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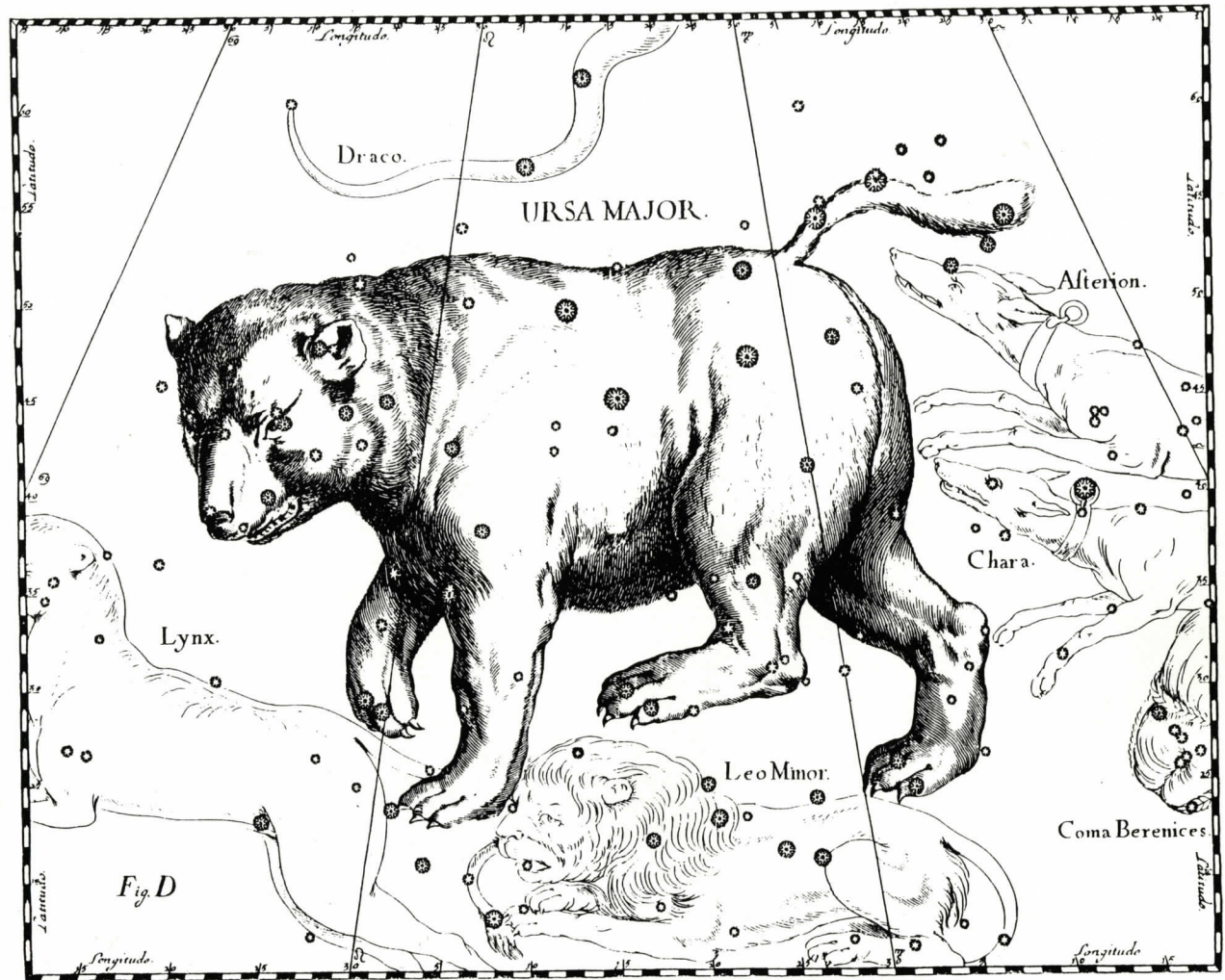
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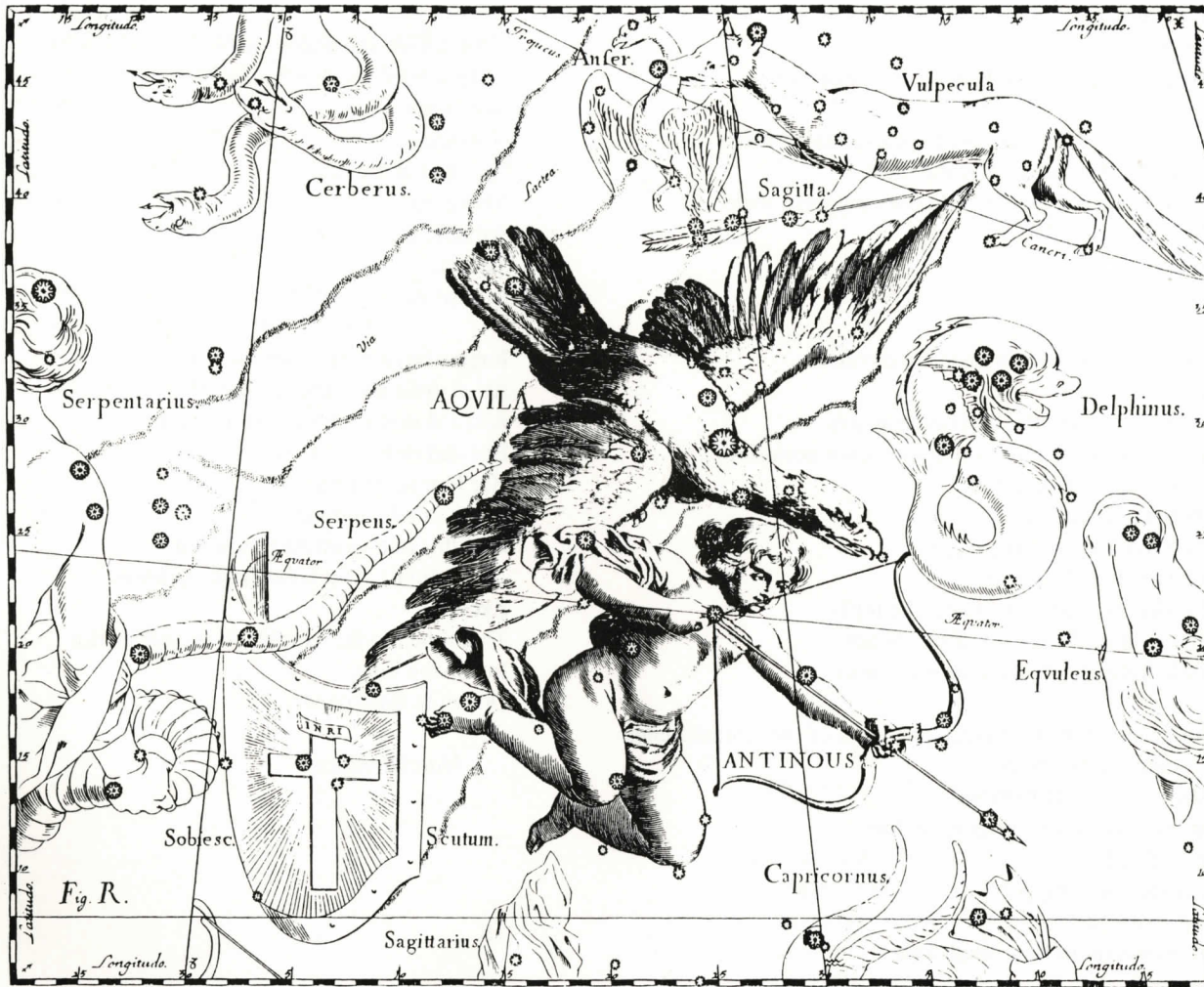
staff

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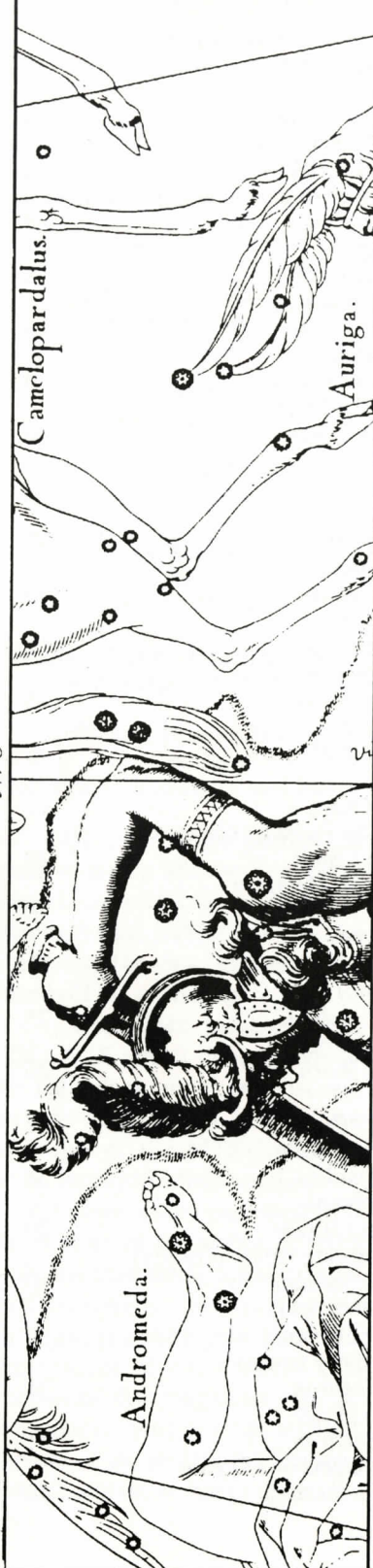
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Coloring George Washington

It was George Washington in outline
 On a background of waving stripes
 And stars
 On the ditto
 Colorless
 Except for the blue-purple he was drawn in

George was spread around the cafeteria/art room
 Where art was: staying in the lines.
 All the colors of the Crayola rainbow were there
 Mixed in a jumbled pile,
 Broken
 In a shoe box.

Black being an overly underused color,
 I chose it.
 Halfway through the best coloring job
 I'd ever done, as a second grader, on a portrait of
 George Washington
 Allen, my friend, said,
 "You're making him a nigger."
 "What's that?" I asked
 "You know, a nigger." came the reply
 Kinda out of the corner of his mouth
 While his eyes glanced the other way.

That evening the first black president of the United States
 came to our house.
 I showed him off to mom.
 On his way to the refrigerator door
 I explained,
 "I made him a nigger."
 And swelled.
 I'd shown mom how smart I was

"Allen is probably my best friend,"
 I thought
 He'd taught me something new.
 I waited
 For mom to say, "That's right!"
 Or
 "That's a big word!"

Only, she stopped
 Her face sank
 She frowned

"Don't ever say that word."
 She sounded serious, but
 Not mean
 Not mad
 Not mad at me, but
 Nearly sad,
 Ashamed,
 Scared,
 And so was I

It must have been a dirty word
 Allen must have tricked me
 And I'd said it in front of my mom.
 But that didn't scare me.
 Her fear scared me.
 It was subtle and sad
 And this one word had caused it
 And I didn't even know what it meant
 Except
 That it had to do with black crayon marks
 Inside the lines
 On white ditto paper.

Matt Hamilton

Dink

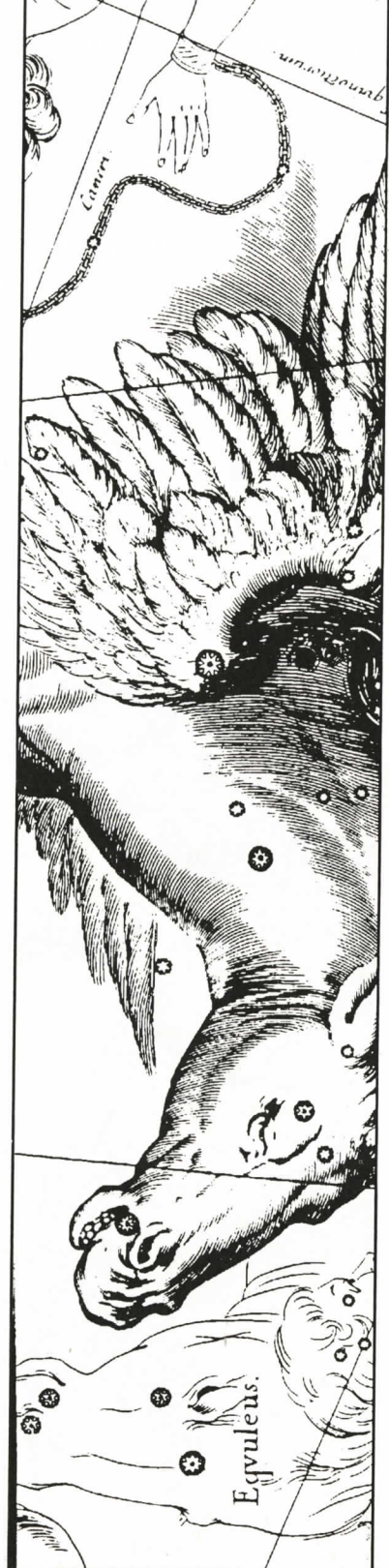
In the deepest, darkest, dankest depths
of Deepest, Darkest Dink
lay ladies,
passions purring,
wishing well
among the men.
And when this scene we saw we sighed,
"I hope the boat will sink,"
and winked one at the other
down in Deepest, Darkest Dink.

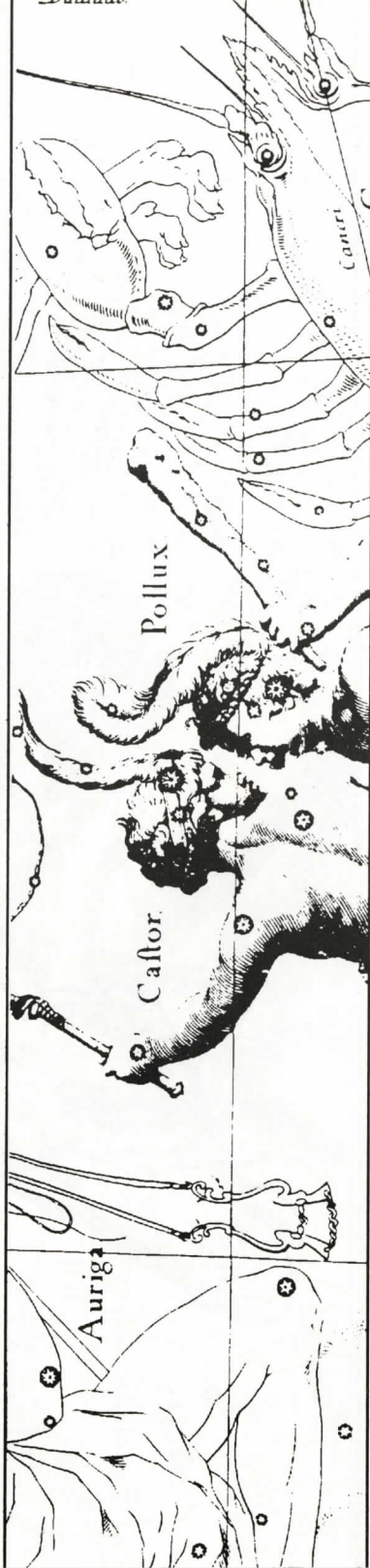
Andrew Arehart

Dem Ol' Messiah Blues

Jumped up Jesus
on a Saturday night,
yesterdays spent hung up in the Sun.
Everyone around here
thinks the end is near,
but it seems to Me that Sunday never comes.

Andrew Arehart





My neighbors sing on their porch at night

He was ugly
she was grossly fat
they were both poor.

They found each other, and in each other discovered
the way to silence clamoring biological maturing
with uncomplicated fucking.

They experienced amazed satisfaction and delight
in each other's wanting to share this joining.
They called it love, and wed, and just maybe it was.

Fifty years later though, that's anybody's guess.
Perhaps, perhaps not, it is or it isn't love.
Now, that's moot. Does it matter any more?

They bore their first child, a son,
and he was a Downs child. Innocently,
they went on and had their next child.

In fact, they fucked their way,
in blind Catholic faith,
to the filling of six cribs.

Two of these children are nearly normal,
a triumph over environment,
not to mention genes, and what will happen now?

I see them all gathered together,
darkly imagining them
in skins by a cave campfire.

Meanwhile, I listen, and all of them,
except the ones who never accomplished speech,
sing so beautifully.

Sue Mullin

We were all complaining about the fresh heap of horse manure which we'd all found in only the way that an object of repulsion will attract people. As the Reverend was giving a mini-sermon about the symbolic meaning of it in relation to the town's spiritual state, as only a preacher will do on his free time with an unsuspecting congregation of men in need of shaves and haircuts, Slayne MacCallister entered the barbershop.

We'd often thought that he must be a fugitive from the law. After all, he had the mustache and sunken eyes that we'd seen on the walls at the post office, and he chewed tobacco. Now, we all chewed tobacco, it's true, but he did it with malice. Ours was a good-natured, Christian, brotherly love way of chewing. He chewed to spite us. Heck, at least most of us wouldn't spit while the preacher was there, else we'd be in for a sermon on the evils of tobacco and how it was the devil's weed and so on and so forth. Slayne just didn't seem to care. He'd chew and spit openly, missing the spittoon. Half the time, he wasn't trying to hit it anyway. Parson Jones never said anything to him (we were always kind of envious of that), but then none of us did. Come to think of it, he never spoke to us neither. He never spoke. As long as he had a good chaw of tobacco and a spittoon to miss, it seemed like all his needs were met.

As he entered the barbershop, Slayne realized that he'd never really considered why he came so regularly. "It's just one of the few things I do along the lines of personal hygiene," he thought. "Hell, musk aftershave is a gift from God. About a half a bottle every three days and I could go for months without needing a bath." He even had a sneaking suspicion that somewhere in the Bible there was a verse that said "Muskiness is next to godliness," but some bunch of east coast women had begun a conspiracy to cover it up. They accomplished this task, he felt, by replacing "muskiness" with "cleanliness." They probably changed those verses about hard liquor, loose women, and gambling, too. None of that mattered now, though. His age precluded those things. All that was left was his monthly shampoo and haircut.

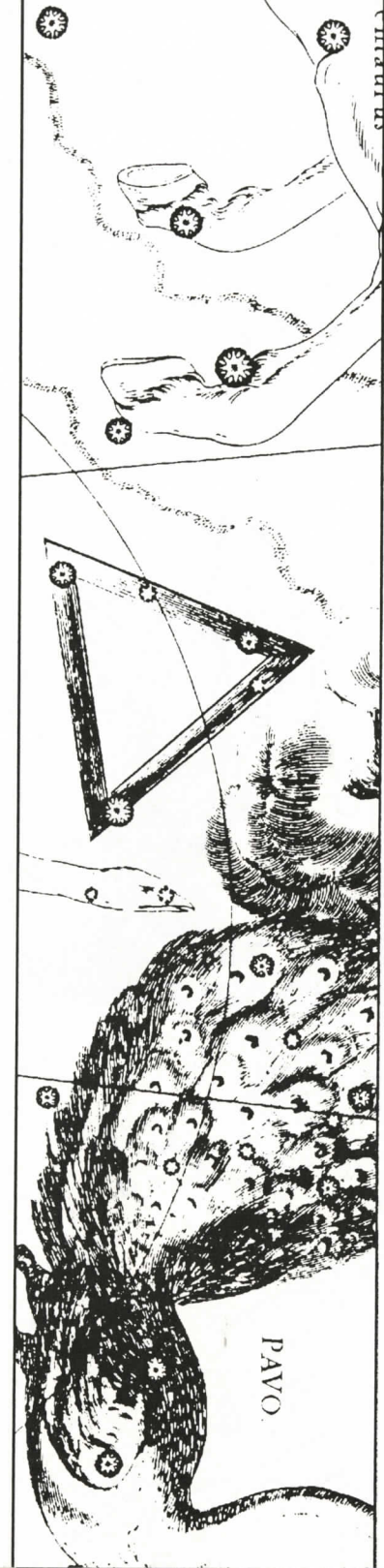
We remember when the old barbershop was built. I believe it was about 1893. The wood was to be brought in from the finest lumberyard in the country at rock bottom prices. Unfortunately for Anderson Spheeny (he's the proprietor) someone read it backwards at the main office and had sent rock bottom lumber at the finest prices, at least in relation to the actual worth of the wood. It had taken four

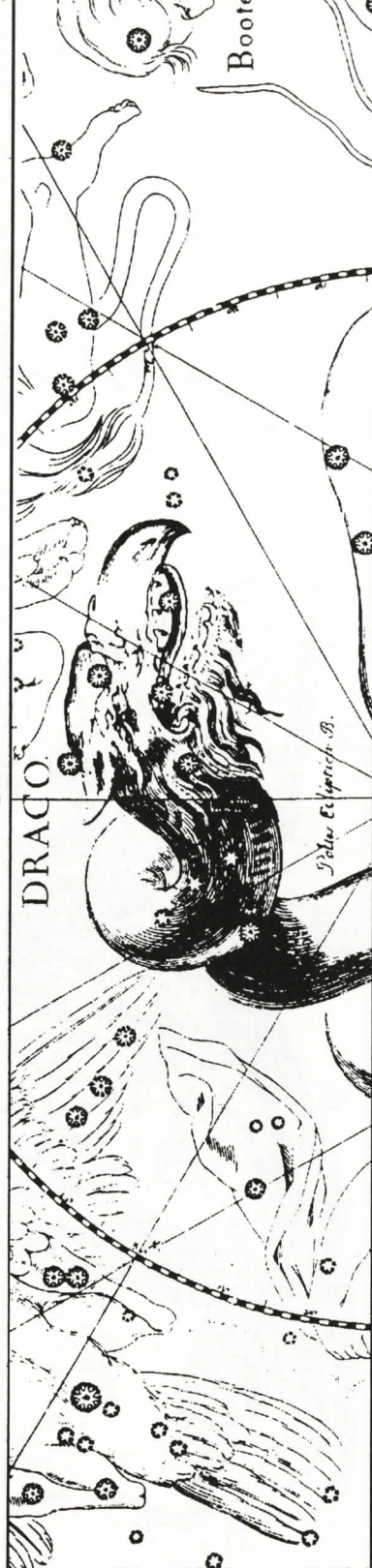
years for this fact to become known, and by that point no one knew what had happened to the lumber company after the buy-out. So, Andy tried to think of the warp in the floor as a design innovation; the peculiar creaking as ambiance; and the significant sinking of the customers, as they sank into the barber's chair as it sank with the floor, as a type of refreshing excitement in what many of us had expected to be just another visit to the barber's. Being the only barbershop in town, Spheeny's Haircuts and Shaves didn't really need any of these things to be explained away anyhow. We were a captive audience.

Most of the customers talked. Talked about horses, taxes, the way a fresh-hewn coffin smelled. Well, that last one was more the town undertaker's favorite than anyone else's. Soon as he'd start in about the aroma of cedar or a discussion of the grains of certain wood and how they complimented certain cadavers, the whole line of folks waiting would begin Hrrumpching and staring intently at the curve in the floor or the design around the spittoon. The more suave gentlemen would nonchalantly find someone across the street and mumble something about meaning to talk to so-and-so, then exit. Others just flat out fell over themselves trying to get out of there. Anyway, even when the customers weren't inclined to shed any speech about the place, Spheeny could usually work something out of them, like worms coming up after a good rain. "Where do you think the new rail will be laid? Who'll win the presidency, do you think? Do you like the smell of that Witch Hazel, or do you prefer that new stuff? Do you think cedar wood is that important, I mean, who's going to be smelling it six feet under?" After a torrent like that, they gave in. Except for Slayne.

Come to think of it, the only noise we'd heard him make in Spheeny's general direction in five years was the grumble that trudged through his windpipe. It wasn't ever exactly in response to anything. It was just a grumble. As far as any other noise went, I guess you could include the PTING "Damn!" whenever Slayne hit the spittoon, or the SMACK as the tobacco juice clung to the wall. However you sliced it, Anderson didn't have any idea as to what Slayne's voice sounded like; most folks' swearing voice is nothing like their conversational voice. Except for preachers—their voices were always loud and overblown.

Now, for Slayne to snub us was okay, but Spheeny took it kind of personal. I can't say that I blame him either. I mean, after washing the dust, bugs, and bits of foliage off of





someone's head, you would figure that a little friendly small talk wouldn't be asking too much. Then again, the only time we ever saw him smile was while he was getting a shampoo. It was a small victory for Spheeny. Seems odd that a man who has a steady company of flies about him should enjoy a cleaning like that.

The door spring made that strained grunting noise as it closed and the floor responded in kind to Slayne's tromp. The basket weave of the chair tittered as he sunk into it and the chair itself kind of screamed some creaks, like it hadn't seen him coming until he was right up on it.

Spheeny's hands always shook a little and his breathing got short on him when he knew Slayne would be next. This was often perceived by the one getting a haircut at the time, who would usually become annoyed as his hairline shifted positions or his ears got nicked. But it seemed like a certain peculiar calm settled on him when Slayne finally got into the chair, despite the fact that Spheeny was going to be mining that mop of hair for June bugs and pay dirt. It made me quiver just thinking about it. Yes, something was different today. Today the flies stopped buzzing, the wind ceased, and Slayne spoke:

"You know, I've always wondered why I like my trips to the barbershop so much. Is it the smell of the alcohol? I've asked myself that one. Nope, that's not it. Is it that I don't have to talk? Hell, I'm alone most of the time anyways, so that ain't it. No, I think it has to do with my dad's golden retriever."

At this point, I began searching the floor for my pipe. His voice had lumberjacked its way into the room and a couple of us, right in the middle of packing the tobacco in the bowl, had dropped our pipes or lowered our newspapers at the sound of it. After wasting a good smoke like that, I wasn't so sure that Slayne should talk. Spheeny searched the furry pile around the chair for the scissors, then realized he hadn't breathed since Slayne began. After sucking in a breath, he said, "Oh, really?" Only his voice cracked as his throat closed up. Luckily, Slayne didn't catch this and launched into his explanation. As we composed ourselves, we all leaned forward a little in our chairs. A good dog story was always welcome at the barbershop.

"Yeah, he used to love that dog. So'd I, mind you, but he especially loved it. You know, my dad never gave me a shampoo."

The sudden shift in train of thought caught Spheeny off guard, and I could see something rude working its way to his mouth, but instead, it came out "Hmm, I see."

"That dog used to get a bath every couple of weeks. Dad would massage its pelt and the skin would just wrinkle up this way then wrinkle up that way. Now, mind you, I know dogs are just dumb animals, but I'd swear that he smiled at that. Well I used to wonder what it must have been like."

"I had a basset hound, once."

"What?"

"Spheeny had interrupted Slayne, and it seems that they were even when it came to sudden shifts in conversation. The scowl on Slayne's face, well, it made us all a little uncomfortable. I started wondering if he was packing an iron. Mind you, I like Spheeny and all, but I started planning trajectories and doing ballistics in my head. I figured on the first bullet being for him, which would give me time to get to the street if I moved quick enough and gesticulated every extremity. Sure, it sounds extreme now, but you should have seen his face. You could have rolled half dollars down the wrinkles. But then it went smooth like someone had just smacked him square in the face with a sack full of calm.

"Yeah, those are good dogs, too. They have real soulful eyes. Say they can smell a rabbit turd three years old, eight feet underground. Must be a real pain in the ass to be able to smell like that."

"Of course you could smell a whole forest while you're deep in the city somewhere."

This time, we all looked at Spheeny in disbelief. As opposed to his usual talk of elections and steam engines, this sudden philosophical comment was just out of place. Turning his head, Slayne peered at the younger man's face and searched it. Every tick of the clock dropped like a truncheon. Finally, he said, "Well, yeah, I guess you're right, Spheeny."

Spheeny overlooked the mispronunciation. He was used to it; we had all done it too when we had first met him. Besides, we knew that he wasn't about to break the flow of conversation by correcting a man older than him. "You were saying. . ."

Slayne's eyes glazed over, he blinked and said, "Oh yeah, my dad. Well, what I'm getting at is that he spent all sorts of time washing that damn dog and any time I wanted to go for a walk or go fishing, he'd be reading the paper or tending the horses. He never even taught me how to tie my own shoes."

"What about your mom?"

"Ah, she died. We weren't near a doctor when I was born and she got infected real bad."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"S'okay son, you don't miss what you don't know. But I appreciate the thought." When he said this, his right hand

made a little motion, sort of like he was sweeping the dandruff from the last guy off the arm of the chair. "Yeah, my dad never gave me a shampoo, though. I think that's why I come here. After a while, all that hair hanging in my face would make me crazy if I didn't do something about it, but the shampoo's the main reason I come. The way you massage my scalp. . . well. . . it's gentle and kind but strong. I suppose that's what it used to feel like when my dad gave a shampoo."

"Well, thank you. . . uh. . ."

"Slayne, just call me Slayne." None of us had known his name up to this point either.

"Okay, Slayne it is. Say, do you know Jack Bobbin?"

"You mean the banker? He grates on me."

"Yeah, me too. Let me tell you, one time he just about had me shut down."

"Why that lousy. . ."

"He thought that I was getting fresh with his wife. She'd gone home and told him about how tenderly I'd massaged her scalp, you know, implying that I'd been a little more friendly than normal. The two weren't on the best of terms anyway at that point. It was rumored that they ate most of their meals in coffee cups. They're further back in the cabinet. That was the safest place to be if you were crockery and they were having one of their caterwauls. Turns out she was just trying to stir her husband up, but that was just like trying to stir up tea with a snake. You might accomplish something, but eventually the snake will just get tired of breathing tea, turn around and bite you, then be on his way."

All the stories in the town came through Spheeny. He was the historical society for those of us who didn't know how to read, or were allergic to the dry air about the library. Spheeny's embellishments usually kept us doubled over and shaking. After Spheeny's story, Slayne laughed a rich baritone laugh that defied the weather-worn places on his face. None of us had heard the story before either. So we were all in that little room, laughing together. As soon as we would just about settle down, one of us would start one of those hiccup type laughs, and pretty soon we'd all be in an uproar again.

Once everything had finally calmed down, Slayne was finished with his shampoo and haircut. He paid for the services rendered and rattled the door on the way out. But before leaving, he stopped and turned around. Slayne's face shifted around and the left side of his face began to bulge out. Spheeny smiled in response. Then, Slayne pursed his lips, spit, PTING, and smiled back.



eight



Loudon, Tennessee

Sherril LaRose

Not the Image

Hips wide
face round
sister of
Mona Lisa

Not the
Image

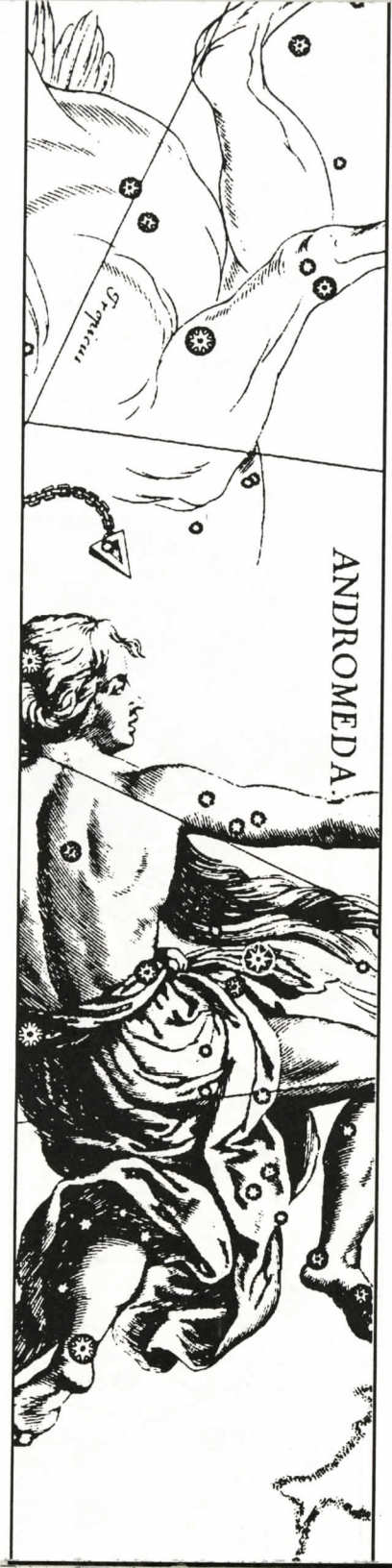
The
anorexia
blond
thin hips
full lips

The
reflection
in the
pupil is
not five
foot eight
flawless of
sculptured
face

But
a woman
bloodline of
rugged
pioneers not
soft
not helpless
not a joy toy
a plaything

Not the
Image

Martha A. Hood



nine



Stories of the South

Made it through my teens
without getting pregnant.
Southern twang and all.
Now I'm afraid I'm barren.
I broke the law
and I'm being punished.

On the pick-up truck,
fluorescent blue,
silhouetted landscape license plate
with silver letters
that read "Chuck and Sue," bought at a flea market
from a grungy man named Bud.
How redneck.

Unflagging support from home.
26 years old?
It's bad enough you're not married,
but I'm fifty and I have no
grandchildren.
What's wrong with you?

Talk to my brother.
your only legitimate shot
at heirs to your
dried-flower fortune.

Terri Conduff

happy hour

four white horses
burning holocaust cloak
placenta shroud
separates and is jarred loose
the chosen one is gone
lobotomized at birth.

the olive in your martini
takes up space, it is only for show
swirling on its toothpick
an angel got her wings
while you were drunk on vermouth.

Terri Conduff

Come, Mr. Boche

Mr. Boche sat silently,
fingering the place where,
in the ages of sound,
his voice had been.
In his hands, gnarled like frustration,
a sheaf of paper lay.
Reaching from stoop to street,
the steps were chiseled and
the residence of dust;
underneath him the concrete was warm,
and next to him dirty.
Furtive, his eyes moved from paper
to sky
to street
to paper;
the pen with precision and wonder
a passerby would miss.
And did,
everyday, for the years
those that number in petrification.

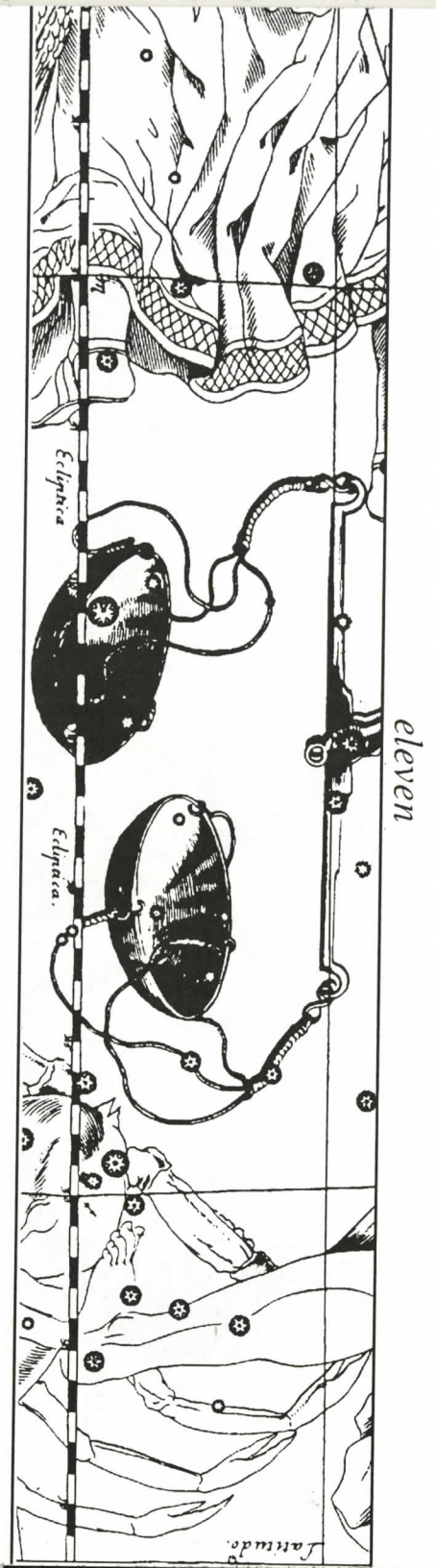
Seldom did the sequester of impression
release its contents.
Children laughed in derision at Mr. Boche,
the silent jester; a madman and a fiend—
the cliché of childish fancy and impassive naivete.
With compassion and misery, though,
did their lives receive the detail of desire
in their fool's journal of lines and
shapes
 and story-like dimensions;
in black and white and thin blue,
without hesitation and through much care,
children bore adults. . . the space of a notebook
and sketch pad that no one saw because no one knew.
Mr. Boche seldom spoke in their memory,
all the while he rubbed his throat
and evoked the voice that once lived there.

Old Mr. Boche, won't you sketch a sketch of time,
that the grocer will sell for food,
and the tailor for clothes,

or the peddler for all life's needs. . .
These and more found their way,
with a tearing heart, and yearning eye,
knowing on muddled former wood what
ears could only discern, and eyes see from afar.
Coming around the corner with slow trepidation,
widow Bona obliviously becomes art;
a gallery is hers for the asking,
hung on webbed, yellowing walls.
Inundated with old man smells,
her visage, her form, somehow beautiful again,
her very stooped grace loves his room
Hand at his throat, Mr. Boche smiles
a transparent smile, that she might know.
For twenty years and as many months,
she has not, and the days grow longer with her passing by,
another drawing for another wall.

Standing, for the third time that day, at her third passing,
when she joins the masses, he joins only himself.
Come, Mr. Boche, let us go inside,
wondering at the dust and the webs;
we'll find the last tack, and
gently,
she will join the other widow Bonas on your wall.
Smile and know that for all these years,
with dust and webs in them, too,
that no sputters have died or misery thrown
away the pistils of forever;
laugh in that silent way of yours,
the one that your grandchildren would have loved,
had they been.
The fish that swim in languor are your own,
and solitude a bridge. . . finger your forgotten voice,
and know that I remember the last time you said grace,
when angels learned their choral praise,
the sun virile rays to give,
and love had a sound.

Bryan Pate



twelve



Untitled Photo

Jessica Lovett

She saw herself. She saw herself at the fair. There was a crowd of people and *I never saw anything like it, Pappy, look at all the rides and people.*

"Just don't go and get yourself lost. Vernon, look after Ben," Pappy said.

She watched the people coming and going and Vernon shrugged his shoulders and mumbled about a dime and disappeared into the crowd with Ben and she went back to look after her cake in the pavilion and took it from the paper box. It was hot for September that year and the fancy chocolate icing and decorations she had made had melted. The chocolate leaked out of the box onto her print dress. She saw it.

The voice was young.

"Why does Grandma have to be sick?" She couldn't remember the child's name.

"We don't know why, it's the way God planned it." She recognized her daughter's voice. She had been educated at home.

"Is she going to die?" The young voice, again.

"If it's God's will, we can never tell." She had always been smart. The smartest of all three.

When she opened her eyes she was alone. Sunlight flooded the hospital room with an orange, western glow, and she lay in the bed and wondered about the sea. She wondered about the surf and the sand, and how beautiful the sunset must look over the water. A lot better than in this hospital room, she thought. And she wondered why everyone got to go to the sea except her. It must be wonderful, she thought. I have to know. I feel it slipping away and I want to see it before it's too late. I have to see, smell and hear. She looked at the I.V. bottle hanging at her side and she remembered how weak she was. But I've always been strong and I know I can make it.

She reached for the needles of the I.V. and peeled back the tape and slowly pulled the lines from her veins. Watching the needles come out made her feel light in the head. She lifted her tired frame slowly from the bed, her head still spinning slightly, and moved toward the door. Her legs wouldn't work, from not being exercised or used, and she tried to take baby steps toward the door, her slippers sliding along the floor. But the room started to spin a little quicker and she closed her eyes to drive away the dizziness, but it wouldn't go. She opened her eyes to the spinning room white and orange from the sun and an almost pink glow, the walls, the bed, the cool white sheets turned back, the I.V. still dripping. She

could hear the faint noise of the fair ringing in her ears as she fell, almost in slow motion, to the floor. Or maybe it was the sound of seagulls. She closed her eyes and the room was still.

When she opened her eyes the raindrops were hitting her on the face. There was the fence post against her back, solid as a rock, and Ben was walking up from the field and everything smelled of fresh earth and dust in the rain and not anti-septic.

"Don't go down around those Indian mounds," he said.

I ain't and don't want to anyway and it's coming up a cloud and we'd better get back to the house.

Her voice was very young.

"Yeah, but we ain't walking around by the Indian mound," Ben said.

Don't you worry about that, I ain't lost nothing down there and we'll walk around by the creek.

"We ought to walk around by the creek, 'cause I ain't going nowhere near that Indian mound," he said. "There's blackberries other places without having to go down by that Indian mound."

Pappy came around dark and sent me down to the well and Ben wouldn't go with me and I wasn't going down there by myself but Ben still wouldn't go and Pappy telling him to. Ben cried.

"You seen what it did to Vernon and him a grown man and it whupped him all the way in from the field." Vernon was a grown man and he ran into the house during the storm all out of breath and dripping wet from the rain with bruises and knots on his head. His hat was gone. Ben cried.

Pappy made Ben go down to the well with me in the dark and called him a little girl and said I'll whup you to that well and back myself but Vernon said he won't go with us and never will after what happened that day and don't ever say anything else about it.

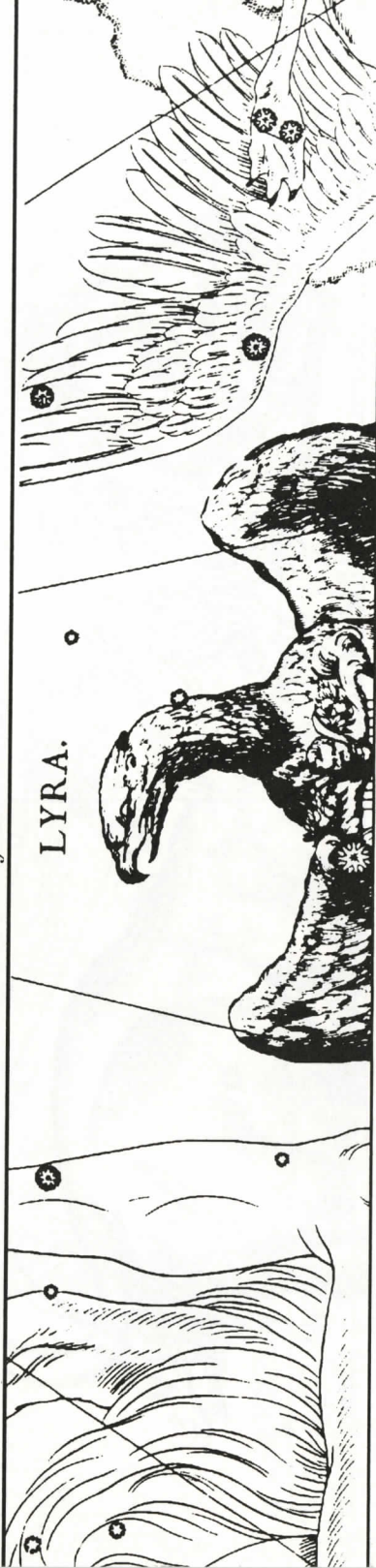
"Don't scare them kids," Pappy said. "They won't never go down to that well again if you keep it up."

"You seen them bruises and knots on my head with your own eyes. I'm not going down by that Indian mound again, or anywhere near it and I'll die of thirst before I go to that well at night." Vernon got caught in the hailstorm and got knots and bruises on his head. "Watch out for that old dead Indian," he always said.

"Quit scaring them kids and ya'll get down to that well and bring back some water."

Down by the Indian mound it was cool in the shade and





the blackberry bushes grew on the other side along the fence. *The blackberries are thick and watch out for snakes and Mama said fill both buckets so she could make some jelly and a cobbler if there's enough left.* Vernon was in the field. We could barely see his blue shirt.

"Watch out for snakes," Ben said. "Mama said fill all the buckets if we can. Will she make a cobbler?"

If there's enough left she will.

"Will there be enough?" Ben asked. "Vernon's in the field. I see his shirt. Don't pick the red ones."

We picked the blackberries and the bushes moaned like a cow.

"What was that?"

We moved around to the other side and the bushes moaned again, around on the side where we were at first.

"It's the old Indian," Ben said.

Pick the blackberries, Mama wants to make a cobbler for us if there's enough left. Vernon's in the field. The bushes moaned by the Indian mound.

"The old Indian wants us to leave them alone," Ben said. "Mama wants to make a cobbler." He cried.

It sounded like a cow in the bushes.

Mama asked where are the blackberries and Ben said the old Indian don't want us to pick his blackberries and he hollers every time we pick one and Vernon's in the field but he couldn't hear it. It was coming up a cloud.

Ben told Vernon about the old Indian saying "Ooohhhh" every time we picked a blackberry and he said he wouldn't go down there anymore because that's his grave and it hurts him every time you pick one and you're walking on him too. Ben wouldn't go down there anymore and we walked from the field the long way down by the creek. Vernon wouldn't go down there anymore, either. The old Indian whipped him all the way to the house in the storm.

"Well, don't go scaring them kids again. You're a grown man and you ought to know better," Mama said. "I wonder about you sometimes." Vernon's a grown man but he said the old Indian whipped him on the head all the way to the house in the storm for plowing too close to the Indian mound. He had knots and bruises on his head. He took all the arrowheads me and Ben found in the creek and threw them out of the house. Vernon's a grown man.

"It ain't funny," he said. The old Indian chased him all the way back to the house because he woke him up. *We won't be able to pick them blackberries Mama, Vernon woke up the old Indian and it hurts him when we pick them. We have to walk along by the creek everyday. Vernon says the old Indian*

don't like water.

"The old Indian don't like water," Ben said. "We walk by the creek now, but it's the long way." Ben wasn't a grown man. "The dog whines down by the blackberry bushes and growls too."

The voice was young again.

"Will you be sad if Grandma dies?"

She listened to the voices.

"Of course I will, she's my mother and all I've got left of my family." She knew her daughter's voice anywhere. She had always been the smartest one of the three.

She wanted to tell her daughter to unhook the needles and hoses and let me fulfill my last wish before I'm called away by the Good Lord. Her eyes and mouth wouldn't open. Maybe it's the drugs they're giving me, she thought.

on the sand the waves crash and roll up toward your feet but don't ever quite make it and you know they won't but you pull your feet back anyway and the water's always cold at first but you get used to it and the fish gather around your feet and the small ones nibble at your ankles but it doesn't hurt and you can watch the porpoises in the morning swimming up and down the beach and in the afternoon a storm might roll in and the waterspouts dance in the sky above the water and you can watch them come closer i just want to see it honey, can't you just unhook these and help your mother up because i tried to fix that cake with my fingers, but it wouldn't do any good and Pappy was mad as hell and fussed all the way home and that's as close as i ever came to leaving here, please

The voices faded.

The doctor and a nurse were standing at the foot of the bed and she laughed out loud and the doctor turned to look at her.

"Feeling good this morning?" He was a good doctor, concerned, or just a good actor. "You should be glad you don't have a broken bone after that stunt you pulled yesterday afternoon."

The doctor looked at her bruised I.V. connections. "You've mumbled about the ocean all morning. It's the most noise you've made in months."

That damned Vernon. Let me tell you, doctor, he thought that old Indian had him. Ha-ha-ha-ha. He ran for the house in that hailstorm and it coming down like baseballs and he just knew that Indian was beating him over the head all the way home. He had the worst knots and bruises you've ever seen. He lived to be seventy and you couldn't tell him any different. You couldn't tell him it was only the hail. I've always wanted to see the ocean before I die. Have you ever

been to the seashore?

"You should get some rest," the doctor said. "Your family is coming by again today to see you." The doctor turned toward the door.

Doctor, you should have seen Vernon go, holding his hands up over his head. You could've examined him. You could've told him it was only the hail, huh? You should've been there.

The doctor went out the door.

Her words didn't come out, never did, anymore. She could only laugh now, it was all she had left, so she laughed out loud and closed her eyes.

Feel Free to Comment

I scowled at the short man
by the heater
with pearlescent glow and I said
Mr Poet, you ain't worth the trip to Hell
and he smiled
and said wryly
My baby, I know that
I just wanted to see you squirm

Shannon Byers



fifteen

Camelopardalip



Generation X

Dance, dance, dance
 Across this cold steel city,
 To the tune of this new world order.
 Rev your engines of fire and fuel,
 Powered on hate for no better tomorrows,
 And roar screaming neon into the rain.
 I'm hardwired behind artificial eyes
 A dark revolution slicing through this liquid grid,
 Burning chrome all the way to Heaven.
 Can you feel the System crashing down around me,
 Chasing hard targets to the very edge?
 No religion
 No salvation
 One generation
 And it's closing fast.

David R. Howard

Nashville

I got lost
somewhere between Southern charm
and Athenian grace
The Parthenon is crumbling
Archimedes cannot be reached
for comment
Athena was never much
of a country music fan anyway

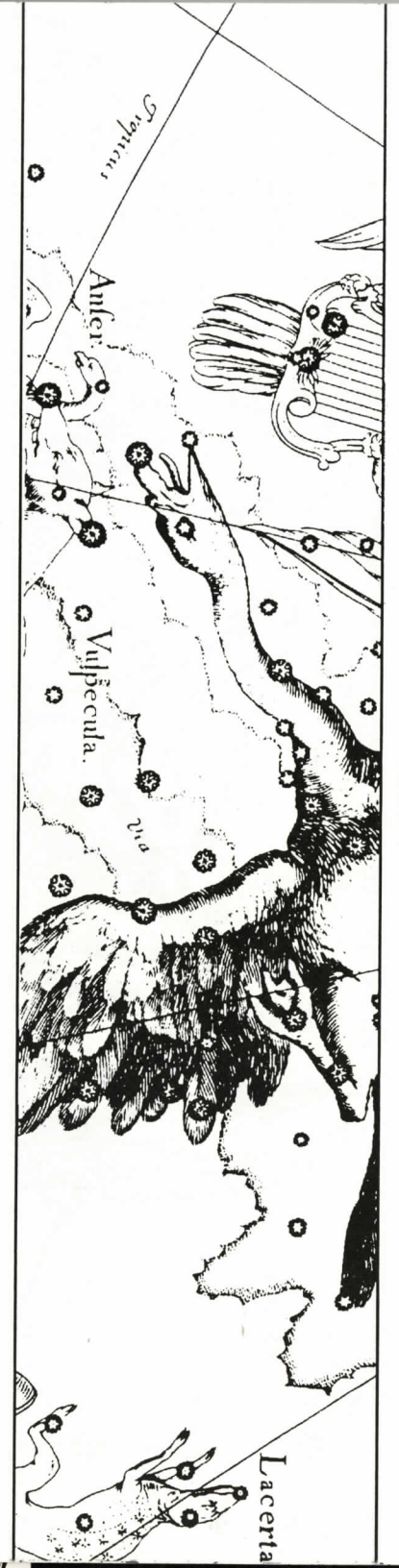
Your underground press is collapsing
All you do is complain
about the potholes
You've never even smelled the ink
Stop waving your partisan Banner

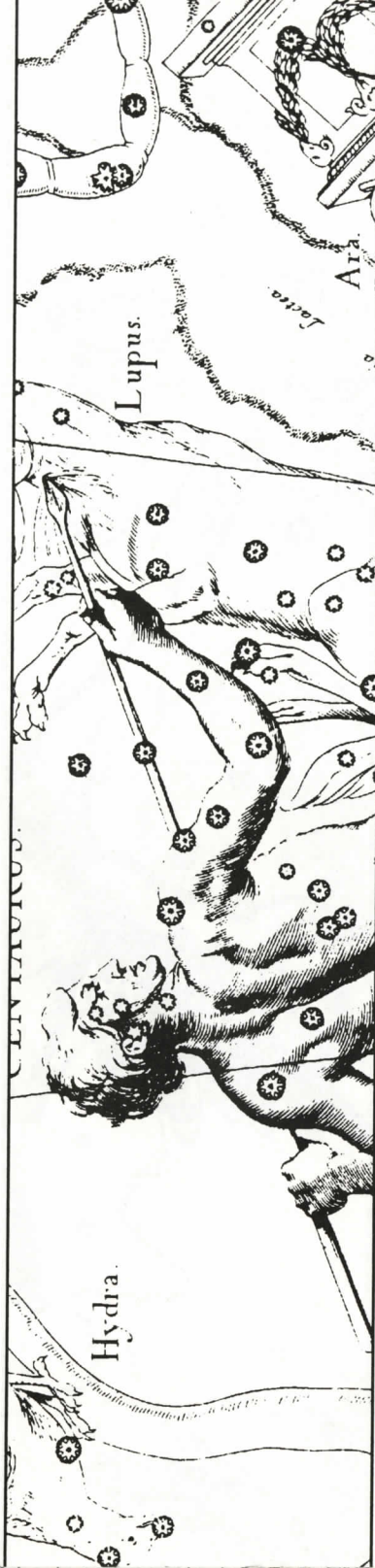
Don't lose faith
If your cowboy hats and cameras
leave for Branson
Roy Acuff is a one way street
for Good Ole Boys with business degrees

Where are you going
in such a hurry?
We all remember The Alamo
but Tony's been incarcerated
Slow down—the insurance business
is already thriving here

A travesty
mere street musicians outlawed
still you call yourself Music City
Of course the Opry House is an institution
So were the Second Avenue troubadors

David Katz





With facelifts and new buildings appearing on campus everyday, it is easy to lose sight of what has been here and what hasn't. This is not only the case with things, but with people as well. Jun Cheng Liu and Tanya Tewell, two new educators at MTSU, talk about their teaching positions, their theories on art and the ease with which they have fallen into their community at the Art Barn. Jun Cheng came to us from Texas, where he lived and taught for a couple of years. Here, he says, many doors were opened to him through the art galleries of Dallas and Fort Worth—galleries to which he did not have access in his homeland of Northern China. His studies while in China included drawing and traditional Chinese painting, which gave him a keen sense of detail as well as the necessary tools for developing style. Jun Cheng desired to extract the emotions that he knew lie inside of him, but only through his exposure in Texas could he access them.

He has paid a high price for this exposure, as his wife and child still reside in China. He uses this pain of separation to help create his artwork. The self portrait standing askew in the dormer window displays Jun Cheng's solitary approach to Realism. It can best be described as a combination between intricately detailed still life and collage. These pieces, or "personal files" as he calls them, are quite two dimensional. They look almost as if one could touch the cards, bits of paper and masking tape which accompany the image.

When asked about personal goals for himself and MTSU, Jun Cheng explains that he would like to act as an ambassador for art students in both the United States and China—a gateway to Eastern art. Currently, he teaches two painting classes while continuing to work on his own pieces.

During my conversation with Jun Cheng, a tall, slender woman dashes in to grab a vitamin. As she offers one to each of us, I realize that the person standing before us is Tanya Tewell. Tanya moved here from Arizona, where she did her graduate work and taught classes. She too uses a form of Realism in her painting, with an emphasis on the person rather than the pastoral.



Tanya Tewell and Jun Cheng Liu

photo by Sheri LaRose

Tanya attests that her fascination with people arose out of what most would consider a rather unusual childhood. As a young girl in Indiana she lived with her grandmother, who kept a home for orphans and wayward people. Tanya describes this experience with relish; some of these boarders travelled with the circus, while others stayed with her grandmother for as long as thirty years. Tanya's early life was filled with the unexpected and out of this grew her love for people as an artform. Rich with color and light, her artwork reminds me of Bosch and his beastial images. Some are relatively simple in design, but all of them evoke a multitude of emotions. Tanya works mostly with colored pencil, graphite and oil; she often uses her child as subject matter.

Tanya's ability is due to her strength and fortitude, as she did not receive the necessary base she needed to develop proper technique through her undergraduate work. She began college at sixteen—a situation that she feels was much more

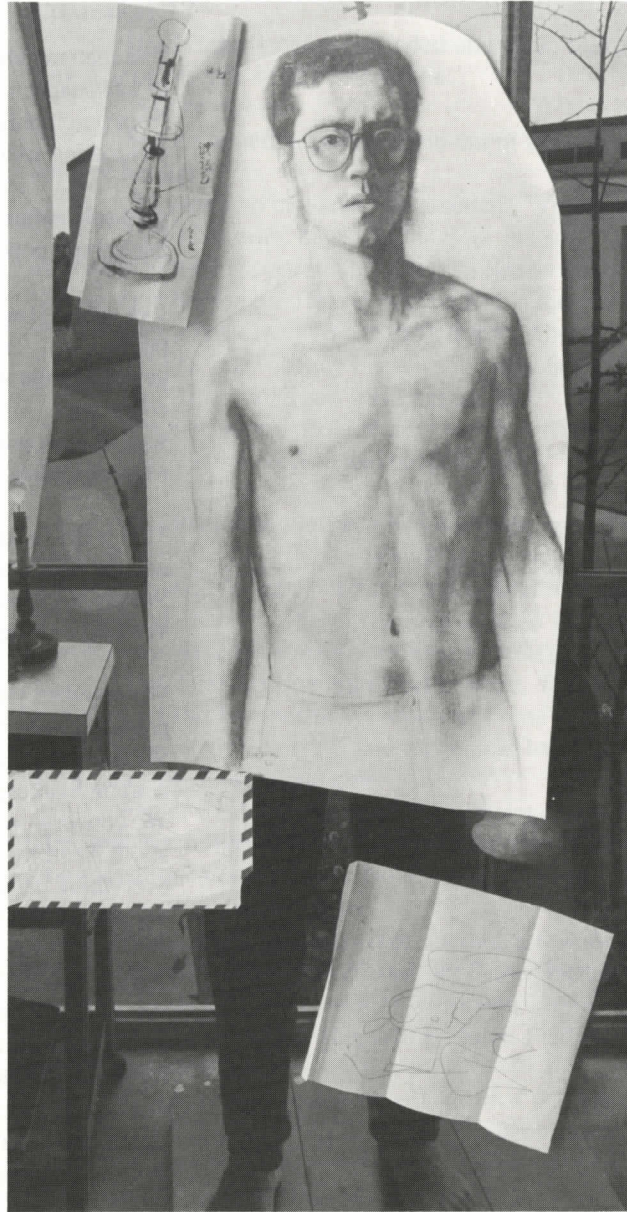
than she could handle at such a tender age. Most of her theory is self taught through the help of dreamwork and art therapy.

At the conclusion of our conversations, I ask both Tanya and Jun Cheng, "Have you always wanted to be artists?" They smirk at me saying that they do not consider themselves "artists"; that is an honor that others must bestow because they think your art is worthy. In that case, I think both Tanya and Jun Cheng are both more than worthy of this title. You can judge for yourself as they will have a showing in the Art Barn gallery from November 30 to December 10.



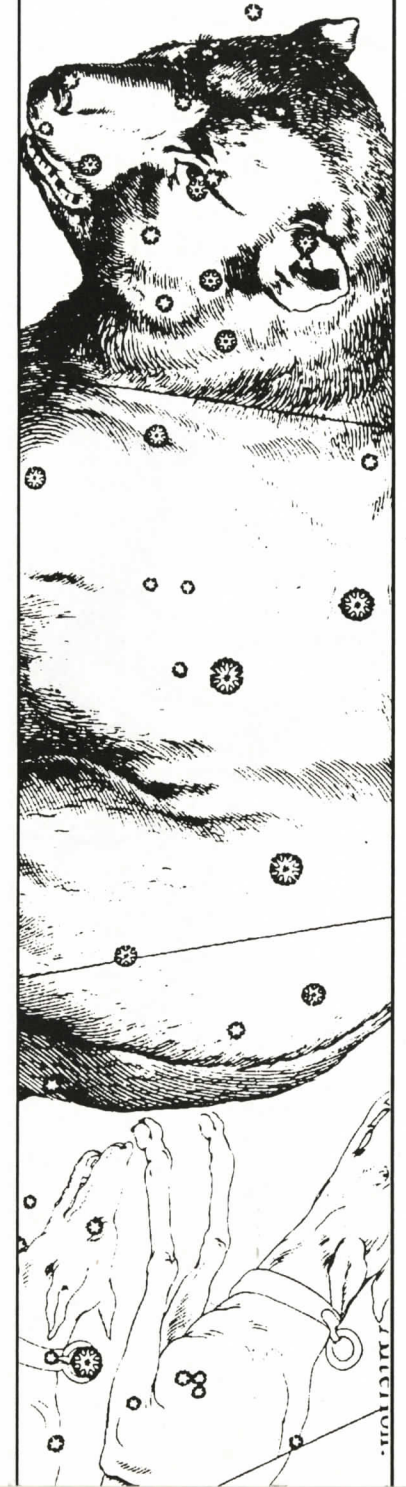
The Doll

graphite by Tanya Tewell

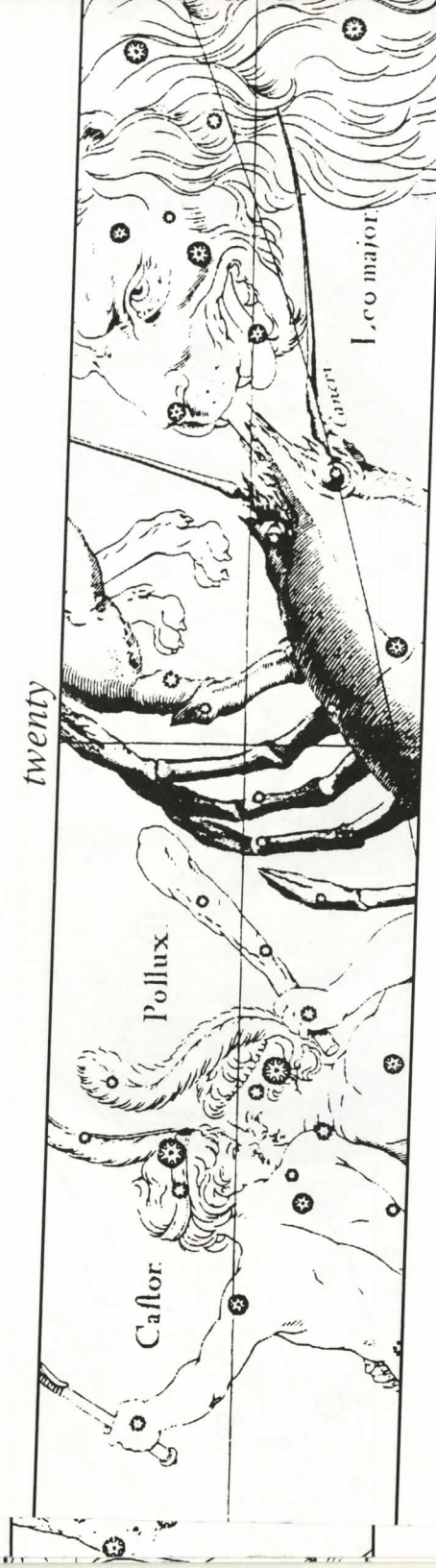


Me in the Dream

oil painting by Jun Cheng Liu



nineteen



Misanthropic Manifesto

I've seen my share
of newspaper scholars
front porch philosophers
postulating social discord

yard sale anthropologists
unearthing popcult artifacts

I've studied the manuscripts of suburban
poets
performed the works of basement
composers
sculpted arrowheads, painted
monochromatic murals

This is the ballad of the young, the restless,
and the disenfranchised;
We are the Roanoke survivors
We find no place in your world.

We populate your universities
patronize your bookstores
We are counting tips
reading Shakespeare in the break room
We converse via computers
about Anarchy, Zoroastrianism,
everything between.
We are not the Walrus.

We are called The Lost,
yet we find ourselves everywhere
maintaining conspiratorial silence
Infiltrating further
that one day we may
all simply stand
and declare peace.

David Katz

"Putá! Putá féa."

Papi screamed at Adela from the old man's window.

She wrapped her arms around her swollen stomach and hugged gently, in an effort to shield her baby from the parrot's condemnation.

Whore. Ugly whore.

"Callate, Papi," she called to him. "Quiet!"

The green and yellow bird flapped his wings and said nothing else.

A storm had settled over the small island the night before. It came from the east—from the sea—avoiding the dense mangroves which blanketed the west side of the island and served as a natural filter against the weather.

The wind was fierce and briney, and mixed with the fine ocean mist were grains of sand and rock that burned Adela's eyes and stung her skin.

She felt her brother, Guillermo, rush past her, and watched as he ran to a cluster of palm trees. The fruits, usually far beyond the reach of the small boy, were now under the influence of the wind, and wavered occasionally within the range of his machete.

Through the haze, Adela watched him. It was an awkward dance of balance Guillermo was performing; his left hand shielded his eyes and mouth, while his right hand waved the long-bladed knife a few inches below the fruits. In the heavy mixture of sand and spray, it looked to Adela as though her brother was engaged in some solitary dance, and all the while battling the wind.

From behind his house, the old man came, walking slow and crooked towards her brother. He stopped a few feet behind and to the left of the boy's swinging arm. Adela saw the old man touch her brother's shoulder. The knife paused and the still right arm dropped to the boy's side. The old man, whom everyone on the island called "Abuelo," moved behind Guillermo and grasped him under each arm. With a graceful ease that surprised the young girl, Abuelo lifted Adela's brother to the tree. The boy removed his hand from his face and made two clean, swift strokes at the fruit, knocking three large cocos to the sand.

Abuelo set Guillermo down. Adela smiled as her brother picked up the largest of the three fruits and offered it to the old man, who accepted, and then retreated, slightly more stooped, to his home.

Guillermo put a coconut under each arm and began to fight the wind back to the porch. When he reached the top of the stairs,

1. The wind will not carry me. . . I am special.

he dropped the fruits at Adela's feet and sat down, rubbing his eyes and breathing heavily.

"If not for the cocos," Adela teased, "you might have been blown away."

Her brother's chest expanded and sank, making the large pink scar on his side stretch and recede.

"Si," he sighed.

Señor Guitteriez quietly came out of the house and looked down at his son.

"El viento no me lleva," he asserted. "Yo soy especial!"

José Guitteriez began to laugh at his son, who sat down and began to rub his eyes again. Adela smiled at the pleasant sound coming from her father. He had not laughed in months.

Papi's voice, softer now, drifted from Abuelo's window.

"Cuda, 'cuda es muy bueno—muy, muy bueno,"

Guillermo stood and waved at the bird.

"Papi es bueno. Hola, Papi!" Guillermo returned.

"Si," Papi screeched and became quiet.

. . .

The British had left nearly ten months ago. They came, it was said, to make a map of the islands along the coast. In addition, they were to look for items of value and natural resources wherever they dropped anchor. These treasures were to be traded for, and arrangements were to be made for future expeditions.

The islanders on San Pedro were, for the most part, untrusting of the Europeans. A ship had come years before even Adela's father had been born, and the sailors had taken with them five young, unwilling island girls.

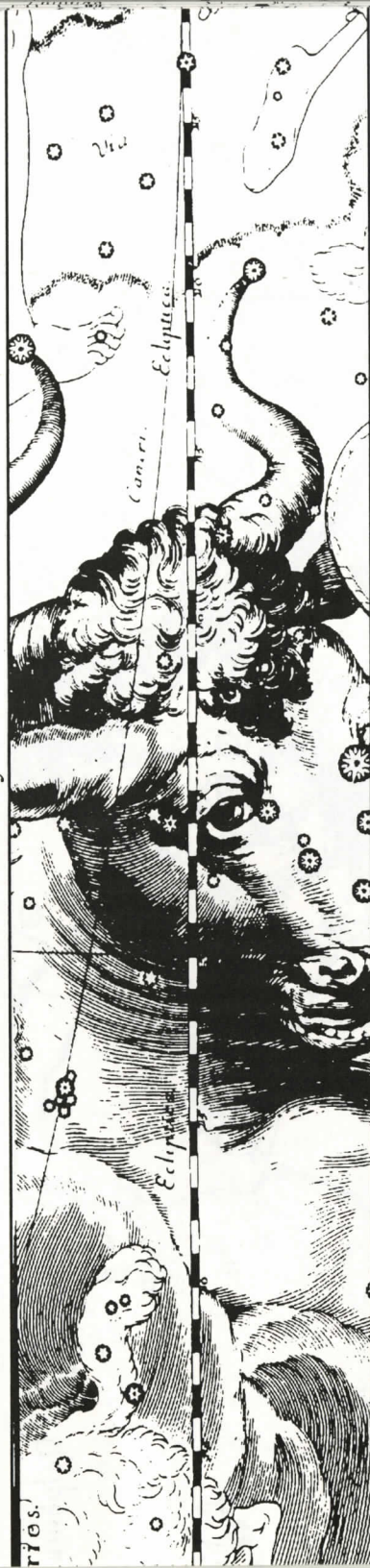
Father Pedro came from the mainland only a few years later, and his religious influence over the people of San Pedro, along with occasional visits from white bishops, softened the islanders to visitors and blancos.

When the small boat that carried a few British sailors touched the sand, it was first blessed by Father Pedro, then pulled ashore. Most of the islanders who had come see crossed themselves silently, either supporting Father Pedro's blessing, or protecting themselves.

When it was decided by council that the rest could come ashore, the whole island went to watch. Guillermo seemed the most excited and stayed awake nearly until sunrise, helping the sailors raise their tents and practicing his poor English.

The British made their camp at the edge of the mangroves





where there were fewer snakes and many fresh water springs. Every afternoon, when Adela and her brother had finished studying with Father Pedro, Guillermo went to the British camp. The small boy showed the captain around the island and brought fine black coral from the reef. Adela's brother also showed the sailors where to fish and told them about the white barracuda that swam around the reef and which was longer than Father Pedro. Few had seen the fish, and they called him "diablo blanco"—the white devil.

The captain of the ship was very interested in the black coral. Once a day, he would go with the islanders and paid in silver for jewelry to take back for the king.

Once, while the captain was at sea, his wife asked Guillermo to catch a fish for them. The boy nodded, and a few minutes later came back with a large bonita. He was rewarded with a silver and gold charm necklace, which he wore with pride. This began an opulent system of barter between the male children of San Pedro and the British—an equal trade of jewelry for fish—although no child's gift was more beautiful and shiny than Guillermo's necklace.

Adela only rarely visited the camp. When she did, it was not out of curiosity but out of concern for her brother, who would sometimes miss dinner.

One Sunday, only a few hours before sunset, she walked with Father Pedro to the camp. Her brother, as usual, was fishing in the brackish water inlet that connected the warm ocean to the cooler water which ran between the roots of the mangroves.

Guillermo, stripped to his waist, was having little luck with the fish and moved out farther with each toss of his spear. Adela thought to say something after her brother dove under and appeared five yards from the shore. The water was still shallow, however, and she did not want to insult him.

The captain and his wife sat in the sand, watching Adela's brother intently. Guillermo's necklace gleamed and sparkled in the sunlight.

The boy raised his spear, and everyone became silent, even the other small boys who were fishing closer to shore. Adela heard her brother yell, "El diablo—" and screamed in horror as his head disappeared underneath the churning water.

There was a doctor among the British sailors. It was he and Father Pedro who pulled Adela's brother to shore. Guillermo was bleeding from a deep wound in his side and was unconscious from the shock of the attack. Father Pedro

carried him to Adela's house and laid him on a blanket on the porch.

Señor Gutteriez kept his wife in the kitchen, sheltering her from the sight of her bloodied son. Adela remained by Guillermo's side and held his hand as the doctor cleaned the wound and began to sew it closed. Father Pedro stayed also, praying and wetting Guillermo's head with cool water from the spring.

The boy woke up after stitching was complete and cried out. Father Pedro and the doctor held him down, and when he stopped struggling to get up, Guillermo opened his eyes and looked to Adela.

Señora Gutteriez came out to the porch then, sobbing, and gently clutching at her breast. She saw the wound and began to cry even louder. Adela leaned down to her brother and kissed his forehead.

"Mi hermano fuerté,"¹ she whispered. "I was afraid for you."

The doctor heard her and looked at Father Pedro.

"I teach the young ones a little English in school," explained the priest. "They rarely use it outside their studies."

"It is a valuable gift," the doctor said to Adela. "The gift of language—"

Adela smiled and nodded to him. "Señora Gutteriez, calmer now that she was making eye contact with her son, touched Adela's shoulder gently and took her daughter's place at Guillermo's side.

"Como estás, mi hijo?" she asked him.

"El diablo blanco no me matará,"² he answered.

Abuelo appeared on the porch, looking questioningly at Father Pedro.

"Diablo blanco?" the old man asked.

"Sí," answered the priest.

Abuelo looked down at Guillermo, sorry that his friend had been hurt.

"He was fishing too far from shore," the doctor added.

Abuelo shook his head in defiance and grabbed at his naked chest. Everyone was now staring at the old man, who said nothing but continued to clutch at his chest and point at Guillermo.

Father Pedro understood and translated Abuelo's charade to the others. "The necklace. . . he says, the necklace brought the fish."

The priest reached down and lifted the charm from the

1. My strong brother.
2. Diablo blanco will not kill me.

boy's chest; he then held it up for Señora Gutteriez, who knew only a little English. Adela's mother nodded in comprehension at Abuelo and returned to comforting Guillermo.

Adela excused herself and walked to the sea. The sun had set and the pale, full moon's light, untarnished in the cloudless sky, washed over the calm ocean.

Relief and realization washed over her all at once, and she fell to her knees in the sand, weeping and laughing at the same time. Her brother, whom she loved more than anything or anyone, and with whom she shared more than even her parents and Father Pedro, could have died in front of her. She might have watched her brother die.

The image of that possibility battled with the reality of her brother's survival in Adela's head.

She heard a noise behind her and turned around, expecting Father Pedro, and instead of the priest or even her father, Adela's eyes met those of the wearied, older doctor.

"Como estás?" he asked as he sat down beside her in the sand.

"You speak Spanish?" she asked him.

He laughed. "Just a little that I picked up at the university. You know far more English than I know Spanish."

Adela nodded, smiling. "Father Pedro believes it is important."

She looked up at the sky, feeling his eyes upon her and wishing for the words to express to him the gratitude she felt.

"Your brother is a strong, good young man," the doctor said, gazing out at the yellowed sea. "He will be fine."

Adela turned to him and placed her small hands over his. He closed his eyes and sighed.

"For saving my brother, I owe you my life," she whispered.

She led him to the water's edge and rubbed his hands in the gritty water, washing Guillermo's dried blood from the doctor's skin.

"You owe me nothing," he said after she had finished. "I am a doctor."

She looked to him, surprised, and insulted that he did not seem to understand the importance of her brother's life. Adela turned her eyes to his.

"Because I help so many," he said softly, "I do not become close with everyone. I will remember your brother's name and his wound. He was brave and strong for such a small boy."

"He has always been so," Adela answered, reaching up and clasping his hand in hers.

Adela woke alone in the tide, as if the same force that pulled the waters from the sand tugged also at her. The sun had not yet risen, and during the night, clouds had come to litter the sky and enshroud the moon.

She was surprised at the lack of pain below her waist, and although her legs were a little sore and her stomach somewhat weak, she was, for all practical purposes, the same.

She stood, and a breath of seagoing wind felt its way across her naked body. She bent down, plucked her dress from the sand, and noticed small red stains on the upper inside of her thighs. She knew it was blood—expected it but did not remember it—and went to the sea to wash it off.

She had given herself to him last night, given him the one thing that was so much what she had known and yet had not known was herself. He had accepted reluctantly, and in the end, gently. It had been performed with no more emotion or attachment than the paying of a debt.

Farther down the shore, she saw Abuelo, carrying a torch and a spear, and she quickly pulled the dress over her head. She was glad that it was not the priest, for he would have asked her questions that she would have had to answer.

She looked down again and saw, on the beach, a spot of blood-stained sand. A cluster of small brown insects were jumping around and burrowing through the tiny grains at her feet. Abuelo was coming closer, peering into the water. She kicked the sand over desperately and ran back to her home.

Five months later, after the physical sickness had been replaced by the shame and guilt, Father Pedro came to see Adela. He waited out on the porch while Señora Gutteriez retrieved her daughter from the kitchen.

Adela sat down beside the priest and looked at the wooden boards beneath her knees.

"You know," he began, "I used to love to hear you sing at mass—the beautiful voice of such a happy young girl rising above all the others."

She looked up at him, her eyes shining from some place within her that longed to return to peace.

Father Pedro sighed. Adela ran her hand over her stomach.

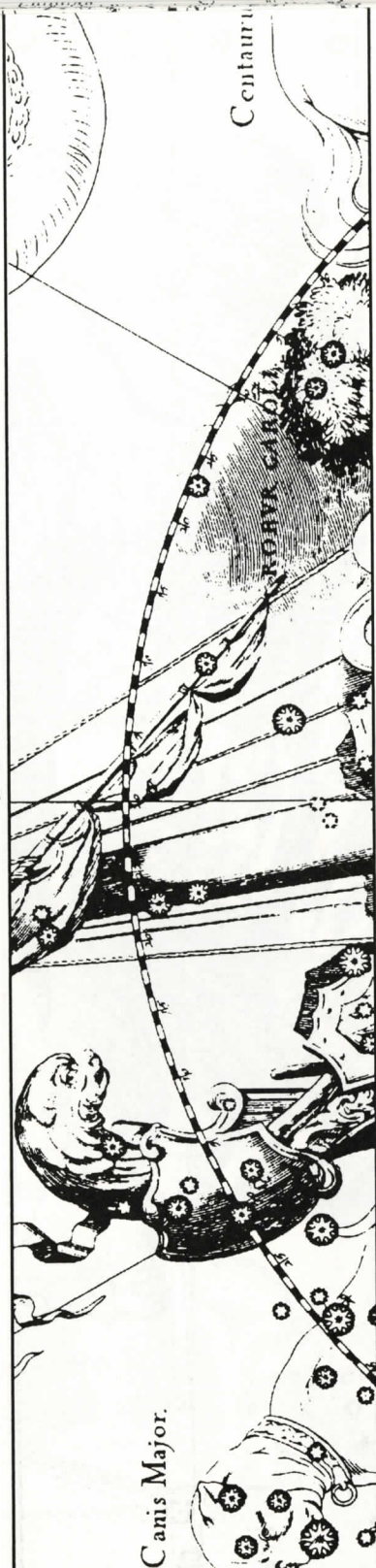
"Now the Gutteriez family sits in the back of the church and no longer can I hear your voice or see you smile."

"I am sorry," she said. "Father says we do not deserve to sit so close to a man of God."

The priest laughed. "You will tell your father that God gives his permission."

Adela smiled. There was an awkward silence.





"There is a cloud of shame over my family," said Adela. "No one except you and Abuelo will speak or listen to us. It is this way because of me."

The priest shook his head again. "What are you going to do then, never make peace with yourself or your family or your God? You will die alone."

Adela's gaze turned to the ocean. Somewhere out there lies the answer, she thought, another island. . . or the mainland itself. No one would know her. . .

Guillermo came out of the house and hugged the priest's arm. Adela saw her chance and stood up.

"So I will see you in the front on Sunday?" Father Pedro asked.

"I will send Papi to sing in my place," Adela replied, smiling.

. . . .

Adela opened her eyes slowly and stood. She walked over to where Guillermo was sleeping and bent down. 'Cuda's head turned restlessly from side to side in a slumber that was as fitful and restive as Adela's. She placed her warm hand on his forehead and his eyes opened quickly.

"It is okay, little one," she whispered, and kissed him on his cheek.

He smiled and closed his eyes.

In the kitchen, she found some left over bread pudding and ate just enough to lift the slight veil of hunger that distracted her.

She left the house and walked down to the beach, softly singing a song she had heard her mother sing to Guillermo when he was a baby. The wind had died down to a soft, warm breeze, and the threatening waters had subsided into rhythmic caps of white foam.

A few yards above the waterline, Adela found her father's boat and untied it from the palm. She pushed the weight of the craft towards the waters and against the sand. Her strength grew out of some unhurried desperation that turned and stormed in her stomach and which boiled up into her chest every time she looked back to the village.

Adela sat down in the boat and paused, expecting, on some level of consciousness, a will to fight or turn back. No such feeling or urge came.

She grasped the lighter of the two oars that lay in the boat. The other she heaved with great effort back into the sand.

The boat slid into the water and she began to paddle. Adela had only been in a canoe once before with her father, and he had paddled alone. She had watched carefully though,

and the boat, caressed by the riptide and propelled by her youth, glided towards the reef.

With every dip of her oar into the water, Adela's stomach constricted. When she reached the channel that led past the reef and to the open sea, her oar hit something at the side of the boat. The movement in the water almost forced the oar out of her hand.

Swimming near the surface and illuminated by the soft moonlight was a great, white, cigar-shaped fish.

For the first time since she had left the village, Adela was afraid. She dropped the oar in the water and fell backwards in the boat. The pressure within her was ebbing and ripping with the waves.

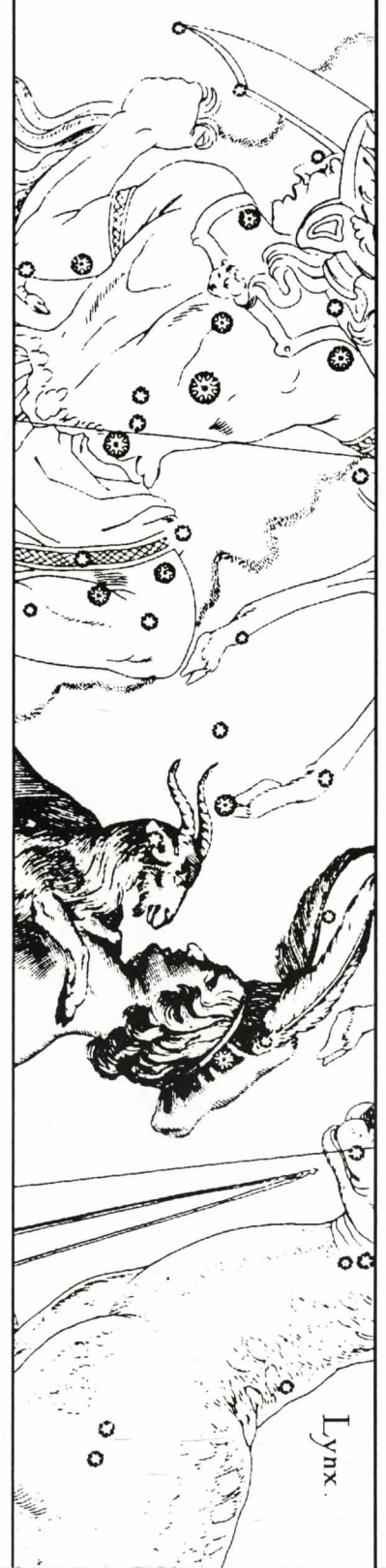
Past the reef, the sea swarmed and swirled in a violent contrast to the calmer waters around the island. Adela felt the canoe close up around her as the waves began to disorient everything except that which was within.

From some place inside her, Adela imagined the cry of a baby, and she began to pray.



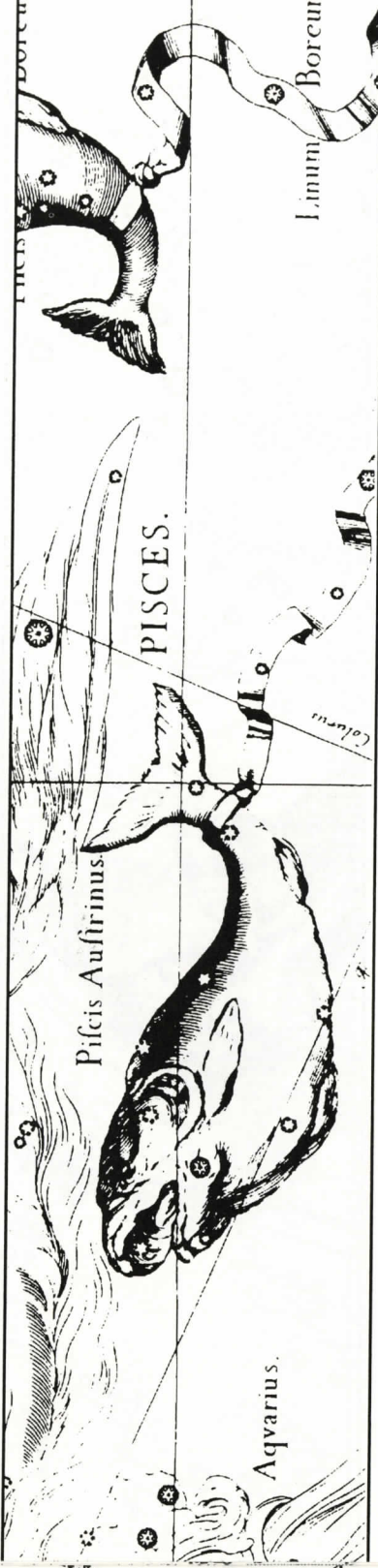
Nuns

Carl E. Lambert



Twenty-five

Lynx.



Of Life to Love

Oh, for my tender folds of life
Layered with perfection
Of warm secure
sheets of silk,
Wrapped around fragile
creation.

Be gentle in holding—
Care for me
Honestly—
Love me without
Deception—
Kiss me
Softly—

When morning light glows
My silhouette,
Let its rays protrude
What clouds selfishly steal.

Understand a dew drop
Falling from my lash.
Keep me young and new
With abundance
Flourishing of that
Which you have to offer.

For to take of greed
I shall not survive;
Veins wither,
Breath, not.

My protective silk sheets
Fall away.

Forgive
When thorns prick—
Patience
When stem breaketh not—
For with no defense
Warm blood grows cold.

Allow me to open
By thy vibrant rays
Of warmth and light
To fill me. . .

Then
Shall I feel
You care—

Nancy Worn

MLK Day '94

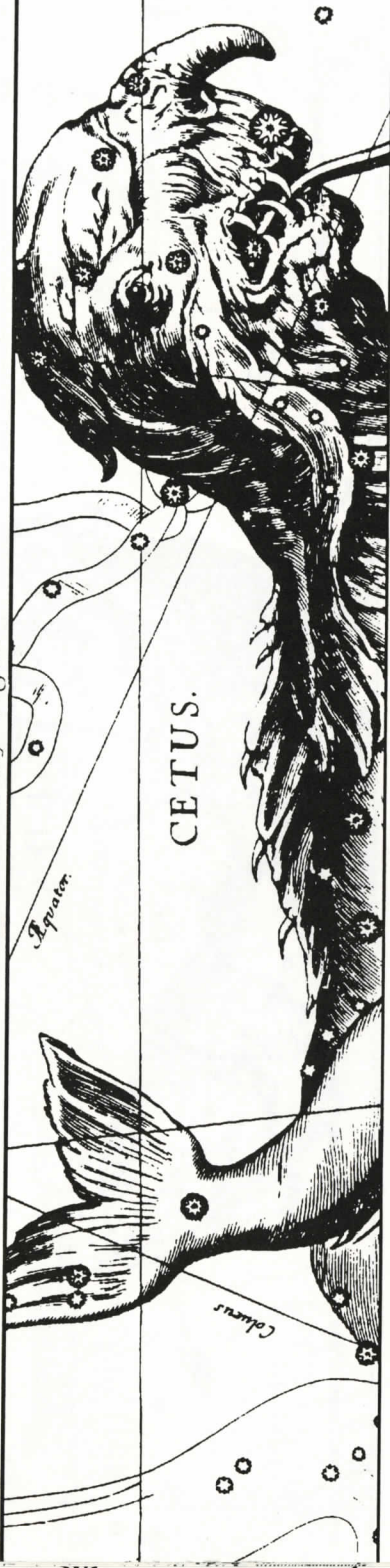
When it's winter like this
I want to pull you all in
and the southern lie stands naked
and frozen
and winter will never end
and children too cold to love
abandon body heat—futile attempts
at integration—too cold to care
and summer seems like
it will never succeed
and hot-blooded youths will
never thaw out
and eighteen's a joke
in frozen youth homes
Flourescent pink rooms
and Barbie gargoyles
with magic outside—4 iced
months away

when it's winter like this
I'd love to pull you all in
and I seem like a saint
but a sinner usurps. . . if my
thighs would thaw out,
and you'd join me inside,
The situation would certainly snowball. . .

Amy York



twenty-seven



Ode to Elvis Presley

In the garage

Surrounded by power tools
And rodent droppings

Elvis squats

Rhinestones and all
Between the Big Wheel and the gas grill.

At 285 pounds

A hunk-a-hunk of burning love
Elvis gyrates wildly.

Reeling, he falls

Backward into the 1970's lime green chaise lounge
And there he breathes his last,
The King upon his throne.

Don Qualls



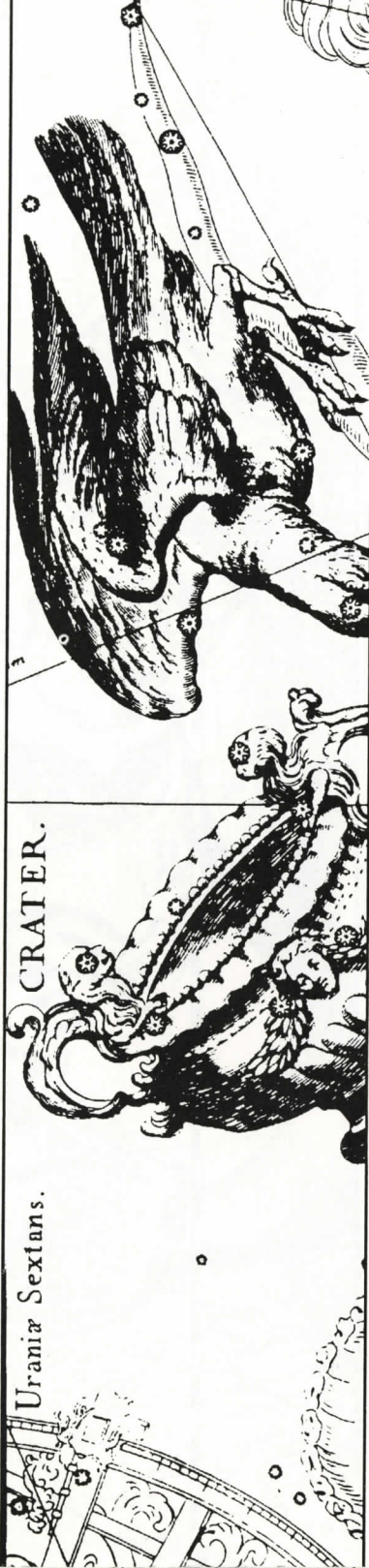
Untitled

Charles Hogue



twenty-nine

thirty



I come carrying balloons of joy
you pop them

one
by
one

With pins of cynicism

Esther Seeman

Sirens in the night
strike a note of terror,
The nearer they come
the more fragile my certainty

Esther Seeman

Take my dusty hands
Shake the tired voice from my throat
Walk me home
And gently scold me
With where have you beens
And I've been waitings
Let me catch up on my sleep
So I can start fresh
On everything I missed

Dan Shearon

This is no place
To peek at the stars
Or bathe in the night,
Not in this asphalt lot
Behind your home.
You should be with the Others
In their green and gold fields
Singing, Hoping, Making Love
If only you could.

Dan Shearon





Liquid Thoughts of a Dream

Her body turns with mine,
as we move in the moonlight and
extend our arms, reaching to each
other as young children reach for
the twinkling stars in her eyes
shine a brilliant blue-grey land
around her moves into shadow
as I step into her embrace of the
world turned black from the clouds
rolling over the moon shines off
her hair into the shadow of the
trees above us gently let loose
their precious leaves of fall-ing
down in the soft, emerald grass
that surrounds us and is entwined
in her hair covers her face as she smiles
her teeth shine in the moonlight
her laugh rings the stars like
tiny bells of celebration of love
yet defined. . .
as her body turns with mine. . .

Ryan Seiberling

