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Point of View

Table of Contents

Literary Work

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 4 "Something Beautiful"
<i>Jan Fendler</i> | 19 "Lost Chances"
<i>Tom Field</i> | 35 Untitled Poem
<i>Jan Fendler</i> |
| 10 "The Nun with the Beautiful Face"
<i>Denver Sasser</i> | 28 "Look into the Shades of Night"
<i>Sandy Thompson</i> | "The Unicorn"
<i>Kristen Rojek</i> |
| "Silent Pain"
<i>Maura Scallon</i> | "Fall Foliage from Interstate 90"
<i>Robin Spencer</i> | 36 "Coddess-To-Be"
<i>Ana Maria Machado Lee</i> |
| "leaf"
<i>Loretta Mark</i> | "Ebb Tide"
<i>Kathleen Brown</i> | 38 "All Will Be Mine"
<i>Linda Slowik</i> |
| 14 "Books"
<i>Kristen Rojek</i> | 29 "Odyssey"
<i>Tom Field</i> | Untitled Poem
<i>Albert Vazquez</i> |
| "Golden Boy"
<i>Sandy Thompson</i> | 32 "Second Shift"
<i>Pam Stotmeister</i> | 39 Untitled Poem
<i>Pam Stotmeister</i> |
| "A Tree"
<i>Virginia Kaplafka</i> | 34 "From the Sin"
<i>Steve Johnston</i> | |
| 16 "Manic Depression Japanese Style"
<i>Taya Lucas</i> | "The Big Bang"
<i>Denver Sasser</i> | |

Visual Work

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 3 "Untitled"
<i>Daniel Brown</i> Oil | 18 "Aphrodesia"
<i>Ann P. Ingerson</i> Intaglio | 31 "Untitled"
<i>Lynn Yauger</i> Clay |
| 6 "Untitled"
<i>Yvette Levita</i> Photo | 20 "The Lonely Hallway"
<i>Scott Garlisch</i> Pencil/Colored Pencil | 33 "Crash"
<i>Marilu Welvers</i> Acrylic |
| 8 "Untitled"
<i>Charles Musto</i> Acrylic | 23 "Proposal I"
<i>Robin Bresemann</i> Drawing | 35 "Barn Scene"
<i>Rose Zaffina</i> Photo |
| 9 "Man with Book"
<i>Colin Ewald</i> Linoleum Print | 24 "Untitled"
<i>Daniel Brown</i> Clay | 36 "Komishcher Vogel"
<i>Mary Ellen Klotz</i> Intaglio |
| 11 "Intimate Moments"
<i>Mary Jane K. Kirkwood</i> Intaglio | 25 "At the Barre"
<i>Veronica M. Potter</i> Etching | 37 "Quilt"
<i>Teri Miller</i> Pencil/Colored Pencil |
| 12 "Untitled"
<i>Patrick Ewing</i> Markers/Pencil | 26 "Perspective"
<i>Helen Koziol</i> Charcoal Pencil | 38 "Crop"
<i>Mary Jane K. Kirkwood</i> Etching |
| 13 "Untitled"
<i>Patrick Ewing</i> Markers/Pencil | 27 "Jeff"
<i>Paul Pearson Jr.</i> Pen & Ink | 39 "Across the Prairie"
<i>Robert E. Esbensen</i> Etching |
| 15 "Bridge of Sighs"
<i>James Stanley</i> Photo | 29 "Untitled"
<i>Cena McNamara</i> Pen & Ink | |
| 17 "Self Portrait"
<i>Sheila Herdrich</i> Colored Pencil | 30 "Self Portrait"
<i>Cathy P. Seiflow</i> Colored Pencil | |



"Untitled"

Daniel Brown

Something Beautiful

"Caprine or equine, you know; I still think that's the big question here." Clark said, scraping the last of the stew from the bottom of his metal plate into the fire.

"Oh Christ, Clark, not this again!" came another voice from the ring.

"We went through this last night, didn't we?"

"For God's sake, Clark, give it up."

Austin silently finished his stew and listened absentmindedly as the other students continued their tirade against Clark. Life really is one big frat party to these guys, he thought dispassionately. He tossed his plate to the ground and wiped his hands on his field jacket. Across the circle, apart from the noise of the younger men, he saw the faint glow of Quin's pipe. Anthropology profs always had pipes, thought Austin. Maybe I should learn how to smoke.

"I don't care if the damn thing turns out to be bovine, for God's sake," said another one of the students. "I'm here for the credits. You don't think that I believe this medieval garbage, do you?" The ring broke into loud, nervous laughter.

"My God, Harris, you're such a no-mind idiot!" hissed Clark. "The man's standing right there, for Christ's sake, and you're here making fun of his goddam life's dream or something! Man, that's real considerate of you, you know, real goddam considerate. . . ."

"Mellow out, Clark. You know that Quin's not listening to us. Our Fearless Leader is too busy deciding which rocky and precarious garden path to lead us down for tomorrow's adventure."

"No lie," added another voice; the conversation was dropped. Austin sighed, rose stiffly, and made his way through the darkness towards where Quin stood, hands in pockets, at the edge of the clearing.

He'd known Dr. Quin since starting as a freshman at the University. Quin's "Peoples of the World" class sounded like a welcome relief from Austin's heavy

engineering course load. Once in class, he was fascinated by Quin's intense enthusiasm for his subject; Austin couldn't help but sign up for another of Quin's classes the next semester, and another the semester after that. By junior year, Austin had changed his major to cultural anthropology, with a minor in medieval mythology. This was Quin's own passion — "So much of what Man is," he would say to Austin over coffee after class, "depends on legends. . . on what he claims not to believe, but somewhere, in the back of his mind, knows he can't disprove, either. . . or doesn't want to try. . . ."

"The natives are getting restless, Quin," Austin said, indicating the ring around the small fire.

"Yes — they'll probably be happy when we reach the village. Late tomorrow morning, it should be. We have to pick up a guide before we hit the mountain."

"You think that this time. . . I mean — you're really sure that it's here. . . ."

Quin showed no reaction to the question, staring into the dark foreign woods as if, by staring, his eyes could cut through the wall of black trees. Austin shifted his weight and turned away for a moment. "I'm sorry," he said finally. "I guess that was a silly question. You wouldn't be here if. . . ."

"You get a tip to try Mongolia, so you try Mongolia," Quin said softly to the trees. "And you're sure — you're really sure — it's Mongolia. You do a year of research and come up with Norway. Of course, it's got to be Norway. All the facts point to China, and you know it's China. Then you know it's Tibet. And, then you figure and calculate and take your class to Nepal and you stand and watch the woods and listen to the night and you're sure, you know, that it's Nepal. Of course I'm sure it's here. I have to be sure it's here. It's here."

Austin looked away again and listened to the dark forest; Quin stood there for a long time, too, and did not speak.

The promise of a village moved the students to an early start the next morning; even Austin joined in the singing of a few randy hiking cadences. The

village turned out to be a band of about twelve or thirteen farmers and their families, cattle, and thatched huts. Austin and the others waited near a muddy well while Quin bargained with a handful of dark men. They left about three hours later with a pair of village men, called in from the fields, talking animatedly between themselves. Austin quickened his pace and joined Quin at the front of the group.

"Either of these guys speak English?" he asked with a laugh.

"The short one does. And luckily, so did their resident holy man. You know, he wasn't even surprised when I described the animal I was looking for. . .he told me of a cave, about twelve miles out, and. . ."

"Hey, Dr. Quin, is one of these guys a virgin?" called a voice from the line behind them.

"Yeah — that would make everything a hell of a lot easier, right? These animals come right up and lay down in the laps of virgins, right?"

"You're so quick, Harris."

"It's good to see these guys in high spirits again, isn't it?" said Austin. He felt a sort of excitement, too — like listening to Quin talk of his work, the stories and legends and myths, the quiet intensity straining his voice and the passion showing in his eyes. Quin was otherwise a quiet man; when not in class he was usually at the university library or at his home with the solemn Chinese girl who kept house for him. He was known not to talk out of class very often with students; never went to school functions, never went to church, never made jokes in class. His students liked him, respected him, and usually gave very little thought to him outside class; they all said, however, that he gave a "damn good lecture."

He was quiet again now, as if he had not heard Austin's question. Austin stared for a moment at the calm face, the passive and relaxed expression; like a man on a Sunday stroll, thought Austin, not a path that may lead to the realization of a life's work. . .he shifted his pack and slowed his pace until he was back again with the singing students. Clark caught up to Austin and fell into step beside him.

"So Austin, what do you really think of all this?"

Austin half-smiled. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you know. . .I mean, the whole field work in the Himalayas thing is pretty cool — I'm really learning a lot from Quin — subsistence modes of mountain dwellers, crap like that. But this. . .this quest he's on. . .I mean, is he serious or what? You're pretty tight with him, right?"

"I don't know," Austin said with a nervous laugh. "Lots of cultures believe these legends — it goes back hundreds of years. There's lots of religious significance, too, even in Christianity. . ."

"Yeah, yeah, but you know what I mean. Don't you think it's a little crazy to hike all over the world looking for something that's probably not even there?"

"It's a dream or something, Clark. I don't know. Everyone's got dreams. You got dreams, I got dreams. . . ." He felt uneasy, talking about Quin this way. He wished Clark would change the subject.

"Yeah, but unicorns, for God's sake, I mean, they're not even *real*. . ."

The word hung in the air, embarrassed and out of place. "Well you don't know for sure that. . .that unic. . .that. . .that what he's looking for isn't real. And how the hell do I know, Clark? Why don't you ask him or something? It's not my dream, for Chrissake!" He quickened his pace and joined loudly with the others' song.

"You don't have to get so goddam touchy, Austin!" called Clark; Austin ignored him and kept on singing.

They hiked for the rest of the day, camped early, and started again early the next morning. The going was slow; it was getting cold. They camped for lunch early in the afternoon. When the meal was almost over, Quin called the group to some order and stood near the ring.

"This is pretty much it, men. We've gone just about as high as we can. Right now, I'm going to leave you here with our friendly guide — I don't know

where he learned to speak English, but he did — and I want you to ask him some questions about his people, his culture, his religion — be creative here. Write all this down, please, as I'll be checking notebooks again when I get back. And, don't feel so locked into Cultural Materialism this time — remember what we read in Julian Steward, and those articles by Fox." He untied his boot and tightened the laces. "Now I've got some. . . personal business up ahead, which I'm sure you are all familiar with. . . ." There was a snicker from the group; someone nudged Harris. ". . . and I'll be gone probably until dusk. Tonight we get to bed early, so we get an early start tomorrow; we hit Pokhara the day after that, reach Katmandu the day after that, spend one more day there and then back to the states. Okay, this guide goes with me, and I need one more volunteer."

Several voices spoke up; "I'll go," said Austin.

"Scott, how about you?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I've already been altitude-sick three times this morning. . . ."

This time Austin's was the only voice. "Quin — I'll go."

Quin turned and started up the path with the guide. "Come on, then, Mr. Austin. You won't need your pack, but bring your camera. I'm out of film."

They hiked in relative silence for almost three hours; they were apparently quite near their final destination when Quin turned again towards Austin.



"Untitled"

Yvette Levita

“Austin.”

“Sir?”

“Austin. . . you’ve been a good student — we’ve had some good talks, haven’t we? I think you’re pretty bright.”

“Well. . . thank you, Dr. Quin. . . .”

“Listen Austin, I don’t really care what the others think about this. . . .”

“Hey, Quin, really I think they all just. . . .”

“But today,” Quin continued, “I feel. . . today we might see something, something really beautiful.”

They had stopped hiking; Austin stood awkwardly looking from Quin to the mountain and back again to Quin. Quin’s voice was soft and far away; he seemed to be speaking more to himself than to Austin. “Something really beautiful,” he said again.

Austin started when he heard the call of the guide from a short distance up. He and Quin moved quickly to where the guide stood, motioning at a dark hole in the rocks and speaking excitedly in his native tongue.

“This is it, Austin, just as the villagers described. I guess no one has seen it in a few years; but it’s supposed to live in this cave. . . .” Quin was on his knees now, looking carefully at the ground around the cave. “No prints — no droppings — still, he seems to be sure that this is it.” He inspected the cave mouth, a low opening surrounded by fallen rocks. “Dammit, dammit, Austin, I don’t think I can get through here. Come here — help me move some of this scree.” They tore at the rocks until their fingers bled; still, the hole didn’t seem to get any larger. Quin sat back and wiped his sleeve across his forehead. “This is useless. This stuff will have to be pushed out from the inside.” He looked at his watch, then at the sky. “We haven’t much time. Austin, you can probably get through this. It must open up inside. Here, take the light. If you find *anything*, Austin, a mark, a funny smell, a scratch on the wall, you start clearing the opening from the inside. All right?”

“Sure thing, Quin.” His throat felt dry. He got down on his stomach and crawled, lantern in hand, through the small opening. The rocks scratched his arms; dust filled his mouth and nose. “Here, push, Quin —” his feet scabbled on the loose rock outside the opening and disappeared. “I’m in. . . .” he called. He switched on the light and shone it around the cave’s small interior. Nothing. . . nothing. . . wait — there, in the far corner. . . . Austin steadied the light and stared.

It must have been dead for at least a week. Maggots and flies covered the matted and filthy hair and filled the gaping silent mouth. Strangely, there was no odor, and no sound in the cave except the almost imperceptible buzz of the flies. One of the dead animal’s rheumy eyes was open and stared blankly at the wall; the beardlike growth of hair beneath the beast’s mouth was stiff with dried sputum and blood, and a dingy yellowed horn, broken at the tip, protruded from the animal’s deteriorating head. Austin turned away and tried very hard not to vomit.

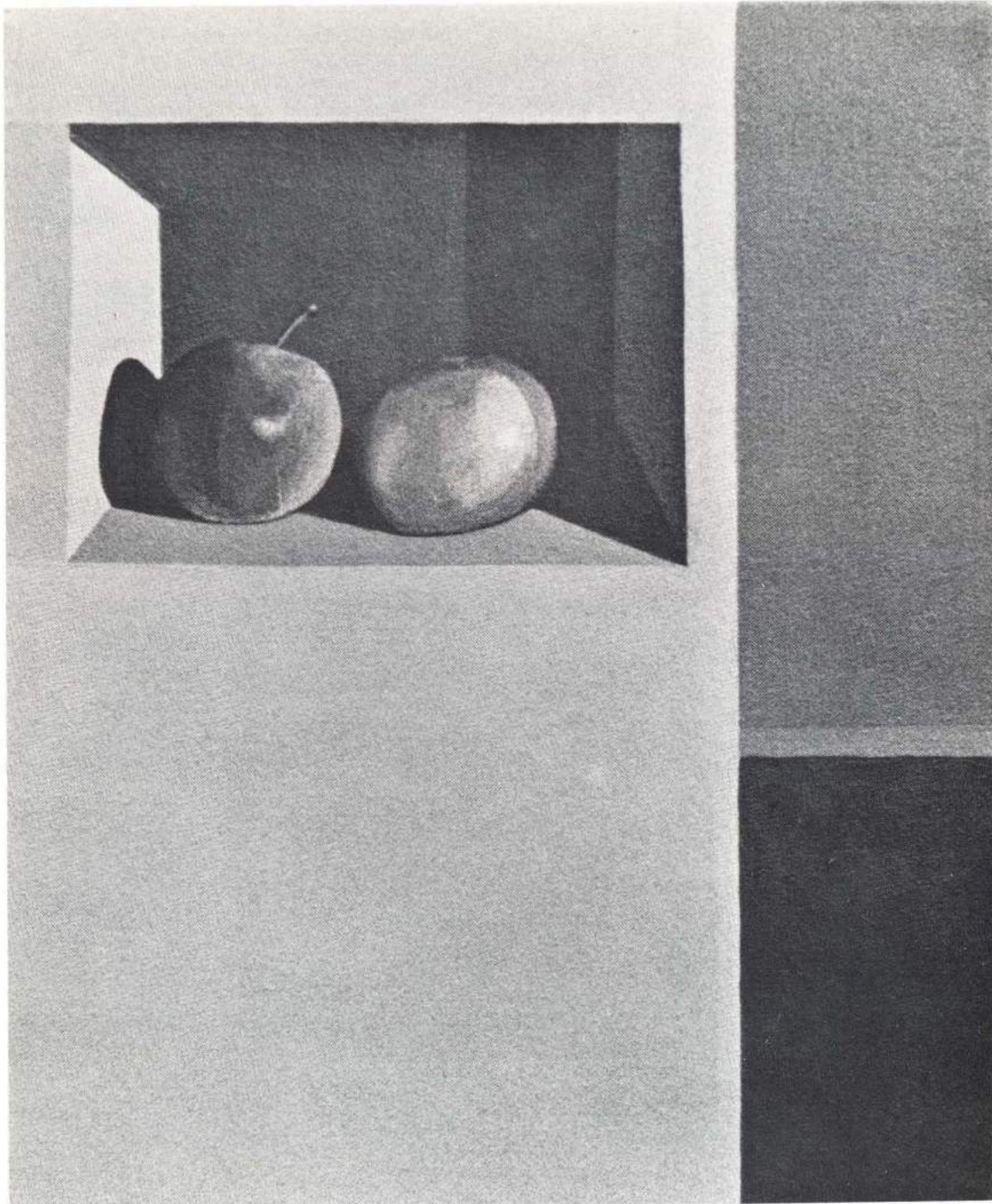
“Austin?”

He snapped his head up and swallowed the bile that filled his throat. “Yes sir?”

“What do you see? Is there anything there?” called Quin from the mouth of the cave.

Austin shone the light again on the decaying carcass in the corner. He took a deep breath. “No sir.” He switched the light off and continued staring into the silent darkness. “There’s nothing here.”

Jan Fendler



"Untitled"

Charles Musto



"Man with Book"

Colin Ewald

The Nun with the Beautiful Face

The nun with the beautiful face
gathers sea shells.

The wind, that lover with lots of neck,
kisses her face
and tousles her habit
as the sea sighs in long swells.

The dark haired man
with piercing, passionate eyes
beckons to her, his arms and heart open
like a sea fan,
his soul calling to her with soft clear
sighs.

The nun kisses her sea shells,
and gives one to him.
He walks on slowly, like distant ringing
Sunday bells,
looking back over his shoulder,
with burning dark eyes, calling her to be
bolder.

The evening sky purples and glows,
with soft suffused light.
She follows at a distance, as on he slowly
goes,

his head turned,
his eyes on hers.
Is her heart scorched and her soul burned,
with love,
with longing?

Silent Pain

Velvet almond eyes
still dart with pride,
cradle tattered ragdoll,
pink ribbon tied aside.
Mouth's too strong
to hurt a smile,
can't cry to Momma now,
want to hide awhile.

Maura Scallon

His lips whisper, "Come to me."
Quietly listens the sea.
Watchful are the seagulls.
The clouds pause in their lulls.

His lips whisper, "Come with me!"
His eyes penetrate.
She does not turn aside her head or avert
her eyes.

It is too late.
Whispers the seagulls, the clouds, and
the sea.

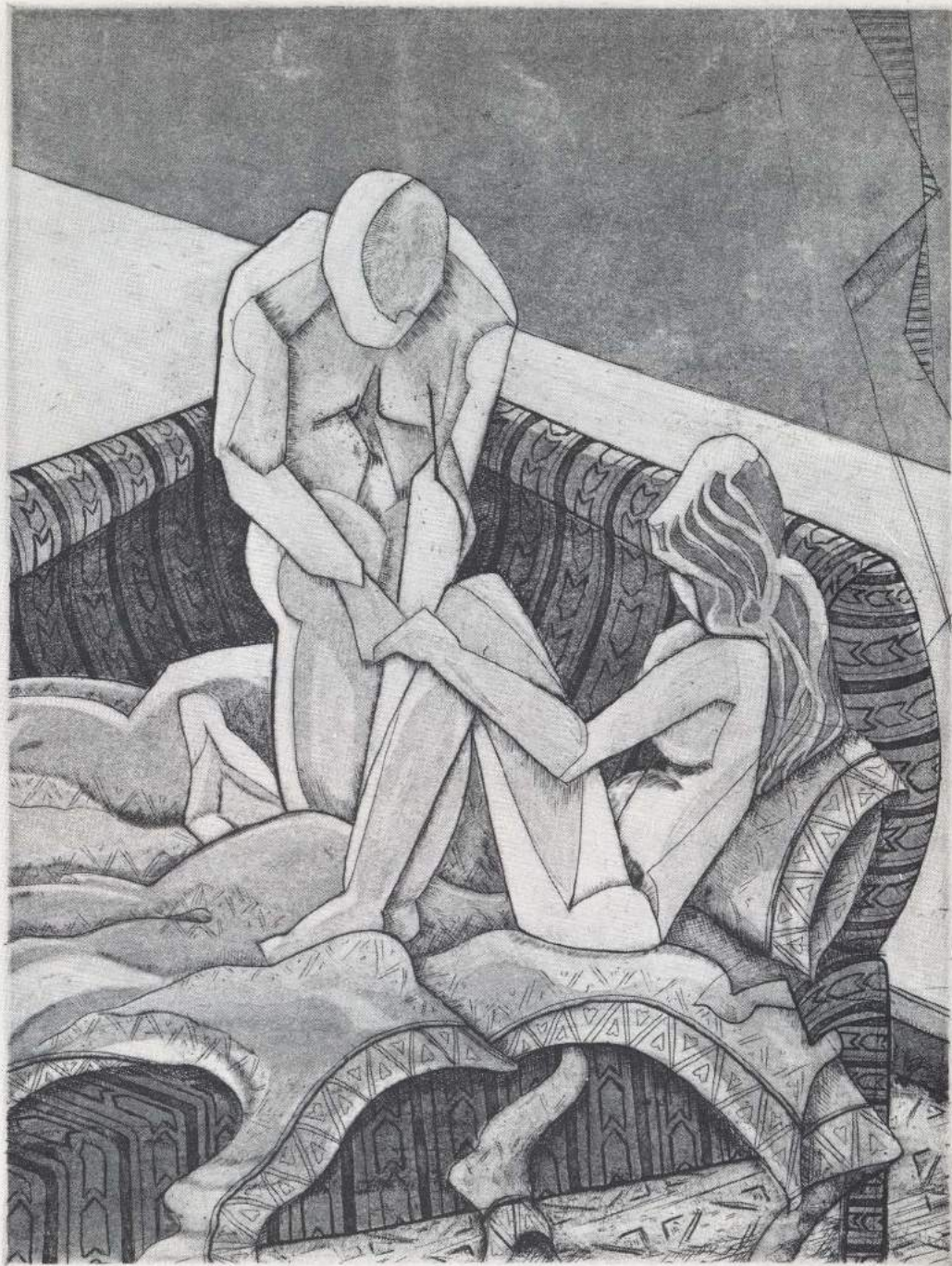
The nun with the beautiful face,
with no regret a trace,
kisses the prettiest sea shell,
softly sighs,
and gives it to the man with the burning
dark eyes.

Denver Sasser

leaf

from a small bud blossoms
mama's little bubushkas
container of life
nature's clock
capturing the rain
kneeling upon its wooden holder
in worship of the sun
then old man winter arrives
and lays them to rest
on the grass
blanketing them
with snow.

Loretta Mark



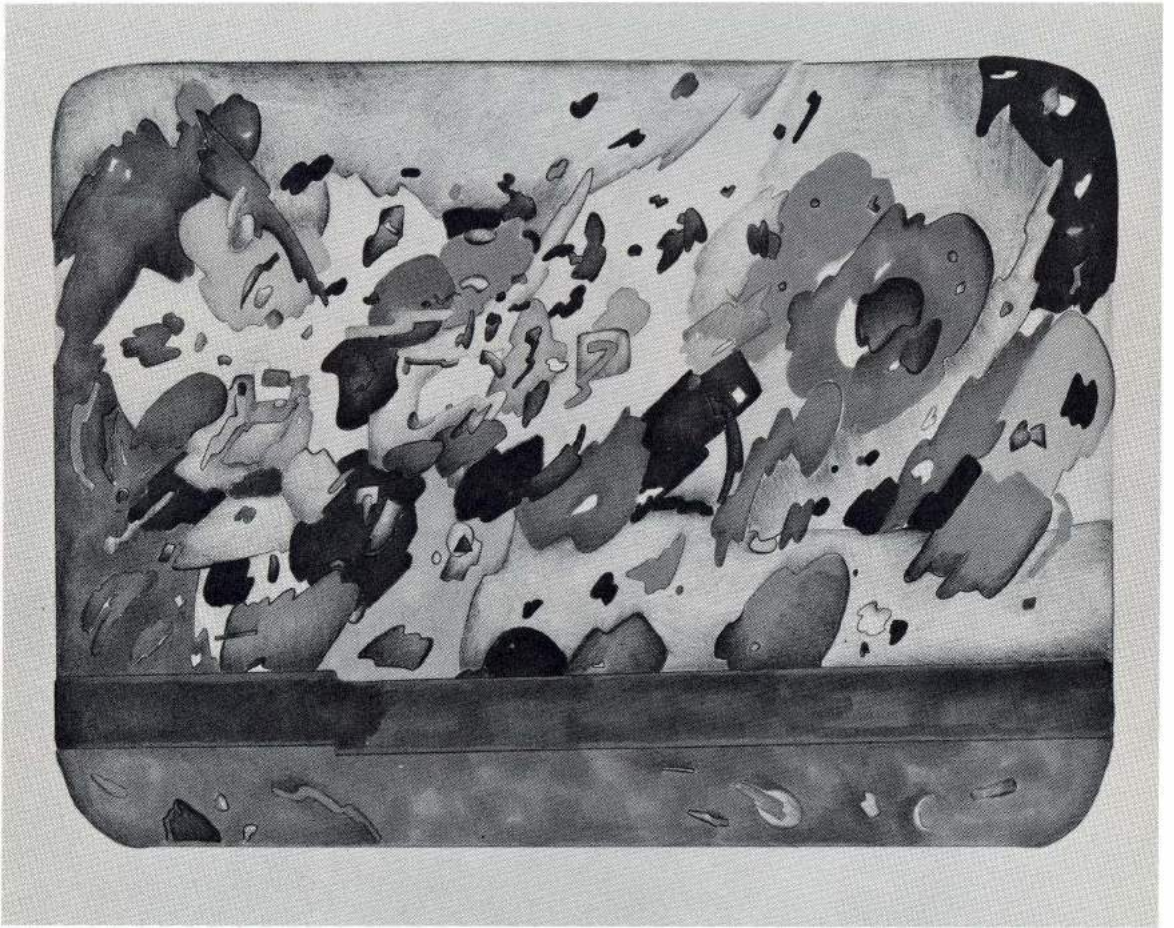
Intimate Moments

Final State

MJK Kirkwood

"Intimate Moments"

Mary Jane K. Kirkwood



"Untitled"

Patrick Ewing



"Untitled"

Patrick Ewing

Books

History and tales of lore.
Mysteries with crooks galore.
Fairy tales with wicked queens.
Tales of hopes and shattered dreams.

Ghosts and Ghouls and witches' spells.
A gleaming knife and ringing bells.
Tales of fear and tales of fun.
All life begins from here;
Page One.

Kristen Rojek

A Tree

It stands in the backyard, tall though bent.
Its branches are the wrinkled, shaking hands
Of an old black gentleman ready for death.
The slimy, shiny trunk
Seems as though it might slither away,
Like a snake after killing its prey.
Yet the tree remains—
Alone, cold, black,
On a frozen February afternoon—
A widow waiting for a hearse that never arrives.

Virginia Kaplafka

Golden Boy

Golden boy

Dark one

How dare she speak to you that way?
You deserve only praise

You will fall before you can
writhe

Why my precious beauty?

Bite back

Vicious python

Stike!

Sink your venomous teeth into wallowy-jello flesh

Lap the languid liquid of her pooling blood

Break brittle bones to powder white bits

Crush her in a dark embrace

Taste the tallow smoothness

Drink the creamy cool of her skin

Leave the clammy carcass cold windwhipped and hollow
tapped of tepid juices

Slither away

Golden boy

Dark one

Slither away

into the smoldering heart

of the hot heat

Sandy Thompson



"Bridge of Sighs"

James Stanley

Manic Depression Japanese Style

My love chanted Hyun, Hyun
benignly joking said Hyun Bun
come over here
I laughed with love
unaware that Hyun Chun
later to seem: a famous geneticist
of the years to come
And a teacher swore
we were all to become like Japanese
in the years to come—again
Like Hyun I thought
After the class confusion he said
not in appearance but
the value of compartmentalism
springing in all minds:
the accelerated, ever growing populous
Oh so this is the fusion I thought

And my next steps
The humor: the confusion of fusion
To AI—Look they're Chinese
And his confusion—How can you tell?
(Why not Japanese?)
You mean you don't know? laugh
I had the secret, I knew
or was just beginning to
Suavely I sang, I think I'm turning Japanese
AI laughed, but did Jay too?
Jay, another link in the plan
Jay looked Korean, Hawaiian, Chinese. . .
but I asked and he came from Japan
People or things gay or not
he never could decide
This is gay or that in rapid firing speech
Time passing he deciding, no, not gay
just a joke, a hypothetical face
Later I thought he a perfect example:
the process of evolution spiraling,
spiraling to present
the years of tension and
ever changing decision
manic depression coming to all nations
and minds within
Upon this later's arrival (Advance compensation for my hell's
too sooned arrival)
Japanese came soaring through my mind
bringing back the fun and the fusion
my love, and AI,
the teacher, his prophesy a jumble, my mumble

Hyun now awesomely transformed to progress
Jay, momentous force surging, still deciding and searching
Flocks in my mind
Now evolutionary answers easy to find
this mania and depression
this human confusion
all a part of humanity's leap forward
to Japanese to fusion
And Japanese kept soaring and soaring
But still only the beginning of my mania's aura
An aura signaling confusion and distress to everyone around
My words a mess, apparently forming answers amusingly true
For only me

Taya Lucas



S. Herdrick

SHE

Sheila Her



"Aphrodesia"

Ann P. Ingerson

Lost Chances

Gary Donaldson slipped through the shadows of late afternoon and into the crowd of people flowing endlessly towards the train station and the drab green coaches waiting restlessly to carry them home. The current carried him nearly two hundred yards before he made his way to one side and onto the steps of the public library. The stream of commuters continued another thirty feet, past the final markets and monthly magazines of the news stand, past the weathered sign at the entrance of the station, into a dimly lit tunnel. Cars honked at each other in the street and, when they could, jerked along in response to stoplights and whistle-blowing policemen.

Gary leaned against a concrete column and studied the people moving past. Suited businessmen moved swiftly around waddling old ladies with spring coats and shopping bags. Women walked in groups, reliving the day or planning the weekend. A mother pulled her wide-eyed child through the crowd. Teenagers, books cradled or under one arm, passed in and out of the library. A young panhandler picked his victims carefully and asked for loose change. An old man in a worn sports coat and a dirty t-shirt fumbled through a waste basket for food or an evening paper.

Shadows lengthened and the slivers of sky between sky-scrapers reddened. Gary searched the sea of faces for one that was familiar. Sometimes his gaze met another's, and he turned quickly away, embarrassed.

Before long the policemen left their corners and the whistle sounds stopped. The stream of people thinned, breaking into islands of ten or twenty, spaced unevenly by traffic lights or turning cars. Late-running executives glanced nervously at their watches and walked faster.

A girl with long, straight blonde hair and faded jeans sat on the stairs. She also watched the commuters pass for a while, then lost interest and left.

Nearby windows had put on bronze masks of reflected sunlight when Gary looked up. Buses and taxis seemed to be the only vehicles still interested in the street. Most stores had closed, window

displays left to stare at the night. Plate glass tilted neon images at strange angles to the sidewalk. In the early evening emptiness, he turned from the library steps and walked towards the lakefront park.

Fifteen minutes later, stopped in a fountain-dominated square, leaning against an iron guardrail, he stared blankly into the water. Green stone sea horses spouted streams from their mouths at the main structure, and soft spray misted his face. Dancing lights played in the cascading water of the fountain and opened a door into his past.

They stood back from the rail, a young man and an auburn-haired girl, his arm lightly around her waist. The breeze off of the lake blew cool. A bullhorn announced sightseeing tours from the gate of a boat. On board, strings of Christmas tree lights danced gently with the motions of the wind and the waves. Inland, lines of autos rumbled along a wide boulevard.

Tourists chatted around the circle of the fountain as a jet of white water shot skyward from its center and ran with the wind. The watchers tried to dodge the mist. Flashes of light let instamatic cameras freeze the sight.

The fountain settled back into three-tiered waterfall form, color flowing into color into color. Sculpted sea horses neighed silently from the four corners of the pool.

The young man brushed the girl's hair with his lips. She pressed closer.

"It knows you're here," he said softly. "It's turning blue and green just for you."

The colors, her favorites, slipped in silky sheets down the sides of the fountain and into the pool, spreading beneath the hooves of the half-rearing sea horses. He hugged her gently, trying to warm her against the cool night air.

Later, they walked slowly down a tree-lined lane, and the breeze brought the smell of roses and the sounds of softball games. Lamps, great white globes on concrete poles, watched over them. Restless birds visited drinking fountains for a quick sip or bath. Everything seemed special to the couple, and



"The Lonely Hallway"



Scott Garlich

they drew closer to each other in a world of their own.

He picked lilacs from a bush and offered them to her. She raised them to her nose and tasted their fragrance, then raised her eyes to his.

"Thank you," she whispered, smiling.

"I love you, Lynn." The words stumbled over his lips.

She moved closer, but he did not kiss her. He wanted to, but he was afraid.

She did not say a word. Both seemed to know that something special belonged to them, yet a lingering sadness kept it from completion. They could speak of blues and greens being meant for her alone, of matching horoscopes that made him, a Leo, her pet lion, but they could not speak of love.



They lay on their backs, side by side on an old army blanket. Wispy clouds raced lightly across the white face of the moon and hid the silver points of the stars. A foghorn sounded. Children, those not asleep in their parents' arms, ran between blankets and near benches, laughing and shouting. To the west, the night-time face of downtown blinked neon. A Pepsi-Cola sign in white lights alternated the time and temperature next to the flashing red bars of a railroad sign. Steady against the dark sky glowed the purple top of an anonymous office building.

The young man sat up. The smells of hot chocolate, coffee, and hot dogs drifted from the concession stands. He looked towards the bandshell, white against the black trees of the park. Musicians stood or sat, tuning their instruments or talking or studying their music. He looked towards the benches where elderly men and women sat expectantly listening. Some watched the children, reflecting on their own childhoods. Some pulled wraps tighter against the lakefront chill.

He looked down at the girl. "Lynn," he said softly. She smiled. He brought his hand up to lightly caress her hair and looked deeply into her eyes. "You're beautiful," he said, and he tried to tell her in his gaze that he really meant it, that it was not a game.

She looked embarrassed and broke eye contact. When she looked up again, her smile was gone. She seemed sad. Again, he whispered the forbidden words, "I love you," and was not sure whether the sadness was in her face or in his heart.

Intermission ended. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was introduced and played. The neon signs continued to flash, the foghorn cried out, the children fell asleep, and a soft mist had crept over the area by the end of the performance. On the ride home, she fell asleep, her head resting on his shoulder. Once again he brushed her hair with his lips and whispered, "I love you."

Gary Donaldson stood between a statue of Christopher Columbus and a busy boulevard, the lake breeze cool and moist on his skin. Sunset's orange still colored the western sky between the office buildings and the downtown hotels. Neon signs flashed. Old people with lawn chairs and blankets began to fill the park behind him. Lights went on in the bandshell, and children played while their parents spread covers on the ground. He hesitated. He could seek her in the rush hour crowds and keep her memory alive in the park, but the sound of the music touched him too deeply. So, he waited for a break in the traffic and crossed the street back into the everyday world.

A young couple walked down the concrete path, around the bench section, and onto the grass to the left of the bandshell. He spread a quilt on the ground, and she dropped her sweater in one corner and sat beside it. She pulled a transistor radio from her purse and turned it on as he joined her.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"We can listen to this until the concert starts," she said.

"Don't you want to talk?"

"We can still talk with the radio on," she said, laughing.

"Well, I'll be right back," he said. "I'm going to get a program." He stood and started towards the benches, her "Okay" hanging behind him in the air.

She took a deep breath and traced the pattern on the quilt with one finger, then pushed a strand of auburn hair back from her forehead. She watched the man approach a blue-jacketed usher. She turned to the bandshell, white against the darkening sky, the trees behind it waving gently in the breeze. A plastic ball rolled to a stop against her hand. Nearby, a curly-haired little boy stood watching, afraid to come closer. She rolled the ball back to him, smiling. He picked it up in both hands and ran back to his family.

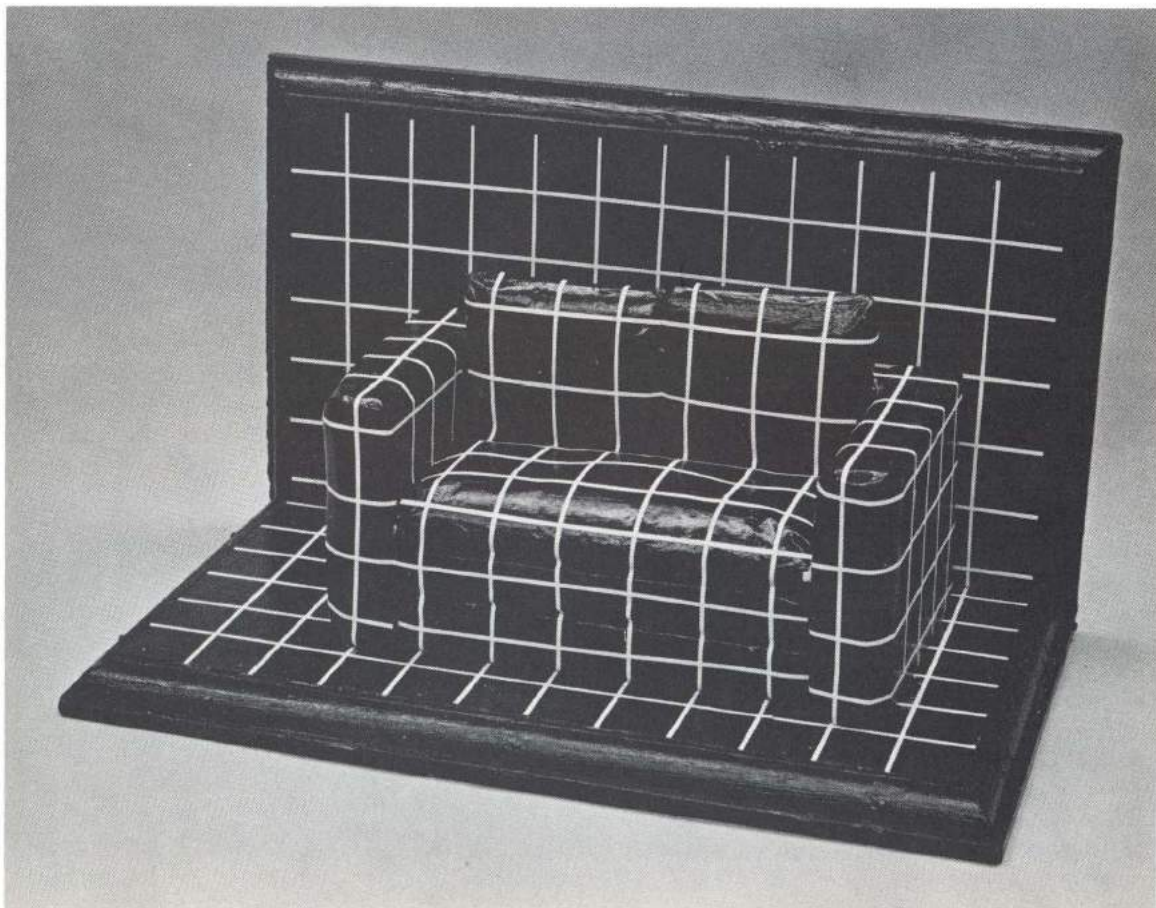
She turned towards a statue in the back corner of the park. "Christopher Columbus," she said to herself. Evening traffic whizzed past just beyond it and a solitary figure stood waiting to cross the street. She lay back and stared up at the sky, watching the stars appear.

The man returned and tried to make small talk, but she seemed to have withdrawn into herself. She half-heartedly answered his questions, then let the conversation die. He finally gave up, lying on his stomach to read the program and listen to the radio until the concert began.

She remained quiet through the first half of the performance, scarcely moving. She watched the stars appear one by one in the darkening sky and once turned her head to watch the neon lights flashing in the west. He saw her wipe some moisture from her cheek and thought something might be in her eye.

"Can I help?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "It's nothing."



"Proposal I"

Robin Bresemann

"Would you like to take a walk? Stretch your legs, maybe get something to eat. How long is intermission?"

"About twenty minutes."

"Well?"

She thought of the fountain. "No. Let's just sit here."

He said nothing for a while, then, "Do you come here often?"

She looked towards the bandshell before answering. "I used to, but not for years now." She reached down, picked up her sweater and pulled it around her shoulders.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"A little." She looked off towards the benches and beyond, to the lake, where a lonely foghorn cried

out. Her heart echoed that cry.

He leaned across and kissed her gently on the lips. "I love you, Lynn."

She looked at him for what seemed a long time. She felt familiar yet confused images of lilacs and blue-green fountains, of great white lamplights, and of a tour boat lit up like a Christmas tree, gently rocking with the waves.

"What sign were you born under?" she asked.

"What?"

"What sign of the Zodiac?"

"Pisces," he said.

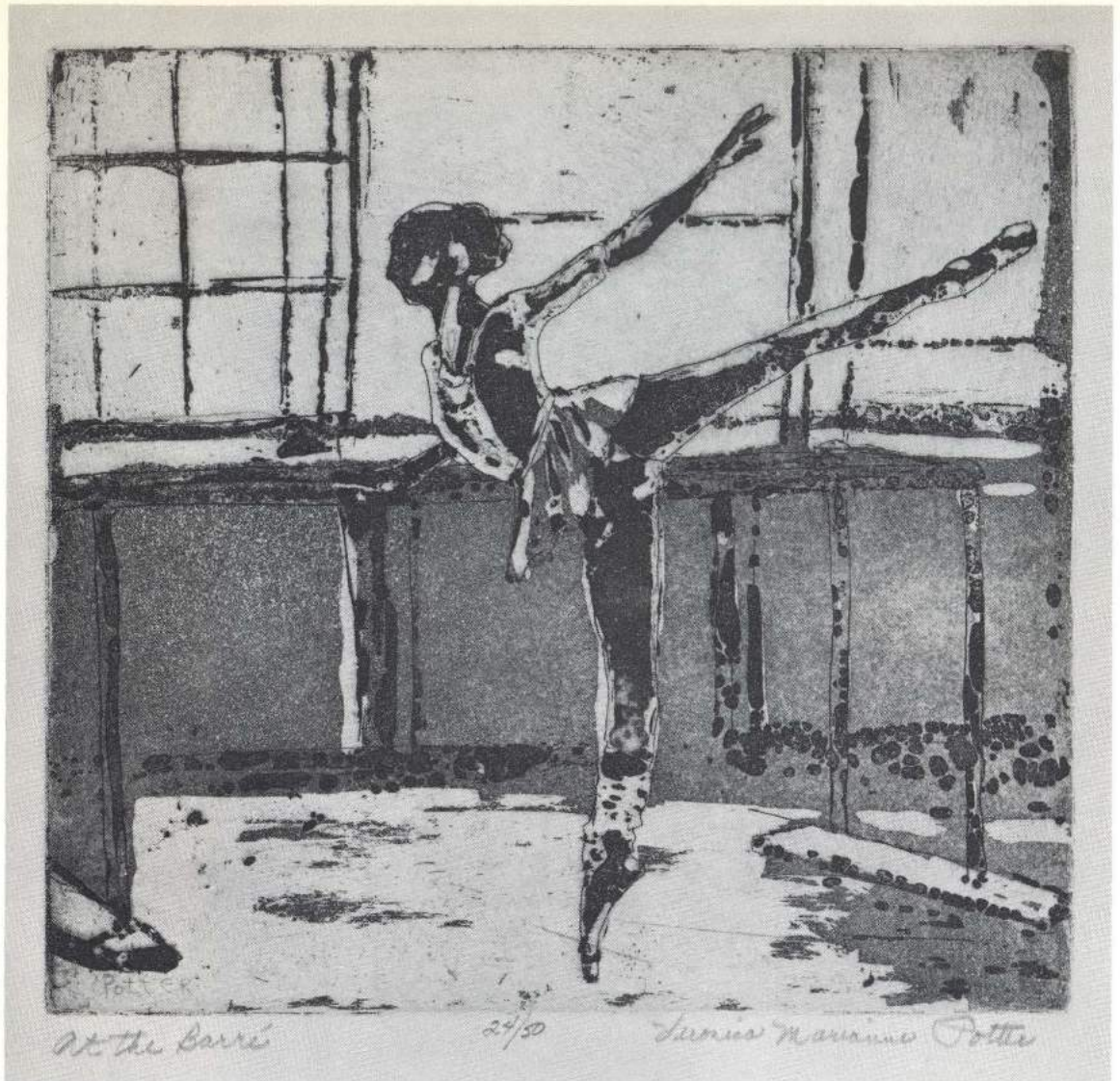
"The Fish. A water sign." She sighed. "Then you can't be my pet lion," and she turned away.

Tom Field



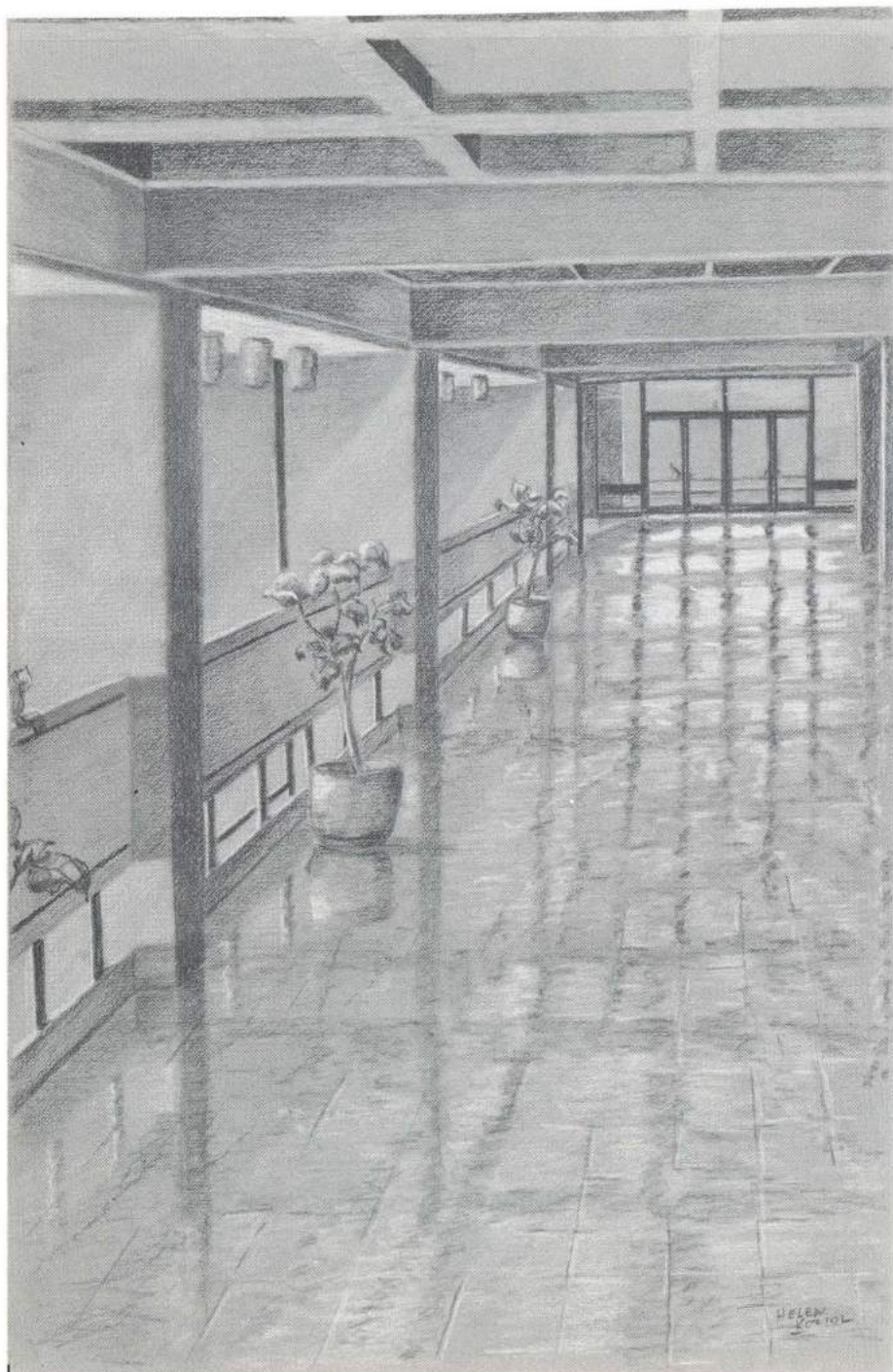
"Untitled"

Daniel Brown



"At the Barre"

Veronica M. Potter



"Perspective"

Helen Koziol



"Jeff"

Paul Pearson Jr.

Look into the Shades of Night

Frail feather forests play frozen games across the crystal panes
Press close to the window my lips warm against the glass
look into the shades of night
My breath swirls upward curling into the crisp cold air
The flesh of my fingertips hovers moist and shaking
Reaching to touch the brittle membrane wanting to shatter it to
fragments

Headlights blare by
illuminating my fragile eggshell
Then glare into blurs
obscured by misty branches of condensation

My breath catches sharp in my throat
No I will not let you out You try to force your way
But I will close the blinds tight my face straining hard
and the skin drawing taut
You sting my eyes open to bleed beading down my cheek
Spilling over the rim when I blink trailing a wet path through
my makeup clouded face
I taste your cool salt with my tongue
As you pool in the corner of my clenched mouth

Sandy Thompson

Fall Foliage from Interstate 90

Autumn's an aging whore with painted face—
Scarlet berries' blood applied for make-up.
Gown of rusted sumac and Queen Anne's lace,
Revealing breast like silver silos thrust-up
Taut, from the valley floor where she reclines
In leafy disarray. Tempting callow lovers
To linger longer and stay awhile to dine
On windfall apples where mud-wasps hover.

Winter comes upon her, deep in speculation
Caught unawares—by the false warmth of pleasure—
Images of past passions are her treasures;
Shouted promises of love with each ejaculation!
Like stacked straw scattered by an icy wind
Blown clean of memories—Oh how she has sinned!

Robin Spencer

Ebb Tide

I wanted only to love you
And for you only to love me

Diamonds bouncing off
Of early morning waters

I wanted only to love you
And for you only to love me

Tide's coming in
On darkening shores

I wanted only to love you
And for you only to love me

Ship sailing away
With flag flying half-mast

Kathleen Brown



"Untitled"

Gena McNamara

Odyssey

They were three years past Antares
 On the starship Amber Light,
 On the Avenue of Ceres,
 Thirty years of ceaseless flight;
 Past the temple of Diana
 With its spaceward flashing beam,
 Past the port of New Havana
 And its prehistoric steam;
 Earth-born geometric patterns
 Oscillated on the screens,
 Signs of rings like once-viewed Saturn's,
 Forms and figures, off-world scenes.
 They had watched the tails of comets
 Tracing pathways through the dark,
 Yet had missed the children's laughter
 And the puppy's happy bark,
 And they stood now, decades older,
 Unaware of sparkling stars,
 With the night becoming colder,
 Thoughts of death on ancient Mars,
 Thoughts of suns with too much fire,
 Thoughts of worlds with not enough,
 Pains of oceans rising higher,
 Pains of dreams that were too tough;
 And they wondered would the passing
 Of the planets and the years,
 And the ever new reclassing
 Of their hopes and of their fears
 Find them resting by a river
 In the silence of the night
 With the moon a slender sliver
 Through the trees, a silver sight.

They were three years past Antares
 And the starship sailed on
 Down the Avenue of Ceres,
 Past the graves of Albion.

Tom Field



Cathy P. Seiflow

"Self Portrait"



"Untitled"

Lynn Yauger

Second Shift

She is seated at her chair feeling for the baby in her womb.
Oh ho, little baby, are you in there?
You are sleeping, aren't you?
She never knows what to say to babies.
She rises for a look out the window.
First she pulls the blind,
then lifts herself up onto the sill and dips one arm
into the breeze.
The taxi cab slows at the curb so she picks up her sandals,
and a brush, and grabs her purse.
She climbs in to the back seat and smooths her hair.
I am on my way to my second abortion she tells the driver.
I feel much more in tune with this one,
the baby, I mean.
I don't squirm to get away from it, nor beat my brow with my hands.
I feel quite comfortable with this little baby in me.
If I dance we are both dancing.
If I swim we are both swimming.
If I leap we are both leaping.
Seven swans aswimming,
thirty-two old men swimming;
all of them diving off the roof of a building,
her apartment building most likely.
The natural function of womankind:
to run unclothed through many fields and sing windingly,
and give babies to men they love, but did not want to love.
The unnatural function of womankind:
to climb into taxis enroute to the clinic,
for termination of pregnancy.
This is a most unpleasant task,
like spring cleaning and getting under all those beds.
She is not far from turning back and spending the day in the park.
In the park she would swing.
If I swing we are both swinging.
If I laugh we are both laughing.

Pam Stotmeister



"Crash"

Marilu Welvers

From the Sin

You're breathing,
I feel it
with your heart's persistent purring at my ear.

Your breasts rise,
then fall
counting each passing moment I am near.

Not a word passed between us, breath to breath;
eyes upon your body,
tracing a path my fingers found before.

A shiver runs to mount my spine,
flashing out from here—
your skin meets mine,

We're breathing,
trading life and liquid for each second we are here.

A sudden lull
from the pushing, panting scene that we had played.
A simple sport turned two to one;
A smile transformed—
to a gasping grasping rush; filling our need.

Then its over,
so classic
Falling limply in a pool of warmth and wetness
Scent and moisture bathe you, you're shining as you smile,
and hold me, not knowing what's to come.

Inside you, there's magic.

A primal, growing purpose that's to be
For in that single second, you gave your life to me,
forced a special spark: the reason for the deed.

From the pleased seed we shared,
there came, too small to view
A miracle of flesh and fluid
to feed inside of you, its fragile frame
too weak to face our tribe alone

Until the day it is to be:
Unveiled in a rush of sight and sound.

You strain and smile, panting as before.
Lying softly in a pool of white and wetness
and hold me tighter—
Merging flesh together with a forge of muscle,
and cry out—

With a push,
and pain as penance,
two cries are heard.
In a world our own
we lie together,
the ecstasy relived

Two into one, now three.

Steve Johnston

The Big Bang

I search for my home
at the top of a missile poised
which space man in white covering

hurls into the space of my soul.
My G-distorted flesh
is his laboratory, my anchorless heart
his odyssey of adventure
with care only for the probe

my soul lost in outer space of my inner being
does not haunt you

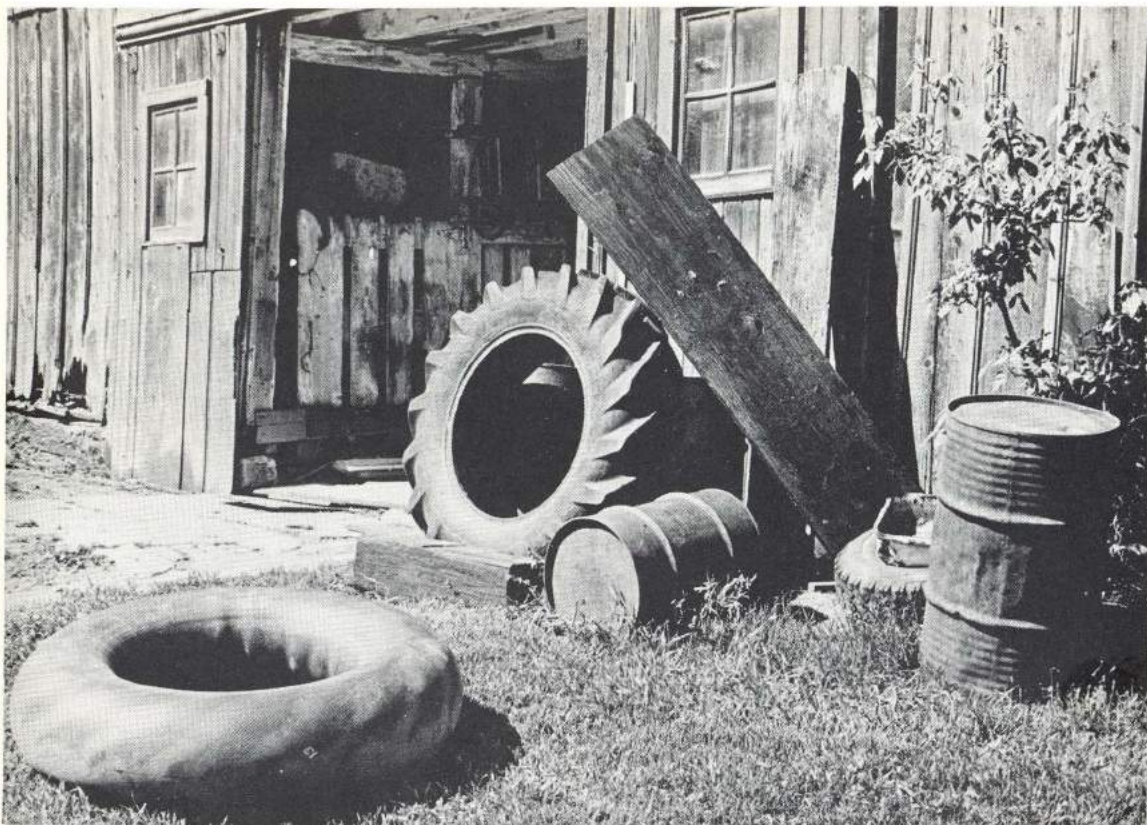
continually it floats weightless
still it pinwheels
in star dust
beyond reclaim, beyond hope, beyond life

my body fills your space capsule of desire
fulfills your need for propulsion
you satisfy your curiosity in my heavens

you seek your meaning in life
through my soul's death probe

for you . . . life begins with
the big bang

Denver Sasser



"Barn Scene"

Rose Zaffina

(Untitled)

Well I was easy eight when life was good,
And I was green as grass, and summer gold,
And flowers died but fathers never would,
I pretty-dreamed and never once slept cold;

And on the night my father fell asleep
For good, my mother screamed at me to go
Down the stairs to where the dark lay deep
And heavy at the doorway just below

And wait there for the rescue ambulance
That comes to carry traitors from the world.
Well open doors help ambulances, I guess,
But darkness won't do much for little girls:

I say I'm not afraid to die, but mark
The cold and restless fear I have of Dark.

Jan Fendler

The Unicorn

In the sweet stillness of the dawn,
a honeyed morn of miracles,
riding the winds of myth,
comes the fabled great horse with pointed
lance atop his majestic mantle.
Trolling through dewey new grass
and running with small forest creatures
the unicorn brings luck and prosperity
to all.

To live for all time is his plan,
if only in the heart.

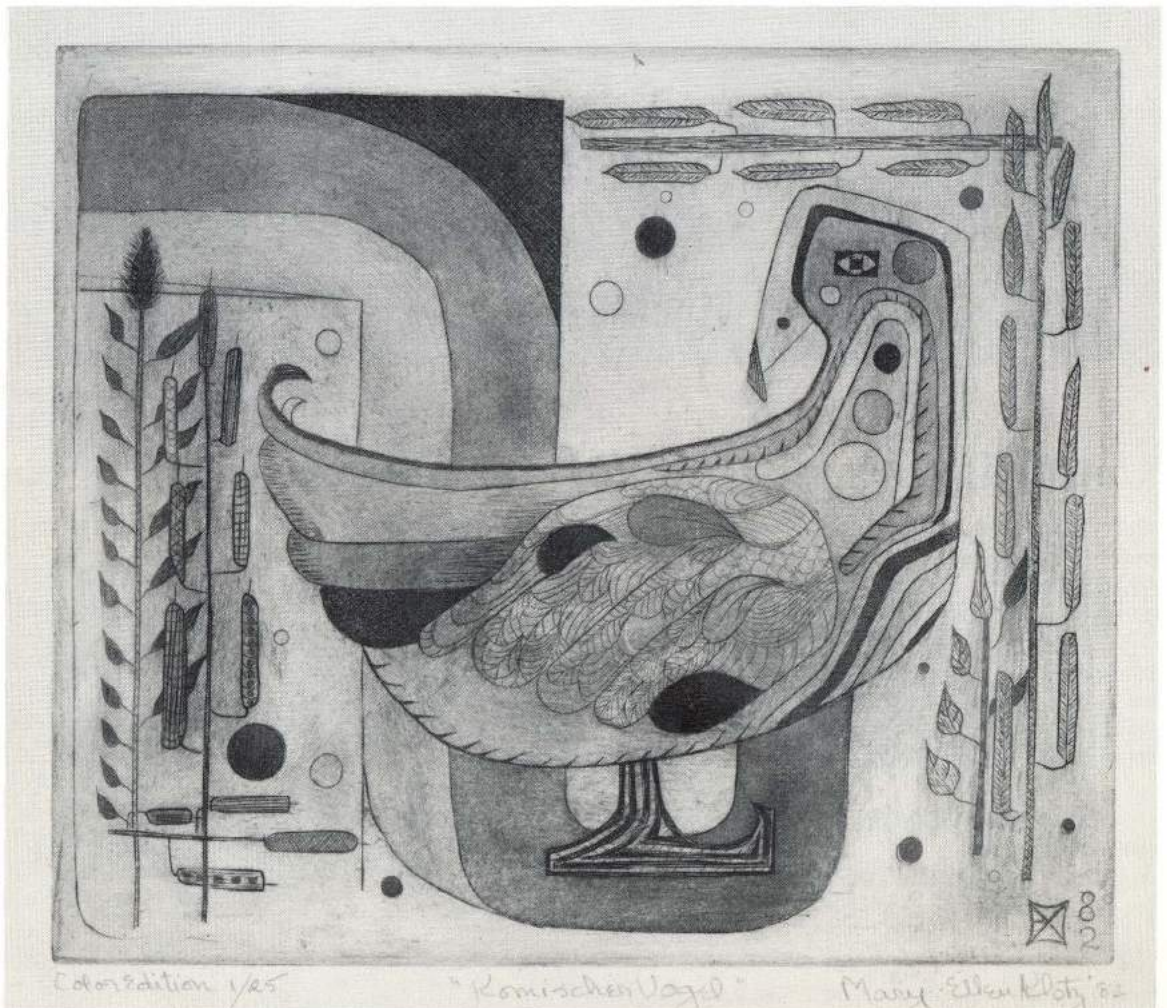
Kristen Rojek

Goddess-To-Be

The noise increased the expectation
The news, the news
The change
The group tried to decipher it
No trials, no deaths
Waiting in silence
The woman is part of the ceremony
The news, the news
The echo in my ears
The image carved in my soul
The drums were loud
The sentence, the sentence

No trials, no deaths
Silence
Curiosity, foolish people
And on the platform just me, all by myself, hands tied, blindfolded,
In anguish, in despair, full of hope and love
I had been chosen to marry one of the gods
But at the last minute, new plans.
I have to be reborn
I am going to be painted blue
I will be part of the sky.

Ana Maria Machado Lee



"Komischer Vogel"

Mary Ellen Klotz



"Quilt"

Teri Miller



"Crop"

Mary Jane K. Kirkwood

All Will Be Mine

Wanting and needing beyond the
point of expression.
Constant thoughts and dreams of the
ultimate possession.

A smile or a glance that touches
my heart.
Longing for the moment we won't
have to part.

Strength and courage must be
my direction.
To attain the splendor of
love's perfection.

The dream, the drive and
a little time.
Through patience and hope all
will be mine.

Linda Slowik

(Untitled)

To place upon you the burden
of my unleashed insanity
has been my worst crime, my love,
my lust for your humanity.

And now I long to be redeemed,
to return your peace I've stolen.
Of anger at myself and love
for you, my self is swollen.

If losing you should be the price
I pay for my stupidity,
then strive ahead and hearken not
the pleas of my futility.

Should days and nights and moments with you
deny my life ahead,
with held back tears and love's true smiles
I'll think of you instead.

Albert Vazques



"Across the Prairie"

Robert E. Esbensen

(Untitled)

Little girl in the mirror touching nose, touching
ear, strokin_ hair, eyelid, roundness of chin,
there is a knock
at the door.

She lifts her skirt, and fingers her thigh.
Come in.

No one is home; I'm playing their albums and
drinking their beer, she teases, dancing once
around them, and clapping her hands.
They fall in a heap on the floor,
forming a trampoline.

She pounces upon it and jumps again and again.
Her body is caught in the air in time to the music,
on the borrowed album (stolen music).

I only drink the cans of beer from the back,
she whispers.

She is doing her best thinking while jumping.
She stops and looks in the mirror and smiles.
Next door to a Chinese take-out, she orders
Shrimp Hong Sue saying its name in her mouth,
running her tongue around it, saying it in the
doorway.

In her rice is a lascivious man begging her
to kiss his face; she kisses him, and spoons
rice over him, and turns the album over.
I'm lonelier than you probably think
she confesses to the visitors on the floor.
They are asleep but she places a shrimp
on each of their foreheads,
and lifts her skirt for them,
and laughs.

Pam Stotmeister



William Rainey Harper College

Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067