? And she wondered if this would happen again with Vivien. But it hadn't.

Instead, she had begun, accidentally at first, to dress like Faith. Libby in the bemused almost trance-like state in which she had always bought clothes, had selected a suit one day, been assured by the assistant that it would be suitable for every occasion while it was in fact suitable for none. But she had made the purchase, left the shop and thought that now she must choose the hat. And then, stopped by such an unlikely thought, she had realized that somewhere in her mind was the picture of Faith in her checkered suit with the flared hem and the smart little hat on her neat hair. Was it because Faith had looked so charming or was it because Vivien had adored seeing her beautifully dressed¹² that Libby had adopted her clothing. She had no way of knowing. The accident had happened twice and no more. After the second time, Libby had consciously arrayed herself in Faith's clothes, studying photographs for hints before she went shopping.

And where am I in all this (thought Libby). The year I was born, Gabriella uprooted herself from Paris where she had lived happily for four years and returned to her own country. She went into a self-imposed re-

¹¹Although only two stories in this first collection have the same protagonist, they almost all seem to emerge from the same autobiographical material. Cary Fagan reviewing Joan Givner's *Tentacles of Unreason in Books in Canada*, December 1985.

¹²Mazo's description of a reunion with Caroline Clement after they had been briefly separated during a vacation:

We (Bunty and I) left New York at a time of torrid heat but in Toronto a cool breeze was blowing. Caroline met me at the Union Station. As the train drew in it was easy to distinguish her in the crowd on the platform, slim and straight in her black and white dress, a wing of bright hair against her little black hat. How pale her face was and how blue her eyes!

Ringling the Changes, p. 156.

treat in Pennsylvania, near where my paternal grandmother was born. Vivien and Faith settled in Devon, near Exeter where I spent my college years. Ten years later, Gabriella was in Yaddo, and Vivien and Faith were in Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island staying with their cousin, the lumber baron. And I (thought Libby) spent the summer in the garden with a beloved aunt who was the mainstay of my childhood and all my growing years and to whom I owe everything, and who died before I could lay my books like trophies at her feet.¹³ All that summer they had played at being other people.

"Do you know what the servants have got for our tea, Lady Cecelia?"

"Eccles cake made fresh today and some seed cake left over from yesterday."

"Oh good. I love the seed cake, only it gets in my teeth a bit."

"Lady Mary makes an excellent seed cake. Let's compliment her on it, Lady Cordelia, when next she comes out to shake her mop."

"Are you leaving, Lady Cecelia?"

"No I am just going in to the lavatory."

"Shall I get out the dressing up box?"

"Shall I do your hair up?"

She was so young then, Libby was, so it was really not necessary to feel overwhelmed by guilt and betrayal. Later when she was a biographer, she was older, more responsible, more accountable for betrayal of trust. And there is it seems scope for betrayal in the writing biography.

Libby had kept a vigil at the Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore when Ella had first started to die. She had gone in for a check-up and been checked up and gone into her born again ecstasy, crying out her joy at being ushered cleanly into the world of the living again. Then suddenly she had had a stroke, brought on Libby had no doubt by the tests, the shocks to the system. Libby made a mental note to avoid these reckless excursions into elective hospitalization, exploratory surgery, preventive medicine. . . .

And Libby had held her hand, read to her, come and gone, passing the huge statue of Jesus over the words COME UNTO ME ALL YE WHO ARE HEAVY LADEN. And one day, had come into the room and seen the small doll-like body heaped in a wheel chair and had asked "Where are they taking her?" "To do a spinal tap," said the nurse. And Libby, jolted, remembered the lines that Ella had written about the request to explain

¹³For another version of this relationship, see "The Saskatoon Letters" in *Imagining Women*, edited by The Second, Second Story Collective (Toronto: *The Women's Press*, 1988), pp. 157-171.

the sources of one of her stories. She had said:

Truth is, it is quite an impossible undertaking, or so I have found it; a little like attempting to tap one's spinal fluid—and if that is a gruesome and painful comparison, be sure that I meant it to be. . . .¹⁴

And Libby had flinched, remembering that Ella and her niece, then suffering from cancer, had made a pact that they would not allow each other to be tortured by life-prolonging techniques. And she had asked the nurse "Is it necessary? Can't they leave her alone?" And the nurse had replied, "Oh we can't do that. Not in a teaching hospital."

The niece wasn't there to protect her, only Libby. And she looked down at the frail woman, unable to do anything to prevent torture, being neither daughter, niece, sister. . . just a biographer, with no rights in the matter.

The question Libby is often asked is "did you have any mentors?" Questionnaires come in the mail to women professors, writers. . . students come round, fledgling journalists, psychologists, interviewers and Libby does her best to tell them the truth. They need to know, especially the young women.

So, going back to schooldays. . . the fact is that scholarship girls like Libby had few friends, being too much unlike the other students. The teachers might have helped but they were blind. They interpreted the parents' absence from parent-teacher meetings as indifference rather than shyness. Besides that, they were socially vulnerable themselves, unwilling to risk contamination by visions of their earlier selves, were idolatrous of the well-connected students and became the worst perpetrators of petty cruelties. Ella would have understood.¹⁵ "When you are poor," she said, "you are frightened of the poor and unfortunate." She wrote her sister that it was little wonder they were not popular with the other children who no doubt realized that they had no friends at home and that they need not be friendly either. . . they weren't so deformed and embittered by their family life as she and her sister were.¹⁶ Not that Libby

¹⁴Katherine Anne Porter, "Noon Wine: The Sources," in *The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Delacourt Press, 1970).

¹⁵Katherine Anne Porter, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 478.

¹⁶Katherine Anne Porter to Gay Hallway Porter, 15 July 1934.

complained, any more than Ella did. They both developed a formidable toughness so that no matter how much discouragement was dished out, they still went full-steam ahead.

Then, after she had shed the concentration camp of her youth, it had been on to the groves of academe—in the heyday of the New Critics. Perhaps the reviewer was correct who described Libby's life as a confinement.¹⁷ Libby had once again—with her interest in obscure writers and their lives—been beyond the pale, like the Jews of Russia. Nevertheless, she had dug in, outlasted the New Critics and their cohorts and come back to haunt them.

But to return to mentors. Yes, she had a mentor, once. Ella had singled her out. Had written to her miraculously and had asked her to write the biography, take charge of all her papers and affairs after her death, had offered Libby the gift of her life. Sometimes she thought the life and work of Ella was the clearest thing she owned. Her twin mentors—her own funny little mother and Ella. And here, in Johns Hopkins, this teaching hospital, she had been unable to raise a hand, to make a protest when for no good reason they wheeled Ella off: COME UNTO ME ALL YE WHO ARE HEAVY LADEN AND I WILL BETRAY YOU. And they had wheeled her back and given her drinks and refreshment just as they revive torture victims who lapse into unconsciousness. And then they started again.

It wasn't as though Ella hadn't let her down too, Ella and Vivien both with their beastly anti-Semitism, their sordid episodes, their seamy sides, their maggotty-mindedness. She has often wanted to wring their necks. She could construct several ugly scenarios.

Before the hospital, before the stroke, before the spinal tap, Libby had been ushered (summoned rather) into the presence of Ella. She rehearsed various conversations.

Ella: Kessler isn't an English name is it?

Libby: It's a Jewish name, Gabriella.

Ella: A yes. . . . I've had so many dear friends of the Jewish faith. You can see the picture on the wall of my beloved Sara Lee Ebbels who handled my affairs for so long. That's her husband, Jerome. Didn't think much of him poking his nose into my business. But Sara Lee was an angel, I miss her so much.

¹⁷Joan Givner's career so far has been confined to a drab dance around the leafless groves of Academe. Born in Manchester, living in Saskatchewan with two daughters and her husband, with the University of London in between, and Radcliffe, raping libraries all over the Free West. . . . Penelope Gilliat, *The London Review of Books*, 19 May 1983.

Libby was so enraged by thinking about it that her heart pounded, her chest hurt and she had to take one of the little white pills she now carried. These casual remarks that detonated! You don't look Jewish in the slightest... that's funny I always thought you were English... some of my best friends... Sometimes Libby hated Ella. And then she thought as she did of her own outrageous mother "she's the only mother I have." The conversation never took place.

She had set out, summoned into the presence of Ella one weekend on a journey made hazardous by a concatenation of circumstances: The Grey Cup weekend in Canada, the Thanksgiving weekend in the United States. And she had struggled on from western Canada to Washington D.C. to Maryland in a disabled airplane that had to be abandoned in Winnipeg so that she missed connections in Toronto, got stranded in Buffalo and so on down to her destination. There had been many journeys to Bermuda and Texas and Mississippi. And she had talked to people and seen places—the house in which Ella grew up, the room in which she spent the honeymoon of her first marriage, but always Libby's secret joy had come from what she held in her hand, the words on pages written long ago containing the key that unlocked a life.

The garden of my aunt was wild and unkempt. My father disapproved—her borders were too miscellaneous and herbacious for him—full of strange plants—green helibore, Christmas roses in winter, stunted oak trees dropping acorns and cups over all the untidy beds, no distinctions made between legitimate flowers and weeds. The whole back garden was like a field and smelled lovely during the hay-moving time. An ancient sundial recorded inexactly the passing hour. The house was full of exotica. There was a parrot in a large cage, trunks full of dressing-up clothes, cabinets full of clay figures brought from India, a ruby ring which was to be eventually bequeathed to Libby, but that didn't bear thinking about. All the treasures from India had been brought by a nephew, for she too, like Ella had a nephew. And like Luke Carter, he regarded Libby with suspicion. She was getting too close to his aunt. Heaven only knew what they talked about, his aunt and Libby, when he wasn't there.

Ella's nephew, Luke, had once said to Libby "Don't make my aunt out to be any saint." And Libby had instinctively made the correct response. "It isn't my job to make anyone out to be either a saint or a villain. I aim to tell a straight story, bear true witness," she said lapsing into Libby's own phrases. She and Luke always talked at cross purposes. She knew very well what he was saying. Don't cut back on the sexual high jinks. His idea of unsaintliness. But what Libby remembered was Ella saying within earshot of her pleasant, intelligent nurse, "She's a nigger but she's a good woman. We always had them around at home." And Luke had laughed,

raised his eyebrows, "Isn't my aunt a card though?" There were too many of these remarks from Ella and they were symptomatic and devastating. Would Libby put them in the book. Or would she be selective, giving a representative incident. Excuses, excuses again. She suppressed them, every one.

For two days Libby thinks about what she has suppressed from her story of Ella's life. There was the business of her betrayal of her most loyal friend to the FBI. Libby tells herself that the episode was someone else's research and had been entrusted to her only on condition that she keep silent on the subject. Was that the reason for her silence or the excuse? Or did she fear that it would somehow compromise the woman and her work so damagingly that neither would seem worthy of serious consideration. In any case, the whole story came to light eventually, as Libby had known all along it would.¹⁸ Then there were the love affairs which she had suppressed or misrepresented and not merely on the advice of the legal counsel. And what about the nephew? Was it opportunism or cowardice that made her keep that whole story hidden? He was, after all, in charge of all the papers, in a position to withhold permission for this and that, the will never having been altered to give Libby charge of the papers. It would have been nothing sort of suicidal to explore the relationship between nephew and aunt.

But what about Vivien's adopted daughter? She had no control over materials and permissions. Even her usefulness as a first-hand observer of the life of Vivien-and-Faith had been limited for as Amy said herself, "I was never really a part of their life." So why had Libby erased these episodes? She thought she knew. It had all to do with her own disappeared daughter, Suzie, about even now she could hardly think without endangering her heart. Rifka had said one day, "When your children have problems, you just don't want to know about it." And Libby had learned quite by accident that that charge extended also to her dealings with her subjects.

It had happened during the process of selecting pictures to illustrate Ella's life. The selection itself was going smoothly. Libby had chosen thirty pictures and her editor went through them to point out why they couldn't be used, discarding them and making his own choices until he happened to spot in the box a photograph of Ella nude, striking a classic erotic pose, hands lifted above the head, eyes closed, the face a mask of revulsion.

¹⁸Edwin McDowell, "Publishing: Was Katherine Anne Porter an Informer?" *The New York Times*, 13 July 1984.

Were there other pictures like this?

Well, yes, she often had herself photographed in this way.

Had I mentioned it in the book?

Well, no I hadn't as a matter of fact.

Why hadn't I Mentioned this?

I didn't really know.

Did I not think it was important?

Not really.

Ideally, Libby thought, an editor should be like a stage director, who mediates between actor and character. But editors like reviewers have their own agendas and those agendas are set by considerations external to the book's merit and quality, to the writer's and the subject's well-being. All the same, in less than ideal circumstances it had been borne in upon Libby that she had shied like a frightened horse from many aspects of Ella's life. She had, for example, enumerated the lovers, admirers and husbands in careful detail, reporting the chaotic sexual exploits objectively, but she had failed to address Ella's deep sense of sexual terror and inadequacy. So much for the distortions resulting from uninterpreted facts, from so-called objective reportage. Similarly, she had chronicled Vivien's deficiencies as a mother, but avoided the causes.

Into all these swirling thoughts comes another postcard from Rifka. It is either from the Milwaukee Art Gallery or from the Institute of Chicago—a creation by Alexander Calder its movement arrested in the photograph. The message scribbled by Rifka is more mobile:

hell O m/other

breaks out daily have ruptured old gonnection (was always already split) w jackie Jenny much better and walloping through the body at a g/rate wot the hell difference does it make say eye/I weather unwearably humored or hot Fishing, Barthing and warbling Ecos all night long on the Graffs by the Lacan reargards Rif

P.S.

Bank account low!!!!Need instant infusion. Serious, mum, right away.(had to buy loads of books). About 400 please *AT ONCE*.

"Well," says Libby and puts the post card in a drawer. Any other summer she would reply in kind.

She is distracted by the onset of the rainy season, the monsoon season, the crisis of weather, the tornado time. In Saskatchewan it starts with a terrifying crack of thunder in the night and then a downpour and all

the drains gurgling and overflowing. It lasts for two days and the garden is waterlogged and swampy. Then the watery sun comes out and neighbors borrow equipment to drain off basements and bail out. Sump pumps go all out. Libby's basement is spared this time, so she has no worries, although she is expelled from the garden.

She has known that she will have eventually to go up to the attic and read again all the notebooks, twenty in all, in which she has kept a record during the writing of the book. There she has noted those dreams in which biographers hope to find revealed their own suppressed feelings about their subjects.¹⁹ She has recorded her dreams, her thoughts, her upheavals—whatever concerned her own life—on one side of the page and her commentary on quotations from Vivien's books on the other. Now she reads the quotations but postpones reading the commentary:

"A Conversation with Phyllis Grosskurth" by Joan Givner, *Wascana Review*, Volume 24, Number 1, Spring 1989.

You've no idea what it is to be a woman. I used to think in my old life that we were equal: men and women. Since I've lived here, it seems to me that women are only slaves. . . . I tell you it's nothing less than horrible. . . . Dreams are nothing. It's the reality that tortures women.²⁰

It was a medical book for the layman. Perhaps he could find out in this book what might be wrong with Meggie. He read and read. . . . The more he read, the more bewildered and more horror-struck he became. Why, there were a thousand things that might be wrong with Meggie! And each one of them worse than the last. . . . Women, he thought, why it was better never to be born at all than be born a woman! How had Meggie lived so long as she had without disaster? How had Grandmother achieved her hundred years? It was a miracle. As he read his heart bled for the mothers of men.²¹

¹⁹See "Clearing the Air—A Personal Word," in Carol Ascher, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Life of Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981).

²⁰Mazo de la Roche, *Jalna*, chapter xxvi.

²¹Mazo de la Roche, *Finch's Fortune*, chapter XV.

Her mind still brooded with passionate affection on Alayne. She felt pity for her and a kind of envy. Pity, because Alayne had buried herself in a place so remote from New York; envy, because she would have liked to reach out and grasp the varied experiences of those who existed outside that city. She had a certain greed for life, and, in New York, she thought she had her ear against the beating of its heart, but was, at times, doubtfully conscious that she was not aware of what its extremities were doing.²²

He laid his hand on her lip and she kissed it. With a swift movement he drew it the length of her body, outlining its curves, to her feet. Then he held it above her as though in menace—as though he had drawn some weapon she had had concealed about her.²³

And eventually, painfully, she forces herself to read the other side of the page, trying not to fit scenes to the words—Susy's empty bedroom, Sam ill, meeting Chris, taking Rifka away for a weekend to Banff, meeting Chris, wishing that Jed would just come back and simply take Chris away and that it would all be over and done with, Sam saying "there's bound to be a lot of harmful gossip if this keeps on," the detective saying, "we shall have to close the case," Rifka saying, "I wish I'd never been born, at least not into a family like this." There is no more desolate sight than a bedroom full of the paraphernalia of sixteen years of growing up and suddenly empty. All that remains, in a forgotten corner, is a small box of worry dolls made in Guatamala.

"The compelling force in biography lies in the initial choice of subject." Hard to say when she knew she was ready again, sufficiently recovered from Ella to start another life with someone else. She had resisted being pushed into it, like resisting being pushed into marriage. "You aren't getting any younger Libby and there won't always be opportunities. People forget about you so gather ye rosebuds while ye may." Her agents, publishers friends all kept asking "When can we expect another big book?" And finally she had a sense of her own readiness. Flying east to serve on a committee that reviewed the grant applications for academics across Canada, she felt sure it was about to happen. But why then? Had she expected some footnote, some detail in someone else's grant application to

²²Mazo de la Roche, *Finch's Fortune*, chapter VI.

²³Mazo de la Roche, *Young Renny*, chapter XI.

send out a signal to be picked up by her? It was an unreasonable expectation.

She quite liked being on the committee. It resembled jury duty, the eight of them closetted together day after day, intimacies developing gradually. At first they sat around the table like national caricatures, speaking French and English interchangeably, the Francophones much more competent than the Anglophones, an international assortment of intellectual manners—the French looking intellectual, the English scatty and vague, the one Pole immensely dignified, multi-lingual, disdainful, stuffy. Libby feeling role-modelled on Margaret Thatcher suspected hostility beneath the impeccable civility of her colleagues. But eventually the caricature outlines melted and human beings emerged. There were tensions—conflicts of ideology, standards and regional loyalties. Libby's predilection was for feminist, modern, non-canonical projects, and she was always ready to mount a strong campaign for a biographer, especially the biographer of an obscure figure. As the days wore on the tensions mounted, dissolved into giddiness from time to time as factions grouped and regrouped.

Hard to know at what point Libby and Chris started to pair off. At first there was palpable static, one particular conflict about a proposal for a study of cross-dressing, Libby thought privately, with an earring in one ear, a different message emblazoned across a different T-shirt each day, blue jeans, and a trendy penchant for theory and jargon. But they had liked slipping away to the corner pub for lunch, liked rushing to the bar at the end of the afternoon and eventually, mismatched as they were, liked prolonged heart-to-heart conversations over endless night caps. And Libby had quite forgotten her original sense that something was going to happen, until the last day and a visit to the National Gallery. Libby and Chris were standing in front of a portrait of a woman—jaunty, defiant—and in a flash Libby had known and had turned with her eyes shining. And Chris had misunderstood and kissed her right there in the gallery so that people stared rather.

Yet the Russian woman had faded away but Chris had not. Libby had been almost suffocated by the terrible urgent need for Chris and the summer had resolved itself into pure misery. Susie had disappeared. Riffy had thrown herself into a summer school course. And Libby needing to lose herself too had stumbled on to the first of the *Todminster* novels. And so her presentiment as she flew off to Ottawa had been well-founded. It had all unravelled like the fulfilling of an Old Testament prophesy.

In the dog days of August, the lens turned, the view clarified and Libby began to see what she had done. The revelation had all the simplicity of

an obvious truth. She saw that in spite of the differences between Ella and Vivien, they were related polar-opposites, Janus-faced sides of the same coin. They were women trying to fuse the irreconcilables—of being writers and being women. Ella with her young men and lovers and excessive femininity had tried to overcome the liabilities of the de-sexing role of writer. Vivien had abdicated completely from the feminine. They were women who had entered and dominated a masculine bailiwick. And the world had reacted to them in the same cockeyed way—with adulation at first and then contempt and mockery. When they were praised, it was with the excessive blandishments that are always liable to topple over into hatred. And soon they did. The criticisms heaped upon them were personal, vindictive and destructive. The Goths and Vandals of the critical world out in full cry:

Perhaps my distaste for this pinch-faced genius comes from having met her once. . . . I suppose my personal distaste for the Whiteoaks and their pen puppeteer is that [she] is such an Anglo-phile she has to send the Jalna children to England to school. . . . You begin to wonder if [she] knows the words of O Canada.²⁴

A large part of her artistic equipment was dedication—or stubbornness, as she called it. Another part was what might be called a high neurosis, driving her from place to place and prompting her to leave, like dumped baggage, a remarkable body of evasions and misrepresentations, through which her biographers will be sorting for the next few decades. . . . Compare her stories to Chekhov's, or Flannery O'Connor's, and they seem fragile, powdery, and frequently just plain boring.²⁵

Libby gets a call from Sam to say that he and Rifka will be meeting up in Minneapolis and coming in on the same flight. Libby writes down the times and flight numbers on a slip of paper and sticks it under a magnet on the fridge. It is the first time in weeks that she has written something down and she stretches her fingers afterwards. She has a sense of panic

²⁴Austin Cross, "Morning at Jalna," *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 September 1960.

²⁵Larry McMurtry, "Ever a Bridegroom: Reflections on the Failure of Texas Literature," *The Texas Observer*, 23 October 1981, pp. 8–9.

because whatever is not resolved when they arrive will stay unresolved. When they walk in the door, the silence will be routed. The place will be full of arguments and cries of laughter and they will start immediately being affectionate and outrageous and noisy. Books, papers and laundry will spread like moss over all the surfaces. As she pads about the house Libby begins to talk to herself as if to warn it of the imminent siege.

She gets out the car and drives to the liquor store and buys champagne for a welcome-home dinner, though her doctor has forbidden her to drink more than an egg cup full of anything.

"I was having champagne," he said, still keeping up a brave front, "although it's against my doctor's orders."

"Never mind your doctor," said the judge.

"I never do," he said, Oscar said, and brought the house down. The whole trial was like a dramatic performance. That was the comic relief. Then came the truly moving part, the eloquence, the great speech:

The 'Love that dare not speak its name' . . . is that deep spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. . . . It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope and glamour of life before him. That it should be so the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it.²⁶

Finally Libby goes to the hairdresser and sits in front of a large mirror watching herself being ministered to by a young woman whose hair stands on end like a victim of shock, electric or otherwise. She places a cap on Libby's head and taking a crochet hook, pulls out strands of hair which she treats with blue paste. Eventually Libby's reflection resembles a dandelion clock, which someone could puff away to tell the time. Devouring time blunt though the Lion's paw. I must stop this, thinks Libby and return to practical business of the world. "Gris cendre," she says, "very appropriate for my age. An excellent taxidermy job."

"We might try the summer wheat next time," the young woman says, "a lot of my older ladies find it very becoming. When is your better half getting back?"

She knows that all her books contain lies. But it seems to her now that

²⁶Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin books, 1987), p. 435.

the biggest one is a single inoffensive line in the acknowledgements: "My daughters have provided me with firsthand experience of the longevity and durability of a childhood play."

I see now says Libby that in the story of Vivien and Faith I have refashioned the story of my beloved aunt and me. Unlike Faith I . . . I what? Defected? Made a lucky escape? Perpetrated an act of betrayal? Come now Libby scolds herself. All these dramatics, all these pendulum swings what does it matter? No judgement is required. It's a question simply of variations on a theme. All I need to know is why for two short years in a very long life I lived not only my own life but played the part of Faith Carington. Now that is known, it is over, ended. I'm freer now. I no longer come up against a locked barred door when I go down that particular corridor. I can recall with unadulterated pleasure the summer in the garden.

But if my younger self had not decided to marry what would our life have been? It was thinks Libby quite predictable. She would have found a teaching job. There would have been travels abroad all summer, wonderful holidays, journeys across the Atlantic, across Europe, planned for all winter long. Then eventually, they would have decided to live together. Perhaps they would have left the village and moved to Derbyshire and bought a house—Rosemount. And perhaps Libby would have continued teaching or perhaps she would have started writing. Yes, that would be it. Hannah would have retired and they would have moved to the country and Libby would have started to write twenty years earlier than she actually did.

Even now Libby can close her eyes and yearn for the harmony of that life, its routine. None of the endless family tensions. The country church on Sunday, the meals in the beamed dining room, the house-guests, the visits, above all the garden in its seasons tended by the groundsman—pheasant eye narcissus and all the spring flowers, roses in June, the michaelmus daisies in the fall. ". . . to her instruction, I owed the best part of my acquirements: her friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly companion."²⁷

She has planned to let them stumble by surprise on what she had done but like a child on Mother's Day she can't keep the secret. "Come up to the attic," she says, "You won't believe it."

"I don't believe it," they cry. "Amazing. Who did it?"

The attic is a miracle of tidiness. There is almost nothing there.

"What about all the papers?" asks Rifka in a surly voice. "Why didn't

²⁷Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 116.

you send me any money," she adds, one grudge leading to another.

Libby has wanted to have a huge bonfire but it is forbidden by law. She has torn up each notebook into small pieces and put it in garbage bags and they have already been taken away. Sam merely shrugs but Rifka is alarmed and angry. Libby knows that she shouldn't have destroyed the papers. It was an act of vandalism exactly like Faith's. She knows that Faith had a hand in it and is still controlling her. So much of Libby's life has been transmuted into these other lives that she has hoped to free herself by an orgy of destruction, a fire of purification. It hasn't happened. She has not freed herself and become whole and she sees now that it is unlikely ever to happen. It didn't happen to Ella either, or to Vivien. But perhaps it will happen to someone in the future, someone like Rifka who already seems whole and undivided.

Two nights later when Libby is once again an indissoluble part of the lives of Rifka and Sam, she lies in bed, wakeful as they sleep. She is in her own twin bed beside Sam's but she might as well be in a large bed with Sam's head resting on her breast and Rifka snuggled up to her for comfort as she did in childhood. So much does Libby feel entwined by them both. Rifka is furiously angry. Part of it is the old generalized, unspecified anger of daughter for mother, but part of it is focussed on the loss of the papers. Perhaps it will subside and perhaps it won't. In any case, Rifka goes off back to school in a few days.

Breathing silently, Libby's mind glides back in time calling up images from all the secret chambers of consciousness. Shadows of the past float before her closed lids—that moment in the musky room in Maryland when she looked up at the portrait that dominated the room and let Ella commandeer her life. . . all the journeys to every part of the world to stand in Ella's rooms—the little house in Kyle, the honeymoon house in Inez, the balcony of Hilgrove in Bermuda and the studio in the garden at the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. . . . and then starting all over again with Vivien. Back came the moment of pure ecstasy when she stood with Chris in front of the portrait of the Russian woman and thought "If now to die. . . ." and all the rooms and houses that had belonged to Vivien and Faith—the house in Malvern, the Old Rectory with its elm trees full of ravens and crows. . . all those miles and miles.²⁸ And yet the pattern and the meaning still eludes her. Still she is divided into many fragments, having

²⁸"I realize that of all the distances I have travelled since I began this work, the geographical distances are the ones that matter least." Elinor Langer in "If In Fact I have Found a Heroine. . ." in *Mother Jones*, Vol. VI, No. IV, May 1981, pp. 36–46.

left or lost part of herself in every life hers has touched. . . .²⁹

As she drifts into a deeper sleep, all the images in her mind begin to merge—Faith with Rifka, Ella and Vivien, Sam with Chris, the beloved aunt with Ella and so on. It is a soft September night with a light rain falling on the city, the prairie that encloses it like a sea with all the small towns and homesteads dotted here and there like fishing boats in the darkness. And in the air is the slight whiff of autumn and new beginnings.

²⁹Katherine Anne Porter, *The Collected Short Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.: 1965), p. 416.

David Manicom

Hadrian's Wall

for Caitlin

*"When foreign peoples could safely be pardoned,
I preferred to preserve them rather than
exterminate them."*

Caesar Augustus

I face into the dark. Small ark:
inside my lover two hearts lived.
One travelled: raspberry in sun.
She was outside night, laid on its soft skin
and heard the slow bell that stayed within,
alone. Sky collapses to a small sack,
a long red sleeve pulls inside
out, our fuel's singularity.
I hoist her to my back, sweetheart
not quite one, take her along.

.....

History in mind north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne's
bricks arranged upon loosened sinews of the serpentine, slicked,
and rainbow-puddled river slowly dribbling grime and water
(still partly elemental) back to *mater*, foamy black.
We took a climbing bus from Hexham, where on market days
they now display bananas from Brazil beside the porch
of Hexham Abbey, its timber vault and torch-smoke blackened crypt
cavities from a Saxon century, the blurred succinct reports
of chiseled flagstones wearing smooth, the bishops underfoot. . .

.....

It is morning, the blanket's cuff
looms into view, monumental blur.
You lift it away and make room,
pastels deepen into surfaces.
It is morning but you must go back.

The trees of the forest stand still
for the moment, space enough between,
holding up the long drapes of their shade.
Parapets of the temple, should
you need one. You need one. Go back.

.....

North of the balancing frames of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
the wall of Hadrian snakes upon complying moors
like the mockup of a river border petrified
by all that's foreign on the other side. My daughter riding
on my back, I decide to put it thus: It was built
just like the town, once upon a time. An empire spilled
across the world swallowing the mess it found en route
much the way you finger your puréed fruit once you've daubed
your tray and nose a bit: robbed and plundered and made peace.
Peace was when the broiling stuff of life they found out there
seemed just enough like Roman fare to think of moving on,
though what they sensed as Roman bulged from time to time.
(But then, what I think is you does tend to do the same!)

One day they waded through the Tyne and the children's game
was done. They found the wall. It came up blue and screaming
like water in the throat, like dreaming in the twisted sleeve
where you struggle free from night; came out of Pictish hills
tasting of the last, intolerable vernacular.

The greatest terror I have felt was the cool, haired skin
of a strange limb in the bed; my own slept-on, senseless arm.
To commemorate this charmed arrest, this bulkhead in the air,
they lifted stones you see, right there, once upon a time.

Today they seem, on the worn saddles of these Northumbrian slopes,
polite, shrunken like a body's cells in the scope of years;
wall for an English garden, say, where plants, like fear,
grow slightly wild to an owner's vague design, where yellow pears
hang on until their pulp is soft, fall deeply into grass—
soft, soft bells. Outside the wall, that numb last skin of Rome,
the tribesmen painted bellies blue, attacked in patterns
no legionnaire could quite make out, nervous as lantern light.

.....

Lens of water on the eye
steeps scenery in wincing light;
the tremble of used surfaces;
drainage system of a face
bleary with its golden pint,
map of storm rains spirited
away, the cistern mute:
hold of water, void, entire,
unvisited and personal.

.....

You weight me down no more than an extra pair of shoes
as we walk where the news stopped, where the emperor reached
his verge of arrogance, began to preach Security
and the sanctity of Peace, disarmed by what he called the dark.
*Externas gentes quibus tuto ignosci potuit
conservare quam excidere malui.* But this far out?
And since then bishops underfoot; Dukes cut into stone;
peasants barely slipped inside a fold of boney soil,
subject to the absolute digestive skill (Once, once—),
contributing to crops we saw softening lower dales.
No corn on these bald crowns, only the mobile hummocks of sheep
trotted by wind under the heavenly flocks of cloud
scudding above a Scottish ridge: Black Hag's Edge or Cuddy's Crag
or High Bleakhope or Windy Oyle. Jags of light and drizzle
sweep a few Canadians down the fading hills toward town,
trickles channelling briefly through my treadmarks in the ground.
Finding history in this Norse and Jute and Saxon dented coast
we feels more, not less, like ghosts, transparencies suspended
over clotted tracts, breached by the colourful son, thin hides of air.
Our muse is everyone's uncle who went to war and would now
be seventy, has his story happened after all, long lived
but uneventful, soiling a collar, consoled by evidence
of wear; forever hefting home our new, belated love,
sail afloat above a river's oil, slipping face.
You weight me down no more than an extra pair of shoes.
Your eyes are still the dark, dark, newborn blue
centred in one shade darker at the core. Since I love you
I must look there often. What stands behind is darkness,
the way the soundless appetite of ravens
listens behind the loveliness of evening trees.
What stands in light is what we think of darkness.

Reizei Tamahide (c. 1302–1372)

Translated from the Japanese by Graeme Wilson

Just Two

Forked lightning flashed:
In its startling blue
Brief-lived light I could count how many
Drops of dew
Hung on a grass-blade.

Two, just two.

West of Polihale

Carl Heintze

At Polihale the beach shelters face due west. Sitting under one of them on bright days the Rev. Billy Schott often imagined he could see across the six thousand miles of ocean that separated the coast of Kauai from Japan, although he knew, in fact, that this was not possible. Without his glasses Billy could scarcely see the flying surf as it crashed on the long white, wide empty beach of the state park.

Billy could make out the expanse of sand this side of the waves, however. The glare the sun threw upon it penetrated even the black plastic of his glasses and seemed to go all the way to the back of his head. After a few hours it not only hurt, it tended to dull his thinking. But he persevered, confident of his calling, ready still to challenge the world. Even if he could not actually see Japan, he could imagine his gaze traveling westward over the curve of the earth, first to Honshu, a land unaware of The Gospel, on to China, one billion Communists strong, across China to Asia and Arabia and the Middle East with all its alien Moslems and Jews, even to South America, peopled with Catholics.

True, he thought, the South Americans, although mostly Indians and Mexicans, could not be classified as heathens, but they were not real Christians, not those who had made public confession and accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. They were, well, after all, Papists. In thinking of this Billy admitted his knowledge of world geography, particularly of the lands between China and Africa (he realized he had forgotten to include Africa, with all those blacks who worshiped voodoo of graven images or even worse) was hazy. Still, it was clear to him most of the world was foreign, godless and without the saving message of Jesus and Jesus was, as Billy often said, both publicly and privately, Lord.

Billy always followed this line of thought when he came to Polihale. And he came to Polihale about once a week, usually on Thursdays, driving his son's battered, old red Toyota, rusting from the salt air, along the highway that ran between the blue sea and the green cane fields, through Waimea, past Port Allen until the road degenerated into dust, sand and the park.

There he pulled up behind the low ridge of dunes and, carrying his

Bible, tramped up over them to one of the shade shelters. There he sat gratefully, feeling the trades blowing across his sweaty brow, alternately gazing westward across the ocean and thinking of the vastness of the non-Christian world, the world in need of his ministry.

Now and then he also engaged in his principal task: seeking an appropriate Bible verse to accompany his Sunday message. On this particular day he was reading the Book of Job, Job 37:12–13, to be exact but it had brought him no inspiration. Nor did the beach. As usual, it was as empty as his mind.

But then, he thought, that was why he came here, to find a place empty of people where his mind might roam free.

He also like Polihale because it was the farthest point westward on Kauai and hence some kind of a frontier. It made him think of his grandfather, also named Billy Schott.

His grandfather, too, had thrust forward to the edge of the unbelievers, a scout along the last reach of the redeemed world. He had been a missionary to the Cherokee, back in the days when Oklahoma was still Indian Territory.

It was a thought more inspirational than the words of the book before him. The pages fluttered in the wind and turned over Painstakingly he thumbed back to Job and squinted down at the words, but the sun made it difficult to read them. He looked up again. When he did, he saw the beach was no longer empty. Trudging up it toward him was a young man wearing only a pair of swimming trunks, his skin the color of polished koa wood it was impossible for Billy to tell if he was Japanese, Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese, Korean, Filipino or part or all of these. Billy had not yet become accustomed to girls with Japanese names who did not look Japanese or men with Portuguese names who looked Oriental. In Oklahoma, there were whites, blacks and Indians. It was easy to tell one from the other. Here one never knew to whom they were speaking. Billy decided this island resident was a mixture beyond his comprehension. He looked more Hawaiian than Oriental, but there could be some white in him, too. The young man was carrying a fishing spear, a net, a diving mask and flippers and an empty bleach bottle to which he had tied a rope to make a float.

Although he was looking directly at the shelter, the young man gave no immediate indication that he saw Billy. Instead, he walked under its roof and sat down on a bench attached to one of the picnic tables.

Then he said, "Hot."

"That breeze is nice," Billy said.

"Sand's hot on your feet breeze or no breeze."

"You ought to wear shoes."

"What for?"

"Keep your feet cooler."

The young man ignored the advice.

"You going fishing?" Billy said.

"Been."

"Catch anything?"

The young man held his line aloft. Half a dozen small varied colored fish were strung on it.

"How do you know which fish to spear?"

"You learn."

The boy put his flippers on the floor of the shelter beside his mask. Then he said, "I've seen you before somewhere."

"Maybe in Hanapepe. That's where I preach."

"I live over by Waimea. Out on the end of town. Out by the beach."

"I'm starting a church in Hanapepe."

The boy slapped his hand on his bare thigh.

"I saw you on a poster."

Billy leaned back on his bench, closed his Bible and put his hand on it as if he were taking an oath.

"I put them up. The picture's a mite old. Got it taken back in Enid. That's in Oklahoma. You know where Oklahoma is?"

"Yeah."

"It was a revival. Same as here."

"What's a revival?"

"Well. . . Preaching the Gospel. Singing the Message. Asking people to come forward and accept the Lord."

The young man shook his line of fish as if to see if any of them were still alive. None of them moved.

"You all are welcome. So's everybody."

"Don't go to church."

"All the more reason to come."

"What's the name of the church?"

"Doesn't have a name yet. It'll come, though."

"There's a Congregational church in Waimea."

"That isn't me," Billy said.

"What's yours?"

"Baptist. Southern Baptist."

"Don't know any Baptists. Lots of Mormons though."

Billy nodded.

"Well," he said, "I'm sure enough a Baptist, son. Born a Baptist, ordained a Baptist, like my pappy and my grandpappy. Going to die a Baptist. Lots of Baptists in Enid. Know where that is?"

"No."

"Sixty-four miles due west of Oklahoma City. Where all the oil comes from."

"How come you're in Hawaii?"

"Well, wife and I didn't see things the same any more. So I came here to be near my son. And to bring The Word. I take it you're. . . ." Billy almost said 'native' and then thought better of it. . . . "born here."

"In Waimea."

"Ever been to the States?"

"You mean the Mainland."

"Yes. Make that mistake all the time."

"Everybody does."

"I mean the Mainland."

"No. Been to Honolulu once."

"Ever want to go?"

"Maybe. Some day. Nothing to do here. Work in a hotel. Haul cane. Drive a bus. Grow grass."

The boy spat into the sand after he had said this. Then he said, "Right now it's fine. I'm not doing any of those. I'm going to college."

Billy looked out to the horizon again.

"When I was your age, I was skinning a Cat in the oil fields."

"Yeah? Good money?"

"Good enough. I drove a truck. Worked on a oil rig. Done a lot of things before I got called."

"There's no ocean near Oklahoma."

"Right enough. No ocean and not many rivers."

"Hawaii's better," the boy said. "I like the ocean."

Billy said, "It's where we are."

The boy stood up, hefting his string of fish.

"I gotta go."

"Well, pleased to make your acquaintance," Billy said, putting out his hand. The boy shook it. "You never did tell me your name."

"Wilson. Wilson Wantanabe."

"Well, Wilson, come on over to the revival."

"Like I said. I don't go to church."

"There's always a first time."

"Yeah. I guess."

He waved his free hand lazily, turned and stalked out into the hot sun, walking rapidly to cross the sand before it burned his feet.

By Sunday Billy had forgotten all about Wilson Wantanabe. He was therefore surprised, when, midway in his examination of Job he looked

out over the sparse gathering of faces in the congregation, most of them Oriental, and saw at the back of the stuffy little plywood building, leaning against its rear wall, studying him a figure that clearly was Wilson. The boy appeared neither interested nor disinterested. Rather, he was simply there. He listened as Billy exhorted the congregation to accept their suffering as a message from the Lord, as Billy told them evil brings its own reward and that that reward is punishment of those with whom He is displeased.

If it moved Wilson any nearer to redemption, confession of sins and re-birth, it was not evident. When Billy called for "all those who truly wish to confess their sins and accept Christ" two gnarled and elderly women in mumus trudged up to the altar, a small platform to the right of the pulpit, but Wilson did not move. He did not join in the hymns, nor did he bow his head during prayers. He just stood and watched. It was a look Billy remembered from a time when he had served a Cherokee congregation, a congregation that once had been his grandfather's at Anadarko long ago. And before the benediction was over, Wilson was gone. When Billy looked up from his final prayer, the place where the boy had been standing was empty.

Billy was sad about this. He was not sure why. When he reached the church door to shake hands and greet, he looked about, but there was no sign of Wilson, anywhere, only the trades tossing the ironwood tree branches and the swish of tourists' cars passing on the highway leading westward to Waimea Canyon.

During the week that followed Billy knocked on doors, had them shut in his face, dropped in on old Mr. Takeshita in the Waimea Hospital and helped paint the outside of the church. Finding painters in the congregation was a problem. Most parishioners were too old to move a paint brush very far.

It was not until Thursday when he drove back to Polihale that he thought about Wilson. He sat in the shade shelter, opened his Bible, this time to Ezekiel and pondered the words without reading them, half watching the beach in search of the boy's familiar form, but Wilson did not appear. Billy was disappointed; he was not sure why. He made penciled notes on the lines of a school note pad he had purchased the week before at the Gem Store in Lihue, glancing up now and then at the reach of beach, the curl of surf foaming in, at the blue ocean beyond until it merged with the paler blue sky and the distant white clouds trundling off to the south in a steady procession.

He thought again of the world beyond, the hostile, heathen world of the unbaptized, he thought of it until the zeal that he felt formed itself into words and he scribbled them on the pad it took him half an hour to finish

and during that time he anticipated Wilson would come trudging up the beach with his mask, flippers, spear and bleach bottle, but he never did.

Finally, Billy folded the pad, slipped it under his Bible and walked back up through the hot sand to his son's car and drove toward home.

Near the pizza parlor where the road from Port Allen joins the highway, he saw a familiar brown figure, long blue T-shirt hanging down over his shorts. He pulled up beside Wilson and stopped.

"Want a lift?"

Wilson looked in the car window.

"I can walk."

"It's a long way."

Wilson considered for a moment and then without speaking, opened the car door and got in.

"Thought maybe I'd see you out at Polihale," Billy said. Billy pronounced it Pole-e-Holly.

"No fish there. I was down at Poipu."

"I saw you in church."

"Yeah."

"Wanted to shake your hand afterward, but you was gone."

"Like I said, I'm not much for church."

"Well, you came once, anyway. Second time might be even easier."

Wilson contemplated this. Then he said, "How come you shout so much?"

Moved by the spirit. When it moves you, it just comes out. You praise the Lord. Ever feel that way?"

"No."

"You have to let Jesus into your heart."

"I don't know what that means."

"You will."

"And your music's funny."

"You mean hymns?"

"Yeah. Too heavy man. You ever listen to our music?"

"Well, sometimes it's hard to miss. It's on the radio. In the hotels."

"I mean really listen?"

"Well, no."

"That's music."

Billy made the turn off the highway into Waimea.

"It's not the Lord's music."

"I heard you say the Lord made everything. He must have even made that music, too."

"Well."

It was Billy's turn to contemplate.

"How come you go to Polihale?" Wilson said.

"That's where I pick out my message. Get out The Book, you know, and find a verse."

"Don't you ever just go to the beach to go to the beach?"

"Never was one much for swimming. In Oklahoma we never had beaches. Just tanks."

"Tanks?"

"I guess you'd call them ponds."

Wilson suddenly laughed.

"I thought you meant tanks, like Army tanks."

Billy smiled.

"No, they was just where we stored water for ranching. Never enough water in Oklahoma, you know."

"Polihale's no good for swimming."

"Well, I never been swimming there."

"You been swimming anywhere?"

"Well, no."

"I'll show you a place to swim. Down at Poipu."

"Don't know as I even got a swimming suit."

"I'm going down there Saturday."

"Well."

They had reached the main intersection in Waimea.

"This is where I get off," Wilson said.

Billy slowed the car and then he stopped it.

Wilson opened the door.

"I'll tell you," he said. "You come swimming. I'll come to church."

"Well," Billy said.

That Saturday Billy went again to the Gem store. This time, after some searching, he found a bright blue nylon pair of trunks with "Hawaii" printed on them in white. He put the trunks and a towel into the trunk of the rusty red Toyota, went to the bank and then drove back to Hanapepe.

On Sunday morning he stood by the door shaking the gentle hands of his few parishioners as, dressed in their Sunday best, they shyly came through the front door of the frame church and sat down on one of its battered pews. Most of them were women who sat fanning themselves with the morning worship program. Occasionally a elderly man appeared. Wilson did not. Not until Billy was about to read the Scripture lesson did he see him slip into the back of the church and sit, as he had before, in the last pew.

Billy felt a little surge of pleasure.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full," he read. "This is my commandment. That you love one another, as I have loved you."

He closed his eyes after he had finished reading and the words of his sermon seemed to flow from some deep cupboard of his mind, a place he had not known before, out into the daylight.

"The Lord God has spoken," he said. "The Lord God has spoken to me. . . ."

He was not sure how long he spoke nor, in retrospect, what he said, but when he came to the end of his sermon and, covered with sweat, looked down at his hands resting on the edge of the battered pulpit, he had a feeling it must have been profound, even divinely inspired. For reassurance he searched the faces of his audience. They were rapt, or, at least, attentive, but demonstrative. He sighed and took up his hymnal. It was something he might have expected. Ever since he had begun his revival, he had sought to penetrate the passive, Oriental stoicism of his listeners without success. They reacted to one another, the elderly ladies chirping in Japanese and a pidgin English he could not understand, but with him a cool reserve came down like a screen to separate him from them.

As he swung into the closing hymn, he glanced at the rear of the church. Wilson was still sitting in the last pew. Wilson was singing, or, at least, he was moving his lips, in time to the music. Again Billy felt a touch of joy.

And when the last little old lady had shaken his hand and pegged off toward her house, Wilson got up from the bench beside the door and said, "Did you get a bathing suit?"

"Sure enough," Billy said. He went around to the trunk of his son's car, opened it and took out the blue trunks.

"Alright," Wilson said. He said the word with emphasis, not "Alright" as if something corrected, but with affirmation: "Alright!"

Billy drove eastward through the green cane fields on the narrow macadam highway until they came to the place where a sign pointed the way to Koloa. There, at Wilson's direction, he turned right, went up and down the hills dropping gradually toward the sea until they reached Koloa town, then right down the Poipu Beach road, skirting the hotels and condominiums until they came to the public parking lot beside Brenecke Beach Park. Cars filled the lot. People were carrying picnics into the park. Swimmers already had entered the water. Out beyond the opening to the little cove Billy could see several surfers.

"We have to get our suits on in there," Wilson said, pointing to the ce-

ment restrooms. "That is you do. I've got mine on already. Under my clothes."

Billy went into the men's room and pulled his suit on. It did not fit very well over his little belly. He kept his shirt on to hide it and went outside to rejoin Wilson.

"Now we have to walk the beach," Wilson said. He had shed his shirt and was carrying two snorkeling masks, two pairs of flippers and his spear and bleach bottle.

"Is that all right?" Billy said.

"Sure. We have access to the beach. That's one thing the *haoles* left. It didn't used to be like that. Once you could just walk over the fields to the beach. That was before the hotels. I don't remember it, but dad used to tell me. I used to come with my dad when I was a little kid."

"Where is your dad?"

"He's dead."

"That's too bad."

"Long time ago. When I was five."

"It's still too bad."

"Well, he drank too much. I guess that was it. And it was his heart. That's what my mom says. But it really was because he drank too much."

"Uh, huh," Billy said. He thought "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," but he decided he would not say it aloud.

They walked down to the beach through the sand until they came to a coral cement walk that followed the shoreline past the hotels.

"That's it," Wilson said. He pointed to a place in front of the last hotel where a small half moon-shaped bay opened in the coral reef. "That little cove there. It's not deep. It's a good place for you to learn."

The surf crashed at the entrance and sent waves resonating on the sandy shore. The tide was coming in, raising the water level along the smooth curve of the beach.

Wilson waded into the water. He slipped his mask over his head, adjusted its tube and then pulled the mask down until it covered his nose.

"See, this is how you do it. You breathe through your mouth and through the tube. You don't breathe through your nose because there's hardly any air in your mask."

He lay down in the water, pushed off and floated toward the cove opening. Then he swam back, stood up and waited while Billy put on his mask. Billy immediately stood up, coughing and spitting salt water.

"Got a mouthful," he said.

"Just breathe through your mouth, not your nose."

"Isn't natural to breath that way," Billy said.

"You can do it. It's easy once you do."

Billy tried again. This time he managed to float a short distance before he forgot and tried to suck in air through his nostrils. He tried again. After a half hour, he was swimming successfully. He had entered a new silent world, one in which he could see the bottom clearly. Rasps, Moorish idols and long narrow fish built like thin plastic pipes floated across his vision. He saw sea urchins attached to the coral and red star fish and sea cucumbers. He was fascinated. He floated lazily back and forth in time with the incoming waves.

The fish moved back and forth with him in rhythm as if they were dancing a kind of ballet. Now and then he met the brown feet and legs of Wilson swimming ahead of him. He followed them out through a path in the coral toward the open ocean and then back in again to shore.

Where it was shallow, he stood up and lifted his mask.

"How was it?" Wilson said.

"Well, just wonderful," Billy said. "I never did see anything like that. Never in my life."

For the first time since they had met, Wilson smiled. It transformed his face.

"That's my church," he said.

"Well," Billy said.

He climbed out of the water and walked up the beach. There he lay down on his towel. Wilson came and sat beside him.

"I got a couple of fish," he said. He held up his bleach bottle. Two small silver fish were threaded to the line.

"Well, good," Billy said. "Are those good eating?"

"Bony," Wilson said. "But they're all right. I guess I'll take them home."

He set the fish so they lay on the sand just at the edge of the incoming surf. The water washed in gently over them, keeping them from drying in the sun.

"You got any brothers or sisters?" Billy said.

"Four sisters. They're all younger than me."

"That's a big family."

"Too big. My mother has to work too hard."

"What's she do?"

"She's a maid in a hotel. Over there." He pointed down the coast at a hotel on the corner of the next cove. "Makes beds, cleans rooms, that kind of thing. It's a lousy job."

"My wife was a maid in a hotel once."

"Yeah. How did she like it?"

"She didn't. Didn't think it was proper for a preacher's wife. I expect she was right. Didn't think a lot of things was proper for a preacher's wife. That's one reason we split up. Preachers don't make much, especially in Oklahoma. That's why she was working. I never could make enough for the things she wanted. So finally she up and left."

"Where's she go?"

"Went off with one of my congregation. Joe Tully. Went off to San Antone. He was an oil rigger. He was doing real well last I heard. I expect she took most of it, though. She left him, too."

"That's too bad."

"Well, yes."

Billy closed his eyes and lay back on the towel.

"Meant I couldn't stay in Enid. I come out here."

He sat up.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all of this. I never had told anybody here. Don't even talk to my son about it."

He looked out to sea. The afternoon wind had risen and was scooping spindrift off the incoming surf and tossing it like fine sand into the air. Billy watched for a moment or two and then lay back on the towel and closed his eyes.

"Well, it don't make no never mind. That's over. Seems like a long time ago. Don't seem real, somehow. Still when you think about it, it seems. . . it's like, well, you don't know, I guess, like part of you was lost somewhere. You keep on looking for it, but it's gone. It's something you can't find."

Wilson said. "That's how I feel about my father."

Billy opened one eye and looked up at Wilson.

"We both lost something, I reckon."

"Yeah," Wilson said.

He picked up a discarded plastic soft drink bottle top and threw it as hard as he could against the wind toward the sea. The cap fell just beyond the next incoming wave and floated back and forth uncertainly on the ebbing foam.

"Lucky we found each other then," Billy said.

The following Sunday afternoon Wilson and Billy again went snorkeling again this time at the Sait Ponds closer to Hanapepe.

They swam not along the red flats where the ponds lay but in the shallow bay beside them. The water was turgid where the incoming waves stirred the sand and Billy saw little but sand and a few broken shells on the bottom.

"No fish," Wilson said after they had been in the water for a while. "Poipu's better."

"I saw a couple," Billy said. "Don't make no never mind, though. I just enjoy floating. Puts the mind at ease."

Wilson nodded. They went to one of the beach shelters to eat their lunch.

"I don't come here much," Wilson said, "Except to the cemetery. That's where my dad is."

"Where's that?" Billy said.

"Back up there. I'll show you on the way back."

Wilson pointed back toward Hanapepe.

Billy said. "Got to have a graveyard somewhere, even on an island."

"It's on the bay," Wilson. "Just across the road."

"Being a preacher, I usually know where the graveyard is, but nobody's passed on since I come."

"We go there and put flowers sometimes," Wilson said.

"That's nice," Billy said. "Makes you remember."

"I guess so. Sometimes it'd be better to forget."

"That's how you keep a person with you. In your mind."

"They don't ever change that way though," Wilson said. "They're just the way they were when you last saw them. They don't get any older. My dad'd be older now if he was alive, just like I am. But now he'll be just like he was when he died."

"Don't see anything wrong in that."

"I don't know," Wilson said. "Seems like people ought to change. Everything else does."

Later as they were driving back to Waimea, Billy saw the cemetery, a flat field, its green grass struggling to stay alive in the red volcanic dirt.

"Why'd they put it there?" he asked.

"I don't know, Wilson said. "I guess it was because the land wasn't any good for anything else."

Billy said, "You'd like to think at a graveyard as a pleasant place with a view maybe or a garden around it. Least ways I would."

"Doesn't make much difference when you're dead," Wilson said.

"All the same you come down here to your dad's grave. Be nice if it was in a nice place."

"Then it'd be for me, not him."

"I suppose," Billy said.

Their snorkeling expeditions soon became a Sunday routine, unvarying in form and content. In the morning Billy preached his sermon while Wilson sat in the back of the church and waited until Billy had finished shak-

ing hands. Then they went swimming. Sometimes they went to Poipu, sometimes to the Salt Ponds. On occasional Sundays they drove to the north coast, to Anahola or Hanalei.

Usually they took a lunch, never anything they cooked, but rather something they brought: pizza or Kentucky Fried or a cold McDonald's hamburger. Now and then Wilson brought a pineapple or a papaya or bananas from home. They ate them on the beach after they had been swimming, sitting on their towels in the sun.

"Never ate so much fruit," Billy said. "Fruit's hard to come by back home."

"What do you eat?" Wilson said.

"Well, lots of corn. Nothing like a good head of sweet corn in the fall."

"Ever eat sugar cane?"

"Can't say as I have."

"You suck it, it's like candy sort of."

The next Sunday Wilson brought a stick of cane for Billy to chew on. The Sunday after that it was three bananas and then a pineapple. Billy ate what he could. He took the remainder home to his son's wife.

"Come from a young fellow in the parish, he said.

"That's nice," his son's wife said.

"He's a nice young man. Lots of nice folks in the church. You ought to come, you and Bill."

"You know how Bill feels about the church," his son's wife said. "How he feels about being here."

"Yes," Billy said. "I know."

"He can't wait to leave," his son's wife said.

"He can't wait for me to leave too," Billy said.

"Now, Dad."

"I know I felt that way for a while, too, when I first come. Like a stranger it grows on you, though."

His son's wife looked out the kitchen window at the stalks of sugar cane rising behind the house.

She sighed.

"I like it well enough," she said. "But it's hard for Bill. He just doesn't bend."

"He's like his ma," Billy said. "Never gives an inch."

"That's it," his son's wife said. "He's Virginia to a T. He's not like you at all, Dad."

"Well, I don't know," Billy said. "It's not so much I learned how to bend as I got bent. Things change you, though. And people change. I learned that, Marie."

His wife's son was named Marie. Using her name for the first time,

Billy realized it had been a long time since he had thought of her as someone with a name. He usually thought of her as Bill's wife.

Marie turned and smiled and then came and put her arm around his shoulder.

"I guess so, Dad," she said. "I just wish your son would."

In spite of their Sunday afternoons together, Billy did not see Wilson during the week. Nor did he ever go to Billy's home in Waimea. But their Sunday afternoons were unailing. Gradually they became a more and more important part of Billy's week, the part of his life he reserved just for himself. He had not realized this until one Sunday morning when he looked out from the pulpit and saw the back pew by the door was empty.

All during the week that followed Billy worried about what might have happened to Wilson. On Thursday when he drove to Polihale to write his sermon notes, he thought of stopping in Waimea to see if Wilson was all right. On the way home he almost did, but, although he slowed the car at the crossroads, he did not turn.

On the following Sunday he plowed through his opening prayer without enthusiasm. Then he looked up and saw Wilson's brown face in its usual place in the back row. He was listening attentively. He even joined in singing the closing hymn.

At the door after the service when farewell handshakes had been completed, Billy said, "I missed you last week."

"I couldn't come, it was graduation," Wilson said.

"Graduation?"

"Yeah, at the college. See I got my degree. "He held up a piece of paper. "I'm an AA."

"A what?"

"I got an AA, an associate in arts degree."

"Well," Billy said. "That's wonderful."

"That means I can go to Oahu."

"Oahu?"

"To Kamahamaha. For free. Cause I'm part Hawaiian. I get to go free."

"Well," Billy said.

"I'm going to live there."

Billy nodded.

"Never coming back to this place. And you know what?"

"Can't imagine," Billy said.

"Maybe I'll end up a preacher. Like you. I been thinking about it."

"Well. That's first rate."

They walked out of the church to the dusty red parking lot.

"Where you want to go swimming?" Wilson said.

"I don't know," Billy said.

He got in the car and turned on the engine. He sat silent for a moment. Then he said, "Let's go out to Polihale."

They drove along the western shore of the island through the cane fields past the entrance to Barking Sands, to the dirt road and finally to the beach shelters on the ocean side of the dunes. Wilson talked all the way. He talked about what he would study in Honolulu, about what he was taking with him, about his final examinations, about how his mother had cried at graduation. Billy said nothing. He nodded now and then, but he did not speak.

When they reached Polihale, the beach and the beach shelters were empty. Not another human being was in sight. Billy wished there was at least one or two other swimmers about, but there was no one.

Wilson got out, took his mask and flippers and ran toward the ocean.

"The sand's hot," he called as he did.

Billy nodded. He walked to the nearest beach shelter and sat down heavily on one of its benches.

"Come on," Wilson called. He had walked into the surf roaring toward them from the limitless blue Pacific.

"In a minute," Billy said. He bent down and without looking at them began slowly, automatically to untie his shoes. Instead he found he was searching the surf, trying to look beyond it to the line of the horizon, to where the earth curved westward and the ocean ran on and on in endless waves toward those heathen lands to the places of strangers, where lived the millions and millions of peoples he did not know to Asia and Africa and South America.

As he watched, Wilson slid his mask down over his face and plunged into the sea disappearing through the curl of an incoming wave. Then there was nothing before him except empty ocean.

Billy stopped trying to undue his shoe lace and straightened up. He slammed his open hand on the beach shelter table.

"Goddamn it," he shouted. "Goddamn it to hell."

Lisa Pasold

1 in 3

one in three women
is raped I

read this somewhere
told a friend who
didn't react with anger
but fear
wanted to hold her 'til
it had gone but it won't,
walked her home
12 blocks of silence

twelve blocks
walk back talking
to myself

Noon

Your
mouth vanilla touch
no hooks
just
your mouth (the
one wrinkle
laughs because it
knows
what I want

Sheila E. Murphy

Life Drawing

The word "tenacity" becomes breath lingering within my brain. A rhythm of stiff consonants applies for some weird kind of visa. The sauce over the snapper broils part of my tongue. I guess my sinuses must have been ready to be loosened into the atmosphere. Someone define for me the concept "intimate" I mean how much. A flavor of bedroom assuming equal time. Long walk within an afternoon not backdrop. More. The talk and food and any fleck of sleep. I love the way your clothes wear you my clothes. Remove what is between us. Then I love the distance I impose. This perfect day the edge of sleep. A lean-to near the body. Touch.

Precise long lines, vernacular supposing wheat and thermal something something, sleep with me

Emperor Sutoku (1118–1164)

Translated from the Japanese by Graeme Wilson

Slumber

So ware we are of the things of this world
That a man will wake
At the mere leaf-rustle of reeds in the wind.

O what will it take
To rouse one man from that life-long sleep
Of his soul at stake?

Contributors

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Sheila E. Murphy makes her home in Phoenix, Arizona where she is Coordinator for the Scottsdale Center for the Arts Poetry Series. She has published 2 books of poetry, and her work regularly appears in *Paper Air*, *Salt Lick*, *Aerial* and others. Her forthcoming volumes of poetry include *Teth* (Chax Press) and *18/81* (Stride Press).

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Graeme Wilson has published many translations of Far Eastern poetry throughout the English-reading world. His versions of the modern Japanese poetry of Hagiwara Sakutaro, *Face at the Bottom of the World*, appeared in 1969; and the three volumes of Natsume Soseki's massive satire, *I am a Cat*, in 1972, 1979, and 1986.

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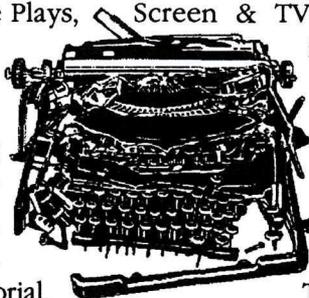
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the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of people with mental health problems. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified mental health as a global public health priority (WHO 1999). The United Kingdom has a national strategy for mental health (Department of Health 2002) and the World Bank has a mental health strategy (World Bank 2002).

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