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**experimentalist**

# S.U.N.Y. - GENESCO

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# **experimentalist**

*Volume XIII*

*Spring 1967*

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# experimentalist

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## Contributors

BETTY BUCKLEY

Grandparents I-II  
St. Peter's School Yard

LAWERENCE ALLEN

Cave

LEW BALDWIN

Groten

JUDY MATTERN

Past, Present and Future

LAKSHMI MANI

Divali - 1966  
Weekend

SUSAN WITTER

1954 and More  
Description of a Child  
Himself

ELAINE TREMPE

The Old Man

CAROL BROWN

Mourning the Life of Death

KATHY WINTER

Poem

CYNTHIA HOLLEY

Urns for Basho

GUDREN MOWER

A Trip to the City

RAYMOND SHIMMER

Passing  
The Far Raft  
Wreath and Wine

DAN JANDORF

Bar Mitzvah

JEFFREY SASS

Tea  
Storm

CYRIL G. MALLETT

Haiku

WENDELL BROOKER

Distillation

Cover design by Roger Smith



Grandparents I-II

St. Peter's School Yard

I

The hansom pair and the blue-eyed man  
with the pale hair, waited.  
Their way of life challenged—  
they thought to test the monster.  
Sun-tanned hands ready to reassure—  
but the brown satin bodies shivered  
as the Iron Ogre pounded the ground  
till it vibrated under their legs and  
they heard in its dreadful scream  
the cry of death—and bolted.

The tall man brought them back.  
This time they lunged at their rival in rage  
To settle the thing once and for all:  
The ugly steed stopped on its tracks  
to hiss at the slaughter, then  
screached on into the roaring future.

II

I had never known my grandfather,  
but I was born in time to see my  
    grandmother  
dying day by day—In the city  
lesser monsters cluttered the air around her  
with incoherent clatter.



I can still see her in the chair by the window,  
half bent forward as if listening  
for the soft whinny of the horses, or some country sound  
to light her coal black eyes with unexpected joy.  
Ever since that "dies ire," time  
had feasted daily at the tall frame  
and the flesh fell away leaving  
finally—a gaunt dark shadow.  
She died never really having been wholly alive again—  
I, to miss my part Irish, part Cherokee grandmother—  
who made me love my father as a little boy,  
to see him, then, as she saw him  
always in the past—  
who made me long ever since  
to hear the soft whinny of horses,  
for a place I could never know  
a man in strange clothes  
scuttles across the school yard,  
huddles over some furtive burden  
wrapped in crested scarlet and gold;  
an acolyte in red and white  
scurries ahead ringing the insistent  
bell.

A madman believes  
he holds God in a gold cup.



## Cave

When I was in trouble I used to darken  
my parents hope of revenge by hiding  
in a dismal cave that was cut deeply  
into the side of a cliff. I would run  
across the stream and scale the cliff  
to the top, groping for small chinks of stone  
to pull my slender body up the side.  
Far behind I would hear the plaintiff calls  
of my mother and father, first pleading,  
then threatening. I would hang tight so not to fall,  
and then say, "Today I'll not be needing  
you!" Here was safety, my shadow beside.

My parents would never follow; they knew  
I would not come out for hours. Besides, what  
harm could I do or get into sitting  
in a hole in the wall? Now I was free, and  
from my cave I could see sights no one else  
knew existed I sit on the cave's lower lip  
and look like a skinny tongue licking  
its mouth to moisten against the dry  
breeze as I sway. To the rear—my cave, dark as  
any confessional, to the front—air and sky . . .  
I can go either way . . . I might take a sip  
from both cups, depending how my mind is clicking.

With delicate discrimination  
I would study the earth which  
seemed miles below.

The field across the way is yellow-brown,  
reduced by generations of flabby cows  
ready for milking, pacing up and down  
near the fence, crying like the angry sows  
across the way. And now I am the farmer  
with my back bent and my hands groping  
in the dead soil for life near the warmer  
part of the earth. I give up and to the sloping  
creek bank I turn, enchanted by the mellow  
tinkling of a Spanish guitar that  
I hear coming from the rushes. And  
suddenly I am in love with a  
beautiful, black-eyed Spanish lady.  
I look at the oaks along the stream,  
their bark stripped and their wood bleached white  
by winter's wind. To me they only seem  
ghosts who from behind the willows, out of sight,  
show their white bodies when the great weeper  
lifts its branches to fight the devilish wind.  
I love ghosts and beg for wind, their keeper,  
to make them act by telling the willows to "Bend."  
I toss a stick into the stream and it  
floats down and crashes against a stone . . .  
I am sailing on the Nile defending  
Cleopatra's barge from a band of thieves  
who live deep in the Egyptian sand world.

I leaned forward past the lip of my  
cave and my mother's voice grated on  
my ear.

The sun was low and my time was running  
out, so I had to go and say I was walking

*Lawrence Allen*

in the woods. They would know it was a lie,  
but they would play along with me because they  
would want me to go there again tomorrow  
so I would not be a nuisance around their  
guests. Below me the green willows would  
bend their ~~their~~ woody fingers to touch the water . . .  
as if they were calling me down. I would—  
and then run to my mother who ruffled my hair.





# Groton

Spitting out his last years on the sill  
of a one window loft on South Avenue;  
Once yellow, once the pride of Swillburg  
. . . Just a short walk from Tony's "New  
Remodeled Veteran's Bar and Grill."

Between coughs "It's just catarrh—nothing  
serious." Then, pushing back a mass  
of fine white hair, and fixing  
me with watery blue eyes he'd smile,  
tug at his omnipresent glass  
and recite "The Barefoot Boy with Shoes On."

Back in Groton he'd been a fine declaimer,  
singing star at socials, Irish pride of  
the Minstrel troupe and parade line.

"An all around good time fellow"

Hot licks on a clarinet.

Grandmother was so smitten that  
She'd dropped six boys before  
she finally realized that  
Grandpa's obvious eclat stemmed  
at least in part . . .

From disregarding work's joys.

Occasionally he'd sell a suit though  
to a sympathetic slightly drunken friend.  
His sample kit accompanied him through  
every bar room door. Then sat forgotten  
on the floor.

All wool fabrics from England.

The family never lacked for much  
'till his dad the Doctor died—  
and never then 'till such little  
legacy remaining . . .  
went by the block.

But . . .

Great-grandma Kate (she wasn't then)  
who had once taught elocution but  
had no further wish to create more  
declaimers—asserting that Grandpa  
was enough—swished off in her long  
outdated skirt to Comptometer School  
and learned a trade.

Knowing her son was not so motivated  
and as a mother of course she tolerated  
his minor flaw. But Grandpa's drinking  
. . . unabated by any sense of recent tragedy . . .  
dissolved those earnings too.

Grandma Kate settled into a  
quiet routine of making quilts  
from the suiting samples.

All wool fabrics from England.

Then, migrating with the grandsons  
to Swillburg, on South Avenue only  
walking distance from Tony's  
"New Remodeled Veteran's Bar and Grill"  
There she joined the D.A.R. and  
among the Dutchmen watched her boy  
spit, and spit, and die.

"The Barefoot Boy with Shoes On"

## Past, Present, and Future

The knight in his shining armor  
rode to save the fairy princess,  
and my mother called me in to dinner.  
I had already passed through  
my cowboy and Indian stage.  
My pictures of Mickey Mantle had been  
stored away in an old black scrap book.  
Shortly thereafter, I gave up my dream  
of riding a unicorn and concentrated  
on entering the "college of my choice."

Adolescence was a series of love affairs,  
Thomas Wolfe, Robert Browning, and Romeo,  
abstract painting, sea scapes, and Dylan Thomas,  
Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and Buckingham Palace.  
I came to Geneseo and was semi-content  
to hear "Baby Ben" chime the hour.  
The challenge of "higher learning" was dulled by Education  
One-Eleven.

Abstract painting became Intro to the Arts—  
an Introduction to Instant Culture.  
And time hurries slowly to June 1967.

Oh, I still have love affairs—  
Big Ben chimes louder and  
planes fly to Europe in seven hours now,  
accompanied by Cinemascope, Technicolor, and nuclear  
fallout.

Who knows, maybe I will at last see a unicorn.  
Of course, I won't be able to ride him—  
they'll have to put him in a zoo  
to be used for research.



## Divali—1966

The crisp brand new clothes  
are smeared in corners overnight with vermillion,  
to wear after the ceremonial bath  
at the unearthly hour of 3 a.m.  
when god chose to kill Narakasuran,  
the demon of evil.  
The door frames are adorned  
with festoons of mango and marigold.  
A geometric design of rice paste  
decorates the threshold.  
The sweets wrapped in glistening tinfoil,  
stand on the sideboard top in tempting array.  
The percolator proclaims the aroma of peaberry coffee.  
Rice cakes steam in the double boiler  
when suddenly the door bell rings.  
Have friends arrived already  
to wish us 'happy Divali?'

Fire-crackers pierce the ear.  
Against the backdrop of an inky sky,  
dazzling flowers of fiery design appear and disappear.  
Meenu is still afraid of noisy crackers  
at twenty, which her brother lights for her  
protectively, as a big brother should.  
Her face gleams, like a segment of rainbow caught at night,  
in the glow of the multicolored sparklers.  
The jasmine garland perches precariously  
on her elusive, wet coiling, black tresses.

We shed our forty odd years  
and become one with the children.  
The sordid city looks glamorous

### *Experimentalist*

in the mellow glow of a myriad earthen lamps.  
like amorous women made up.

The chimes of the distant church  
waken me against my will  
to the chilling beauty of a valley.

A class at eleven and ten already!

I must hurry.

A strange Divali!

The sparklers are scattered and shattered all over.



### Week-End

The cars tear away on the freeway;  
week-ends are a ritual  
of mad rush in U. S. A.  
A snail from the eastern corner  
withdraws itself into its shell on such a lovely day.

The transistor sings a paean;  
Gordon and Conrad have done it again!  
In the peak of their achievement  
in another sphere,  
do they miss their loved ones too?

The silvr'y sun turns gray.  
I undo the dusty cover  
and pluck the veena's strings;  
the sounds are not in array.

Does the raga' search for rapport?

A T.V. refrain recommends 'Neet' with nasal persuasiveness.

I was returning from the laundromat;  
two women thro' an Impala smiled  
looking like the elite.

One asked me, "Will you read my palm?"

The other, "Is it true that cows roam your streets?"

Was Kipling right about east and west?

I hung my head in chagrin

as they showed me an Indian news item with a kind intention,

Rioting Hindus ban cowslaughter!

Can naked sadhus legislate

and mock the secular state?

The floods devour treasures of art

in Italy instead of erasing epileptics.

An irony of fate!

I woke from my futile reverie,

and searched my diplomatic repertory

for a counter question that would match

this understanding of the cultures.

A brainwave struck me for a query

"Is it true that even your love is computerized?

Do machines take over where man has failed?"

The stars in the inky firmament

blinked at each other uncomprehendingly.

Self-consciousness smothers me

like the smog that shrouds this city.

Window shopping on Main street

may cure me of this neurosis.

I begin to roam.



"Topless dancing every night"  
The garish neon lights outcry.  
Fascinated, I stop, with slight nausea,  
or is it hypocritical squeamishness?  
Curiosity consumes me.  
Can vicarious sex satisfy?  
Khajuraho's<sup>2</sup> dusky sculptures  
resurrect the Kamasutra.<sup>3</sup>  
East and West find common ground  
in living sandstone and striptease.  
The one is Freud and the other Maya.<sup>4</sup>  
Both by time and place unbound.



*Notes.*

1. Raga is a melody in Indian music.
2. Khajuraho is the site of twenty temples (many of them in ruins) of the 12th century A.D., containing some of the most exquisite erotic sculpture.
3. Kamasutra is a treatise on the Art of Love by Vatsyayana and the inspiration of much erotic sculpture.
4. Maya, a Hindu philosophy, is the term for illusion.

1945 And More

In 1945, my sister Barbara lost one braid,  
at school.  
Father lost his job, and mother  
lost some weight.  
They all gained me.

We lived four and a half years  
in a Colonial guest home,  
a long enough time to run a large place,  
people stopping, sleeping in rooms  
near mine.

The home that held four before evenings,  
held six or eight through the nights,  
the time of day the doorbell rang  
and guests (that was what I was to call them)  
mostly sleepy salesmen in wrinkled suits,  
wandered up the curved staircase  
behind my father.

During the one day, sometimes two weeks, stays,  
I spied a lot.  
Some weren't too busy to make friends with,  
like Tim Mahaney.  
He let me poke the metal-rimmed keys  
of his ugly, scratched black typewriter,  
and I kept what I wrote.

The neighbors were different every year  
except one.  
The Ralston boys in '49 whined  
and told me to go away.  
But it was *my* yard, *my* swing, *my* slide,

Barbara's first,  
she was at school most of the time.  
so was my mother.  
Old Mrs. Lynch couldn't be bothered  
to chase the boys away.  
Her job was to watch me,  
that was all.  
She was special in the kitchen, not in games.  
I helped her make peanut-butter cookies  
by pressing patterns in the batter with a fork,  
or by staying in another room listening to  
"Red Ryder" or something on the old Emerson radio.

One summer the front yard became  
one more lane for routes five and twenty.  
Men came early in the morning sweating already.  
The sidewalk was hammered and chunk by chunk  
got thrown into dump trucks with black stuff  
Oozing out of their bulging axles.  
I filled milk bottles with ice water  
and loaded them onto my wagon to  
pull across the yard to the workmen.  
Somehow I helped, but I wasn't helped.  
That year, 1950, the guest home was sold.  
I lost an old friend . . .  
Mrs. Lynch.  
Being five years old wasn't easy.  
Once I tried to help a squirrel with a bleeding leg,  
and it bit me.





## A Description of a Child

He won't eat apple skins  
or wade into deep water.  
The way he moves is fast,  
sings, loudly, and loves  
always from his heart.

Among items lost are  
one saddle shoe  
with a white sock inside,  
a cat, "Missy," tonsils  
and adenoids this year.

Sometimes he walks with me  
across the road, beyond  
the foamy green pond,  
to the end of the wood.  
We can see Nutter's farm.

Horses walk to the fence,  
roll on their backs, whinny,  
eat tall grass he picks.  
They lick his fingers by mistake,  
and make him laugh.

Dry cereal in a plastic bag,  
a thermos bottle of water  
and "Topsy" the retriever pup  
go with him each day.  
He limits his world to everywhere.

## Himself

A quiet horse would do  
For a ride this afternoon,  
With pheasants flying to the wind  
And hounds under horses' hoofs.

Himself is a quiet horse.  
He and I will make our ride  
Without the hounds beside.  
We will cover the entire course.

He's a broad-backed mount,  
Sturdy, with a wide neck.  
His gaits are even, unless  
By whim, he hops about.

Being Irish, he jumps  
With ease, and never balks,  
Except at a bog, or a hole  
Left by a reckless gopher.

We did some gully work,  
Then moved through thickets  
And up another bank,  
Hand to flank, to flank.

Cantering towards the woods,  
We angered small deer,  
Quail, and rabbits; steers  
Struggled to their feet and bellowed.

In his black winter coat,  
Nostrils catching the wind,  
Himself slowed to begin  
Our ride through the oaks.

*Susan Witter*

Weaving through the trees  
We covered leaf-smothered earth.  
The sounds of hid hoofs came first  
Then the snapped twigs' smoke.

Once on the other side  
Of the wooded pasture land  
We, Himself and I,  
Rode home with the sun's brand.

Himself is a quiet horse.  
He and I made our ride  
Without the hounds beside  
We covered the entire course.

ELAINE TREMPÉ

## The Old Man

Hunched, small,  
He walked,  
Bent against the wind.  
Hands  
Clutched a wet coat,  
Steadied his hat.  
I watched him  
Cautious-childlike,  
Alone in the crowd.



## Mourning the Life of Death

Like an eel she slithered  
to spin webs in concentric  
circles around her children.  
Greek tragedians conceived  
similar plays, not one as ugly  
as the cancer growing in Brooklyn  
who sucks her children . . . killing.

—I remember—

The woman lying in her  
bed of lies, saved two night's pills  
And took them. She mumbles words—  
"I'm ill" . . . Doctor's . . . I'm ill . . .  
He's trying to kill me, Audrey, please won't  
you stay by me? I am your mother."  
Don't hold the trembling tumor!

—I cried—

Lemminglike eyes taunted me.  
Audrey's going to follow  
blindly, the animal re-  
evaluates the distance  
from the dead sea, and seeing circles  
closing in, clutches the silver card  
strangling both, if possible . . .

—I know—

Bitter as the pecan grit  
were the evenings she spent in  
the daughter's gold living room.  
She pitted her child against  
her son-in-law, who was crazy, for  
he loved his wife and saw the cancer

*Carol Brown*

try to grow in his farmhouse.

—I saw—

The spider traps Dot . . . her dot . . .

the child of her wildest dreams

to whom she loaned ten thousand

traps, interest free. And

Dot, whose circles include no husband,

made a concession in circling her,

depends upon the traps her mother made.

KATHY WINTER

Poem

Autumnal lonely

With grey rain

Scarlet aching

Winds that slash on

Wet, slippery leaves.

## Urns For Basho

Night

So lightly falls the night,  
Its folded wings  
Never make the air whisper.



Evening

Fiery lake,  
Liquid ember flowing endlessly  
From a dying sun.



Lily

Small ivory vase,  
Milk kitten tongues  
Growing from a jade pencil.



Ring

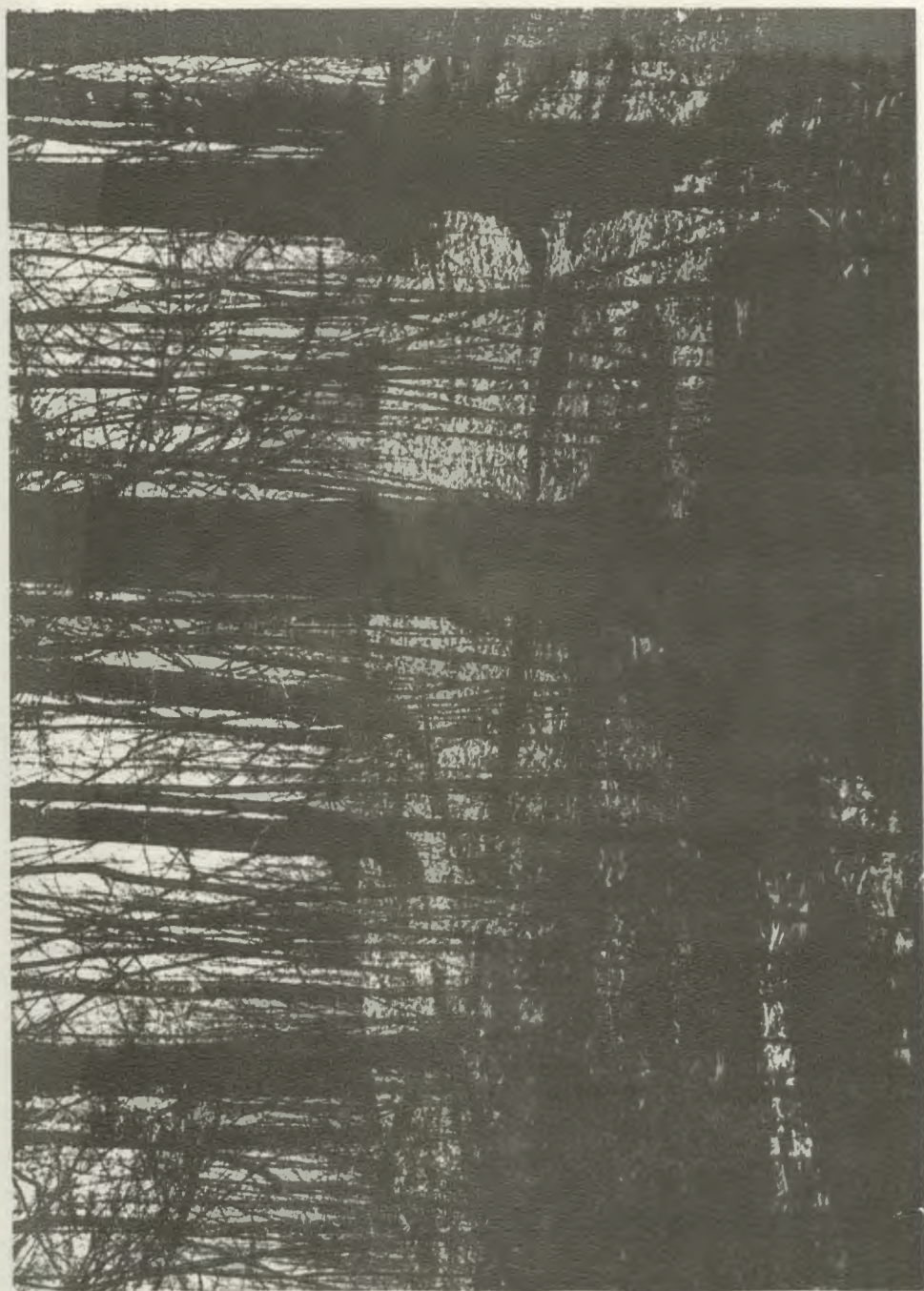
Ember sunset,  
Frozen in a golden bed.  
Riding an ivory finger.



Urn

Black urn,  
Fused earth,  
I cup you in these hands  
So soon to be held by you.





Roger Smith



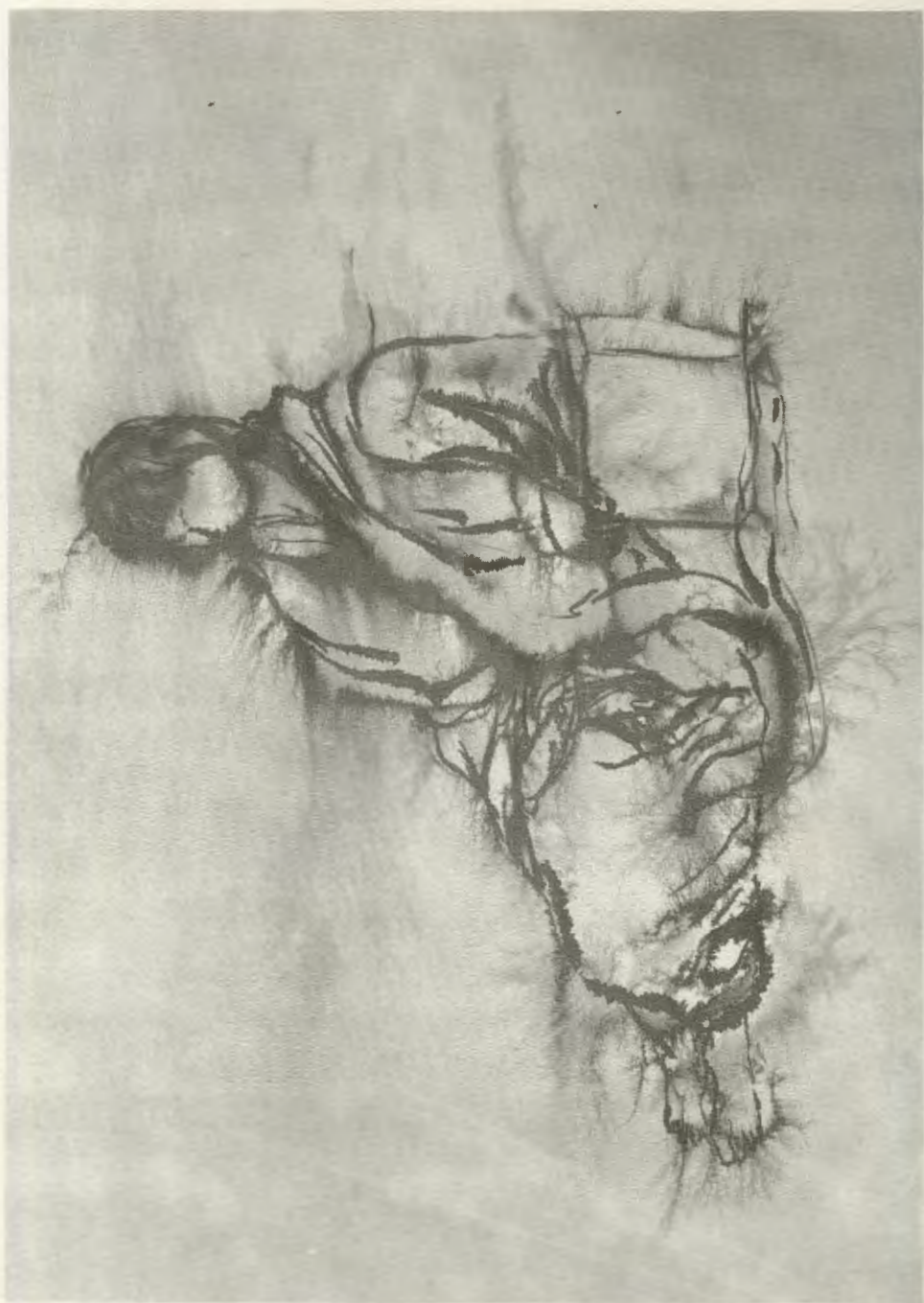
Dan Jandorf





Michael Keogh





Sue Wood



Pat Riester



Carol Cherney





Dan Jandorf



Roger Smith

## A Trip to the City

Clack went the door. Her mother was outside. Helen stood behind the window and watched her mother walking hastily down the street dragging Helen's six year old brother behind her. He could hardly keep up with her vigorous step. After they had vanished around the corner, Helen remembered what her mother had said, "Now Helen, you are old enough to watch Martin. After all, you are ten years old." The child was crawling on the floor. He was howling. Mother should have taken Martin along, she thought. He likes to see things, too. Then, for seconds forgetting everything, Helen thought of her trips to the city. When one rides on the bus everything outside changes. Things look so different from a moving bus. The telegraph poles hang from the sky, and the trees along the road look evil. Helen was always afraid that sometime one of those huge trees might collapse on the bus. And then there was the squeaky old street car prattling along. Except for the clattering wild movements, Helen did not care for it much. It always smelled so awful. She did not like the smells of strong tobacco, the dirty clothes of the fishfactory workers and the sweet perfume of highbusted ladies. Their faces did not seem real to Helen. They were so clownish, much like the masks worn in the fairy tale plays in the theater. Oh, how she loved to go to the theater! Oh, how she loved fairytales!

"Martin," she said, "remember the story about Sleeping Beauty?"

He stopped howling for a few seconds, looked at her expectantly, turned his lips inside out, rubbed his dirty hands across his face and said stubbornly, "No." "Oh yes, you know," Helen said cheerfully. "It is the story about the princess who slept one thousand years in the castle behind hedges of thorny roses." "Would you like to go and see the place where Sleeping Beauty is sleeping?" "She don't sleep," he said sullenly. "she's awake, and she lives with a prince far, far, away."

"I know where she lives now," Helen said dreamily. Martin became interested, and his crying slowly changed to sobbing.

"Right behind grandfather's house is a park. And in the middle of the park is a tower with little dark windows in it. One day when grandfather took me for a walk I saw Sleeping Beauty at the window. Her face was white as snow and her black eyes looked so, so sadly at me. And then I saw the prince standing behind her. He was sad too. And his hair was like silver and it was long."



Martin listened attentively. "She still live there?" he asked.

"Do you want to go and see her now?" All of a sudden Helen had a wild idea. She was excited and frightened at the same time. Her mother had taken her out of the suburb at the edge of the city into the bustling life of the inner city. She could remember only the quiet street where her grandfather lived and the street car stop in front of the candy store. It was close to the park.

Within a quarter of an hour Martin and Helen stood at the bus stop. They were dressed for the city. In an old chest of drawers Helen had found a white tropical hat for her brother, a dark green Russian style coat that was hard to tell whether it was for a girl or boy. A pair of blue kneesocks and a pair of red shoes gave the final touch to Martin's outfit. Just before they left the house Helen looked into the mirror and discovered that she did not look elegant enough. One of her mother's hats, which resembled a flower bed, and an old-fashioned purse accented her girlish coat, kneesocks and shoes. On their way to the bus stop they did not meet anyone they knew. As soon as the bus stopped, Martin started to cry most abominably. Whispering into his ear, Helen had to remind him about the purpose of their trip. He was persuaded and his crying stopped momentarily. When the bus started moving he lost all control. He banged his hand on his legs and his legs against the seat. He wanted to go to the bathroom. "Not right now," Helen said. He insisted. His insistence became more violent. The more he persisted in the urgency of his physical need, the more she talked about the princess and the prince. In a frenzy she told him absolute nonsense. Her sentences became mere fragments without any relation to each other. But he did not listen to her any longer. They became annoyed at each other. And then Helen slapped him across his face. A loud cry escaped his mouth. Helen blushed, her arms and hands trembled, and tears came running down her checks. Then Martin decided to be quiet, and he sat in complete apathy.

Although most people in the bus had eyed them curiously, after a few questioning looks their attention had shifted back to other things. At the moment when Helen had slapped Martin, everyone had turned around, and about a dozen faces had stared at them. Martin and Helen sat in the rear of the bus. Two ladies with faces of parched skin looked at them severely and disapprovingly. One said to the other, "Parents don't care for their children any longer. Nowadays everyone wants to have an easy life. Look at these children. How can a mother allow her children to run around like that." The other lady nodded agreeingly.

They also had caught the attention of a young girl. She smiled at Martin and Helen encouragingly. Martin did not respond. Helen could only smile faintly. When they left the bus, the young girl helped them across the street and waited with them for the street car. She asked them where they were going. Helen was embarrassed. "To see my grandfather," she said.

"Helen lied. We go to see Sleeping Beauty," Martin added proudly and with emphasis. Martin had finally opened up and was showing a bit of sympathy and trust.

"You know," Helen said casually to the girl, "my grandfather has all kinds of books."

"Not books, we see the real Sleeping Beauty. She lives in the great big tower. You want to go?" he asked the girl who looked skeptically at Helen.

"What do you wear the purse and hat for?" she questioned Helen.

For some seconds Helen's thoughts ran through a labyrinth out of which she could not find her way. Then a smile of relief spread over her face. "Oh," she said, "my little brother is a dreamer. He believes all stories are real. He wanted me to put on the hat so I would look like a flowergirl. You know, the ones that help Father Spring spread the flowers during the calm nights in April." An expression of incredulity appeared on the girl's face. She looked at both of them with awe. When the streetcar came around the corner, she silently walked away.

The ride on the streetcar turned out to be more joyful. Martin did not eject noisy lamentations any longer. Instead he stood on his seat pressing his face and hands against the windows and shrieked loudly whenever he saw a dog or a swarm of seagulls take off from the roof of a building. Helen was disappointed. She tried many times to direct Martin's attention to the shopwindows, the high buildings, the traffic and the crowd of people walking in the streets. All this could not excite him. He was only fond of the familiar. What a waste, thought Helen. She sighed deeply. The conductor came. Helen gave him just the money for herself.

"Is the boy with you?" he asked sharply.

"Yes, but he is only two years old." Martin did not share the curiosity of most children who always want to know how old they are. He did not know his age. So he blindly repeated "two."

"And how old are you, young lady?" the conductor asked.



"I am ten," Helen replied.

"And how old were you when your brother was born?" the conductor further inquired of her.

How stupid of him. Helen thought, he must really think I can't subtract two from ten. "Eight," Helen said quietly.

The conductor took a deep breath. His eyes became two indistinguishable dark lines and the hair in his nostrils vibrated. "Either you pay or you get out," he said furiously.

Close to tears, Helen indicated that she did not have any more money. Then she noticed the man who was sitting opposite from them. His face had been buried in a newspaper he was reading. He slowly lifted his head, rearranged his glasses and calmly looked up to the conductor, who could not withstand the glance of the man. The conductor murmured something about rules and exceptions, but the man did not seem to hear him. He drew some change out of his pocket and handed it to the conductor.

"Thank you very much," Helen said to the man. He did not hear her because he had already hidden himself behind the newspaper again. "Thank you, Mister," Martin shouted and peeped below the man's newspaper. The man answered Martin with a short stern look and the raising of his eyebrows. Helen drew Martin away from him. When it was time for them to get off the street car Helen, slightly smiling, turned again to the man and said, "Thank you very, very much." The man did not stir. Angry and ashamed, she grabbed Martin's hand and they got off the streetcar.

It was not difficult for them to find the park. But it became a task to find the tower. Often Helen could see the green copper roof in the distance, but she did not know how to get there. The park consisted of too many paths turning here and there, meeting other paths which again led into many directions. Martin became impatient. He wanted to get to the tower fast. They went farther and farther into the park. Then they were lost. There was a stretch of dark young pine trees which appeared sinister and impenetrable. The silence made Helen's head palpitate. She was frightened. They were by themselves. Then from the distance came the roar of laughter, shouting and hollering. Martin looked fretfully at Helen. He pulled her by the hand, and again he started crying. Helen heard the voices come closer. Closer, louder, savagely echoing between the trees. She seized Martin's hand and they started to run across the meadow to their left. Martin struggled, slipped, fell. She picked him up again



and again. He bellowed increasingly. One time when she lifted Martin off the ground, she saw a group of boys following them like a herd of wild boar. Oh, how Helen wished they had stayed home!

Their pursuers gained speed. Sometimes she carried Martin under her arms. Exhausted, she had to drop him again. She had lost the hat. One of the boys swung it victoriously through the air. Just before Helen and Martin reached the wide ditch filled with muddy water, the boys had almost caught up with them. She put Martin on her shoulders and walked courageously into the ditch. The slimy ground made her struggle. She started sliding, lost her balance, and fell backwards. Martin was thrown against the dirty side of the ditch. The boys had reached the ditch. They were a wild bunch. Martin tried desperately to climb up the bank. Halfway up he would slide down again. For the boys it was a special amusement. "Bet he won't make it," some said; "Bet he will," said others. At times the boys laughed so hard that they had to roll on their stomachs. Helen tried to help Martin. She pushed him upwards. "Stay in the water, you bitch," they told her. When Martin had finally reached the warm fragrant grass of the meadow, the boys started pulling the flowers out of the hat and threw them toward Helen, who with fearful eyes, saw them floating on the grey water. Helen wanted to catch them with her hands. "Don't touch them," one of them said. Helen did not listen. The boy approached the outer limit of the ditch, swung his foot upward and kicked Helen's breast. Splash! and she was under water. Martin ran against the boy and pounded at him blindly. When Helen stood up again, the boys were retreating. Martin threw chunks of dirt behind them. For a while they lay in the warm grass and absorbed the hot rays of the sun.

After Helen's clothes were almost dry they started wandering through the park again. Martin declared that he was hungry. He wanted to go home. Just when he began whimpering, the strong smell of jasmine met their nostrils, and they came into an opening with fresh mowed lawns and neatly arranged flowerbeds.

There was the tower. Helen and Martin looked at each other and smiled. They crawled under some bushes not far from the tower. Lights from the distance reflected in various shapes and movements in the tiny obscure windows of the tower. Martin wanted to know all about the marvelous appearances in the windows.

"You see," Helen spoke quietly, "Sleeping Beauty is alone tonight. The prince has gone off on a voyage far over the deep sea. Right now she can see the white full sails of his boat on the horizon. Soon it will be gone."

"Will she cry?" Martin asked.

"No, tonight she will not cry, because the good fairies will come to see her and make her laugh. They will sing to her and tell her funny stories."

"I just saw a fairy. She is so beautiful. You see her?"

"Yes, Martin, I see her now; we will see them only tonight."

"Not tomorrow and the other days?"

"No, tomorrow the good fairies will leave the princess in the tower, and the princess will have to wait for her prince to come back all by himself."

"Poor princess," Martin said, "all alone. But we come back, when the prince is back?"

"I don't know," Helen said, "maybe you can see all this only once."

Martin was quiet. He let his head fall softly into Helen's lap and fell asleep. The moon rose between the high elmtrees and bathed the tower in its cool light.





## Passing

In the late autumn, in the early days of December, there are a few mellow, melancholy days. They are windless; the sound of young boys playing comes clear from blocks away, from years away.

A man with a wrinkled, weathered face and freckled hands was on a ladder. He was nailing a spray of green pine boughs over his garage door. There were nail holes from many other Christmases in the garage, and they rose in a ragged line. The first was just above the door, and the last was a foot higher than the nail the old man had driven.

The wrinkled man was on the last rung of the ladder. To pound the nail in, he had stretched dangerously far, and now he was resting for a second before hanging the wreath. He was also remembering. In fact, he was remembering and waiting, something he had been doing more and more of late.

It had been three years since his last Christmas. When a man is old, he can't say, as the children do, that there are only three-hundred and sixty-four days until next Christmas. Christmas is the family that left home and got married. It doesn't live with an old man, and it doesn't visit him very often. This year though, it would come with a son's return.

He remembered the times when the trees were always green and the house would glow with the family. Then the boy and the father put the tree up. Each year the boy nailed higher. Each year they laughed, and he gave them presents. They were there when he came home; they needed the food he gave them. They lived in his house and they grew under his strength. They grew and the wreath went higher. The boy stretched farther every year . . . The old man was proud of the higher and higher holes.

Then would come the swirling and the flames of the Christmas; the noise and the confusion of much joy and life at once. His house was a chalice; its wine bubbled overflowing out the windows in a rosy glow. He exulted in its presence and abundance. He laughed drunken, as it splashed gaily on the floor.

Suddenly, in one year they were gone. They needed his strength no more. The windows where the light had run from were dark. There were no more Christmases. He could not put the wreath up alone. He forgot it. The boy was coming home now though, so he remembered it again. He had taken the hammer and the branches



and the nails, and had climbed the ladder. The ladder had not been high enough. He stretched. He could not reach above the highest hole. The Christmas was past him. With a strange wonder, he rested.

The Christmas was past him. He heard the young voices far, far down the street. He looked at the darkened windows of his house. The young voices had come from the windows. They confused him. He had helped them place the wreath very high, but now they were past him, and his own chalice was dry. Not a drop left, and the windows were dark. It was all past him.

## The Far Raft

They had been diving from the raft for over an hour. As they lay on it, feeling the warmth of the sun, one decided on a last plunge before paddling in. He stood up. In his eyes the lake glared and twinkled like the heavens. Each choppy wave had its own star flickering against the black water. With a quick breath of air the boy plunged through the stars and into the depths.

He swam far underwater. All the power of his youth surged in the arms and the legs. He was proud, thrilled to reach far in front of his head, pull smoothly, and feel himself glide forward. Again and again, glorying in the sheer waste of all his fine power, he drove farther and farther from the raft. He felt the bubbles against himself, the gentle resistance against his feet and hands. He felt the flow in his hair, and the water passing under his face. The sensation intoxicated him. He dared his youth. He drove on heedlessly.

He needed air at last. He popped to the surface, and exhaled the garbage of his youth. Before he could suck in new life, a star slapped into his face. He coughed and choked on it. The graceful crawl became an ugly dog paddle as he tried to regain the control he had lost. Treading water, he saw the raft in the distance. It seemed to be part of the land instead of the water. He was beginning to feel alone and tired. He wanted to go back.

Breathing deeply he tried to kick into the crawl again. His legs were heavy. He could not level his body off. He started stroking anyway unable to wait for the legs. He would demand that his arms take him back. The rhythmical strokes were becoming formless. He was in trouble now. The raft was very far away. He wasn't sure it was there or he was here. The fatigue dominated everything. His arms were flailing against the water, his head rolling with each clutching stroke. He saw his cousin lying face down on the raft, and he saw the beach and the cottage behind. They seemed one.

He was frightened and ashamed. He could not call for help. Everything was confused. The sky, the green water, the hopelessly far beach and raft, whirled through the splashings and his snapping, grasping head. His legs were paralyzed with fatigue and dragged on him. There was the water, the sky, an unreal glimpse of a dirty grey seagull motionless against the blue of the sky, and then his face was in the boiling, foaming, green water. His vision was a blur of color. He was unconscious of the weak thrashing of his arms. He was almost through. The water was in his eyes, smothering his face, sucking at his arms.

Then he wanted to stop and sink. It was suddenly obvious. He would die, but he didn't care. He was mildly surprised to discover this. He would merely slip under the water. No pain. No noise. None of the chaotic terror and desperate, humiliating begging with the Death-Bringer. He remembered reading about drownings. Many people disappeared within feet of help, making no whining, whimpering cry for life. One minute they were here, with dirty grey, passionless seagulls, and the next they were gone. He understood.

There was a flash of raft and cottage. They were very far away. He was surprised. He had not thought such a distance was between them. And he had not thought there was such a closeness to death. Now he looked at it, and he was fascinated. The stars outshone everything. His arms were quiet and he sank.

Dan Jandorf



## Wreath and Wine

He watched the door shut behind the bellhop. The room fell back into silence. The only sound was of his breathing, then a creaking as he sprawled on the bed. There was only his breathing again. He listened to it. He rose again. It was night, and he turned on every light in the room. He listened to the sounds he made. They proved someone was in the room with him.

He walked around the room, first noticing, then reading the copies of the city's hotel ordinances. It was like reading someone else's mail. They fascinated him. They said the city would punish him if he stole something from the room. He looked out the window at the traffic below and listened to his breath. There were no people, only a steady stream of cars. They had harsh, impersonal headlights. He couldn't see inside of the cars because it was night. They kept streaming past. He looked at the ordinance, vaguely puzzled. The city didn't know he was in the room.

Leaning over the cold radiator, he looked at the window of another room, which was part of the protruding hotel wing. No light showed under the shade, and it was apparently empty. As he stared at the walls he suddenly wondered who had built them. He wondered if a human had ever touched the dull, dirty brown bricks. Glancing around the room, he wondered about other things. There were the yellowed ordinances hanging from the walls, and the musty Bible on the desk. There were the bent coat hangers in the closet, and the cotton spread, on the bed. He looked at the window frame, which had been smothered by innumerable layers of pale green paint. Gazing at the bricks once more, he decided the hotel was never built and had never been new. It simply was, with no sound, and had always been brown.

He turned away. He lifted his bag onto the bed, opened it, and pulled out a newspaper he had bought at the desk. As he began to read, he was ignored by names he didn't know. They streamed past him, indistinguishable and impersonal. They did not stop to talk to him. They were not for him. He didn't recognize the ads. They seemed not to notice him. The editorials didn't care if he listened. The paper didn't speak. It made no noise for him to hear. When he was done, he put it on the desk. It belonged in the room.

Restless now, he went over to the window again. Across the street was a cathedral, which rose up past his window. The spire commanded the featureless, silent sky. The church itself was grey, constructed of geometrical, concrete forms. Dark stains made it look damp. Standing over him, it was omnipotent. It was the focal point of the sky. It came from the earth far below and reached well above him. It did not pause along the way. It was either ignoring him, or telling him he was not here. He thought that if he was not here, where was he. He decided that the church really knew, but that it cared little, because it commanded the sky. Down in his stomach, the understanding frightened him.

He refused the fear and looked out of the room, past the cathedral, to an office building two blocks away. The lights of the top floor were on. After a minute, there was a movement in a window. He saw a night janitor. The tiny silhouette was cleaning the offices. He stared at the figure, watching it for twenty-five minutes. He wanted it to stop moving and look at the hotel window. It didn't, and after a while was gone. The lights on the floor went out.

He took the bag off the bed, turned off the lights and lay looking at the darkness. At six-thirty, the desk rang. He said thank you to the telephone, took a shower and checked out. Nothing knew his name, so he left. The room was neat, almost undisturbed. It was as if he had never been there.





## The Bar Mitzvah

"Look how he looks, like a regular little mench."

"A boy like him a mother could be proud of."

"He's so handsome I could just run up there and hug him."

Once the room had been a room where a family had retired after their evening meal. They had sat there and waited. It had been carpeted and easy chairs had been scattered neatly about. But families have a way of leaving, and so now the house was a synagogue, and the room is filled with people sitting in folding chairs waiting for Bruce. Bruce comes out from a side room which was the same length as the other room but narrower. It is filled with long tables covered with small cakes for a reception after.

"Look how straight he stands, a fine husband he'll make."

Bruce squares his shoulders nervously, stands straight trying to keep the tallis on its precarious perch. He opens the book, binding to the right, and starts to chant the prayer for wine.

"What a voice. A cantor he should be, he is so good."

His voice totters on the edge of manhood and sheltered youth, but luck and will power holds the line and it stays steady, but full of a hint of sudden ruin. Rising and falling in the echoes of the millions that had come before, the ancient words come out. Bruce does not know what the words mean except he knows that all of them put together and said by him meant that he was soon to be a man.

The rabbi calls up two men and they wait as Bruce pulls the cord that opens the curtains in front of the ark. The whole congregation starts to chant as one of the men lifts a torah out, holding it at the bottom of the two rolls. The other pulls off the cover and unties the ribbon. It is laid on the table and spread out. Once again the man lifts it up and starts to turn it around. As he faces the audience, the chanting rises in pitch, falling to a murmur as the twin scrolls are laid once again on the table. Bruce now had to say one more short prayer, and then came the real test. When he finished those nineteen lines, his haftorah, he would be welcomed as a full member of the family.

The real test had come a month before. Two days a week, after Hebrew school, Bruce and his other twelve year old companions had stayed after to learn their parts. Bruce had to stay after all the others had left. The cantor asked him to recite his lines. Now there is a special kind of fear reserved for boys of twelve when they finally have to step into reality, when there is no hiding behind age.



It came to Bruce then; he hoped the cantor would go away, maybe it was not too late to hide behind youth. But it was too late and the time had come for Bruce to admit he had not studied, he knew not even the first words of his section. He did not even know the name of it or where it was in the book. The record with the melody and the book with the words had fallen to the side when faced with stickball and daydreaming. The cantor, who was perhaps too amazed to be kind, told Bruce to leave. He threatened him with no bar mitzvah at all. Bruce had one week.

Now that lump in his stomach, which had been small and forgotten along with the book and record started to weigh heavier. All he had heard for almost a year was how good his bar mitzvah was going to be, how many people were going to come, how many presents he would get, how proud everyone would be. Every week now one of his friends had gone in a child and come out a man, laden with praise and presents. He was the first, the oldest boy in his generation of the family, and all the old people would say, "If only I could live to see at least one bar mitzvahed, I could die in peace."

And now they would not die in peace for he would fail. The future does not exist for shy young children, only the day after tomorrow, and the whole thing was something far away that would not happen for a long time. It would come, but only when he was ready, only he was not ready and it had come. The trip home after the ultimatum had passed in silence.

Bruce had resurrected the battered record player from the cellar and took it into the playroom. He had put on the red record, the kind made in some booth in Coney Island, with only one side cut, and started it off. He had played it through three times, reading along in the book and started to cry.

It is now halfway through, coming to that spot he could never get, the one that had almost kept him from doing it. The words are long and complicated and the melody twisted around on itself so many times that it was lost. His eye was being pulled to the markings he had put in the book to help him.

You are supposed to memorize the whole schmeer, but they had let him use the book. For the words and lines he could not remember otherwise. On and on it went, two hours right after school, dinner, then another three hours after. School work, play, everything else was forgotten.

Coming now was the part he always enjoyed, where there is a chance to be a singer, and so he looked to this and not only because it is last. He trilled, curved the words up and down, sculptured them

in what he thought to be a professional way. With an upturned flourish he ended, a little sad that his moment was almost over.

He catches the tallis under his forearms, steps back, turns and sits in a straight back chair that hides him from most of the congregation. The rabbi stands up to his lecturn and pulls out a small box and a Bible. He gives a special speech that sounds so original he must have said it before and gives both items to Bruce. In the box is a tiny goblet, made of tin plated with silver with inscriptions. The bible is signed by the rabbi.

Finally it was all over, the crowd that had patiently sat through the entire thing, pours into the room that Bruce had come out of to start the whole thing off. They go to eat the cakes and drink the wines and scotches. But before they leave they all come up to him to shake his hand, and say, "Well Bruce, now you are a man, how does it feel?" or "Bet you just cannot wait for tonight, right son?"

That last month had been one of constant terror. Any reference at all was enough to plunge his heart deep enough to touch the lump in his stomach. When someone asked him for the time he realized how little time was left and that was going fast. His birthday, a week before the bar mitzvah, was ignored, but every card was another pin stuck in him. Every moment he guarded jealously, so as not to waste a minute of what little was left. If he were to fail, no he could not fail, he would not let himself think that, there could be no failure, for there could be nothing after that day if he were.

Finally the *oneg shabbot* is over and he returns home to wait for the real big party that night. He changes into his pajamas after a bath and sleeps for a few hours. His mind is empty, for four weeks it has been filled with that morning and that morning was gone. He gets up finally and starts to dress. He goes downstairs. Now he could look forward to the party tonight, when everyone would congratulate him and give him a present. He has his pants on and is putting his shirt on. He pulls down his black tie and starts to knot it, it comes out wrong. He tries again, no good. Finally, he has to yell for help.

He is ready, time to go.





## Tea

JEFFREY SASS

Grandfather John please come to tea  
So we will have a chance to chat.  
Come, take this seat here close by me.

Admire the tatted table cloth,  
The china, the dustless demispoons,  
Fruit and sandwiches for us both.

Susannah, will you come serve tea?  
Pour swiftly from the china pot,  
The brew has steeped sufficiently.

Remember the silvered strainer  
Must be used to stop the leaves.  
Pass the sugar bowl and creamer.

Now, let's spread our linen napkins,  
And have these cakes, that Nanny makes,  
Filled thick with rich, ripened raisins.

Grandpa, tell of your company  
Keeping and holiday seeking,  
Shall we not talk and drink our tea?



## Storm

Fretfully I lay awake  
While weary patterned rains  
Were drearily driven  
Upon the broken panes.

Dark, bitter doldrums  
Stirred up the rains to wash,  
And weather lonely stones —  
Then whipped the shuttered sash.

Winds made melancholy moans,  
Among the papered walls.  
Trees creaked, Heavens wreaked  
The lightning-lit thunder falls.

The rage ran and turned  
As rages ran on me,  
That beat and injured,  
And venged relentlessly.

Twisting and spinning, in  
Reeling, whirlpool whines,  
The tempest spurned and coursed,  
But slowly did unwind.

It purged cathartically,  
It abated its caustic harm,  
Silencing into final lulls,  
To heal me, leaving calm.

## Haiku

CYRIL G. MALLETT

The warm shower splashing  
on a tired back. Water  
reaching more than skin . . .

The farm kitchen filled:  
wood-stove warmth and sweet home smells.  
More than shelter here!

Alone, walking home,  
night bounces on white snow;  
the cold is still, deep . . .

Into puddles which  
trap the bright morning, leaves glide  
and dissolve their own images.

Distillation

Remember love, freckled smiling gazelle,  
 when we walked out by the Genesee at six a.m.  
 leaving an unkempt, morning-rustled bed,  
 seeking a world remembered but not there.  
 Ice-white dew brittled the hazy morning air  
 sharpening to laser strength  
 intensely boring points of light  
 from dying morning stars which shot  
 the jabbing breaths of late winter winter wind  
 through frail, fickle flesh,  
 permeating our bodies,  
 causing a chilly trembling  
 of the fibres of our existence  
 with white frosty light —  
 a lonely skeletal x-ray, all that was left.

Your cold, red, raw fingers  
 yoked my thin right arm,  
 constricting the acid flow of blood  
 but not harnessing the warmth you needed.  
 Soul searchers we were, unable to get beyond  
 penumbral, impersonal jackets which were  
 forcefields,  
 wanting to lock out maddening morning cold,  
 succeeding only at trapping warmth in,  
 away from your grasp.

We walked to the shore,  
 talking, looking out across the water,  
 mutually exclusive arguments  
 in a sargasso sea of meaningless words,  
 shining on the surface



*Experimentalist*

as the light on the water,  
but becoming inky blackness with depth.

We watched two rocks near the shore,  
echoing the strained frustration  
rampant in our eyes,  
alternately engulfed and abandoned  
by the splashing of the persistent,  
eventually dissolving waves, unable to combine  
for the height and strength they would need  
to stay above the wave,  
unable to resist for very long alone  
the quick corrosion of the wave.

The shore beneath us  
began to crumble  
into the shivering mirror of the river.  
When I slipped  
on a clump of dew-heavy grass  
you held firmly,  
pulling me back.

We walked on to a budding tree and  
silently as puppets on a string we sat down.  
You were a cozy lump of leaden flesh  
corraled in my arm  
as we sought one aloneness  
for both of us —  
instead we found two,  
inseparable as tree and earth,  
immiscible as the warm golden light  
of the rising sun  
with the cold, gray-white light  
of the fading stars.

We heard thrashing  
in the woods behind us;  
a bugle blared, throaty and off-key,  
from up on the hill  
and we left.

As we walked on  
you pointed a finger up and out  
saluting the stars, apparent friend Fridays.  
Flickering, the crystal sparks,  
light years old, many from sources  
once brilliant, now dead,  
filled moist particles of air with light,  
illuminating haze in retreating night.  
There were eclipsing binaries in the northeast,  
revolving about points nonexistent,  
pointing back at us — two lives,  
revolving about an empty shell,  
a hollow core of love.

Eclipsing binaries — one firechild,  
a pale disc, reaching out and breaking forth,  
rose out of the caldron womb,  
climbed to a peak,  
dove back into and through  
its apparent home  
making a delayed mirror image  
of its movements above.

The entire process was slow and yearning  
as if captured  
by a slow motion camera.

I remembered when our love  
had been stretched out and hung  
on a cross of deceit —  
it had died for the first of many times,

only to be resurrected  
three unbearable days later  
in the resounding warmth  
of your embrace.

There were large dewdrop tears  
streaking your makeup,  
showing a brief glimpse of your beauty;  
I wished that my drowning heart  
could stop forever, right there.

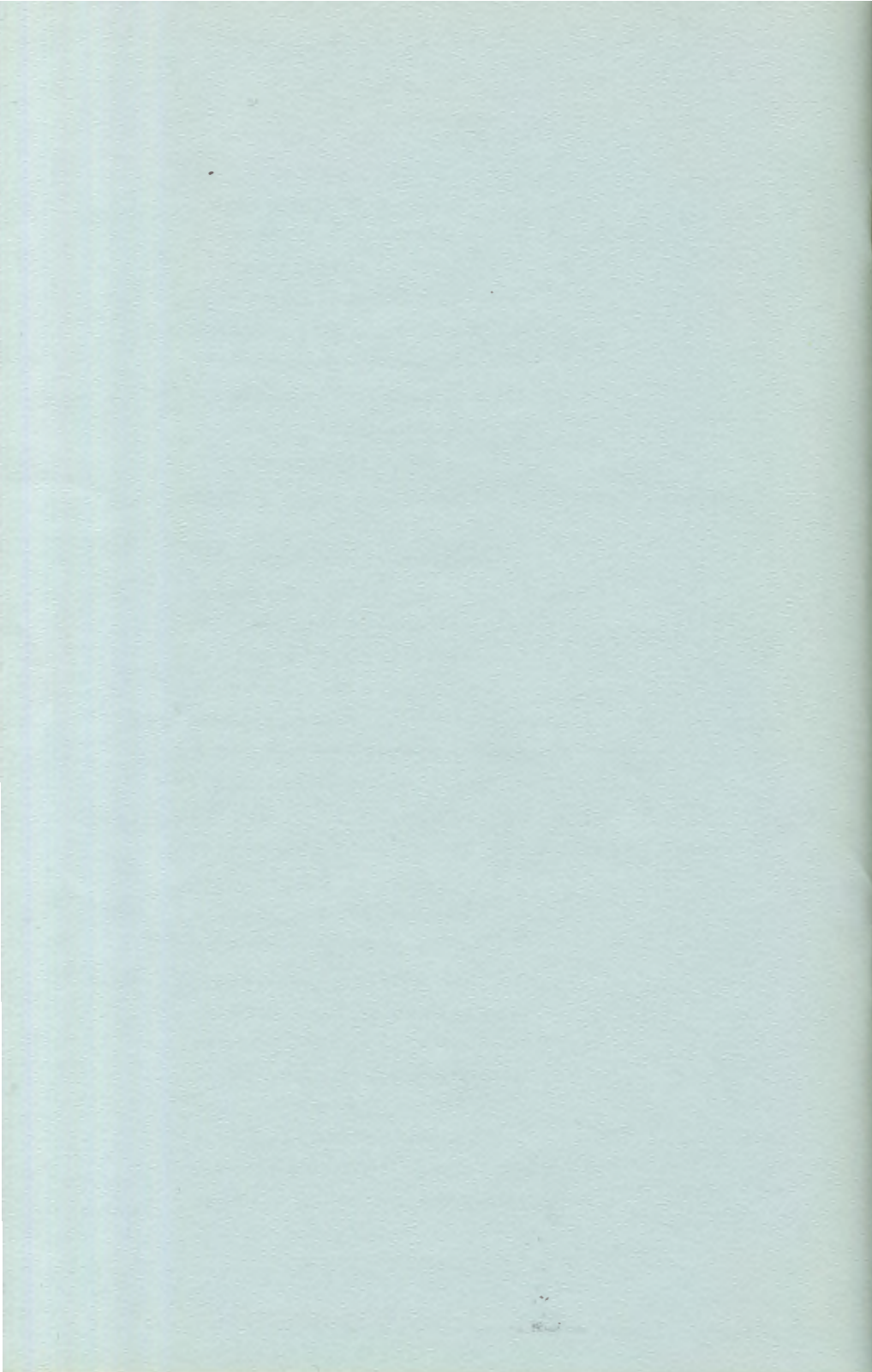
The sun arrived slowly  
making a pastel pageant of the scene around us,  
and we walked on.

We found a thorny rose bush  
to ring around,  
and then your delicate, milk-white hand  
reached out to clutch a rose,  
it found instead a thorn  
which gashed it  
laying bare your flesh and blood.  
I grasped your gentle, stained hand  
and felt the softness of your lips  
in a moment when the sun rose higher and warmer.

Joining bands of gypsies  
or losing ourselves in books  
were not our savored lots but  
a kiss in trust, a crystal tear,  
staining, streaking, washing away  
harshness applied so carefully,  
baring briefly softness, whiteness,  
your glowing skin,  
your eyes reflecting the sun  
caused removal of my woolen jacket  
and departure for home to make the bed.







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NONCIRCULATING



