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Fall 77

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The
Experimentalist

EXPERIMENTALIST

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State University Collège

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Mark Staub*Paul Tantillo

Darlene Williams

One Man

One dying man hangs upon the wire
One failing flashlight struggles to be seen
One wilted sycamore leaf flutters to the ground
A groaning muffler clatters beside.

Two hungry children cry to be heard
Three lonely Black men play Gin on the street
Four hundred weary soldiers chip the mud from their boots
An albatross tumbles to the sea.

The chimes rang once
One dying man slips from the wire
The chimes rang twice
One dead man falls lifeless from the wire
The chimes cracked and clunked to the floor.
One man hangs a bell upon the wire.

Dianne K. DeMott

Webs of Life

Spins threads of time
as the spider spins its web
all parts intertwine
but a few raw edges
that dangle aimlessly
and wait to be torn down.

Spins threads of dreams
that get caught up
in fantasy and wishful thinking
as a spider's prey
gets tangled
in the sticky strands of the web.

Spins threads of death
that takes away
never gives in return
as the spider's prey
is caught by the confines
of the web
from which there is no escape.

Judi Schwartz

I lie awake
and think - Sometimes:
in halting prose
in metered rhymes
indecent thoughts
in throws of guilt
in cabs of trucks
indifference felt
in hotel rooms
in someone's arms
in bed alone
into the dawn.

Jack Mullen

Job

I'm collating and stapling my life
this year--

Arranged by days, sorting and gathering
things I've learned.

I'm wetting my fingers to know this
year--

Punching a stapler to clamp what I've found
piling it up.

I'm examining all of the print this time--
Squinting my eyes, trying to read all words,
out I can't.

I'm working all hours, fluttered for order--
collating, stapling, gathering, filing,
eager to know.

I'm collecting and stacking information
this year--

Finding I now have a story compiling
and more work.

Kathy Kellman



The Dancer

She stands - ready
and begins...
the legs bend - down
Like a tight, thin string she pulls herself up.
She rises on her toes - reach.

The mirror are everywhere.
Scrutinizingly, she watches herself dance.
Images of uniform color and controlled movement
flash back at her - at all the bodies in nylon pink and black.
Arching, aching muscles strive for grace and perfection.
The swoosh of leather slippers beat the floor rhythmically.

Sweat glistens on her face
and the room is hot with effort.
Listening to the piano
count out the music, she moves and glides and jumps.
Finally, ultimately...
She becomes the dance and the dance becomes her.

Gina DeBlase

Wedding

Ring for ring
beside the pond,
The leaves settling
yellow and red
on rock walls.
Your field is half-ripe round,
planted in June,
four months yet till harvest.
Watching you dance
In a ring around the room,
And another year's gone by.

Paul Tantillo

Night Light

I will not beat my wings
against their determination
towards your light
merely for a glimpse, a word, a touch.
I had rather ride a wind's breath
or sit, swaying on a branch.
I can enjoy a daydream's indulgence
appreciating the way you speak
with head bent towards...and towards
and how you listen,
watching the uplifted mouth,
blushing with a smile.

No, I will not crowd with others
flying at you desperately
burning in the heat
and dying in pityful brown smoke.
There will always be these
rushing wildly forward.
But I have chosen to move on
remembering the sting when I, too
got too close.

Caryl Meyer

Snow flakes
reflecting jaz-y
dances beneath
the curtain sky
stars laugh in delight
evaporating the sadness
from grey clouds
As the moon
like a sullen
old woman watches
her children play.

Bianca Spence

leaving your house
on a still december night
when the snow
was just beginning to fall,
i reached down
to run my hands
through the whiteness.

a snowball
skimmed over my head
and another
hit my back
and i looked up
to your mischievous
grin.

laughing,
i chased you
down the street
and finally caught up.
suddenly,
you weren't my teacher,
and so i crushed a snowball
in your face.

i could have hugged you then.

i watched the snow melt
on my mittens all the way home.

Beth Rosokoff

White Hearses

A man stood watching
Protecting his corner with a
tin cup and cane.
Passersby were rejected with one
look of those eyes
Those blinded eyes that saw
white hearses.

A child approached and begged
his mother for a penny.
The child was reproached for his
stupid generosity.
"He will only waste it."
"But it's only one penny."
A coin in the gutter was retrieved
and flung into the cup.
The child clapped his hands with
glee, and was run over by a
white hearse.

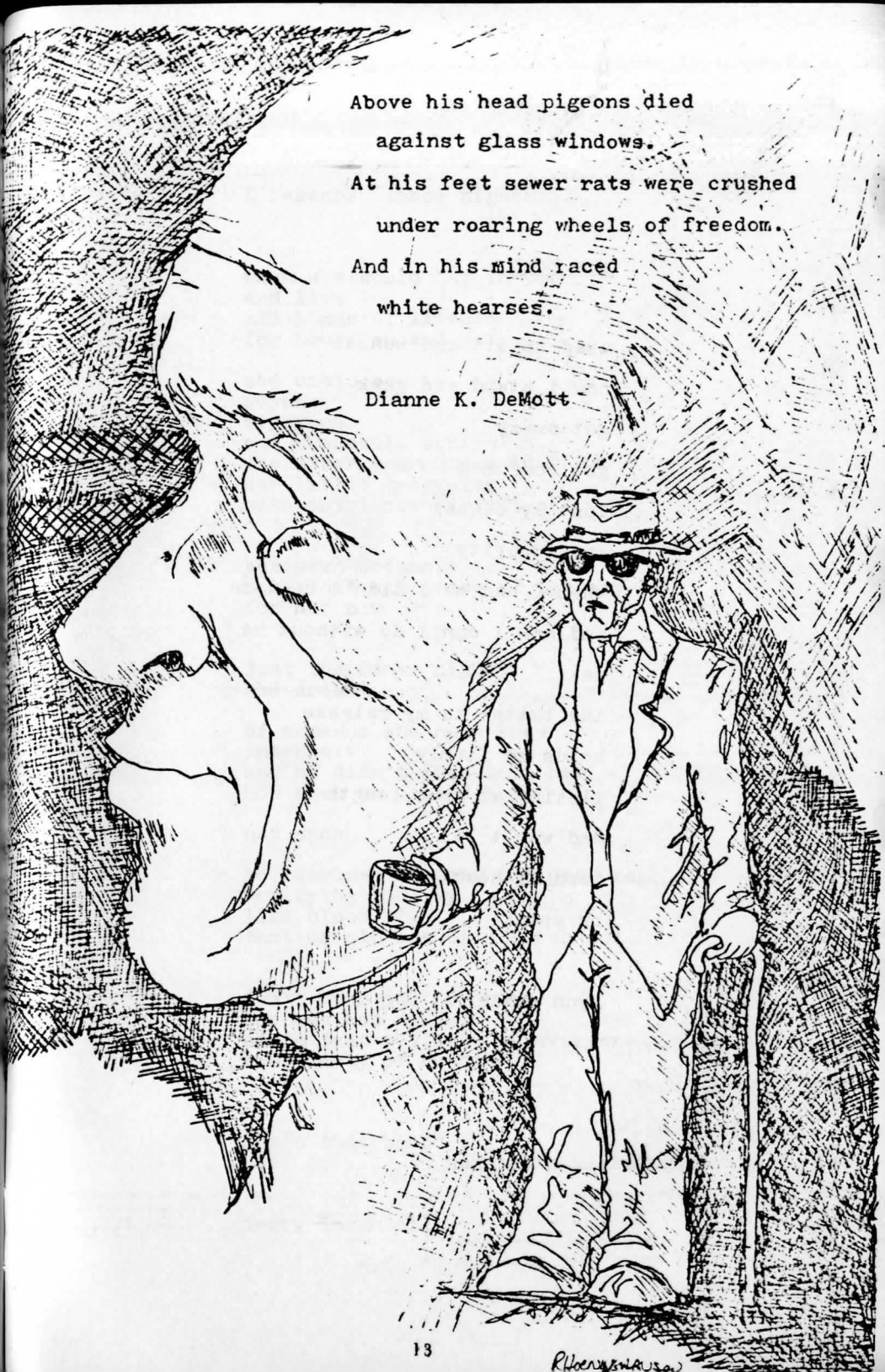
A young woman passed but
turned back with pity.
She rummages through her purse
and came up with a quarter.
It clinked against the side of the cup as
she reached out to touch his hand.
His face remained impassive and staring as
she was annihilated by a
white hearse.

Above his head pigeons died
against glass windows.

At his feet sewer rats were crushed
under roaring wheels of freedom.

And in his mind raced
white hearses.

Dianne K. DeMott



the bomb

used to sit and wonder
now i stand and gawk
got crazy
got confused
lost my sense
and security
when i had me i didn't need me
and now i can't do without me
me
the button to my release
holds me firmly
ticking at arms length
and won't let me
turn my head
or speak

lynn miller

I remember those nights...

when she would lay in bed
and live
all kinds of lives
for hours on end

she could be
anyone
everyone
and she could sculpt
the other characters in
her little tragedies
with intricate expertise

but even dreams
have lost all sense of fantasy
for her now

just the other night
she dreamt

of someone she once knew
intensely
and he didn't even tell her
how much he needed her

not once

he remained distant and obscure
verifying reality
like blood
that crawls out of a fresh cut

don't even ask her name
for she has none
she's just a little of everyone
and plenty of no one

She's that blood
and she's bleeding

Terry Tarantelli

Grandfather

**Say a half moon goodbye to the oracle
with Popeye elbows and Jersey tomatoes**

In the garden

Buy some new lightbulbs for the diningroom

**But roll in the wet, morning frost
Make snow angels as you move through**

The everyday

Always love as if you had

**To set an example for the rest
Dance the hell out of your new shoes**

You knew the Best.

Scott Morley

Nana

Nana's house was evening
sinking into a TV chair with sighs
from a life full of work well done.
Her house was Sunday
which smelled of good cooking
in the stale air that
held the smoke from her cigarettes.
Nana's house was autumn
with years falling like leaves
slowly
spiralling
softly
landing
on the sheets of a hospital bed.

Caryl Meyer

Thick With My Own Mother

"...sometimes in still moments
that autumn terror
returns
leaves me stunned,
breathless,
naked in the garden
and I hear the steady ringing of the phone
into the long night."

-Anita Skeen

She is waiting, waiting for me to react. She has baited the trap wall, or have I? So she waits, we both do- to see exactly how I will react next. I should have seen it coming- what I was building out of her life, never really believing (or never really wanting to believe) it was possible for her to be manipulated in such a way. The situation was carefully laid out and she stepped out as naively, so very naively into that which I believed I controlled. Or was it me? Am I the one that walked so blindly into what she had created for me? Is the motive really important now- now that the damage (is it damage?) has been done and now that before long the frequency of our meeting again will have decreased.

"They had put me in the corner there, by the wall, an attempt to humiliate me- I refused, refused to stand there allow them to even try to command control over me- I would turn to walk away and he would press me back again pushing me into the corner, pushing my head against the wall- hitting my head against the wall again and again- not feeling anything except the stubborn determination that I would succeed, that I would win over them, that I could prove I was stronger."

Staring hard at the unlit candle I felt the emptiness crawling inside once more- the futility- the incongruities- which are the shape of my life. I'm secure for now- but knowing that my first step beyond this door will propel me back into the darkness and chill

outside- outside where she is waiting.

"He was drunk again and Mother, yes she was too. And he holding my head back pulling and pulling my long hair (he liked my hair, liked to touch it, caress it) so that I would look at him. I could smell him- the same foul smell that always came from him when he drank- the same smell that would warn me to stay away from him and that half dazed look in his eyes that I knew without explanation was his hatred not for me but for her that had come before- the oldest sister (was she my sister?) inwhom he had put all his pride, his hope, his dreams (his dreams) only to have them shattered when she had left home (his home)- hatred? no not hatred, fear- fear that I would become like her and this act this forcing of me to look in his eyes, his way of confirming that he would control me and not allow me to become like her. And then pushing me, pulling me down the hall into that room that was mine because I had gotten my own room when she had left- no longer punishing me for the crime whatever that was had been long forgotten- punishing instead because I had dared to go against that control that both he and Mother felt they should have over my life."

Unable to think now- to feel fear- only the warmth, the sensuality of the room I am in- made that way by the woman whose hands are moving back and forth, adept and confident, weaving, creating. Fascinated by her hands I sit and watch them moving back and forth, strong hands, pulsing, alive with energy- warm. She is warm, I think, and makes the room- my shelter- safe.

"Mother had come into the room- had come closer to me- closer until she was sitting on me holding me down- closer- nothing in her eyes except a duplication of his gaze, cold, drunken, not even into my eyes but past me maybe onto the pillow beneath my head or the wall behind me. And my disbelief- my refusing to accept what was happening that did not allow me to feel the initial pain as her drawn,

white fist clenched and determined descended striking me somewhere- on the face I think- the voice, the voice inside me repeating to me over and over this is your mother, your own mother who created you who loves you your mother. The second and third blow going by with my still believing that this woman who was not could not be my mother would go away or that the face of my mother would leave the body of this strange woman that was not my mother that was striking me so that I could not fight back because even when hit first who can hit that woman who is your mother that mother who has cared for you- fed you- loved you and who maybe has just for one moment lost control of herself- your mother who of course does not normally act this way yet you still don't understand. The only reaction you can bring from within is to keep mumbling over and over again- this is my mother, my mother, my god, my mother."

The cold. I was walking there, awake and feeling the depth of the winter night penetrating, cold. I was running now, pushing myself on- not to where I wanted to be- alone and fighting, fighting hard to retain what was left of my intelligence, yet feeling the pain of the winter air- cleansing my being- forcing me to feel only sensation- sensation of cold- not allowing me time to think- my body pushing itself on and on trying to release for me the tensions I could not intelligently deal with. Only half a nightmare- only half of my consciousness liberated and able to move me- the other half the calculating and rationalizing half, trying to project intellect trying to force decisions I was not ready to make- shut off- sensation pushing intellect deep inside, denying my mind allowing for only non-verbal responses, running, pushing myself on against the cold, alone, incoherent in the night, walking on blindly feeling the slow numbing of my body tuning with my mind that had already been numbed, already been forced to feel only the cold insensitive night.

"I began to feel to understand the pain- I could no longer allow her to continue. My mother my god my mother- not wanting to fight yet forced through the pain to react. I felt my legs coil beneath me and with one determined push I flung her from me. Her age and intoxication causing her to stumble and fall, hard into the floor. The crash of her body pounding within me causing me to recoil to fold my body up and begin to sob- uncontrollably- she in pain on the floor how could I do that to my mother my own mother?"

Afraid to face me she lingers outside the door listening for sounds from my silent conversation with the woman that might betray my mood. I know that soon I must face her must face that part of me that feels somewhat responsible for what has happened. I wonder what story I shall create to reconcile her and what rationalization I will not invent that will convince my own self. And now the knock, the hand at the door asking permission to enter- it was time- she will not even wait for me to react, she is forcing my hand. It is growing colder in this room I am growing afraid again. The weaver, this friend accepts her knock opening the door to her allowing her to enter, the woman's hands returning to her weaving disrupting their motion only long enough to ask if the two of us wish to be alone (she is warm, I think). The other one answering negatively to the question almost before the woman has asked it. I feel myself purposely projecting cold, indifferent energies, pushing them at her begging her to go back out of the room because I am not yet ready to deal with the situation. Not speaking to her allowing only negative energy to pass between us. She is leaving I gained control- I will be safe again- I do not have to deal with her now. Again just the weaver and I- I am safe- secure once more.

"It was Dad. He pulled me from my coiled position. Mother had moved only slightly from the position she had landed in, on the floor and crying now in pain. Fear controlled my sobbing as he

began to come down on me much harder than mother had. Not able to escape- not able to feel him hurting me- not able to tell him he was hurting me- seeing my mother on the floor- feeling his fist come down again- seeing her lying there not moving- not understanding- afraid- my brothers outside the door one watching, one keeping my little sister from seeing- my mother slowly recognizing what was happening with me just staring at her not feeling pain- she turned to tell my father to stop, shouting now at him and then finally ordering my brothers to take him from the room."

I cannot allow this to continue I must respond I must finish it I cannot deal with this uncertainty I will let her talk will allow her to fulfill her desire to make me believe that she understands what has happened what she thinks has happened between us. The warmth in this room stifling me now I must leave must face her end it. The woman looks up at me as I leave her hands moving gently now back again across the work she has already completed.

"Judy wants to know why my eye is black and blue, she keeps joking, laughing, thinking it's funny, I want to shake her pull her close against me and ask her scream at her. Has your mother, your own mother ever hit you? Or your father, has he have they have they?"

It is my hand now asking permission yet the reply in the sound of her crying. She is unable to control it for the one or two minutes that I would be at her door but instead crying louder begging me to enter knowing I will enter- understanding my compassionate nature. Not thinking about manipulation I enter again not believing not wanting to believe that she could have any power over me. I hold her listening to her crying, I say I'm sorry not because I am sorry for anything I have done but because I want to believe that I feel compassion that I can realize her pain and by staying with her maybe relieve some of it. It is cold here with her

I feel cold I feel it deeper and deeper inside of me I can't remain
I cannot nurture her negativity I can no longer force myself to
accept what I cannot love. She can destroy- destroy her own life-
evoke pity- but not from me- will not destroy me. I feel it build-
ing inside me the breathing now- close to sobbing- almost there- no
control- must leave this room this cold place- go - outside- will
go out free myself from the pain I am feeling- cannot stay no
control- outside. Now.

"Her ribs are cracked I have done this I have hurt my own mother
I have caused pain- my mother, why does no one look at me and say
there is the one who has cracked her own mother's ribs, the one
who fought against her own mother, she is unnatural, her own mother?
She must be punished must be it is her, her mother her own mother."

The cold- loss of every sensation except the cold penetrating,
commanding me pushing me on farther walking on faster into the night
the cold the uncertainty of one sensation- only one, affecting me.
The cold- safe again, secure.

Suzanne Sowinski

My Mother

First in my mind, there were the mornings,
and the way she always left me,
standing behind the newly closed door,
hurt and afraid.

And then there were the evenings,
when she would come back,
worn from work,
but still strong enough to lift me into a bear hug.

And so it went each day:
the mornings and the evenings.

And she was tired more often then.

Until the night when she didn't come home,
and the music of her voice didn't ring in the house
and suddenly everyone was tearful
and I saw my own questions and fears
reflected in my sister's eyes.

We moved away from that house, that time,
And it wasn't until much later that I really understood.
And I was suddenly a child no longer.

And even now,
the white-washed wood
and the brass knob
stand clearly in my mind.

vanity

I am sore
I am black
senseless as a thief
I'm realing
and tireless
pursuing the cheap
I am ego
sitting, ready to reap
to bruis your mind
and steal your sleep
I'll take your heart
or I won't take you at all
this fair lasts forever
at least 'till the fall

lynn miller

Prisoner

A time
some time, before now.
A place
somewhere below the line.
A field
snow-white with cotton.
A black man
sweating under the sun.
A slave owner
makes him stand in fear.
A whip
the symbol of authority.

I watch
the owner
in blue overalls, he doesn't sweat.
I watch
the black man
torn shirt revealing rippling muscles.
the owner smiles
the black man doesn't.

The day is over.
the slave slowly stumbles homeward
the owner follows on his mount
down the red dirt road.

A mile away
they reach a dingy-grey cottage
a padlock on the only door
the black man calls this home.

The door is locked
inside the black man is alone
his wife and child sold at auction
solitary in the darkness.

The owner
reaches his white colonial house
reaches his wife, daughter and dog
He is never alone.

Surrounded by comfort
the owner's family have dinner
beef, potatoes, tomatoes and bread
they eat in silence.

Back in the woods
in a dingy-grey cottage
the black man eats greens and bread
talking to his silence.

All is quiet
the dark southern night wears on
the black man is free in sleep
holding his wife and child.

Before the sun is high
the owner unlocks the grey-cottage door
stepping inside he gives a shout
the black man is free no more.

another day begins

Michael Alan

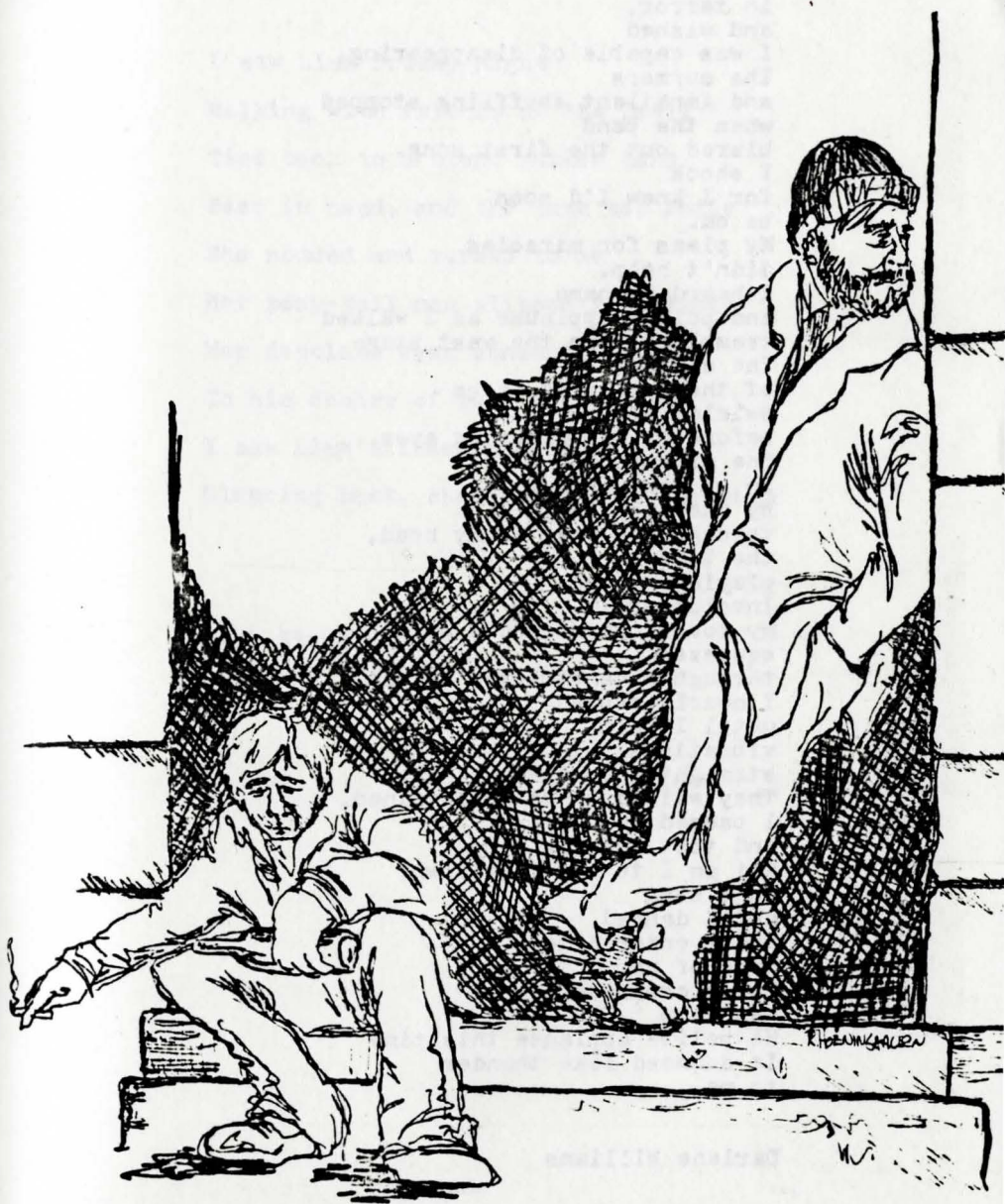
A Bad Night For Winos

A bad night for winos
huddled in the rain
sleeping close in doorways
aching with the pain
dreaming of their past loves
A life they couldn't bare
A hollow empty feeling with no one left to share

A bad night for winos
huddled 'round the pot
relating tales of glory
and honors they had got
while hiding deeds of heartbreak
and other acts of shame
at the mention of a name

A bad night all over
the bottles past again
to have it and to hold it
the true and only friend
no moments left for loving
no moments left to share
but time enough to remember
the fragrance of her hair

Jack Mullen



They came
and noisily packed the bleachers.
I watched
in terror,
and wished
I was capable of disappearing.
The murmers
and impatient shuffling stopped
when the band
blared out the first song.
I shook
for I knew I'd soon
be on.
My pleas for miracles
didn't help.
I heard my name
and polite applause as I walked
trembling onto the vast stage.
The collage
of their blurred faces
swirled about
before my disbelieving eyes.
The microphone
in my hand, was cold.
By chance I heard
through the roar in my head,
the band
playing my cue.
Involuntarily
my mouth opened and a note
squeezed
through a constricted throat.
I nearly choked
until I felt
vibrations
straight from them.
They waited to be entertained.
I paused
and took the big jump.
Whi am I to let them down?
So I sang
and I danced
and I entertained
both of us.
The microphone
was warm
No polite applause this time
It sounded like thunder
to me.

Darlene Williams

I saw Lisa Friday night
Walking with friends of the Devil
Tied back to a blond rubber band
Beer in hand, and the same sad smile
She nodded and turned to me
Her pony-tail man slipped in between
Her desolate eyes consented
To his desire of pure possession
I saw Lisa's freedom fade
Glancing back, she looked very far away

Mark Staub

the beach

he could see right through his eye-lids
he was looking straight at me
and he slept with bullet wet-dreams
under rain scattered sea weed
the beach was soft and gentle
as it took that poor boy down
the beach was soft and gentle

lynn miller

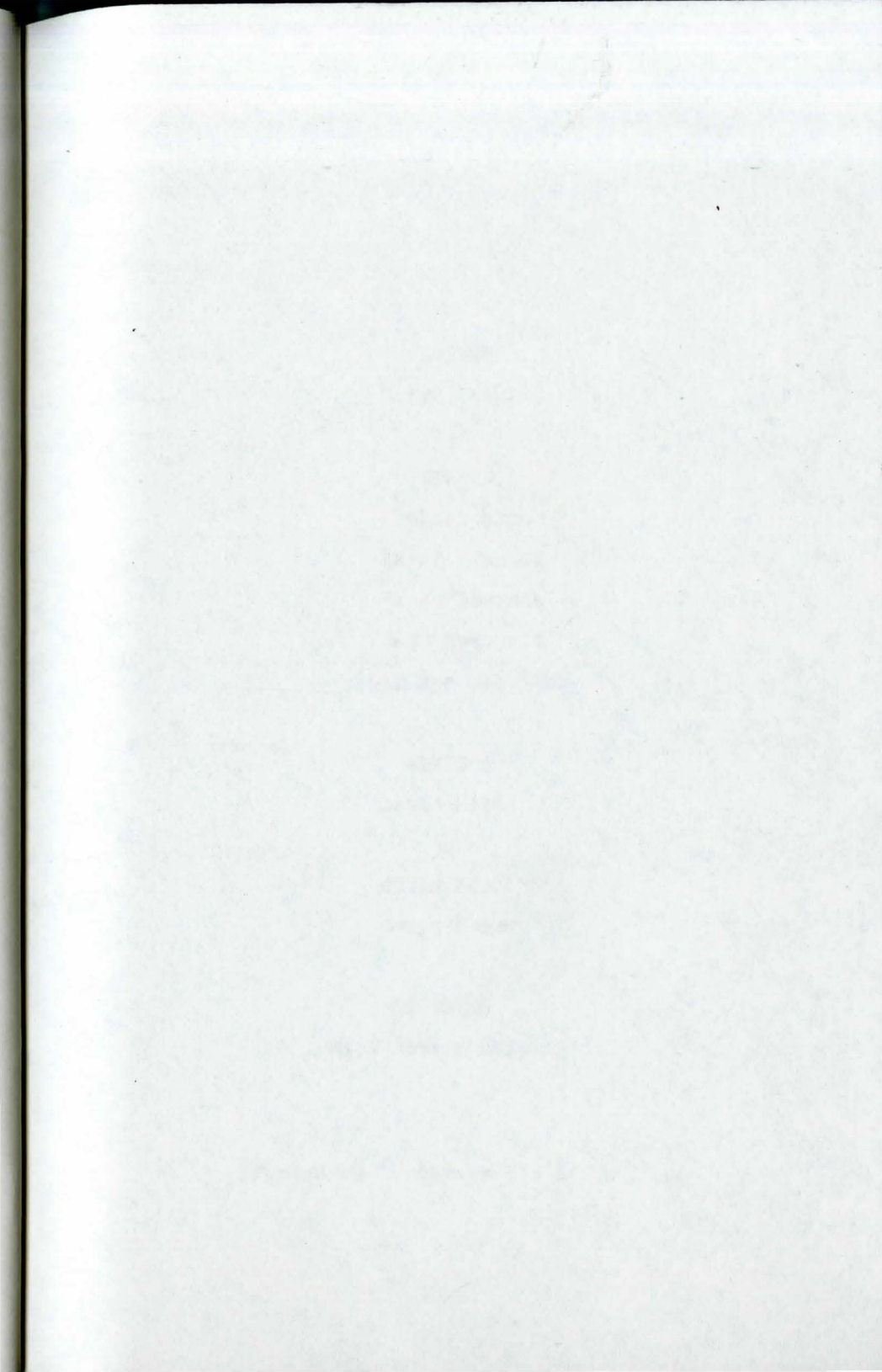
I write my lines
I pen my verse
and tell myself
it could be worse.
I build my walls
to save my soul
and try to stay
intact and whole
and failing this
I give my heart
and watch it
as it's torn apart

The parts are eaten
and are scattered
what's once worthwhile
no longer matters
the feelings, then
are blowing dust
surrounded by a fragile crust.
The moment's gone
The moment's past
I should've known
It couldn't last.

Jack Mullen

Editorial Statement

This year I crawled from office to office, tangled from head to toe in red tape. Due to this fact, one issue was all we were able to print this year. My endless apologies to those of you anxious to be published in our literary magazine. You will be the ones ultimately responsible for expanding the limitations which have stifled our only outlet for creative expression in literature. Special thanks to the English Club, James Scholes, and the secretaries in the English department for all of their interest.



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