

1977

UA68/6/1 Zephyrus

Western Kentucky University

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Zephyrus 1977

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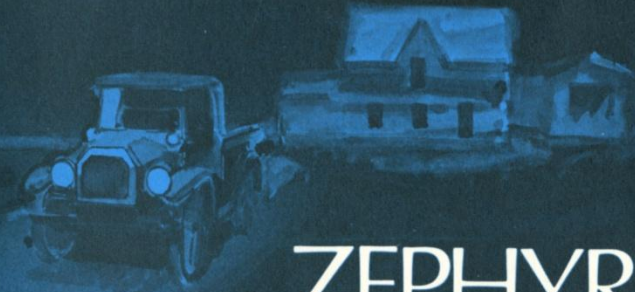
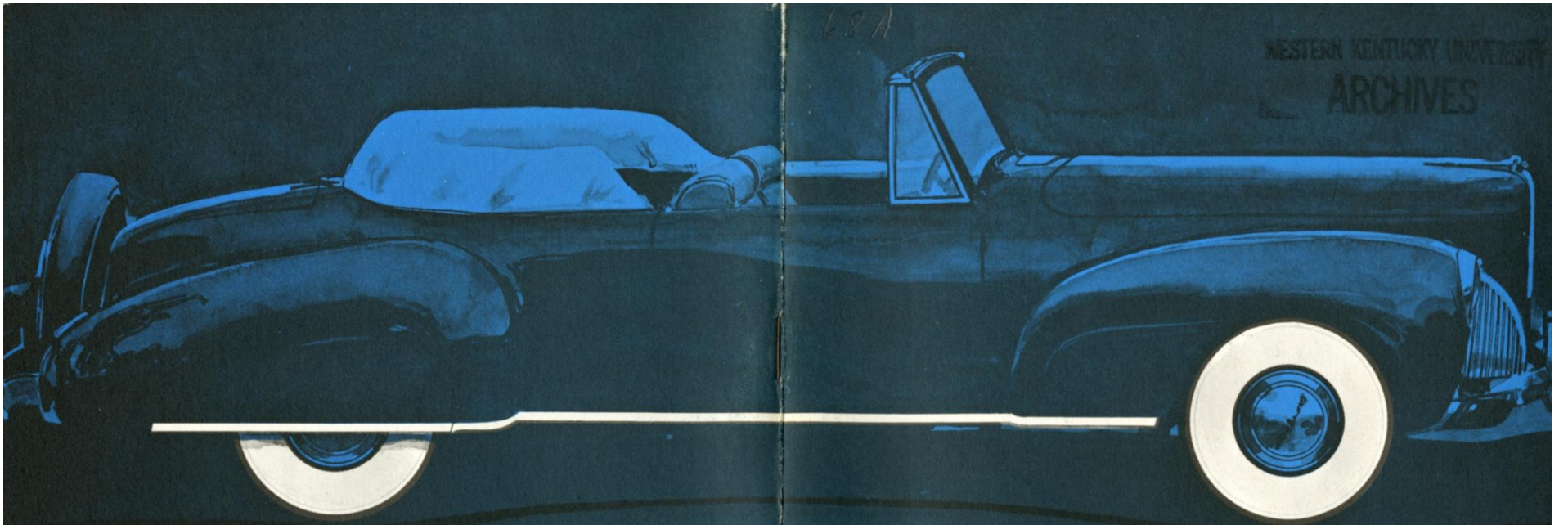
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George Simpson
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A.T. Stephens
David Surface
Linda Webb
Bradley Wells
Jacki Wood
Gail Yarbrough

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ZEPHYRUS

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ZEPHYRUS

Spring 1977

A publication of
the English Department of Western Kentucky University
at Bowling Green

1977 Literary Prize Recipients

Gail Yarbrough – Prose Award

Denise Newbolt – Poetry Award and Bluegrass Poetry Circuit Award

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HONKY-TONK

hey baby,
don't go lookin for me
to wait on you while
hot smoky Southern Boogie
is banging
on a red piano,
and singing with a raspy voice
i'll be with him
in a pair of soft blue jeans
shaking to his rhythm
in a room full of flying bodies
ribboned in color
making a live neon sign
in the flashing lights
in the dark.

Denise Newbolt

DRIVE

Greg Sanders

He'd had the same dream again.

He looked in the mirror and groaned. He looked like a fugitive from the city morgue. His skin was belly white under the black stubble of a five day beard. There was a black smear under each bloodshot eye.

"I'm dying," he thought. "It's killing me."

He'd slept eight hours last night, but he felt more exhausted than when he'd gone to bed, which he didn't think was possible. It'd been going on for three, maybe three and a half weeks. He wasn't sure. What do days mean when you're in hell. One thing he did know; it couldn't go on much longer. It couldn't last much longer, if his life meant anything to him at all to him anymore, which he was becoming less sure of with each passing day.

He leaned down to the sink and splashed cold tap water on his face. He pressed his fingers deep into his eye sockets and told himself to forget. "Forget. Forget the dream," he told himself. The same dream he'd been having for the last month. It was always the same, like a clip from an old motion picture. It started playing the moment his head hit the pillow, like an instant replay gone berserk.

In it he is in the car, at a stop sign, waiting to turn onto a main highway. He looks both ways; no cars in sight. Nothing but a straight plane of asphalt, all his. As for the car, the engine's sounding tight, like a tuning fork set humming. "Well, maybe not quite that tight, but what can you expect from the old girl?," he tells himself in the dream. A brand new Porsche she's not, he admits to himself. Ready to go, he hits the gas. The car starts dying. He starts dying.

The car halts and jerks itself out onto the highway, the engine acting as if it has the dry heaves, or has swallowed gas down the wrong pipe. Then it dies, while he's furiously pumping the gas pedal and crying "PLEASE!" and "Oh, NO!" He sits back in his bucket seat, wearily, and then remembers he's sitting in the middle of the highway. "God, cars!," he screams. He looks down the highway, but doesn't see down the highway. He sees the grill of a Mack truck that's so close there isn't even time to read the word MACK that's embellished on the grill. He got as far as M*A*C*. Broadside. No pain, no bones crunching, not even time to open his mouth, just a white-out.

And then it starts over again.

He's sitting at a stop sign, looking down the highway both ways. . . .

He tore his fingers away from his eyes, told himself to think about

something else. He thought about the taste in his mouth, like a small, furry animal had slept in it. It didn't help. He thought about the car. "Maybe it isn't there today," he feverishly thought. Maybe it was never there. Just the godawfullest nightmare every dreamed by a man.

He weaved his way, dizzy, from the bathroom to the greasy, food-specked kitchen, pin-balling off doorways like a drunk. He reeled to the one window that overlooked the street, and with trembling hand brushed back the curtain, and peeking out with one eye, drew back from the window as if he'd seen his own death.

It was still there. The broken grill of the car was grinning at him like a skull with missing teeth.

He edged away from the window, smoked a cigarette, and talked himself into calming down. A cup of cold coffee was sitting on the kitchen table, left from the night before. He sat down at the table in his undershorts and sipped from it. He lost some of the hysteria he had felt when he had awakened. He tried to go over the situation as objectively as he could. He grabbed a paper sack that was on the table, picked up a pencil stub that was lying on the floor, and tried to write down his thoughts. After a few lines he saw that it was useless. He couldn't even read the scratches and jerks that made up his handwriting.

He did get something out of the scribbled lines: he was on the verge of insanity. He was going to have to get rid of the car, or the car was going to get rid of him. "Hell, it's already driven me insane; why should it stop there?" he asked himself. It had robbed him of all his money, with the interminable repair bills, the gasoline it gulped like an insatiable vampire, and the blood-sucking insurance it used to guard itself against extinction. It had brought him to this dump, made him live like a beggar. Why should it stop at this? Why should it stop at anything less than his life?

He shivered, and his skin raised in goosebumps. He hugged himself against the chill he felt. He went over to the window to try to stare it down.

There it sat, a three ton albatross of scrap metal hanging from his neck. Sitting like it was, some thirty yards away from the window, he felt some of the old feeling he used to have for it. It was a part of him, he told himself. It wasn't going to be easy. Ten years and 87,000 miles; it was going to be hard to just roll them out of his life.

"You sop! Pull yourself out of it," he said out loud. "Yeah, sure, it's just like your right arm, and it's all rotten and stinking, and it's gonna kill the rest of you." He knew what he had to do.

He strode from the kitchen into his bedroom and threw on some wrinkled clothes that lay in a corner. He ran from the bedroom, scooping up his last few pitiful cents off the dresser as he went. He blew back in a

few seconds later to snatch up a faded and sweat-stained piece of cloth, so worn that the cloth was tearing off in pieces from the cardboard brim. It was his driving cap.

He was on the highway, and was looking for the first junkyard that would appear. He was going to drive the car into the junkyard, park it, leave the keys in the ignition, walk out to the highway and hitch a ride. Take the first ride from whoever would pick him up, to wherever he could get that would be away from the car.

It wasn't his first plan. A couple of miles back he'd stopped at a used car lot. Roy's Used Cars, Clean Used Cars Wanted, the sign said. He stopped anyway. A lean character in a plaid suit, wearing two-tone shoes came out, and unsmiling, asked him what he could do for him.

"Buy it?" he asked the salesman.

Now the salesman smiled. He circled the car leisurely, looked at it from time to time in a diffident, condescending manner, and strolled over to where the driver was standing, stood next to him and looked at the car. The pair of them looked like two mourners gazing on a dead friend's casket.

"Well?" he asked the salesman.

He saw the salesman's reply, rather than heard it. He saw lips moving in a pattern that was unmistakably that of "fifty dollars." His ears had just refused to hear it. That figure hit him as if a trusted friend had taken him aside and punched him in the gut. He felt like kneeling down in the gravel of the used car lot and puking. The countless oil changes, lub jobs, sets of tires, tune ups, car washes, and it all came down to a lousy fifty bucks. He knew that he and the car had seen better days, but he hadn't realized it had gone this far. The car had bested him again.

He feebly shook his head to the salesman's offer and crawled into the driver's seat a sicker man than when he had gotten out. He wouldn't take the fifty dollars, because having it in his pocket would remind him of the car's victory. Fifty dollars for a lost fortune and a ruined past was a slap in the face he didn't need. As he pulled out of the car lot his dragging muffler fell off, making a gut-wrenching roar. The car sounded wounded, as if it were protesting as he pulled out onto the highway, rattling window panes and causing pedestrians to turn and stare.

In his rear view mirror, he saw the salesman run out onto the highway with the muffler in one hand, shouting and waving his other arm. "To hell with it," he thought, and throttled the car towards the city limits, hoping to make it before the police or the car got to him first.

He saw he wasn't going to make it. The fuel needle was rocking gently

below the empty mark, and no junkyard was in sight. The few cents he had left wouldn't have got him a quart of gas. He began rocking back and forth in the driver's seat, trying with sheer will-power to get it over the next rise. It was no use. After another quarter-mile the engine started missing, and no response came from the floored gas pedal. He guided the car off the road and onto the gravel shoulder, crunching to a silent halt.

He cursed the car silently, banging his head against the steering wheel in time to the curses. All he succeeded in doing was giving himself a headache. He threw the car door open and ran down the side of the road, stopping at about twenty yards to heave rocks at the car, raging as he threw. The first one shattered the windshield. He cackled wickedly. The following two rocks broke a headlight and lodged in the grinning grill. He put his whole body into the next throw. The rock glanced off the hood and smashed the side window of a passing car.

The car screeched to a halt. He stood quite calm and still as the other driver, a bulky type fellow in heavy work clothes, got out of his car and proceeded to bounce and slam him up and down the side of the road for a solid fifteen minutes.

Hurst dragged himself to the car and propped himself up against it after the other fellow had left. After a few moments he summoned up the strength to start cursing again, but his mouth wouldn't open properly. He felt it. "Broken," he thought. He was even being denied the pleasure of cursing the car. While he was feeling his jaw, his swollen eyes caught sight of a large, water-filled gravel pit which the roadside hill steeply sloped into. It looked deep, maybe twenty, thirty feet deep.

Then the solution appeared to him like a shaft of sunlight in a forest.

In the deepening twilight, he fumbled through the car searching for any valuables he might want to keep. The glove compartment sprang open, pouring forth dozens of unfolded road maps of the continental United States, Canada, and Mexico. The flood of memories which accompanied them was almost too much for him. Most of them were of Helen and the kids. He couldn't even remember the year anymore. The summertime of '68 or '69. It was at a rest stop somewhere between Columbus and Medina on I-71. He has just come out of the men's room and was fumbling with his zipper in time to see three distant figures fleeing across a tobacco field. "They'd been smart," he said to himself, "they knew what it was trying to do. They got off before it sucked them under, too." He'd been blind so long. He sighed through bruised lips.

He stopped searching. There was nothing he wanted from the car except the one thing it couldn't give: peace. He slipped the gearshift into neutral and began to push. One hand was on the open passenger door and the other was on the steering wheel, which he turned gradually so that the

car began to gently nose down the hillside. His heartbeat quickened as the car picked up momentum, mowing through the waist high weeds. He felt free as a child as he trotted alongside, putting less effort into pushing with every foot of ground the car covered.

He gave one final shove, just for luck. As he was pushing, he envisioned himself standing on the hillside waving Goodbye to Care and Worry forever as the car settled on the bottom of the gravel pit. He put his whole soul into the final shove, and slowed his stride to stop.

But he didn't stop.

When he had slowed his pace after the final push, his belt had snagged on the inside door handle. It wouldn't be exaggerating to call it the shock of his life, when instead of finding himself standing, panting from his exertion, he was jerked forward with the now rapidly rolling car.

His head dribbled along the ground like the tires of a car driving over railroad tracks. His legs kicked back in the impossible stride of a man running too fast to stand up, as his feet tried to find the balance they had lost forty yards behind.

He'd probably been knocked unconscious by the time the car hit the water. With the front end half-way submerged, the car floated for a moment as the interior and trunk rapidly filled with the black water of the gravel pit. Then so slowly, so deliberately, because of the water flowing in through the open driver's door, the car rolled over onto the side to which he was pinned, and settled beneath the surface. Nothing was left to denote the graves of the driver and the car except a spreading oil slick on the surface of the water.

POEMS OF TRIBUTE

Perhaps this very holding
back is the one suffering
you could have avoided.

—Franz Kafka

1

Like moments in war
there is little time
but you
embrace your kindness
as if it were a pillow
flinging it
without letting go

2

The carpet and these walls
know your name
they repeat it as the wind
bows
through the curtains
a walk-on at the matinee

3

I wander about the kitchen
testing all the lights
making certain
every burner heats
I hate myself for being
so restless

4

Thunder and the rasp
of rain
wake me from your dreams
and lulled by these noises
I lie in bed
pretending to sleep

5

"There's a man downstairs.
He has a little mustache.
And little bitty ears.
And all the hair he needs."

A. T. Stephens

ABSTRACT WILL

To this world when I go
I leave behind
The thoughts that quietly
Entered my mind
To my would-be friends
I pushed aside
I leave an empty place
To coincide
With half-dreamed dreams
That never came true
My gift to those
Who believe they do

Zell Page

OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity comes by taking one thing at a time,
What seems like "overnight success,"
Is the product of preparation fine,
Though slowly grows, endures without recess.

If we could view life laid out before us,
It is much like a hand-sewn quilt,
Every hue, fabric, and fortress,
Joined together with tiny stitches built.

Years of service, feelings, performance,
May show a stitch missed someplace,
But the strength of many stitches,
Will move us ahead, though by inches.

We build our lives, one block at a time,
Patiently with our goals in line,
Don't look back, the past is gone,
But the future is God's gift to everyone.

Pauline Luckey

A CONVERSATION WITH FATHER TIME

MAN: On untame sands I've
 trod my feet
 wanting longer days and
 longer weeks
 In silent thought of
 wishing time
 I've wasted her's and
 wasted mine
 But, then DEAR SIR, I
 hope you'll grant
 The time to try the
 things I can't

FATHER TIME: The uniqueness of your request
 you see
 Is not at all new
 to me
 For many times I've heard
 your cry
 In hope of time for
 more to try
 As for the request, I
 cannot consent
 Until the time you have is
 more wisely spent

 Bradley Wells

THE CITY

Cold and unfeeling the neon signs flashing
their false welcome.
Endless miles of barren sidewalks.
Crowds of people with unseeing eyes, all
unknown to each other.
Cars streaming by, blending together into
a drab rain-spotted surface.
Buildings intruding the gray cloud-
stained sky.
The city slowly dying giving in to the
chosen or perhaps the ultimate end.

Sherry Roberts

ONCE

Faded dried flowers,
emitting a faint reminiscent
fragrance of days now gone.
Once gentle breezes caressed the petals.
Bees made daily visits.
The coffee-brown soil and golden-faced sun,
were one with life.
Pressed between brittle, yellowed pages,
 happened upon by chance.
The withered, age-spotted hands,
stopped. . . .
Reminiscent fragrance of days now gone.
Once the sun brought freckles,
upon an upturned nose.
The breeze gently lifted golden curls.
Chubby dimpled hands reached out to place the flowers
in the now old hands.

Sherry Roberts

WALKING ON ICE

i

These are the fields where the boys went running
in those sweet long afternoons
Bursting from the red brick schoolhouse like thistledown
kicked by a careless sneaker.
These are their trails and these are their secret paths
and this is the mark they leave—wild currents of dog paw-track
and tennis shoe-print in winding rivers of dust and time.
It is winter now and the boys are gone
Their rivers have turned to cracked and brittle mud
And I find only one lost sneaker print stranded in the cold
winter sun
My foot will not fit.

ii

There is a way in which the winter takes thoughts
strips them of their cover one by one
and leaves them naked as the black trees against the gray sky.
and last night when I looked at you
I found that all of you would not fit into my eyes.
You spoke and all of your voice would not fit in my two ears.
We would have laid our boat upon the waters
but the waters were frozen over
and who will thaw the waters when we have grown too big
to walk on ice?

iii

Sing us a summer long ago when boys ran laughing
down to old fields and thickets just behind new houses
All dogs and sneakers and thistles they ran
down to those old tangled places
to dig up the Buried Secret
and watch it shine by the light of the moon.
so damn fine.

David Surface

SUMMERWINE

One late long summer afternoon
You sit on the shore and watch me wade across the river
to you,
Bare-chested, water streaming from my beard,
Great bunches of dark purple berries
snatched from the vines on the cliff—
shining wet clusters in my hands like stolen gifts.
I laugh and say that I look like Pan or Bacchus.
You smile and say that I look like me.
And together we crush the fruit in our own hands
and turn that river to wine.

David Surface

THE CHANGELING

Cocoon of God and nature spinning round,
webs of time.
Bursting bubbles of self-deceit pop,
Like a net over the head and close the eyes.
Despair and anguish grow,
Like weeds in untilled soil.

No embryo in this festered womb of discontent.
One metamorphosis of birth and death.
Mother destiny denied by a surgeon's hand.

Man . . . crowns himself with virgin brides,
Adam and the rib embrace inside.
Jack goes up the hill . . . comes down as Jill.

Randol Sledge

AN OLD CHIEF'S PLEDGE

Young one,

Ask me to show to you the far oceans of the earth,
And I will bathe you in them all.
Tell me to pick the yellow flowers of the fields,
And I will make of them a gift to you.
Beg me to teach you to hunt, fish, and track,
And I will give you the sure fleetness of a buck.
Smile at me with your walnut-brown eyes,
Then I will proclaim you most beautiful on earth.
Show me how you can fashion leather into thongs,
That I will marvel at your ingenuity.
Tell me how the sky came into being, Little One,
And I will give you the wisdom of ancient chiefs.
Brush tears from these tired, old eyes,
That I may feel joy in your compassion.
Do wrong, but show genuine sorrow for your actions,
And I will forgive all your youthful mistakes.
Beg me not to leave you,
And I will tread the tall grasses forever.
Ask of me all these things, and I will do them,
For as a small papoose, you looked
At me through newborn eyes,
And asked me to love you. . .
Many moons ago.

Joy Medley

MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

Four legged spiders
With webs of rope.
Held together
By knots of hope.

With muscle for glue
And faith in a team
They spin their webs
To catch a dream.

E. Clay Buchanan III

BAPTISM

Gail Yarbrough

Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea, silver buckles on his knee. Won't come back and marry me—so I have to go to a home for unwed mothers. That's only one of the nursery rhymes we doctored up, but it's enough to give you the idea, and it's probably the best. We also greeted each other on the telephone: "Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?" We thought this was extremely funny because Terry's father was the preacher in our church and people were always saying things like that to him, for real. We even thought it would be brilliant to get up a line of toilet soap called blood-of-the-lamb, then people could wash in it two or three times a day if they wanted to.

We were clever; there's no denying it. And thought of ourselves as impish when we made paper airplanes out of church programs and threatened—only threatened—to sail them over the balcony on Sunday mornings. Actually we did sail one once. What we did was, we played chicken by laying the airplanes down on the rail and inching them toward the edge until they got too close and one of us refused to nudge the plane. Our exuberant irreverence may or may not have called down the wrath of God on our heads, but it certainly did bother Mr. Carlisle. He went so far as to tell us from the pulpit to be quiet or leave.

We also rewrote the Bobbsey twins, involving them (in the RSV, we called it) with motorcycles, bicycle chains, zip guns, and dope smuggling.

You laugh about the awful things that seem most remote; or you laugh in order to try and make them seem remote. The nothing-is sacred trend in our humor reached a high pitch when we were at a dam dedication by President Kennedy. We were close enough to him to touch him, almost, and it wouldn't have taken more than a pistol to shoot him. For some reason we got a lot of laughs out of saying over and over again, "Would you like a program, ma'am?" "No, thank you; I won't be here a minute. I've only come to assassinate the President."

It was funny then; it truly was. Him bright and beautiful, with the wind just ruffling his hair, quoting Aristotle in the afternoon sun—the idea of anybody shooting him. . . Just like Bobby Shaftoe was funny until I turned up pregnant my senior year. Well I said, there's only the Three A's as far as I can see: Abortion, Adoption, Alliance. Misalliance, is more like it, said Terry. It's a hard decision. And we realized that neither of us had ever had to make a decision before. The stark thing about it, to me, was knowing that no matter which decision I made, it was going to shape me, to change me. There was no decision I could make that would put things back the

way they were—make them always stay the same.

The abortion was pretty painless and pretty easy to get. As far as I know, not even my parents knew about it. But as far as I felt, well, that was something else. Whenever there was a group of kids talking together, laughing, I believed they were talking about me, about my baby unborn, not going to be born—ill-conceived as Mrs. Brodie said about my short stories. I felt my parents looking at me across the table and thought, they know, they know—and what it had been to me, what it was costing me, I wanted people to know. I wanted it to show.

At least there was Terry, loyal, kind, flippant and true, and even though we were going in different directions to college, we knew that we would always be blood-sisters to the core. It came as a shock when she started to date a guy who was a devout Catholic and not, as far as I could see, much else. Oh, he was an engineer, of course; but he didn't read things, didn't go to the movies, didn't listen to good music—in my book, he was an A-number-one dud and I told Terry so when she came to visit. Well, she said, you have to know him. He's a very strong person. Strong person, indeed; he was a bully, and he was taking Terry away from me. At least, I said, he sounds like he's washed in the blood of the lamb. We both kind of laughed, and nothing more was said about Tom.

Until the wedding invitation came two weeks later. Why couldn't she have told me? On top of being too spiritless to tell him no, was she too scared to tell me about it face to face? I was furious, but I went to the wedding just the same. The guy I was living with said he wouldn't go if he were me, but I felt there was too much already between us to let go by.

Terry told me at the wedding that Tom had promised her the kids wouldn't have to be raised Catholic—and let me say here that I haven't got anything against being Catholic or being anything else; it's just being so gung-ho anything that I can't tolerate. Just about nine months to the day later, Andy was baptised Catholic (Andy—that's the first of several Fruits of her Womb). Tom, she told me again, is a very strong person. Besides, it turned out, the priest had got her on the phone and told her that the baby's soul would be damned to immortal flames and agony if she didn't have him baptized.

Well, it seems impossible, but we just didn't have much to say to each other after that. Andy's baptism was followed within a year by her own, and then by a string of other ones, a couple of boys, a couple of girls, whose names I can't remember. I would visit her maybe once a year, and the news would always be the same: dentist's bills, skinned knees, runny noses, junior service league. She was completely immersed in the life we had vowed to avoid at any cost.

Was I doing any better? Well, when I was finishing my doctorate the guy I was living with at the time decided he might as well try marriage, and that suited me. Suited us both, until it didn't suit us both, and by then I had a teaching position at State University anyway, and was interested in the radical left, spending a lot of time as secretary to this and chairman to that. I couldn't help comparing myself to Terry; it just didn't seem like I had a toe-hold in the world, and here she was with property, position, and (I didn't envy her) husband and children. Never mind that. It was all going to be swept away, crushed to rubble, in the coming revolution. There was no doubt in my mind the revolution was in the making, and that I was a maker of it. For a full year I gave just that cause my undivided attention. Late at night we would debate—my friends and I—whether any part of it could be accomplished by peaceful means. If they had all been like us, I'm convinced there would have been a revolution.

But one day in Central Park, there was the Big Daddy rally of them all for that spring, and as I walked through the crowd, looking, I saw nothing but picknickers out for a happy day in the sun and an afternoon of free rock music. It was a giant, children's party in the park. People I didn't even know said to me—and I had heard this before, but it had never hit me—"When were you radicalized?" Not just once or twice, but over and over again, like a password. Like "Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?" I knew I wasn't radicalized. I knew I wasn't anything. I just was, a haphazard string of decisions made, and decisions unmade, and driftings, and wonderings if things might have all been different.

I got drunk that night—past dizzy-drunk and reeling drunk; crying out loud and telling people about my past drunk. I don't know who I talked to, but I told him all about Terry and me—I told him how Terry had turned out as neatly as a gingerbread man cut out of dough, and how I had sprawled over everywhere then sunk into a tired little puddle. I told him how miserable I was, and how I was afraid I was past saving.

He didn't even try to go home with me. When I got in, it must have been four-thirty or later, I called Terry, three states away. "Listen," I said, "listen. Am I washed in the blood of the lamb?"

CHANSON DES CYGNES

We are dancers of eternal measure
past the reach of light's endeavor
before the breast of darkness
offers a soft repose for tired heads
whose tired feet slide slowly across
the floor of time's symphonic watershed,
stepping the stones that clutter
the flow that rivers the material world

The dance is part and whole.

Steve Smith

MOMENTS OF MIASMA

The senses reel and leap
over the intellect's rail
to plunge and follow the dolphin's trail
sleek gray glistens in the soft aurora—
ever-dawn of wet twilight.

Ah! To always have that freedom of roll
no linear movement know,
but infinite and various planes of depth—
and to flirt with forms of coral
in the faithful nonverbal.

But, clandestine monks clump in the clouds
hover heavy with moist breath
and utter "Hosanna" in a trance like death
to the shuffle of unshod feet
which muffle their retreat to senescent cells
cloistered within the matins bells.

Steve Smith

LOVE

She let you in. I would not have.
She cleans up after you, as if you were a baby!
The empty bottles she throws away as you use
Smirnoff—80 proof
Your three month drunk, I wouldn't put up with.
Roaches she fights and the rent bill too!
I just don't see how she puts up with you.
She wipes up your spleen that your stomach has rejected
along with the end product of your beer that you
sprayed everywhere.
Three to six months you're a worthless reject.
But six to nine months you're as straight as the rest.
The laurels I give are to her, not to you.
For through all of the year through your changes she stays.
She loves you. I don't.

Letha Edison

DUALISM

A sidewalk snakes between the condemned
buildings and—
as I ease down its white back—
it spreads to the moon, gathering cold,
red meteors along the way.
At its end stands Diana—her silver hair,
like whorled ice,
draping her sandals' silver hasps.
I press my hand to the hollow of her
cheek
and the celestial viper coils, giving me
sweet poison;
I melt to a street corner where a wino
sighs.

Gary L. Hottinger

THE LAST GIFT

Here in this package is contained
a Remnant,
a scarlet shirt of corduroy
stitched by yours truly.
We worked so well together,
the needle and I,
leaving behind a fine garment.
It is a practical thing
so wear it well (désespere)
it fits.
I learned from the making
how to sew
and how to weep.
This sacrifice is my retribution.
I cannot keep what is not mine.

Cynthia Minor

STREET-BOY

Good morning Sergeant.
Have you a dollar for me?
I'm still starving!
Is there something I can do for you today?

Let me sell you my daughter,
or these flowers from your garden.
Have you a dollar for me,
before I'm on my way?

Randol Sledge

PINK SOCKS

down-twisted, corners curled on a thin smile
condescending nose

he says

"your eyes shine like headlights dancing on telephone wire—
not to one spot fixed.

beauty. . . dreams, ideals even?

what is now fierce-fire will so soon seem as
moist steam-smoke slithering away from slush-ash."

angered, muscling arm thrusts fist into glass,
recalcitrant, undaunted,
again hammers until
blood slips along spiderweb cracks. red web.

why must I spoil?
did he say my soul's a city sidewalk?

he says

"I been around, honey."

about to ask whatdoesthatprove, I notice
he sees my socks, pink—
down-twisting, corners curling.

Barbara Carter

WITHOUT CEREMONY

It's so cozy and nice,
You don't think twice about me,
When you're wrapped in your children's smiles,
The new dog's barking,
The brick house sitting starkly against the country horizon.
Outside, the rain falls cold and tingly against my skin.
Car lights spin by two by two.
While you, enclosed where you want to be,
Behind two front windows
Spilling golden light upon the dark wet ground,
Are where I want to be.
I finally turn my car around. . .
The thin sound of the radio and whining gears
Reach my ears in disharmony,
Widening the hinge
That connects you to me,
Who is ever on the fringe of your life.

Carolyn Hogan

... AN INTERPRETATION
OF THE DIVINE PLAN
AS ACTED UPON BY
HUMAN ERROR ...

The Supreme Force of Power and Might looked down upon
The emptiness and said, "Let there be a world . . ."

". . . today Hiroshima was devastatingly
bombed by the U.S. Damage is estimated
in the millions of dollars bracket . . .
countless deaths recorded. . ."

Then He smiled and breathed the words, "Let there be
Light. . ."

". . . local officials are on the scene . . .
blue lights flash in circular motion
from all angles . . . floodlights outline
the bodies of brutally slain . . ."

And He nodded His all-wise head in pleasure and
Announced, "Let there be birds in the air, fish
In the seas, and pairs of all types of animals
Upon my earth . . ."

". . . today a record-breaking number of
deer were killed as hunting season draws
to a close . . . polluted waters said cause
of rising destruction rate of sea life . . .
real, live buffalo may be seen Monday
thru Friday at Monroe's Wheeler Dealer,
2284 Singapore . . ."

He gazed in satisfaction at all He had created.
Then He uttered the ultimate command, "Let there
Be man . . ."

". . . 2,000 years ago today a short, pugnacious
town rowdy was cheered by a crowd as he spat
upon the face of a prisoner who was viewed
dragging a cross up a sharp incline . . .
now, for today's local hospital birth record . . ."

And He smiled and said, "It is good."

Joy Medley

PEOPLE (AS WINDMILLS)

Windmills spinning
Can cause a scare
Windmills motionless
Mean calm air

Windmills Windmills
Stop and go
Windmills Windmills
Nobody knows

Windmills Windmills
Don't really care
'Cause Windmills Windmills
Are controlled by the air

Bobby Mattingly

HUNTER OR SOLDIER

Eyes flickering
Nostrils flaring
Snake coiled nerves
Listening for footfalls
In the hiding green.
Every sense, concentrating life
To cause death.

E. Clay Buchanan III

INGREDIENTS FOR A DYING RECLUSE

Shuttered room
Exhausted mind
Dusty house
Years of time

Neglect of children
Indifference of men
A body too frail
To hold a soul within

E. Clay Buchanan III

THE MOVIE ENDED

Men died on sidewalks
their faces pressed flat
against gray concrete
struggling breaths
sucked in red blood
instead of air
slurping sucking
gasps expired,
wide eyes that
didn't blink appear
fixed as human
fish stares

little boy stood
sobbing
begging to go home
clutching his mother's knees.

Denise Newbolt

VULTURE

he came from the black stars
as a gentle vulture
slowly folding his wings
his feathered cape collapsed
behind him as graceful
strides brought him closer
to the small animal
cold air clung to him,
kindly, gentle vulture
fanned his black sail
in a protective gesture
over a relaxing, wide-eyed victim
before the bird plucked out the red heart,
still warm.

Denise Newbolt

IN THE CORNFIELD

falling down into the middle of the field
yellow breezes
run through thick
corn silks
and leave them
drizzled in buttery
sunshine
warm light seeps
among tall green
stalks creating
jungle patterns
big hairy caterpillars
prowl between leafy rows
with cool dirty toes
happy little child wanders
in wilderness, crashing
the corn patch.

Denise Newbolt

INTELLECTUAL MAN

Power behind eyes
explosively injects into stars
and lovingly touches wildflowers
with Artemis in spring
ingenuity released
solves all mysteries
and leaves them behind
a cruel lover of reality
stripping his time for
its tender insides,
turning over Deity and Passion,
passing his answers on
to his timeless brothers.

Denise Newbolt

INSANITY—GUISE OF THE HOLDER

This guy gets bolder and bolder
The insanity guise of the holder
I was fined
I spoke my mind
I wish I could do (Groucho) Marx
I wouldn't get picked up in parks
If I was famous
Name us Name us
Said to my niece
Leave me police
I plead
Insanity—Guise of the Holder

Rick Houchin

CINCINNATI SUPERHIGHWAY: SUMMER 1972

he was a man
a regular man
not regular really
the springs and sprockets and gears and things that go
ping-ping
went all funny in his head
he was crazy
how did he feel when he stepped off the island
that the metal and rubber and blinding lights
would evaporate as he
with royal mein and stately tread
ignored them
or scared like a chicken
did he fling himself into the stream of things
blind in mad terror
not hoping to survive
perhaps he welcomed the death angel as a brother
a deliverer
and went of a purpose to meet him
the sodden lump that was him
tells no tales
but lies there leaking life
and the cars roll by
and the cars roll quickly by

Gail Yarbrough

TOGETHER FOREVER

I am the wax; You are the wick;
 Together
We combine to make the most beautiful candle;
Without the wick the candle is not whole;
The match which sets the fire glowing,
 Becomes destructive and dangerous;
For with the wick we burn together forever.
For without the wick I melt and sizzle,
 Becoming burnt eternally.

Paul Allen Neff

Lying in piles of paper leaf expression,
Balancing his chin from the post of his bed,
His eyes looked rather thin and betrayed,
—"You have nothing to provide."
 His words are a blister,
 On the tip of his mind.
I knew he was right.
I turn and ran sorrows
Through filters of understanding,
And spilled half of the impressions,
Through the holes in his hands.

Scott Marx

GO NOT GENTLY

Gail Yarbrough

He was singing when I opened the door:

Bury me in my shades, boys
Bury me in my shades
Burn my guitar in Washington Squar
Cuz I never learned how to play
Send my poetry home to Mom
Hang my sweatshirt away
You can have my records, my books and my car
But bury me in my shades.

"Get the hook," I said, "We got a real loser here."

"Laurie," he said, "if you ever do have to bury me, I don't want to be in my shades. I want to be in a pink sequined tuxedo with a Roi Tan cigar in my mouth and a hundred dollar bill in my pocket. Better to have it and not spend it than spend it and not have it. And on my tombstone I want 'Here Lies Joey, Do Not Laugh, He's Waiting for His Better Half.'"

"The grave's a fine and private place," I said, "but none, I think do there embrace! That's got to be true—that's poetry."

Well, then, said Joey, "Let's put 'Breaking Up Is Hard to Do.' You know, I ought to have a will, too, just in case. Take this down, now: To my wife Laurie I leave the Hope Diamond, the Brooklyn Bridge, and all the butterflies in the world, also the sun and the moon and the stars and the sky to put them in. Also a year's supply of Reese's peanut butter cups."

"You're too generous," I said. "With all that other, a six-months' supply would be plenty."

"Seriously, Laurie, what have I got to leave behind, right now, besides debts? There's my aquarium, and my coin collection, and my subscription to *Punch*—not much at all, really, when you count it up."

I didn't say anything. He was right, it wasn't much, and it was about all he really owned free and clear.

"But I leave it all to you, Laurie; really I do. You know, I look back over the time we've been together, the places we've been, the people we've seen, all the great vast multitude of experiences we've had in our long and happy marriage, I marvel to think I still love you just as much as I did the day we married."

"Wow," I said. "Three long months."

"Well, they have been long months. Laurie, you know, some people live a lifetime in three months."

"Some people do," I agreed.

"Listen, Laurie, do you think people do leave anything behind? Besides a corpse and a little pile of junk to be swept under the rug? Do you think—but let's not get morbid. I feel the urge for a greaseburger coming on. Tell you what; I'll pay if you'll go."

"Deal," I said.

Maybe we won't always have to fetch junk food, Laurie," he said. "Maybe someday they'll put a MacDonald's on wheels and it can lurch through the neighborhood spewing french fries and cokes in every direction. Santa Claus can retire."

"How wonderful," I said. "Ronald MacDonald could even come down the chimney and so could Colonel Sanders; what with them and the television, we could spend months at a time without ever going out of the house."

"Oh we'd have to have toilet paper and toothpaste and things," said Joey, "but I imagine they could figure out a way to dispense all that, like water and electricity. Wonder what life really will be like in the next twenty-five or fifty years?"

"No way of knowing," I said abruptly. "Where's the money?"

"You're right—there's no way of knowing," he said. "Here's some dollars. Take several—they're small. And kiss me goodbye. I want a kiss that will last a million years, even though you'll probably be back sooner than that."

"If I catch the traffic and the lights right," I said.

"See you real soon," he said.

"Why?" I said, "Because we like you!"

"Laurie," said Joey. "Goodbye."

He was gone when I got back. Not gone-out gone; dead, gone. He left with no warning nor word of farewell, went through my head, even though I knew it wasn't true. What had we had, really, but words of farewell since we first knew about the tumor?

The nurses said he hadn't any pain—he had said he was sleepy, he had gone to sleep, and he wasn't waking up. As simple as that. He left with no warning nor word of farewell. Nor word of farewell. Did the Mickey Mouse Club song qualify as goodbye forever? Suddenly I was crying; crying for all those months when crying was considered gauche, mourning for all the words left now forever unsaid, and hating Joey with all my heart for the fancy footwork that denied we knew what was coming or cared.

It hadn't been easy—each of us had caught the other panting from the exertion, sweating from the heat of the lights that illuminated our little act

for our friends, the town, the world and the universe to see. We thought—does it matter what we thought—I guess we thought that going out gallantly was the ultimate thing. And Joey did go out in style. Not just a style, his style.

I didn't hate Joey for long, of course. But I wonder things now in the night: Could we have played the whole scene differently, not for laughs—or did we play the scene at all? Given Joey, and me, and the Angel of Death, was everything we did and said already printed on giant idiot cards in the sky? And I wonder in the night, did Joey wonder in the night, was this the way to do it?

His aquarium is still in operation and some of the fish that outlived him may outlive me, too. His coin collection is in a drawer somewhere, I think, and his subscription to *Punch* ran out. If that was all he left behind, that about takes care of him for good.

If.

EMOTIONAL SUICIDE

Frustrated
from continual
rejection,
She voluntarily
allows herself
to be sucked
into a
vacuum
of permanent
withdrawal;
a satisfying non-existence

Jan Inglehart

WRITER'S BLOCK

The door is locked,
sealing my most
delicate thoughts
in the airtight
dungeon
of my mind.
I must find a way
to unlock the
door,
before they suffocate.

Jan Inglehart

APOLOGY

I watered You with my tears each time
I admired the beauty of Your leaves;

My proud smile
shone warmly upon Your soil.
I nourished You with words of kindness,
praising You each time a new leaf
uncurled.

Perhaps it was my fear of neglecting You
that I over-protected You with my love.
Nothing can justify my mistake.
I have only my apology to offer.
I'm sorry,

I loved You to death.

Jan Inglehart

SPRING DEATH (Incident)

Driving too fast
down a country lane
feeling too light with spring
too fluid
too good to think
I came too quickly
upon a rabbit
too indecisive
and unaware
to escape my wheel
Two days later
I'm still too concerned
to think of much else.

Linda L. Webb

EARLY MORNING MAIN STREET

This old city's got a slow mornin' comin' on
Main Street.
Yes, it's Tuesday and Main Street hasn't change in years — —
The barber shop, the junk man sittin' in front of his store
sleeping,
A bent old wino lookin' poor
and tired,
but so much at home
on Main Street,
Toothless old women
comin' doubtingly from their apartments
above the shops, the liquor store
dressed in old jersey flowered dresses
from Salvation Army boxes
move amid traffic
Going nowhere
Especially
— — just for a pack of cigarettes
at the bar.
Their smiles have all gone
with too many curse words
and cursed husbands
and would-be husbands
in those old dwellings.
Yes, it's Tuesday and Main Street hasn't changed in years.

No one even notices the L&N as it whistles down the tracks
two blocks down.
No one cares.
They know they're not going anywhere
but Main Street.

Linda L. Webb

JUST A DREAM

Everyone wants in his life time to lead
To make strong commands that his followers heed

To guide a smart people with magnetic speech
Compelling the masses with long vocal reach

To sway minds to cater to what he believes
To laugh when he laughs, and cry when he grieves

To master a culture to tastes of his own
Ascending to heights from a timid unknown

George Simpson

SPEECHLESS PASSION

How vaguely she saw me but I worshiped her
Watching her moves in my dream reoccur

A year in her presence spent fruitlessly waiting
My dream and reality sterile in mating

And never I spoke of my knightly intentions
And never she felt of my warming extensions

Silence has parted us much as we met
And time spins my hear in its cruel roulette

And fervent affection dies sadly unspoken
And boundless dimensions of love sleep unspoken

George Simpson

A FAMILIAR RING

R-r-r-ring!! Eight o'clock!
Here we are--the comp. class flock.
Joyously we take our place,
Greeting every smiling face.

Patiently we fill the room,
Waiting for the cry of doom.
Spies so loyal give the call,
"Here she comes on down the hall!"

Enters teacher--eyes the herd
Like the cat that ate the bird.
'Tis the day she'll get a rest,
We're the ones who'll take the test.

"Take your pens and write a theme
'Bout Brazilian coffee beans."
What a way to start the morn!
How I wish I'd not been born!

I've the feeling I am sunk,
And am tempted to write junk.
Knowledge of those coffee beans
Is quite less than what it seemed.

My Muse is silent; she won't speak,
I'd like on someone's test to peek,
But I'll do right and not be bad,
And get my F, make all D's glad.

The tempus fugits; it is late
The hand of fate is well past eight.
I'll try again with all my might
To think of any thing to write!

Suddenly the wheels start turning,
All my being is a-burning,
Words are surging from my brain
To a hand that long has lain.

One line, two lines, three, four, five,
I soon start to come alive.
That's an intro., now let's see
How I'll do points one, two, three.

Here at last this stupid theme
Gives me hope: I could fill reams!
'Fore, howe'er, I scrawl a jot,
Something hits me; I feel shot.

Gone that hour of my day.
Gone my chances of an A.
Gone the peace nulled by the shock
of
R-r-r-ring!! Nine o'clock!

Patricia Lyon

ALONE

Alone
She sits in her small room
Cluttered with trinkets from grandchildren:
A bouquet of paper flowers from Susie,
A cardboard sailboat created by Don,
A lop-sided heart for a Valentine's Day,
Given, with love, by John.
Marie beamed as she handed the gift
Of Evening in Paris perfume.
"I paid for it myself, Nanna. . ."
And my, how proud little Bobby was
As he played his trumpet, sometimes off key.
But she never minded
He was good company.
And remember the time little Anna came. . .
Not so little anymore--a husband and a child.
But she visited her faithfully back then,
Although now. . ., well, it has been a while.
And she chuckled when she remembered the time
With Bill and his new puppy. . .
"Dreaming again," the nurse quietly sighed.
And she entered the room, and helped her to bed.

The lights were out, the nurse was gone.
Four children she had, they had children of their own.
And here she lies, in a rest home,
Alone.

Cindy Glaysbrook

FARMER THOUGHTS (so many thoughts)

How many men,
have squatted here with God,
and pondered all the unanswered questions?
So many thoughts;
that handful of fertility drops back
to patient peacefulness.
Each line copied,
in a pride-stained leather face.
All the greatness across those fields,
all the sweat,
all the hoping,
all the prayers,
are hammered into a strong heart of self-respect
Each day
watching,
hoping,
praying,
and loving the God that gave it to him.

Robert Burkhead

AT THE APEX

Gary Marchal

Have you ever had that feeling while driving down a country road? You know, when you're driving along at a pretty good speed, and you begin to climb a hill. Well, after you get to the top and just before you start to come down, this feeling comes over you. For that split second it seems as if the road just ends, and you'll go flying off the edge, falling to the depth of some huge and terrible canyon. But alas, the continuing road shows itself, laid out in front of you for miles and miles.

I was flying down this narrow country road, doing about fifty. I was taking turns on what seemed like two wheels, the wind was blowing my hair straight back in a flutter, and the hum of the engine made my insides dance.

After turning a sharp curve, I slammed the stick into fifth and rammed the peddle to the floor. Out in front of me was nothing but asphalt, shooting straight away as far as the eye could see, and then bending upward to rendezvous with the blue sky.

Forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, I cocked my head down and forward a little to avoid the wind. Sixty, sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five, telephone poles and fences swish by in a blur. Eighty, eighty-five, the white dashes in the road approach slow but pass in a flash, and I begin my ascent of a small hill. Ninety, ninety-five, a hundred; just at the top of the hill my insides felt like they had just taken off. Coming over the peak of the hill, expecting to roller coast down, I disappeared, vanished!

I was dumbfounded. I was in the middle of nowhere, literally. I was suspended in what seemed to be midair, yet there was nothing below, nothing above, nothing anywhere. I was stuck in the middle of a clear and vast universe of space. Caught in the midst of an unknown realm that stretched as far as could be perceived by the eye or the imagination. I was hung in a white oblivion, and for me time became a nonentity.

As I write this I am still caught. Caught between ascent and descent, at the apex of the hill where for that fleeting fragment in time, fear struck deep and quick, and time existed no more.

CITY SIDEWALKS

we all hurry:
furtively,
 watching each other
(impassively judging)
 (impassable)
we erect insurmountable defenses
 from each other

we do not speak:
 our thoughts do not meet.
we are silent,
untouched,
 safe and uninvolved
 as we wend our way back
to our private
 fantasies.

Mary Herde

THE PARTY

Black as volcanic
Soil

The darkness and
The people

Throbbing to the Beat
The Beat

Rising from deeper source
Than sweating bodies

Moving from deeper joy
Than pop-hit song

Room becomes jungle
Shoes, dusty feet

Rhythmic stomping
To tribal tune

Equatorial heat
Electric air

The joy is in the Beat;
The joy is in the Beat.

Jacki Wood

FIRST SNOW

Like children
we'd talked
and teased
of its coming
and we stare
at it now as though
it had never
come. I am
happier now
than I have been
in a long time
giving
my starved feelings
this new food.
Still the weather
is warm
these clusters held
with invisible
hands.
This snow is special
like the first
day we
noticed spring.

A. T. Stephens

IN BOTH OF US

Meeting an old woman
on the sidewalk today,
books under my arm,
I smiled, said hello—
 to greet a soul in passing.
She drew back
and making no reply—
 hurried on her way.
If she had pulled a gun,
I might have torn her eyes out,
but not before.

S. D. Cole

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