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THISTLE



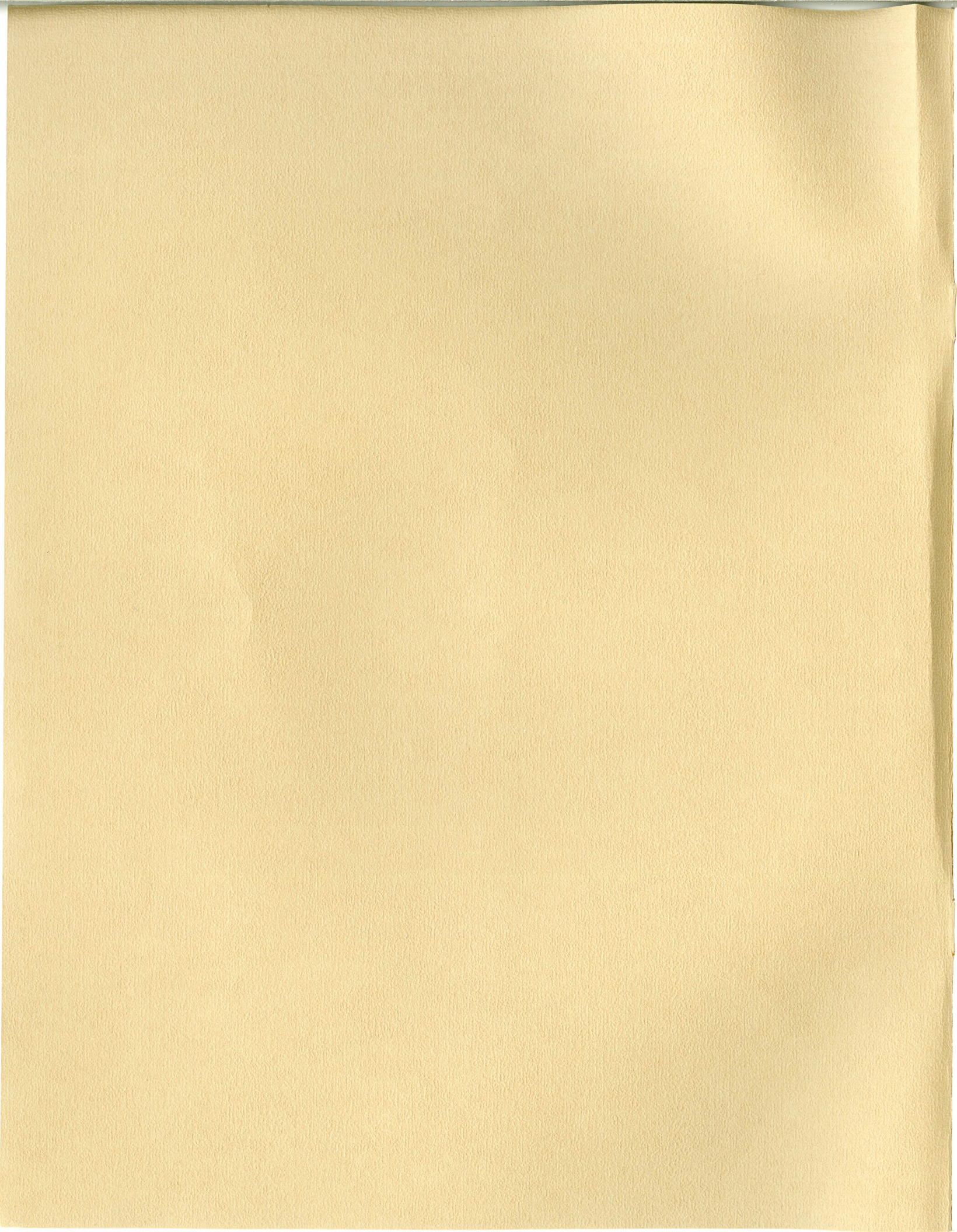


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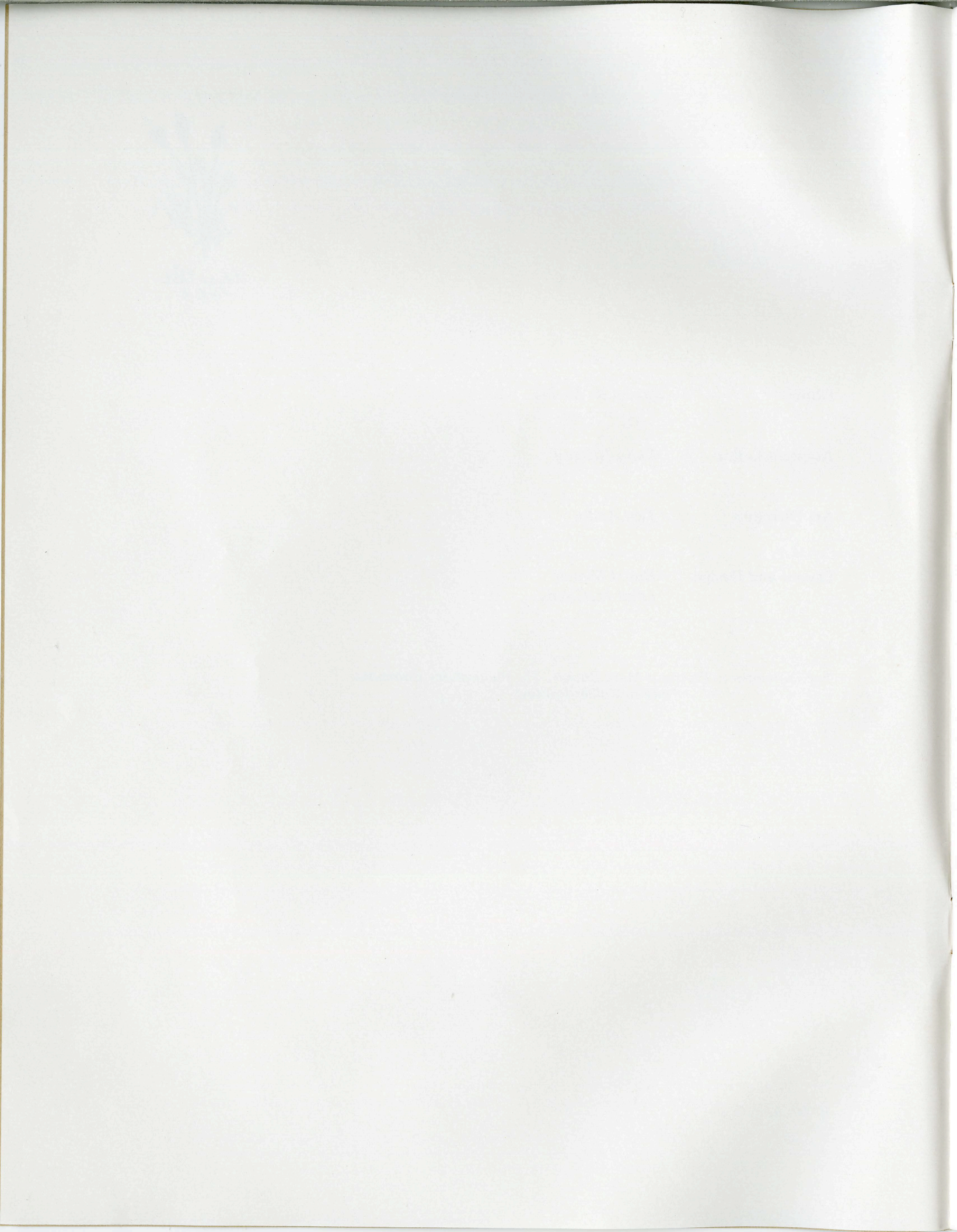


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False Elegy

We share only a slow disaster.
I see myself dying in you, in another, in all,
and I still yawn or distract myself,
as though in boredom.

The days are unwoven,
the nights consumed before we realize;
we finish so.
Nothing is. Nothing exists
between the lid's rise and fall.

But if something's about to be born (its announcement,
the possibility of its imminence
its syllabic weight in the air),
existence is transformed,
it can do more than the real,
can dislodge the corpse of the living.

ROSARIO CASTELLANOS, Mexico
TRANSLATION: CARLEE LIPPMAN

I Don't Laugh At Death

I never laugh at death.
It's only that I'm not afraid
of dying among birds and trees.

I don't laugh at death.
But sometimes I'm thirsty
and ask for a drop of life,
sometimes I'm thirsty and I ask
daily, and as usual I get no answer,
only a deep dark bellylaugh.
I've already said it, I'm not in the habit
of laughing at death,
but yes, I know her white face,
her gloomy garments.
I don't laugh at death.
Nevertheless, I know her
white house, her
white robes, I know
her moisture and her silence
Of course, death hasn't come yet,
and you will ask: what do you know?
I know nothing.

This is also true:
I know that when she comes
I'll be waiting,
I'll be waiting — standing, or maybe
breakfasting.
I'll look at her calmly
(no one's getting upset)
and as I've never laughed
at her robe, I'll accompany her,
solitary and solitary.

JAVIER HERAUD, Peru
TRANSLATION: CARLEE LIPPMAN



Lynn Rogan / At the Altar

Stream

The diffuse scent
of the sewage plant,
faintly born on the breezes,
fanned hot and sticky
was like violets,
as we ran to the River.
A small, brown stream
crawling like a garden snake
through the briars and weeds,
swaddled in muck,
as we chased after shouting.
Bubbling foam over smooth stones
until it slowed, turbid
and stagnant.
We searched for minnows, snails
and try to cross
we follow, until deep
sloping banks and meshing mail of thorns
chokes us off
with unsatiable senses of distance
the first step towards Africa.

CHRIS LUSE

Dogfight

A thin film of dust
settles across my memory
of yellow-faded photos
of boys with enormous smiles,
curly-haired pilots, no longer virgins,
but rusted relics in dark-blue waters.
Red streaks across the sky
mapping old dogfights,
angels locked in combat alone
against the blue wrinkling curtains,
doing victory-rolls
over flaming Zeros
their valient embrace unbroken.
We've never flown away
we trail smoke fading
and land unseen
on the carrier's sloping deck.

CHRIS LUSE



Teri Andos

Intimacy Blurred

He fussed a pepper shaker
And above diner's din
Began a conversation of endless encore
Stammering familiar frustration of his latest intimacy blurred
Peering through flowers of a Perrier bottle centerpiece
I saw that his puzzle was mine
Consolation was his need
But his weak whimpers
Infected this bearer of calm comfort
To be only a partner in confusion

I mumbled him my own frustration of an evening before
When warmth doubled as intimacy blurred
When excited sharings of summer exploits
Suddenly ceased
And on a blanket spread over a summer park diamond
She whispered callous of a spoiled engagement past
"I closed up and wouldn't open for a chance
I guess I was cold and locked myself away
I replied, "but something got you out here for another glance
The game is a full time job, or so they say"
I admired her features
Shadow-laced by the moon's light through the backstop fence
She wept, she crept close with a timidity that started my smirk
I couldn't imagine her married.

Now silent, I spun the salt shaker
He smiled, knowing his puzzle was mine
We bantered the validity of playboy infidelity
But blurred intimacy
Was a tormenting redundancy
We would continue to entertain
We would join with the fancy dancers and gambling valentines
In reading eyes and
Decoding signals
That really are not at all.

BARRY EISENBERG

Them, The Bear, And I

I scuff across floors, staring grey
Only an inner obligation forces muttered hellos
I sit in a grubby diner blowing the paper sleeve off a straw
While the deep kids, the veggie philosophers, talk of saving their world
I just try to drive personal dismal to another place
'Cause like a piercing chill from an open door
The scent of the bear with the silent roar
Captures my nose and I breathe in cloudy days
A passing haze
The panting growler of shadow
Has arrived to disrupt my straight and narrow

I gather senses to shake personal gloom
They ponder pop culture pangs
And try to stop the rain, while I grab an umbrella
And tip-toe puddled depressions
They're building a national zoo, I'm discouraging the bear
'Cause like a piercing chill from an open door
The grizzly's glance is hard to ignore
His pupils smoke from an arsonist's blaze
A passing haze
The one whose tongue drips darkness
Plays in my path of ivy and rose
And while they chase a roving pack
I struggle with just the one
'Til he grows bored
And tame.

BARRY EISENBERG



John Eaton / Artichoke Forest

Above Their Chasm (for P.A.S. and others)

We don't dare stair-jumping challenges now
Champion, we reflect on moments of hide n' seek history
Worst of all
We can't pout now either
Time was when a furred lip
A slammed door
And an hour of voluntary solitary
Wondered their compromise

An outsider in these negotiations,
Shed only a distant tear for their torn vows
And be on your own way
Above their chasm is fertile land
Precious plots scattered about regions so pained
Where a man's demands
Grow around a child's cries
And a space is claimed
His, alone

Cozy readings don't end with playful pillows in the face now
Friend, we don't re-invent breakfast with Strawberry Quick concoctions
The famous spaghetti fight splatter is a fading stain
Worst of all
We can't pout now either.

BARRY EISENBERG



Jim Denne / Pastel on Burlap

Elephant and Swan

For my mother who likes each

The moon dipped swing a quasi crescent fling
Of light bright down on the plain where
Big dream sleep four gray elephants be.
And the wide sky rises blue deep blue over wide
Flat land over wide lump pachyderms sleep set.
Three four maybe more thin tall trees wing
High black bunch-cluster leaves against the sky.

The sun rose bright circle melon color light
Over silver lapping sky catching water
Where two swans crossed swimming sweetly moving neatly
Never seeming to be running underwater.
Whitely plumed nicely groomed silent ballet for the birds.
Swans are always ruling their platinum pool of aqua
Cooling, beneath high cerulean sky.

AMY HOLMAN



Leigh Calmar / The Enchanted Forest

Prayer To Our Unborn Child

For you, Lord, in all days, we pray
For the strength and grace that you will give
To our child, who is yet to be born.

Breakfast Insecurity

I purr in our cat silence
Remembering last night's tender violence.
With popsicle toes on tundra tile
While cheeks flush in stove's steamy
Satisfaction of cooking for you.
I play house
And thee I will espouse.
I must hide
Domestic dreams that wing up inside
Quivering unspoken on tongue's tip,
Mercury from a broken thermometer.
Now your liquid brown eyes below
Hair ruffled by sleep and love
Watch me.
Next year who will you see?
And who will watch?

ANGELA HUBLER

Thousands of feet of dark water
Even the fish are afraid to go down
Pressure, scared of the deadening air
That captures the light
And never lets it go.

DAVID MEARS



Lynn Rogan / Never Say Never

Prayer To Our Unborn Child

The wind twist in off Lake Michigan
Born far across in long Wisconsin forest,
The smooth hard streets of Chicago:
It bends the sand into corrugated sheets
Rippled against the brown-green blades of
Razor grass
That scratch our ankles as we wander
Across the dune
Sinking into the dense
Sand. Wasted motion, pushing off, sinking
Down. We leave a long line of prints behind.

The waves never cease below.
Each with its casual undulation.
Grey lips reach out to kiss us with
Willing, undercurling, hooks grasping lightly
Like a baby's primitive, instinctual clutch
Holding the edge of silt back and
Scooping it endlessly to the center.
We watch it all
Far below us.

She might see the waves that are born
out of those winds that come from the tops
Of those tall crowned conifers:
She might sit here with her knees tight
Against her chin and look into the orange
Line of the sun, as it moves so slowly down.
We scratch at the sand between our toes and
Hold against one another tightly.

Say a prayer for your unborn child, the sand said:
Fear is natural when you sleep, when the darkness
Builds its fuzzy temple around you.
The waves are as timeless as the spotted coral
We build that world from, it hisses.

It is deep out there
In the center of the lake
Where the nautical charts
Show the final dip
Into the silted canyon.
Thousands of feet of thick water.
Even the fish seem dazed at the
Pressure, scared of the deadening silt
That captures the light
And never lets it go.

DAVID MEANS



Robin Telerico / Youth Revisited



DAVID M. VANDERBILT

Coffee

I

Across from me an old man sits
Gazing into his coffee,
Watching swirls of steam
Dance
Over the rim.
He looks deep into it,
As if some old love were
Near the bottom
Where
The old grounds lay,
Like black sand.

II

Carefully
Stirring gently
Deeply
The gleaming spoon
Brings up
The grounds.
He searches for her
In the oily darkness
Some face,
A body smooth.

III

He drank slowly
Tilting the cup up
Looking hard,
Into the darkness
Seeing the bottom
Flat and white
And empty reminder
A body smooth.

IV

He looks up at me
Sadness bright
He knows I know.

DAVID MEANS

Hopeless Last Gestures

Mother, father, wall
Of household barren tortures
Small of the backfield
Burned out orchards
God rang the doorbell
In movement of fire
The brush of wilderness
Of internal desire
Sealed into the past:
Mistakes scalding
Hopeless gestures
Motion in pictures
Of last minute changes:
Papers and letters
Changed over in hours
Looking at children
In positions of power
Oh-lack luster loving
Of slow motion sickness
The pertinent limits
Of calculated changes
That splatter on life
Like broken down marriage
Printed in ink
On empty dark pages
Society jumping
Little short fences
Motion motion of
Helpless last gestures.

DAVID MEANS



Leigh Calmar / A Picnic in the Woods

Robert's Coffee

Robert
Took his coffee dark
Black
and stirred it with his little
Finger
all the plastic spoons were
Gone.

He bit into the styrofoam cup
Leaving behind indentations
Of his teeth
inside and outside
the rim.

that is all he left
all we have of him.

DAVID MEANS

**written at an opening reading
St. Clement's November 1, 1982**

do you
I think yes
the red is really
fine much better
than the white
they had here
last week
don't you
belong to the writer's union
would you like to
sign our
reading
mailing
talking
drinking
list?

MARY NEAGOY

Athene / Minerva

I never believed
in the self-made man
the boot-strap yank
you know
perhaps because
I wore sneakers
instead of boots.

have you ever tried
to pull yourself up
by the shoelaces?
I stumbled then

you burst forth armed
and ready
steady and patient
to teach me that
bows bend

that truth
is more on target.

MARY NEAGOY



Robin Telerico / Hyde Park, London

watching her washing up

woman
hysterically scrubbing
her face
her teeth
rubbing
the soap from
her eyes
trying
to clean up
the dirt of
her life

it's over
we're finished
I mean it she said
crying
I watched her
washing him
away.

MARY NEAGOY



Teri Andos

Guttering out

Plunging beams splintered in the crystal frost
a clear night's moon gains entrance
Marking where our hands laid on the window pane
have bade the frost reclaim its own

The forms remain
gone cold as the tea
and the place where we lay

I'm left alone to tend the fire
banking coals that long yet to rage
We did but make a small difference in the chill
but I think it was enough.

IAN HARTRICK

The River

Have I not thrown stones from bank to bank
that distance the substance of my strength
But then you took our flowers
cast in
on the swollen pool before the dam
and we were carried apart

That judgement was proven right in time
yellow then are the petals of error

Long wilted is that bloom
Long frosted that spring
Always true the seed.
Dandelions demanding repentance for my presumption.

IAN HARTRICK

The Seventh Summer (fencerows)

The early spring pleasure of having known these days
grows dark
as oak leaves in late summer
and there are late day shadows cast
no matter how strong the sun
this time waits for a finish

My work stands
posts and rails to set off
mine from all else
but it stands to mark me as a builder by eye
judging sometimes on weak evidence
and it is indeed a chore to set right mistakes
fencing out my errors.

I built you out
So I could eye you uncaring
knowing that to be a section finished
a summer promise lost
one need not wonder why the straightness is gone.
that laid by such an uncertain measure
Is hard pressed not to wander

IAN HARTRICK



John Eaton / Self Portrait No. 9

Nachtmusik I

in love
with strangeness
i gather smoky dusk about me
and go

where
there is
a dry thicket of high grass
by this old brown
road

in it
and autumn evening
i sit with crickets
that like a thousand elf doors
creak open
and shut
and wait

for
the pumpkin
headed one will come
his thinness into gaping death
with red spark eyes
and scraped

stars
will watch
what he may do
to me

and as
distant yellow windows
of an old farm on a hill
will wink

he
may clutch me
to his scratchy self
string and fiddle my gut
with his moon bow to hatch me
to the endless winking farm
the field of yellow stars
in one
song

consummation

consume me
skeleton human
love is not
enough

GLENN BECKER

Nachtmusik II: Urlicht

The lamp
outside your door
tilts. Two fans
of yellowed light
spread up, and
down, and
out.

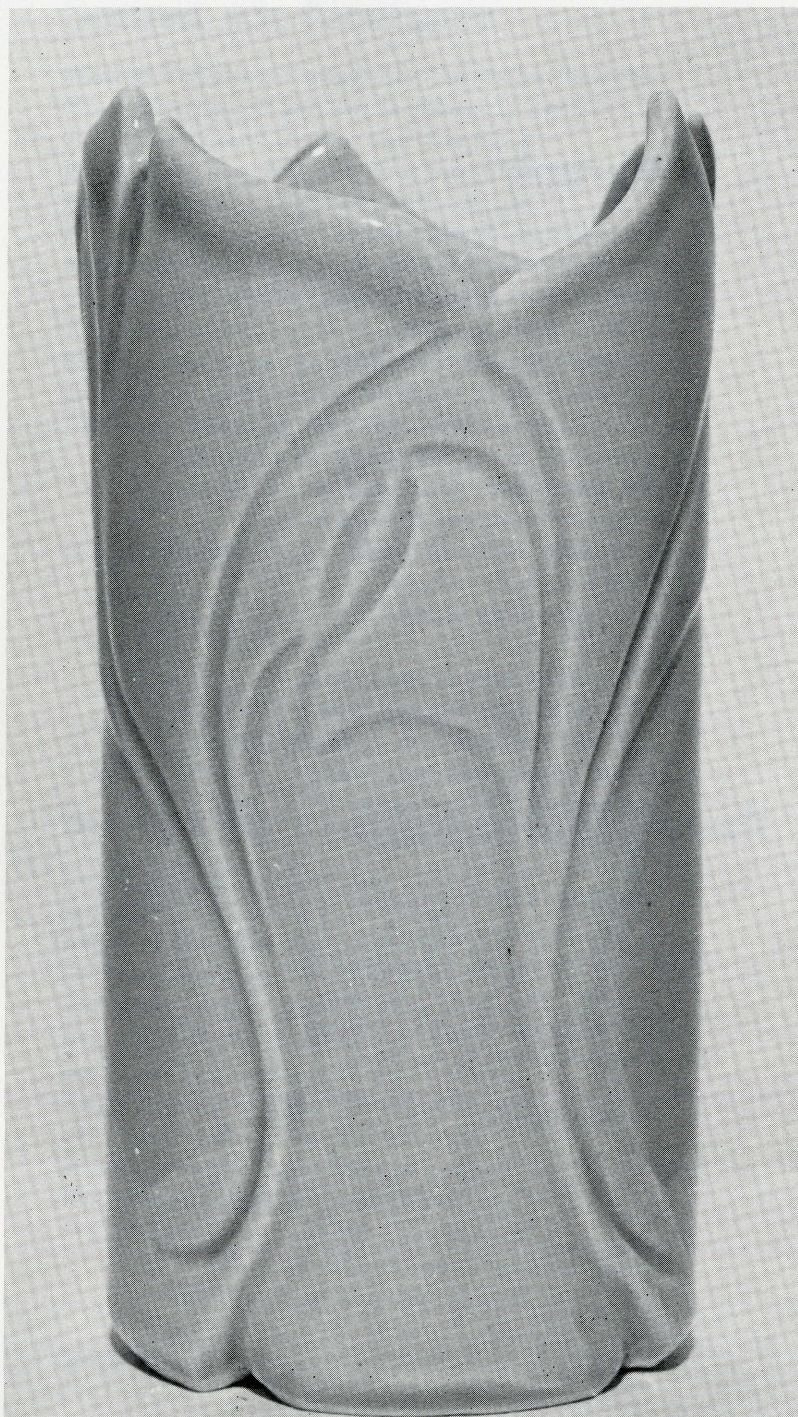
Since
it is night
I might tilt myself
to force the iron lamp
and fans of light
to stand straight
up.

I make
the universe lean
by leaning; the only
upright thing in all
this hill is the lamp
and its twin fans
of yellow
light.

So
inescapably
strange

we
go
inside.

GLENN BECKER



Heidi Hais / Vase

Shrunk

The faces of my scarecrows
are sold in every store;
and one sticks up on Calvary Hill
another nothing more
than you in hand with Eros
and knocking at my door.

One hung above the mantel
the other night, and stared
with paper eye and told me how
one, once, had truly cared;
I cut it with the scissors
and ran, a little scared.

One stopped me on the corner
when midnight dropped intent,
and told me then with cornhusk tongue
where all his tears were spent;
but I could find no reason
for another mind, unpent.

The face inside my mirror
is the only one I have.
I'll throw out all the scarecrows
but the one I'm born to save,
and we'll survive the plummet
to a scarecrow in the grave.

GLENN BECKER

Sonnet #3: Nocturne

Masked Pan flows through the bushes by the lane;
His dusk seeps up and swirls about my knees,
And owls expand. I stop, and step again
When night has sewn the stars into the trees.
And hooded Pan, gigantic, burns beside
A creek that tunnels crooked through the wood:
Now night has burst day's blue and bitter hide,
I reach and snatch away his sequined hood.
The moon is like a grin: Pan's grin awhile
Floats moonlike in the gloom with eyes like coals,
Cupped orange between the horns of goaty smile:
Pan-man, Man-pan. I am the swelling owls!
I step, and stop. Pan crawls into a tree,
And I am left to feed on dawn, and me.

GLENN BECKER

Sonnet #5: Cosmological Farewell

Like spiral galaxies that flee, and bend
Beyond the awful hands of Gravity,
We reach the silent subatomic end
Of Force that once attracted you to me.
The Cosmic Egg exploded when we met,
And lit the dome of Spacetime with a shout;
Bare stars now whisper of a naked debt:
Elastic Space has tolled the Big Bang out.
The constellations lean across the sky
In brittle matrix; everyone can read
The bitter message scrawled in nebulae,
The Answer to our Riddle: Love is dead!
For God, in sowing us down Space, unfurled
A microcosm of His macroworld.

GLENN BECKER



thistle
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