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## Shawnee Silhouette (Winter 1988)

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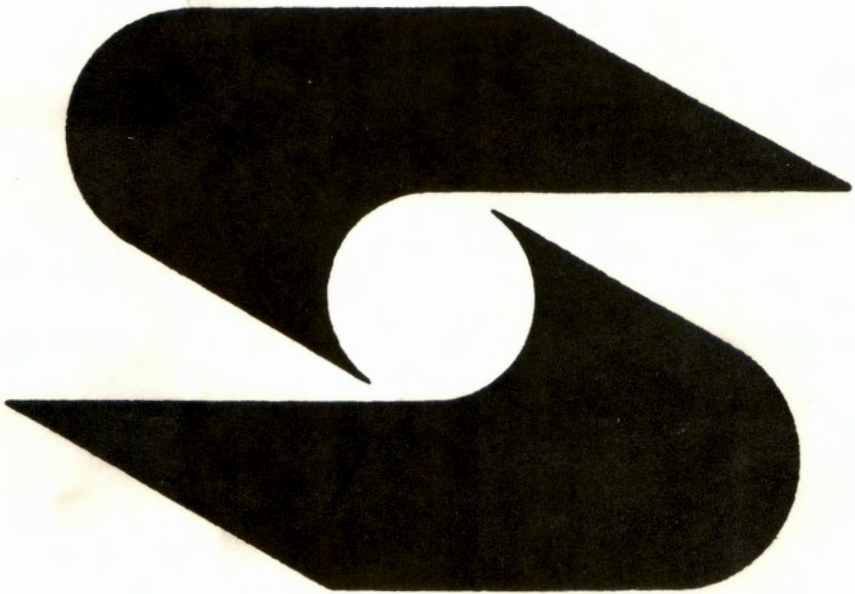
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et al.: Shawnee Silhouette (Winter 1988)

# THE SHAWNEE SILHOUETTE



**WINTER 1988**

The Shawnee Silhouette is published quarterly by the editorial staff at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, Ohio. Subscriptions are available for \$2.00 a copy or \$5.00 a year. The three issues will be published during Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters. Submissions are invited in the areas of prose, poetry, art, and photography.

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## POETRY REPORT

Through the courtesy of the Fancyflights Division of WD Contesta Verselines, I recently flew to Muse Mountain in the Province of Erehwon to visit the immortal Ertha Poetica and some members of her family. I am glad to report that in spite of recent ailments, she is reasonably well and functioning in all faculties. However, some of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren have been causing her problems and frustrations.

Her greast grandchild, Obscureson, the one who is suicidal and talks to himself in meaningless phrases, is now rarely seen except at grant-supported readings in public parks and universities. Even his great grandmother insists that he is missed only by those who believe that a great poem must also be a great puzzle, laced with personal symbolism and recurring four-letter words.

Ertha's oldest daughter, Sonetta, though variously polluted and prostituted, has nevertheless produced some decent children who move freely within their iambic cages and sing clear songs of balance and beauty with an average of five beats each to fourteen bars. She is the first to admit, however, that there have been many abortions and still births in her career.

Another daughter, Di Dactica, who first married a college professor and then a minister, goes around offending people by telling them in rhyme what they should or should not do and how they should or should not do it; but lately she doesn't seem to get out as often. Besides, she is finally learning that no one listens to her anyway.

Ertha's great grandson, Freeman, likes to play "tennis with the net down," but seems to have learned that it is also fun to play with the net up and that, with or without a net, the game is a disaster without rules.

The most highly educated of Ertha's offspring is her great grandson, Professor A. K. Demia, Ph. D. Although her would never admit kinship with Obscureson, he nevertheless writes in a similar way except that his vocabulary is much more learned. His poems are often sprinkled with French, Greek and Latin words and phrases which few readers except other Ph. Ds can understand.

Dr. Demia has a great following made up of other professors who publish one another in hundreds of subsidized "literary journals" in colleges and universities throughout the country. And probably because of a strange law titled "Publish or Perish," these publications also print endless comments, analyses, and debates about all kinds of poets and poetry, past and present. The Dr. A. K. Demia group calls this "literary criticism." Like vultures, they are forever picking the bones and brains of the great poets then regurgitating their ingested ruminations in the pages of their "learned journals." The publications are usually off-limits to other members of the Poetica family, even though they are supported mainly by the taxes of those who are excluded.

One of the largest branches of the Poetica family, the Anachronos, behaves in an even stranger manner. Though they live and work in modern cities, watch television, drive new cars and speak modern English, they insist on writing their verse in trite, obsolete language, using words, phrases and literary styles that went out of fashion years ago. In conversation they would say, "I saw the Grand Canyon," but in verse they write, "Mine eyes hath seen the glory of the grandest abyss of all."

Unlike their relative, Obscureson, they believe in absolute clarity--however, not enough to improve their punctuation, sentence structure and spelling. They all say the same things over and over in the same way; such as, "beauty is beautiful, sadness is sad, love is lovely, death is deadly, nature is grand, and god is good." Then they applaud one another. Most of them use rhyme, such as "love-dove, moon-June and breeze-trees." A few write in unrhymed lines of trite prose phrases often inverted, such as "Love hast my poor tattered heartt set free."

The Inspiritos, another Poetica family group, are descendents of Di Dactica and have intermarried with the Anachronos almost to the point of poetic incest. However, they are careful to draw rigid family lines designed to insulate themselves from what they call the vulgar masses. The Inspiritos insist that they have a hotline to the Divine Muse and that, because of this divine direction, everything

they write is perfect just as it comes from their holy pens and sacred typewriters. They insist it would be sacrilege to revise or tamper with anything they have written, and they are insulted if you ask them why the Divine Muse has never learned the basics of grammar--specifically, spelling, punctuation, word usage and sentence structure, not to mention the basics of versification.

The Wordweavers, a small, unassuming branch of the Poetica family, are artists and craftsmen who are fascinated with the sounds, smells, colors, histories and multiple meanings of words. They are forever trying to write all subjects in a new way, seeking original imagery, making marriages of words that never met before. Their object is to communicate something significant in a new and significant way. Allured by alliteration, mastered by metaphor, submerged in simile and symbol, they constantly study the best poets of the past and present and use what they learn to improve their own original writing skills. They avoid the trite, easy, and archaic. They know that somewhere between the extremes of obvious trivia and obscure pomposity lies the golden poetic mean, the inaccessible world of the perfect word. They know that they will never quite reach it, but sometimes they almost do by weaving equal measures of sound and sense and by teaching emotion and meaning to sing a harmonious whole.

There were other groups and sub-groups, of course; but I couldn't possibly contact them all. The day before I returned to the prosaic world, "Ignore this farce," Eartha said. "Come with me, and I'll show you the source of poetry."

She took me on a long hike up Muse Mountain to the secret pastures in the foothills of Parnassus where Pegasus, accompanied by a unicorn, could be dimly seen grazing quite peacefully in the misty distance. Ertha explained that Pegasus had once been gentle and easily available for poetic flights, but that was before her great-grandchildren had begun to harrass and frighten him. They had spoken to him in non-languages that confused him. They had tried to make him a beast of burden by forcing him to transport the boring, trivial or meaningless. They fed him sugar spiked with LSD, the irritated him with harsh sounds and discordant syllables. Finally, they singed his wings with firecrackers in an attempt to make him fly faster and perform aerial acrobatics.

As a result of all this, Pegasus deserted his pastures and remained unseen by human eyes for a long, long time. It was not until recently, Ertha told me, that the Wordweavers had been able to coax him back into vision with loving patience and honest poetry. She felt confident that Pegasus would continue to respond to gentle treatment and that he would eventually make himself once more available for flights to the peaks of Parnassus, to Helicon to drink from Hippocrene, and finally to the lost kingdom of Appolo.

*John D. Engle Jr.,  
Staff Writer  
Writer's Digest*

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## **A Wintered Field**

am looking at the periphery  
that lays in all its many forms before me,  
trying to assume its reasons for existence  
and assimilate its realities.

the sky is a maniacal blue,  
and a blinding sun showers the earth with light  
while stabbing jagged fire spears  
across a cloudless heaven.

am scanning the frozen ground,  
beblanketed with a thin layer of snow.

there's not a bird in sight,  
but an occasional free snowflake illuminates itself  
as an illusionary bird;  
a sacrificial wraith of crystalline beauty,  
melting away its presence in time.

a small tree barely unfolding itself through a timid wind  
staggers its thawing limbs at the crisp morning.  
i touch the tree with an emotion of love--  
it warms  
and straightens to the newness of the day.

*- William James Kovanda*

## Virginal Rooms

no one has ever loved in this room.  
i am lonely for the ghosts of it.  
nothing has ever been thought of here.  
in some rooms much lovemaking has been made,  
but no love felt, or maintained,  
it is like a mountain that  
has never known the wind.

*--Jonathan Levant*

## Silhouette

Shadow carrying heavy packages of thought  
drumming steps to melodies  
no one else has heard today  
revealing second sides to one-faced flat objects-  
just once too often taking a step past where  
I stopped.

*--Deborah Hale Spears*

## **Out of Touch**

A poem with no rhyme  
A dance out of time  
A record that's scratched  
A hand not attached

*--Dexter Wolfe*



## Windowpane of Dream

I search for you in night thoughts.  
    Lines of a poem  
    run through my mind,  
I wander in a thousand miles  
    of dream.  
I follow the wind;  
    it caresses my face.  
I feel your presence.  
But what will I remember  
    when I wake  
to sunlight  
    on the curtained window?

*--Janet Nesler*

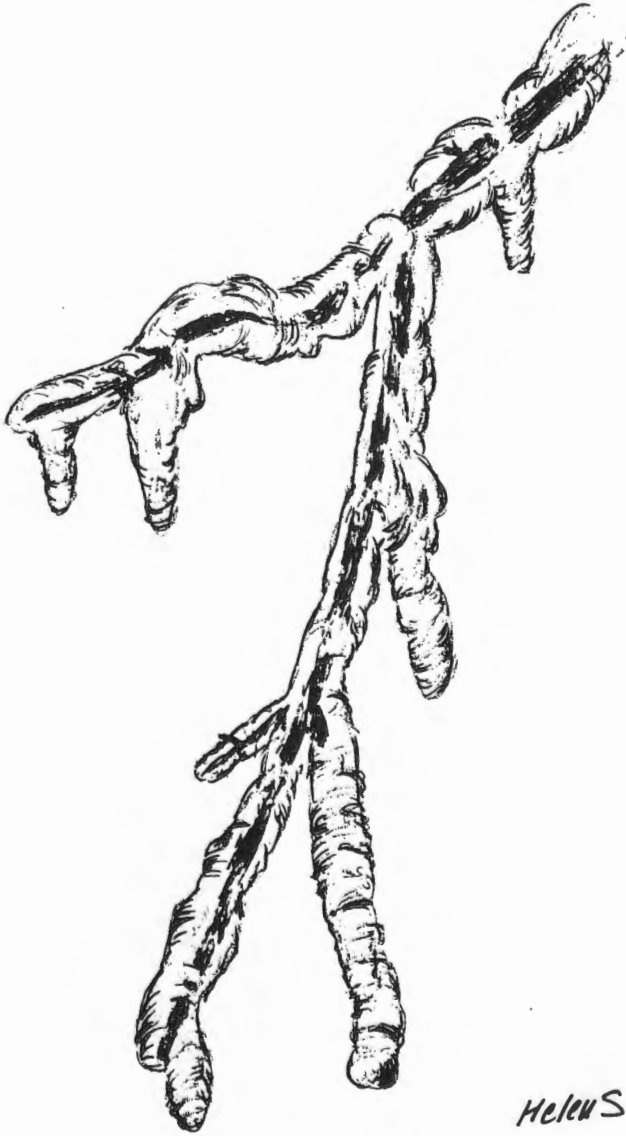
## **Submission**

Barbarian creatures lurk inside us.  
Bold, blind aggressors,  
the leaders of the pack,  
they make submissive or destroy  
those who do not cooperate.  
Sometimes through force,  
sometimes by alienation,  
the will of our masters becomes complete  
when we submit  
or learn to live with  
our domination.

*- H.C. Mason*

Accepted by  
Suwanee Poetry Anthology....





## **When They Played "Misty" for Me**

Songs of innocence  
brought me to edges of ecstasies  
and bound me to that spot,  
if just for a moment.  
It was a moment not to be forgotten,  
this song of transient beats,  
and my emotions short lived.  
Yet I yearn for more of those moments,  
when I am lost in the lyrics of heaven songs,  
riding on shades of moods cherished now and forever.  
Songs of innocence.  
Songs of pleasant moments,  
reside in the inner chambers,  
to be summoned again.

*-Joseph Ferri*



## I Look at Carl's and He Looks at Mine

Carl lost another fight this weekend. He got in it with this trucker at the 68 Club. The trucker bounced him off the pool table and threw him into the bass guitar. Carl showed up to teach with his wrist in a cast and told the Dean that he had fallen off a ladder. Even the dear old Dean wouldn't swallow that line.

It's no problem, though. The students in the art department love Carl. He wears cowboy boots in the winter and sandals in the summer and his hair is never combed, just sort of flies away and this thatch of red hair on his chest bristles out of his open workshirt collar and he barks, "No student of mine will be saddled and ridden and made into a Wall Street wage slave. Create or get the hell out of my class!"

Once I thought he was going to be great. He was living in that shack he built out at the junkyard, existing on vegetables from his own garden and beer, and building these crazy, twenty-foot-high sculptures out of old auto parts. And he had that poem in The Mid-West Review and they asked him to come over to the state u. and do a reading. God, he was impressive. Up there in front with his eyes closed, he chanted his stuff from memory in a basso profundo. And then some hotshot Ph. D. candidate asked him if his stuff wasn't derivative. Carl offered to whip his ass right there in the lecture hall.

That was six years ago -- before Ashberry. He came jumping off his Harley and ran into my office one morning and said he'd just read this guy who blew the top of his head off (Carl was never one for understatement) and he showed me this stuff by a Pulitzer Prize winner. From there on it was no more Mid-West Review; it was The Funky Knee and She'll Be Comin' Around The Mountain.

We always exchange our stuff. Carl says, "Bill, I want you to be brutally honest with me. There's nothing you could say that could ever alter our relationship." Then he hands me his latest poem.

*My father is coughing up  
Rough shards of quicklime*



*As the mountains crash silver  
Lies into broken promises,  
Cash register of tomorrow.*

What can I say? I haven't understood a word Carl has written in the past five years. I think about all the fishing trips and all-nighters we've pulled and I tell him I love it, but think maybe his punctuation needs revision.

Carl can handle that -- punctuation revision. To him punctuation and spelling are as irrelevant as the burrs on a gorilla's ass. He could care less. "It's the vision and the passion that drives poetry, Bill. I'd sooner be dead than count syllables." But the truth is I don't think Carl could handle any basic criticism of his work.

You take that little Nigerian sculptress with the hairy legs that he lives with; her function is strictly to feed his ego. If she ever decided that Carl's stuff was dreck, she'd be gone in a minute.

Now me, I'm not that type. More objective. I'll never be great and I know it. I'm just another lit professor who scribbles on the side, no pretensions, basically a pipe and dog kind of guy. Once in a while I get in The Sandinistan or The Devil's Itch, but you'll never see me in Poetry Review, and it's not breaking my heart.

In my view, art is the greatest democracy of all. We've all got the same talent and intelligence. It's just that some have had better training and found their niche and others haven't. Like you -- maybe you could have been a great harmonica player or something, but nobody ever gave you music lessons so you never found out.

The function of art is to promote tranquility. Carl says, "Great art spits in the public eye and offers to bite the bourgeoisie in the ass." I disagree. Art is not tattoos and chains and women with hair on their legs. Like the Japanese think -- even the arrangement of foods on a plate is a work of art and should invoke serenity.

So I show my stuff to Carl. Actually I think he's jealous. Maybe that's what got into him. He was practically foaming at the mouth over my last poem. "This is drivel, Bill, worthless as horse turds. You ought to be asked to step outside. Art has to shout! You're not doing anything here but playing with yourself. You've

prostituted your talent, man."

I don't know what got into Carl. We've always agreed to be honest with each other and then he turns around and pulls a stunt like that. To tell you the truth, I think he's doing more than just over-drinking these days. I think he's putting stuff up his nose and ruining his emotional stability. But the saddest part is he's lost his objectivity and critical standards. Maybe the Dean and I ought to have a talk. For God's sake, art is no place to turn a madman loose.

-- *Hugh Smith*



**and it came to pass...  
September wind claimed every one**

September whispers secrets  
across Missouri  
blowing yellow leaves  
from fingers of green,  
the first to let go.  
Others cling  
to the transient growing season.  
There always is  
the first to go and  
the last...those  
who cannot bear the thought  
of change.  
They do accept,  
however resolutely,  
in the end...or beginning.  
Walnuts fall  
giving punctuation to  
wind sentences.  
Voices to remind me  
that my only security lies  
in the smell of creekbank  
and wood.  
Grasshoppers sing in celebration  
of forty-eight Septembers.  
She wears a different face  
this year,  
yet shamelessly displays  
the same old golden petticoat.  
Missouri's September teases,  
first with soft exaltation  
then forces her lusty breath  
to brush my hair with fury.  
September reminds me that  
she is all her own  
and in that realization  
lies some portion of my salvation.  
I must claim this  
blue-skied instant,  
as others far away lay claim each  
to their September day.

*-Juanita Mays Teeters*



## A Proper Goodbye

The cold November wind blew dead leaves across the freshly-covered grave. All day there had been a hint of snow in the air, and now the slate-gray sky was beginning to spit flakes angrily at the late autumn landscape.

They stood in the cemetery, two alone. The burial had taken place hours ago, yet something had pulled them back. Back from the warmth of home, and away from the security of familiar sounds and smells. Back to this barren place. Something unspeakable yet desperately urgent had brought them back to the grave of Miles Preston.

Shaun turned his collar against the bitter cold. He allowed his eyes to roam the stark surroundings, and he felt a chill that had nothing to do with the wind.

There's something ominous here, he thought. Something I'm not ready to face. But what? He looked across Miles' grave at Cyd. She was staring intently at the grave and seemed lost in thought.

I'm a lucky man, he thought. Cyd is more beautiful today than she was twenty years ago when I married her. She's managed to raise two kids, and me, and still look so good. I should tell her more often but I just... the words just don't seem to come. I hope she's happy; I think she is.

"Poor Miles," he said, more to get Cyd's attention than anything else.

Cyd continued to stare at the grave for several seconds before she looked up into Shaun's eyes and said, "Shaun, there's nothing we can do for Miles now."

"I know, honey. We'll leave soon. I just... well, I just didn't feel that we'd said goodbye properly.

Somehow, when all the people were here at the funeral, it all seemed so... I don't know. Impersonal. He was the best friend I ever had in the world, and I needed to let him know that I'll miss him. I couldn't do that with all those other people here."

Cyd looked deep into his eyes, but said nothing.

"Do you think his spirit is around?" Shaun asked. "Do you think he knows we're here?"

"I'm sure he doesn't," Cyd answered with a harshness she hadn't intended. "He doesn't know

anything. He's dead." Cyd looked inward and thought, He's dead. Oh, my God, he's really dead. Oh Miles, why? How can I live like this? How can I face day after dreary day, knowing you're gone? You were the only light in this dark world of mine; the only thing I loved. How can I face tomorrow, knowing you won't be there?

"Cold, honey?" Shaun asked, invading her thoughts. "I can see you shivering from way over here."

She looked at Shaun, but said nothing. A tear escaped her eye and trickled down her cheek.

"You loved him too, didn't you Cyd? It's okay to show it. Everyone loved him. You should have seen the way people gathered around him. He just seemed to have that ability to draw people to him."

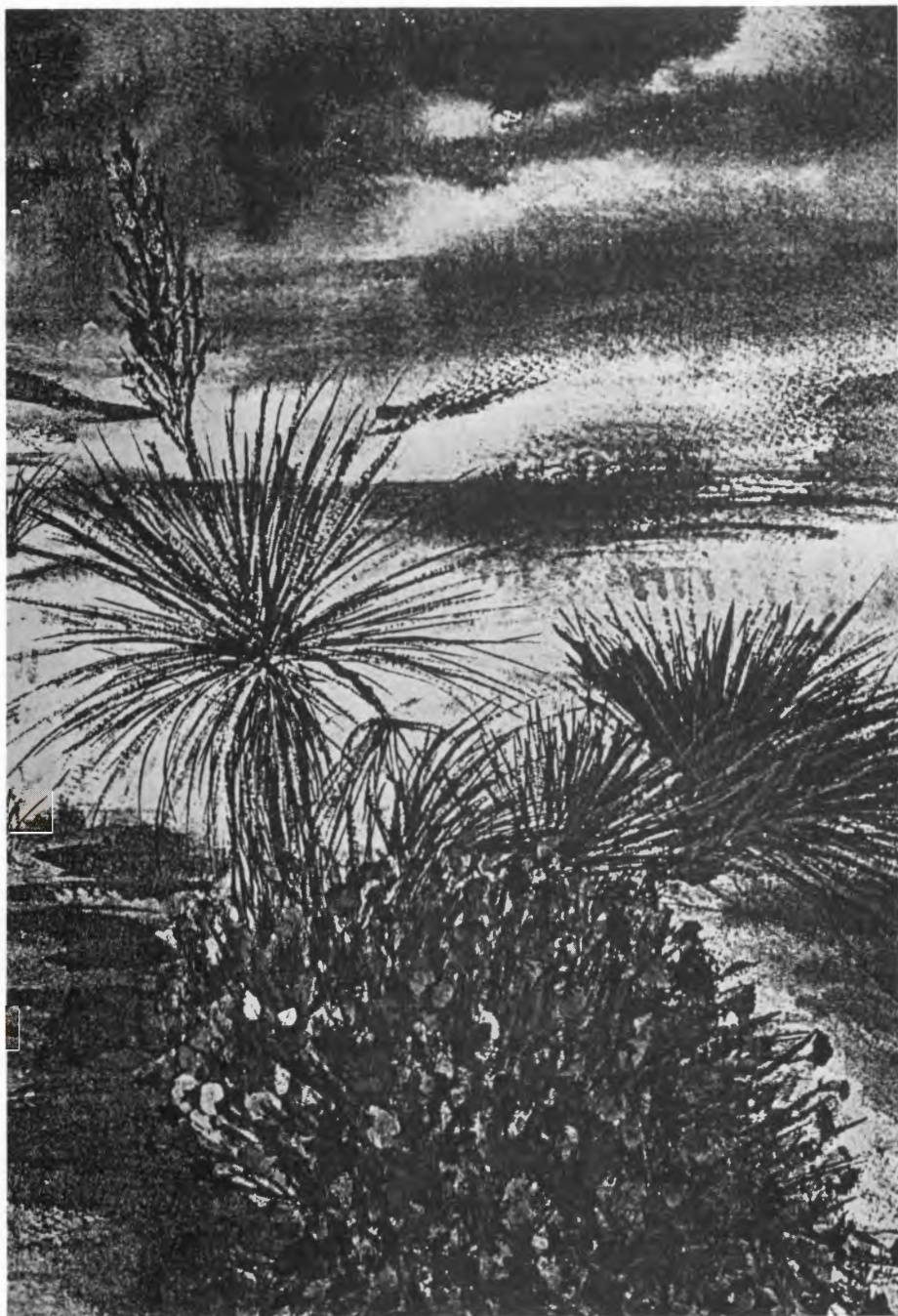
"Yes," she said, "he had a very special ability."

The sky opened, and the snow came in waves.

Shaun took Cyd's arm and led her from the cemetery. Somehow, the ominous feelings had gone, and he felt better now that he'd said a proper goodbye.

*--Donald Nunnally*





## **The Maze of Becoming**

Two thousand mostly blind mice,  
meandering around in the corridors of their confusion;  
screaming in silent rage, they long to lash out  
at their captor.  
But because of their vision that is really no vision,  
they are unable to identify him.  
Yet he is there, hiding boldly in the open.  
How he must chuckle when he looks at them  
day after day...  
in the mirror.

*-Christopher A. Estep*

## **Iron Butterfly**

Gently she floats  
wafted by merest wind.  
She darts nervously  
among friends and relatives  
dispensing aid  
to those who no longer  
want.  
But she'll keep giving  
cause it's the one thing  
which keeps her crystalline  
world  
from crumbling.

*-Gary A. Scheinoha*



## **March Memories**

Trees still hover  
over streets  
like old wrinkled witches.  
Winter threatens  
a return performance  
and one grey cloud  
hangs silent  
in the sky.

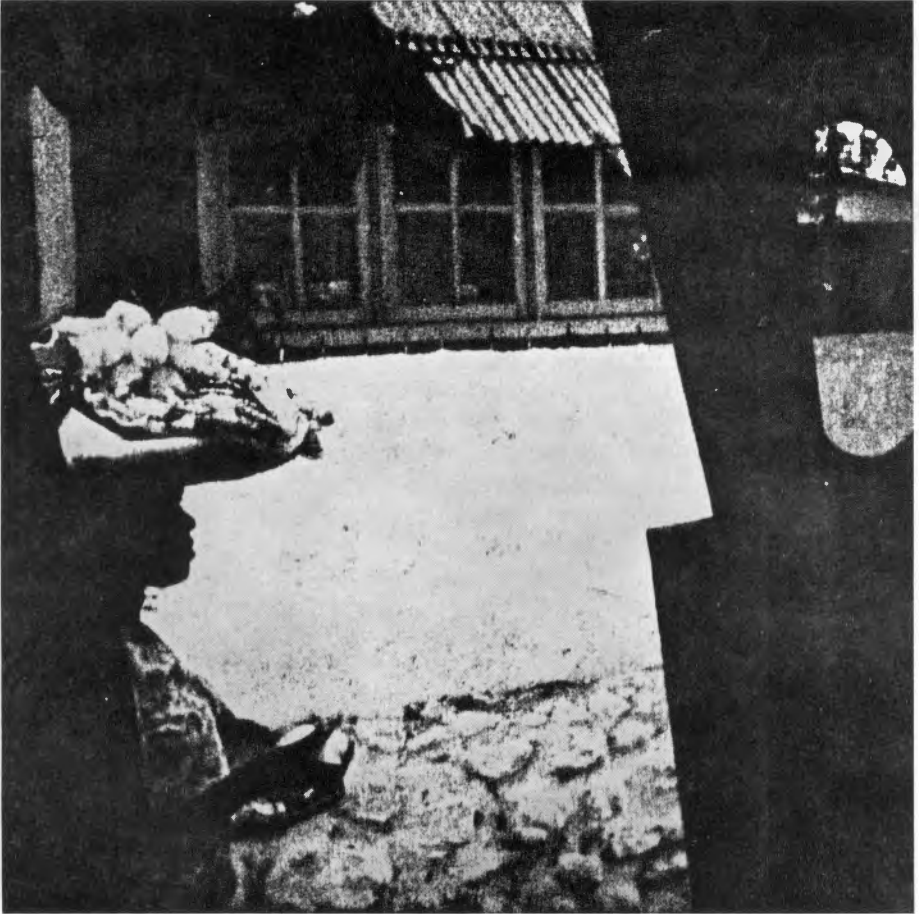
*- Teresa Lodwick*

## **The Faceless**

The shop door closed  
in my face.  
"Hello, I'm here too."

Walking with your eyes closed,  
you slipped between the cracks  
as the crowds stepped over you,  
not reaching out a hand,  
for you never really lived.

*- Martha Shaw*



## **Listening for the First Beat**

The caged bird  
lives in darkness  
but will not die.  
He breathes stale air  
and feeds on fecal mold  
in the loneliness  
of his chamber.  
His only song , he hums...  
in rhythms  
of pre-creation silence.  
No one hears.  
No one wants to hear  
his silent song of hope.

I know that bird,  
lost upon a cause,  
fighting to shed the shafts  
of universal blackness.  
The rainbow of its feathers  
fades into oblivion  
as I listen for the first beat  
of its heart.

*- Harding Stedler*

## Misery's Calendar

The weight of 3,016 days,  
    spent pacing my concrete and steel hell,  
lies heavy upon my spirit; even as the night's fog  
    smothers the fierceness of the searchlights  
outside my window that is not really a window at all...  
    but a crack in my reality through which I may peer  
and for a brief space in time escape my anguish.  
    And now even the fog conspires to deny me  
    this small solace.

The weight of 3,016 days,  
    spent pacing my concrete and steel hell.

*-Christopher Estep*

## Eulogy for an Orange

I would like to point out  
that he had appeal  
and never annoyed anyone.  
Indeed, all the girls  
who knew his flavor said  
he was, in reality,  
quite sweet.

Though he had many segments  
to his inner self,  
and many thought him a fruit,  
he was obviously a well-rounded fellow.

Let his seed carry his memory on.

*-Garrison L. Hilliard*

## Swing

I first saw her in the far circus  
corners of my youth.

Was --twelve? How do you  
measure child years? Are they  
passion burned without wood  
or flitting butterflies  
lighting on rainbows?

Let me say it was my first year  
by my own hand a man. That year,  
that time.

On the old Eighth Street field , near  
the river, I watched elephants  
eat hay, the great tent go up,  
strange little people talk and mill around.

It was then I learned we laugh  
the hardest when a clown cries.

Having been close, I moved beyond--  
where children play-- by the swings  
hanging down from the crossbar of heaven.

I think perhaps I wanted to climb  
to the sky, take one more slide back  
to earth--the child very much in me,  
but the man tearing at my chest  
said no.

She came from that row of cars--the ones  
brightly painted with figures, faces, lines, and words--  
straight to the swings near where I stood.

The way she moved across the ground  
( as if she were weightless ) , her  
ballerina shoes barely touching down,  
her flowing white dress flirting

with the wind, I think she must  
have been a tightrope walker.

Opposites we were--she in the morning  
mist totally free, I frozen  
tightly as my own stare.

She sat in one of the swings,  
smiled at me, then twisted  
around and around plaiting the chains.  
When she turned loose, she was a swirl  
of blond hair, white blurred dress  
and laughter.

She freed her dress from under her  
and began to swing--very slowly  
at first--our eyes met in mysteries.

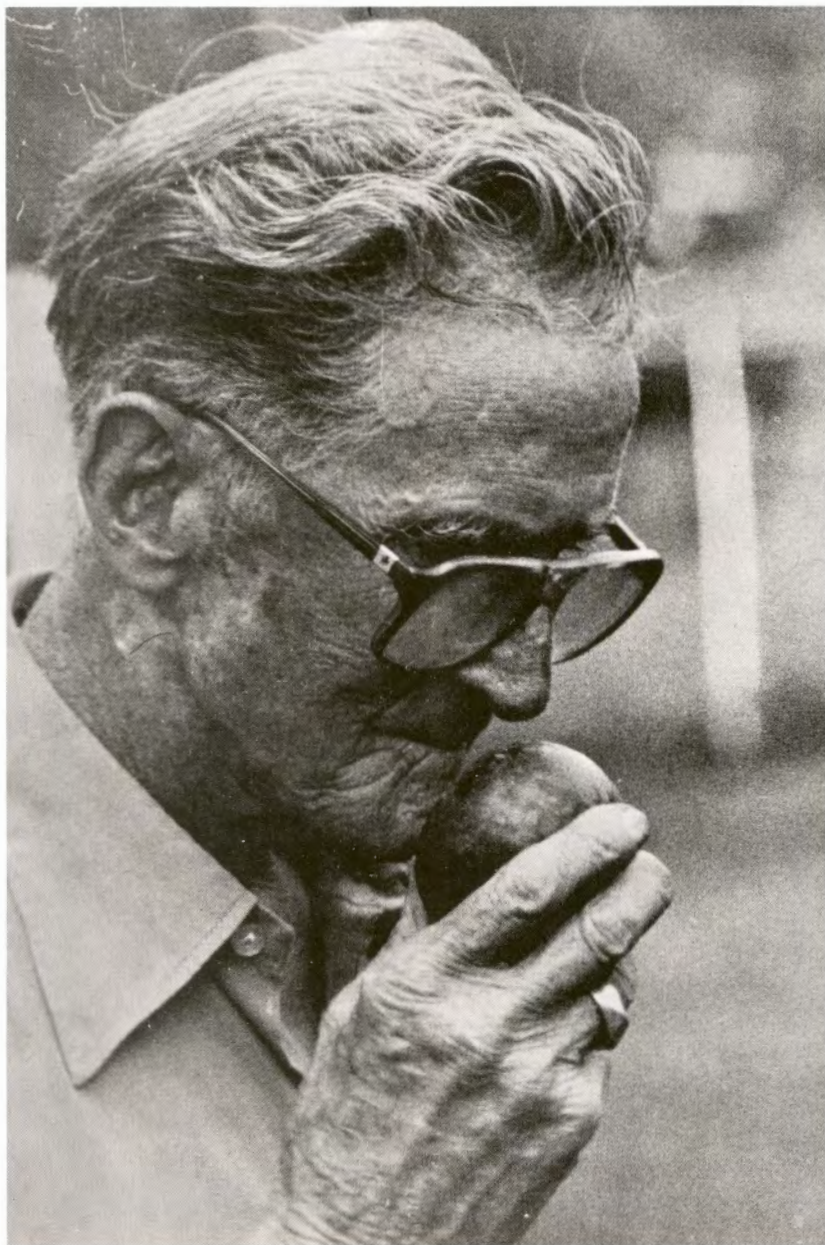
Then faster, higher, creating her own  
wind; coming toward me, going away,  
she floated in the air.

Her dress lifted like love wings.  
Her pink panties, bright pink, almost red,  
swam against the sky  
drown in my eyes  
and I marveled at what they held,  
what they hid.

Later I told my grandmother  
and she said that I shouldn't have looked,  
that the woman was wicked,  
that I should have turned away.

Today I saw her in her swing  
and I wanted to tell her  
as she chased a child to the sky  
of the two fighting inside me  
one broke free  
but the other is always close by.

- Lee Pennington



## Old Kettle

what have you brewed, old copperness?  
applebutter, these many falls,  
with hot, strong hunting stews later--  
and grandfather, as a small boy,  
watched morgan's raiders cook outside,  
glad he'd hidden the horses well--  
knowing Dad was with Sherman, south somewhere.  
They didn't steal you then,  
travelling light- and you remained  
to render lard and boil soiled clothes,  
to stand now, strangely by my door  
hole-burnt, but brimmed with memories.

- *Charles Rampp*

## Puppet People

You follow me  
with wide, blurry eyes  
and look to the side  
of my soft spoken word.  
You won't face them.  
I can't insist  
so I turn away and play  
chit-chat-giggle-wiggle  
with puppet-people  
whom I watch but do not see  
and they play with me  
but I want you.

- *Jody Savin*



Newsletter of  
**TSTHPFAGOTIAOLLTFFTO\***  
(Volume 1, #34, 34th Release)

**\*THE SOCIETY TO HELP PEOPLE FEEL AS GOOD ON  
THE INSIDE AS OTHERS LOOK LIKE THEY FEEL  
FROM THE OUTSIDE**

We're finally getting around to our grin issue of the newsletter. I know a lot of you have been wondering what the hold-up's been. We have to take a larger view though; a lot of subjects are being neglected out there. In any case, this should shut a few yaps.

People, being what they are, will, of course, pick up a lot of the basics on their own. Most come to realize that the devilish grin of childhood cannot be used in adulthood, except, of course, when around childhood friends. Nobody would deny its use in that case, unless childhood friends are around each other constantly, which can, by the way, be a real trouble spot. (We should mention here, just for the record, that we don't go along with the thought that people who have continued the childhood-friend level of relationship throughout their lives by means of fraternities, sororities, country clubs, etc. should be taken out and shot.)

One of our personal favorites here at THE SOCIETY is the confidence-inspiring (or cheerleader) grin (often accompanied by a wink) telling people that we all have it made. This has never gotten any further down into the ranks than labor leaders and heads of (good) youth gangs, plus religious cultists of a certain stripe. The greatest opposition to this one comes from those who would have us wait until we really do have it made.

The adoring, glassy-eyed grin was brought down to us by the hippie. Its sticking power hasn't been great. Although the grin is quite easy for the elite, it's very difficult for the masses without drugs (although, here again, religion can fill a lot of the bill).

The reserved grin is currently a bit in fashion, but it too is at the whim of the political climate. This one gives

the impression that the wearer reserves the rest of the grin for the family.

The everything's-new-and-exciting grin has always seemed like one of the most desirable (and unobtainable). This one gives the impression that the person lives in constant foreign travel. It is, of course, easier to obtain if everything is always new and exciting. It has long been a favorite of the elites because when you're constantly learning and aren't sure about anything, you can't make moral judgements -- therefore, you can't conclude there's anything wrong with being elite. It is, in theory, possible for the average person to use it, since, strictly speaking, no moment of life is exactly like the last, whether we travel or not. But this view of things is virtually out of reach without so much yoga training that you'll probably also be able to walk on water.

Much easier is the secretive grin. The trouble with the average person wearing this one though is he doesn't have a secret.

The we're-all-on-the-same-pleasure-cruise grin is one that's been thought to be the most potentially adaptable by the masses because they already have the feeling of being together (only the pleasure is missing) waiting in lines, sitting on buses, etc.

The tail-end grin should probably be mentioned. When this person grins at you, it always seems like the tail-end of a great laugh. The impression is of a life filled with gaiety. The problem with the average person using it, though, is he might be thrown in the booby hatch.

*--Tim Coats*



## These Woods

It's not too late  
to think in terms of leaves,  
though winter comes swiftly  
to open woods  
for intruding eyes of men.  
Men who seek to unravel  
wild schemes and place their own value,  
dead or alive, on that  
which they can conquer.  
These woods, however inviting,  
will be free  
of trick and trap,  
of gun, boot, or bullet,  
of lust for innocent blood  
that serves my eyes  
as faithfully  
as nature herself,  
as trusting as a child.

- Taylor Pierce

**Relationships**

**are  
uneasy vessels**

**pressed**

**into service**

**When**

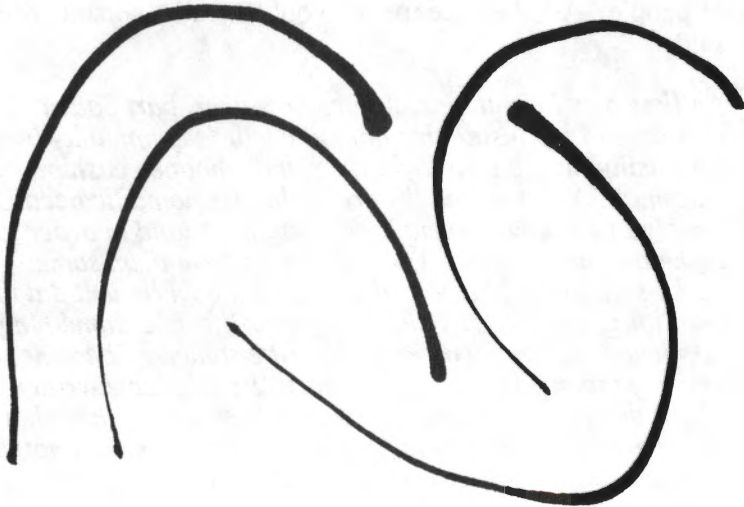
**love leaves and**

**hope**

**dances away  
leaving behind**

**relationships**

*- Martin Burwell*



## Mary Shelley Writes to Me

Admittedly I have been remiss in writing you, dear friend, but, alas, the time has come to relate good news. The past year has encompassed the four seasons, no doubt, but one and only one thought -- you. I have thought of you daily, wondering if the time had come for better fortunes, worrying that perhaps you would commit a beastly, monstrous act with another before I could get up the nerve to write.

I hope I'm not too late. Alas! Nature has brought me back to my senses. The spring air, the snowy alps, the distant sounds of glaciers surrounding boats in the North Atlantic awakens me. I love you and only you, dear friend. What's past is past. What's passed has passed. O, what a terrible, horrendous wretch I have been to you.

But actually the spring has nothing to do with it. Indeed, an old, dear schoolmate of mine told me a story -- a story that may be true or may be fiction -- that caused me to come to terms with my feelings. She told me an extraordinary account of a man she once met while travelling through the lower regions of Uganda. The man was one of the Ik tribe -- a nasty, egocentric, selfish group of people. And he, like me, had once loved a person. She said:

*An Ik is part hermit, part tightrope walker, part Sadist. I was able to get inside this nomadic tribe's community by disguising myself as a joy buzzer and whoopee cushion salesman. You see, the Iks are no longer nomadic because the Ugandan government took away their land in order to make a national park. The politicians gave them some rocky soil, much like your dear friend's government did to the Sioux. Anyway, by changing their lifestyle, something happened. Every member of the tribe somehow became entirely inconsiderate of the others. People have written about this phenomenon, but I saw it firsthand -- they shat on each others' doorsteps, they only laughed when another was in extreme pain, they took food from each others' gardens, and so on. So, you see, a person selling objects of pain and humiliation could have a field day there.*

*Zbej was a member of the group that few would*

*mess with. "Zbej" in the Ik dialect means "one who can hoe the soil without use of tools." After the long journey by boat and mule to Uganda, as you well know, Mary, I was quite ripe to blacken some redbfish. As I entered the group of huts in the center of the village, Zbej sat cross-legged, watching my every move. I was distraught and nervous, did not watch where I was going, and stubbed my toe. When I yelled out in pain, Zbej laughed hard. When my valise popped open, he laughed and fell on his side, slapping his leg. Alas! I did not want these monstrous creatures to think they could take advantage of a visitor. I inflated a whoopee cushion and placed it under his derriere. When he sat upright, he sound emanated from beneath him. Many of the other Iks started laughing now, though somewhat stifled. I bent over to stroke my big toe. Zbej stood up and, from behind me, proved his name.*

*O glorious day! I know it sounds vulgar and ghastly and horrendous and stupendous and uncommonly beastly, but it may well be the highlight of my life, Mary. Given, our men on the island and on the continent have manners, but sometimes a woman could just do without all the pardon-me's and excuse-me's.*

*So, I moved in with Zbej for the month I was there. He helped me sell the buzzers and cushions by threatening the other Iks in the area. He and I became acquainted with one another's language as best we could, dear friend, and, alas, action speaks louder than words as the clichéists tell. On the morning I was to return to the continent, Zbej sat silently, brooding, staring at the wall. Outside, a group of men had just been struck by lightning and he didn't even smile. Zbej slowly turned to me and in his eyes I read an account of what he was thinking:*

Few men really believe that distance makes the heart grow fonder. Only one thing grows when a person's loved one is away. Grass does not grow in the yard. Gourds do not grow in the soil. Days do not grow into nights.

Is it the woman's fault? Perhaps. But I doubt that many women also believe this saying. When a woman goes away from her spouse, she is going for good. If she tries to return, she may be in error. If the man takes her back, he may be a fool.

Once upon a time a long time ago, a great warrior came to our country. His name was Chuck. He had come to us because he wanted

to get away from a treacherous relationship he had with his wife -- a woman who used him and never gave back any affection. Chuck was a famous scientist and she only seemed to care for him because of his petri dishes. For an entire fortnight, Chuck slept under the stars, crying himself to sleep. We all sat in our huts, laughing at him. But one day I was stricken with a mild heart attack, or stroke, or muscular dystrophy. Chuck came to my aid. And in helping me, he forgot about his other troubles.

So, go out and find someone to help when you return, dear love. Go find a starving foreigner and lend him a rhubarb. Pull a flea off a stray dog. Kill a bureaucrat.

As a matter of fact, Louie related a story to me that has helped me in my life. He said:

**All bodies continue in their state of rest or of uniform linear motion unless acted on by a net external force.**

And he left. But I have been living by his example ever since. When you return to your country, think of me if you wish, but I promise I will be cheating on you. I will be in linear motion. And that's no line.

*So, as you can see, Mary, I had no reason to cry or grovel or question Nature when I returned from my stay with the Iks. And I think that you should have this little talk with your American friend before it's too late.*

Alas! I have come to grips with the situation, dear friend. I have been travelling around the continent in mourning for twofold reasons: Percy's death was so traumatic that I take out his dried heart daily and weep on it until it seems to come to life; and, I mourn for the adulterous acts you and I have committed through the postal service. O! I pray there is no afterlife so that Percy could see us at this very moment.

But enough of all that. I have learned from the story that the scientist told the Ik, who told my friend, who told me. I hope you have also. But if you don't get my point, let me relate a story to you. A week ago I was eating at our local feminist taco stand, just sitting around with the other women in mourning. A man named Pedro gave us our menus. I ordered a Michelle -- a taco heaped with a lot of

cheese and no meat. Someone ordered the Beth -- a shell with no filling whatsoever. And another woman ordered the Margaret -- no meat, but a lot of tomatoes and bean sprouts. I asked the owner why all these tacos were named after women. He said he named them after ex-girlfriends.

Well, as you can imagine, we were up in arms immediately! Our feminist taco stand was, indeed, a chauvinist ploy to make fun of women. We got up before our meals arrived, and my friend -- who was not an old dear schoolmate of mine -- said to Pedro, "You can't spell 'lifeline' without a 'feline'."

Alas! I asked her where she heard of that timely idea, and she related to me this story:

*In a small country or province in Bulgaria, there is a group of people wherein the women are in charge of the men. The men understand that women have the power to have babies. So, the men do all of the farming and cooking and washing of clothes. The women go out and hunt when they wish, or they tell the men to do the work. When I was there amongst them, an old woman told me this story:*

You can't spell 'lifeline' without 'feline'. Then she went on to tell me some kind of story about how it doesn't really matter if your husband has a big zbej, but I didn't understand that part of her story.

So, dear friend, you can see all the connections, *n'est-ce pas*? My first friend has already told me the story about the Iks, and now this other friend had already told me the story about the Iks, and now this other friend tells me about her travels in Bulgaria. Do you notice the similarities? Yes, it is zbej. Zbej, and only zbej.

Life is interconnected. Nature is absolute. We have little to no control over our destinations. I am coming to America to visit you, in between my reading tour at the various Ripley's Believe-It-Or-Not wax museums. Perhaps we can meet in Myrtle Beach.

I leave you with a thought, dear friend, that perhaps will make the wait less tedious: when one is stung by a bee, one places wet tobacco on the stinger to ease the pain. To quit smoking, place bee stingers on your



tongue.

With deepest regards --  
Queen Bee

--*George Singleton*



## New Voices

**THAD BLIZZARD (p.32)** is an English major at SSU. **MARTIN BURWELL** is, at the moment, an enigma. **TIM COATS** writes from San Francisco. **SCOTT DICKISON (p. 12)** majors in Communications at Shawnee State. **JOHN ENGLE (p.28)** provides the guest editorial in this issue. **CHRISTOPHER ESTEP** favors us with inmate art. A Rhode Island native, **JOSEPH FERRI**, is an alumnus of the Vesper George School of Art in Boston. Cincinnati, OH is home to the poet **GARRISON L. HILLIARD**. **PHILLIP HOLSINGER (p. 23)**, poet and photographer, has traveled at length in Europe. **JONATHAN LEVANT** writes from West Carrollton, OH. With his wife and two sons, **DONALD NUNNALLY** lives in Marion, NC. **JODY SAVIN** is a Glendale, CA poet. **Helen Scott (p. 11)** recently designed the official Christmas card for SSU. **MARTHA SHAW** contributes from Chelsea, MO. **HUGH SMITH**, a teacher in Dayton, OH, lives in suburban Kettering. **DEBORAH HALE SPEARS (p.17)** is an Ironton, OH contributor. **JAN STEIN (p.20)** is the newest member of the *Silhouette* staff.

## Familiar Voices

From Mendocino, CA, WILLIAM JAMES KOVANDA writes. TERESA LODWICK, nearing the completion of her baccalaureate degree at Ohio University, is the incoming editor of the *Silhouette*. H. C. MASON recently placed a poem of his with the National Library of Poetry for its upcoming anthology. JANET NESLER (pp. 19 & 32), a darkroom technician and photographer for *The Portsmouth Daily Times*, is a photography and journalism major at SSU. LEE PENNINGTON, a poet laureate of Kentucky, contributed the guest editorial in the Fall '87 issue. TAYLOR PIERCE recently won six awards, including a first prize, at the annual KSPS awards banquet at Mammoth Cave, KY. A graduate of SSU, ORVILLE RAMEY (pp. 10, 15,&38) resides in Otway, OH. CHARLES RAMPP pastors a church in Baltimore, MD. GARY A. SCHEINOHA is a familiar voice to readers of these pages. HARDING STEDLER conducts the Shawnee Hills Spring Poetry Workshop at Greenbo Lake State Park. GEORGE SINGLETON writes from Florence, SC, where he teaches at Francis Marion College. JUANITA MAYS TEETERS, a residence hall counselor at Graceland College, writes from Lamoni, IA. Formerly of Scioto County, Ohio, DEXTER WOLFE is currently a Columbus poet.

## **Some Current Markets**

**POETIC JUSTICE**, Alan Engebretsen, Editor. 8220 Rayford Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045

**THE VILLAGER**, Amy Murphy, Editor. 135 Midland Avenue, Bronxville, NY 10708

**APPALACHIAN HERITAGE**, Sidney Farr, Editor. Berea College, Berea, KY 40404

**PLAINS POETRY JOURNAL**, Jane Green, Editor. Box 2337, Bismark, ND 58502

**THE GALLEY SAIL REVIEW**, Stanley McNail, Editor. 1630 University Avenue, Suite 42, Berkeley, CA 94703

**WIND**, Quentin Howard, Editor. R.F.D.#1, Box 809K, Pikeville, KY 41501

**BROKEN STREETS**, Ron Grossman, Editor. 57 Morningside Drive East, Bristol, CT 06010

**INTERNATIONAL POETRY REVIEW**, Evalyn P. Gill, Editor. Box 2047, Greensboro, NC 27402

**VOICES INTERNATIONAL**, Clovita Rice, Editor. 1115 Gillette Drive, Little Rock, AR 72207

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