



**Jerry Bass • Amy lone**

***Tjotjok***

## ***Tjotjok***

Having transformed life into art  
the Javanese have a word for it;  
*Tjotjok*—to fit, as a key slides  
smoothly into an old lock once use  
has grooved them into easy harmony.  
*Tjotjok*—to defy gravity, as slim  
limbs pedal balloon-tired bicycles  
down broad Jogjakarta streets  
slowly, soundlessly, space-  
suspended dreams moving in  
soft brown waves that take the  
breath as they remind us that  
the journey is all we are given.

\*Pronounced *chō-chōke*

# ***Tjotjok***

**Jerry Bass • Amy lone**

***The Diatropo Press***

Berkeley, California

2002

*Tjotjok*

Poetry: Jerry Bass • Art: Amy lone

©1989 Jerry Bass and Amy lone, All Rights Reserved

First Printing, 1989

Second Printing, 1989

Third Printing, The Diatrobe Press, 2002

ISBN: 0-9725330-0-1

The Diatrobe Press

2161 Shattuck Avenue

Suite 234

Berkeley, California 94704-1313 USA

[www.diatrobe.com](http://www.diatrobe.com)

No Part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the authors.

## Table of Contents

### *Homeless In My Heart*

This Sadness Runs Deep . . . . .	3
Rainy Day Thoughts . . . . .	4
Manhood . . . . .	5
I Never Intended This . . . . .	6
A Walk on the Berkeley Campus . . . . .	7
Who Am I? . . . . .	8

### *Love's Anguish*

Very Few Things Happen at the Right Time . . . . .	13
He Who Is Trying to Liberate Himself . . . . .	14
We've Been Married Twenty-Seven Years . . . . .	15
I Would Love Her . . . . .	16
Cry Just A Little . . . . .	17
Large Question . . . . .	18
Cage of Understanding . . . . .	19
Reasons . . . . .	20
Plastic . . . . .	21

**Connections**

Visit . . . . . 25  
The Weight of History . . . . . 26  
Reading Essays on Wallace Stevens  
While the Couple Upstairs Make Love . . . . . 27  
A Response . . . . . 28  
Thinking Back . . . . . 29  
Out of Sync . . . . . 30  
Sacrifice . . . . . 31  
Regal Woman At Poetry Reading . . . . . 32  
Not Once Looking Back . . . . . 33  
I Never Told You . . . . . 34  
Another Sad Spring . . . . . 35  
Dying of Cancer . . . . . 36  
I Don't Know How To Be There . . . . . 38  
Telegraph Avenue Mystery . . . . . 40  
Other . . . . . 41  
Unanswered Question . . . . . 42  
We Knew We Were Creating Each Other . . . . . 43  
That Damn Machine . . . . . 44  
Tourist . . . . . 45  
No Room in Touristland . . . . . 46  
The Meeting . . . . . 47  
We Don't Have to Know That . . . . . 48  
The Men in the Room . . . . . 49  
Men in Power . . . . . 50

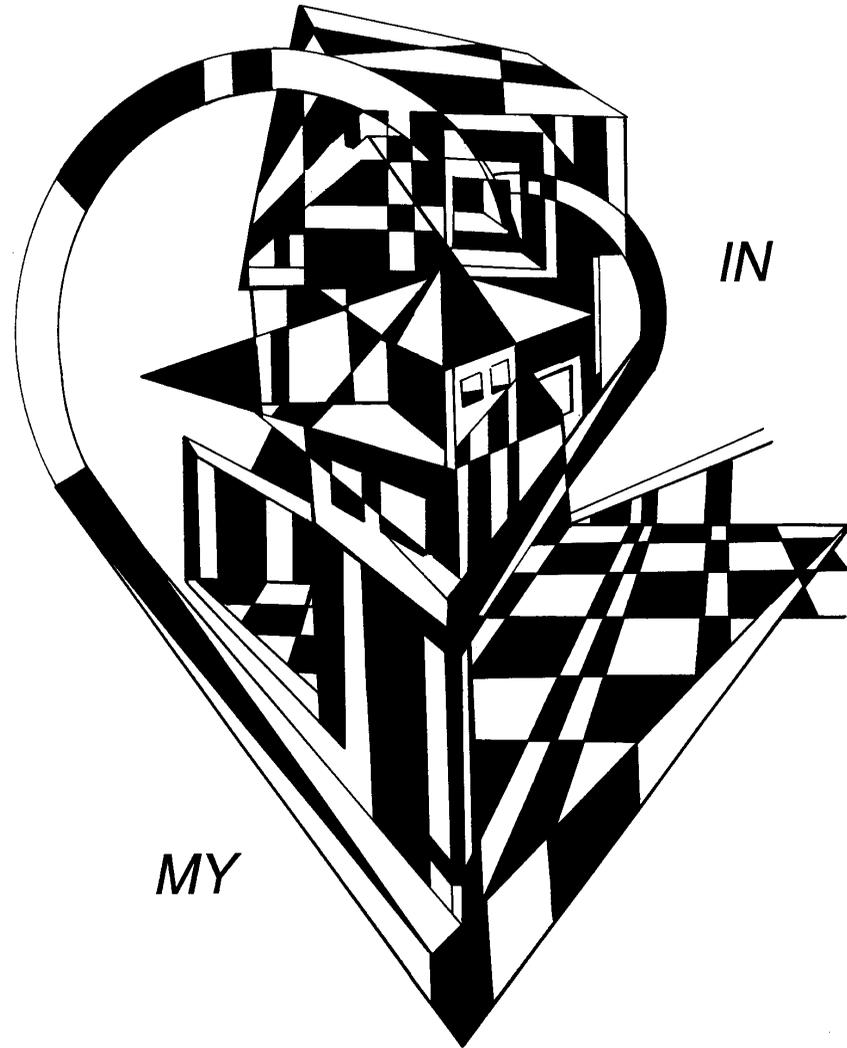
### ***Approaches To The Muse***

This is Not that Poem . . . . .	55
So I Got One Poem Published . . . . .	56
So, Finally . . . . .	57
The Way it Spozed to Be . . . . .	58
Edna St. Vincent Millay . . . . .	59
Kinnell . . . . .	60
Before the Poetry Reading . . . . .	61
Unneeded Teacher . . . . .	62
None of It Makes a Damn Bit of Sense . . . . .	63
Another Stolen Child . . . . .	64
The Next Phase . . . . .	65
Henry Miller (1892-1980) . . . . .	66
Tennessee Williams (1914-1983) . . . . .	67
Who Do You Talk To Now? . . . . .	68
Monsieur Baudelaire . . . . .	69
Art Opening . . . . .	70
Blue Clouds . . . . .	71
Colors . . . . .	72

### ***Harmonies***

Now I Adore My Life . . . . .	77
I Walk This House Naked . . . . .	78
Interrupted Conversation . . . . .	79
Rebirth . . . . .	80
Morning Grace . . . . .	81
Slownesss is Beauty . . . . .	82
Learning to Attend . . . . .	83
One Tough Old Man . . . . .	84
Earthweavers . . . . .	85
Our Common Home . . . . .	86

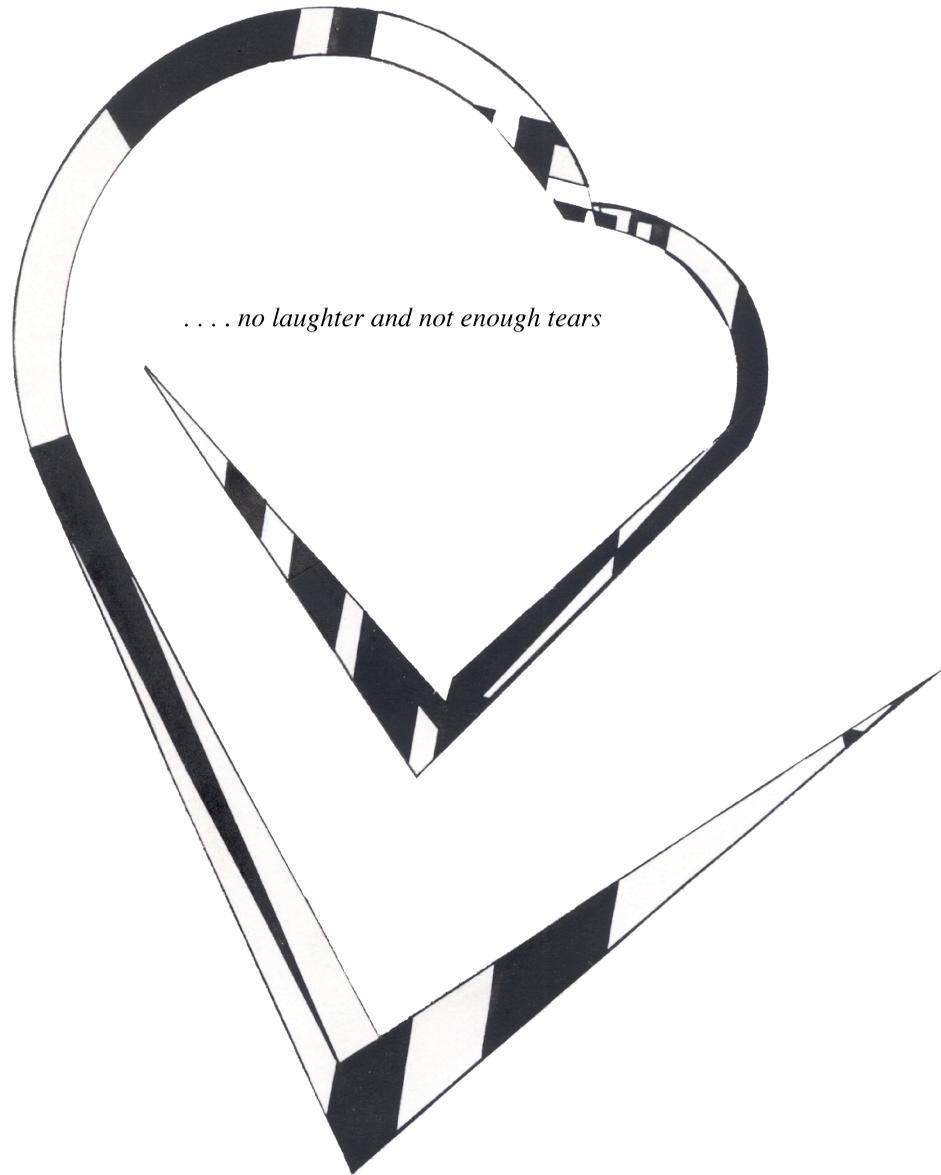
*HOMELESS*

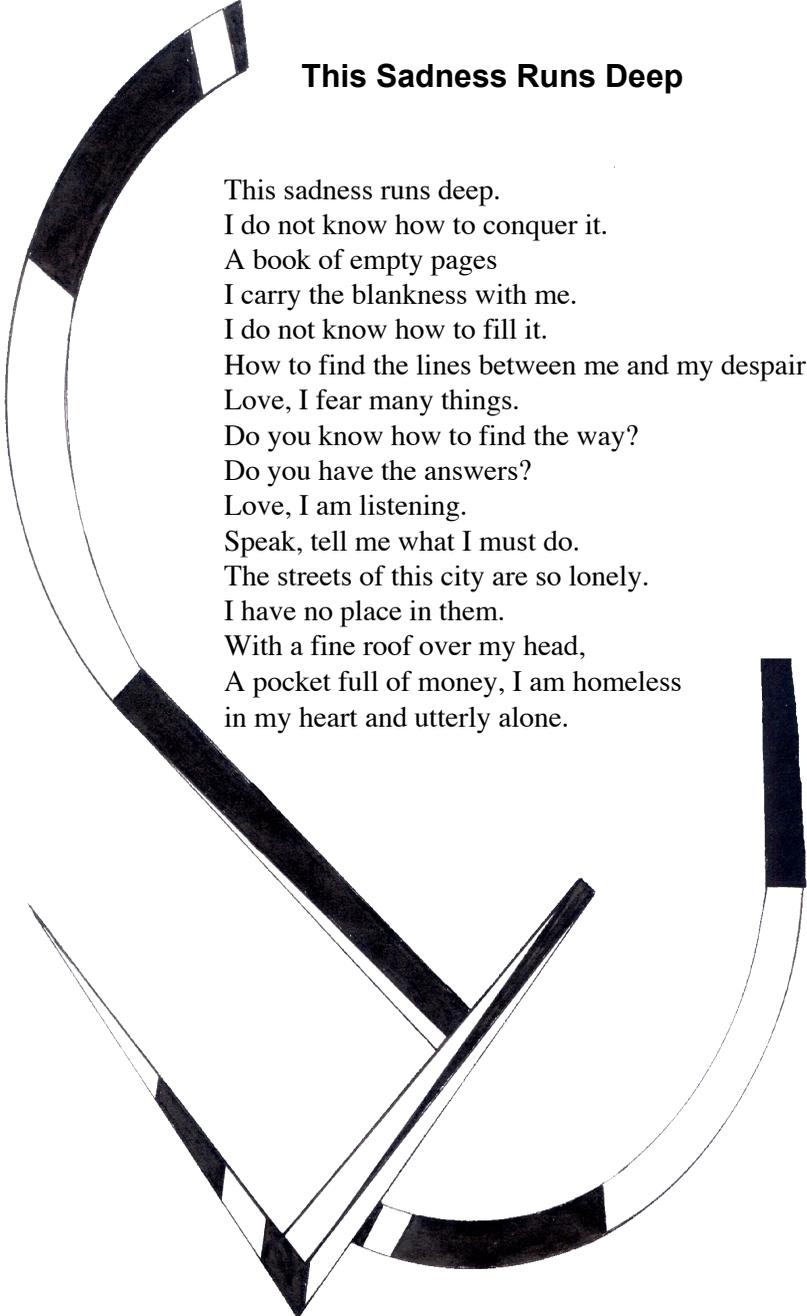


*IN*

*MY*

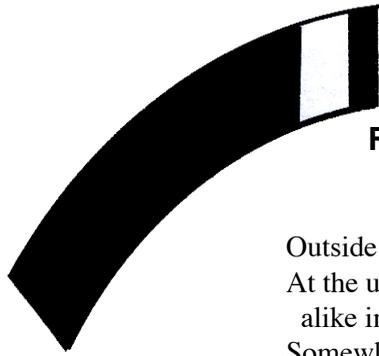
*HEART*





## This Sadness Runs Deep

This sadness runs deep.  
I do not know how to conquer it.  
A book of empty pages  
I carry the blankness with me.  
I do not know how to fill it.  
How to find the lines between me and my despair.  
Love, I fear many things.  
Do you know how to find the way?  
Do you have the answers?  
Love, I am listening.  
Speak, tell me what I must do.  
The streets of this city are so lonely.  
I have no place in them.  
With a fine roof over my head,  
A pocket full of money, I am homeless  
in my heart and utterly alone.



## Rainy Day Thoughts

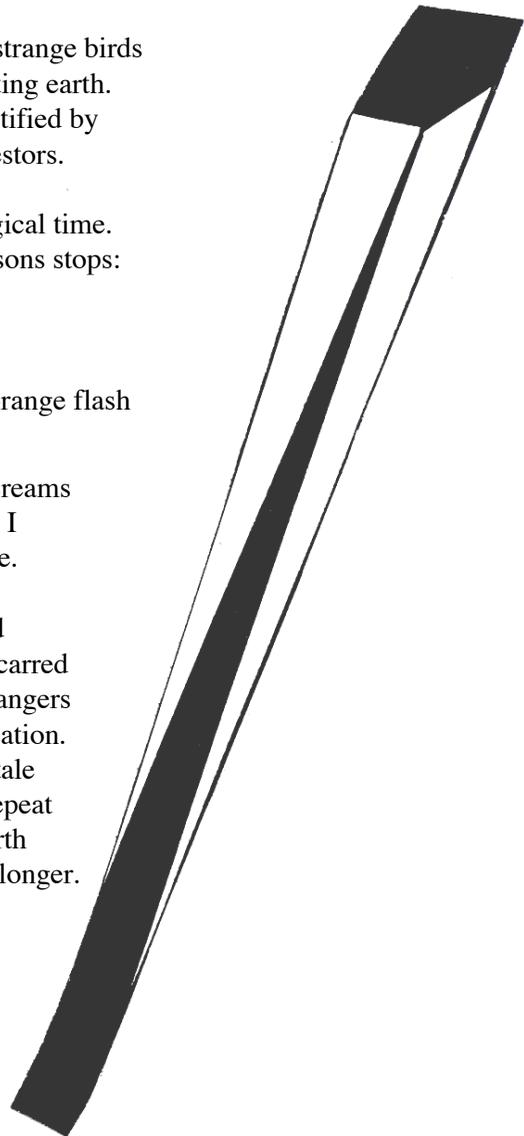
Outside the rain continues.  
At the universities Foucault replaces Marcuse  
alike in their impenetrability.  
Somewhere a crying child lies ignored.  
Fifteen years from now he will murder  
an old woman who lived a life of kindness.  
People in blank buildings accost typewriters  
and wonder where it went wrong.  
I grow far-sighted; squint at the page;  
sleep away the day; prowl into night.  
There is no laughter and not enough tears.  
I cannot recall the last time  
I saw an elephant.  
Even the mosquitoes have disappeared.  
I would write a travel book  
if there was somewhere to go.  
I wonder what my father is doing now.  
I have not seen him for years.  
My children seem tired.  
The rain can be depended upon.



## Manhood

The droppings of the strange birds  
are no help to the waiting earth.  
The patient earth, fructified by  
the bones of the ancestors.  
Wonders of centuries  
cannot slow technological time.  
The movement of seasons stops:  
Green-terraced fields  
Red-roofed huts  
Children  
Gone in a moment's orange flash  
Without any screams.

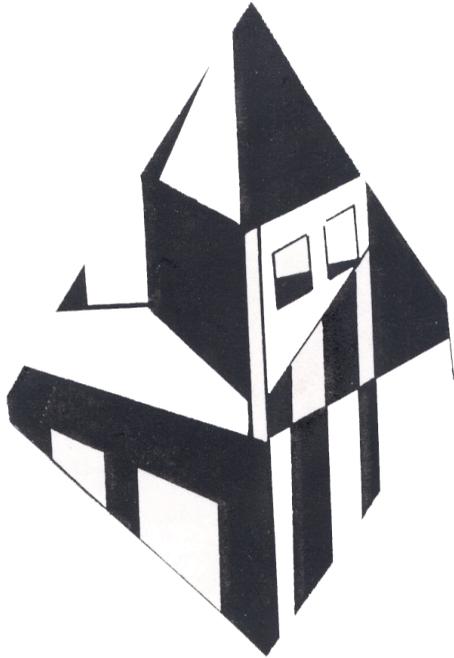
Eight years old, my screams  
resound in memory as I  
dangled from the ledge.  
The long drop a test  
a tentative step toward  
a manhood too soon scarred  
visiting napalm on strangers  
on an unknown civilization.  
Re-enacting the tired tale  
we seem doomed to repeat  
until the shuttering earth  
can put up with us no longer.



## I Never Intended This

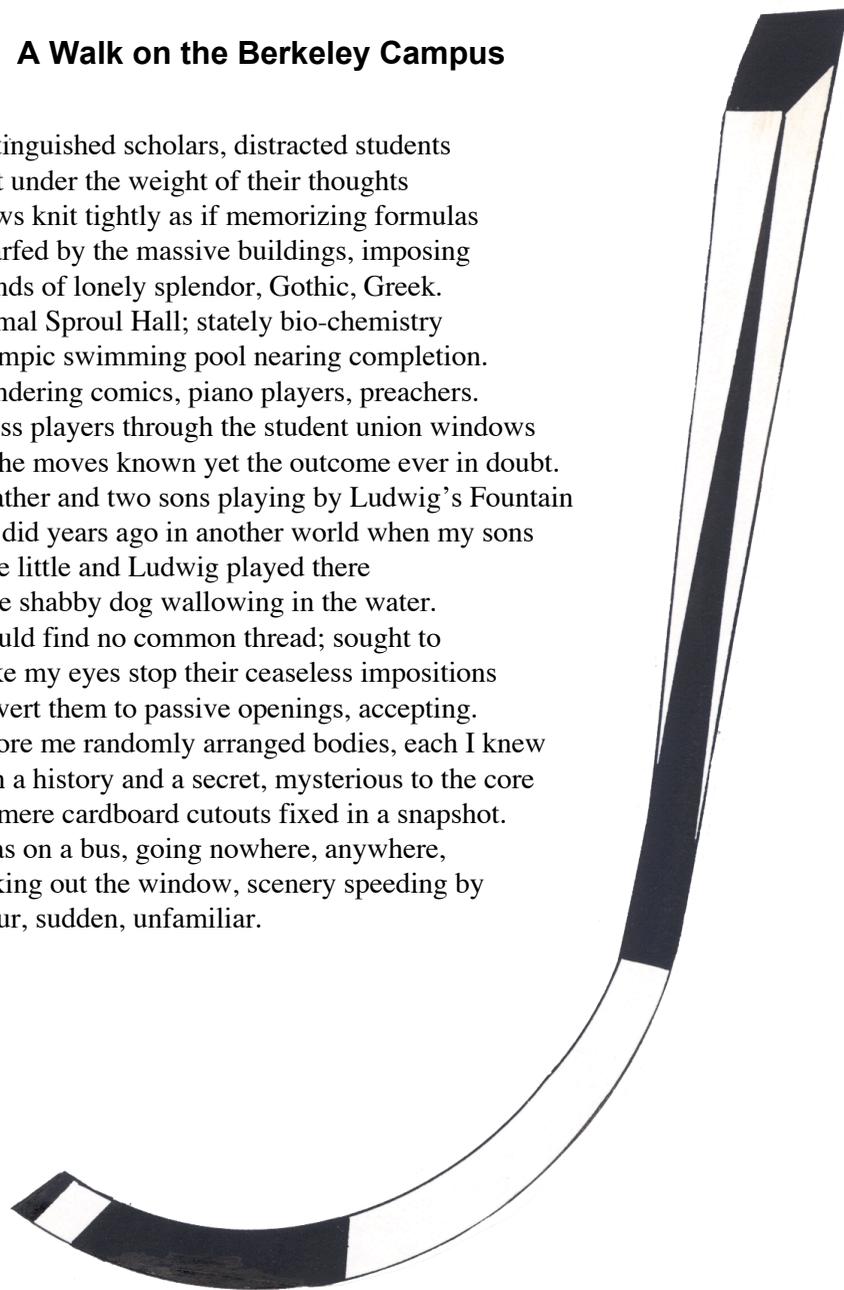
Glazed-eyed, they line up  
waiting for their books under  
the bronze-ceiling  
magnificent  
if they would look up.

“Next, whose next?”  
the gum-chewing student calls.  
No one knows. They look stunned.  
Too many books,. Too much to do.  
Sweat runs down my sides.  
I never intended this.



## A Walk on the Berkeley Campus

Distinguished scholars, distracted students  
bent under the weight of their thoughts  
brows knit tightly as if memorizing formulas  
dwarfed by the massive buildings, imposing  
islands of lonely splendor, Gothic, Greek.  
Formal Sproul Hall; stately bio-chemistry  
Olympic swimming pool nearing completion.  
Wandering comics, piano players, preachers.  
Chess players through the student union windows  
all the moves known yet the outcome ever in doubt.  
A father and two sons playing by Ludwig's Fountain  
as I did years ago in another world when my sons  
were little and Ludwig played there  
large shabby dog wallowing in the water.  
I could find no common thread; sought to  
make my eyes stop their ceaseless impositions  
convert them to passive openings, accepting.  
Before me randomly arranged bodies, each I knew  
with a history and a secret, mysterious to the core  
yet mere cardboard cutouts fixed in a snapshot.  
I was on a bus, going nowhere, anywhere,  
looking out the window, scenery speeding by  
a blur, sudden, unfamiliar.

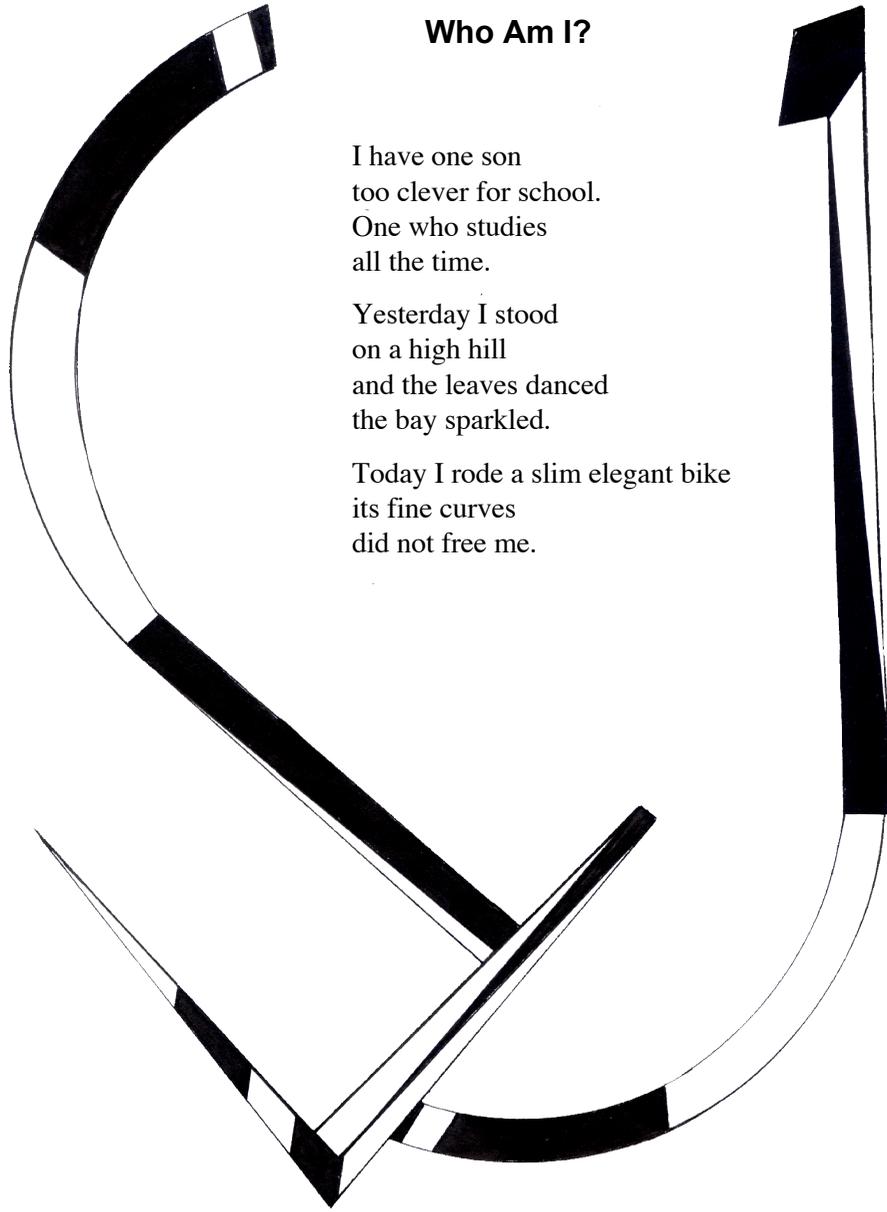


## Who Am I?

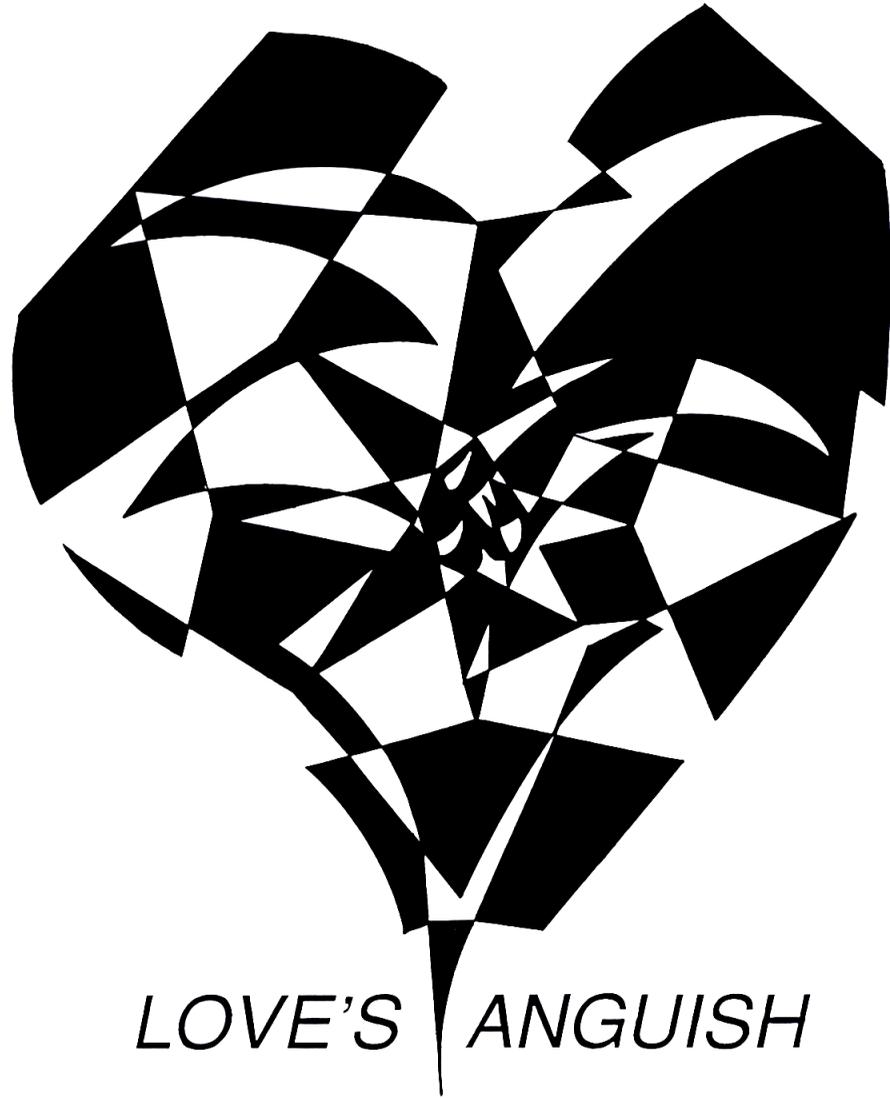
I have one son  
too clever for school.  
One who studies  
all the time.

Yesterday I stood  
on a high hill  
and the leaves danced  
the bay sparkled.

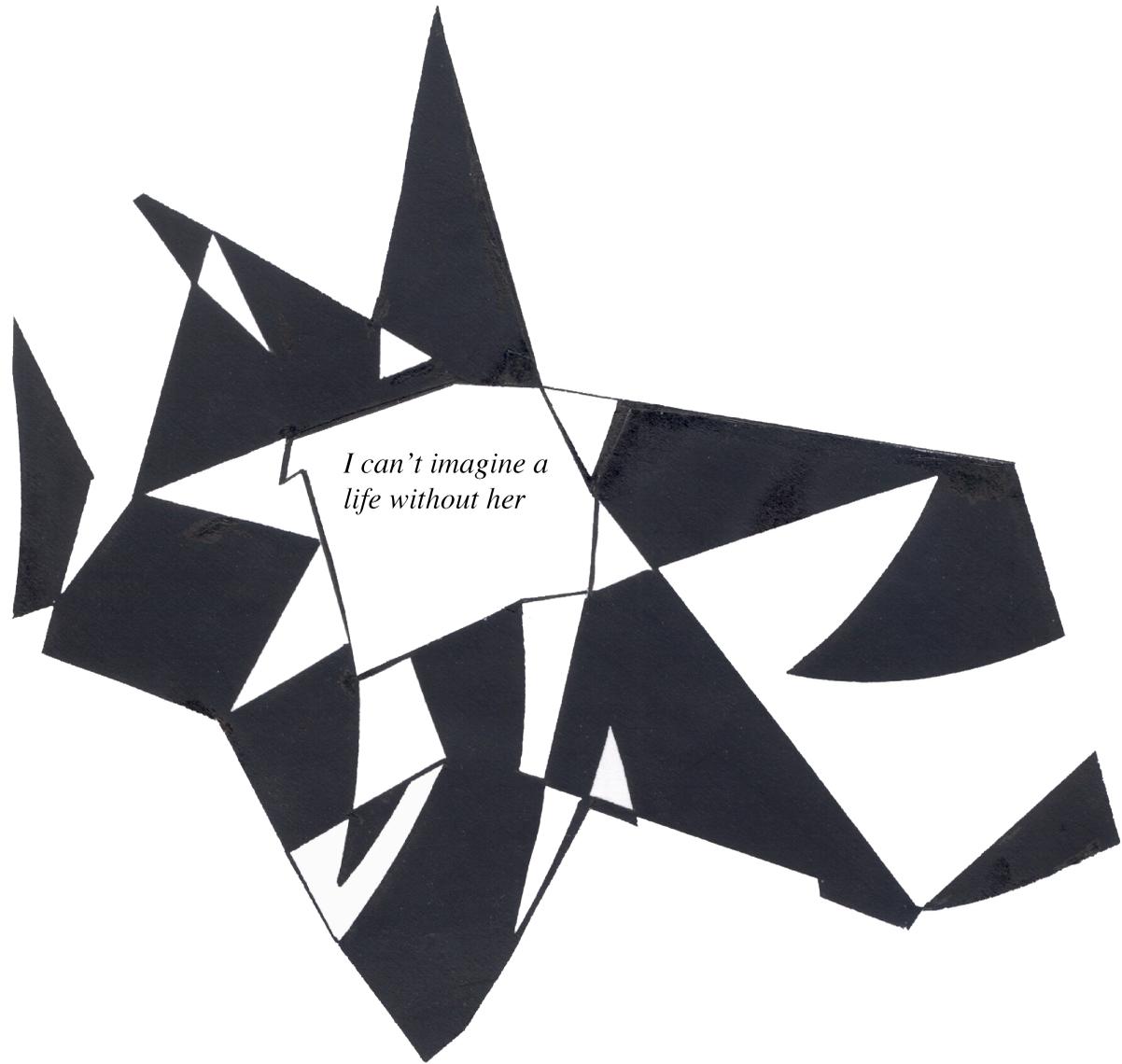
Today I rode a slim elegant bike  
its fine curves  
did not free me.



*. . . the journey is all we are given.*



*LOVE'S ANGUISH*



*I can't imagine a  
life without her*

## Very Few Things Happen at the Right Time

Herodotus

A woman of courage  
told me once  
timing is all.

She was speaking of  
love.  
I left her.  
It wasn't the right time

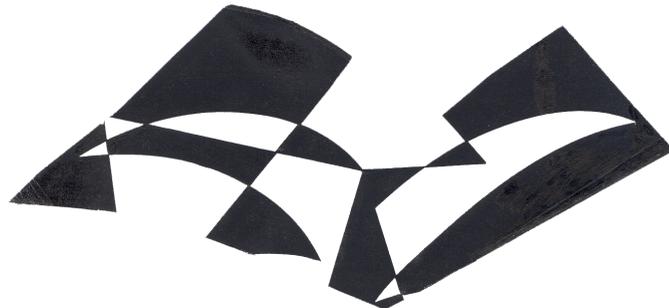


## He Who Is Trying to Liberate Himself

“The relationship . . . is in fact the story of  
a struggle in the dark on the part of a  
man who does not yet know himself . . .  
and who is trying to liberate himself.”

Henry Miller, *The World of Lawrence:  
A Passionate Appreciation*

You who brush aside my discontent,  
how little you understand:  
Dreams are meant to be impossible!  
You who hold me safe,  
how much you understand:  
Days are meant to be dangerous!  
You whose claims wear so well,  
I'm not happy at the way things are  
and at times it seems  
I cannot come to terms short of madness.  
And if I do not know how to flee your sanity  
I do know we must insist on the dark  
and heavy seas. “The world,” says Miller,  
“grows grayer, drearier, deader.” And thus  
must we not insist on our lonely  
light, make of ourselves a large project  
embrace everything, understand  
this discontent not as a niggardly thing  
but as the intimation of titanic possibility?



## We've Been Married Twenty-Seven Years

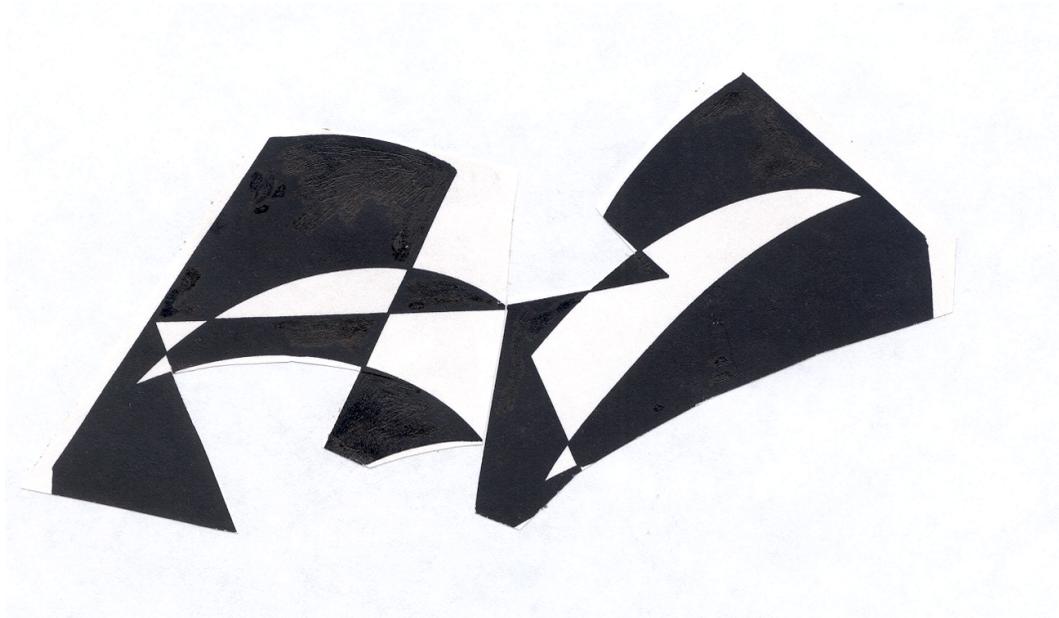
I lie in bed  
reading Creeley  
and know he has  
known many women  
and in them  
met himself.

In the next room  
she sits with an  
Agatha Christie.  
I cannot imagine  
a life without her.

I would be in  
a far country  
where they speak  
Spanish  
Alone in a  
busy bar  
A stranger  
quietly drunk  
on tequila.

## I Would Love Her

She is a rock.  
She does not give nor  
sway with wind, the burning seasons.  
My heart lies heavy with her pain.  
I would have her laugh, cry, scream  
I would tell her: love, don't worry  
Don't worry.  
There is nothing to fear.  
She would not hear.  
For her my words no longer matter.  
They vanish in air.  
I would save her  
if she would let me  
If the time were not past  
And time will have its vicious way.  
And I am an army with nothing to defend.

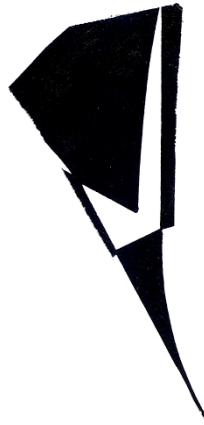




## Cry Just a Little

To feel sorry for you darling  
has become second nature  
the sinews of our life together  
habits built glacially over the years  
until all grace was lost.  
Lies repeated so often they became true.  
Is this then time's revenge? This inability  
to see anew the wonder we were and are?  
Friends find it sad, predictable, hackneyed.  
Estelle would talk about it  
and she understands the deceptions culture  
plays, woodsy witch that she is.  
Alan has every label lined up,  
ready to write a brief on long legal sheets  
The pros, the cons,  
The list does not, most decidedly does not,  
include life and death.  
They appear nervous, concerned  
for us, for themselves, the mutability of time  
the fragility of relationship.  
"Only connect" "Hell is the other"  
Everyone an expert on endings.  
There are so many endings.

We learn from our mistakes  
to the extent that they kill us.  
There is no life without murder.  
Everything else is a lie.  
We stop crying once we realize  
that there is no answer, we are alone  
and nothing is what it seems  
even the sun above us.  
No, I am wrong.  
Cry just a little that we  
will not go on as once was  
so easy, so assured.  
Cry just a little



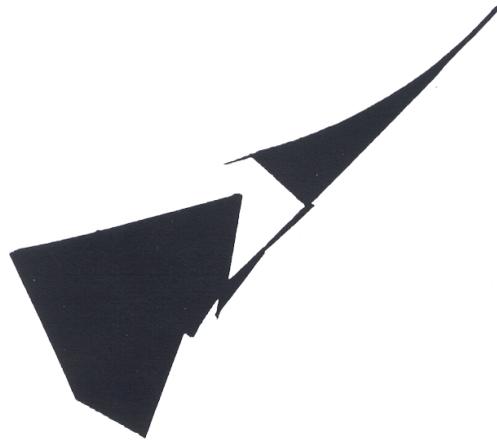
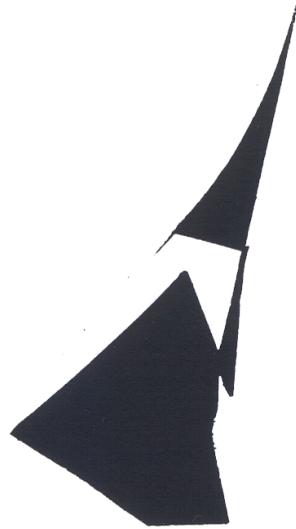


## Large Questions

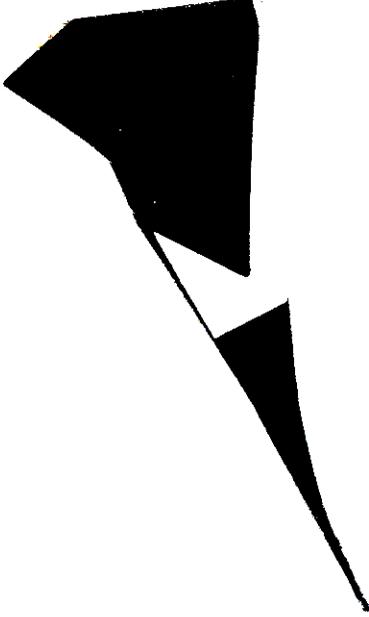
And as I am leaving  
At the last moment  
You spring  
Uncoiling a question  
A lifetime could not resolve.  
You stand there at the top  
Of the stairs questioning  
Our very lives as I slip out the door  
And then complain when I return:  
“You just don’t listen.”

## Cage of Understanding

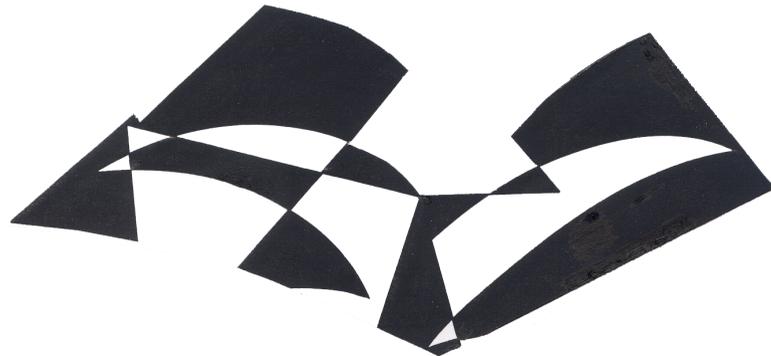
You explain (o so kindly) how my dreams  
are rich in meaning: the bus, my body;  
the snaked tongue, awareness of duplicity.  
You specify with numbing virtuosity  
the unconscious ways I turn from you  
my failures to communicate directly.  
So many insights leap from you  
I am trapped in a cage of understanding.

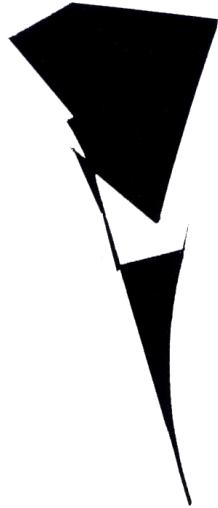


## Reasons



I must leave though for no good reason  
for you are kind and I could find no better.  
It makes no sense I'm the first to confess  
for you are kind and I could find no better  
Say it is tiredness or the absence of surprise  
for you are kind and I could find no better.  
Say I owe myself a debt of suffering  
and until I pay I cannot know my way.  
Say I hunger after loneliness and despair  
Say I want to discover how much I'll miss you.  
Say I need shadows to weave myths to live by  
and you are too much in the glare of light  
hurting my sight leaving no cave to hide in.  
I could compose I suppose a reason a day.  
You with so many answers little need mine.  
But I tell you, I cannot stop inventing them  
Say I don't grow younger and the hunger grows.  
Say I am tired and want to bear my solitude alone.  
But you have never required complexity:  
Say simply I am cruel; say I'm a fool.  
I have no defense; I will keep inventing one.



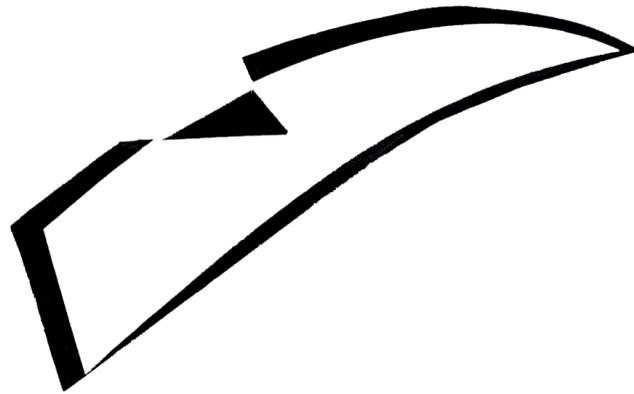


## Plastic

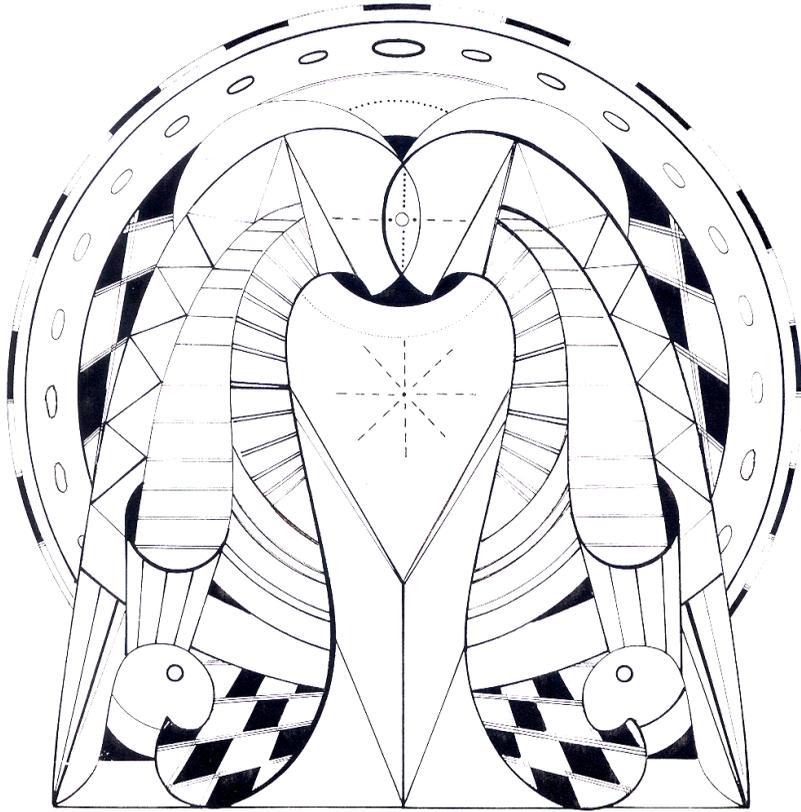
Hon  
I give you  
jewels as well as buckets but  
you insist on leaping artistry  
well I tried  
it's just not me.

Miracles  
o.k., miracles  
I'll change  
become a free-wheeler  
impregnate  
the every day  
with the infinite.

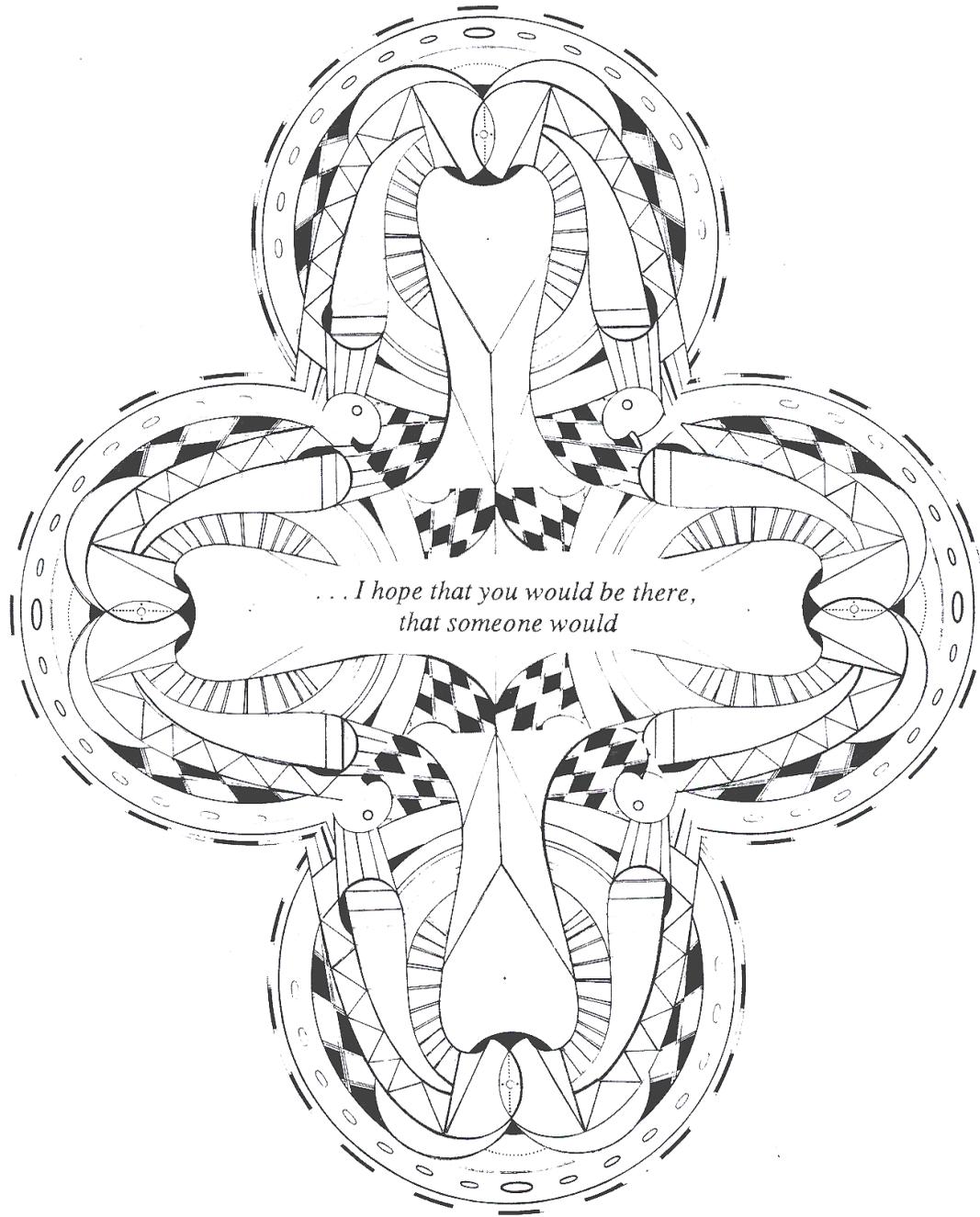
Will that be enough?



*. . . the journey is all we are given.*



# *CONNECTIONS*



## Visit

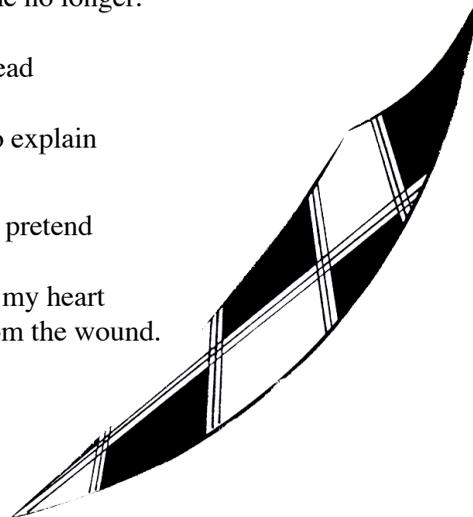
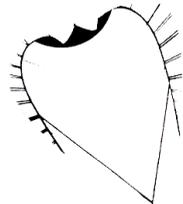
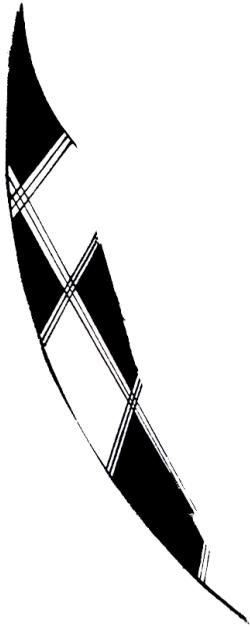
I see the small boy  
Tender, hopeful, accosted  
at every turn  
no room to cry or to sing  
(wanting only to be left alone)  
collapsing into himself

Now you come and refuse to see  
Do not care who I am. Unable.  
I stayed ready, waiting  
But you cannot begin to see.

I was a wayang scream for mad giants  
unaware torturers who maimed  
in love's name, stuck daggers in  
with a smile.  
A living sacrifice  
who fled into sickness  
strangled himself for a chance to breathe.

The small boy could not escape.  
I can. You will kill me no longer.  
I can at last leave  
knowing the past is dead  
and that I am alive  
that there is no way to explain  
that there never was.

I will still smile, even pretend  
but never again yield.  
I draw the knife from my heart  
and emerge whole from the wound.



## The Weight of History

1.

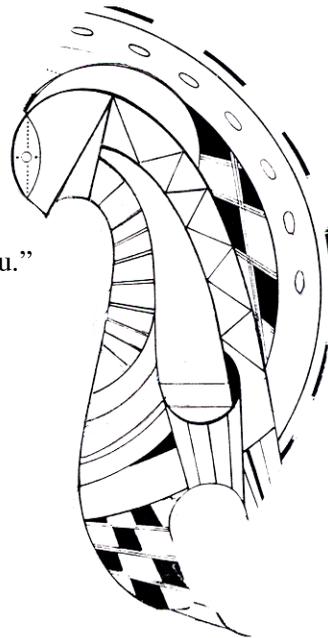
I can recognize  
hundreds of people  
I've never met, among them  
all of the presidents.  
I can cite casualty figures  
for wars before my birth.

2.

The juice of a fat peach  
sliding down my mouth.  
Speeding along the highway  
perfectly out of control.  
My father's smooth legs  
surprising his grizzled body.

3.

My mother said:  
"Learn to play the piano  
they can never take that from you."  
I dance in the rain  
Soak it into memory.



## Reading Essays on Wallace Stevens While the Couple Upstairs Make Love

The couple moaning upstairs are  
tigers striding spacious crystal cages.  
They talk before and afterward.  
I cannot make out the words, only  
that they're not the animal grunts of love.

I try to scent the ripeness of this love  
musty on the bedsheet; her moist mound;  
his penis grown languid, spilling  
a last pearl of sperm on the sheet.  
Ripeness! Ripeness!

But the thought is abstract,  
devoid of magic  
lacking majesty  
One thought among many.  
Yet what I would not give for love!

They are talking again, laughing; pleasant annoying laughter.  
Where are the moans of ten minutes ago?

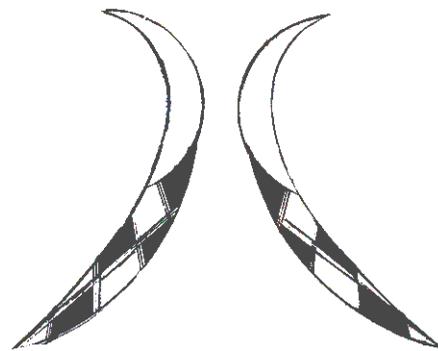
Ah, this love is a blank canvas  
on which we paint with our minds.  
Broad feathery brush strokes:  
Moans/laughter pleasure/poems  
swirling together in strophes of imagination.

## A Response

You speak longingly  
of a long-dead poet who is  
as alive for you as the first light  
as the body stirs from dreams.

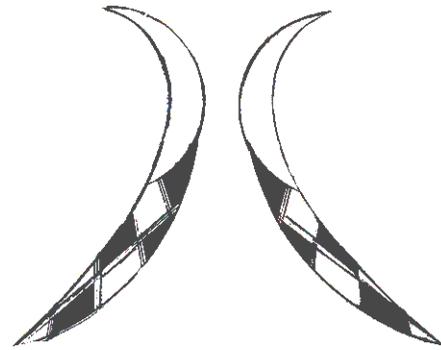
How is it you're so beautiful?  
What magic makes it so?  
No matter, it is a gift  
to quell the infinite hunger.

What do I wish for you?  
The joy of ever coming home.  
Warm arms, warm hearts  
the night harboring your quiet self.



## Thinking Back

Reading your poems now  
the vaulting phrases  
the quick lovely way with words  
seems self-indulgent.  
I have grown or diminished.  
It is the same.  
Nothing stays fixed.  
And you write new poems now  
of which I know nothing.  
Yesterday's best efforts trial balloons.  
Begin then, begin again  
and drop me a line sometimes  
when I least expect it



## Out of Sync

It is not that, in loving, we free ourselves  
from the loved one and, quiveringly endure;  
as the arrow endures the string to become, in  
the gathering out leap, something more than  
itself. For staying is nowhere.

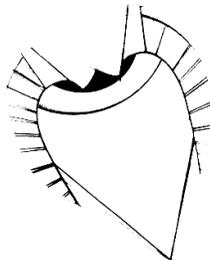
Rainier Maria Rilke

Your tape came in the morning mail  
six months after it was sent.  
“We are out of sync,”  
I can hear you say  
in that husky semi-hysterical tone  
that always makes me smile.

Six months earlier, I would have been  
on the phone before the tape played out  
breathless  
desperate to state my case  
to discover the formula  
to make you understand.

I like your voice as  
I recall your fiery way with language  
how you savored each word as you  
tasted the thought  
wanting me to understand  
thall all you wanted was everything  
that nothing less would do.

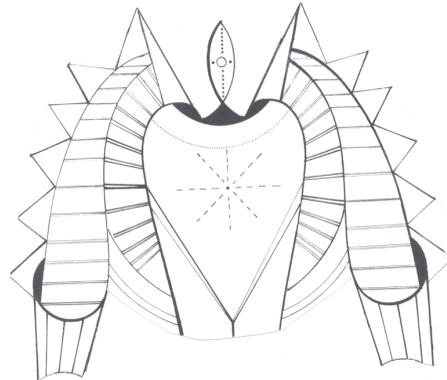
Now, six months in finding me, the passion  
of your sharp tongue  
and sharp lips are ghostly echoes  
that do not satisfy the moment’s hunger  
I will not call.



## Telegraph Avenue Mystery

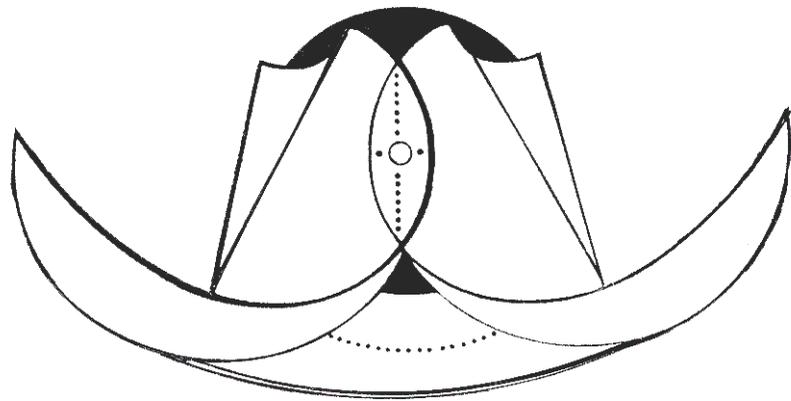
Her mind as fine-tuned as a violin  
Once she'd won all the prizes.  
Now queen to a fierce Jamaican  
She sells her earrings on the street  
Swirls in clouds of marijuana  
Beats her feet to a reggae beat  
That contains answers never found  
In Schopenhauer or any dour wordsman.

She told me about it casually  
As if relating a recipe or a dream:  
“Yes, he plucked out his eyes  
one after the other, right here  
on the Avenue. Said he'd had a vision.  
It was in all the newspapers.  
He'll be back on the corner  
When the skin heals over  
Reading the Tarot like before.  
Yes, you see the highest  
and the lowest here.  
Refugees from the monied race.”  
And she smiled, showing yellow teeth.  
To her self-mutilation was no mystery.



## Regal Woman At Poetry Reading

I love the way you look.  
Regal, unapproachable.  
I want to make love to you.  
My office is near.  
There is a large wooden table  
I can drape you over  
and mount your unapproachability.  
We need not talk.  
Just walk together through  
the evening and rain  
the poet's words in our ears.  
Make love and part.

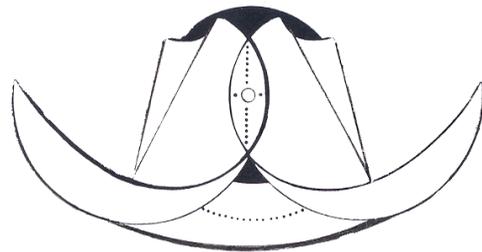


## Not Once Looking Back

Why are you always walking away from me?  
In the first poem I ever wrote you were entering  
A great plane as you left home for the first time  
Not once looking back.

Today it was going down the brick steps  
down and away from me as  
I stood outside my office  
Not once looking back.

I could do nothing except watch you walk away.  
I know how much the world can hurt and all  
I could do was stand there and watch you walk away  
Not once looking back.





## I Never Told You

Son, there were times when you were little  
when I would stand by your bed entranced  
by your dark rosy good looks.  
I never told you.  
Nor how I gloried in your precocious tennis swing.  
The quick way you had with machinery.  
How you knew not to take school too seriously.

Now twenty-two you've been sick real bad  
and you live with a girl from Saint Paul  
whose family is well-known in Minnesota.  
Her father's a Princeton graduate, a state senator,  
a company president.  
He is, you tell me, a charming man.

My father ran away from home at thirteen because  
his step-mother beat him silly.  
At seventy-eight he still drives his junk truck  
up and down traffic-choked Brooklyn streets  
worried about the blacks/proud to earn his living.  
His father, with brawny arms, broad Polish face  
and memories of pogroms  
peddled old clothes from a pushcart.  
I watched him become senile.  
Grow thin and broken in a faded tenement.

Of these things, and so much more  
You know nothing. How could you?  
I never told you.  
There was no way to tell you.  
I fled from it, from all of it.  
As you flee now.

## Another Sad Spring

Like male dogs on first encounter  
We growl at one another, circling  
Probing for signs of weakness.  
Ready to move in for the kill:  
Straight for the jugular.

We are color coordinating consultants  
Helping people to present themselves  
So that they can get the job  
The promotion; a serviceable identity:  
Straight for the jugular

We are stirred by bus. ad. classes  
Reviewing case studies of companies  
So we too can aid them to grow  
Or even start one of our very own:  
Straight for the jugular.

It is the time of the growling dog.  
It is the time of the well-presented package.  
It is the time of the entrepreneur.  
And the winners are full of anxiety.  
And the losers not even in the game.

Yesterday the first ball was thrown.  
And the beer flows in the stands.  
Million dollar babies hitting  
That old horsehide once again.  
Another sad spring.



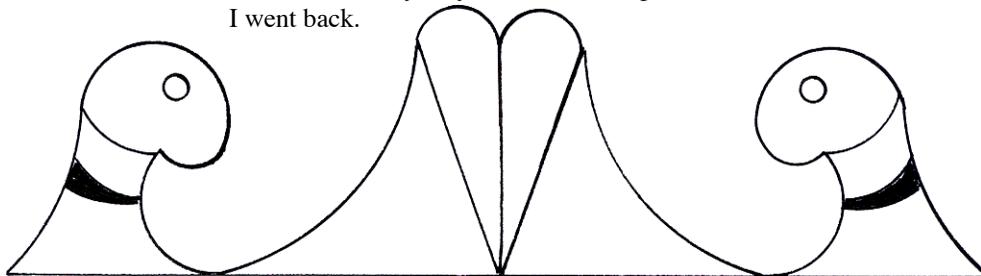
## Dying of Cancer

Mom, I'm out of the hospital. It's morning here.  
I'm fixing my usual breakfast, eggs-over-easy.  
When I order at my favorite restaurant three  
blocks from the house you've never seen  
the words roll off my tongue like a litany:  
"Two eggs, over-easy, home fries, coffee, black,"  
Sometimes, I confess, I have bacon or sausage.  
At home I eat the eggs off taco shells.  
A California touch but also corn agrees with me  
more than wheat. You always served Wonder Bread.  
Thick slices of glutinous white bread. The butter  
too cold to spread I would fold the pieces in half  
around the lumps of hard butter.

Mom, I've also discovered that meat makes me sluggish.  
You were so proud to put meat on the table.  
Briskets of beef from the kosher butcher who  
patted my head and called me a nice Jewish boy  
every morning when you took me shopping with you.

At the Paradise restaurant we sat at the counter.  
(Mom, do you remember? Mom, you're dying.)  
You always ordered coffee and danish. I had  
a bagel with cream cheese (a "shmeer") and  
a cherry sometimes a vanilla malted.  
(Mom, do you remember? Mom, you're dying.)

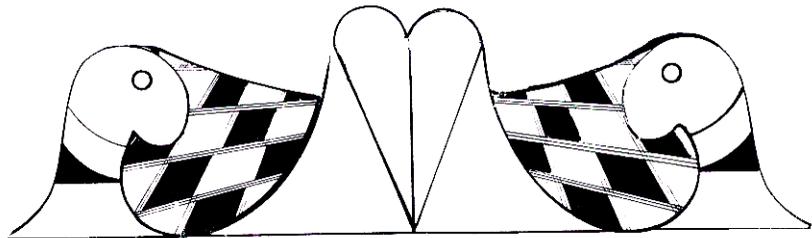
I spent a lifetime fleeing the world we created.  
Now, you're dying of cancer and I did not know what to make  
of the cold butter, the kosher meat, the daily shopping trips.  
Didn't know why they cried out for explanation.  
I went back.



We drove from the apartment house where I grew up  
where you and Dad have lived for fifty years  
to Ina's suburban house on the outskirts of Philadelphia.  
(She would tell me how she worshipped me, her older  
brother, and resented that I was your favorite.  
I was, it's true, though I didn't know it then.)  
The trip was brutal. First heat wave of summer.  
The engine light went on and, not knowing the problem,  
I drove slowly the entire way.  
Dad next to me, you in back. Two old people and me.

Each time I looked in the rear-view mirror  
I caught your tired eyes, your sticky dress,  
your pasty skin and remembered you were dying of cancer.  
And—a last confession—I was annoyed by the heat,  
the drive, the traffic, the ancient misunderstandings.

I tried so hard to make my love blot out your cancer  
To make amends for my desertion  
I flew back to Berkeley in a desperate whirl  
ended up in a hospital where they tried  
to put me on lithium for the rest of my life.  
But I refused their insistent offer  
What did they know of white-bread butter sandwiches  
or briskets of beef or morning shopping trips or love  
or dying of cancer?



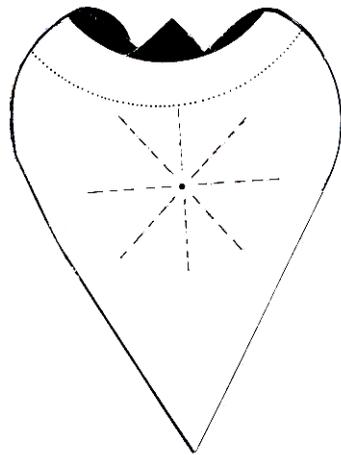
## I Don't Know How To Be There

And as I attack these overdue bills  
jumbled on the desk  
Sunday past midnight  
dark outside, lights ringing the Bay  
shimmering dots through the curtain  
soft music on the radio  
I remember, Mom, how proud you were  
to pay the bills promptly  
month after month, year after year  
as if the phone company would be grateful  
Con Edison not turn off the gas  
if you missed one payment.  
Fifty years of doing your duty not worth a damn.

Mom, the world has grown large and empty  
They don't know you, they don't care to.  
Was it that they frightened you  
Child of the Holocaust and Depression  
And does it matter any longer.

As I float on the velvet music, I remember  
the last time I phoned.  
You were in the bath.  
Dad said you spent a lot of time in the bath.  
What do you think of there?  
Do you dwell on the cancer that has spread  
through your body and was supposed to have  
killed you two years ago, the drugs, the pain  
killers, the chemotherapy.  
Listening to the music,  
I remember the pain and sadness, how Dad said  
You wanted to talk to me, and that he would carry  
you out of the bath  
you, the strong one who always took charge  
Almost 80, he would carry you.

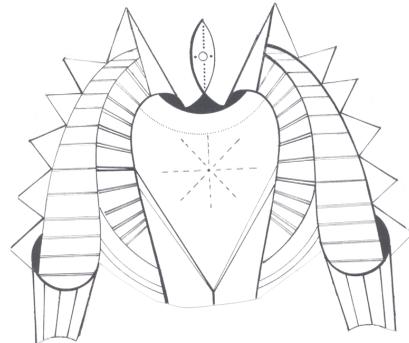
My heart broke when I heard that  
I never felt further away.  
Of what use am I to you, or anyone?  
So far away.  
Of what use as I pay these bills,  
like you used to, only some of them are  
overdue and I know it doesn't matter.  
And I wish so much was different.  
That I could be there with you who  
gave me life, ambiguous gift, as you suffer.  
And I choose not to be.  
I don't know how to be there.  
Its been too long.  
I do not fit there any more  
But I pray it's not too painful  
for you in your bath  
and that your thoughts are comforting  
And that you think kindly of me.



## Telegraph Avenue Mystery

Her mind as fine-tuned as a violin  
Once she'd won all the prizes.  
Now queen to a fierce Jamaican  
She sells her earrings on the street  
Swirls in clouds of marijuana  
Beats her feet to a reggae beat  
That contains answers never found  
In Schopenhauer or any dour wordsman.

She told me about it casually  
As if relating a recipe or a dream:  
“Yes, he plucked out his eyes  
one after the other, right here  
on the Avenue. Said he'd had a vision.  
It was in all the newspapers.  
He'll be back on the corner  
When the skin heals over  
Reading the Tarot like before.  
Yes, you see the highest  
and the lowest here.  
Refugees from the monied race.”  
And she smiled, showing yellow teeth.  
To her self-mutilation was no mystery.



## Other

1.

The loneliness pours off him  
like blood from a wound.  
I cannot look at his warped hand  
dangling in front of his body  
the fingers fused like mittens  
inviting my scrutiny and sorrow.  
His movements are so graceless  
as to be a cry against God.  
His loneliness, smothered  
in thick clothes, sweats.

2.

I remember the party.  
Seeing him across the street  
feet on a rail, reading and  
utterly alone.  
We pretended indifference.  
The evasion haunts me.  
What does he want from me?  
I have nothing to give.  
Go away, damn you, go away!  
Die, die already, die!

3.

Such ugliness should be gracious.  
We should say airily, "Ah, but his  
is the disposition of a Saint."  
That would be the justice of balance.  
But his thin voice booms.  
Laughter pours from his mouth.  
He makes claims, demands favors,  
Screams loneliness.  
I will have to kill him.  
Or myself.

## Unanswered Question

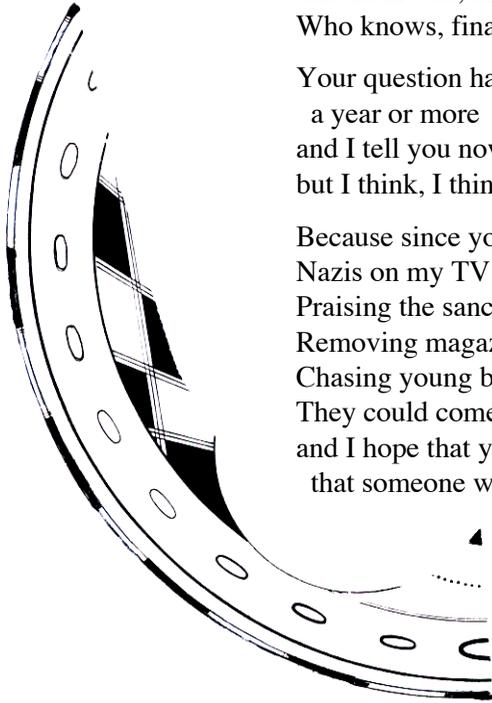
Your whispered question rang among clanging dishes,  
animated conversations.

Peering over the coffee cup you softly asked  
“And will you hide me when the Nazis come?  
Will you be there when they knock down my door?”  
It was a question out of which  
a great novel could be fashioned.  
Out of which grow nightmares, responsibilities.

I had no answer then and I have none now  
though even then I was beyond an easy “yes.”  
The truth was, as I said, I didn’t know.  
Who knows, finally, what one will do?

Your question has lived with me  
a year or more  
and I tell you now I still don’t know  
but I think, I think I might

Because since you asked I’ve seen  
Nazis on my TV screen celebrating the Statue of Liberty;  
Praising the sanctity of life from battleship decks;  
Removing magazines from supermarket shelves;  
Chasing young black men through city streets.  
They could come for me at any moment I think  
and I hope that you would be there,  
that someone would.



## We Knew We Were Creating Each Other

“And now here is my secret:  
a very simple secret. It is only  
with the heart that one can  
see rightly; what is essential  
is invisible to the eye.”

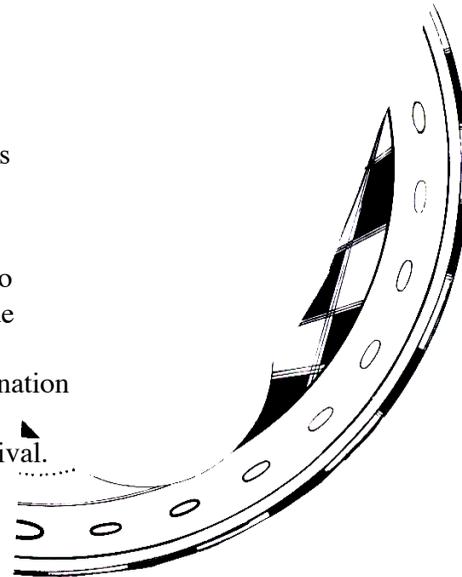
Antoine de Saint Exupéry  
*The Little Prince*

No, we did not go to Mexico  
though the thought tempted  
as we hurried to the airport so you  
could catch your plane home—  
an hour away, 500 miles, Los Angeles  
another planet where love is measured out  
in swimming pools and is no less wondrous for that.

What do the details matter to old friends  
who have the fortune to smoothly resume  
ancient understandings; to discover after  
twenty years and three hours of talk that  
only with the heart can one see rightly.

Friendship rooted in youthful beginnings  
like the serried rings of powerful oaks  
petals of roses before they unfurl  
provides a singular mirror reflecting the  
design underlying time's tricks and permits  
us to glimpse what is invisible to the eye.

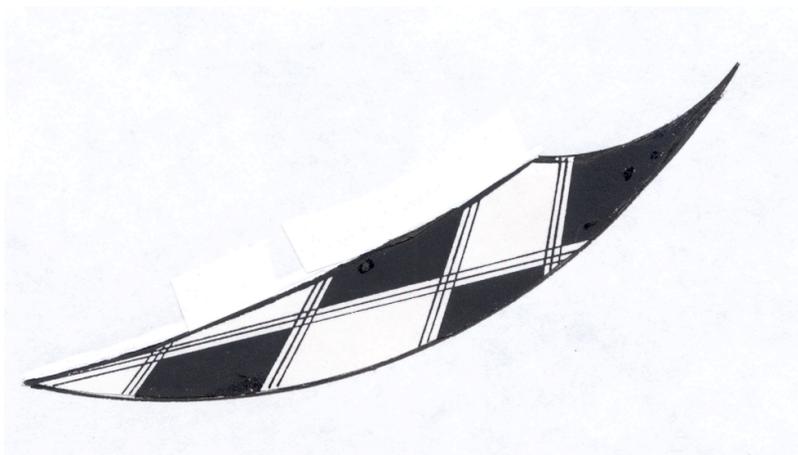
Friendship renewed is as limpid as  
a flute sonata unexpected over the car radio  
driving down a country road windows wide  
to the cool smell of newly moved hay.  
It is to live at once in the Mexico of Imagination  
and the airport of reality. It is to think old  
friend and give thanks to the grace of survival.



## That Damn Machine

And all at once I need to hear your voice  
an emblem, an anchor  
a sweetness like re-turning  
the last rowboat in a darkening boat-  
house, black water lapping the pier.

Instead I get Rilke  
a bit of Rilke  
casually tossed my way;  
always you toss roses and angels  
as I compose some words  
to fill the void  
to leave some trace—  
I know you know  
when to discount  
my words  
murmurs of a calculating  
heart.

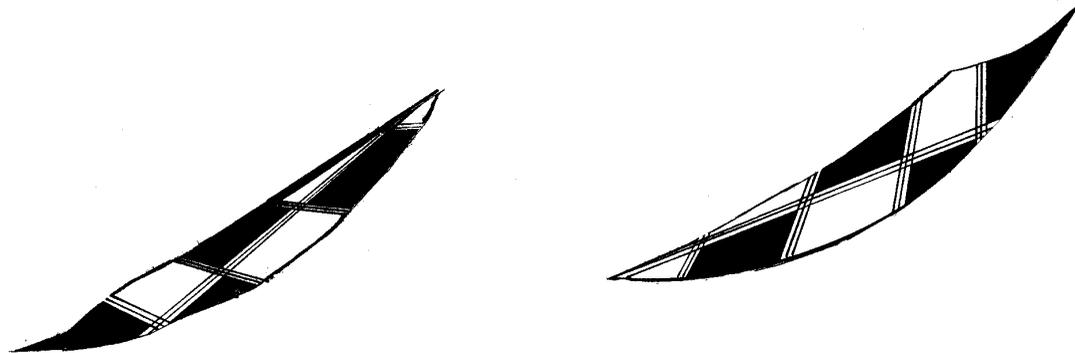


## Tourist

You travel to the distant corners;  
Ladakh, Tierra del Fuego, Timor  
seeking you know not what, only  
that it's far from where you are.

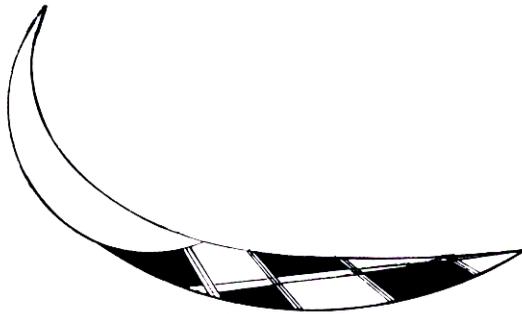
You hunger after revelation in the planes  
of dark faces, the sounds of strange languages  
come away instead with a craving  
nervously haggled for from someone whose  
name you did not bother to ask, and in exchange  
for pretty postcards; boxes of carefully-labeled  
slides, you leave beggars, whores, plastic  
wrappers, impossible hopes.

With what God-like ease you tear  
the tissues of ancient cultures  
seeking you know not what, only  
that it's far from where you are.



## No Room in Touristland

They ply Highway 1  
between Monterey and Carmel  
sailors seeking a port-of-call  
It's mid-July and tourist time,  
but there's no room at the inn.  
Desperation eats at the sweet fantasies  
that carried them to touristland.  
The couple away from the kids at last  
still cannot manage to be alone.  
The couple each married to another  
cannot find four walls to hide from prying eyes.  
Saint and sinner confront the same plight.  
There is no room in touristland.  
They travel the darkening highway  
in growing horror. The world is full.  
There is no more room.



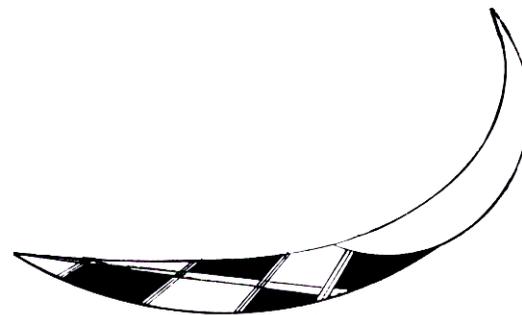
## The Meeting

As children tenderly cradled by bamboo-fenced villages  
they rode the kerabau to the same rice fields the ancestors  
tilled, paddy ripe with life greenly glistening in the sun.

Now in this new land where food comes in plastic  
and bricks fly through windows they sit around  
a table with strangers planning a meeting on:  
The Vietnamese in America.

The calm conversation of budgets and agendas  
balm perhaps for the horrors they have known:  
Sons tossed casually into the South China Sea  
slim arms sinking slowly below the water.  
Daughters, delicate flowers, left on gory decks  
when the pirates had exhausted themselves.

And night after night they dream of twisted dolls  
Of strange fishes with human faces dripping blood.  
Monsters that cannot be discussed around a table  
And cannot be escaped once light flees the sky.



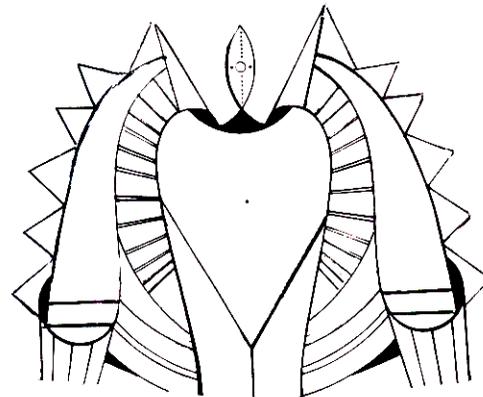
## We Don't Have To Know That

“What seems strange is how the atheists Sarte,  
Camus and Heidegger, have given currency to  
terms—the ‘absurd’, ‘the leap’, ‘dread’, ‘despair’—  
that Kierkegaard coined to pay his way into heaven . . .”

John Updike

We don't have to know, you and I, snug on the soft couch  
sleepily watching the 25 inch colored TV with remote control  
casually speaking of “dread,” “despair,” and sundry species of  
leaps, that Kierkegaard in his fierce lonely wrestling  
with meaning tore those words from his wounds.

No, we don't have to know that; it lives in our bones  
formed from the bones piled outside the gas chambers  
From the bodies on dirt road-sides in Salvadore  
in the Philippines, in Lebanon, in Mississippi  
From the legions of dead and disappeared  
that drive down our freeways  
surround our fast food franchises  
groaning in anguish-choked voices:  
How will you respond? What will you do?

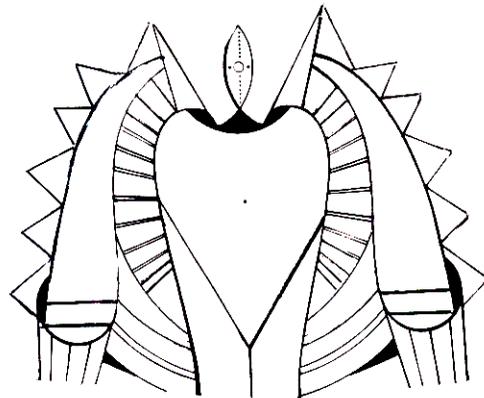


## The Men in the Room

The men in the room  
wear pin-stripes and silk ties.  
None have ever read Martin Buber  
or learned how to roller skate  
or missed a day's work for a woman.

The men in the room  
went to the best schools.  
Their nails are carefully manicured.  
Their wives wear stylish shoes.  
Their dogs have perfect pedigrees.  
Their children have perfect teeth.

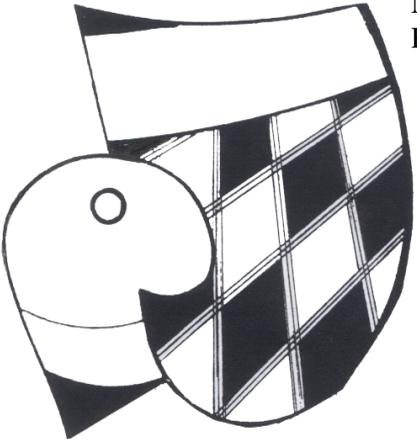
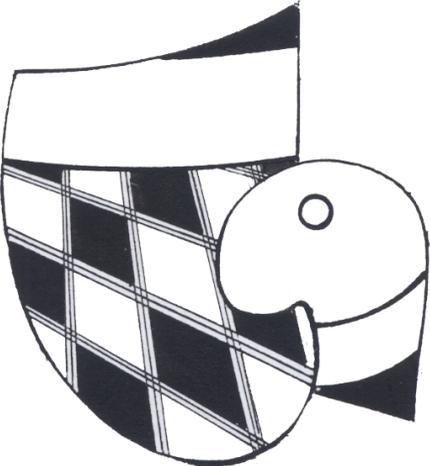
The men in the room  
without windows or women  
without flowers or children  
drinking coffee from styrofoam cups  
are deciding about war or peace  
are deciding whether we live or die.



**Men in Power**

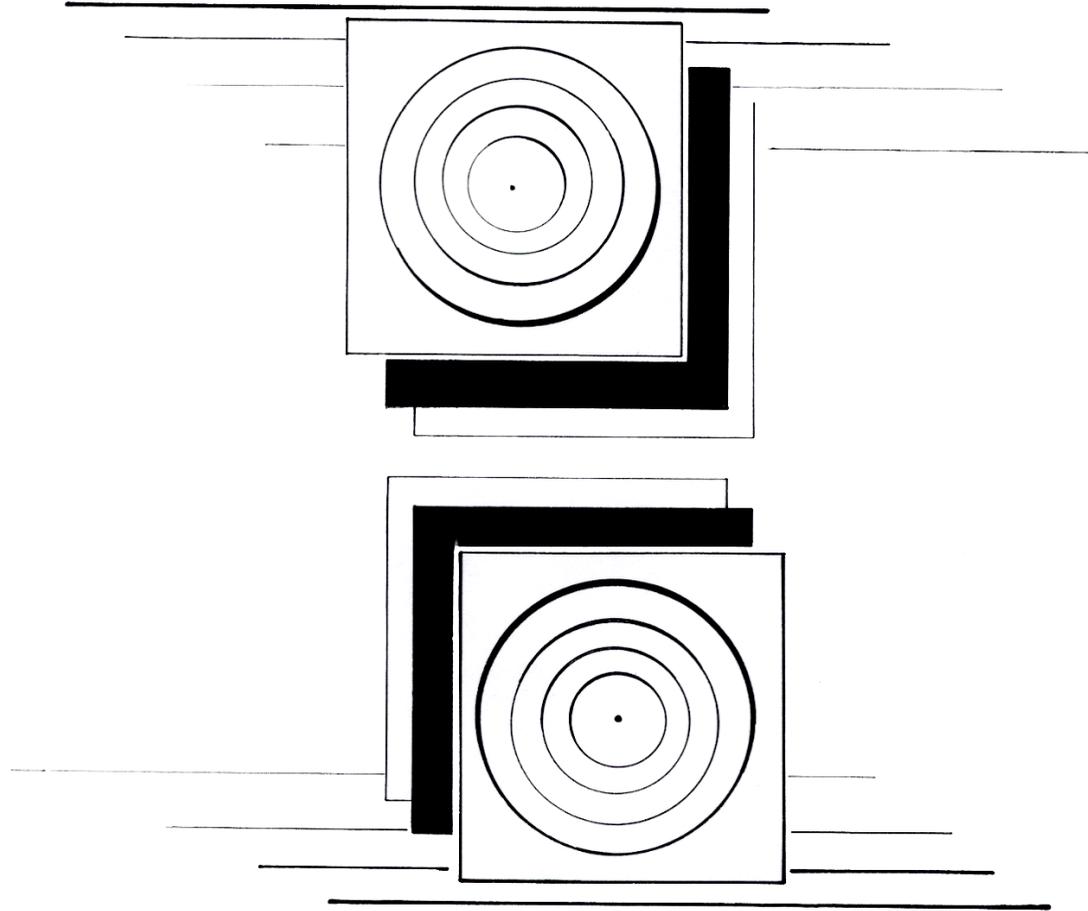
Seated in plush chairs  
thick wrists thrusting  
through tailored sleeves  
men in power play games  
in fields of their making.

They are stone serious  
Who will question them?  
Indoor life contains them.  
Nature the great equalizer  
Has no say here.

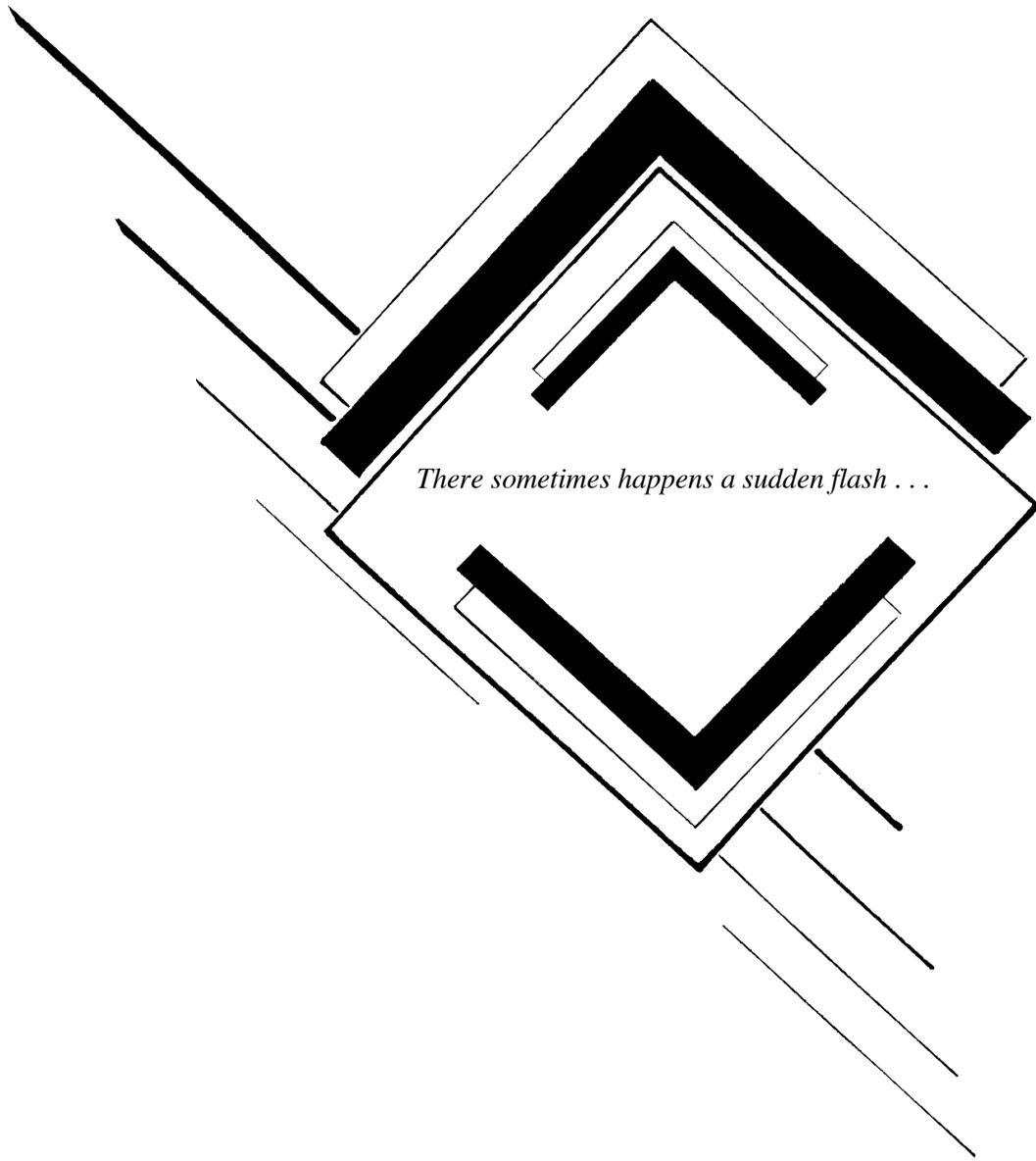


*. . . the journey is all we are given.*

*APPROACHES*



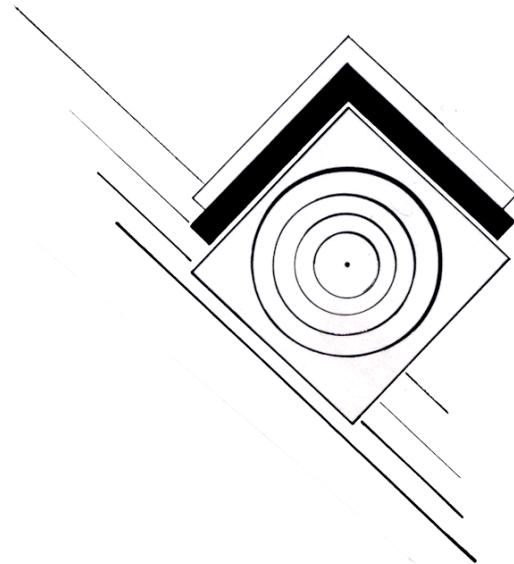
*TO THE MUSE*



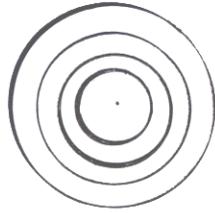
*There sometimes happens a sudden flash . . .*

## This is Not that Poem

This poem has been dreaming me all day.  
And now alone in this quiet room once more  
like so many nights before  
I try to get it right, to pin it to the page.  
And I fail as always. The words lie;  
they forever lie. This poem has begun itself  
ten, twenty, I cannot count the times,  
in oceanic depths and drowns each time  
it seeks the surface. And with each death  
I grow wiser and more desperate. So though  
I must begin yet again; yet again let me be clear:  
The poem I intend concerns love, courage, truth.  
But this one (again! Again!) is merely about me.  
No, this is not the poem that has been  
writing me for centuries  
This is not that poem.



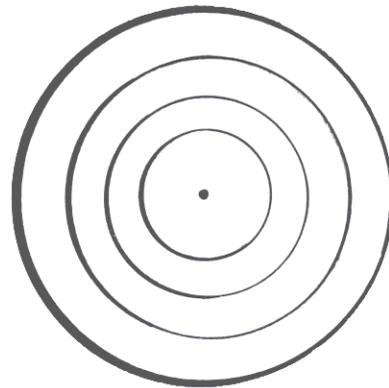
## So I Got One Poem Published



So I got one poem published  
in an obscure magazine  
Why am I so proud?  
Libraries overflow with books  
which have stirred thousands  
to grave and terrible actions.

Still it is something. That poem.  
A creature I breathed into being:  
That would not exist but for me.  
An expression in transparent mask  
of the paradox that haunts my days.  
I am all. Center of the universe  
yet a mere speck on a tiny star  
who will end in dust, forgotten.

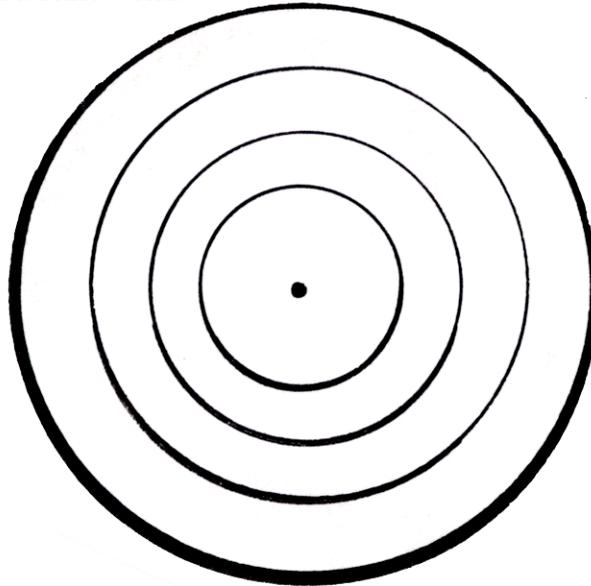
Will a handful of words cancel my fate?  
Several lines, a rhyme or two.  
That's something I think  
But it is nothing against the glory  
and terror of life and the  
lives that surround me.



## So, Finally

Getting up; going out; coming back  
are devoid of reason  
do not touch the heart.  
Passing days, a smattering of phrases  
a girding for more of the same.  
A dull ache ground in the common indifference.  
We are or have been taught we are  
more but there have been too many failed attempts.

We know too much (though not enough)  
Lived too long (though not enough)  
Fall short too many times until  
All that matters is the poetry:  
The sudden illumination molded into a form  
that soothes for a time; that redeems  
the sameness; the limitation of imagination;  
the unyielding of a dense world.



## The Way it Spozed to Be

“They’re influenced . . . By the  
paintings or posters they’ve seen,  
not by real life. They all want to  
paint pictures that look like real  
pictures, the kind they always see.”

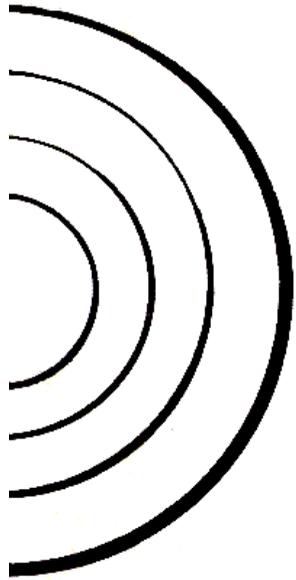
James Herndon

And who’s to say what a poem is?  
What majestic critic in the heavens  
with regal beard and studious brow  
rule book in finely-curved fingers  
setting down the way it must be

like greeting card rhymes  
shiny apples and monochrome hearts  
of unreal red rising from the chalky page

like lissome caped young men  
athletic figures yearning toward the  
grave or sprite spinsters  
grasping distinctive pens  
like weapons or doves

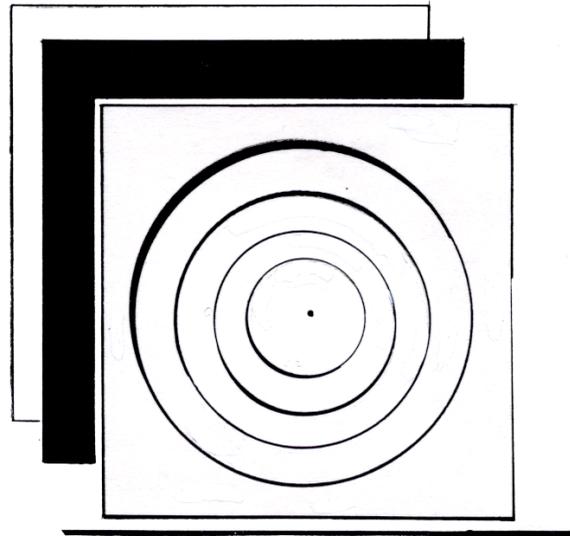
What is left  
after the definitions  
the serious books as suffered  
over as a sick child? Just that  
there sometimes happens a sudden flash  
that, with grace, holds on  
to become a phrase, a line,  
a few lines coming together  
in a way that is satisfying  
and is, for a time, enough



**Edna St. Vincent Millay**

I read how birds  
    would fly about her head  
    when she went for a walk  
How all manner of men  
    fell in love with her  
at first sight.

O, the birds circled  
How lovely?  
I wish, I wish . . .  
O, they circled  
And everything fell into place.

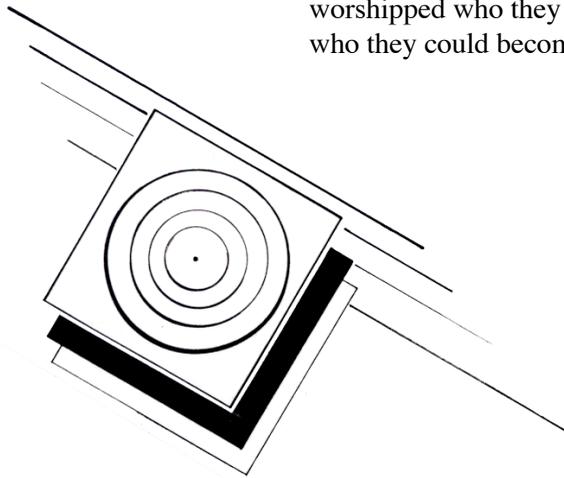


## Kinnell

A large man whose brawny arms  
and whiskey face belonged more  
to the sea or sky than to the  
small crowded room where he  
read about his son falling from a high tree  
and the courage that is, finally, love

in words proclaiming what we seldom allow:  
that poetry is not a reedy voice whispering  
in the shadows of buried hurts  
but the depths of anguish surmounted  
with a certainty borne only from life  
so in the whole is ground to continue.

That the crowd worshipped him  
hung on every word was troubling  
until I understood that through him  
they worshipped at their own altars  
worshipped who they were and  
who they could become.

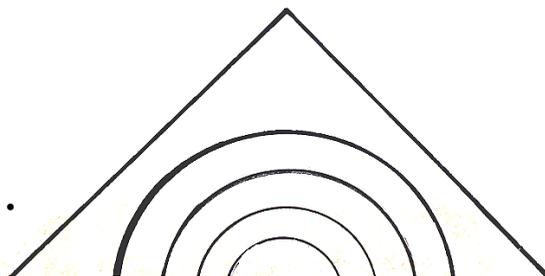
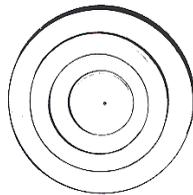


## Before the Poetry Reading

Tonight Denise I will hear you read  
Your life has intertwined mine  
though we've never met. For once  
a woman sat next to me on a plane  
reading your book, *Jacob's Ladder*.  
And she shone like polished ivory.  
I almost left my life for that woman.

Tonight I will sit as I always do  
at the back of the hall feeling  
sad and alone as I always do  
in crowded rooms among strangers  
connecting your face and voice  
with a woman on a plane  
perhaps I should have.

Tonight I go filled with loss  
and to honor a memory  
You are dear to me  
though we will never meet  
Tonight Denise I will hear you read.



## Unneeded Teacher

I never wrote down the lines that sometimes  
like unexpected guests flashed into my mind.  
Who knows what felicity was lost over the years?  
But I could not be bothered and there seemed  
a rightness about transitoriness. A Justice.

Once I noticed the poet John Logan at the back  
of a room where someone was reading poetry.  
I watched him take out a small notebook  
and with Buddhist deliberation a fat black  
fountain pen and write something down.

The poet at work, I thought.  
It is simply that –paper, a pen, motion  
of the hand, words grow and swell.  
The next time I saw him, weeks or years  
later, it was clear he'd been ill.

A stroke–sudden, dreadful word–someone said.  
Not long ago I read he had died.  
He was 64 and left a large family.  
I have no need of a teacher.  
The word is sad with magnanimity.

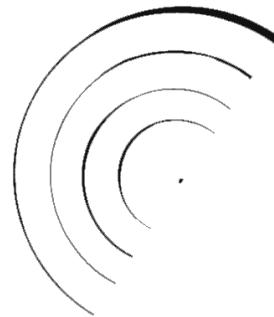
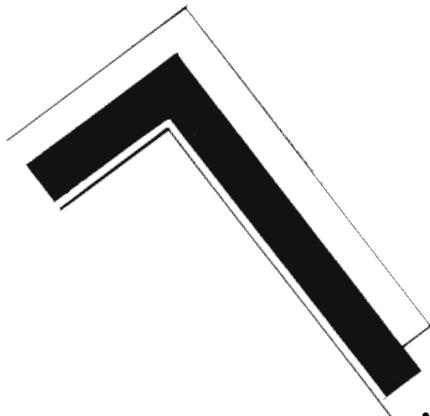
We pay homage to death in unseemly fashion.  
Caught in beginnings and endings, forgetting  
the moment; watching, for example, a somewhat  
celebrated poet who does not know you're  
watching take out a notebook and a pen.

I carry with me now when I remember,  
a small notebook. When I write in it  
a shadow falls over the page.



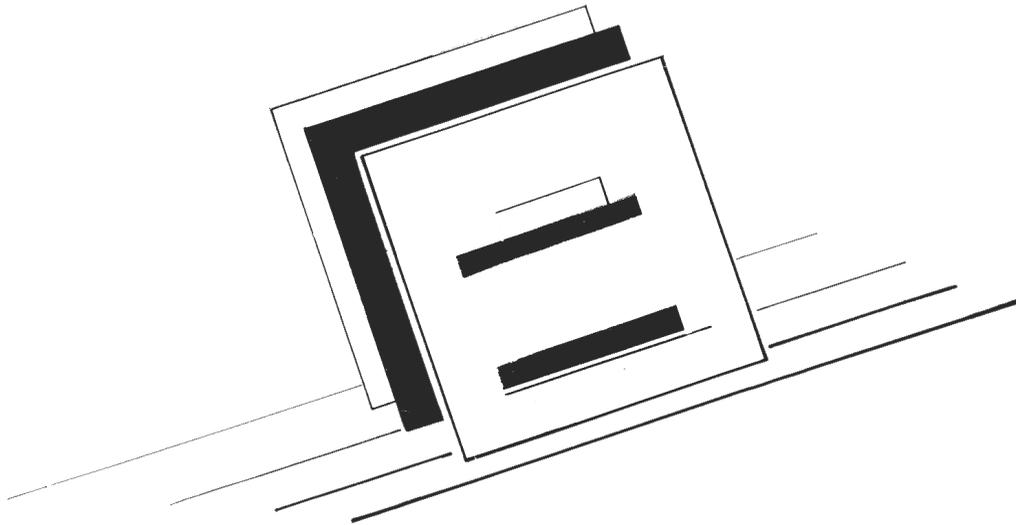
## None of It Makes a Damn Bit of Sense

When I was a boy in New York  
Well, not exactly a boy: 19  
two years before a marriage that lasted 27 more  
Frank O'Hara  
sparked the NY  
streets drunk and drinking  
reeking and reeling  
writing poems about NY in 1959  
("it is 1959 and I  
go get a shoeshine."  
that I would read not quite 30  
years later in a Berkeley library, next to a  
loud, snoring stranger  
And none of it makes  
a damn bit of sense  
except, he wrote this too,  
"you will never know how beautiful you are  
or how beautiful the other is."  
I will remember that the next  
time I am asked (and I have been asked this  
and had no answer ready):  
Give me one good reason to go on living?



## Another Stolen Child

My spirit lashed by the swish-swish of the cars  
rushing by outside I think of you, Robinson Jeffers,  
and of hawks, rocks, stars; enduring, hard unyielding things.  
And now they celebrate you: Talk about you at con-  
ferences of prize-winning poets, milk-eyed scholars.  
A strange homage to one who worked rock and lived,  
and lived with, the severe Greeks, the ageless ocean.  
Who went away to the waters and the wild.  
Better they should worship trees; make pilgrimages  
to shimmering deserts, singing seas, rushing rapids  
where the wandering water gushes.  
Truly in this society which you came to fear  
withdrew from into the depths of nature and self  
nothing is safe from celebration. I will not be there  
to hear their easy pieties, but I write these lines for you  
intertwine them with those of another stolen child.



## The Next Phase

"I left teaching, and left England,  
and left many other things."

D. H. Lawrence

Ah, but where to go today, what  
new continent.  
Where to find the heart's path;  
The gathering together; the wily  
lithe moves of the red fox.  
And always the wind blowing  
through.  
A pure wind wafting the eternal  
wonderment of the child; and  
Always something held back,  
the beckoning mystery  
The better to spring forward  
the next time, the leaving time.  
He possessed a deft quickness  
A certainty of focus that flowed  
animal-like graceful  
Is that the gift given the leaver?  
Never to grow heavy on the earth

## Henry Miller (1892-1980)

The day Henry Miller died  
I was visiting an old friend  
who has lived for twenty years  
surrounded by towering redwoods  
in a collapsing shack near Santa Cruz.

Listening to the trees we spoke of Miller.  
How we understood his hunger having  
ourselves fled gray Brooklyn streets  
for what we dreamed a more natural  
shore on the wild side of the continent.

Lou told me how years before  
he arrived drunk at two a.m.  
outside Miller's Big Sur cabin  
an hour's drive down the coast  
and shouted into the woods:  
"Come out Henry. Come out and play,"  
then stumbled away content, not  
knowing whether Miller had been inside

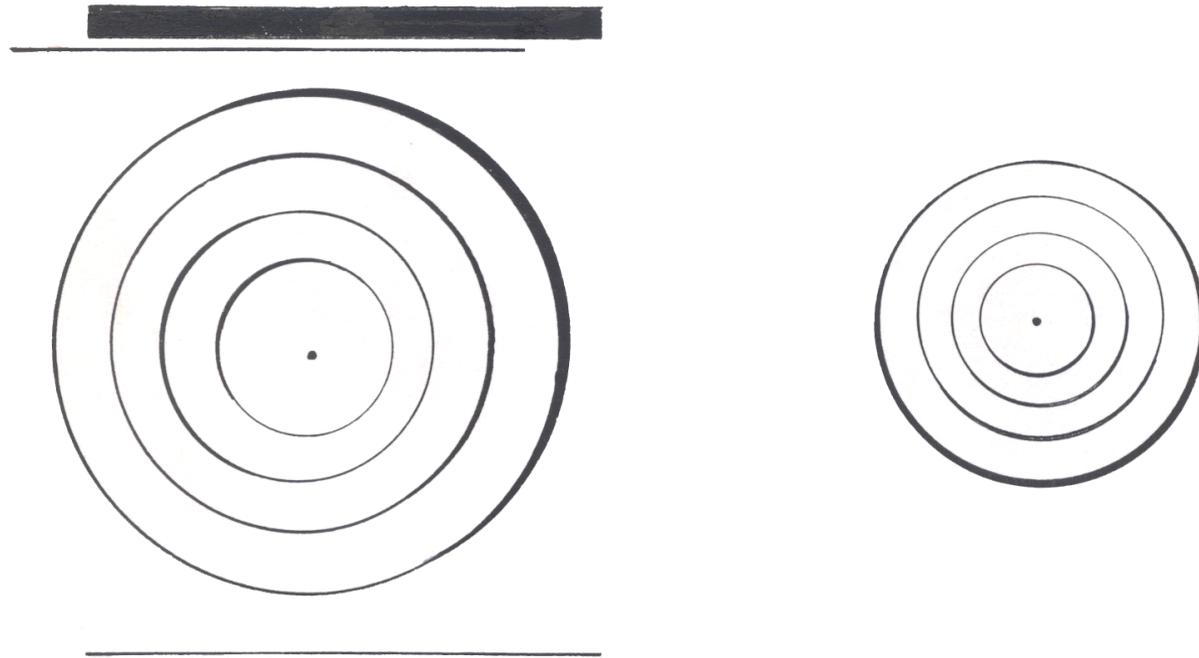
Lou wondered if Miller was still alive.  
"I'm not sure. I think so," I replied.

That night the news came over the radio:  
Henry Miller dead at eighty-eight  
Perhaps at the moment of Lou's question.  
And recalling Miller's passionate faith  
in the sun and other stars it seemed  
more than coincidence, Lou's question.  
Lou, at forty-four, an astrologer.

## Tennessee Williams (1914-1983)

to play it safe was not in him  
for he knew he was the only player  
in the drama and that the play always ends  
as he wrote in blind heat on scraps of paper  
and rewrote painstakingly on sleek machines

and in the end they got him for it.



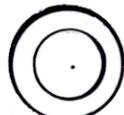
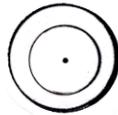
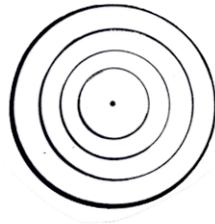
## Who Do You Talk To Now?

For W.S. Merwin in appreciation of his  
masterwork, *Rain in the Trees* (Knopf, 1988)

After all the carefully crafted words  
No need now to talk on your mountain top  
friends there and brother sun  
grinning through the trees  
But too many sons and daughters are dying  
Too many wondrous children drowning  
and the dead men still cutting down the sacred trees.

So with your left foot you  
turn once again to language  
simple words strung into simple  
sentences into simple truths

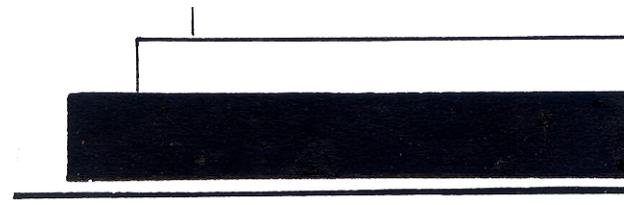
And master I honor your silence  
A willing joyful discipline  
I send your message to strong struggling friends  
that they too may be healed  
that we may restore each other  
and our beautiful earth.



## Monsieur Baudelaire

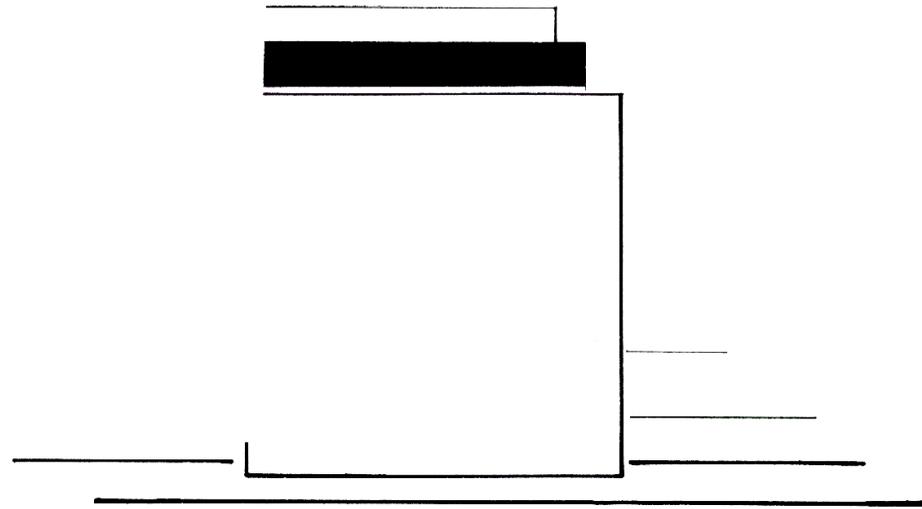
Baudelaire Tombstone  
Paris, April, 1986

So it ends up here, Monsieur Baudelaire  
At the end of this long stone walk.  
Hands under chin, intent  
You look down the silent lane.  
There are no dates, none are needed.  
Do you see the black cat  
Walking in front of your grave?  
Among your flowers  
A single yellow tulip stands tall.  
Seated on the bench  
I scratch a pimple on my neck.  
A well-dressed French family stands before you.  
They don't stay long.



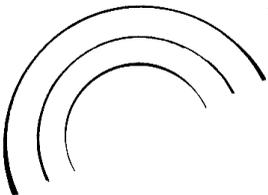
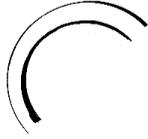
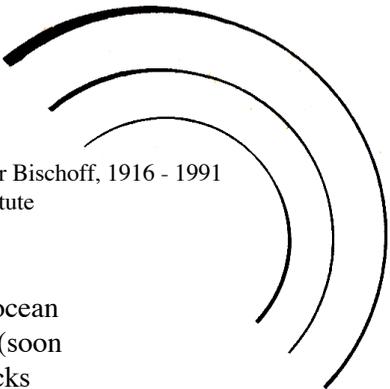
## Art Opening

You smiled and told jokes  
Sipped wine, lit cigarettes.  
Greeted old friends warmly as  
The years disappeared among  
the clichéd geometry of gesture  
by which we solidify our claims.  
And all around the studio  
Your story unfolded in flowing colors  
Against the pure white surface  
To which one climbed, as if in worship  
To the crowning deck of a bright ship.  
Were we sailing somewhere?  
The Bay glimpsed through the windows.  
The strips of paper circling the walls.



## Blue Clouds

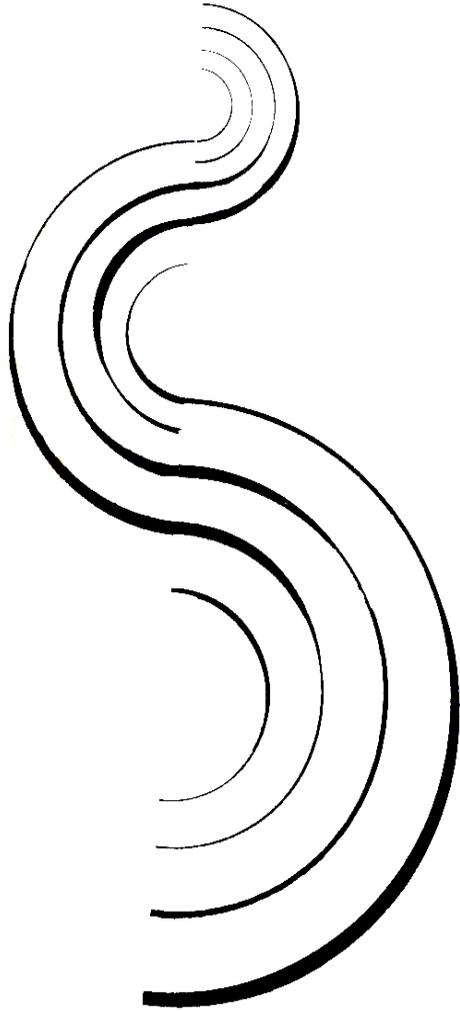
Painting by Elmer Bischoff, 1916 - 1991  
Chicago Art Institute



Blue blanket blue clouds  
Overarching green-blue ocean  
sweeping over the ochre (soon  
to be swamped again) rocks  
that in time will be no more  
and over the woman naked  
on the blue blanket.  
She too shall disappear.  
Move on to some other place.  
But why does she recline there?  
How is it that all of nature  
conspires to center on her?  
No matter: she will remain  
in the painting forever.  
One of the elements.  
Like sea or cloud.  
The one around whom  
all the others gather  
to declare themselves.  
Her restful rosy flesh  
births and bears the world.



## Colors

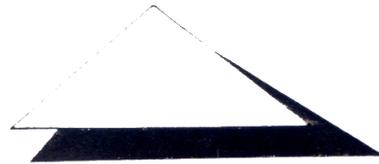
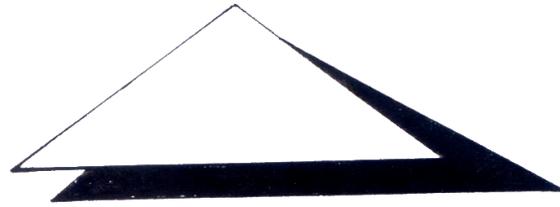
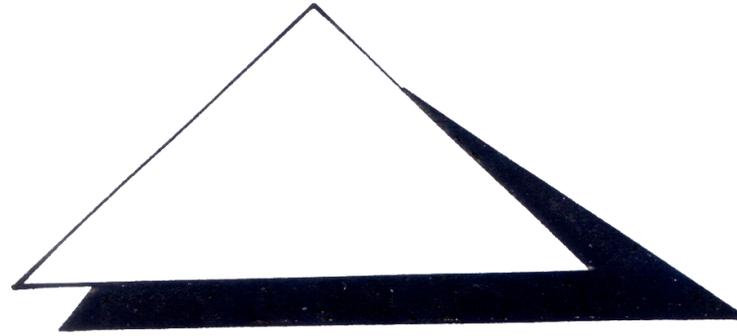


And the shadows danced too  
Crisscrossed stark white walls  
Secret torments brought to light  
and healed by the smooth motion.  
Your yell shook the silent studio  
The first ape, screaming  
in the primal jungle, yielding  
to delicately poised ballerina  
Degas tableaux  
Pin, ruffled, innocent.

And the shadows danced too  
Precise path of yellow banana  
Skins sailing slowly through space  
Red flying Icarus, afraid no longer of the sun  
escaping the strangling rope cage  
enclosing the heart, binding the arms  
Wings too sure to melt.

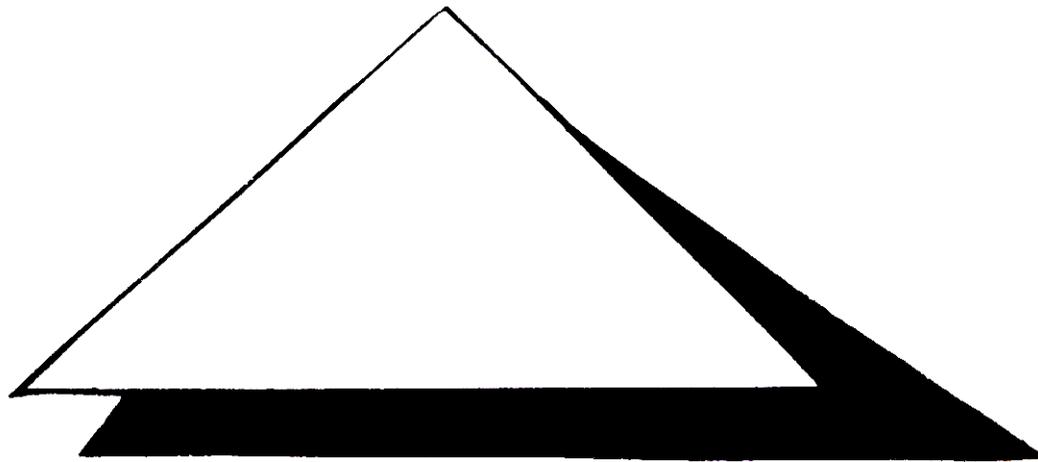
Explosion of flowing limbs  
Broad clown-smile. We saw the young girl  
dreaming of the great world, a stage.  
Understand the 14 year pause, twice the biblical seven.  
The gathering in of power  
flashed brilliantly out on your own  
stage, your own world.  
One created for us. For yourself.  
For the Gods

*. . . the journey is all we are given.*



*HARMONIES*

*. . . unfurling in the winds of my truths . .*



*. . . unfurling in the winds of my truths . .*

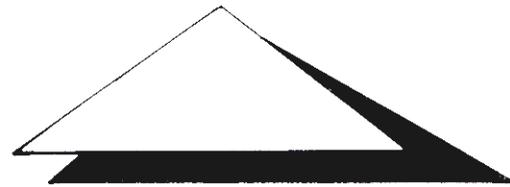
## Now I Adore My Life

Theodore Roethke

It doesn't get easier  
but it gets grander  
I am a flag, unfurling  
in the winds of my truths.

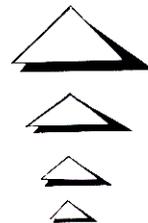
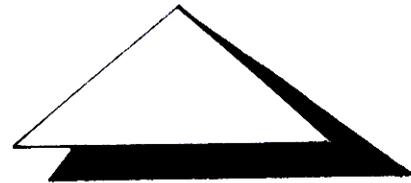
I embrace all—  
the desperation  
the need to walk  
paths of beauty.

Sweeping aside the sweet child  
Now I adore my life.



## I Walk This House Naked

I walk this house naked, my house, naked  
a clever thief, a stealthy animal  
and read your poems  
and still don't understand them  
only the yearning you bring to your days.  
And I'm learning. O so slowly—  
(This is not a world at home with nakedness)—  
Learning slowly to clothe my body in  
tenderness; my thoughts in majesty.  
I lay claim to this body, to this mind.  
Inhabit them as a new, strong house.  
Your poems guide me from room to room.  
I walk this house, my house, in pride and beauty.  
Learning and crossing the bridge to myself.



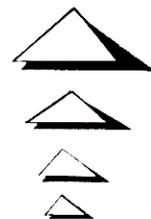


## Interrupted Conversation

At its best this life is a series of  
evocative interruptions moving us  
from the locked track of the over-  
determined mind to the warmth of flesh  
the morning rush of birds. Accident  
upon accident until the whole spells a truth  
larger than we could ever conjecture.

Today speaking with a stranger  
I found a friend and learned about a  
Patchen recording that will find me someday  
and I learned that Urdu poets favor aphorisms  
and that I yearn to nest in a tropical tangle  
and I discovered a little more how to live  
the perfect contour of the holy moment.

I would be like the spider  
Center of an ever-expanding web  
reaching into the darkest corners.  
I would be the wolf gliding through tundra.  
I would learn to devour myself again and again  
Invest everything on the swing of an arm  
On the way light falls in familiar rooms.



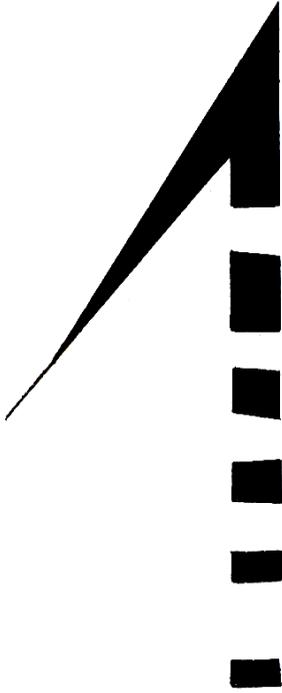
## Rebirth

“All deaths in the first world are murder  
disguised as suicide disguised as the  
course of nature.”

David Cooper, *The Death of the Family*

“There is no humankind  
but . . . You!”

Nanao Sakaki., *Break the Mirror: The Poems of Nanao Sakaki*



You throw many fine words,  
and through them I know your pain:  
the joy of it  
the play of it  
the knowing that it's  
the sun, the stars, the earth  
that finally matters;  
this whole wondrous world  
waiting, waiting  
waiting for the time we find the way  
to move out of the way  
of ourselves.

Billowy dense white clouds  
grow dark and serried, folding  
into the distant hills.  
Words unnecessary, extra, redundant  
as when you get everything you need  
are complete  
yet empty.

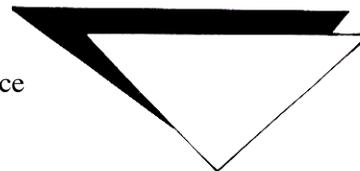
I speak of the necessary death of the family,  
the self, the world  
from which Phoenix-wise we rise wide-eyed  
before the rocketing world.  
After death, rebirth  
empty fullness, simple beginning.  
Walking away, walking toward:  
The same.



## Morning Grace

Start slow  
Test stiff muscles  
against concrete, softly  
as a sparrow, a cat.  
Around the first bend  
Up the hard slope  
Alert to cars  
Then the abrupt  
Turn, the hill lengthens  
Deep slow breaths  
Sweat spills down the neck.  
You hit the dirt trail  
winding through the hills.  
The body a clean animal  
greeted by a young deer  
head tossing as it glides  
into the thick bush.  
Ahead the endless ascent  
called agony.  
Heart pumping, you shout  
You can do it, keep going  
and then, all at once, the peak  
And the silken descent.

Sailing smoothly through  
the silent woods which once  
filled the entire land  
you understand what  
alive is.

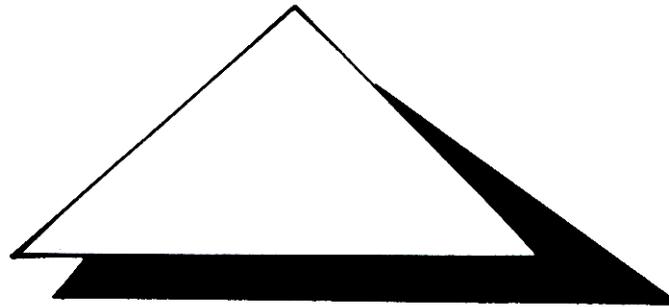


## Slowness is Beauty

I am in no hurry and have  
no desire to name it  
though it waits up ahead  
laughing at my small conceits.

I have no god to save me  
except one morn I watched creation  
slowly dawn and knew the pastel majesty  
of beginning, the daily awakening of beauty

Would unfold on a patch of land between  
sky and sea a million mornings and more  
at the juncture of all possibilities  
the gift there for the taking.



## Learning to Attend

But I, I only wonder / and don't  
know, / I don't know fishes. / In  
the beginning Jesus was called  
the Fish . . . / and in the end. / "Fish."

D. H. Lawrence

Yes, he saw it all in the fish  
though it could have been a snake  
an acorn  
One he could never know  
the God beyond the gods.

A ripping from the water.  
A silver blaze  
a dead gray thing.

For the power of gods  
Is the power to destroy.

And from destruction  
the gods fashion life  
endlessly endlessly  
The Father in the Son.

Each of us  
desperate-eyed  
against the great  
weight of the sea.

Each  
yearning toward death  
out of which mighty effort  
a new beginning.

A new beginning  
Only to end the same.

Yet we have his words  
His miraculous words  
And can never again  
think we know fishes.

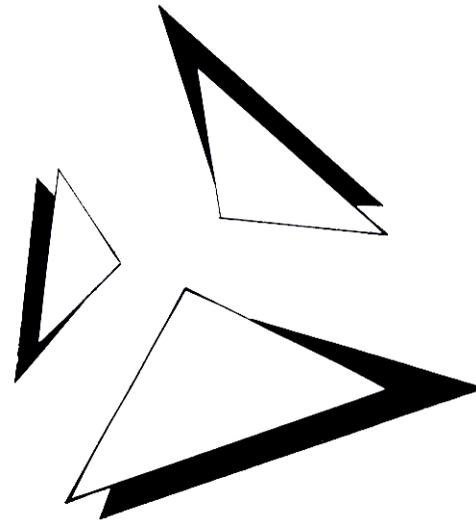
## One Tough Old Man

As for me I will play the flute  
ride spirited horses  
speak Italian fluently  
walk Rappalo streets  
grinning at the descendants  
of Ezra's scrawny cats.

I will seek the larger  
ever larger task.  
Insist on the primacy of self  
in a televisionized world.

The world is built of possibility.  
Either that or a grinding down into a  
disinterested old-age.

One tough old man for instance  
turned an asylum into a solon.



## Earthweavers

“Where do we begin?” Aldous Huxley  
was once asked. “Everywhere at once,” he replied

The rain is falling on the last place”

W. S. Merwin

The Earth cries out now to her weavers  
to intertwine the threads that will create  
a new green tapestry.  
Quiet workers who slip in, slip out  
and never stay too long but  
ride the tides, patiently waiting  
the right waves, ride them joyfully  
until the end, then walk softly  
by the shore, waves unnoticed  
for the moment, and perhaps  
there will be a gull or a solitary  
man, who for a smile  
will tell you a wonderful story  
so that you can go to Mexico or Manhattan  
and meet him again, in suit and tie  
this time, and returning your smile  
as you tell him the story he told you.

And it all begins somewhere—on a beach  
walking down a busy street  
and it continue to begin, as long as we  
do not stop or become fixed.  
As long as we remember someone always  
takes notes, keeps accounts;  
As long as we remember everyone is  
waiting to serve, everyone is serving  
the Earth, which calls out now to her  
children  
in her time of need to come to her help  
by weaving, ever weaving, ever new  
tapestries of service and love.

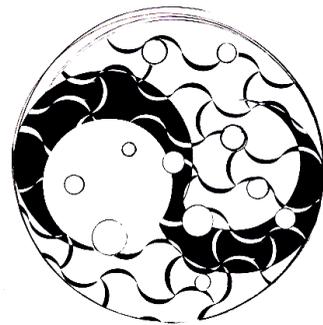
## Our Common Home

“Last chance to testify on Lease Sale #91:  
Public Hearing on Offshore Oil Drilling”  
Headline, *Mendocino Commentary*, Issue 317,  
January 21, 1988

Mark night from day; faint moon from fiery sun  
Here where a continent ends in relentless waves.  
Ocean, ocean as far as the eye can see.  
Imagine looking out over this vast beauty extending back  
To a time before time and seeing grey-black oil rigs  
Filthy giants against the sky, rising from the rolling blue  
Seizing the eye, twisting it to ugliness.

If we do this thing we do evil,  
If we do this thing we turn our back on God.  
If we do this thing our sould shall wither  
into barren seeds unfit to sustain life.

Leave it be! We must leave this beauty alone  
If we wish to be worthy of this place.  
We must learn to love this crust of earth  
On which we dwell. We must learn to dwell  
On this crust of earth, our common home.



**Jerry Bass'** poetry has appeared in such publications as *Androgyne*, *The Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Calapooya Collage 12*, *The Galley Sail Review*, *Minotaur*, *Peace and Perish* (an anthology edited by Miriam Patchen), *Proof Rock*, *San Francisco Review*, *The Suisun Valley Review*, and in privately published collections. Following receipt of a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California at Berkeley, he held teaching and administrative positions at the City University of New York, the University of Oregon, the University of Singapore, and the University of California, Berkeley.

**Amy Ione**, an artist and a writer, lives and works in Berkeley, California