
HALLMARKS

HALLMARKS 1990



Megan Murphy

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COVER — Ashley Hodde



Lisa Tanley

THE VENDING MACHINE
Lainie Petrie

I sit alone, all through the day,
watching each person walk by.
They come and go in clumps.
Sometimes, one of them will stop.
A wide-eyed toddler stares in my window,
while eager saliva drips down from her mouth.
An ignorant kid banks and kicks me
because he has put the wrong change in.
An older woman studies each treat,
Trying to decide which one is most nutritious.
Occasionally, a big fat guy comes along,
and buys every type of candy I have.
But I don't mind, because he feeds me.
I just love the sensation of a round silver coin,
sliding into my hollow tummy.
Every night my master opens me,
To redecorate my window with candy.
He pats me twice and turns out the light.
I have a weird feeling that I'm being used.

MY TRUNK
Wendy Sellers

A chewed and frazzled baby blanket
cradles childhood memories...

A yellowing Ranger Rick camp picture
of a nine-year old girl in pigtails
and buckteeth.
Fifth grade class stories such as the
"D-team visits Mars" fastened
in a crumpled folder.
A program of my sixth grade class
play, "You're a Good man
Charlie Brown" pasted in a no
longer used scrap book.
Framed NASA picture of Christa McCauliffe
seated in her astronauts suit.
Stapled freshman year love letters
from a hopeless redhead.
The safety pin still attached to a note
Dad fastened to my new jacket
Plane ticket stub from a visit to old
friends.
A newspaper article on the destruction
of the Berlin Wall my senior year.

All locked in a trunk
That is falling apart.

NARA—KIRI
Kelly Inman

I lie sleepless
in my bodily excretion.

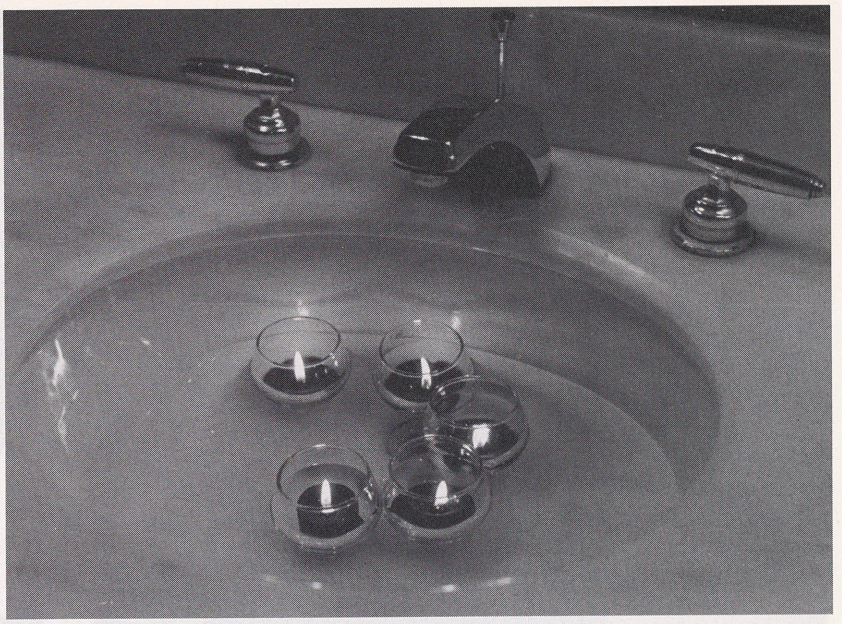
My black lungs
emit poison.

My children cry,
beaten and afraid.

My head aches
as steel collides, glass breaks.

I rip my guts
to kill life.

I am the world
in its De-Creation.



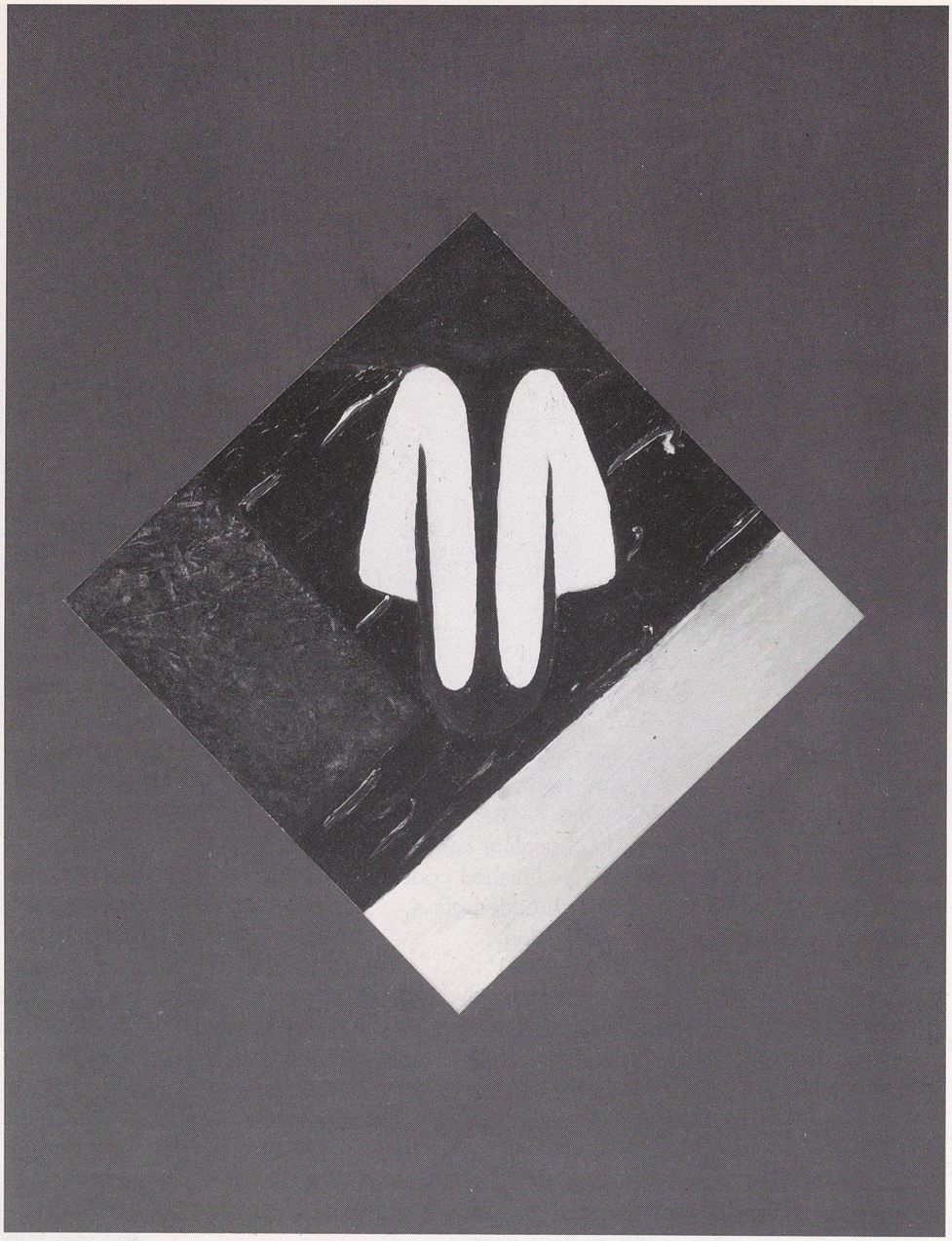
Lee Ann Campbell

BAKE A CAKE
Kelly May

Have you ever wanted to kill someone?
Well, if you have and still want to
Bake a cake.
A nice lovely chocolate cake.
Then after it has finished cooling
Take a cup of shredded glass,
Some chocolate icing
And mix--
Be sure that the glass pieces are so small
that you can neither see nor feel them
in the icing.
After you have checked this
Spread the icing on the cake--smoothly.
It's the perfect way.
Do you know why?
Well, I'll tell you--
-this is the glorious part-
As the glass slides its way down to the
stomach no real damage is done
Once down there, though, this changes,
As the glass sits and settles in the stomach
The weight of the glass
Slowly...
Slowly...
Starts to rip the delicate lining of the stomach
It rips
And rips
All the way through
Until,
Until
Death of internal bleeding
All from a piece of cake.
Do you want the recipe?

Lihbin Shiao

Waves, waves, waves
wash over me,
through me,
as I stand in the middle
of this ocean.
sea waves
flush out of the earth
through rivers
and join into me;
as I swallow
meat and wine,
I fly
up in to the air,
swallow the sky,
capture the world,
and burn
to contain
it all within me;
my eyes glow,
I burn
and become nothingness
as my ashes fall
through the sky,
fly through these brisk winds,
and I fertilize a new world.



Ashley Hodde

Ann Baughman

I have slipped into a state of increased awareness, thoughtful observance. Happy, yet not altogether removed from my surroundings, I become a spectator only. So much to take in with my eyes that they dart about until they hurt. So much to be thought about that many things slip from my grasp before I can form words to describe them. Life seen from a different perspective- I have no control and no desire to possess it; I am consumed by the need to watch the things that go on around me. I want to share my discoveries, frustrated that they have come so late, hoping that someone can understand. Late? NO! Now I think that it is still so very early. I'm moving too fast. The mundane seems significant, things which I have taken for granted, I learn to appreciate. My whole approach to life rapidly changing, being developed constantly, and I still can't tell reality from fantasy.

Alaine Wallace

My heart changes with the seasons
My life changes every month
I look and find no reasons
I add it up to find its worth
Always looking for something to want
But ending up with something I take
The fun is always in the hunt
And not the choice I make.



Brent Sharp

TO THE INNOCENT WHO STILL THINK
THEY ARE GODS—
Lihbin Shiao

Wanted to
kill you with kindness,
a cake with razor shards
of broken glass
collected from the streets.
I wanted to cut you
using the same instrument
you had cut me with.
So you thought
none of it was your responsibility—
after all,
who but a fool
would walk
upon the dirty city streets
laid by men
with bare feet?
Who did I think I was?
Moses,
who could part the waves of the Red Sea?
Or did I think
I was a mer-woman
able to tangle you
with my long hair
and haunting spell-songs,
stretching the continent
by wind?
Yes—
wicked witch
you proved me
much deceived.



Megan Smithwick

SOMETHING SINISTER
Jane Campbell

Something sinister, quiet but
rumbling, is about to awaken.
The giant skies hover over all the
earth. And the heavy air seeps
through the grass and leaves and
weeds. The lazy mist is dense and
holds back all life into slow motion.
Everything worn and gray is
turning to black. All life, what is
left, is listening for
its culling from the ultimate
power. The whole earth is on guard,
hiding under ground, for what is
to come. And a little child, peeping
from the curve of a tree trunk
observes. Unlawfully she left the
protective hand of her guardian
mother for the world of her true
biological mother and escaped
outside. She knows that familiar
feeling. She knows the cool touch
of the sprinkling mist and the
force of the blackened skies. And like
a dumb child she wails, surrounded
by nature, for this sinister something
to arrive.

UNNOTICED
Amanda McClure

Perhaps no one ever noticed
  the fragment of eraser
lying on the floor.
  But regardless, it was there.
Perhaps no one ever remembered
  the two small harmless ants
Crawling on the wall
  Therefore no one had noticed
But they had once been there.
Perhaps no one had ever noticed
  the colorful leaves
Blowing outside the window
  But they did during the fall.
Perhaps no one had ever noticed me--
  Sitting in the corner of the
    classroom,
But I was there--
    Observing all.



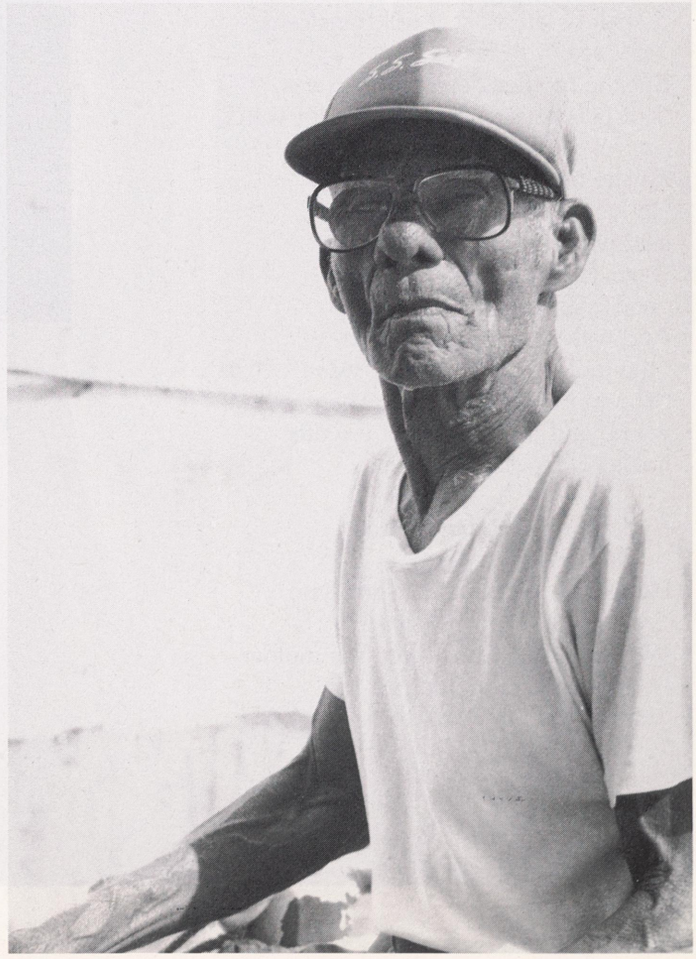
Brent Sharp

THE CRUMBLING SENTINEL
Heather Kirksey

At the end of the rutted and grass grown drive,
The sentinel stands,
Guarding nothing but the past.
The flag is not raised in salute or resting in peace
But rusted somewhere in the middle.
Vines climb irreverently,
And the ornaments are dry and crooked.
The post is cracked and crumbling
From the weight of the past.
It does not now receive dire messages:
The love letters, the death notices, the Christmas cards, the bills that can't be paid.
It stands, waiting.
Waiting for what will never come,
But receiving death
which will always come.

Virginia Kelley

As I walked farther into the darkness,
I felt the heat from peoples' questions
scortching my neck.
I could not look at them
or answer them.
I fell into the dark hole of emptiness
and stared at their gazing faces.
Their inquisitive lines of worry
grew deeper and deeper until their expressions
were sucked into nothing.
I stared at the remaining wrinkles
of their lives
and felt the heavyness
of their darkness.
I was all alone,
left with no one—
only the worry lines of ones I loved.



Grayson Woods

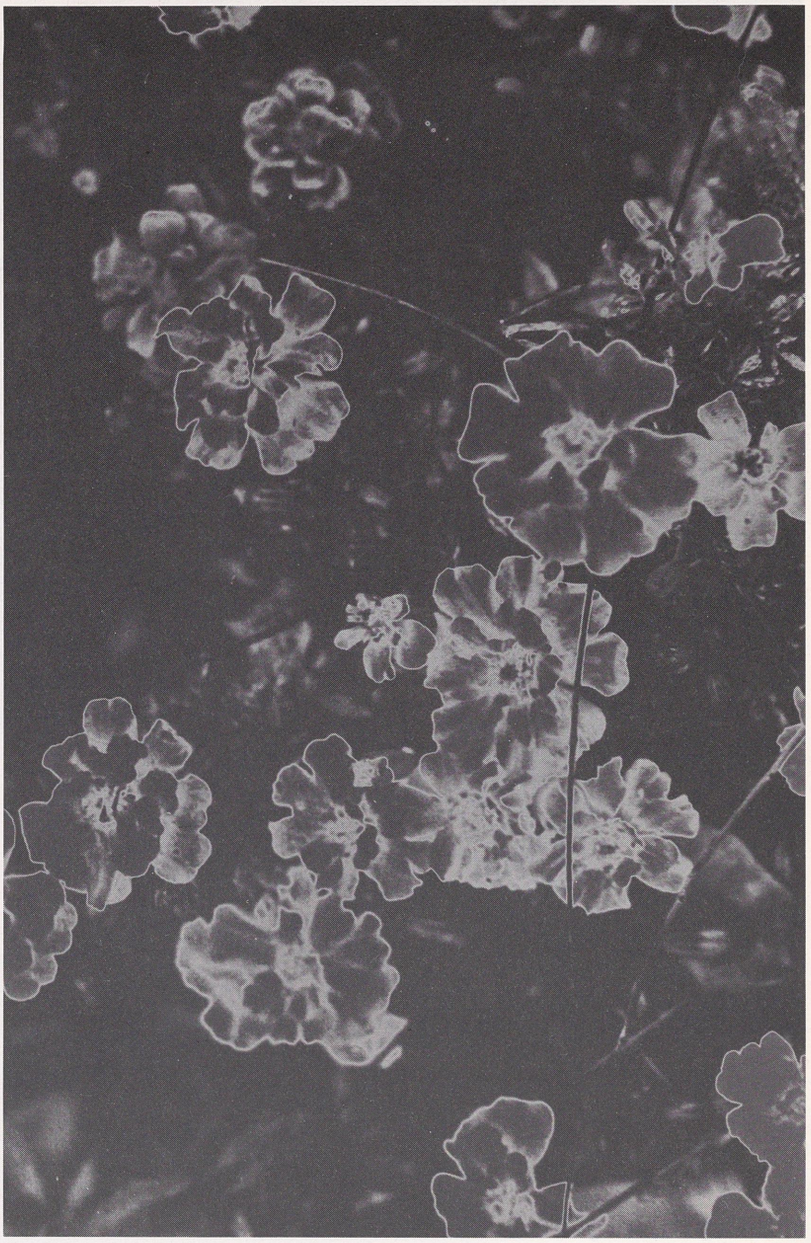
METAMORPHOSIS
Kelly May

The child looked up to his mother
And raising his arms in
magnificent triumph
he shouted,
"I shall be a god one day--a god
that holds power!"
But then the mother looked down upon
her child and answered with
the calm serenity of
"But you cannot, my child, for the
gods are dead and useless."

Time passed
Another day came
And the boy raised his arms
with a holy passion
And cried above
"I shall be an artist. I will transform
all I see."
But the mother's only answer was,
"But you have no paints to paint with."

As the boy grew older
He looked to his mother and
said with a dream
"I would like to be a writer,
and change the world."
And with a weary frustration
the mother's only answer was
"You must have power to change the
world, and the poverty of a writer
holds no magic of power."

And then as the boy turned
into a young man
He turned to his mother and said,
"I would like to be a lawyer?"
"Yes, my child," answered the mother
in a happy triumph
"that's what you want to be"



Megan Murphy

REVOLUTION
Alaine Wallace

I woke up among the bleeding sky of a universe
that was crying. Screaming for help in dead
silence. masses of chaos joining in the streets
"Revolution!" they scream. Change they mean
And yet no one wants to hear the children cry.
For they are too young to know.
No one answers their prayers but calls for
an end to it all. And the children give up
because this conflict is over.
It's all over for now.

CID AND ME
Kelly Inman

Cold, forlorn, helpless,
Full of dismay,
she wanders on the streets.
her Body is propelled
By hopeless causes,
Moving in an unknown direction.
Eyes are failing her,
Deceiving her.
Mumbled pleas
For no one to hear
Full of fear, she crumbles.
Falling into her mind,
She dies there.
No longer aware of
her pain
Numb of all external forces.
she remains in an intoxicated
Avoidance of life.

DEMENTED SCREAMS
Katherine Kuhn

Demented screams ring in my ears/
They are all I hear through the pain
and tears.
I am surrounded by a whirlwind of
emotional fire.
All I can see are twisted faces, hear the
voices getting higher.
I can't ignore them, they return again.
Demented sounds, the pain and anguish
of men.
I cover my ears, I close my eyes,
Distorted faces crying in agony drench
me like falling rain from the skies.
Voices and silhouettes from my past,
The faces come to me and the sounds
cease at last.
Trembling in solitude I stand.
I reach for the grasp fo knowledge's
hand.
It is then I see what knowledge knew
from the start,
It was your deceptive face that
pierced my broken heart.



Ashley Hodde

MY TREE
Allison Sisk

I see him every day at eight,
His knarled smile and windworn face,
He stands beside the traveled road
and looks on toward the vast unknown,
Past hill and vale and fellow tree
As he stands proud on calloused feet.

Sometimes he'll chance on other's feet,
Who might pass by in groups of eight,
They'll mention something bout a tree
But never look him face to face,
Which might be better. For things unknown
To a lonely tree beside the road

Can charm a place where kings once rode.
Through all the lonely march of feet,
Who tread onto a place unknown,
This lonely guest who arrives at eight
Can claim a different caring face.
I've seen many a green shade tree,

But never such a learned tree.
He's kept his vigil by the road
Though he's seen many a great man's face,
And witnessed many a wonderous feat.
He's always here at promptly eight,
For I paint him a picture of unknown

Places, and tell him tales of unknown
Faces. I'll talk to a sagging, restless tree,
Who'll stand for hours, perhaps for eight,
And never grow tired of a forgotten road
And never stop to shift his feet.
I can judge a person by their face

And so you'll simply have to face
The fact, my tree can keep his secrets unknown,
Though they pain him like his aching feet,
But what is this to my aged tree,
For he is sole guardian of the road,
Ane he'll always keep our date at eight.

I followed my feet down that traveled road,
The time unknown maybe a year, even eight,
But when I looked for the aged tree, all I saw was my own knarled face.



Lisa Tanley



Genny Frazer

MOM
Kelly Inman

She sees me through foggy windows
She cannot see my hole
that is bleeding like her windows
She is unaware of my firey soul.
Her windows full of glass and pain
are turning away forever
to view my face never.
Oh, it all is so insane
to live in a world where nothing is clear and plain

Confusion is all I see
when the womb is crushing me
my head is pounding, pounding
her heart is breaking
so very delicately
My soul is fleeing, fleeing
  from shelter to insanity for a home
wherever it has gone, it will never come.
  HELP.
I'm being poisoned
    by the milk
      of life.

RAIN DROPS
Anne Blaufuss

On the edge of the leaf, little bits of crystal sit
ready to fall to their breaking.
The beads magnify the sun's brilliance.

Then with the push of wind, they fall.
The crystal marbles begin to separate,
and as they hit the ground they shatter.

Some pieces land gently and stay where they fell
while others hit with such force
they immediately fly up again
and become "new" rain drops.

Alaine Wallace

I looked up among the blazes of fire in your eyes
a tear appears as I find you
Following a pattern of life in my mind
I feel the heat from our body of one
Overwhelming in this flame, I scorch myself
to the acceptance of what to come
And yet I feel secure, warm
Until this fire is put out and the ashes
fill my soul taking over my life
But this is where I want to be
This is where I belong.

NOTHING
Amanda McClure

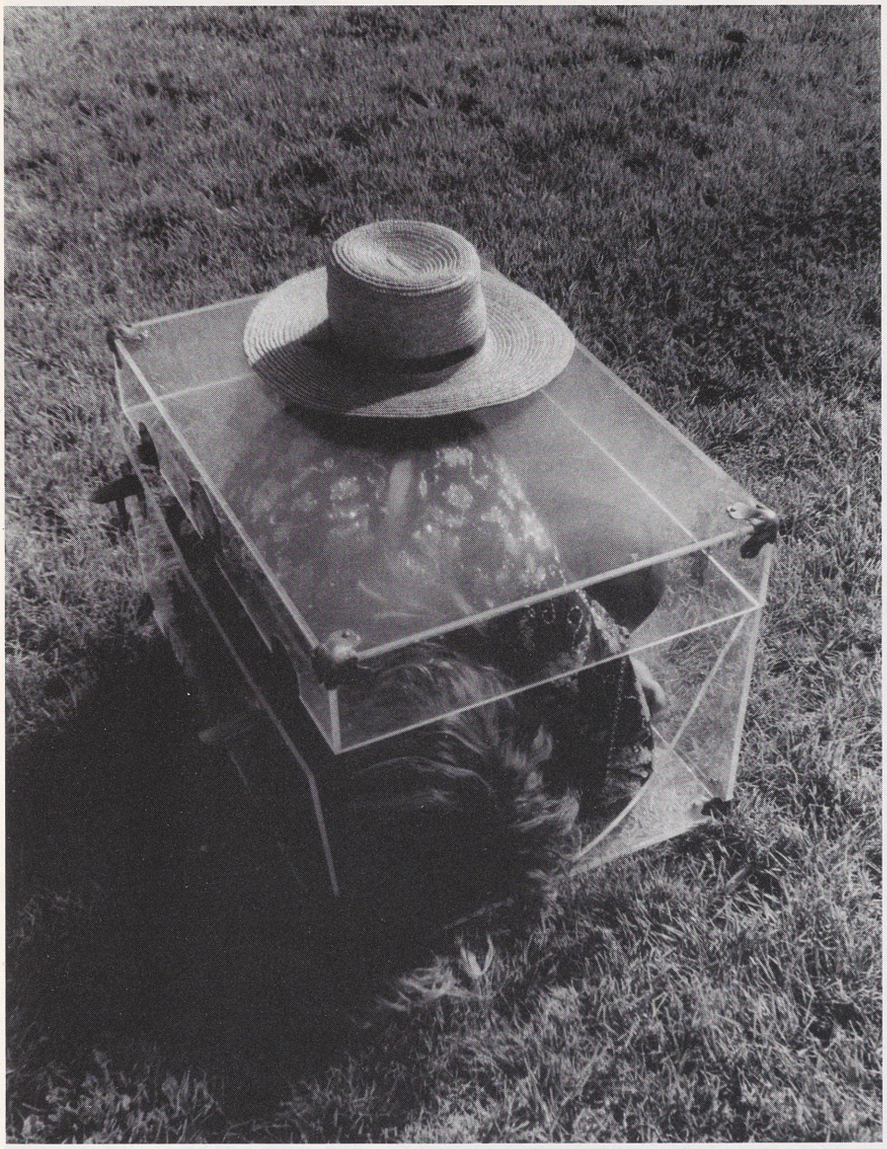
No one, nothing, absolute
ZERO.
Gone ever; come home never,
no HERO.
Unloved, dead, forbidden
call.
Trapped solitare, unescapeable glare.
Trapped by silence
WALL TO WALL

SILENT JOURNEY
Lihbin Shiao

I went out out
into the valley
through the windy-calm
before lightening storms,
a long dark curving path
down the mountain
on which I dwelt,
trodding on the serpant's scales
slipping down the well-worn stones
indented in the centers
almost in the shape of human feet,
soft like human bodies.
at the end of that tilted path,
I lept over the rope
with the sign "Dangerous Incline, Keep Out."
and entered the valley
full of nodding daisys
approving of my newest turn of life.
I went forward
looking everywhere
over the uneven plain of short and tall daisys;
I picked mine a mile away
and set towards it through the storm.
my eyes watered
with my unswervingness
until I reached that flower
and shut my eyes
curled beneath it like a child,
like the serpant
around my mountain, sleeping.



Ann Baughman



Michael Maxwell

LABOR
Jane Campbell

Inside, a mother is clenching.
With her weak hands she grasps the
arms of the chair. Her head is
cocked back so tightly that the
tendons in her neck pierce her skin
out in long thin roots from
her jaw. Large tears drip from her
chin and roll slowly between her
sore breasts and over her swollen
stomach. Stealthily the heavy air
creeps into the room from the
darkening earh. And she gasps
for the saturated oxygen within it.
Once again her back constricts, and
her abdomen grabs at her insides.
She panics, and her breath
quickens. The room around her
swirls and darkens with each of
her gasps. She pleads for relief
and falls to her knees. But from
intense exaustion, she neatly
eases into a natural trance.

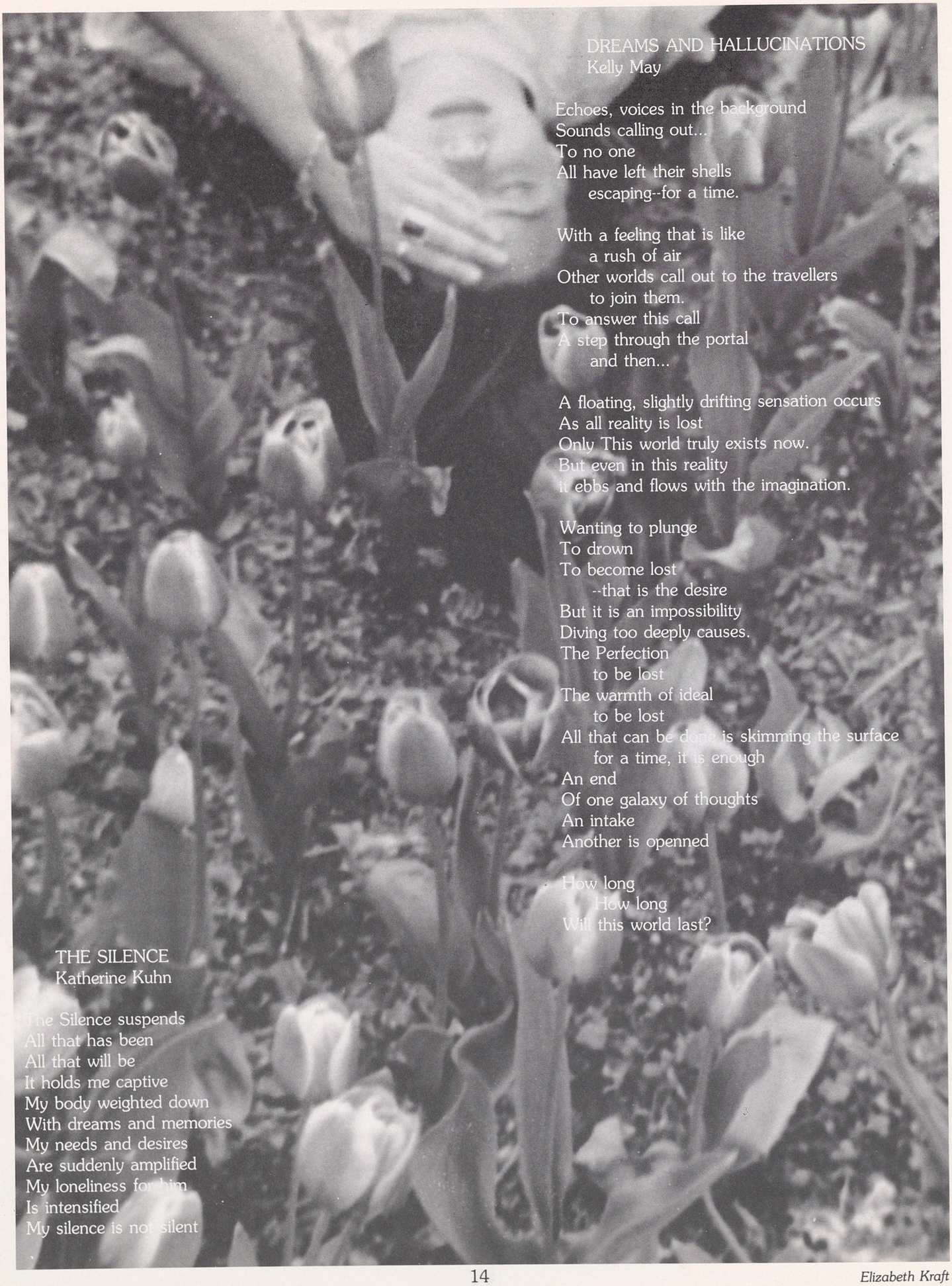
Laura H. Polk

They are all standing around me
Looking at me
With tears in their eyes.

They said could she
How would she
With all of those promising lies.

They'll close me in
And lock it tight
And place me somewhere
Out of sight

Promising to Remember me Oh God Please
Promising to Remember me.



DREAMS AND HALLUCINATIONS
Kelly May

Echoes, voices in the background
Sounds calling out...
To no one
All have left their shells
escaping--for a time.

With a feeling that is like
a rush of air
Other worlds call out to the travellers
to join them.
To answer this call
A step through the portal
and then...

A floating, slightly drifting sensation occurs
As all reality is lost
Only This world truly exists now.
But even in this reality
it ebbs and flows with the imagination.

Wanting to plunge
To drown
To become lost
--that is the desire
But it is an impossibility
Diving too deeply causes.
The Perfection
to be lost
The warmth of ideal
to be lost
All that can be done is skimming the surface
for a time, it is enough
An end
Of one galaxy of thoughts
An intake
Another is openned

How long
How long
Will this world last?

THE SILENCE
Katherine Kuhn

The Silence suspends
All that has been
All that will be
It holds me captive
My body weighted down
With dreams and memories
My needs and desires
Are suddenly amplified
My loneliness for him
Is intensified
My silence is not silent

Elizabeth Kraft



Meredith Palmer

THE PERFECT PLACE
Becky Burk

Beneath the trees I lay,
A ladybug lands on my nose.
It looks at me as if to say,
"Come on, get up, it's time to play,
Roll in the grass, quit wasting your day"
So up I jumped and
Down I rolled
Until I came upon a dog
And he told me to run away,
sing some songs, and jump in the hay.
After the running, the jumping. and singing
Along came a horse
He had much to say, of course,
"Jump on my back, I'll take you to town,
Always be happy, don't fret or frown."
In the town, we met a man named Sam.
He was very nice, he gave us some ham.
He asked for help since he was in a jam.
"My wife has left me, my kids are all grown,
I have nothing of my own to own."
We told Sam not to pout,
We would try to help him out.
A house was built of Gingerbread,
He said he preferred chocolate instead.
We planted a garden with lots of seeds,
Then we helped Sam kill all the weeds.
Sam said he wanted potatoes,
Unfortunately, we had planted tomatoes.
The whole situation was quite a mess
But the horse and I ran away.
We tried to find a perfect place,
With perfect people of any race.
Of course, we had no such luck,
All we could find was filth and muck.
The places were ugly, the people mean,
It was like all the places we had
Already seen!
So we left and decided it was best,
To go somewhere far away from the rest.
Maybe somewhere in the west,
Where we wouldn't find a single pest.
And so we did, it's the greatest place
We hope to never leave.
I would tell you where it is,
But if I did people would come.
And ruin our place.
They would make us unhappy
And take up our space.
So don't worry about us.
We couldn't be better.
Maybe in a few months.
We will send you a letter.

DESERTION
Lihbin Shiao

From far off
I watched from beneath a tree,
watched dark clouds descend over me
as the fog began to swirl across the floor
with the shaking grasp of the preacher's hand
on his flashlight.
I watched him mouth the words
over my friend's fresh grave
and I smelt crinkle of freshly gutted mother earth
forcefully openned to rereceive what had sprung
from her not so long ago.
I thought I saw ashes
begin to flicker upward
as when a log is first being burned,
its outer flakes rising
like the spiral of a snail's path--
transparently greasy lines
drawn on invisible air.
I watched their breaths expel
warm through the cold evening
and vaguely I felt a deep chill
fixing within myself.
I dreamed myself the corps in that moment
as night descended to mask my face.
Their vigil continued late into the night;
so tired, I closed my eyes
to stare through the crisp copper and brown leaves
to the iridescent moon seeking a guidance
I could not find on earth or in intangible gods,
but I could not find her this once,
not even when I openned my eyes.
Huddling down against my tree,
I watched them lower the coffin,
thinking that they were burying me
and I could not believe I was still here
for no trace of me seemed to remain
as the last shovel of black earth closed
the mother tomb and rejected me,
locking me out even more firmly
as the intermittent bars of ice rain
began to fall, pounding the new ground,
ineffectively trying to reach me/my friend
for answers with its loud questions.
There were no flowers that day,
only black footprints walking the path away
from the grave, all different shapes--
only mine were untraced.

LONELINESS
Joelle Herr

The funeral was three days ago.
I did not cry, for no tears would fall.
Not wanting to be a burden, I returned to the
empty house filled with flowers and food.
I was confused and did not know what to do.
He left me with unpaid bills and little money.
It was all so unexpected.
Echos were the only replies to my questions.
His familiar scent filled the air each time
I opened the closet door where his clothes were
still hanging.
Setting two places at the table, I ate my
meals with an empty chair.
The long, warm days and even longer,
sleepless nights seemed to last forever.
I could not stand the loneliness any longer.
I finally surrendered as I swayed, suspended
in the air.



Brent Sharp

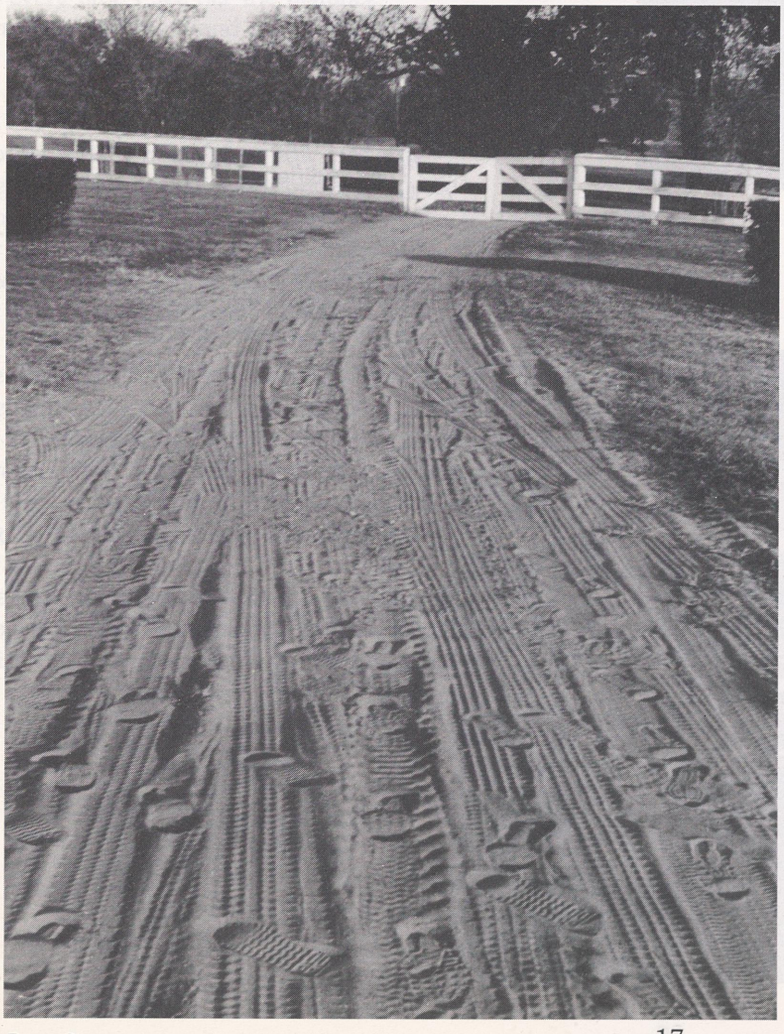
Virginia Kelley

The dense smoke fills the air
As I inhale, I am tragically reminded
of the path before me.
Though I cannot focus ahead,
I have clear periferal vision.
I see all around me yet
not where I lead.
I turn and glance into the past,
a dense mat of tears projects my sight
of how it used to be.
my eyes are steamed dry by the heat
of the smoke crawling over my back.
As I turn back to the unknown walk,
I fall.
It is as if I am falling over
the edge of the world.
I openned my eyes and saw
it was you.
The obstacle in my path was you.
I turned too fast, and you were behind me
the whole way.

LOVE
Wendy Sellers

Sand runs through my fingers
creating a small mound.
More and more sand--
The mound grows larger and larger.
Water trickles over top;
I mold my work.
Pack the sand down,
And smooth the uneven sides.
High towers rise above;
Swirles of wet sand deck the tops
like Gothic spires
A surrounding moat prevents enemy
attacks.
I hide inside

The ocean creeps up the shoreline,
Devouring my castle piece by piece.
Eventually I sand alone;
only the waves lap at my ankles.
I walk further towards the dunes
And begin again.



Brent Sharp

HER LOVE SO DEEP
Ruffin Priest

"Will one day our paths to meet,
Down the lonely road of life?
Will our passions merge to one
Under moonlit skies?
Wilt thou be mine as
I belong to you?"
The desperate cry fell
From her lips to ears too deaf to hear
Her love that pierced the skies,
And the hearts of all to hear.
So that night she took the cup
And rended hearts next morn.
For she had drunk the hemlock green,
And left them all forlorn.
Bright tears had fallen upon
Her cheeks so fair,
Seashells had wound within her
Golden Hair.
And so we tell the tale
Of love so quickly quenched
And because of this her life
was from her body wrenched.



Sarah Roberts



Elizabeth Edwards

CONCRETE PLAINS

Kelly May

Interstates
Roads of convenience
A rape to Nature

The land is razed
so that humans will have the comfort
of a straight line
But the beauty of nature's wholeness
is lost.

On either side of the interstate
There can be
plains
hills or
mountains

Yet with the indifference of fear
They have been blasted away
To try and enforce
Man's superiority

No attempt
Has been made
To blend into
the countryside.

Instead the clean concrete lines
Scream out
Their indifference
To the surrounding green
The land is no longer joined
Instead
Each side of the road
Is divorced from the other
With no hope of ever touching

Kim Wang

She stands alone, the scent of spring dancing through the room.
I work at crossing the sea of floor, the distance
Between us. But each footstep I take echoes on stone.
And before I can reach her, before I can see
The expression on her face or the mystery in her eyes
A throng of people come, to surround her and block me out.

I lean against a marble pillar and look out
Into the blinding sun, not finding the shadows of this room.
They cannot truly see with only a camera as their eyes.
These followers have travelled far in distance,
But their cruel encroachment refuses my will to see;
I hope again for the empty barrier of stone.

Once more I hear the resonance of my footsteps on stone.
The gentle wind softly carries the falling leaf out
Of sight. I am left alone and given the chance to see.
I admire the long folds of her dress captured in the still room.
Falling folds brushing ground, held in hands uplifted to the distant
Sky. She is forever looking up into the tiers with those eyes

That only see the sky beyond with those eyes.
Why do I admire that familiar countenance of stone?
For every time I see her the distance
Seems only to grow and grow until it must be let out.
Let out of bindings that hold her in this constricting room;
I'm afraid I have stayed too long, but I must see

Into her eyes. I must learn how she sees
The falling snow that burns bright in my eyes.
In our cold shelter, her delicate hands offer no room;
Her silence chills like the glistening stone.
I see her face clearly now; it is not blocked out,
But it does not hold what I envisioned from a distance.

She stands with the grace of old pride, grace held at a distance.
The beauty her master's hand created I can see,
But he anchored her feet to a platform that keeps her out
of reach. And his skilled hands molded her eyes
To forever look up, held in solitude against the room,
Held in the past with ever encircling stone.

I walk out of the room's shadows. But I turn to see
through the haze of distance her uplifted eyes.
I wish my heart was made as hers--was made in stone.



Caney Gunn

Anitha Anandaiah

I hate to mow the lawn.
The grass won't stop growing.
It gets very boring.
It really makes me yawn
like when I wake at dawn.
Later the next morning,
I'm on the tractor snoring.
My paycheck is now gone.

I am going to look
into a helpful book
for ways to stay awake.
More work I need to hook
or else I'll be a crook.
For money, I must make.



Beth Geddie

ALGEBRA
Brooke Brown

I can't handle Algebra.
I just like sit every day and stare at the walls.
I mean those God-awful, clausterphobic-type, white, concrete walls,
Or maybe sometimes I'll just stare out the plastic windows,
But I never think about Algebra.
I like think about all the other things I could be doing, or,
like how the room always seems too small to have eighteen
people in it,
Or maybe what the person was like who built these walls.
Mrs. Beachamp keeps on sayin' how I "don't concentrate enough," and
I, "fidget too much," as she lets us choke on the bottle of
perfume she must'a put on that morning.
One day she sent me to open the window, 'cause it was real hot.
And I opened it real wide so I could smell everything outside,
And I just stood there a minute,
I mean I just stood there thinking and wishing;
So, I did what I had to do as a red-blooded, American teenager.
I jumped out the window on to the ground.
I bolted. I was gone. I was so free.
I didn't even stop to look back at the white walls.
I heard screams to "Come back!" and voices asking what I was doing,
Y'know, for a while I thout...I mean I coulda sworn it was that
whole building wanting me to come back inside.
I don't think I ever ran so fast in my entire life,
But I ended up having to go back 'cause I didn't know where I
was going;
So, I got back and pleaded something like temporary insanity,
and all I got was grounded on the basis that, "kids are crazy,"
And now I'm back in school.
I don't like get to open windows anymore.
I don't even get to sit by 'em.
I don't sit by doors either,
And my book's open in front of me,
But I still don't think about Algebra.
I couldn't if I had to.
I just like sit and wonder what would happen if
I could break down the walls.

THIS IS MY BRAIN ON SCHOOL
Thalia Acosta

I sure as heck love semester exams!
Just the thought of them makes me smile.
Two full hours of mental traffic jams,
but I'm a-grinin' all the while

'Cause there's just something about perplexion
that really fascinates me.
Who won the 1880 election?
Well, I've narrowed it down to A, B, or C.

Eenie, meenie, minee, HELLO!
Of course! the answer is L!
I sure do love exams, you know!
(I've gone completely insane. Can you tell?)



Susie Creagh

THE BRIGHT FACADE
Kim Wang

As the clock struck 5:30 and the National Museum of American History began to close, we were pushed toward the huge doors that towered over us. The dull cold rushed through the open doorway and people scrambled to put on their coats as they see the faint glitter of falling snow outside. I passed through the threshold and walked down the gradual slope of steps, blades of cold numbing my face and hands. As I dug my hands deep into my pockets, my mother stopped to take off her scarf and wrap it around my face. I looked up into her eyes and thought about how happy she had been since we left our responsibilities at home to visit Washington D. C.; this was the time to see America as other countries saw it. Our vacation was to explore the capital of our country; taking pictures with both our cameras and minds of things we were afraid we might forget.

My family and I entered the crowd of tourists on the sidewalk. The procession of people, representing places across the world, took light steps down Constitution Avenue. I looked up into the sky and watched as the thick clouds quickly covered the sun, turning the sky gray, as unsubstantial color caught between conception and nothingness.

I was tired and bored with looking at the remaining echoes of Christmas strewn across the city. As my feet continued to travel onward, I glanced down at the cracked sidewalk and noticed an empty bottle in a torn paper bag gently rolling back and forth in the wind.

Walking on the streets of Washington D.C. is like walking across the world. The different languages that filtered in and out of my hearing were like small tastes of various cultures that, brought together, form the basis of America. However, as the day wore on from late afternoon to dusk, the once crowded sidewalk took on a feeling of emptiness as people began to leave and the dark took over, gradually settling in its place.

Built with ash-colored stone, the Department of Commerce building loomed on the right side of 15th Street as my sister and I followed closely behind our parents. In the comfortable silence between us, we heard our parents talking quietly and could distinguish a few words from the sounds of the city: family, Taiwan, friends, change. My parents immigrated to United States twenty years ago. I can remember being told of the hardships they had to overcome as children. They journeyed halfway across the world with only the belief in the American dream to guide them. As I looked around Washington D. C. I realized the majority of tourists is formed by the minorities of the United States. At each memorial, museum, and monument, I saw a part of the world in every upturned face. In Washington D. C. people of all cultures come to celebrate their realization of a dream.

I impatiently looked at the long parallels of sidewalk that still lay ahead. My eyes rested on an old bundle of torn blankets held supported by the end of a green park bench. The top blanket was once a deep red but was now black from the grime of the streets, as a cut red rose slowly becomes darker and darker; the edge of each petal withering from the outside in.

We could hear the roar of the subway below the sidewalk. The sound was a low but constant rumble which seemed to shake the earth itself. Large vents punctuated the sidewalks surrounding each street. As we approached, the hot air from the subway could be seen seeping through the meshed grate, somehow connecting us to the things that lay below it.

Walking closer I could make out the faint outline of a man slouching on a vent, trying to warm himself with the hot air. Smoky wisps shrouded him with obscurity. He was alone, standing in place as other people continued to move on. He was near, yet he seemed far away, estranged. He stood confined in his cell of poverty looking through bars of smoke with eyes that hid the secret of his past. I say his torn, old clothes; I recognized the brown bag that held his few belongings; and I witnessed the gaunt, livid look in his face; but I was not allowed to see inside him.

He stared ahead, as if trying to find some truth or answer in the distance. I followed his gaze; my eyes passed over a sea of people rushing toward their goals in a flood of hope, and my eyes saw through the long, black iron gate, each bar ending in a sharp, ornate point that marred the perfectly trimmed landscape that laid behind it. For an instant, I saw what he saw and searched as he searched; and my eyes finally rested upon the luminous flow of the bright facade of the White House.