

THE MIRE 1987



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THE MIRE

fall 1987



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Anna W. Grant

Armor

The gilded barons of Wall Street
Play "hide and seek" in Switzerland.
- Mark Seifred



Balloons

Balloons are such evasive things
just when you think you have one,
'Pinch me' it squeals and turns and runs
to taunt and daunt and fly on

They bear their souls transparent all,
just when you think you see them,
They pop and burst and disappear
deceiving the most winsome.

So it is with one's true love elusive as the wind
just when you think you've caught and trapped it
it's up and gone again

Flying high or flying low
you're never really sure
If it's the wind that's laughing
after your pursuit of her

the Winds

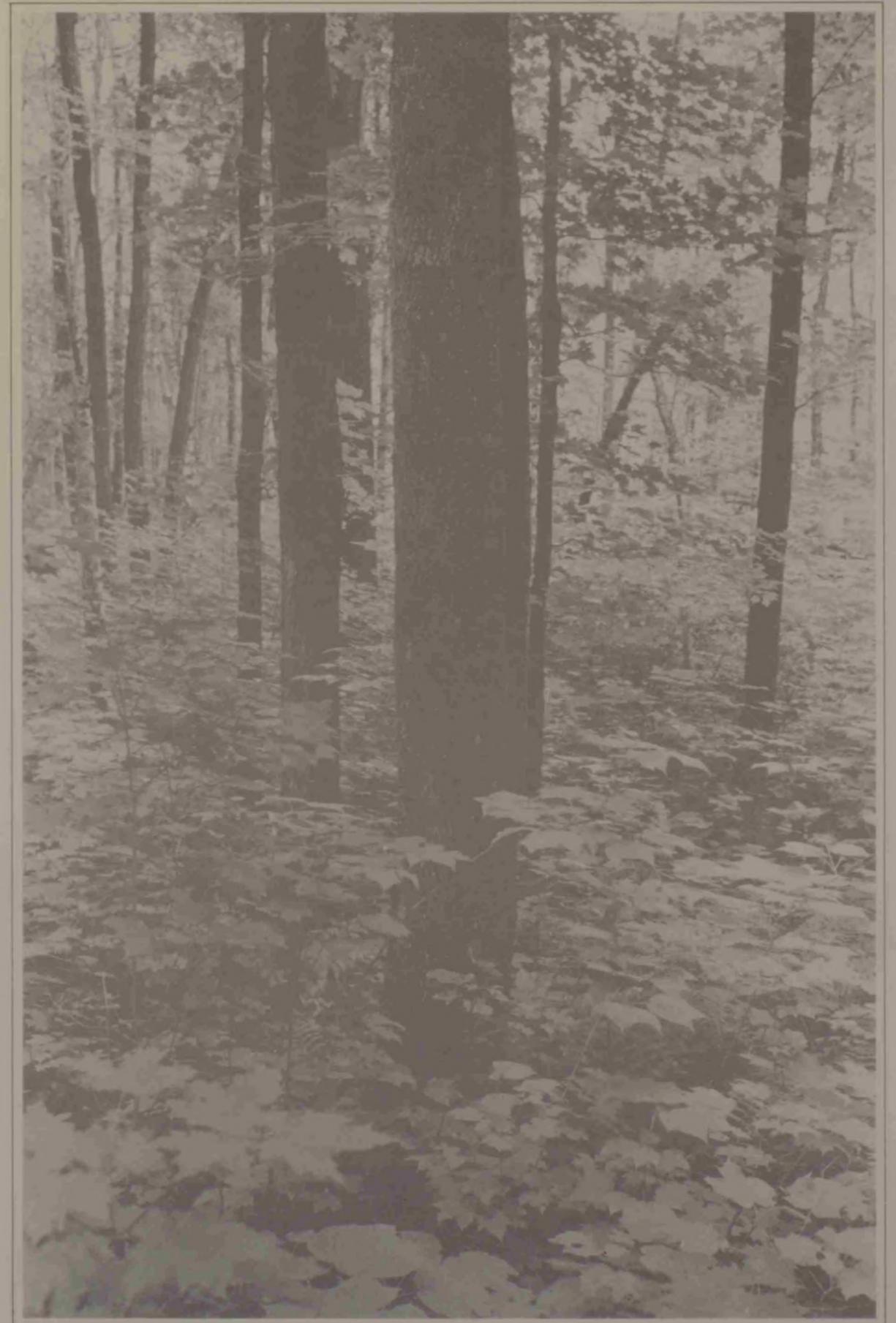
The winds are roaring, like
a lion's roar
against my window.

Only sleep — like
an owl, toss and turn and
soon learn it is no use, but
to stare at the wall in
my rumpled bed and count 1 sheep, 2 sheep
through my head.

Sparrows

One by one
the sparrows
swoop in and collect
in the top branches
of the tree.
Across the courtyard
drying laundry flutters translucent
in the fading light.
Most of the shutters
are already closed.
The guttural cries
of the old men
playing pétanques
drift up on the breeze.
And suddenly
two thousand sparrows
rise against the sky
in a mass of flapping black.

— Alix Kroger



Memo:

to the theater manager from an angry popcorn vendor

While you were in
The projectionist's booth

I stole the keys to your office,
Broke down the door,

Burned all your posters,
Catalogues, schedules

Filled in two hundred order forms for
"Attack of the Killer Tomatoes".

Later, when the movie had ended
And everyone else had gone home

I went back to the theater
And saw you staring

At an endless square of white
Flickering against a blank wall.

- Alix Kroger



Doctor's Dream Hotel

Tired of all those potholes that trip my
wand'ring soul

In a cold and hungry version of Hooker's
Dusty Road

Those words "my time it isn't long," precious
as an old gold watch and chain,

help me sing above the hecklers who
don't even ask my name.

Drunken fools with wives who bore them, late nights spend beside
their beers

Never carin', never sharin' their cries, smiles, or fears.

Yet when the night time slips away into an early morning fog,
they'll pick up pieces of scattered Sundays and wish they could belong.

(A friend once said, "You are a wasteland," his country he held dear.)

I'll drive home to the rhythm of Earnest's
Opry Show,

those markers fly by like minus signs with
fifty miles to go.

Can't wait to share a dream or three, or
some soft-said lullaby,

to move my darlin', sweet and low,
beneath my loving sighs.

- David Jackson

It's snowing

It's snowing, it's snowing
Feel the fluffy flakes like feathers flowing
It's snowing, it's snowing
We simply can't resist a little snowball throwing

It's quiet everywhere, it makes us feel much more at ease
We thank God for His beauty; He can melt what He can freeze

It's snowing, it's snowing
Hey, crazy carpet, where do you think you're going
It's snowing, it's snowing
My toes are cold as ice and now my nose needs blowing

There's a fire in the hearth, hot chocolate in the cup
Did someone ask for cookies? Yes, they're coming right up

It's snowing, it's snowing
See those long-footed beings the mountain line is towing
It's snowing, it's snowing
Equipment's getting dearer, yet the crowd is growing

The world is white with wonder, it looks so clean and pure
If we doubted our Creator, we should know He's here for sure

It's snowing, it's snowing
Dad's thinking while the children's cheery faces are glowing
It's snowing, it's snowing
Will I make it out the driveway, there's no way of knowing

Somewhere in the distance, the music blares then fades
As people swirl in circles on pairs of single blades

It's snowing, it's snowing
What a lovely season Father Frost is showing
It's snowing, it's snowing
(And if you don't like winter...)
Think of all the grass we get out of mowing.

-Sharon Sorensen

Becoming Wise

I asked the gods: Why did you bring
This man to my door? Suffer more
Suffer more suffer more.
Loneliness is a jealous husband,
Almost impossible to desert.
That's why vows I took
Having decided to priestess be
Serve forever Lord Solitude
Without so much as crying gee.

And it was so, till this man
Appears knocking on my door.

Up I went full of hopes
The Jealous One try to discard
But he, old player, allows not me
Coming down my track
Charging on, he says:
Better off with me girl
Iron bound than with this other
All around.
Thus dear folks back I went
With my lord.

And if you can learn from me:
Better alone than alone with me.



Reclassified Classic

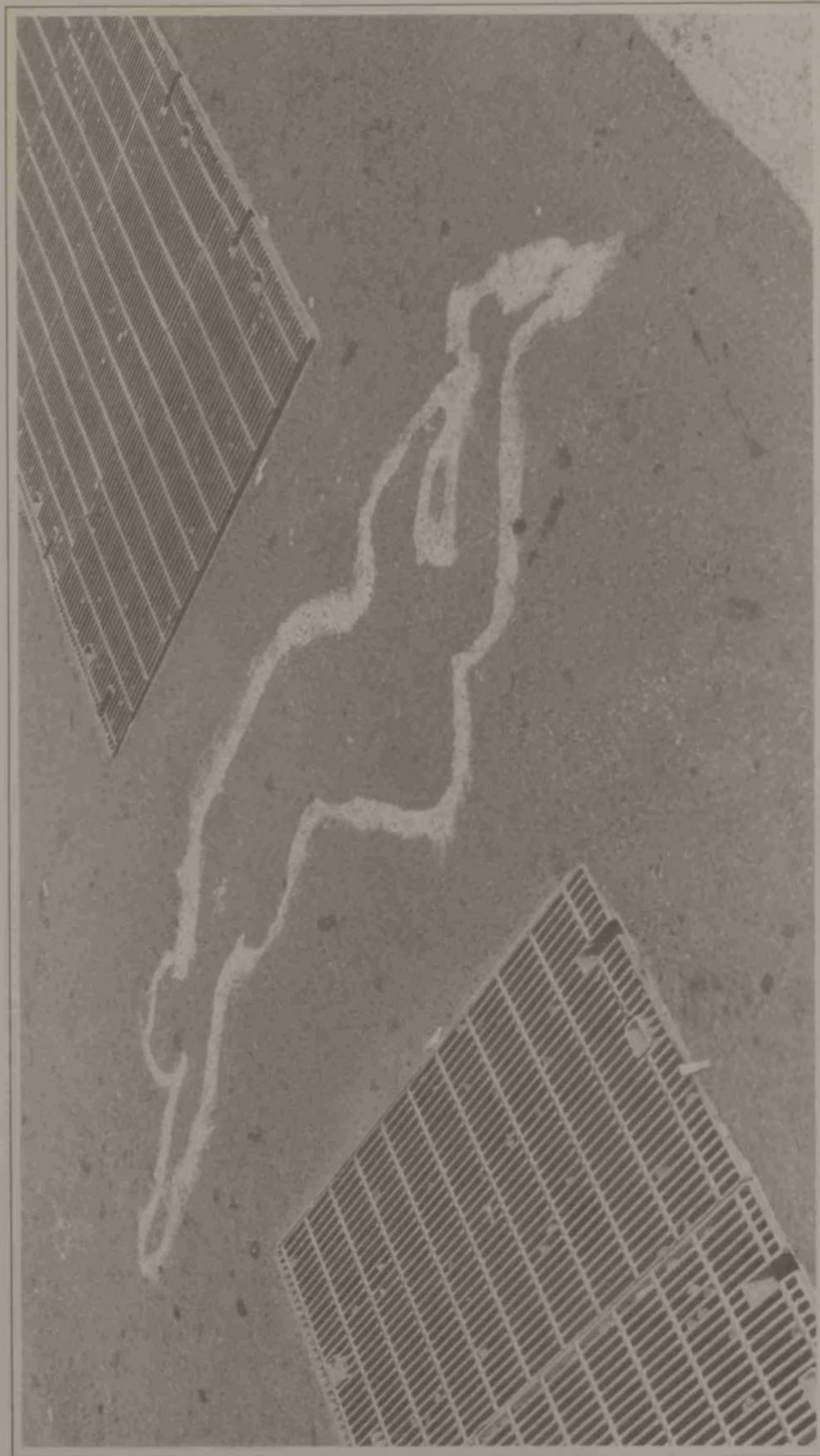
Make haste, choral yeomen,
To the hall of descant,
To hear a fine woeman
Make love to an ant.

With bells on his feelers
And she drumming her breasts,
They drowned out church peelers
And La Fontaine's jests.

While the Grimm Brothers ranted
And Mother Goose became wan,
Shrewd Aesop hotly panted,
Citing Leda and Swan:

'Tis a contemporary fable
In modern free verse.
By making metre more stable
She's confounded Zeus' curse.

- David Jackson



Dramatic Irony

"What is the difference
Between this department and an anthill?"
Asked the tearful coed.

"In one the ants are prettier,
In the other more persevering,"
Replied the prof with a sniff.

"But you DO tend to over-dramatize things!"
Said he, scarcely stiffling a yawn,
As he plucked off her legs

And ground her into the dust.

- David Jackson

miscellaneous

Rain tinkling on a tin roof
Clothes hung on ceiling beams
Still holding the mold of our bodies.

- Christine Hopps

The warmth I feel at your
sight,
Is like fireglow on a cold,
dark night.

- Sharon Sorensen



Looking through the Window

I sit and stare into another world
Listening to a lifeless troubadour
Trees brown with decay
Fighting against extinction
I see the source of life suffering a painful death
And reborn as an emissary of Death, Destruction and Annihilation
I see no life but mine for I have come
To accept the presence of the Furies
Green land broken down into Grey Blocks
I see a heaven darkened with discontent and
Sadness. They call spring.



The Days and Ways of Meadowland

He wafts around Mother Cow; he is the day and ere long will have trampled the grass and Lochs lee of the mountain with his heat, the soft lilted heat brought noiselessly, lolling over daisies made bright by the sun, clouting birds to sing high aloft in the young green of the trees.

Mother Cow lies and watches the cars drift by. The gleam from the union of sun and steel marks their procession like banners. But there are no drums in this procession, just the movement of tires. Mother Cow watches lazily. Beside her another cow, equally touched by day, chews an invisible curd.

Over the hill comes Jebadiah Crowley, chewing a stalk of grass. His tall lanky legs reach barely to the ground; his cocked head surveys a horizon curiously tilted. A farmer, this Jebadiah Crowley, complete with wooden shoes and smelling of the processed end of grass and meal. He walks slowly towards the fields, gazing, wandering, meandering, making no fuss of time at all.

Jebadiah's denim blue makes sharp contrast to the thalo of the sky, holding, as it does, its own over a visual cacophony of green and ochre spattered violently with black-eyed susans. A white picket fence outlines in the distance the square of land Jebadiah calls his home, next to which stands an old, pre-dawn barn, as neolithic as its architects.

Mother Cow twitches as a fly alights on her lower lid. Her tail swats at the air, alive with the smell of summer heat seasoned with the odor of distant lakes lapping on some distant shore.

Jebadiah surveys the steaks so curiously alive, his jaw working to some unsung rhythm at the stalk of grass. His arms akimbo when his glass-eyed stare fixes quickly on Mother Cow as she awkwardly remains quite still. Jebadiah thinks — still taciturn — and though better steak might burn, none will set hoof on his field. And soon Mother Cow is a crisp, blackened beast sitting quietly next to a jar of pickles and a plate of sauce, lowing one last time behind Jebadiah's belt in an exercise of digestion. But the image fades and she is once more a cow, the Mother Cow, the lowing, lolling, lazy, listless lump of seven ninety-five a pound.

The wind takes up the unsung rhythm and in her own way sings the day in a song of her own making. Built of notes combining the chirp of birds, the whistling grass (or perhaps the roll of tires), the quiet heat and the lapping lakes on leeward side, by the mountain rill, the song beats hammer on anvil in the earth-caked ears of Jebadiah Crowley who silent, gives consent.

The heat on cricket's backs has changed their sounds to silence and the cars roll to and fro on the blackened tar, watched from Crowley's field by Mother Cow. And so it goes from dawn to dusk, the wind wafts her heated musk about the fields till day shrinks back along the sky and night curls about the bottoms of trees and rises like smoke from groundhog holes.

Night cultivates his shade on the darkening greens and sombre hues that now exude a different mood. He crawls from divets in the sod and from under stones and river rocks; he darkens the depths of distant lakes and melts the shore and the water into one color, when eight hours in twenty-four the lake stills beside the shore.

But Day will not be outdone, and Mother Cow admires the palatte as she paints the sky in rhapsody. A library of color coats the once green trees who soon will stand black against a red horizon. The wind quits her single song and plays the end of day with the crickets and the trees.

Mother Cow gathers herself to one standing mass and wanders over the field towards home. The darkened wind is laid to rest and the trees no longer sway.

The sound of night: the vacant song, is lost to all but Jebadiah Crowley who works his fingers to the bone in the intense quiet of the darkness behind his eye. He thinks feverishly about the coming of the day when Mother Cow will roll away, shorn of limbs to call her own and bloodless as a cricket's leg. He thinks of meat, a fine treat for one so lorn and lonesome as himself. Oh, Jebadiah works his mind thus every time he effects a cow's transmigration. But this is Mother Cow, he thinks, the cow that bore him seven more, that filled his barn and ate the store in feeding children and relations, yet furnished him with evening meals twice before.

The crickets sing the man to sleep and Night unlocks his jailer's keep now brightening under a growing sun. Day's shimmering spears launch endlessly and upwards from the distant mountain ridge. And Night shrinks back against the sky, the day infusing her blend of colors into his blackened face: a band of blue resting on the horizon marks the border 'tween night and day. Night forms his final front and resolves himself in a flourish of light. His gentle tears of slow retreat rest silently as dew on the stalks of grass and flower's leaves, soon given up to growing heat.

Day resumes her age-old task and wafts about the resting cows. But she cannot greet the Mother Cow as Mother Cow is lost to Day and all the days and ways of life in fields and downs. The cars drift slowly past, as cars are apt to do, and the wind picks up the unsung song so gloriously long in the heat of days. And she wafts in and among the trees, now colored brightly green, and plays among the leaves and then silently to the field to graze on time left forgotten now by Mother Cow.

Now Jebadiah Crowley soundly sleeps the day away and plays with hazy images of geisha girls and bottled rum and sea-tough sailors and a far-away land where the shore surrounds the sea in a tropical mountain valley. His world is always bright with day and color washes clean the turbid trees and sands and sea. And when he wakes his world will be all fields and cattle-cakes and downed with snowy, heated flakes of days gone by and dimly-lit saloons in snatches of memory.

And when he wakes, he will find the cars come to and rolling fro, the cows grazing on grass grown sweet with the taste of dew, the rolling of the tires on the blackened road, and the settling heat grown heavy with the taste of time.

The Day tramples down the grasses that surround the Lochs lee of the mountain rill and peels the dew from the ground. And the crickets, taking up their part in the song of the wind, provide a reference for the unsung rhythm that fills the days and ways of meadowland.

-Stephen Harris

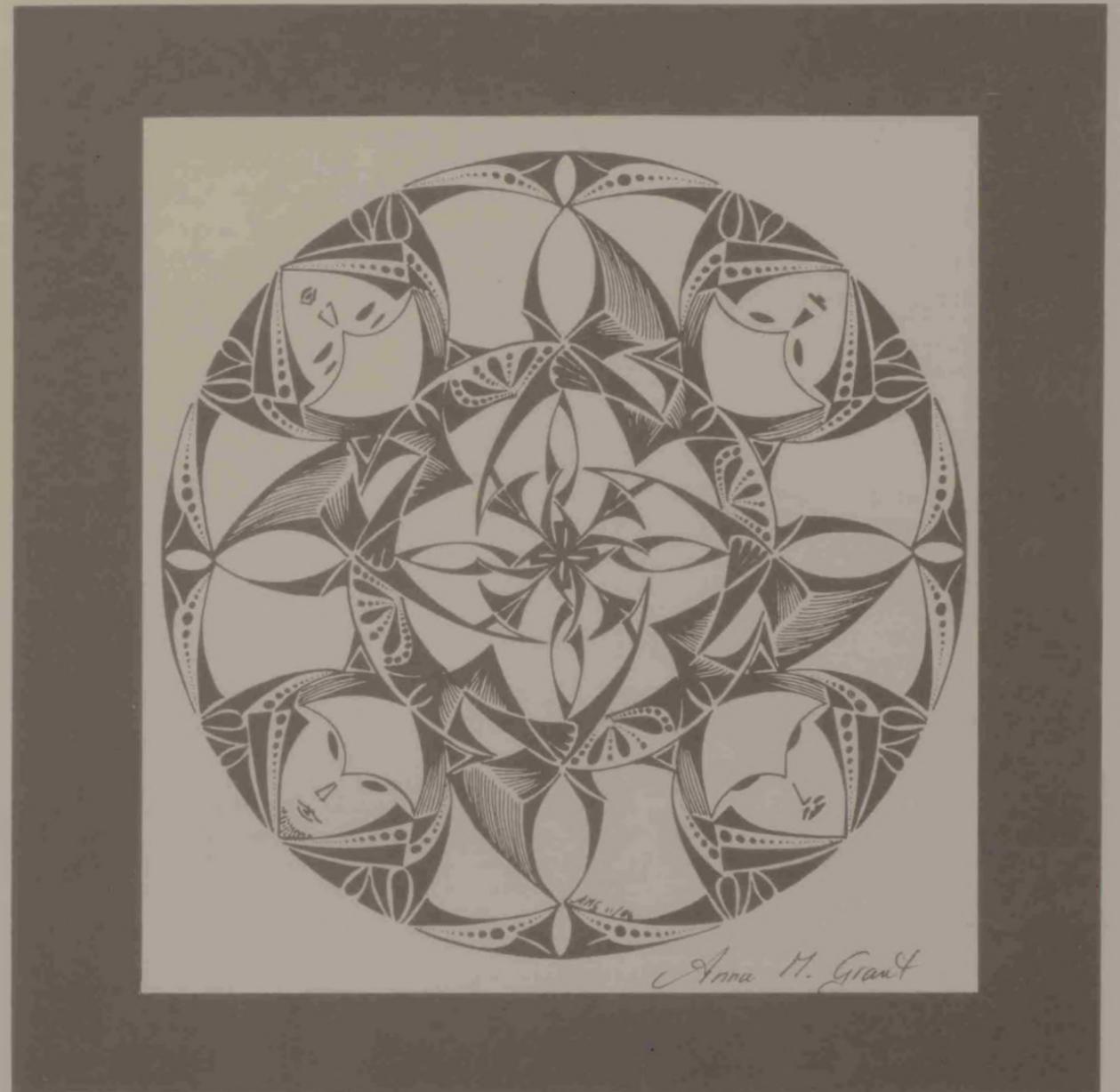


CRUNCH

(with apologies to Daniel)

The stranded Odysseus carved
An image of his fondest heart:
Her head was of fine gold,
Her breasts and arms of silver,
Her belly and thighs of brass,
Her legs of wrought iron,
And about her leaden feet
Crawled men of clay.

- David Jackson



JUMP

We came down out of the mountains in a small crumpled car, Paul and I. Down out of the mountains, down a falling road towards the sea-coast and the town barely hanging on to it. I was tired and the day-air was filled with humidity. I was tired, almost nodding off behind the wheel. Paul was wide awake — why was I driving? Crazy awake, Paul kept turning up the radio every time a song he liked came on, which was every time, so soon we were blasted by one bleating hit after another. Still, I felt myself fade out three or four times on the way down — just barely pulling myself awake again, seconds from missing a curve or plowing into a geared-down truck ahead.

"Why am I doing this? You should drive."

Paul lit another cigarette, yelled back, "Fuckin' I can't drive — I'm drunk!" He started screaming, "DRINK WINE SPODEODE! DRINK WINE SPODEODE!" The song on the radio was, of course, "Havin' My Baby." These things I remember, too ugly to forget.

"Pass this fuckin' truck, man!"

"Shut up!"

"You shut up!" Paul sat back, seeming proud.

"What a fuckin' brilliant comeback, asshole —"

"Pass the fuck — fuck — pass the fucking truck!"

I braked a bit. My, I'm witty when I want to be.

Paul looked in the rear-view mirror on his side and turned to me, face all serious and decisive. "They're behind us, man."

Cheech and Chong; I glanced in my mirror. Another trailer-truck, sliding down the mountain, was about a hundred yards behind us.

"You're a fuckin' goof!"

"I have a plan." Paul took his half-smoked cigarette, looked at it, and dropped it onto the road behind where it sat, visibly glowing. "Blow its tires out."

"You're fuckin' ignorant, Paul."

But I watched to see. In my mirror, the truck wheels rolled right over it. Nothing. Paul was massively disappointed for a few seconds, all down-cast, and muttered (inaudible to me through "Climb Every Mountain") something to himself. I looked right at him as he looked up. Then he yelled: "Shit!"

I looked ahead; the truck in front had stopped.

Oh, God Almighty — about ten feet, at fifty. I threw the wheel over; car blundering across the line, screaming tires.

There was an on-coming truck.

"FUCKIN' GOD-DAMN!" and I, can't say I know why, hit the gas to the floor. I started yelling unintelligibly, my mind trapped, locked with terror, my hands and my feet looking after their own survival. With a weaving, panicky burst of speed the car shot diagonally between the two bumpers, maybe grazing the fender of the stopped truck.

A huge noise filled my head. I was thinking, "Am I dead — I can't see — what!?" Suddenly we were going fast down a steep, curving dirt road; barely attached to the earth, I, thank God, slowly braked and we stopped at the foot of the mountain by a running stream. Up above, on the highway,

sat that mother fucker stopped truck. A commercial screamed from the radio, and I tore at the dial trying to turn it off. I think I yelled, "SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!"

Then I remembered: turn off the car. I did. It stopped.

I looked at Paul. His door was open; his seat empty. I was about to yell again when I saw him — or at least his feet. He was kneeling on the road-edge, throwing up — so hard he shook and shook. Between heavens he'd yell, "Oh God Oh God Oh God," his voice slack with passed terror, present dis-belief. Oh God Oh God Oh God.

A logging road — the cliff everywhere else, hundreds of feet, and we hit a logging road. Isn't that fucking amazing?

I got out, rather fell out the door of the car and sat, knees hunched under my chin on the gravel. Smooth, damp ground, and cool. The little stream, audible; a bird flew over, wings fanning the air in time with my heart. There was bright light in that spot: unimpeded sun. Paul heaved uncontrollably. "Fuck — Oh God Oh God Oh God."

Once I drove the wrong way on a busy street and just beat the on-coming traffic to the corner. Paul was with me then, too, but that time he'd laughed — said, "Do it again!" while I cursed him and everything and drove very slowly home. Inconsistent guy. I guess I had been drunker that time. Younger too.

Once, a guy jumped out of a burning B-17 over Germany. 40,000 feet and no parachute — and he lived! I read that somewhere, and it comes to me whenever I think of that logging road. Landed in a pine forest covered with snow — broke his fall and also his arm. No one believed it at the time. Wierd. I thought of it then, too, if I remember. Probably I'm just putting dreams into memories, augmenting past reality. I know something: some thought like that crossed my mind, calmed me as I sat hunched there listening to Paul throw up.

He stopped, after a time. I could hear him sobbing; little catches of breath. But I couldn't move, not yet.

I felt warm, sort of a "part", you know? I kept looking at that stopped truck, that logging road; the truck was small and far away. Everything was. Paul crawled around the front of the car and, still shaking, sat against the front wheel hyperventilating and wiping his face with the sleeve of his shirt.

We sat there a long time, the two of us. I didn't know what to say. Some things can never be more than unarticulated thoughts, unknown but understood codes. I still can't figure myself out — what or how I did anything after that.

I don't know how long it was, but it eventually seemed correct to get up.

"I should check the car — dents — borrowed car," I said.

Paul said nothing.

I felt drunk. You know how sometimes when you're drunk, one specific item or action becomes It — everything — and you've got to change It, study It, just do It. Yeah. Dents.

On the right side wheel-rim there was a small but noticeable scratch. I looked at it a while, then decided I'd better look at it more closely. I got down on my knees before it, my hands spastic. With irregular, unsure movements I touched and touched that scratch, my eye enveloping every detail of it. Ridiculous, right? Little flecks of red paint came off onto my finger. The silver metal exposed was like a smile. "The car is smiling;" Stupid thoughts.

Paul lurched up behind me. "Bad ?"

"Just a scratch."

"Uhhh — let's — let's get away — from here."

I felt insulted — I can't describe — right near his feet was some of his sick. I looked at the scratch one last time, then at him. "Are you alright ?"

"Yeah. Let's go."

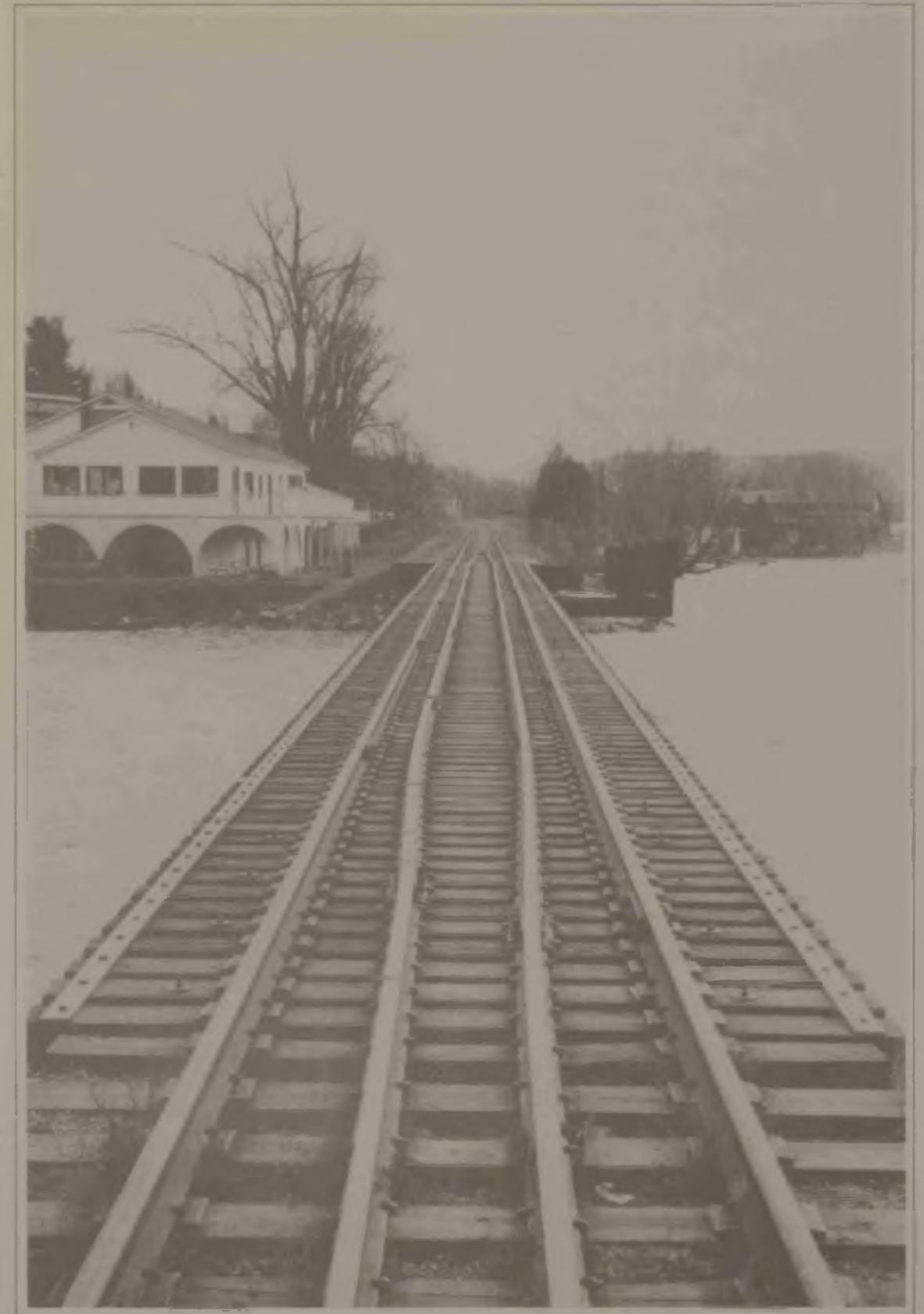
We had been going into town for more beer; can you believe it ? Amazing. So of course, I didn't know what to do next.

"To town ?"

"Okay."

In town, we sat on the beach for a while, Paul still pale and shaking and me, I guess, the same. I don't remember how I looked or thought I looked. We wore sunglasses and no shoes and ignored everyone else on the beach. In the evening we drove back, very slowly, high up into the mountains where people were waiting and worrying about us, with a case of beer and a good story, Paul and I.

- Jeoff S. Bull



Fool's Gold

The face of the moon, glowing in all her splendor suddenly and without warning, began to contort as if trying to speak.

To the stars beyond, only a whisper was heard. To the millions of souls, gathered in fear, thunderous vowels of praise shook the floor of the planet.

Only the children survived that day and the age is now a forgotten myth.

"Sun and moon, and you and the moon, and sons of gods we've all become ..."--- he tried in every way to decipher the recipe. Choking with anger, he burned the book.

They found him on the edge of town baying at the lunar crescent, digging holes in the ground.



POSTSCRIPT

The names of many of the contributors to this year's edition were not available to us. As a result, their submissions have remained anonymous. Nevertheless, we would like to thank all those whose work composes "The Mitre". We must also apologize for the inconvenience.

-the editors

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

