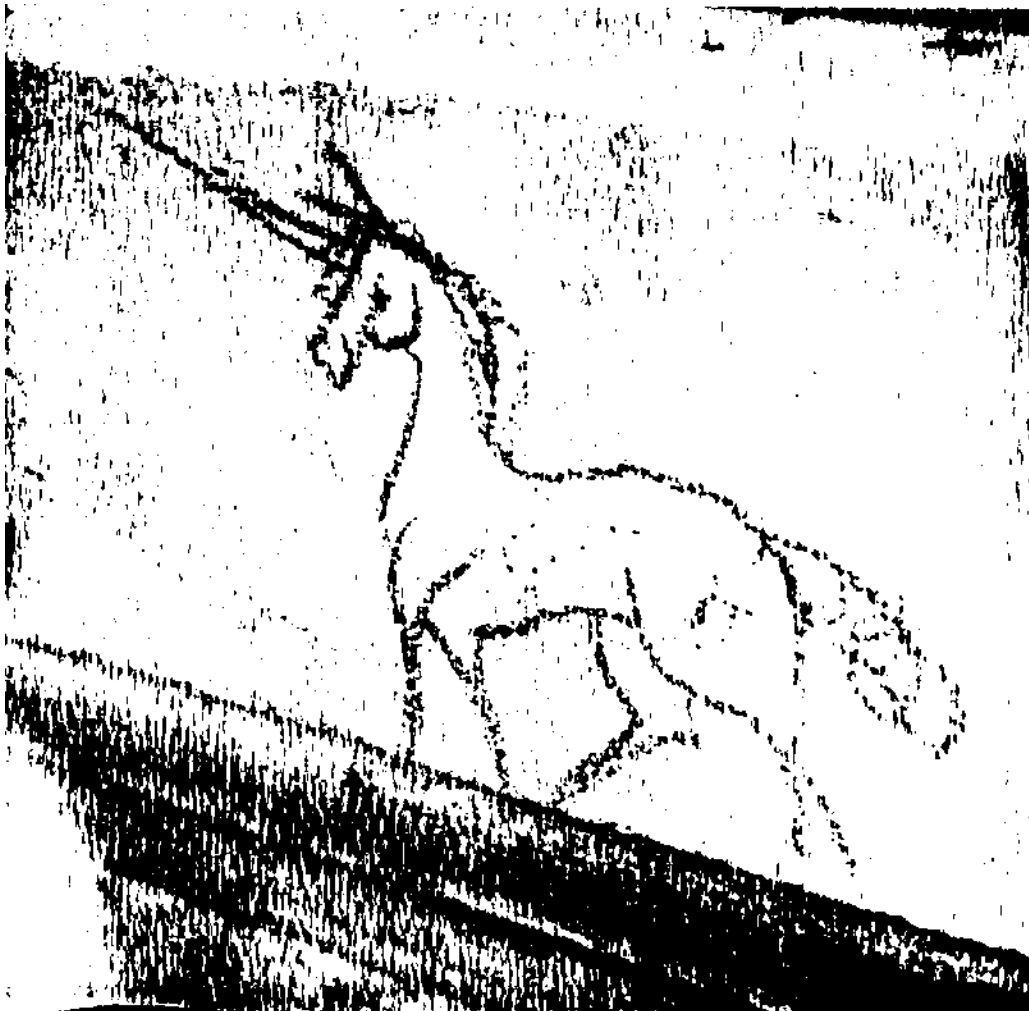


# unicorn





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## Excerpt From a Work in Progress

by Jesse Glass, Jr.

THERE IS THIS HUGE PLACE where I get my words. Like a spooky supermarket out in the middle of the stars or a belfry infested w/ poltergeists I slice in there opening boxes like a mad Pandora. I find glittering rocks I find animal bones I find whistles inside. Sometimes I creak open a lid & find the bloodless parts of people. I snap them together & set them spinning -- pow! I then have a dramatic scene--a memory. I line these boxes up w/ my eyes closed searching for news in old brailled newspapers while I hear the contents of these boxes escape: micefeet ratfeet sailor's footsteps across the attic & down steps to become life again. Memories like rings of granite suspended by spiderwebs from planets. Scenes happen like ditto marks in pulsating brain-jelly. Some are shaped like Christmas balls, glowing & tinkling in the winds of plasmic life. They twist themselves out of dreams & become lost Christmasses & hollywood dreambabes found & recaptured by the fleshy nets of future dreamers/lovers.

On an off day,  
the editor mixed up the obituaries  
with the shipping notices.  
Which put Ethel  
(loving mother and daughter)  
bound for Oslo of Bremen,  
suddenly.

---Mike Reis

### **Primer**

I ate the soup, I ate the crow,  
I ate the whey and curds,  
I even ate the syllables that festered  
in your words.

I've buttered up your relatives--  
there's sauce in every cell.  
And when you toddle home from school,  
I'll butter you as well!

---Mike Reis

## Long Distance

fatal mistake, opening the  
live wire telephone box  
to program some anonymous  
operator to drop me into  
your evening.

memories falling like B-52  
bombs, raining death above  
the settled, gapped space  
between us, while my open,  
sweaty palm throttles a  
2.50 ticket to your voice  
for fourteen minutes.

everything is counted, planned,  
delivered, destroyed: on target.  
seconds have dimension, the  
mouthpiece holes enlarge to  
swallow me, while flames ignite  
the dry rotting grassland  
planted since you left,  
a path from here to Philly,  
as i fall out, a walking  
corpse, shellshock casualty,  
waiting for the night to  
embalm my dreams.

---nancy k. barry



## **Ravenna Memento**

I once saw a pile of square stones by the side  
of a street.  
I have one of them now, at the end of some  
books.  
All I keep thinking is that they will never  
put that street together again.  
And the workmen keep wondering and profaning  
their mason,  
As people keep stealing their stones.

---D. R. Belz

When my son broke the plow  
    'Few years ago,  
His mother cried and I went to the show,  
    to escape the torrent;  
He and I were bonded then  
By our indifference and because we're men.

When our boy returned home  
    'Few days ago,  
His mother cried and I just didn't know  
    to cry or swear  
Cause our boy is no longer here  
Our glow is splintered still  
But I don't care...

---Kathleen Burke

## **Mounted**

The bird that from the front wall stares  
is a Madagascan cockatoo  
which I acquired through  
the trade of a zebra head  
to a sweet, young thing--  
a consul's daughter in Ste. Marie,  
long since shot dead  
in the revolution.

---Mike Reis

## **Crosshatched Buddha**

A chess piece undefined  
The movement of the hand  
Conflicts battling the defense in offense  
Knights and castles force queens to labor  
A draw, no mate  
A buddha in relief

---Tom Gamache

## **Flying the Friendly Skies**

Strapped in, legs braced for the crash,  
I begin the long and endless search for bombs,  
the plot behind the Foster Grants.

The stewardess flashes a comforting grin  
save for that piece of her snack's black olive  
trapped between her two front teeth.

She seals the foot-thick door  
and as we rise, I watch our shadow bailing out,  
a gunfight raging in both my ears.

Icarus, poor lad, never had a Captain Jack  
whose reassuring voice gets lost  
in the steady suck of air and musak.

We lurch to the right  
and even Black Olive loses her balance,  
dropping a leftover cellophane sandwich.

I'll bet a body from this height would splat  
and ooze like real-egg mayonnaise.  
Two seats back some lady vomits.

Time for one more drink,  
I stuff my last words in small bottles.

---Bruce Guernsey

## **Sunday Afternoon Social**

Hello  
nice to see you all  
men right for television  
ladies to left of center hall  
half-time blitz for refreshments  
kick-off positions once again  
game has ended with a tie  
such a lovely party  
Goodby

---Marjorie Pinsker

## To a Memory

I saw the world rivered  
In the salt of your eyes,  
Rivers running, rivers carrying  
Your howling madness  
Softly, noiselessly  
To the corner of your mouth mortered  
(Your mouth, let's talk of failures,  
That you your pathos to  
On rainy spring mornings feed  
Only because, unearthed, worms wiggle  
Bleeding among your cenobitic toes,  
Or, because on a sunsoaked summer morning  
You find no granola only dead lilacs  
In your playpen, your cosmos;  
A rough life) but cracked a bit,  
Barely a cleft that took the river in,  
Now only a tributary  
And your tongue,  
Licking a lizard's lick,  
Like a wind-whipped candle flame,  
Sucked the salt and silt  
Back into that river of pollution,  
That slow-Carthage of  
Yourself.  
How interesting a perfection:  
No energy loss and fed on waste.  
I saw the world ragged  
In the salt of your eyes daft  
In prayer and repentance  
And moaning, sick but calling out again  
Now in a weak yet passioned wail,  
Now in hollow mechanics,  
"Pater Noster. . ."

---Bob Smith



# **An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge**

by D. R. Belz

THE ORDER PRESCRIBED execution at dawn and the sun was now rising.

A small formation of blue clad soldiers advanced down the dirt road on the mountainside. At the bottom of the road lay the Owl Creek and its oaken bridge, veiled in mist.

The condemned man was a local planter, whose name was of no consequence to the men in the formation around him, or the sentry who took up his rifle and barked a challenge.

An officer directly in front of the hands-bound prisoner called a reply.

"It's the prisoner and escort." His baritone hit the pines lining the road and echoed back up the mountain, wavering.

The sentry turned to several officers on the bridge.

"The prisoner has arrived, sirs."

A bearded captain stepped onto one of the bridge's jutting support beams. The Owl Creek fled beneath him into a sassafras thicket.

"Sergeant, hand me the rope," he said.

An older man in faded denim gave a final tug to his handiwork, then pitched the coil and its cobra head to the captain.

The condemned man was led onto the bridge as the sun began steaming through the morning clouds, clearing the pin-topped pines. His face was blank as a chaplain mumbled a prayer at him.

One of the officers stepped up to him as the chaplain finished.

"You have been charged and found guilty under marshal law for treason against the United States and for conspiring to aid the rebels. Have you any last words?"

The planter's neck muscles tensed as he shook his head, looking at the officer's two rows of silver buttons.

"Then as sentenced you will hang by the neck until dead."

The noose was about his head. They flung the opposite end of the rope over a high beam, looping

it on the first attempt. A young sentry stepped up and coughed nervously, a potato sack and a length of cord in his hands. The captain looked at the prisoner briefly, then shook his head to the sentry. The young man backed away, his face growing pale.

The planter was prodded onto a thick board placed across the bridge beam, and a heavy set officer stood on the opposite end.

"Atten-shut!" came a sharp cry.

The captain nodded to the heavy set man.

It was a whole second before the planter felt the board fall away beneath him.

His eyes bulged and tongue shot out with an obscene heave as his neck crackled.

The young sentry staggered and vomited into the Owl Creek.

The bastard was dead. And there were no two ways about it.

[illegible]

## The Exchange

He lay straight against her,  
in their bed,  
till she made love.  
And how it hurt!  
that end of possibilities,  
that scraping too close, too fine,  
of her intentions.  
She felt her life's blood  
dam inside her,  
felt that empty muscle, her womb,  
fall upward with the flush.

Next morning,  
her dreams lay flat upon the ceiling.

"Last night, a soul was traded,"  
she sighed.  
To mark transaction,  
a ring of blood and sweat  
across her thighs.

---James Ercolano

## Halloween

By nine  
she's put her boy to bed,  
hung up the cavalry suit  
she'll send next year to a cousin,  
and checked his sack of candy  
and apples for pins or blades,  
putting the loot back with a smile,  
knowing he's safe from all  
but the dentist. 9:10,  
the wash is done,  
a four-year-old's clothes  
and her own: frayed,  
losing its shape like her:  
sagging, separated, thirty-one.  
(They'd loved and fought,  
like others they thought  
until their boy was born:  
then each wanted him,  
trying to destroy the other.)  
9:20, the phone rings,  
and hurrying from the dryer  
she grabs it on the fourth ring  
just as someone hangs up,  
the dial tone sharp in her ear.  
Depressed, wanting suddenly to talk,  
she hopes they call back.

9:32, the dryer still humming  
as the doorbell rings.  
Putting down the day's paper  
she'd been trying to finish all day,  
she looks for the last  
sacks of candy, wondering  
why kids are out so late.  
She opens the door routinely,  
as if for the cat,  
but the mask unshaven, distorted,  
is her husband's face,  
smiling faintly, almost sorry.  
Strangely, just as the knife,  
sudden and cold,  
chops into her throat,  
she remembers tomorrow's  
the day for the trash  
and drops heavily to the floor,  
shuddering in death like the dryer  
shaking finally to a stop.  
Spilled everywhere,  
the candy corn drifts  
on her blood into a corner,  
the old frame house  
having sunk with time.  
The boy, now his, sleeps well,  
with dreams of defending  
a whole wagon-train of ladies  
who look like his mother.

---Bruce Guernsey

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| U R |             |   |  |
| R   | little girl |   |  |

-But today --- with dirty paint-  
 covered hands, you brought  
 me a hand-painted basket  
 tied with a ribbon and  
 blooming with wild flowers  
 and i became a Mother

---Carolyn K. Long

## Excerpt From a Work in Progress

by Jesse Glass, Jr.

HERE IS THE DOPE on riding w/Hap & Bill (my cousin) on the circuit. Smiling in silhouette past ghostly evil chicks hanging legs bare over laundromat steps in the brown nite--waiting for pickup & beer & green hands on hot body...I & horny cousin & friend Hap would drive the great barren triangle on tragic Fri-Saturday nites--pulling dotted line from Littles-town to Hanover to Westminster & all points in between. Sipping Miller & Bud from bitter cans. Slowing down at all curbs, Hap would stick his pimpled face out the window & Hoooah! to some fresh little broads on the corner. Those wild drives when we'd stop to take a piss & throw our frustrated bottles at the billboards of analman's daughter enjoying new \$\$ products & alcohol. Town after town would zip by accompanied by the troubled erection music of "when I took that Mary-Lou out I got a good job--why she just..." or "man would I like to get that bitch of a Maggie down in the backseat & mmm mmm mmm." You understand--not a stick of truth--but we'd race the full moon till 1 o'clock doing the above odd thing. Head buzzing from beer & sex talk--I'd fall into bed & laugh it off the next day--only to repeat these Dry Runs like firedrills before the real thing.

## Nightfall, Newton & God, at Midsummer

Nightfall running black without  
the soothing spill of sundown,  
while the summer-dry branches  
ink their way into darkness,  
as snarled and tangled as a  
fishing net hauled out brimful  
with barnacles, poking me  
through my holes, as if  
to say that I'm the one whose  
knotted with this business of  
falling sky.

Is this what Newton groped at?  
What science made even him  
afraid to say: that nothing  
soars against the final  
pull, that we all must find  
a way to digest earth's  
last swallowing of day.

And I am hung between the  
inkspilled sky and ribboned  
trees. The air heats my brew,  
while this stale smoke sinks into  
the heavy breathing of summer.  
I wait for God to tell me  
that it's night by lighting  
stars, but maybe he too  
is lost, somewhere.

I always knew that God  
would never really do that.  
More mechanic than magician,  
he seemed just like the  
whiffle balls that I made  
dance when young, riddled  
with holes even the smallest  
of thumbs could unclasp, just  
as he himself would let go  
the sky each night, slowly  
unscrewing the sun in a gentle,  
most unglorious disruption  
of our ballgame.

Not Newton's pull, nor  
my life's melting into  
death-stilled darkness  
could match those nightfalls;  
with my day mud-smeared,  
my brother Waldo's knee-patch  
torn once more, God was always  
there, somehow, waiting  
fistfull with lightening bugs,  
until the first dull blink  
of the streetlamps nudged us  
homeward, before sleep.

---nancy k. barry



## **Dancing at Bougival 1883**

A couple dancing  
gaily she in red  
bonnet her face

radiant with delight  
the white dress swirls  
trapping colors from

the background he,  
his face hidden behind  
a brown beard and

under a straw hat,  
holds her firmly  
as if to lift

her from the ground  
in back the faces  
oblivious to ballet

chatter while the trees above them  
join the dancers' grace  
following their line

her eye in turning  
spots a violet  
on the ground.

---Tim Davis

# Love

by Michael Reis

WHEN FIVE CAME, it found Ignatius walking in the garden. He remembered a great many things, but nothing so much as those things that were pleasing to him. He remembered the other day, in Olney. A pamply of Elizabethan drama. But he wasn't struck by the coldness of the theater, or the flowered curtain going up and down, or even the girl from Silver Spring with the mark on her arm that looked like a chancre. What moved him was the concrete disc, sunk in the ground beside the door. "Theatre cat - d. 1952" Now that was moving. Ignatius berated himself, though; He should have been struck by the girl with the chancre. A fine line of sound, anyway--a physics distinction. It was the word "chancre."

He remembered what he had read recently. An existentialist's nightmare. Bultmann's Jesus Christ and Mythology; why did he ever read that? Then there was Seven Storey Mountain. He thought about Thomas Merton and for some reason pictured him sitting on top of the world, whipping it senseless. Such a quiet man. Mild sexuality. The idea struck him that Merton might have come to the college had he not encountered that electric fan in Tibet, stepping out of the shower. He might even have met him. But the thought came to nothing, a handful of pipe dreams. He thought of the people at the retreat house and he felt a pang of conscience. It had been years since he had seen them; why had he never returned? They were all so multifaceted--like ikons, in their way. Absalom held his cruet like a watering can. And John--my God, how John could sing! He had a friend who was an anthropologist. He had an existence that was fusion, man-tool, to be used wherever use was needed. Whereas Ignatius was fission. But the more he thought, the more he liked things as they were, so that the cook's bacon face, and the pristine chapel in the morning, and Absalom on the tractor and that damned river he fell into could please him in their nothingness. Memories are always better than experiences--always. You risk baring a knife with experience; you may not be able to resheath it before it has mutilated and played havoc on you. But a memory? Ah, the knife

slips neatly, harmlessly into place. No worry of damage. Just quizzical enjoyment, like sneezing ten times in a row.

Ignatius suddenly recalled that he was expected at the refectory for dinner. Rather odd they should call it "refectory." Sounded mocking. It might have been a figure of speech--synecdoche, metonymy, refectory! Bang! Why not give the place a half-way worldly name, like "hot shop" or "cafeteria"? He caught his foot in a crack and laughed. The Naming Of Names, Priestly And Mundane. Wouldn't make a bad title. He added a postscript: What Have We Done And Where Are We Going? Beautiful"! He'd send it off to The Living Light, with all due acknowledgements, just as soon as he could fit it with an article.

There was a great commotion at dinner when Ignatius got there. Someone had dropped a heaping plate of asparagus to the floor; a spontaneous roar went up from the diners and the poor fellow had to get a broom and pan to collect the remains of his meal, swimming in Hollandaise sauce. Ignatius came in on the tailend of the laugh; it didn't present much novelty to him. He felt the tug of someone's glance, so he gave a sociable chuckle and that was that. A moment later he almost fell into a first-year man who had the raw courage to go back for seconds. "Excuse me," he said and Ignatius smiled. "That's alright. Why are you in such a hurry?" "Gee, I don't know," came the reply, "But I'm sorry." Ignatius saw the seminarian shake his head mournfully, as if to say "God, what a klutz I am." Here was the absurdity of saying anything--right here! How a little beeline of words could suddenly transform themselves into a prize claw, a big, grasping protuberance to make you feel guilty. No one ever admits that brief encounters hold any water, but then no one wants to look all naked and discontinuous in front of his friends. Commitments are everlasting and little incidents that happen each day are toothless, incapable of tearing into the meat of one's thoughts. Damn the common! We shall have no intrusions showing up to ruin us. If it only were--if it only were.

Ignatius stepped up to the rack and removed a tray. He put the tray on the bars and loaded it with utensils. He picked up a napkin and promptly thought of a mathematical game--Nim. You have three stacks of chips. You may remove any number of them on one turn, but if you take away the last chip you lose--disgracefully. You see, Nim has a system. If he plays by theory, the good player never loses; he never draws. He wins--Lord, how he wins! Opponents left and right and he wins because he has the key.

Such is Nim.

Ignatius took a piece of yellowish meat from a receptacle, snatched a roll up, along with some gravied potatoes, and sat down right underneath an imposing portrait of James Cardinal Gibbons. The wise vicar's right hand had only four fingers. Ignatius was impressed; he liked errors, especially artistic ones. Sitting under an artistic error was immensely pleasing to the soul. Pathos, Bathos, Aramis and D'Artagnan.

For a little while, Ignatius simply sat. He ate and seminarians wandered in and out. He caught snatches of one conversation.

"Did you read Shea's article in The Critic?"

"Which one?"

"The article was--"

"No, no. Which Shea?"

"Which Shea?"

"Yes."

"John Shea, S. J."

"Oh. That Shea."

"Yeah. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing's wrong with me! Go ahead--what were you saying?"

"Jeez. Well, this piece was in the last issue. It was on eschatology, see, and--"

"Escha-what?"

"Aw, come off it!"

"I don't know what it is!"

"Eschatology! Eschatology! We only had a year of it."

"Alright, then, what is it?"

"The study of the belief in heaven, hell, purgatory. You know."

"Oh yeah."

Ignatius sipped his iced tea.

"Well. Did you read it?"

"Uh, no. I didn't."

"Jesus H. Christ. Well, what the hell am I babbling about? You didn't read it! YOU didn't read it!"

Ignatius laughed. Brief encounters again. He finished off his Jello and went up to his room.

His room gave the impression of cleanliness (the dirt lay piled under the bed). Ignatius sat down at his desk, opened a Jerusalem Bible, decided against it. Instead, he began to peel off his clerical suit--black shirt, gumshoes and all. He wrapped a towel around him and ambled down the hall to take a shower. He came back thoroughly refreshed, went to the mirror, shaved hurriedly but neatly. He took out an old flannel shirt, put it on, grabbed a pair of Levis from

the back of a chair, and smiled satisfied. He looked good--really good. He retrieved his Jack Purcell's from the closet, pulled the tongues, tightenend up the laces and tied his knots. Then he completed the ensemble; he threw a brass-button denim jacket over everything and adjusted his beret. Piece de resistance! The appropriate freak look does wonders for me, thought Ignatius. It makes me fit in in crowds. It gives me a ruddy look. But most of all, it makes me more of a man. And what, thought Ignatius, could be more important to Molly.

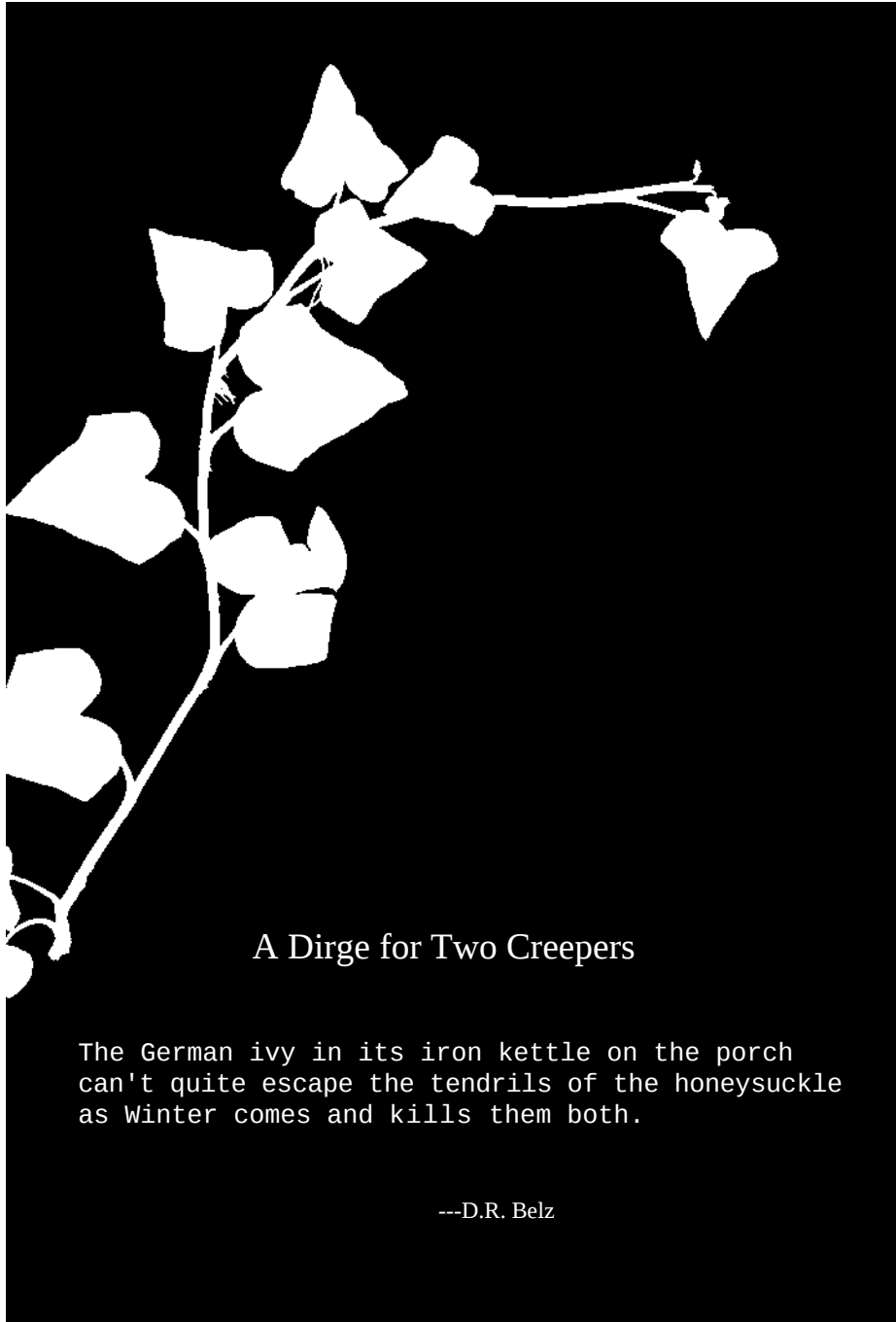
He strode through the big double doors. Debonair to the gills, he headed his car to Johns Hopkins University. And for one grand moment at Charles and 39th, everything fell into place. There is nothing but love; love is the be-all and end-all of human existence. Happiness is love and love is happiness. Immerse thyself in love and thou hast seen through to a radiant truth, a truth that comforts, like a soft pillow. Love here! You may be too late. Celebrate now! Before the mass is over.

## Apparition

I sit here in a church  
watching the angels  
walk up and down the steps  
to the balcony;  
some scratch behind their ears  
with their feet, like  
contemplative birds,  
others preen themselves  
with the feathers  
that billow forth from  
the organ pipes  
at each note.

I am invisible:  
the black crows (that  
may be deamons)  
shit through my head  
like I am the apparition  
of a public monument.

---Jesse Glass, Jr.



### A Dirge for Two Creepers

The German ivy in its iron kettle on the porch  
can't quite escape the tendrils of the honeysuckle  
as Winter comes and kills them both.

---D.R. Belz

Dear Admiral Byrd  
I feel abnormal,  
You sent us no word  
Penguins were formal.  
How must I appear  
In foul-weather gear?

---Bernard Galvin

The top of the lighthouse  
Is always fresh and bright,  
With bleach it is not doused,  
The seagulls keep it white.

---Bernard Galvin

## **Please**

Don'cha deem it decent,  
To leave a man at peace,  
If to Him malfeasant,  
To chase the social fleece?

Could Ye sort'a settle,  
If a soul fein be alone,  
Not of the same mettle,  
That Ye feel in your bones?

Can't he read books and romp,  
The seldom trodden trails,  
Without the urge to stomp  
Him into social pale?

What the hell's wrong wi Ye,  
That I can find no ease?  
I just choose to be me,  
Away from social geese.

---Bernard Galvin

## **Inkling**

Do it  
in pencil,  
They always  
told me,  
  
too late.

After I  
had read  
the minus  
sign as  
a plus,  
put one  
and one  
together and  
got two  
where there  
was nothing  
worth adding.

After I  
did everything:  
smearing, rubbing,  
erasing until  
the page  
ripped completely,  
leaving nothing  
but a  
hole for  
an answer.

---nancy k. barry

## Verse

I've never written poetry,  
only verse.

When a reader bites with a crunch  
and splash  
into the lines  
that I have polished until I can  
see myself in their outward shine  
he usually finds a pit.

And there poor reader sits  
embarrassed  
for not knowing where to spit.  
I admit I deserve  
it in my face.

Perhaps that bothersome pit  
will serve as seed  
for some future fruit--  
out now you can't digest it.

They grow seedless oranges  
in Florida now--  
but I think that's done by grafting  
or some modern trick.

Yeats' are pitted--  
but someone has those golden seeds  
well-hidden.

---Jack Holmes

## CONTRIBUTORS

TERRI BAGLIARI is an art student at the University of Virginia.

ANGELA BAIRD attends Loyola College and majors in art.

NANCY K. BARRY is a student at Western Maryland College. She has previously been published in Western Maryland's magazine, Contract.

D.R. BELZ attends Loyola College as an English Major.

KATHLEEN BURKE teaches English at St. Vincent's High School in Savannah, Georgia.

TIMOTHY DAVIS is a philosophy major at Loyola College.

VINCENT J. ERCOLANO, a Loyola graduate, received honorable mention for his poem, "The Drinking Age" in a contest held last spring by the Federation of State Poetry Societies.

JOHN EWERS is an art major at Boston University.

BERNARD GALVIN is a physician and is retired from service in the U.S. Coast Guard.

TOM GAMACHE attends Loyola College and is an English major

JESSE GLASS, JR. a student at Western Maryland College, edits and publishes Goethe's Notes, a little Magazine. He has previously been published in The Wisconsin Review.

BRUCE GUERNSEY HAS

BRUCE GUERNSEY has been published in Yankee, Shenandoah and The Ohio Review. His most recent book of poetry is Lost Wealth.

JACK HOLMES attends Loyola College as an English major.

WAYNE IVUSICH, a student at Loyola College, has translated and directed the Spanish one-act play, Juicio Final.

CAROLYN K. LONG is a free lance writer.

MARJORIE PINSKER lives and writes in Columbia, Maryland.

MICHAEL REIS attends Loyola College as a History major.

BOB SMITH teaches at Mercy High School.

## STAFF

Editor-in-chief: Mary Claire Helldorfer

Associate editors: D.R. Belz  
Ed Gainor  
Skip Heaps  
Jack Holmes  
Jim Maginnis  
Mike Reis

Circulation manager: Matt Loman

Advisor: Dr. Phillip McCaffrey

