

University of Alabama in Huntsville

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## **Axis, 1984**

University of Alabama in Huntsville

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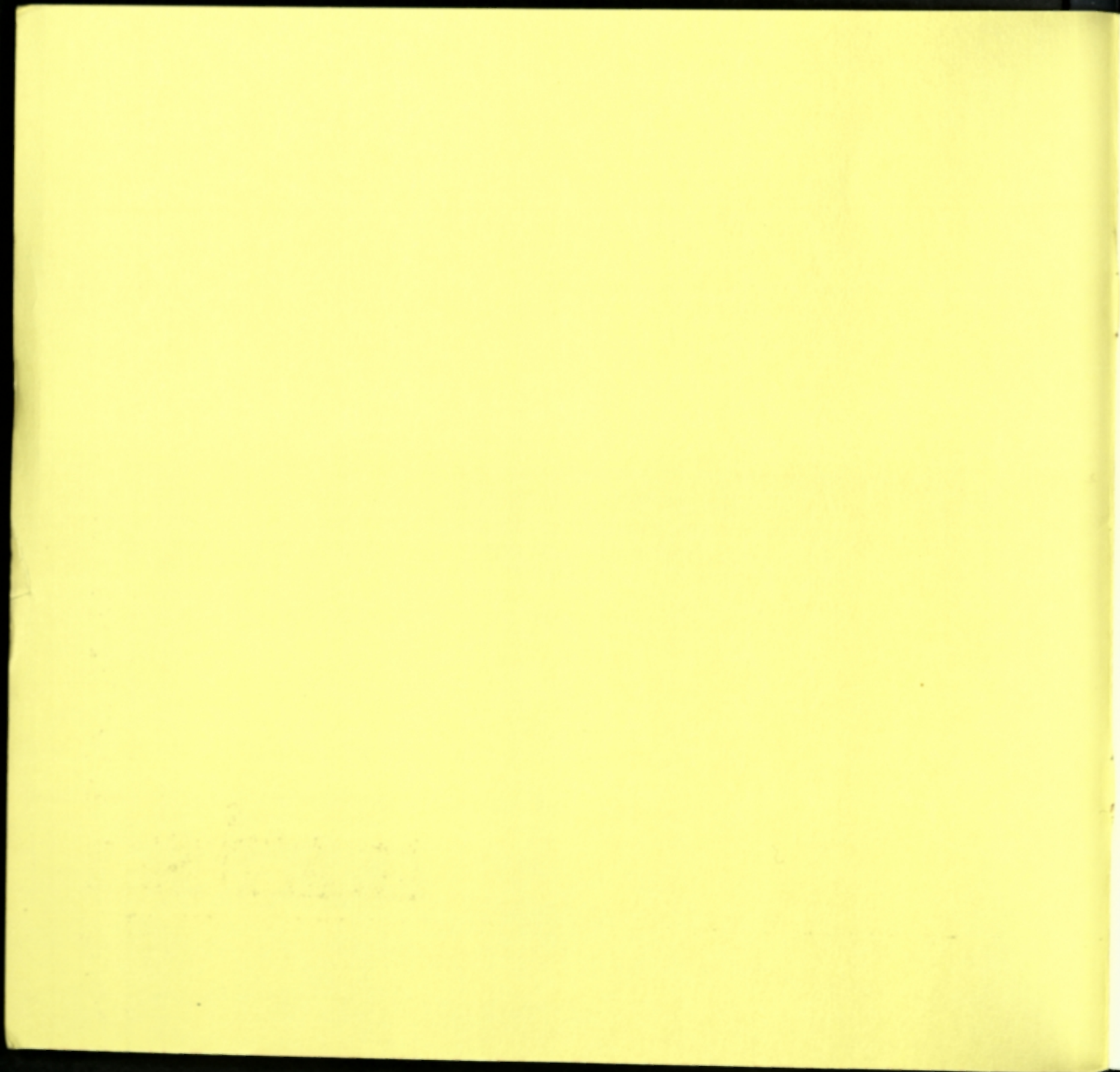
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School of Arts, H. & S. S.

**axis**

fall

1984 uah art & literature



## **axis 1984**

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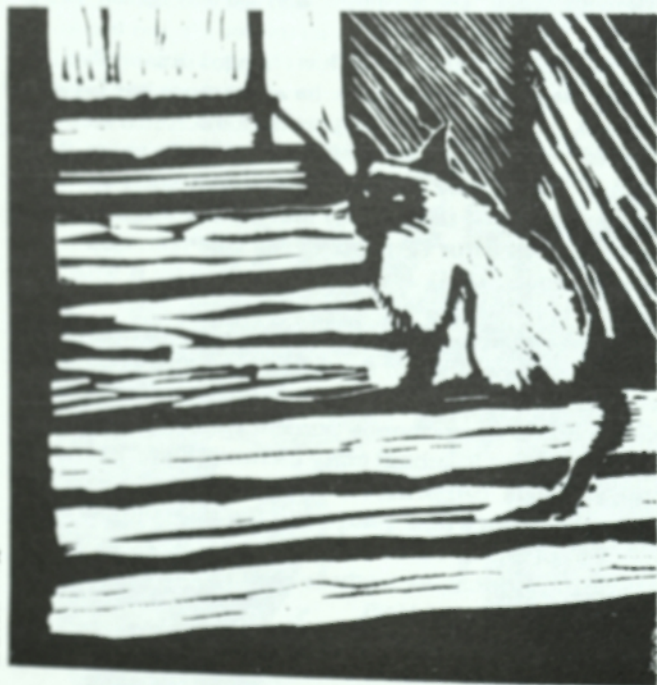
Joanne Walker

Anyone and everyone who  
submitted work  
for consideration.

# **axis**

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David Rogers

## The Artists

Three of **axis'** contributing artists are not 'officially' art students at UAH. **David Rogers'** woodcut at left was done just prior to his freshman year here. **Dawn Phillips'** pine cone on page 4 would have earned her praise in a UAH drawing class, and **Elizabeth Trent's** watercolor on page 9 is sensitively done.

**Duane Halbert**, a junior art major new to UAH, concealed a self-portrait in his still life photo on page 18. **Stephen May** is a senior art major who's gotten down to the finer points of photography, an example of which is on page 23. **Russell Davis**, an alumnus of the art department, lent us the collage on page 27, and **Greg Taylor** was responsible for the cover design.

## The Writers

**Becky Breeding** is a sophomore biology major whose poem was inspired by nature and a high school writing assignment.

**Loomus Cosby**, a major in business administration, has been writing poetry since the early 70's, when he attended an "artsy" college in New England. Loomus lives and works on campus.

**Doug Ensley** is a native Huntsvillian in his junior year as a math major at UAH. Most of his writing is spontaneously scribbled fragments, but the poem in this issue came out as a complete piece.

**James B. Gibson** is an Associate Professor of Education at UAH. He says that "On Waiting" is the first poem he's written in a long time.

**Jean Greenwood** is an ex-anthropology teacher who works in Computer Services at UAH. Her poem combines both those influences with a dash of T.S. Eliot.

**Tamela Gregg** is a UAH student and music lover.

**Richard Hay, Sr.** is a fire chief and father of nine, living in Newton, Massachusetts. How he found **axis**, we'll never know.

**Edward W. Jackson** is a senior majoring in English. While studying a collection of daguerreotype prints, he was inspired to write his tale.

**Dennis Nichols** is Scottsboro born and bred, but it doesn't seem to have affected him adversely. An ex-engineering student turned English major, Nichols originally wrote his story for a UAH Fiction Writing class. As for the poem, it was just for kicks.

**Neil Ryder** is a "sane, normal" business major from Bloomington, Indiana, who's been writing poetry for many years.

**Joanne Walker** describes herself as a "drifting artist," but she's been working at the UAH Library since 1978. Her poem, she says, is about an imaginary place.

**Betty Urbanz** is a recent graduate of the English department and a mother of three. She's working as a technical writer, but dreams of writing fiction, and probably will.



Dawn Phillips

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### **Untitled**

A canopy of pink hovers overhead.  
A slight breeze pulls at the blossom's  
delicate hold.

Fragile petals rain upon me, their  
softness touching my skin and heart  
with joy,  
banishing my worries and casting my  
problems away, as I am slowly  
enveloped by this  
ethereal,  
fragrant,  
fantasy world.

**Becky Breeding**

---

## The Cost of Grief ..... Dennis Nichols

They had just lowered his Lodie into the ground. Joseph McHutchen raised his coat collar over his ears.

"Much too cold for a funeral," he thought. "But, oh, look at all the flowers, and all the people!"

Joe never knew he had so many friends. It looked as if half the town were there. He even thought he recognized a couple of reporters from the local paper. They had all shown up to express their sorrow for the untimely demise of Mrs. Joseph McHutchen, wife of the eminent and civic-minded real estate broker, man of wealth and power. It was enough to bring a tear to old Joe's eye. And there was Burt, close friend and colleague, and, at the moment, village idiot. Blubbering all over Lodie's relatives, Burt! He was ruining the solemnity of the whole occasion. Damn him.

He was an ox, too, that Burt. Even his best suit didn't fit right. Joe thought he might slip out of sight into a knot of mourners. With his ears covered, maybe he wouldn't be noticed. Uh-oh, too late. Burt was on Joe in a twink. Joe's diminutive frame shuddered, and he felt like he was going to implode.

"Oh, poor, poor Joe!" sobbed Burt. "I never thought something so terrible could happen to you. Poor Lodie!"

"I know, Burt. It's a tragedy."

"And you're being so brave, li'l buddy," Burt blathered on. "But when your time comes to break down and grieve for your poor, lost Lodie, I just want you to know I'll be there for you. You won't have to go it alone, Joe."

"Thanks, Burt. You're a guy."

Joe's back and shoulders were really starting to ache. What is more, Burt's gushing sentiments were getting Joe wet. Fine thing on a day as cold as this. After everything was said and done, Joe walked briskly to his car and left.

Lodie's death was a shock to the community. Every Thursday night she left promptly at 6:48 to attend the weekly meeting of the Ladies' Historical Society Against Drunk Drivers. (That's the L.H.S.A.D.D.) And because she was Lieutenant Treasurer, she attended meetings faithfully. This was all quite convenient for Joe. He liked having the house to himself, and besides, if he wanted to entertain one of his teenaged guests, he was free to do so: Lodie rarely got home before 10:10. That particular night, Lodie had been uncharacteristically late about getting back. Joe was having a scotch in his study when the phone rang. The call was from the hospital.

It seemed that on the way back from the meeting, Lodie had had the distinct misfortune of slamming head-on into a Buick that had been weaving uncontrollably from one side of the road to the other at 70 m.p.h. The driver had been attempting to smash half-empty vodka bottles against road signs. He'd been pretty good, too, hitting three out of four. While making a valiant lunge for a 'Yield' sign, he'd smashed headlong into Lodie's car.

Poor Lodie had been dead on arrival. The driver of the Buick had jumped out of his car and made

a run for it. He'd been tracked down and summarily dealt with.

Joe intended on sleeping late the morning after the funeral, but a noise from downstairs woke him up only shortly after dawn. His head ached, and the house smelt of bacon. Joe slung on a robe and descended the stairway in a huff. Burt was frying up a pan of bacon and eggs. Lodie's old magnolia apron strained to fit around Burt's thick waist, and the popping grease made an uneasy racket. Joe's stomach balked.

"Good morning, Joseph!" chimed Burt.

"Good morning, Burt. What are you doing here?"

"I thought you might be hungry, so I let myself in. How do you like your eggs?"

Joe fell into a dining room chair and rubbed his temples.

"If it's all the same to you," he mumbled coarsely, "I'd just as soon have a provolone sandwich later, like around noon."

Burt thrust a plate of bacon and eggs in front of Joe's reeling face. God, how Joe hated crunchy bacon. The toast was burned.

"Thanks, Burt. It's just like Lodie used to make."

That was the truth, too. Lodie, God rest her soul, was a terrible cook. Joe numbly ate a few bites while he tried to think of some way to shake off his keeper. A diabolical little smile peeped to the surface opposite the oozing mass of eggs. Then Joe's face turned somber.

"I am truly grateful that you have come over to look after me, Burt. But I am numb with grief, you understand, and sleep would be the best thing for me right now."

Burt blinked. "I understand, friend. I read about this in a Pearl Buck story one time. You should sleep now. Tears will come in time. I'll clean up the kitchen before I go."

Joe crawled back into his big, warm bed. The last thing he heard was Burt leaving out the kitchen door. That poor, dumb sap. Joe was glad to be rid of him.

It wasn't that Joe didn't love Lodie. He did. He loved her the way he would a prime piece of lakefront property, though in her case, somewhat depreciated with age. But even as she got older, Joe was still right fond of her. Oh, Joe had eyes. He knew that she was not the cute young thing he had courted, though he told her otherwise. Lodie so much loved to hear him call her his round-eyed girl. She would light up with that idiotic little-girl smile of hers and turn around and cheerily lick her green stamps. Marriage had its little conveniences, even though it really didn't suit Joe's obsessions. Perhaps, he mused, he should never have married. And now he wasn't. It was time to get out of bed. No point in brooding. Joe did hate sentimentality. Besides, there was all that money from the insurance companies.

Joe was tugging on his trousers when Burt pushed open his door. He had a steak and provolone sandwich on a tray. He also brought in a box of Kleenex. Jesus H. Christ! Didn't this guy ever give up?

"Why aren't you at the office, Burt?" asked Joe dryly.

"Work? While you waste away alone?" I wouldn't think of it."

"Think of it! Think of it!" pleaded Joe.

But Burt bodily picked up Joe and tossed him onto his bed. He then shoved the sandwich toward Joe's face to make him eat. Joe wanted to take a brick-bat and beat Burt's face into a frothy mess. He loved the thought of spongy bits of gray and yellow tissue meandering down a foaming crimson rivulet. Joe quietly ate his sandwich while Burt read aloud excerpts from a "Guideposts" magazine.

Burt was knocking on Joe's door three times every day for the next two weeks. In the mornings, Burt made breakfast. He worked in the yard and in Lodie's flower beds in the afternoon, and subjected Joe to ten or twenty games of chess in the late evening. The most heartfelt exhortations could not faze him, and, damn his thick skin, the choicest invectives wouldn't drive him away either. Burt had set little boxes of pink and blue Kleenex at strategic locations all over the house. Next to each box was a little wastebasket. Burt would go from one empty wastebasket to the next with a perturbed look on his face.

It was a Saturday night, and Joe got a call from Sylvia. He hadn't heard from her since before Lodie's accident. Such a pleasant voice! Now Joe remembered why he didn't like chess. She said she would drop by at around 9:00. Ah, Sylvia. Oh God, yes, Sylvia, a nymph, an angel! Silky hair, golden thighs, Sylvia of the varsity squad. Yellow and green pom-poms. Sylvia! Love, perfume, palpitations. Hello! The doorbell rang, and Joe opened the door with a flourish.

"Hey, pal! Glad to see me, eh?" It was Burt with a stupid grin and a chess set under his arm. Joe wanted to break down and cry. This guy was more of an obstacle than Lodie. God rest her soul, ever was. If sweet Sylvia were to come over and see a strange car parked out front, she wouldn't even stop. Joe had to think of some way to be rid of Burt.

"I'm sorry, Burt. I can't play chess tonight. I'm expecting company," said Joe truthfully.

"Company? Oh, good! Is it someone I know?"

"No, you've never met them. You probably don't want to, either. They're Jehovah's Witnesses."

"Oh, this should be enlightening," replied Burt enthusiastically, as he made himself comfortable in Joe's favorite easy chair. "Do you think they play chess?"

Burt got busy setting up the pieces.

"You know, Joe, I think it's wonderful that you have turned to the Lord for guidance during these trying days. If you really need religion, why don't I bring some pals from my church over one night? We'll get you started in a proper faith."

Joe could have kicked himself for opening up that can of worms. Now he was really in a mess. Obviously, what was needed was a fresh approach.

"Say, Burt, why don't you and me just slip out on the company and hit the clubs?"

Burt looked up at Joe and blinked, his face awash with that silly, incredulous look of his. "What was that?"

"Yeah, you know," Joe continued, "have a few belts, pick up some floosies, bring them back here and have a big, ole time! We can pretend we're bachelors for a night. Wha' do you say?"

"Would you like to play white or black?"

Joe took white and lost. Needless to say, Sylvia never showed up. Joe seemed to have at least made Burt disgusted, since his visits were no longer quite so frequent. Joe thought that perhaps at last he could pick up the pieces of his once immensely gratifying social life. It was a Wednesday night and Joe was parked behind the high school waiting for cheerleader practice to be over. But he couldn't spot Sylvia. He was a bit worried until a gorgeous, nubile figure approached his car.



Elizabeth Trent

She was not Sylvia, for she had dark hair tied up in pony tails, and was wearing the cutest pair of navy-blue gym shorts.

"Hi. You must be Mr. McHutchen. I'm Debbie," she said with a smile.

Joe smiled back. "Yes, I am, but you can call me Joe."

"Well, Joe," she went on. "Sylvia wanted me to tell you that she would not be able to attend practice for a while."

"Nothing serious, I hope," said Joe, a trifle concerned.

"I don't think so," Debbie opened up the door on the passenger side and got in. "You know, Sylvia and I are best friends. She tells me everything. I know all about you."

"Really?" Joe coughed. He suddenly had difficulty breathing. He knew a good thing when he saw it. "Would you like to see my house?"

Debbie giggled. The car started. They were off.

Joe made his Good Thing comfortable in the study. God, she was cute!

"Hey, I'm really sorry about your wife," said Debbie sincerely.

"Yes," replied Joe, remembering Burt. "It has been especially trying these last few weeks. Would you like a drink?"

She assented.

"Have you ever had cognac?" asked Joe. She hadn't. He poured her a tall one.

Debbie drank like a trouper. After knocking back a few she giggled. "You know what's really funny?"

"No, what?" replied Joe.

"What's really funny is that my dad thinks I'm spending the night at Sylvia's house."

At these words Joe almost choked on his drink. He knew it was time to dim the lights.

All of a sudden, everything came tumbling down. The doorbell rang and, oh shit, Burt and five deacons from the First Methodist Church and a fat lady came trooping in. Debbie screamed and fled out the back door. A bottle of cognac spilled all over Lodie's expensive plush-pile carpet. Joe's head began to spin and he fell into his chair. He started to weep convulsively, uncontrollably. The flustered aldermen and the fat lady had found themselves seats, and started reading from the Book of, what was it, John?

Burt cradled the weeping mass in his ponderous arms. Joe wept like a baby.

"You bastard," Joe sniffled. "You knew I didn't love her. You knew I could never grieve for Lodie."

"I know, I know," Burt answered as the party swung into "Nearer My God to Thee." "But you are grieving for your poor, lost Lodie now, aren't you?"

Joe couldn't stop sobbing long enough to admit it, but Burt was right. Dammit, the big, ugly lug was right.

Joseph grieved.

### On Lisa's Conversion

Light at the end of the tunnel  
Light through the carelessly cracked doorway  
All are welcome  
Upward unto the Light.

Uplifted they climb that bleary height  
And make play upon those cool, smiling beams  
Gossamered souls that seek to merge  
Upward unto the Light

Unscrew the shade  
and pour them out.

Dennis Nichols

## The Counted Men

### I

We are the counted men  
We are the computed men  
Processed together  
On tapes celluloid. Alas!  
Our lost names, when  
Thus mingled together  
Are quite meaningless  
As numbers and holes  
Or punches and symbols strange  
In codes that render  
Names without form, men without substance.  
Numbered men, processed without emotion.  
Those who have emerged  
With printout names, to join a mailing list  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Scrambled Digits, but only  
As the counted men  
The computed men.

### II

From birth to death I am lost  
In the reels of tape  
UNIVAC owns:  
AT&T  
Knows me—205-89  
5-6347  
I shall be  
Known by name no more—  
To herald my growth, I arrive  
A number at MVD.  
Let me be no nearer  
To that tape which keeps  
Me ever in limbo  
Between self and the lost  
Multitudes of those thoughts

Processed out  
By digital segregation  
No nearer—  
Assembly translates me  
Into codes and soulless.

### III

This is a polled land  
This is census land  
Here are the gallups  
Forming our selves into  
The statistics used by politician's hand  
To guide and compromise a nation on tape.  
Is it like this  
Where kingdoms do not vote?  
A man alone  
Listens to man and hears  
A man gone mad in tape  
Fighting a bill  
With computers on the phone.

### IV

The names are not here  
There are no names here  
In this building of cold machines  
In this humming building  
This mathematical perfection  
In this last of meeting places.  
We grope together  
And search for names  
Scattered on the tapes of the paid keepers  
Social security  
Numbers for the  
Government, zip codes in dots  
For sellers and never  
An identity  
For counted men.

V

Here we go round the memory bank  
Memory bank memory bank  
Here we go round the memory bank  
At 0-five-hundred this morning.  
Between the tax  
And the payer  
Between the idea  
And the man  
Falls the machine

For thine is the computer

Between the elected  
And the voter  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the machine

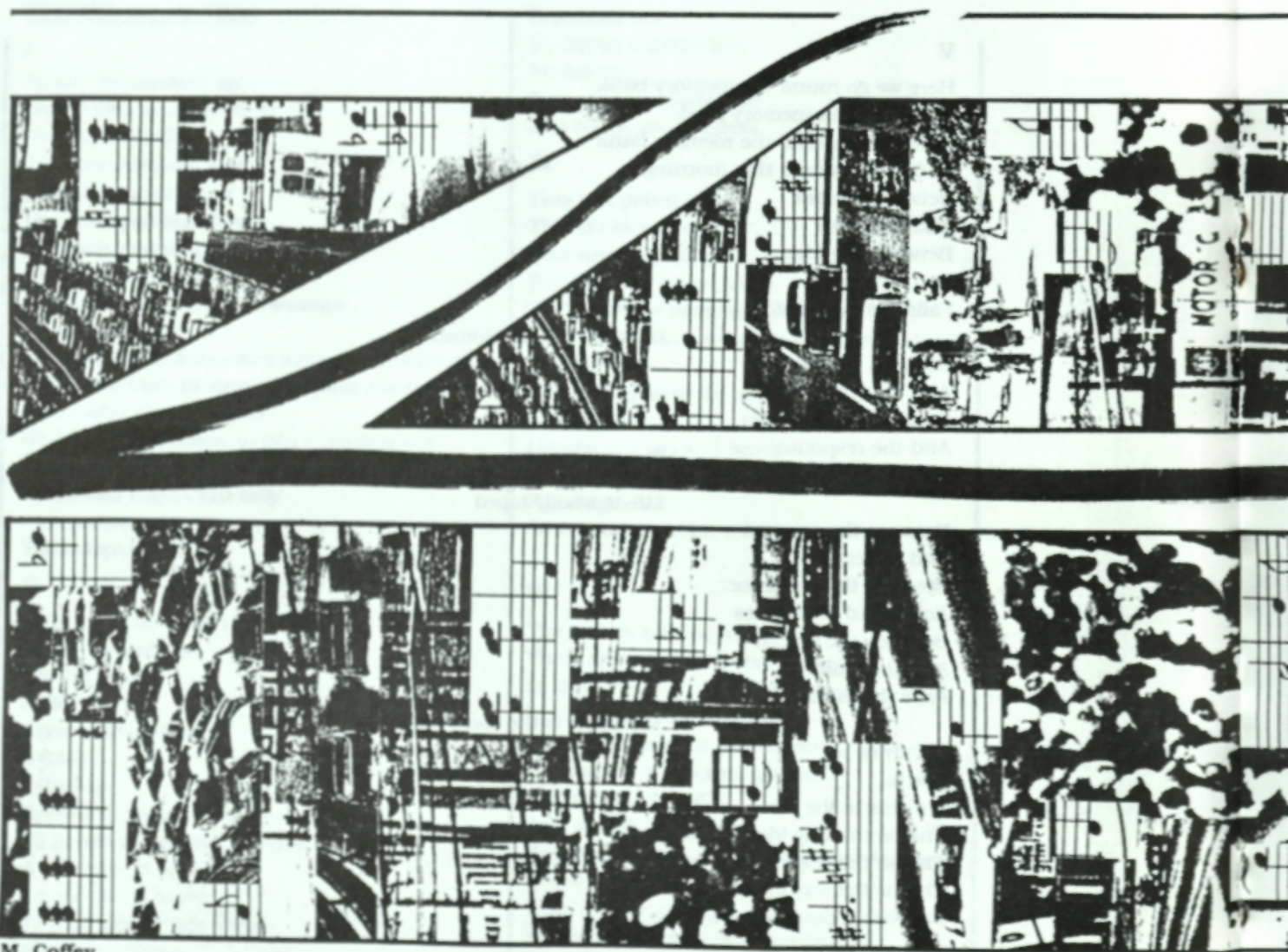
Life is wholly taped

Between the accused  
And the crime  
Between the professor  
And board of trustees  
Between the parent  
And the children  
Falls the machine

For thine is the computer

For thine is  
Life is  
For this is the  
This is the way identity ends  
This is the way identity ends  
This is the way identity ends  
Not with a bang but a spindle.

Jean Greenwood



M. Coffey



## Late FM

Mellow songs on the radio  
soften invisible  
lines on my face, and  
move me toward a higher  
realization of this so-called  
rat race.

Tamela Gregg



## The Daguerreotypist's Tale ..... Edward W. Jackson

I offer immortality. My art is to take the very life from men, women and children, and to transfer it, in a harmony of light and shade, to polished silver plates. The image of life is fixed there for posterity, "a portrait drawn by the pencil of nature," as I state in my advertisements. In this year of 1856, Philadelphia is filled with inept daguerreotypists whose pathetic portraits seem to be of vacant-eyed idiots; as proof of my own expertise, I would point out the two beautiful faces that greet me this bright spring morning as I saunter along the busy street and approach the stairs that go up to my studio. The two portraits in the display case are hung at street level to entice the public to climb up for a sitting. And, often enough, the public is indeed enticed by the serenity I captured on the chubby countenance of the sleeping infant, and by the demure half-smile I secured from the bright-eyed brunette young lady.

A flat wooden sign hanging underneath the display case is inscribed with the legend: "ASCEND THESE STAIRS TO IMMORTALITY!" A disgruntled minister of some absurd sect recently took me to task for the sign, and followed me up the stairs barking about blasphemy. A short time later he left my studio pacified, free portrait in hand, worshipping as he descended the stairs the graven image of his own granite visage, which resembled a drawing I once saw of the great stone heads on Easter Island.

Fortunately for me, mankind is fascinated with faces; the daguerreotyping enterprise is far more lucrative than my previous venture, the manufacture and sale of Dr. Moon's Lunar Laxative. Though a man of only twenty-five, I have traveled from one end of the business world to the other; I have flipped the coin of commerce from tails to heads.

My studio is of necessity a walk-up, as a skylight is essential to indoor portraiture. A skylight that is fairly dirty, I have found, diffuses the light upon a face most favorably. Besides the skylight, I have a red Turkey carpet, an old brown sofa, two iron headrests, a background cloth of bluish-gray, a movable reflector for bouncing light onto the subject's face, and my camera, mounted on a tripod. My developing equipment I keep in an adjoining room. I take the precaution of always leaving a window slightly open while I work, for everything involved in processing the silver plates is poisonous. Indeed, some daguerreotypists have lost their own lives attempting to capture the lives of others. Such a fate befell the original owner of my equipment. I purchased it at a bargain price, thirty dollars and two cases of Dr. Moon's Lunar Laxative, from his bereaved and apparently irregular widow.

As I begin my day at the studio in my usual way of sitting down on the old sofa to smoke my pipe, I hear steps on the stairway. The door slowly opens, the bell above it rings, and a prospective client stands before me. A tall, thin, balding, bespectacled man somewhere in his thirties, he has a hesitant, nervous smile as he takes in the numerous portraits hung on the display wall. His

wrinkled black suit appears to have been slept in numerous times. He has the air of a man on a serious mission.

I rise and introduce myself.

"You do excellent work," he says in a pleased voice, making an awkward gesture towards the images of life captured in rows of rectangles. "My name is Clarence Weldon, and I desire to have a portrait made of my wife."

"And I would be most pleased to take a portrait of Mrs. Weldon," I answer, wondering why the lady has not accompanied her husband. "Please bring her by the studio sometime today, if that would be convenient."

Weldon's eyebrows rise. "A little after noon?"

I nod. "That would be fine."

Weldon's eyes grow larger. "I must inform you that Mrs. Weldon will not be an ordinary subject. You see, she died a year ago."

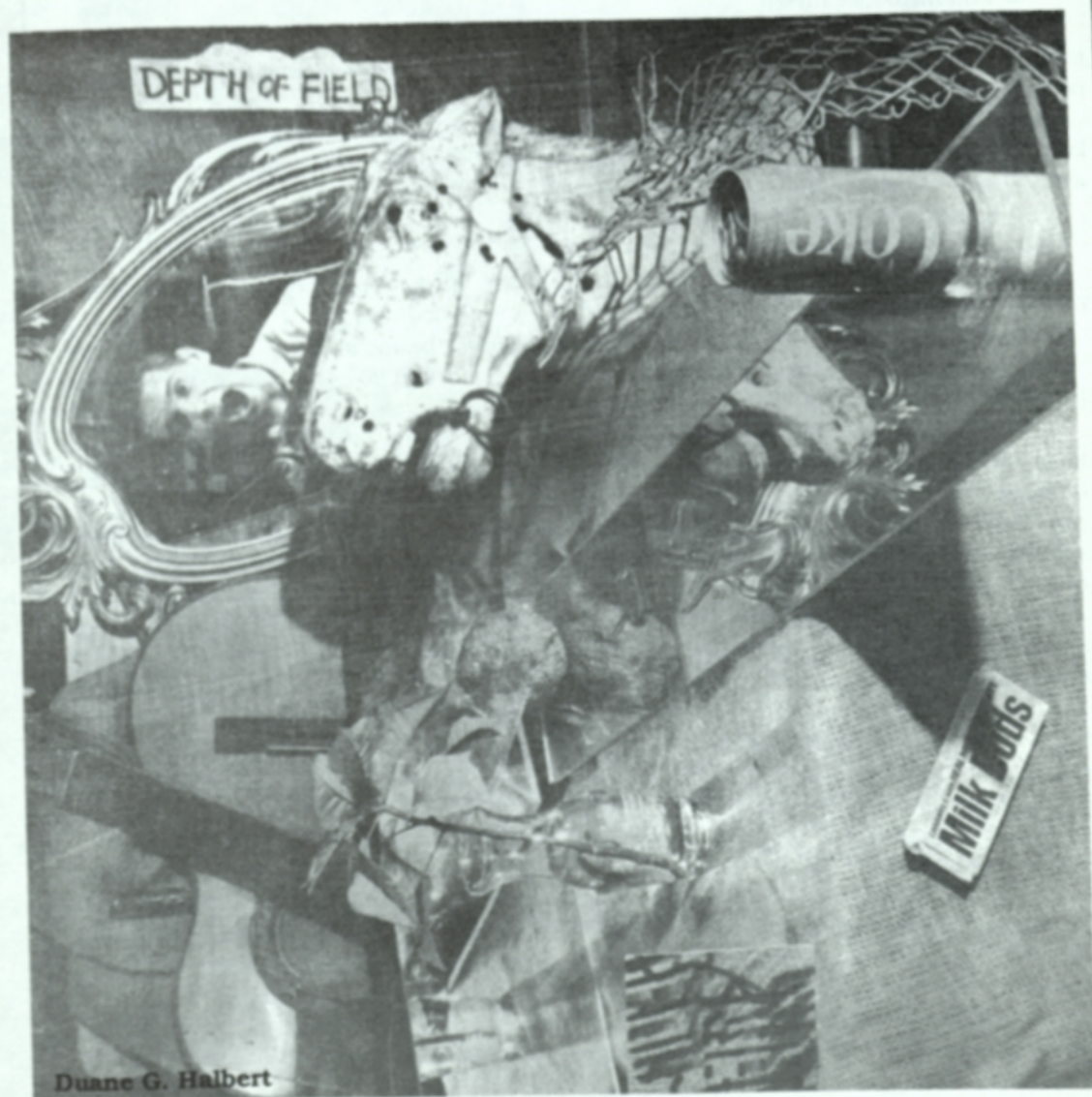
Having said that, he seems freed of a great burden. His face beams, and he takes no notice of the look of surprise I feel forming on mine. He shakes my hand, and takes his leave. I simply stand, dumbfounded, wondering if Weldon is a lunatic.

My bewilderment is interrupted by heavy, laboring steps ascending the stairs. The door opens, the bell rings, and a rather hefty woman and her two small children enter. I leave my thoughts of the dead Mrs. Weldon to earn my living.

By the time I finish the portraits of the three, it is nearly ten o'clock. Next, a young couple stands before my camera: newlyweds, they desire to be joined in a portrait as they are in matrimony. After this happy couple leave, I fill my pipe and sit down on the sofa. Not more than five minutes later, I hear steps on the stairway. The door opens, the bell rings, and an elderly man and a woman I guess to be in her late twenties stand before me. I get to my feet, wishing that every day brought me so much business. This couple, too, I discover, are newlyweds: the man tells me with a great deal of pride. His rude, red-haired bride is most difficult to please. I take five portraits before I produce one that she condescends to be at all pleased with. The worshipful attitude of her husband gives her vanity wings, and she looks down from a great height upon a mere tradesman such as myself. I am relieved to see her go out the door, her white-haired husband following with a look of dog-like devotion in his eyes.

I take my watch out and see that it is twenty minutes after twelve. Is Mr. Weldon, I wonder, having trouble finding his ghostly wife? Perhaps, I muse, his spectral spouse is busy baking an incorporeal cake or sewing a discarnate dress. When she arrives, I wonder, should I offer her an intangible cup of tea? I light my pipe and watch the smoke rise, imagining the smoke to be ghostly ectoplasm attempting to become a human shape.

Footsteps on the stairs. The door opens, the bell rings, and a triumphant looking Mr. Weldon enters carrying a large rectangular object completely wrapped in white cloth. As I get to my feet,



Duane G. Halbert

Mr. Weldon carefully sets his burden down on the sofa and removes the wrapping.

"This," he says, smiling, "is Mrs. Weldon. I desire a smaller portrait of her that I can take with me when I go west in three weeks."

The painting is indeed remarkable. I see at a glance that I will be able to take the life from the late lady's large and luminous dark brown eyes. As Mr. Weldon assists me in positioning the painting against the back cushion of the sofa, he tells me in a quiet voice that she died in a fire, fatally burned by the explosion of a lamp filled with Danforth's Non-Explosive Lamp Fluid. While I move my reflector and adjust it to illuminate Mrs. Weldon's thin, angular features, he tells me that he is a geologist attached to the Academy of Natural Science, and that he is going west to the Nebraska Territory as the leader of a government expedition. I cover my head with the camera's black cloth and consult the viewing glass. The black drape over the top of my body seems somberly suitable for daguerreotyping a face for whom a funeral was held a year ago. I look at Mrs. Weldon and am pleased that for once I do not have to worry about my subject keeping still.

Mr. Weldon's elongated features are elated when, a few minutes later, I present him with the finished daguerreotype. "Now I can take her with me when I go west," he says. "It will be a great comfort to have her with me." I assist him in wrapping the painting. Weldon pauses reflectively, hand on chin. "Would you be interested in daguerreotyping some specimens I brought back from my first expedition? I don't know why I never thought of having pictures taken of them before."

"Certainly," I tell him. "What kind of specimens are they?"

"Dinosaur bones," he says proudly. "If you could come to the Academy that would be best. These are very valuable bones. How about next Wednesday or Thursday morning?"

"Let us say Wednesday morning, before ten o'clock," I say.

Weldon agrees, and leaves, painting in hands and daguerreotype in pocket. He turns and thanks me again as he goes out the door. I pick up my pipe and wonder what on earth a dinosaur is.

Wednesday morning, I look through the viewing glass of my camera and before me is the sunny scene of Mr. Weldon sitting in a chair (braced by a headrest) in the wild-flowered field behind the Academy; at his feet are two huge thigh bones. The bones, he has informed me, belonged to a type of dinosaur Weldon has named the Helenosaur in honor of his late wife, Helen. He has explained to me what kind of creatures these dinosaurs were. These extinct beasts seem to live for him the way his late wife does. Somewhat embarrassed by his confession, Weldon told me that on his first expedition, when he found the bones, he had nightmares in which he was chased by the huge beasts whose remains he had unearthed during the day. "They truly live for me at night," he said ruefully.

As I expose the image of Weldon and the bones, I recall that I have promised my wife to attend a seance with her Thursday evening. I have no interest in spiritualism, but my wife is curious about it. Spiritualism is very popular these days in Philadelphia, so popular that the spirits seem to be

returning by the trainload, with all seats taken and floating room only. As I pull the plate from the camera, I invite Mr. Weldon to join us. A seance would seem to be a perfect evening's entertainment for him.

"Thank you," he says, "that would be most pleasant."

The seance is held at the pleasant home of a woman named Mrs. Exley; the medium is her daughter Egyptiana, a plump young woman whose glossy black hair blends perfectly into the parlor shadows that surround the six of us at the table. Her round, bland, pocked face, illuminated by a single candle in the center of the table, resembles a full, feminine moon. All six of us at the table hold hands, and Egyptiana begins to sing, in a clear soprano voice, a most mournful hymn. I look across the table at Mr. Weldon, and see tears streaming down his cheeks.

When Egyptiana finishes the hymn, she blows out the candle, plunging the parlor into pitch darkness. My wife squeezes my hand. Egyptiana produces a harsh, masculine voice that raspingly reveals itself to belong to her control, a spirit named Noseless Ned. Noseless Ned informs us that he had been a pirate on the Spanish Main. His messages from the Other Shore are as leaky as his ship must have been. He informs my wife that her late father has made famous friends in the spirit world, among them George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. Ned informs Mr. Weldon that his late wife is very happy caring for many spirit-infants.

As Ned continues with his messages, I imagine Mr. Weldon, a few weeks hence, in the west. He sits in the darkness before a fire, surrounded by dinosaur bones. Having woken up from a nightmare in which a fierce, gigantic reptile endeavors to devour him, he calms himself by gazing at the daguerreotype I took of his wife's painting. He examines by firelight the relic held in his hand, a relic quite different from the huge bones that surround him. Like the bones, however, it is a relic of a world irrevocably gone. I imagine a full moon hanging above him like Egyptiana's luminous face above the parlor table; I imagine the wind singing a mournful hymn. And I think about Weldon's imprisonment in an inescapable seance, haunted by the spirit of his wife and the spectres of ancient beasts.

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### **Untitled**

My Jenny six, maybe seven.  
And her best friend on the phone;  
Then sharp words, a phone-slam, blue-eyed tears.  
Scoop her up a mother's way  
Hopelessly protecting  
Arms legs wound round  
And two one again beginning-like,  
Her heart against my heart becomes my heart.  
Her tears my tears.  
One moment all lonely moments of a lifetime helpless.  
Helpless, no soothing words for my child.  
For me.  
For me my child.  
Little use words:  
Rock her, hold her, a place to weep.  
Carried once  
Nine months shelter never again.  
Ever again  
On your own  
On my own forever  
On our own:  
Hold us, rock us, a place to weep.

**Betty Urbanz**

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## Epitaph For An Old Building

St. John's Drugstore came down today.

townspeople milled around

".....you know, it seemed like only yesterday....."

Eighty years according to some,

others preferred not to hear a sum.

Music drifted from the bar, the jukebox was playing "Love Me Tender."

The smell of stale smoke and sweat mingled and lingered

and eventually wafted down the roadway accompanied

by the murmers of tired blue-collar workers.

Liquid muse and hushed conversations

brought back the memories, and forgotten sensations.

St. John's, where condoms were red-faced bought.

And on sultry summer days one could buy an ice cream sundae,

hurriedly eaten on the way

to a Bette Davis matinee.

Mustard plaster bought by tight-pursed mothers

stopping in the aisle to sniff the colognes once worn by

some past lover.

Fine linen hankies to guise the sniffles

of some finely dressed child at some forever Sunday sermon.

...books and cards and shoeshine kits,

appropriate items for some young draftee losing his wits.

St. John's is down...to modernize the town...

and in the once hallowed space

now stands a video arcade...

where one can hear epithets hurled at the loss of every quarter,

and watch senseless facts race across an electronic border.

Birth control pills and purple dye haircuts,

drive-in churches and lots of budget cuts.

Time goes on...moving like a lonely vehicle

speeding through the night...never stopping.

At the Smithsonian Institute the androids milled around—

laughing the laugh of humans.

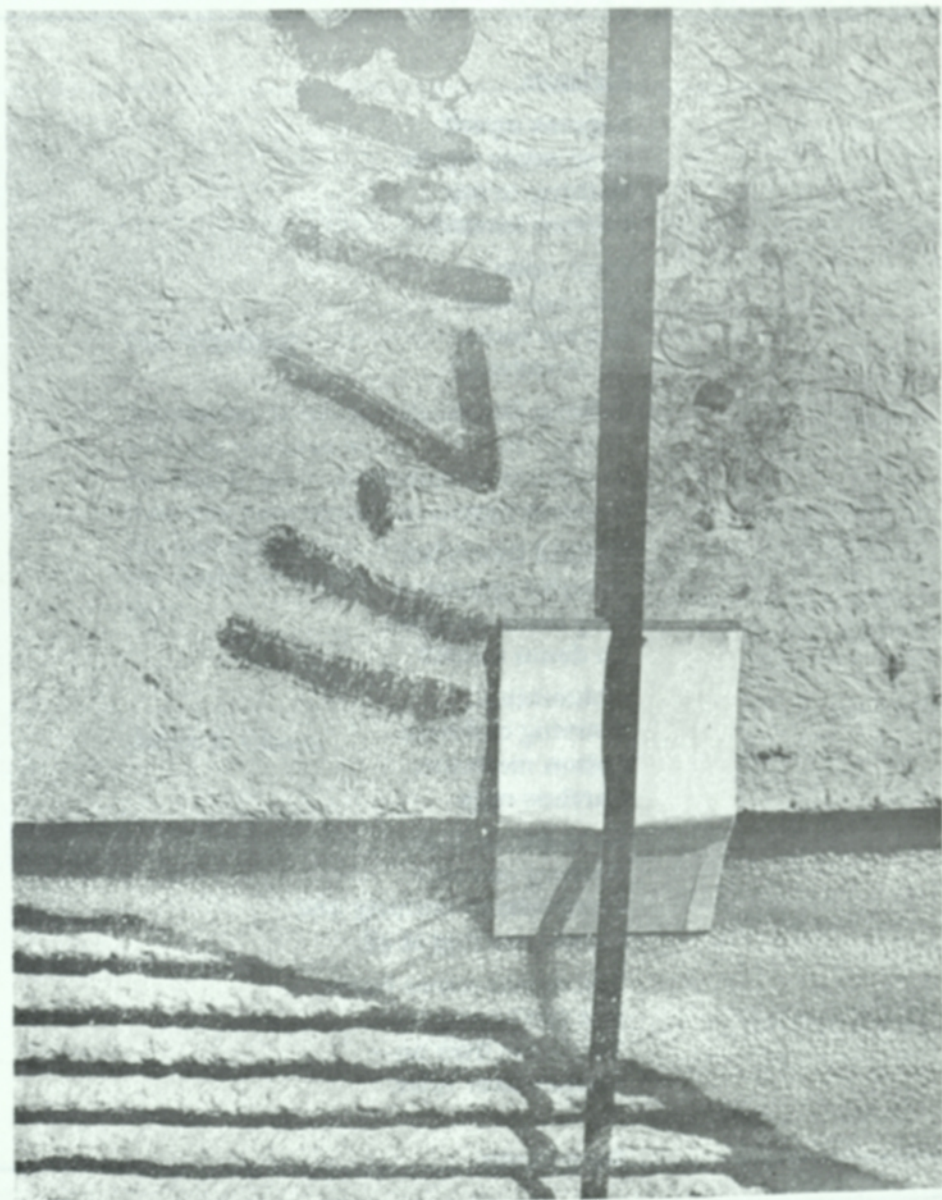
What's a memory without sensation?

"Who cares?"

said the androids.

Joanne Walker

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Stephen R. May

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**Grimm**

Express myself  
In so many words.  
Nothing to say;  
I dream instead.

Once upon a—  
Why not ever  
See me home  
To Neverland?

Talking Bears,  
Flying Children;  
Ice Cream Mountains,  
Careless Eggs.

Blissful innocence.  
Peaceful ignorance.  
Why must we know  
So damn much?

Obliteration,  
Starving children;  
Poison medicine,  
Careless eggs.

So much, so little.  
Nothing can ever  
Comprehend nothing, and  
I know nothing at all.

The dream comes home,  
But can't come true.  
The home lives on—  
Happily Ever After.

**Doug Ensley**

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### **On Waiting**

Separation is not like death  
with its terminal sting.  
For death, after all, is a definite thing  
that has time limits imposed;  
not like separation, where no one knows  
the limits or degree.  
See?

James E. Gibson

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### **The Mist**

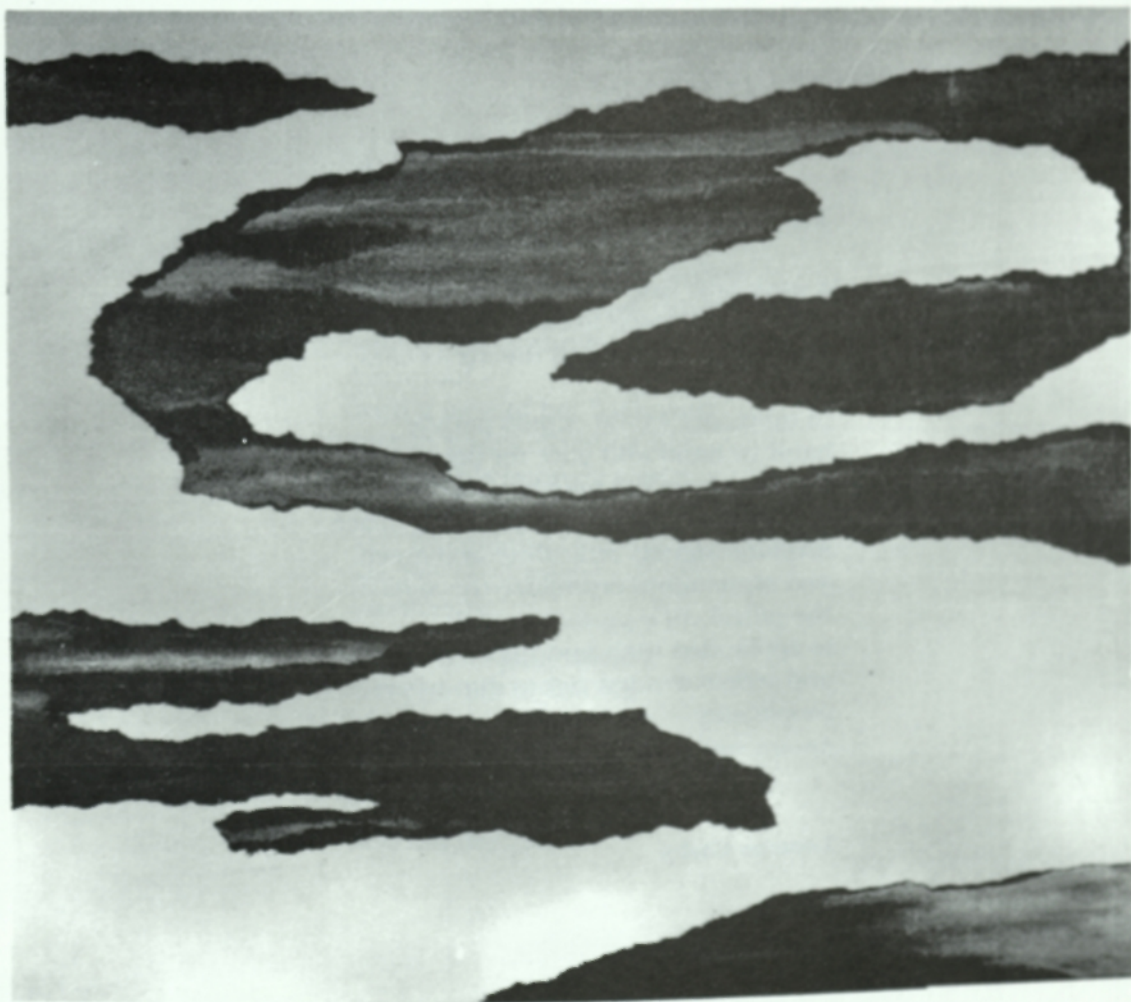
A mist often rises  
From the ground in the night  
To flow about the lonely houses.

The mist absorbs  
The earth-loving touch of footsteps  
The sound of laughter under breath  
Whispered love and courage.

The mist is ambiguity and marvel  
One breathes it in as vapor  
And becomes—perhaps—wiser:  
At least a blurred wisdom  
Can be found in the fog—  
An ability to say  
What might never be said  
In daylight or under  
The extravagant invitations of the moon.

**Neil Ryder**

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### **The Night**

A navy blue hue descends to the horizon  
and stars twinkle to the crickets' shrill.  
The smell is humid in the air as cars  
billow up the hill  
in moments where cupids parade  
hand in hand and pace for pace;  
a place where the juke box fills the  
room with dancing and prancing space.  
Airplane signals red, white and green,  
and streetlights crystallize the serene;  
the patrol car's protective sigh  
is applauded high and nigh,  
and yellow window lights dim where  
people stay  
dream watchful until the day.

**Loomus Cosby**

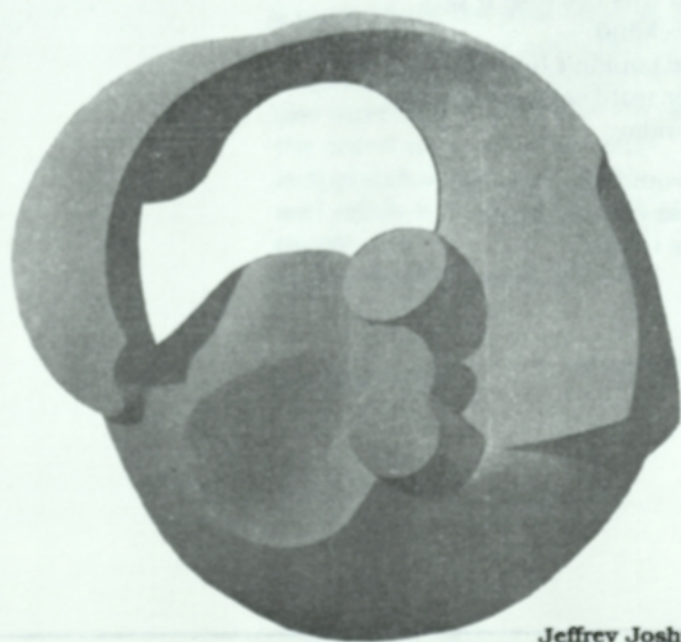
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### **Strange Behavior**

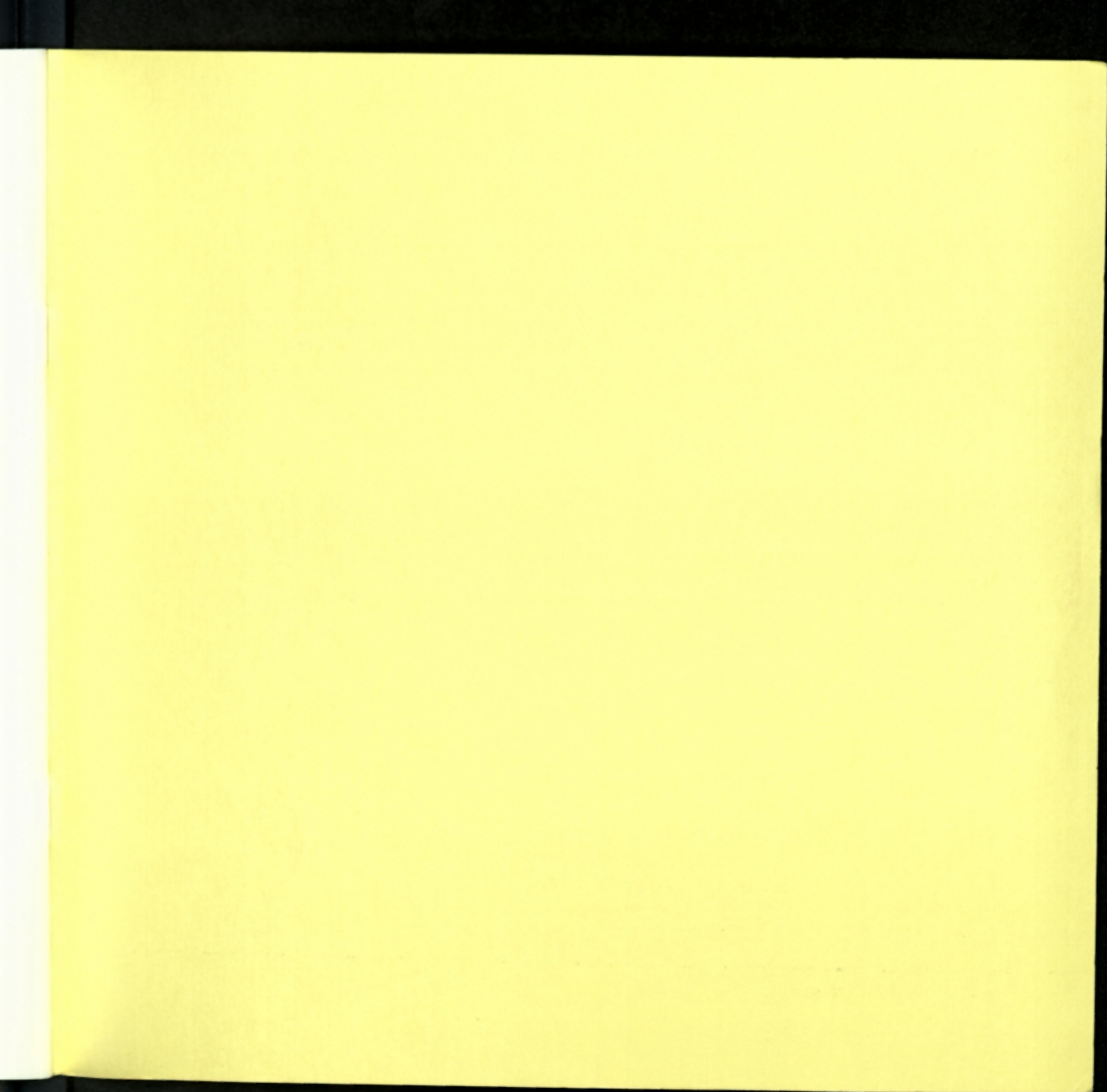
Since he was shy  
at least where it concerned her  
he did a rather bizarre thing  
which was to climb up on a  
barn roof  
with a view of her back yard  
just in hopes of seeing her.  
He did this because it was  
the weekend  
and he couldn't bear not to  
see her until school started  
on Monday.

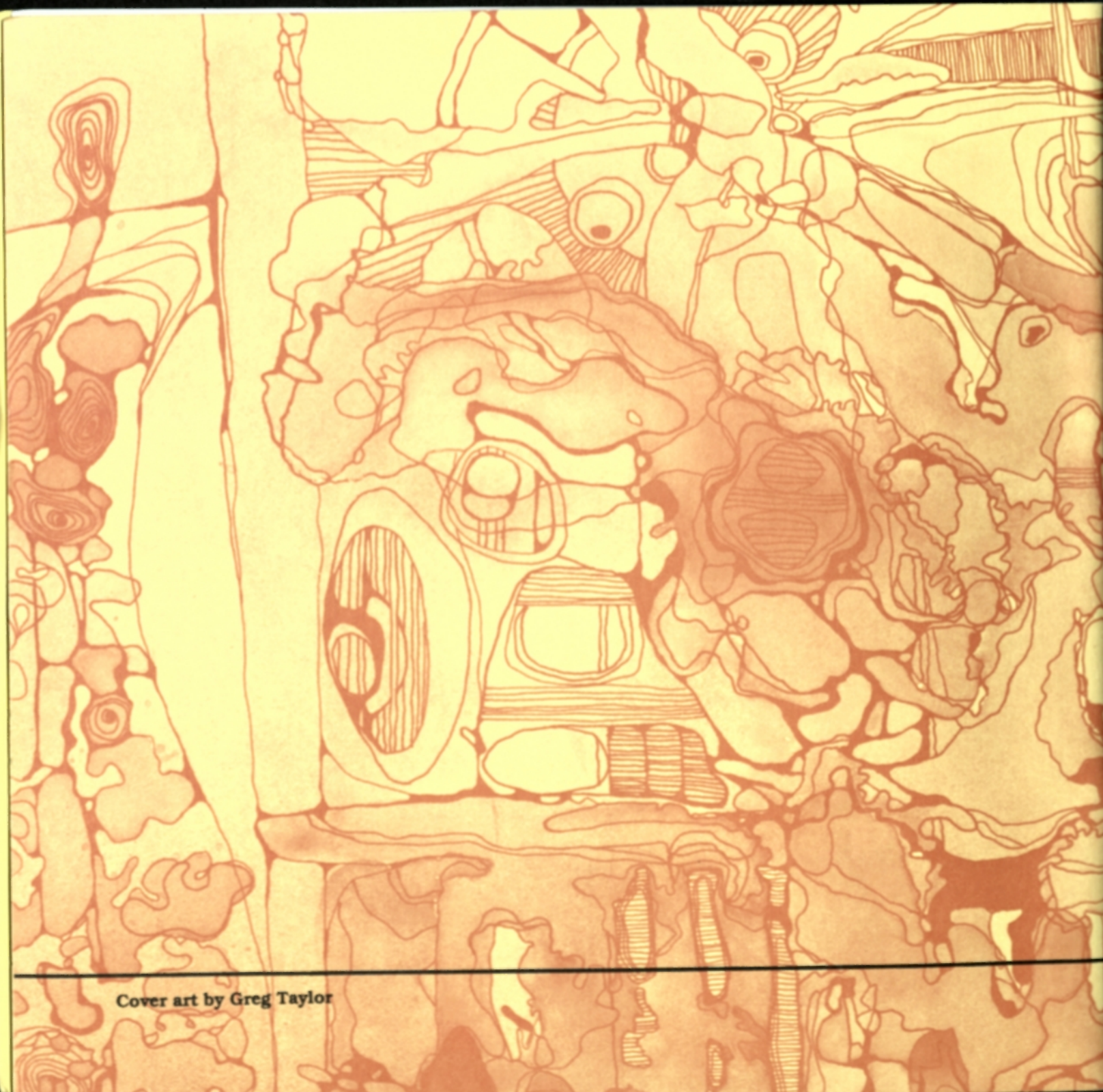
How would you expect a  
ten-year-old boy to act  
if he is in love?

**Richard Hay, Sr.**



Jeffrey Joshua Bayer, 1943-1984





Cover art by Greg Taylor