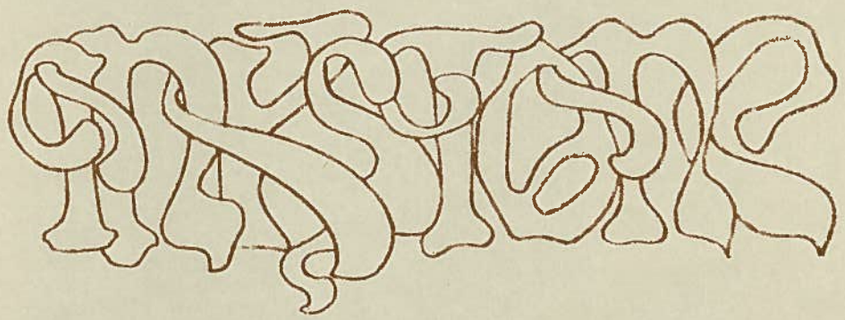

spring 1967

WINNER OF THE DELTA PHI DELTA PRIZE FOR ART FOR 1967 "THE FIREBIRD" ENGRAVING BY URSULA WEBER

THE STRANGE ONE

The day Great-aunt Virginia died, the family breathed a secret sigh of relief, for at last they were rid of the old maid of the family, the boarder who always seemed due for a visit at the wrong time.

It was, the family thought, a shame that Virginia had never married. She was attractive in a wild, unrefined kind of way. Her long, straight red hair had not yet been able to be traced to even the most obscure relatives and, as rumor had it among the younger members of the family, Great-aunt Virginia was really a foundling. Why else was she so unlike the other aunts? Thin and fragile with sagging breasts, hair tied tight in a bun: that's how she should have been. But Virginia had a healthy, almost sensuous kind of frame that was considered more fit for a hussy than Great-aunt Virginia.

And there was that beautiful mane of mysteriously red hair. Most men who had paid court to Virginia would have loved to see the hair unbound, to feel the wild body cut loose from the straining corset, to hear Virginia's throaty voice whisper words of love on the wedding night--but Virginia had refused them all, and the men, even the most hopeful and imaginative, stopped courting her.

"Virginia," Aunt Jessica would say, "was a strange girl. The rest of the sisters would sew and cook and clean, but Virginia preferred to work the garden. One day I was to go and call her. I walked beneath the arbor and found her...dancing, quite shameless. Her petticoats flying, face all red and flushed. She was as unpredictable as the summer storm."

"Yes," Uncle Henry would agree in his stern, booming ministerial voice. "She would have rather played with her brothers when she was a child. She was a strange one all right. Always reading or daydreaming or doing some kind of foolishness. She was a pretty girl, but never much good for anything."

Now Great-aunt Virginia was dead, and, for a day or so, the family forgot the wild girl and the crotchety old maid she somehow mysteriously became. They were really quite sorrowful, in their reserved kind of way. Aunt Jessica walked past the coffin with tears in her eyes, and chewed her white knuckles, and wiped her nose with her lavender-scented lace handkerchief. Uncle Henry in his black derby hat fingered his mustache and cleared his throat as if he were going to say something, but never did. Aunt Sylvia never went near the casket at all, but just sat in the third row and wept as she listened to the organ

music. Aunt Sylvia never went near the casket at funerals.

The family was very sad that day at Great-aunt Virginia's funeral--all but Uncle Steven, who didn't go to the funeral at all. His absence was not much noted by the rest of the family. They had, in fact, been terribly glad, in their private way, that he had not come. Uncle Steven was not really "family." He had married Aunt Harriet, that was true, but Aunt Harriet had died many years ago, and when her husband had "turned to the drink," as Aunt Jessica had so aptly put it so many times, the family discreetly ignored him.

The day of Great-aunt Virginia's funeral Steven sat in the corner saloon all alone, quite drunk. His mood was black and he couldn't quite make up his mind as to how to take the whole business of death, especially the death of Virginia. The family, he knew, had almost forgotten, but he too had been one of the young Virginia's many callers. He had brought her candy and bouquets of lilacs and white roses in the hope of wooing the red-haired beauty, but to no avail. She had disregarded and discarded him as she had all the others, and if a man's heart can be broken, Virginia had broken Steven's. Finally he had married Harriet, her cousin, so he could at least be near her at the Sunday dinners when the whole family would get together. He had never really loved Harriet, and when she died, his drinking had been more because of his loss of family status in Virginia's eyes than because of his wife's passing.

As he sat half-weeping, half-laughing in his beer, Uncle Steven would gloat in his secret knowledge: the intelligence of a part of Great-aunt Virginia's past which he alone knew. Many nights he had lain alone in his bed at the boarding house he now frequented and chuckled aloud at its absurdity. And how he had laughed at what the family, straight-laced and proper, would say if they knew what he knew. How shocked they would be, how mortified! How embarrassed they would be if they could know the kind of woman they were weeping for as she lay smiling in her coffin!

"Oh, Virginia, Virginia," he mumbled into his foam-dripping mug. "You sure pulled the wool over their eyes, didn't you, Virginia?" He laughed uproariously until his eyes were blurred with tears. Then, in his drunkeness, mistaking the tears for sorrow, he would begin to sob once more, his head in his hands, his feet tapping to the tune of the honky-tonk music that whispered in his brain the remembrance of that one night in July.

***

Harriet had died in April, just three days after Steven's thirty-sixth birthday. The family had come to the funeral and sent their condolences. In May Jessica came to cook for him and stayed until June, when she found out, quite by accident, that Steven "had turned to the drink." When he came home that summer night, his clothes in shameful disarray, smelling of whiskey and cheap perfume, she felt it her duty to warn the rest of the family of Steven's shameful behavior. In a last resort to return the black sheep to the fold, she had prodded Uncle Henry into offering Steven a job in his dry-goods store. Steven had refused. That was the last straw, and in July Steven left for the city.

At the Fourth of July family reunion, the adult members of the family whispered of Steven's departure, and were careful to shush any questions by the inquisitive youngsters, hoping to discourage any expanded commentary or embarrassing explanations. As she ate her fried chicken and drank her lemonade, Aunt Jessica offered a silent prayer to the Lord that Steven would not cause any needless scandal. She did not know that faraway in the city Uncle Steven was hoping to do just that--or at least trying very hard.

As soon as he arrived in the city, the first thing Steven did was pay a visit to a red-headed "fancy lady" who had been recommended to him by the hotel bellboy. The visit, however, had proved quite unsatisfactory as she did not resemble his beloved Virginia in the least. As a final blow to his pride, her auburn tresses were noticeably artificial, and he was reluctant, quite understandably, to pay the seemingly exorbitant price she demanded.

Uncle Steven left the "fancy lady" quite desolate, even ashamed of himself for so cheapening the love he felt for Virginia. He found himself wandering the city streets, even more hopelessly alone, his head swimming. He fancied himself missing the family's petty bickerings and silly grudges, but recognized it as such--a fancy of his loneliness. As he walked, he began to relish the anonymous freedom of the city. The street sounds wrapped him within their raucous, carnival, honky-tonk atmosphere. The gaslights flickered their signposts to a world far away from the family, Harriet, and, most of all, Virginia. He almost forgot her, now that the memory of the cheap, vulgar hussy with hair dyed a harsh red-orange was gone,

Steven turned into the first bar he saw. Its smell of beer and sweat drove those other smells--Virginia and the scent of lilac and roses--from his head. Bracing his foot on the rail,

he seated himself on a stool at the far end of the long, curving bar. A wizened little man banged out dissonant chords on a battered upright piano. He chewed on a thick black stogy, and every few minutes, would aim a dark spurt of cigar juice at a spittoon near his foot. Steven ordered a beer from the bartender, a fat lug of a man whose voluminous white apron stretched around his huge expanse of stomach. As he pounded the thick glass mug on the bar in front of Steven, he cleared his throat noisily. Steven looked up and the bartender tossed his head in the direction of a sign on the mirror behind him: "PLEASE PAY WHEN SERVED."

"Oh yeah," Steven mumbled in reply, and extracted a bill from his vest pocket.

The fat man's sweaty hand enveloped it with one broad swipe and, in turn, dumped a handful of change in exchange, wordlessly.

Steven took a swig of the lukewarm beer then looked up into the mirror over the bar. Its smoked glass swirled the lights around him into a soft, diffused pattern, intermingling with faces and shapes. Everything he saw was bathed in a copper glow. That same copper, he thought. The same color as her hair. But she is faraway right now, visiting another branch of the ever-present family. Faraway; so far. He, once more, felt terribly alone. He searched the mirror before him in quiet desperation for a face, any face. Maybe a salesman he had once met, or, purely by chance, some visitor from his hometown. So many faces, but nobody he knew.

He drank again from the heavy mug, his eyes drooping from lack of sleep. He had not slept at all on the train the night before. Then he saw it. His eyes opened a bit wider as he looked hard into the mirror. There it was again, fleeting and illusive. But that was impossible. If he turned on the stool too quickly, it would be gone, he was sure. But no, his eyes were not playing games. The finely-shaped head, large copper curls draped into heavy waves, the soft curving body.

Steven turned on the stool and found himself staring into two large, blue eyes. Virginia's eyes, he was sure. He shook his head, as though trying to clear his brain of its alcoholic fuzziness. What was she doing here? What about the vacation? The family? The why's and how's of her being here, here in this place at this time, overwhelmed him.

She smiled at last in recognition. "Why Steven! What a surprise!"

She came toward him, her gloved hand outstretched, her step assured; confident and unmindful of the storm she was creating

within him. Steven could not speak. "Won't you join us?" she asked.

It was then that he saw the man, a swarthy foreign type, sporting three flashy rings and well-oiled hair.

Steven just nodded.

"Julio, this is my dear cousin Steven." She smiled at the dark stranger. Steven could not help but note how her beauty was set off by his romantic Latin air.

"Hello." said the man, his resonant voice colored with a heavy accent Steven could not quite place. "You are lucky," he said, "to have such a beautiful cousin."

"Yes sir," Steven acknowledged.

He didn't know how he managed it, but he stayed and talked with his Virginia and her suave foreigner. He left the two of them alone, but not before he had arranged to meet her the next afternoon.

***

When he left his Virginia, his cousin, it took him several days to really understand what she had said that afternoon. The vacation story was a lie. She too, like Steven, had grown tired of the family, but she had left voluntarily, quietly, just for a time, but not forever, of her own free will. She was a woman and women need family. Those were her exact words. Women need family, if only to mourn you when you die. Her rejection of her suitors, that too was a lie. She had met her man in Julio, and, though they would never marry, he was now her lover. Though she might die an old maid in the eyes of the family, she had said, at least she would not be trapped by nice young men they had forced upon her. Yes, even Steven, and she smiled and apologized. But, she said, it had taken him too long to leave the family and divorce himself from their list of nice young men.

She had made him promise never to tell that he had seen her. She would have to go back soon. He might see her again, but then as straight-laced and proper Virginia, part of the family. He had promised and she had kissed him on the forehead and had called him Cousin Steven and had shown him to the door.

Days later he laughed when he thought of it all: the bar, the night, the copper head in the smoked glass of the mirror, Julio....and Virginia. But the secret, their private joke, would be too much to keep hidden if he ever returned home. So he stayed away from the family...until the day of her funeral.

***

Great-aunt Virginia is dead now. She left behind a string of nieces and nephews and great-nieces and great-nephews. She left behind Uncle Steven who once had loved her, who had once shared a secret, but it had come out in the end. Uncle Steven, quite drunk, rushed into the funeral parlor and staggered to her coffin. He screamed and sobbed and fought when the family tried to pull him away. That's when the story came out. Order was restored quickly enough, but the damage had been done.

Aunt Jessica was the first to slip away, then Uncle Henry, And Aunt Sylvia, and all the rest, a few at a time until the flower-filled room was quite empty...except for me.

You look so quiet lying there. If only you knew, Great-aunt Virginia, what a commotion you caused. You and your secret life. Oh, they will try to forget about you. They will stuff the skeleton back in the closet and try to erase all memory of you, the black sheep, from their minds, their petty, bickering, smug little minds. Uncle Steven will leave again, just as he did before, and he will try to forget, just as he did before. But he won't be able to. And neither will I Because my name if Virginia too. I'm your namesake, Great-aunt Virginia, and I too am getting tired of the family. I promise I won't forget. Because tonight I'm going to run away....

--Bonni Banyard

WINNER OF THE 1967 MAUDE CARVETH PYM PRIZE FOR POETRY

HOW SWEET THE SEASON

The sweet season comes, singing
With trees that glitter
Birds, arms
Alive with twisted blossoms
That strangle in the sky.
Strange
How the sun, who sulks all winter long
Behind the wires of falling rain,
Rejoices in this time. The marvel
Of loam springing with joy,
The music of slender strings
Seeding in the home
Of this, the sweet season.
Strange,
The colours of the tulips by the wall.
So pure, they must be made by man.
The cat who stalks among the tulips
(Her fur muffles the spangled bell
About her neck) sits among
The hues and cries, distending
The world about her licking face,
And haunches her grim body
On the green-grown grass.
And I, too,
Born on a shore whose suns
Are bright and burnished,
New copper coins pressed against the cheek,
Rejoice in the budding days,
In the mint-green days, the sweet
Breath of the morning, noon, and
Night,
And the first glance at stars
Unwrapped like glass from
These tissue-paper skies.
This self-same season,
Sweet, serenaded by the mild
Lovers under trees, whistlers
In the dark, is heaven to
Those who would resist
The dying and the dead days.

--Arnold Rampersad

NANCY WHITNEY "LUCERN 7/18" PEN DRAWING

BODY AND SOUL

Body and soul writhe from
their last innocent position and--
Violent with searing abandon
and virgin awkwardness,
Yet completely riskless
on the violeted sheets--
Engage in making love
poetry.

--Anne Bingle

NANCY WHITNEY "EN LUCERN" PEN DRAWING

PORTRAIT NOW AND THEN

Observe him asleep,
this conqueror of nations,
embodiment of the laws,
whose unequalled stature
and eloquent discourse
swoon the masses
to oblivious subjection.

Observe him asleep,
a hand clenching the covers
that caress his head.

--Thomas Tressler

THE PARTING

Where are you going, my love,
In the stillness of this,
Our first winter's snow?
You must know
That the world is as cold
As my bare-walled room.

You are going.
Since you think you must,
Let me kiss you once more.
The fresh and still-falling snow
Won't hold the remnants
Of your tracks long.

Dress warmly, and use your finest wool.
And seek the light
Of the first fire you cross.

--Thomas Cadwell

ELOISE

As usual, the rumble of voices from football practice, Home Ec Club, and chemistry extra help session had gradually filtered out of Anderson High School and into jammed busses. As always, there I sat on the top step of the old school waiting for Mom and our maroon '54 VW, neither of which would show. No matter how many times I reminded her, Mom never remembered that Wednesday was extra help session. She hadn't made it to pick me up, anyway.

I leaned against the old marble owl which stood beside Anderson's door and sighed. It was all so ironic. This symbol of wisdom with, "Anderson Hurts!" lipsticked under its left wing, me waiting for something that wasn't coming, and my mother home forgetting--forgetting everything but how to forget--where to find the glasses and the ice cubes.

I think that I never really expected the maroon '54 VW, anyway. I was waiting more to build up courage. The courage to go home to a sink full of dirty glasses and a mother lying on an over-stuffed red sofa. There was irony in that too. She would be lying among pink satin pillows. Satin pillows! Like she was an empress or something. A blubbering empress, crowned in the dirt that lined our house.

It was appalling to think about the way she was going to stagger around and start telling me all about "Eloise" and how "Eloise" used to help her, and how "Eloise" loves her. I was getting tired of this genie-like person who would come popping out of wine and beer bottles. I was getting tired of trying to be pleasant as I ran around getting dinner, when all that time I could have been studying chemistry. But I was also getting tired of fooling myself (or trying to) and thinking that today would be different. Because it wouldn't. And because I should have been used to it by now. So I picked up my delapidated notebook and the torn-and-taped Lasalle's bag with my Home Ec apron stuffed in it, and descended the cracked concrete stairs. The sooner this soap opera starts, the sooner it will get over, I reasoned with myself. Still, I took the long way home. Around the football field and through the flats.

I loved to walk through the flats at that time of night. The fat colored women were always leaning from their windows taking the dingy wash from lines that seemed to link all the houses in a chain. They'd sing old spirituals in loud, uninhibited voices, interrupted now and then by a gay laugh or greeting directed to another housewife across the alley. I

remember hiding under a fire escape on Saturday afternoons just to listen to the happy, off-key voices.

About four blocks of tenements were followed by an empty lot where I used to stop and watch an inning or two of neighborhood baseball. It fascinated me to see the dirty-faced little girls out-running, out-hitting, and out-throwing most of the boys. It was something to watch for a girl like me who had never had much time to play with the neighborhood kids. I used to help Mom with the baking and ironing and things. And when I did play, it was always lady-like things like "house" or "tea party." It's not that I really minded it then, it's just that now, when I walked by on my way home from school, I got the feeling I had missed out on something: skidding in the mud, and screaming hoarsely, "Go Tigers!"

Tonight as I stood against the street lamp watching, I started to wonder if they'd let an over-grown girl play. I wasn't that good for my size, but I made a double in gym class once. It was silly, but I really wanted to play. I wanted to swing that bat with all my might, and let the mud ooze through my toes as I jogged around the bases. I wanted to get a dirty face, and have my hair blown in the stale city air; I wanted to tear my shirt, sliding home for the winning run. It wouldn't have hurt to ask. I knew it was silly, but it wouldn't have hurt to ask.

My heart jumped to my throat as I edged slowly across the street to the vacant lot. "It's a hit!" I heard myself whisper excitedly as I reached the field. It was a Tiger hit. (I always rooted for the Tigers.) A little girl with long black braids was scampering around the bases, giving a loud, teasing laugh, while a round-faced girl with a Yankee cap on backwards jumped up and down and screamed at her, "Run! Run! Run, Eloise, Run!"

I froze. God! What a horrible sound; what a dreadful name! It brought back pictures of the over-stuffed sofa and the pink pillows and the bottles and the staggering. It was unbearable. "Run, Eloise!" pounded in my ears. I bit down on my quivering lower lip to steady it and then ran.

I ran for two or three blocks, passing distorted trees and parked cars. A putrid city breeze slapped against my face; my eyes burned. I ran until my throat started to get sore and my legs began to shake. Then I stopped. Breathing came hard through my raw throat. So I stopped at a drugstore and bought a box of cherry cough drops. I ate three of them while leafing through a "Seventeen" (I didn't have enough money to buy one) and left the store, feeling a little better, anyway. At least

courageous enough to make a re-entry into a world of stale air and ugly names.

I had to hurry for the last three blocks because it was late and the air was cooling, and threatening gray clouds shoved each other around the sky. So I was hurrying past Sam's Bar and Grill, and I noticed an old lady swaying on her stool in laughter. She held a tall glass which was spilling foam and liquid all over her coat and the floor. She looked ugly. Everything looked ugly. Cringing, I turned my head away, and darted around the corner to our house. I took long, reaching steps and almost tripped over a roller skate as I ran toward the back door.

I gulped hard, but the saliva stuck in my throat, causing me to choke as I opened the squeaky door. "Mom," I almost whispered. Something stirred in the living room. "Mom!" I set my shabby things on the kitchen table and slowly moved toward the living room.

"Eloise?" in a slurred voice.

I felt nauseous, "Mother--it's me." She moved on the couch with a grunting noise and a satin pillow fell to the floor. "Mother, I'm home and supper isn't ready," I shifted my weight to the other foot.

She sounded as though she were snoring, but I could make out a muffled, "Eloise?"

"Eloise isn't here now, Mom. It's me! You've got to get up! Supper isn't even started, and Dad and Ted'll be home, and..."

My mother sat up then and I had to turn away at the sight of her. Her eyelids drooped so that almost the complete eyeball was hidden. Her hair stood out around her face, making her look like a circus clown. She hadn't washed it in weeks. And her tongue--it was white and puffy and hung from her open mouth. "I was just talking to Eloise," she said dizzily.

"Can't you forget Eloise just once?" I walked over to the window, trying desperately to ignore the lump of anxiety which clawed at my throat.

"Eloise is such a pretty girl. And so helpful...all the time doing things for me. She's such a dear," my mother stumbled toward me, and I felt a shudder race down my spine. "Eloise has such pretty hair. Long and golden..." She raised her unsteady hand to my head; her breath reeked with alcohol when it reached my flared nostrils.

"Mother!" I swung my body from the window and my shoulder hit against her jaw. She fell to the floor and just lay there in her wrinkled polka-dot dress and fuzzy hair. At first I

started to help her up, but the ugliness of the scene made me turn away from her again. "Mother!" I screamed, "The supper! Dad and Ted and I! Your family!...God--Mother! Get up!" I was sobbing now and my voice had lowered, expressing some of the futility I felt, "You drunken mess...Ohh, Mom, get off the floor."

I could hear her breathing heavily now as she supported herself on one hand, glaring up at me through glassy eyes, "You!" she spat the word at me. "If only Eloise..."

"For God's sake, Mom--there is no Eloise!" I took the fish bowl from the phone stand and hurled it to the floor. It was empty--it had been for as long as I remembered--but glass and little pink and green stones and shells flew all over the room. Strange, but some relief came from setting these dusty stones free.

I moved swiftly to the other side of the room, yanking my dad's old army jacket from the back of a chair and pulling it on hastily. "Won't you ever realize that?" I screamed at the pitiful heap on the living room floor behind me.

When I got outside I felt some relief. A slow drizzle had started to leak from the mass of grayness overhead, and the whole atmosphere was cool and peaceful. I turned the scratchy wool collar of the old army jacket against my neck, and shoved my hands into its pockets. I cut across yards and through alleys. The rain came harder, and it was beautiful. I kept walking.

I read "JOE + PATTI" and "GO TO HELL's," softened by the graying rain on the brick walls of an alley, and then I heard a faint purring sound behind a trash can there. I had always been afraid of cats, but the softness of this purr compelled me to look. I slowly leaned over the can and peered down at two frightened green eyes. A mass of wet, tangled fur huddled shivering behind the eyes.

"Cat," I said affectionately aloud. I reached down to pick him up. He scratched at my arm at first and I drew away. But slowly and persistently I won his confidence and he mine. I pulled the matted gray ball to my face and whispered, "Cat, come with me. I'll take you to a very special place where you and I can talk." He purred contentedly and I knew we'd get along.

I talked to him as we went, fingering the wet tangles that surrounded his thin body. "If I were going to give you a name," I said, "I'd call you Emeralds because of your beautiful eyes. But I hate names, so I'll just call you Cat and you can call me Girl..."

"This place is very special, Cat, and you and I are the only ones who'll ever know about it, except my brother Ted. I told him about it, but he's never been there. You and I will be the only ones who'll ever be there..."

We reached the flats in a few minutes, and I found the fire escape where I first listened to the fat colored ladies sing their spirituals. "This is it, Cat...Do you like it?...Well, it's not really fancy, but it's good for just talking. And maybe, if we're lucky, we can overhear a story or two. Sometimes men come by and tell the most fascinating things..."

A few minutes later I heard someone walking by, so I quieted Cat by petting his neck very softly. The person stopped, and we got excited, Cat and I. But then the person bent down low and looked searchingly under the escape. We were afraid until I saw that it was Ted. "That's Ted!" I told Cat. My brother smiled at me, and I smiled back, presenting him Cat.

"Dad and I heard what happened," he said softly. I thought I'd find you here." He stretched his large hand out to me and I took it. "I came to take you home, Eloise."

--Gwen Goodridge

HARRY SCHWARZER "UNTITLED FIGURE" PENCIL DRAWING

MIND-LETTER: B.G., 2/6/67

Be bread to multitude lovers
& save what crumb
our world might count as waste
to be my food.

Rejoice! if I can taste
one combed-out hair as my sufficiency
& on this gift
erect my soul of love

(eternal as the Stone
they cast away,
rising a corner-head
incorruptible)

-- this then my Self
who loves your weakest part:
my all for your least
& All unto His glory,

praying, sweet Brenda,
your spirit understands,
Steve

--Steve Schmidt

FIX

longingly down, guttered teardrops
of a breathing night wind caress
the face of earth, while the madding
sound of their crashing rush plays
like purple velvet against my
naked leg.
the wind hounds howl.
cold, bitter, 2:30 a.m.
a speckled rainbowed squirrel
sits in this tree i am under and
gathers acorns in the midnight dreams
of lost angels and fallen criminals.
i have nothing to do but smoke
this gently inhaled air and scatter
words of muted silence.

--Gary Silver

ROBERT FOSTER "ADDIE" INTAGLIO PRINT

IN THE FIELDS OF WESTERN

On the nothing afternoon of the kind
Of discovery day when you find
Old memories in new places and
New love in old memories, we ran
Across the field of thawing earth,
Our feet sinking slightly, leaving
Footprints on a playhouse carpet.
In a turn on meadow we talked to
An opened up sky, and it answered
Us, telling us of all the good times
In the past and reminding us of
None of the bad. It all must have
Happened before sometime and the
One touching my hand with happiness
Must have been there before, too. Many
Times before, I think, tho we'd just met.

Every tree was a childhood friend,
But there was no time to talk, for
The next hill was waiting with another
Reunion. "Race you to the top!"
There a half frozen lake lay patiently
While we watched from a stoney arch.
We looked back and everything was
Still there, forcing us to be the ones to
Walk away. But to walk away still
Speaking to them inside thru the music,
The drinks, and the words. Still speaking to
Them till the time came to slip off under cover
With champagne and others, holding the
Warmth of a self so close to mine.

--John Hite

MAGGIE

cornsilk
on a long, slender stem
is Maggie's hair
drenched in sunlight
angel hair
wispy threads of silver fog
by the dark of night.

echoing of wave against
rock in a cove
tall fading grass
whispering impolitely
at the end of summer
a jubilant aria of
the vagabond wind
sounds of
Maggie, singing
sounds of comfort...

her spirit
blows wide and free,
and the space in her heart
big enough to hold a world
or two,
a beautiful exaggeration
a childlike misfit
fitting everyplace
where the sun raises flowers
and the earth unburdened by
the weight of concrete

girl from the north country
fair
Maggie
with the long long hair
it ought to be a law
to have a
Maggie
in everyone's life
sometime....

--Karen Sekerak

HARRY SCHWARZER "DIE POLTERGEISTER"

MIXED MEDIA DRAWING

WINNER OF THE 1967 SIGMA TAU DELTA PRIZE FOR SHORT STORY

NO CANDY FOR BREAKFAST

When I woke up on Tuesday morning it was raining hard. I usually like rain okay, so long as I'm at home and can stay inside and sleep while it's going on. But if I know I have to get up and go to the bus stop in the rain, it depresses me. So when I looked out the window at all that water coming down, I didn't feel like doing anything but crawling back into bed.

Besides, it was Tuesday. A lot of people make a big stink about how bad Mondays are. But I think Tuesdays are worse. Because on Monday you're sort of resigned to the fact that you've just had a weekend and it's all over now and back-to-the-grind and all that. But by Tuesday you think, okay, I've worked for a day, and now I'm tired, so can I stop now and take another weekend? The trouble is, people don't agree with me too often when I tell them that. Like my father. He just looks at me like, "What a lazy boy," and then says, "Go mow the lawn," or something.

Anyway, I watched the rain for awhile, and then I went downstairs to the kitchen. It was still dark, so I turned the light on. On the table was a bowl and a spoon, and a box of corn flakes. That really burned me. My mother knows how much I hate cereal, but she still puts it out for me every day of my life. I've tried to tell her, but she just says, "Eat it anyway--it's good for you," or something. She seems to think it's the only thing in the whole world that's good for me that I can have for breakfast. And she always yells if she doesn't see a used cereal bowl in the sink when she gets up. When I was a little kid, I used to put about two corn flakes and a few drops of milk in the bottom of a bowl, put it in the sink, and then run water over it, so it would look used. I'd even spill sugar on the table so it would look like I'd eaten in a hurry, then I'd eat a candy bar on the way to school. I hated cereal that much.

So anyway, I was feeling pretty terrible since it was Tuesday, a rainy Tuesday; and I was hating cereal even more than usual. So just to be mean, I deliberately ignored the bowl and the box, and ate a candy bar on the way to the bus stop. I didn't even run water in the bowl. I didn't feel much like faking it.

The rain had stopped, and as I walked down the driveway, I suddenly noticed how foggy it had become. Even though it made everything gray and drab, the fog sort of cheered me up. I've always liked fog. I don't know why, exactly; maybe I just like the feeling that if there's somebody I don't want to be with, I

can just walk away into the fog and not have to look at him.

When I had almost reached the bus stop, I started to feel sort of guilty about ignoring the cereal box. I pulled out the candy wrapper I had stuffed into my pants packet and threw it into the street. I knew my mother was going to yell about the cereal when I got home.

Actually, my parents are pretty nice people, even though I usually make them sound like a couple of ogres. They've made rules for me and all that, but deep down I know they'd give me almost anything if I asked for it. I could go up to my father and say, "Dad, could I have a hundred dollars for a car?" And he'd probably say, "Why, sure, son!" and pull out his wallet, just like that. Maybe that's why I don't ask for too much. It makes me feel a little guilty, like I don't deserve it or something. My mother's the same way. I can bring home fifty-two kids after school and she'll act like she really gets a charge out of it. The only trouble is, I don't really know my folks too well. I mean, we say hello and goodbye and all that, but we never talk about how we feel about anything. I used to talk to my sister Jane before she got married. She and I used to talk about things that bothered us all the time. Jane used to say what really gave her a pain was the way Mom was always complaining that none of us kids did any work. The thing was, we didn't mind doing things if Mom would ask us. But, as Jane said, somehow we were expected to know, without being home all day, and without being told, exactly what was to be done. Like we were mind-readers or something. That really got Jane. That and the breakfast bit. She hated cereal too.

My father is an all-right guy, except that he tried too hard. When I was a little kid, I used to want him to play ball and take me fishing and all that, but he was always too busy. So I learned to get along without him. But suddenly, last year I guess he realized I was in high school and would even be going to college soon, so he decided to make friends and get to know me and all that. I'll never forget it, that one night when he walked up to me and said, casual as anything, "Why don't we go fishing?" as if he'd been saying it for years. I was so surprised I almost swallowed my chair, but I just sort of said, "Well...okay." So we went.

The whole thing was a flop, naturally. I mean, what did he expect? We just sat there and fished and didn't say anything. He could have gone alone and had better company than I was. Funny, though, he asked me to go again several times after that. But I always just said, "No, thanks." I just couldn't see it, both of us sitting there for hours, wondering what to say to

each other. I figured, after all, he had fifteen years to make friends, and he blew it. So now that we didn't have anything in common, no use leading him on and letting him think we did.

Just as I reached the bus stop the bus was coming around the corner, Joe Burke had just run to the curb so he'd be sure to be the first one in line. He was standing there watching the bus with his mouth open. Joe Burke has to be about the biggest toad in the whole school. He's big and fat, and he always runs to every class. I guess he's afraid of being late. Everybody always cuts him down pretty badly, but he doesn't seem to know it. Even when somebody put in the school paper, "Recommended: stop signs for Joe Burke," he didn't change any. I guess he must be pretty dumb on top of being a toad.

I got at the back of the line with the guys and tried to look casual, like I didn't care if we ever got to school or not. They were all standing around looking casual too. It seemed like everybody was standing there looking casual except Joe Burke. I sort of knew this cocky attitude the guys took was a big farce, but I couldn't really jump on anybody for it because I was just as bad as they were. I knew if I walked up to a guy and said, "Knock it off," he'd probably say, "I will if you will." But of course I wouldn't because nobody else would; so he wouldn't. So everybody just stood around being casual and cocky because everybody else was.

All of a sudden I started wondering what the other guys had had for breakfast. I bet they had juice and toast and donuts. Maybe some even had bacon and eggs. I looked at Joe Burke. He had cereal. It couldn't be anything else. I could just picture him, eating a bowl of corn flakes real fast, and liking it.

We all climbed on the bus, still acting casual. I felt like hurrying so I could get a good seat, and I bet the other guys did too. But nobody did. We just let everybody else on first, like we didn't care. So when we got on the bus we had to stand. We always did.

I almost felt like asking Joe Burke what he had for breakfast, just to make sure. But the other guys would think I was nuts. Well, maybe I could ask him in a casual way..."Say, uh, Joe, what'd you have for breakfast this morning?" No, he might answer me and then say something else. I didn't want to have to keep up one of those polite conversations with him, where everybody asked a lot of questions like, "What's new with you?" when they really just want you to ask them, so they can talk about themselves. Besides, he had cereal. It was written all over his face.

The bus was rattling down the road by now. And I mean

rattling. Those buses are all so junky they sound like they're falling apart every time they move. And every time the bus hit a bump everybody went flying. Some guys even dropped their books. Somebody should do something about those buses. I don't think they're safe. The kids at our school don't even kick the tires when nobody's around. If they did, the whole bus would be in little pieces.

Those seats are only made for two people but since it's so crowded, we have to have three in a seat. The guy on the end only gets a couple of inches, so he keeps falling off all the way to school. When we were in grade school we always used to fight about who had to sit on the end. But we don't do that anymore. We just stand now.

When we got to school the bus kept rattling until it stopped. In fact, even after it stopped it still rattled a little. Joe Burke got off first since he sat in the first seat. Then we guys who were standing got off. That was the only good thing about standing. You got off right away.

I was right behind Joe Burke as we walked down the sidewalk. Just as he got to the door he stopped and put his hand into his pants pocket. I went on into the school. Then I turned around just in time to see him throw a candy bar wrapper into the street.

--Coleen Carr

MARTHA SUHR "L'APRES" CHARCOAL DRAWING

TO MY SISTER

Had you not told me,
I would never have lived your sorrow.
Hurt set before me
would live only as long as tomorrow;
then be buried with me in my today
to be repressed into yesterday
with the other pains I have earned along.
Yours is not pain of my own reward
and it rings in my past. A dissonant chord,
yet it sounds out more hurt than my own.

But, I am too often busy with my own concern;
scattering axioms to society at large,
a bone to pick, a cross to burn
and a contract with Madame LaFarge.
I spread my anxiety out thin,
taking atrocity in through my skin,
directing the whole matter at the dying
of the goodness of man, the wise.
When picking the scales from man's eyes,
I am too far extended to hear just you crying.

--Robert Erman

LISTEN

Flutes, lutes, lyres. Smoke rises snakelike from the glowing end of a weed. Bodies twist and turn. Spectators see only the gargoyle mirror images of their dance, magnified ten thousand times by the floating nothingness oozing over the brain.

Cleopatra's barge. Vicious, tender, solemn, the music entwines its victims--
and the smoke, thick as corn fields in summer.

You're playing blindman's bluff, and you see the old man drooling as he rapes her. You scream until blood runs from your mouth. Until you can scream no more. You cry. The day is dark. Quilted clouds cover the death below. Night tide brings bitter winds, and still you cry, softly now, eyes empty pools of blood, face mudcaked, hands torn and cut from beating the ground. You creep towards her. She is just a thing now, and the night has covered her so that she's nearly gone. Your hand moves. Her leg is still warm. An ounce of heat, but the suns had blown their way to paradise and the forbidden fruit was scorched to a cinder.
A knowledge, your knowledge--
gained and lost, to a cornfield in the deep, rich, afternoon of a summer, a thousand and one years ago--and maybe even yesterday.

"Jason," a voice whispered in his ear. But he was gone. He was a lone river winding its way through dense forests. He slid over soft beds and now and then touched the rich, live earth of grassy banks.
He was a silent wind, his fingers reaching to every corner of the globe. Enveloping whole towns, whipping, careening along dark narrow streets. Battering against splintered doors that would not yield.
He was a faceless ghoul, wrapped in darkness his soul a black slimy thing hanging, dimensionless, in its own frothing hell. Again his eyes were empty pools of blood. The smell of corn shucks was thick, pungent in the air.

He screamed.
And the river, the wind, the ghoul, were gone. Only the corn smell remained.
For a time, he was down.

There was a room, people, and the perpetual hanging garden of smoke. The glowing butts and the eyes.
Not red--
Black, sifting dust of jeweled, sparkling coal.

Teeming multitudes of rats juiced, on and upon stocks, pills, needles. Stinking vermon, eating, gnawing on mind filth. Day bitches with the night hots. High, dry, and away.
Gone the ecstasy of the shimmering hinterlands. A strange mock-turtle concoction of rarified horror. A hellish eden built of four walls and yesterdays' dreams. Yesterdays' nightmares.
Light the jester's torch and burn your way to infinity.

Lost to four walls and a lonely cockroach.

"Jason," whispered the voice.

--Scott Robert Munroe

INSECT

So soon the ruffle-encased insect must emerge,
naked...defenseless:
an excellent prey for the experienced hunter.

The hunter springs and catches the insect in his grip,
heedless of its incessant attempts to escape.

One soundless shriek.

--Joyce Wasen

DECEMBER 8

In that musky-green world-part
   where death wears white
   at the bloodless altar
The pure black rejoices now
The black-robed bows
   sways and gesticulates, conception

There in the wet-green
   demeter and hymen
Pray black sweat
 into mother earth the blood of christ
   blood and sweat and soil
 in chorused alleluia
   at yesterday's violets.

--Anne Bingle

DIRGE

the bells of St. Aloysius ring,
the deep bells ring
and shatter the air,
stroking the air with long tongues,
resounding in the morning.

      in the belfry,
      on the floor white with droppings,
      the boy who woke at six
      to scare pigeons for a quarter,
      pulls the long rope.

brass bells swing and shatter
the sacred vacuum of sunday
and the dawn is filled with noise
and violated.

      in the dead air of the sanctuary,
      and old woman bows
      to the litany of candles
      and says a rosary.

proud bells peal
loud upon the morning
tolling out gray morning
with heavy joy and grief.

      there will be no mass
      this morning.

--Harald Wyndham

HARRY SCHWARZER "GENERATION" INTAGLIO PRINT

DEAR ALICE

I note the pronouns
   In my letters,
I's and me's backslanted;
My introverted club,
   Crowding the page.
I write letters to
Myself
   And affix your address.
I miss--I am--I think
I love
Me,
I mean you.
Alice, where are you going?
"Through the mirror
   For to be
With myself."
An us of me.

--S. M. Kingsbery

WHEN I AM OLD

Feel the grass on your feet
Wet with dew
And barely warmed by the sun.

When I am old, I will stand with my toes
In morning grass and remember
What it was like to be young.

--Elisabeth Brandfass

RITA DUNIPACE "OF A CHILD" ENGRAVING

MOTHER-OF-PEARL SKY

The sky was blue and pink, glazed with gray--a mother-of-pearl sky hanging heavy, heavy over our heads. We ran across the wind-blown field, our bare feet tangling in the grass, my hair streaming out behind like tails of horses running. It was the kind of day that has no season.

We ran, ran, ran to the top of a hill and found the sun on the other side sinking into the white-capped sea. As we walked along the beach, the waves lapped at our toes like friendly wet-tongued dogs. We scooped up green seaweed and wrapped it round our necks like precious lace scarves and the sand clung to our wet feet in silk-soft stockings. We laughed together at our rich garments and breathed happy sighs in the salt-sea air.

A pair of white-winged gulls flew around our heads and spread a cloud of each other and we sank to the sand, our arms around each other. A pink and blue mother-of-pearl sky--a shell laid over us by some gentle god.

That seemed so long ago, but now I remember it as clearly, as vaguely as last night's dream. They will be coming to get me at dawn and I have no choice but to go unless....

I remember the first time I ever saw them. We were running across the fields, he and I. Just as we came to the top of the rise that marked the road leading away from town, we saw the first of their dreadful processions. We fell to our knees behind the tall grass so as not to be seen. Tall, powerfully-built men, leading a small naked child with each hand. The men walked with long steps and if a child stumbled, he was dragged along on his knees unless he could struggle to his feet. Then came a flock of youths, boys and girls, being driven by more giants with whips. Their young bodies glistened with sweat under the hot yellow sun. One girl with long golden hair streaming down her naked back knelt to pick up one of the bleeding children the men had cast aside. She held it close to her young breast, whispering softly in its ear. A giant strode up behind her and, grabbing her hair, knocked the child from her arms. She wrested herself free and glared at him with flaming, angry eyes. He just laughed. She spit in his face and bent once more to the child. The man only laughed louder and snatching her up, dragged her to the tall grass at the edge of the road, not far from where we crouched. We could hear her screams and his hard breath as he took her.

The tall men's whips cracked a wordless threat to any who might show such displays of foolishness. The rest of the youths walked by, their pale faces toward the ground, avoiding the pools of blood and tears where screaming children lay dying.

Last of all came the young women, some of them straining forward to watch after their children who were being driven before them, others looking back at the string of bodies that had been left behind, all of them wailing great cries of sorrow and hate. Many of them were swollen with unborn children, now fatherless, all the men now either executed or lost to the army of slaves the tall men had claimed.

The cries of the women were heard long after the procession had passed us. I trembled beneath his hands as they disappeared down the road. That had been the fifth day of such marches. In two days the enemy will have taken all--all except the few like us who were able to run away. But now I can run no more. His child is big within me and thrashing his legs against my belly, getting ready to be born. How I wish he had never been conceived, to be born into a world where death is the most merciful ally. But it is too late for such wishes. His birth is only hours away unless the giant men find me first and kill me before his time arrives.

The giant men are everywhere now, so terrifying they are. Not men really but animals. No. More like machines, labored of machines, conceived by twisted old men who were long ago drained of any human passion but the overpowering lust of power. Creaking men, inanimate minds giving birth to machine men to do the things they themselves are too old to do, formulas for conquest of dissension, plotting the purges of women and children so that all men can be reduced by fear to the passive obedience of their machines.

I know I should have been in the wailing parade of women but I could not have borne the thought of his child being slaughtered so. Our love was so great that day under the pink and blue sky. I should have refused him--yet I could not. He will not leave me, even now though I have begged him, scolded him, even mocked him for being such a slave to a woman. He just frowned and said our child must not live to be a slave like the others. I only hope the few of us, of those still running, will outlive the blind gropings for a power that must die with them: their years, the stagnant laughable wisdom.

It is dawn now and he is beside me. I plead with him once more to leave, to run and join the others. He bends over me.

to kiss away the tears the child's writhings are bringing to my eyes. The pain is so great. I grab him close and press my head to his chest. The warmth of his body against my breast. A coldness against my thigh. His knife. Still holding him close I reach down with my hand and grab the hard steel, slipping it beneath my back. He does not notice, but runs his fingers through my hair to smooth it off my sweating face. I smile at him and pull his face close to mine, feel his mouth on mine, his hands on my body. You must go, I say, and watch for the men. The child is coming and I must be alone, I lie. He says he will not go, but I insist.

Reluctantly he gets to his feet and climbs to the top of the rocks. He looks down at me over his shoulder, then crouches at the top. The sun is rising in front of him and as I see him now, he is at the center, black against its brilliant light. He will miss me, I know. And he will cry for the loss of his child. But then he will join the others to fight the old men because he knows he must. He can take his revenge after I give him his freedom.

The knife is cold beneath my back, cold in my hand. The next pain from the child is coming so perhaps I will not feel the pain of the knife. Nor will the child.

I raise the knife, my eyes staring into the sky...the pain is coming...a pink and blue...forgive me...mother-of-pearl sky hanging...my child...heavy, heavy over my head...

--Bonni Banyard

DEATH

had never really slapped
his nerveless hand

hairy from repetitious dirty
jokes whispered through rotting teeth

hard upon my back -- you leaned your
feelings held securely

until I watched your
warm hand squeezing mine

-- the shifting scene to flowered
salutating hands as ugly cold

as I the spectacle
spectator tried to

coax a nerve
from unnatural flesh I

kneeled
I cried

selfishly because
your face

my
hand

could not take
back my life.

--Steve Schmidt

HARRY SCHWARZER "VALORIE" PENCIL DRAWING

VANILLA ICE CREAM

The ride from the dorm to the park had been uneventful for the four young men. They rode in a late model convertible--the top up. All were members of the football team and, consequently, racial disharmony was practically non-existent. Still, it was plainly evident to Jerry, the lone white boy, that Jim and the others were being unusually silent. To Jerry there seemed to be no hatred in the air--just a feeling of aloofness.

It was the week before finals and Jerry's mind was on matters other than the picnic the coaches had arranged for them. Jerry had recently been warned by the Registrar that he was overcut in two courses. He knew that he would flunk them because of it. He thought of his girl Anne, "Why does she have to pick this part of the year to start acting as though I've never noticed her?" Thinking of summer school and worrying about money caused Jerry to fail to hear Jim's announcement of arrival.

The pre-summer setting of the park failed to lift the lethargy that surrounded Jerry's thoughts. Apparently it was the same for the majority of the other fifty-six burly members of his team gathered around a pavilion at the south end of the park drinking Cokes and Pepsis. The line coach was in the process of explaining the rules of the stock race to twenty unusually preoccupied and quiet young men. The race was won by Rod and his fraternity brothers, not because they were better, Jerry thought, but because they were more organized.

As the games progressed, Jerry noticed that he and his teammates seemed to discard some of their preoccupation. Some really began to press themselves into the spirit of stiff competition. Jerry observed that football players were natural competitors, regardless of the nature of the contest.

"What are your grades going to be like?"

The harsh question came from the friendly voice of the head coach, breaking in on Jerry's thoughts. "Not so good," was his feeble reply. Jerry knew that in his two years at school his grades had been a great disappointment to his coach and his family. The grades had been low enough in his freshman year to cause the coach to hold back a complete scholarship. In his sophomore year his father had refused a car at school for the same reason. The crime of it was that Jerry knew he was capable of far better grades. He also knew that responsibility lay mostly in his hands, yet he had rationalized his failure to his father's not caring for anything Jerry achieved. Summer school

was again inevitable, but the coach's pointed comment only seemed to drive Jerry's thoughts further away from the impending finals and toward the games.

"Let's enter the egg throw, you toad!" Jerry quipped to John, and slapped him good-naturedly on the arm. John was a defensive end from a small farming community and his speech reflected this fact, to Jerry at least.

"Yeah, OK, but don't call me a toad again or there won't be enough of you to throw out with manure," John threatened with a large meaty hand.

Bruce, the rotund guard who had a way of getting into and then out of trouble with the big end, contributed his share to the mocking tough talk, "You haven't a chance with those claws, lobster!" Bruce ducked in time to avoid John's hastily and softly thrown right.

It was all in fun and they soon broke up, with Jerry and John heading for the clearing outside the pavilion to practice for the egg throw. As the contest progressed Jerry marvelled at how he had been able to completely take his mind off the troubles and dark thoughts that had haunted him moments before. It was, he felt, a tribute to team spirit and fellowship, as nearly everyone had begun to lose their long faces and initial reluctance to play.

A short but pointed announcement by the back coach was directly responsible for the confusion that followed the final throw of the eggs. There is nothing like the availability of food to take a football player's mind off anything. Jerry took his plate to the tables that had been set up and sat down next to one of the graduate assistants. He had to be evasive when the talk shifted to school, for he was trying to maintain the ability to push grades, girls, and money problems out of the realm of conscious thought.

"Ice cream," and the rush for dessert was rivalled only by the original rush for the barbecued chicken, baked beans, and potato salad.

"Think I'll get some now," Jerry muttered as he broke away from the assistant coach's conversation and walked up to the already-formed line. He stepped in behind Paul, the All-America candidate at fullback. Paul was a Negro and one of the most popular persons at school. Jerry had admired Paul for his ability to get along with everyone as well as for his prowess on the football field. Paul had been at least as friendly with him, and they had ridden home together a few times.

"Man, that chicken's good," Paul's grin told Jerry that the picnic had been an escape for him also.

As the line slowly moved forward, Jerry couldn't help but think of the recent racial troubles in Watts and other areas. He wondered when, if ever, these dark-skinned people were going to get the freedom he knew they deserved. Freedom had been promised them nearly a century before by a tall man in a dark suit who...

"Can we have some ice cream?" Jerry's mind had wandered so much that he was just now noticing the three small boys who were asking Paul for ice cream. At first glance they seemed to be the picture of middle-class urchins temporarily neglected by their mothers for a bridge game, rather than the picture of innocence which they were trying to be. All three had on dirty t-shirts, patched blue jeans, and scuffed shoes.

"Boys, you kin have some ice cream ef you'll get right in front of me," Paul's bass voice was full of good-nature and the three boys scrambled to get a good place. The smallest of them was naturally pushed to the rear and Jerry noticed that he was staring at Paul with more than the normal amount of curiosity. In the next horrible instant Jerry's world was jolted from the momentary feelings of security and brotherhood. Gone were the thoughts of equality and the dreams of freedom by the tall dark-suited man a century back.

"Aren't you a nigger?" Jerry heard the small boy repeat.

As he had the first time, Paul only shrank away from his small accuser's eyes and turned a vacant stare to the sidewalk going around the pavilion.

"Mister, don't they call you a nigger 'cuz you're black?" The big man was a silent onyx pillar.

Jerry's outrage found no method of escape. The entire scene had been transformed from one of tranquility to one of charged and hate-filled emotions. His fists, which had whitened so many times on the football field, could only hang limp at his sides. His voice, so light and full of banter only a few moments before, was suddenly caught in his throat.

"Mister, are you a nigger or aren't you?" the boy seemed to plead for information as he might of a teacher or parent, innocent for the moment, tragically ignorant of the tearing of souls he was causing.

Paul reacted in an understandable manner. "I never really cared much for vanilla ice cream," he said, and the black man walked away from his teammate and the line. He sat alone on a park bench for a long time.....

--Roger Schmidt

INKSTONE STAFF

1967

COORDINATING EDITOR

Diane M. Fischer

ART DIRECTOR

Harry D. Schwarzer

PROSE EDITOR

Richard Steeves

PROSE STAFF

Frank Gungan
Paul Steinberg
Mary Ann Happy
Diane Gruber

POETRY EDITOR

Christine Bieri

POETRY STAFF

Valerie Wilson
Marlene Adams
Kamilla Plesmid

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carl E. Arthur

FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Thomas L. Kinney