52. Do you believe that men who write poetry are less masculine than men who drive trucks?
"Don't you go walking around naked in my kitchen," she said.

Upstairs, Jan was lying on the bed. The springs of the bed had just started their rythmical squeaking when something crashed into the house, shaking Jan and Teagarden to the floor. Teagarden stood up. He peered over the ridge of the window and saw three sparrows rolling around on the ground like crazy bulldozers.

"What's going on?" Jan whispered from the floor.

"It's just those goddamn birds trying to cause trouble," Teagarden said and sat down beside her.
"I want to show you my new flag," Jan said.

She unrolled the flag which consisted of a piece of brown cloth with a big yellow circle in the middle. A gold shape that looked like a bird held the yellow circle in its mouth.

"This is my sparrow-eating-the-pancakes flag," Jan said.

Jemima bent over, laughing, with her hands on her knees. Teagarden burped and, frowning, picked up another pancake.

Jan folded up the flag. "Let's go upstairs."

Teagarden sat staring across the wheat field. She nudged his shoulder. "Come on."

Teagarden looked up. "Oh," he said.

Jan took Teagarden's hand which was sticky with syrup and said, "Let's go upstairs."

"Sure, O.K." Teagarden said and got up. "Wait, you go on up without me. I want to finish Jemima's pancakes. I'll be a minute."

Teagarden listened on the porch until he heard Jan walk up the stairs. He jumped off the porch and crawled under the floorboards. Under the porch were cases of whisky. Teagarden picked up a case, lugging it across the yard and down the path to the pancake pile. Opening the case, he looked over his shoulder and then poured each bottle over the giant pancakes.

"Take this, you goddamn birds," he said.

Teagarden stopped when the pancakes looked like wet golden sponges. He put the empty bottles in the case and ran back to the porch. He picked up his pancake and started to nibble. A flock of ten-foot sparrows landed in the field and started gobbling up the whisky pancakes.

Teagarden walked back into the kitchen licking his fingers. Aunt Jemima was pouring batter on the griddle.
Sharon Doane

TWO CHEMISTRY POEMS

Farm

The sun sets low over the Potomac which twists through the bottom woods like a dropped string. Down the road, Doc Colby's dog barks into the red air. It is still too early for the crickets to start. A hundred years since the plantation fell. The blue soldiers still cling like ivy to the stone foundations of the old house. There is no one who remembers; they are buried in the river with their niggers.

Lillian steps to the back porch and watches a pickup loaded with nigger boys from town, coming down the dirt road. They sing into the cloud of dust that billows behind them. Twenty four years since the farm strangled when John died, two children gone now-- John Lawrence to Virginia, a lineman for Bell telephone. Eileen to New Jersey, married to a Yankee. Carlton has stayed behind.

He will be home soon, his white shirt stuck like flypaper to his skin, after the drive home from the A & P. Home to his mother, who is like dust in his eyes. The sun goes down; the sky remains red.

and listening to the flags rattling against the poles, Teagarden stood up, his entire body caked in mud, and stripped off his jeans. He hosed himself off and walked around the house carrying his wet clothes.

Aunt Jemima was setting a platter of small pancakes down by the couch. Jan was pulling up the strap of her slip when she saw him and started laughing.

"What happened to you," she said in between giggles.

Teagarden flopped his wet jeans over the railing of the porch. "I hate those craphead birds."

He tipped over a bowl of syrup sitting on the porch floor. The brown syrup rolled off the porch down into the weeds. A flock of sparrows flew by.

"Jemima," Tesgarden said, "why don't you just put strychnine in those pancakes, so we can get rid of every last one of those bastards."

Aunt Jemima put the spilled bowl upright. "I'll do that when you stop being so clumsy."

She walked back into the house. Teagarden sat on the couch and picked up a pancake with his hand. He wiped the inside of the syrup bowl with it and started eating. Jan leaned back and watched the wind blowing rivers through the wheat. Teagarden looked down and watched a drop of syrup roll down the hair on his belly. Jan turned and watched the drop too.

"I'm done with the flag," she said. "Let's go upstairs."

Teagarden put down his pancake. "Wait, let's see it."

She stood up. "Jemima, come out here a minute."

"Is Mister Naked afraid of the big birds again," Aunt Jemima yelled from inside. Teagarden heard her footsteps come across the kitchen to the screen door.
He wiped several off with his sleeve and went up another set of stairs to the attic. Sunlight streamed in through an oval window and lit up a small black typewriter sitting on a desk.

Teagarden sat down. Two days before, while drunk, he had written, "Once upon a time." Yesterday he had written, "there was," and now he typed "too many goddamn birds." Teagarden got up and went down to the bedroom. "Oh crap," he thought, sitting on the bed, "I have to check the hose."

He put on his boots and walked downstairs, out the front door to the yard. The entire front yard was covered with mud. Birds had rolled in it during the night and left big trenches. Teagarden slipped through the mud to the edge of the yard where a green hose lay tangled in knots. A thin flow of water came out of the open end. He turned it off and looked back towards the house. The flag poles in the front were covered with one continuous sparrow turd.

"Goddamn birds, crapping up the flags," he said.

He turned on the faucet full blast and started to squirt off the flags. A sparrow landed at the edge of the lawn. He was twice as tall as Teagarden.

"You're the same bastard who was in the window," Teagarden said to the bird. He aimed the nozzle, and a stream of water hit the sparrow's head. The sparrow shook itself and hopped right up to Teagarden. Six inches away from Teagarden's nose, the bird's leg ended and the rest of the bird began.

"Up yours," Teagarden said and crossed his arms. "I'm not moving one damned inch."

Teagarden could hear a gurgling in the sparrow's stomach. The sparrow looked down at him and spit up a mass of pasted wheat which splattered across Teagarden's face.

"Goddamn!" Teagarden screamed and kicked the bird's leg. The sparrow hunched down and took off, knocking Teagarden into the mud. He lay in the wet ooze watching the sparrow fly away...
Dog

I remember the day you got rid of the dog because he didn't bark when the one-eyed man from Tucson cut a hole in the front porch screen.

Carlton, the cows are in the pasture by the house, again the one you planted hayseed in. The cows will do the mowing, you won't have to hire six schoolboy niggers to do the job.

Where is the dog?
He would get the cows to the river woods again, racing around the field flapping at their heels like a grounded crow.
Is he at Emmit's pig farm now?
Or did you break his legs and shoot him, like you would a wounded horse?

Jan looked at Teagarden. "I bet you left the hose on in the front yard."

"It figures," Aunt Jemima said and walked back into the kitchen letting the screen door slam.

Teagarden rubbed his hand through his beard and stood up.

"You better check the front yard to see if the hose is on," Jan said.

"O.K." he mumbled and went to the screen door.

"And don't slam the door," she said, but it was too late.

In the kitchen, Aunt Jemima was sitting at a table with six greenish bananas. She was cutting them into cubes with a long knife.

"When's breakfast, Jemima," Teagarden asked.

"Well these bananas aren't for the birds, dumb-bo," she said. "You keep yourself busy for 15 minutes, and then I'll have some banana pancakes all ready."

Teagarden stared out the screen. "I feel like writing," he said and walked up the stairs. The hallway was lined with brown photographs of Jan's father sitting on different flagpoles. Now that Teagarden was awake, he noticed dust caked on all of them.
Teagarden shook his head and went out to the porch. Jan sat propped up on the couch in her slip. She was humming to herself as she sewed on a piece of yellow-brown cloth several yards wide.

She looked up and smiled at Teagarden.

"One of those goddamn birds tried to eat me this morning," he said and clunked down on the couch beside her.

Jan's flags blew all around them on the poles. They were pancake flags made out of different shades of brown cloth. One was the buckwheat pancake flag, and another was the blueberry pancake flag. There was one flag which resembled a man who looked like Teagarden eating a pancake. It had been his birthday present, and Jan had worked a month non-stop on it.

Teagarden stretched out his arms. "What is this flag going to be?"

Jan bit a piece of thread with her teeth and said, "It's a surprise."

"You've been sitting out here for three weeks sewing," Teagarden said. "I'm getting lonely, man; I don't like spending the nights alone getting drunk because there's nothing else to do while you're out here on the porch sewing another goddamn flag."

Jan looked at him and then, grinning, poked his knee with her needle.

"Ouch!" Teagarden yelled and then laughed too.

"Look," Jan said, "I don't bother you when you climb up into your attic and start writing, so you leave me alone."

Teagarden looked across the wheatfields and saw birds bunched in groups pulling up the wheat. Aunt Jemima walked out the screen door and clumped across the porch carrying a platter of giant pancakes. She walked across the dozen yards of lawn and dirt to a pathway cut through the wheat. Then all Teagarden could see was her big outline between lines of yellow and hear

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Rosalie Matchett

TO THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

When the house is asleep
I circle each room looking
For my mother's old rag closet.
It is lost
In some dusty corner of my body.

Tonight I find the closet
In my ribs. The rags are tied
Tightly around each bone. I shut my eyes
Dark, until crevasses form
In my face. Then I squeeze
Into the deep rib cage. All night

I try to get comfortable
Twisting and rubbing my body
Until its skin pounds
With my pulse.

Its color is sky blue now
That new light has crawled
Into the black cracks
And I am like the princess
Who slept on twenty mattresses.

---

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Amy Pattullo

BIRTHING AND DYING

I

Even the walls
of Boston were womb-red, pushing
British soldiers out
of quarters, out
of bed. Boys pressed
ear to wall, listening
for Sam Adams, their Mother Boston’s
kicking baby. Everything
a-birth! Boston, swelling
with men and boys, snowballed
into America’s first labor.

Pain quickened:
men shed
British tea’s obstruction
from their harbor. Paine quickened:
stroked America’s belly; the American people stroked
their own
bellies till they bore America.

II

On the farm today no mother
is listening,
so boys stuff
themselves with beer bought
on credit, lay girls on birth control,
get put to bed white, and lie still
till they vomit.

When they dream, they dream
of furrows deeper, silos fuller
than their fathers’. No boys
know their father’s foreheads
furrow deepest, the strip
mines gouge furthest. No boys know
their father’s silos are empty
of seed; fuller than theirs
will ever be, full with raping missiles.

David Bowman

A STORY ABOUT PANCAKES
(for the pancake girl)

Teagarden woke up smelling the pancakes that Aunt Jemima
was making for the birds. He yawned and noticed hair from his
beard was stuck to the roof of his mouth. As he started spitting
them on the floor he looked up and saw a sparrow the size of an
elephant sticking its head through the window.

"Damn!" he yelled, rolling out of bed. "Jemima! Jemima!
There’s a goddamn bird trying to eat me."

He jumped to the closet and grabbed the shotgun. He ran up
and smashed the sparrow on the beak with the gun butt. The
sparrow backed out of the window, ripping down the floral curtains
and then flew away, rattling the floorboards and causing the
hanging light to sway.

Teagarden looked out the window. His wife’s three hundred
flags still looked intact. There was nothing else outside but
the wheat fields and the blue sky where the sparrow dipped over
the horizon.

"Goddamn birds," Teagarden said, putting on his jeans. He
spit out the window and walked down the stairs, tucking his shirt
into his pants. In the kitchen, Aunt Jemima was making enormous
pancakes, several feet in diameter, on an old griddle.

"Damn it, Jemima, can’t you hurry up and get those pancakes
out there. One of those goddamn birds tried to eat me this morning."

Aunt Jemima turned over three pancakes at once with her hands.
"Now don’t you start telling me to hurry up Mister Sleep-till-
whenever-you-please. I was up at dawn and it took me two hours
to clean up the mess you made in the kitchen last night with
your drinking."
A story about pancakes

(for the Pancake Girl)

BUYING BULLETS
DAVID PERK
BUYING BULLETS

The dead shacks and buildings lean to each other mumbling secrets and dust. It is overcast and static. Brown grass grows in the square below the catwalks. There are dry creeks and a hunched figure scurries across a rope bridge above the street. He vanishes, only to reappear a moment later on a catwalk; one arm hangs limp at his side. Snapping his head, he looks in two directions before leaping into the grass. He is gone with a furtive rustling.

The darksider leaves the horse in the square and mounts a catwalk. His mud-caked boots rasp softly on the curling boards. Long blank sections of the catwalk walls lean inward, preparing to collapse. Mortared with dried earth, even their scratches are faded. From somewhere behind the buildings there are words, stifled by the heavy air.

Beside the dangling ropes of an access ladder, a sign reads, Armaments. Munitions. Supplies. A crooked doorway leads off the catwalk into a long passage. Its floor gives slightly under his feet. There is a humid silence. A pale, staring face peers through a grille in the ceiling; its yellow fingers curl around the bars.

Past the door at the end, the room is large and musty. Barred windows crouch against the ceiling. Racks on the wall hold crossbows and a variety of guns, long rifles and carbines, caged with rusty padlocks. The dust from the central display case clings to his hand, working into the flaking skin. With a small rattle, the darksider lays a bullet on the glass. A moment passes. Then a curtain in the back billows. A tall girl enters like cool air, sliding through trees and smelling of something else, another place. Low-breasted, her flat, smooth face is sunk dreaming in her hair.

Swaying slightly, she glides to the case and silently examines the bullet. The darksider places one finger on the glass at arm's length, with great deliberation. He smiles slightly. With a key she unlocks the case and takes out a pasteboard box. Taking it from her, he turns it over. The bullets pour from the box and rush...
The Garter Snake sleeps in the tar-papered walls of a granary grown up with milk weed next to the stone silo built in 1893.

across the glass; they sound like pebbles dancing across a tabletop. He stops them from falling to the floor with the palm of his hand. Brass insects jostling each other, they are stones gleaming in the rain. Pinched between his fingers, he counts them one by one. From beneath her shawl, the girl brings her hand, holding a wind-dark rose. Forgetting him she nuzzles it.

When he has finished, she looks up. He has returned the bullets to the box; her crisp grey eyes are doubtful at his coins. Then the rose is gone, and her lean arm moves like a lizard off a rock. Her long white fingers leave small streaks in the dust where the coins were. He watches her dress as she leaves; for an instant he hears water, then she is gone. The case is cool where she leaned.

Going, he tucks the pasteboard box under his arm. The pale face vanishes at his footsteps.
LETTERS TO KEOGH:

IV.

Down below Caldwell Hill
across Turtle Creek culvert
snakes shed skin
in the back seat of a '57 blue Volkswagon
while Bill Daley twenty feet up in his Cessna sprays his alfalfa
III.

On the green manure-caked fender of a John Deere
Jim Rabb smokes his last Muriel Cigar
back of the shed a bull tied to the box-elder by a brass ring through its nose paws the dry chaff

Martin Keogh

LETTERS TO KEOGH (Pierre Delattre and L.S. Lurp)

1. A Letter from Pierre Delattre

(Pierre Delattre is a freak, free thinker and english teacher I met in Mexico. He's written a book called Tales of the Dali Lama.)

Dear Martin,

Your letter gave me a terrific lift as I read it over my hotcakes and orange juice at the Carousel. You really got into that school and I know they will see past the rebellion endemic to all free spirits testing the validity of limits into your enthusiasm. Enthusiasm comes from the word en theos, to be filled in God, filled with God; have been getting into the Greeks lately; never realized they used to send someone called a theoretikos from one city state to another to observe the rituals, plays and games. Theatron was the area in which the story of the universe was acted out— theatre and theory come from the same word and they both refer back to the theoretikos who was a man considered so free that he could observe all of life as if it were a play, with the complete detachment from wanting to get anything out of it or use it or make money from it or justify his existence by it.

All of this was observed from a speculatum, a seat where you watched life take place without bringing your own prejudices to bear, but as if you were watching your very own life and the story of all mankind, a microcosm of the microcosm. It seems to me that we have gone a full circle from the original conceptions of theatre as revelations of the divine working in the ordinary, theatre as from the same source as theos, god, to thoroughly secular stuff having to do with Neil Simonish yelling, and screaming neurotic reflections to people of their adorable hang-ups, the ones they cling to so much; drinking, virginia woolfish spats, sexual screw-ups, all that crap. Saw a Neil Simon play here and was disgusted by the way the San Miguel Hill crows lapped it up. No insight, no revelation into the causes or the ultimate meanings of neurotic behavior, just giving people back their adorable screwed-up selves so that they can titter at one another, such a far drop from the revelatory quality of high theatre.
I know what you mean about the smoking problem. I went through that for eight years and still have to fight it; but I found that my mental and creative energy was vastly diminished by grass, that it was a worse turn-on every time I took it. I still don't regret the original revelations, but as Alan Watts says, "Once you get the message, hang up the phone." Or as I see it, grass is a guide that takes you there, shows you the place, then you say to the guide the next day, "Take me again." Pretty soon the guide gets sick and tired of taking you when he figures you should have learned long ago to make the journey without him, and so he starts getting mean and nasty with you and putting heavy trips on you. If we have any faith in the revelatory power of a weed or a book or a play or a person, we don't go around clinging to that element in our lives, waving bibles or bags of grass or trailing after gurus—we let them go, continue on the path light and unencumbered with only our own body and spirit and maybe a flute or two.

Have been playing blues harmonica with a country and western group in a new club here and enjoying it greatly; finished two novels and a movie script this year and Leonard Robinson thinks I may be able to get a series in the "New Yorker." It's hard for me to work up much energy seeking publication, but I know I must do it so I can travel to Mongolia which is where I want to go. My granny was mongolian on my mother's side.

Love you, Martin, keep shining

Pierre
THE ROVING JOHN JOURNAL

1. The Snapper pulls his shell onto the bark of a water elm in the cattails near Jensen's mill.

John and Gordie Hoffmeyer pull the oak hull of the Roving John from the Muskegon River mud onto the thick sassafrass banks near the willow and skunk weed where Dick Redfield gutted his first fox.

2. A Letter from A. S. Lurp

(This is from two architects who I apprenticed with for two months in Mexico. I asked for a letter of recommendation so I could get credit for the work that I did and this is what I received.)

66 San Francisco,
San Miguel de Allende, Gto.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Martin Keogh was conscripted to work under ideal conditions of slavery with the firm of Injectos de Gran Ego, S.A. by his dictatorial parents, guardians, friends, and ourselves (owing to lack of non-union slaves.) It was hoped that chaotic discipline would regulate his movements and dilute his vandalizing of other people's simple, confused minds. However, he failed miserably at responding to any form of work that is normally considered important such as counting money, sweeping floors, and packing boxes of news clippings of great value. As a result we had to fire him at great cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kiln</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plumbing</td>
<td>200.00</td>
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<td>Gas</td>
<td>400.00</td>
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<td>Hotel Expenses</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
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Nevertheless, we feel that if he returns the office typewriter, door keys and toilet soap, then we can recommend his honesty to any local traffic inspector.

Yours inexplicably,

Alfred S. Lurp
Supositor General
Injectos de Grand Ego. S.A.
The poems in the Roving John Journal are taken from real experiences, past and present. The ideas for most of them were drawn from stories told to me by my Father and Grandfather, reminiscing about their boyhood experiences growing up in rural Reed City, Michigan, a small town where everybody knew everyone else. The poem, "The Roving John" came from a story told about my Great-Great Grandfather who owned and operated a small steam boat named the "Roving John." This boat ran up and down the Muskegon River supplying logging camps with food and hardware until it sank in the early 1900's near Evart, Michigan. Today, pieces of the boat can still be found lying on the river bottom, painted with green algae. Perhaps eggs rest on a cast-iron griddle, frying in pastry lard as the coffee in a white porcelain cup sits on the portside window sill, cooling with each surge of the river. Only the fish and clams know.
Clovis Price

BLUES ON A CTA BUS

In the back of a CTA bus, last token in my blue-jeans pocket janglin', just wonderin' if this bus is gonna take me far beyond these soot-embroidered buildings with the up-stair windows busted outta 'em. Wonderin' if it's gonna get me out of the ghetto to the Show-Me lounge, to the Discotheque, to the Safari Pool Room. On the seat each little bump keeps sayin' somethin'. My feet curl up, gym shoes pressed against the seat ahead of me. Junkie crawlin' out from the seat behind me keep on sayin' keep on sayin'
Mutha you better believe it Mutha you better believe it Mutha you better believe it better believe it better believe it Mutha you better believe it better believe it!

Eric Schneider

TWO POEMS

3 A.M. Departure

The Christmas holiday is over. The narrow streets of daytime Pittsburgh stretch like deserted hallways after school. All night doggeries and bars advertising topless go-go dancers glare "importance."

The sign "BUS" shines blue-white over small buildings, and below it the white dog still stretches for the G in Greyhound. The crowds, returning from Christmas, spread from the gates like fingers. At gate sixteen I wait, hearing the speaker, "Detroit, making stops at Cleveland and Toledo now boarding." The door opens to busses lined up like dairy cows grumbling in high idle. Second bus to your right," the driver says, taking my ticket. Walking into the dark, I pass an "Americruiser" and stop by a "Senicruiser 7," just in from New York City. The mud has been spread thick on the sides by rainstorms and road dust. I get the last seat, right behind the driver and read the signs in front that I will have memorized by Toledo. Fifty eight of us will sit in this gray-brown cocoon until our 10:15 arrival in Detroit this morning.
East on the Penna. Turnpike

The sun will rise in an hour. I relax
in the lounge of the rest stop,
drinking a bad cup of thirty cent coffee.

A woman feeds her baby shreds
of sandwich from their Ohio stop
while her husband, curled in a telephone booth,
tells his mother how late they will be.
An orange Howard Johnson's lady
empties ashtrays. At the gas pumps outside

trucks line up, waiting for diesel fuel.
A boy of twenty watches his breath bounce
off truck sides. He has been working since midnight

and his shift is almost over.
My shoe explores oil stains in the neon pavement.
Back on the bone-white pike,

I flow with others from Arizona, Delaware, and Ohio
as we cruise through valleys. Blue ridges
lie like women. We plunge through

the black tunnel under Shenandoah Ridge
to reach the orange glow on the eastern side.

Brooke Cushman

BUS

Release; like a fish
giving up to the downstream push
of the river.

The bus pulls into Hemingway's town
and gray birds cloud
off the tin roof
of Wayne Feeds.

We leave Johnny's Eat
with the taste of egg,
blowing exhaust at the metal
siding. We release the final
gear and are delivered
onto the highway.

Release; white sliver of
belly up, a rudder
in the water. Fins lax,
a wave in the give, the water.
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Release; like a fish giving up to the downstream push of the river.

The bus pulls into Hemingway's town and gray birds cloud off the tin roof of Wayne Feeds. We leave Johnny's Eat with the taste of egg, blowing exhaust at the metal siding. We release the final gear and are delivered onto the highway.

Release; white sliver of belly up, a rudder in the water. Fins lax, a wave in the give, the water.
Clovis Price

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66 San Francisco,
San Miguel de Allende, Gto.

Martin Keogh was conscripted to work under ideal conditions of slavery with the firm of Injectos de Gran Ego, S.A. by his dictatorial parents, guardians, friends, and ourselves (owing to lack of non-union slaves.) It was hoped that chaotic discipline would regulate his movements and dilute his vandalizing of other people's simple, confused minds. However, he failed miserably at responding to any form of work that is normally considered important such as counting money, sweeping floors, and packing boxes of news clippings of great value. As a result we had to fire him at great cost.

Kiln $ 500.00
Plumbing 200.00
Gas 400.00
Hotel Expenses $1,000.00

Nevertheless, we feel that if he returns the office typewriter, door keys and toilet soap, then we can recommend his honesty to any local traffic inspector.

Yours inexplicably,

Alfred S. Lurp
Suppositor General
Injectos de Grand Ego. S.A.
I know what you mean about the smoking problem. I went through that for eight years and still have to fight it; but I found that my mental and creative energy was vastly diminished by grass, that it was a worse turn-on every time I took it. I still don't regret the original revelations, but as Alan Watts says, "Once you get the message, hang up the phone." Or as I see it, grass is a guide that takes you there, shows you the place, then you say to the guide the next day, "Take me again." Pretty soon the guide gets sick and tired of taking you when he figures you should have learned long ago to make the journey without him, and so he starts getting mean and nasty with you and putting heavy trips on you. If we have any faith in the revelatory power of a weed or a book or a play or a person, we don't go around clinging to that element in our lives, waving bibles or bags of grass or trailing after gurus—we let them go, continue on the path light and unencumbered with only our own body and spirit and maybe a flute or two.

Have been playing blues harmonica with a country and western group in a new club here and enjoying it greatly; finished two novels and a movie script this year and Leonard Robinson thinks I may be able to get a series in the "New Yorker." It's hard for me to work up much energy seeking publication, but I know I must do it so I can travel to Mongolia which is where I want to go. My granny was mongolian on my mother's side.

Love you, Martin, keep shining

Pierre
III.

On the green
manure-caked
fender of
a John Deere

Jim Rabb
smokes
his last
Muriel
Cigar

back of
the shed
a bull
tied to
the box-elder
by a brass
ring through
its nose

paws
the dry
chaff

Martin Keogh

LETTERS TO KEOGH (Pierre Delattre and L.S. Lurp)

1. A Letter from Pierre Delattre

(Pierre Delattre is a freak, free thinker and English teacher I met in Mexico. He's written a book called Tales of the Dalai Lama.)

Dear Martin,

Your letter gave me a terrific lift as I read it over my hotcakes and orange juice at the Carousel. You really got into that school and I know they will see past the rebellion endemic to all free spirits testing the validity of limits into your enthusiasm. Enthusiasm comes from the word en theos, to be filled in God, filled with God; have been getting into the Greeks lately; never realized they used to send someone called a theoretikos from one city state to another to observe the rituals, plays and games. Theatre was the area in which the story of the universe was acted out—theatre and theory come from the same word and they both refer back to the theoretikos who was a man considered so free that he could observe all of life as if it were a play, with the complete detachment from wanting to get anything out of it or use it or make money from it or justify his existence by it.

All of this was observed from a speculatum, a seat where you watched life take place without bringing your own prejudices to bear, but as if you were watching your very own life and the story of all mankind, a microcosm of the microcosm. It seems to me that we have gone a full circle from the original conceptions of theatre as revelations of the divine working in the ordinary, theatre as from the same source as theos, god, to thoroughly secular stuff having to do with Neil Simonish yelling, and screaming neurotic reflections to people of their adorable hang-ups, the ones they cling to so much; drinking, Virginia woolfish spats, sexual screw-ups, all that crap. Saw a Neil Simon play here and was disgusted by the way the San Miguel Hill crows lapped it up. No insight, no revelation into the causes or the ultimate meanings of neurotic behavior, just giving people back their adorable screwed-up selves so that they can titter at one another, such a far drop from the revelatory quality of high theatre.
IV.

Down
below Caldwell
Hill

across
Turtle Creek
culvert

snakes
shed skin
in the back seat
of a '57
blue Volkswagon

while
Bill Daley
twenty feet
up in
his Cessna
sprays his
alfalfa
V.
The Garter Snake sleeps in the tar-papered walls of a granary grown up with milk weed next to the stone silo built in 1893

across the glass; they sound like pebbles dancing across a tabletop. He stops them from falling to the floor with the palm of his hand. Brass insects jostling each other, they are stones gleaming in the rain. Pinched between his fingers, he counts them one by one. From beneath her shawl, the girl brings her hand, holding a wind-dark rose. Forgetting him she nuzzles it.

When he has finished, she looks up. He has returned the bullets to the box; her crisp grey eyes are doubtful at his coins. Then the rose is gone, and her lean arm moves like a lizard off a rock. Her long white fingers leave small streaks in the dust where the coins were. He watches her dress as she leaves; for an instant he hears water, then she is gone. The case is cool where she leaned.

Going, he tucks the pasteboard box under his arm. The pale face vanishes at his footsteps.
BUYING BULLETS

The dead shacks and buildings lean to each other mumbling secrets and dust. It is overcast and static. Brown grass grows in the square below the catwalks. There are dry creeks and a hunched figure scurries across a rope bridge above the street. He vanishes, only to reappear a moment later on a catwalk; one arm hangs limp at his side. Snapping his head, he looks in two directions before leaping into the grass. He is gone with a furtive rustling.

The darksider leaves the horse in the square and mounts a catwalk. His mud-caked boots rasp softly on the curling boards. Long blank sections of the catwalk walls lean inward, preparing to collapse. Mortared with dried earth, even their scratches are faded. From somewhere behind the buildings there are words, stifled by the heavy air.

Beside the dangling ropes of an access ladder, a sign reads, Armaments. Munitions. Supplies. A crooked doorway leads off the catwalk into a long passage. Its floor gives slightly under his feet. There is a humid silence. A pale, staring face peers through a grille in the ceiling; its yellow fingers curl around the bars.

Past the door at the end, the room is large and musty. Barred windows crouch against the ceiling. Racks on the wall hold crossbows and a variety of guns, long rifles and carbines, caged with rusty padlocks. The dust from the central display case clings to his hand, working into the flaking skin. With a small rattle, the darksider lays a bullet on the glass. A moment passes. Then a curtain in the back billows. A tall girl enters like cool air, sliding through trees and smelling of something else, another place. Low-breasted, her flat, smooth face is sunk dreaming in her hair.

Swaying slightly, she glides to the case and silently examines the bullet. The darksider places one finger on the glass at arm's length, with great deliberation. He smiles slightly. With a key she unlocks the case and takes out a pasteboard box. Taking it from her, he turns it over. The bullets pour from the box and rush...
A story about pancakes
(for the Pancake Girl)
BIRTHING AND DYING

I

Even the walls
of Boston were womb-red, pushing
British soldiers out
of quarters, out
of bed. Boys pressed
ear to wall, listening
for Sam Adams, their Mother Boston's
kicking baby. Everything
a-birth! Boston, swelling
with men and boys, snowballed
into America's first labor.

Pain quickened:
men shed
British tea's obstruction
from their harbor. Paine quickened:
stroked America's belly; the American people stroked
their own
bellies till they bore America.

II

On the farm today no mother
is listening,
so boys stuff
themselves with beer bought
on credit, lay girls on birth control,
get put to bed white, and lie still
till they vomit.

When they dream, they dream
of furrows deeper, silos fuller
than their fathers'. No boys
know their father's foreheads
furrow deepest, the strip
mines gouge furthest. No boys know
their father's silos are empty
of seed; fuller than theirs
will ever be, full with raping missiles.
Teagarden shook his head and went out to the porch. Jan sat propped up on the couch in her slip. She was humming to herself as she sewed on a piece of yellow-brown cloth several yards wide.

She looked up and smiled at Teagarden.

"One of those goddamn birds tried to eat me this morning," he said and clunked down on the couch beside her.

Jan's flags blew all around them on the poles. They were pancake flags made out of different shades of brown cloth. One was the buckwheat pancake flag, and another was the blueberry pancake flag. There was one flag which resembled a man who looked like Teagarden eating a pancake. It had been his birthday present, and Jan had worked a month non-stop on it.

Teagarden stretched out his arms. "What is this flag going to be?"

Jan bit a piece of thread with her teeth and said, "It's a surprise."

"You've been sitting out here for three weeks sewing," Teagarden said. "I'm getting lonely, man; I don't like spending the nights alone getting drunk because there's nothing else to do while you're out here on the porch sewing another goddamn flag."

Jan looked at him and then, grinning, poked his knee with her needle.

"Ouch!" Teagarden yelled and then laughed too.

"Look," Jan said, "I don't bother you when you climb up into your attic and start writing, so you leave me alone."

Teagarden looked across the wheatfields and saw birds bunched in groups pulling up the wheat. Aunt Jemima walked out the screen door and clumped across the porch carrying a platter of giant pancakes. She walked across the dozen yards of lawn and dirt to a pathway cut through the wheat. Then all Teagarden could see was her big outline between lines of yellow and hear

Rosalie Matchett

TO THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

When the house is asleep
I circle each room looking
For my mother's old rag closet.
It is lost
In some dusty corner of my body.

Tonight I find the closet
In my ribs. The rags are tied
Tightly around each bone. I shut my eyes
Dark, until crevasses form
In my face. Then I squeeze
Into the deep rib cage. All night

I try to get comfortable
Twisting and rubbing my body
Until its skin pounds
With my pulse.

Its color is sky blue now
That new light has crawled
Into the black cracks
And I am like the princess
Who slept on twenty mattresses.
I remember the day you got rid of the dog because he didn't bark when the one-eyed man from Tucson cut a hole in the front porch screen.

Carlton, the cows are in the pasture by the house, again the one you planted hayseed in. The cows will do the mowing, you won't have to hire six schoolboy niggers to do the job.

Where is the dog? He would get the cows to the river woods again, racing around the field flapping at their heels like a grounded crow. Is he at Emmitt's pig farm now? Or did you break his legs and shoot him, like you would a wounded horse?

Teagarden could hear the thump of the pancakes being dropped to the dirt. Aunt Jemima walked out of the wheat field.

"That was a filthy bird," she said. "He was all covered with mud."

Jan looked at Teagarden. "I bet you left the hose on in the front yard."

"It figures," Aunt Jemima said and walked back into the kitchen letting the screen door slam.

Teagarden rubbed his hand through his beard and stood up.

"You better check the front yard to see if the hose is on," Jan said.

"O.K." he mumbled and went to the screen door.

"And don't slam the door," she said, but it was too late.

In the kitchen, Aunt Jemima was sitting at a table with six greenish bananas. She was cutting them into cubes with a long knife.

"When's breakfast, Jemima," Teagarden asked.

"Well these bananas aren't for the birds, dumb-bo," she said. "You keep yourself busy for 15 minutes, and then I'll have some banana pancakes all ready."

Teagarden stared out the screen. "I feel like writing," he said and walked up the stairs. The hallway was lined with brown photographs of Jan's father sitting on different flagpoles. Now that Teagarden was awake, he noticed dust caked on all of them.
He wiped several off with his sleeve and went up another set of stairs to the attic. Sunlight streamed in through an oval window and lit up a small black typewriter sitting on a desk.

Teagarden sat down. Two days before, while drunk, he had written, "Once upon a time." Yesterday he had written, "there was," and now he typed "too many goddamn birds." Teagarden got up and went down to the bedroom. "Oh crap," he thought, sitting on the bed, "I have to check the hose."

He put on his boots and walked downstairs, out the front door to the yard. The entire front yard was covered with mud. Birds had rolled in it during the night and left big trenches. Teagarden slipped through the mud to the edge of the yard where a green hose lay tangled in knots. A thin flow of water came out of the open end. He turned it off and looked back towards the house. The flag poles in the front were covered with one continuous sparrow turd.

"Goddamn birds, crapping up the flags," he said.

He turned on the faucet full blast and started to squirt off the flags. A sparrow landed at the edge of the lawn. He was twice as tall as Teagarden.

"You're the same bastard who was in the window," Teagarden said to the bird. He aimed the nozzle, and a stream of water hit the sparrow's head. The sparrow shook itself and hopped right up to Teagarden. Six inches away from Teagarden's nose, the bird's leg ended and the rest of the bird began.

"Up yours," Teagarden said and crossed his arms. "I'm not moving one damned inch."

Teagarden could hear a gurgling in the sparrow's stomach. The sparrow looked down at him and spit up a mass of pasted wheat which splattered across Teagarden's face.

"Goddamn!" Teagarden screamed and kicked the bird's leg. The sparrow hunched down and took off, knocking Teagarden into the mud. He lay in the wet ooze watching the sparrow fly away.
TWO CHEMISTRY POEMS

Farm

The sun sets low over the Potomac
which twists through the bottom woods
like a dropped string.

Down the road, Doc Colby's dog
barks into the red air. It is still too
early for the crickets to start. A hundred years
since the plantation fell. The blue soldiers
still cling like ivy to the stone foundations
of the old house. There is no one who remembers;
they are buried in the river with their niggers.

Lillian steps to the back porch and
watches a pickup loaded with nigger boys from town, coming
down the dirt road. They sing into the cloud
of dust that billows behind them. Twenty four years
since the farm strangled when John died,
two children gone now--
John Lawrence to Virginia, a lineman
for Bell telephone.
Eileen to New Jersey, married to a Yankee.
Carlton has stayed behind.

He will be home soon, his white shirt
stuck like flypaper to his skin, after the drive
home from the A & P. Home to his mother, who is like
dust in his eyes.
The sun goes down; the sky remains red.

and listening to the flags rattling against the poles,
Teagarden stood up, his entire body caked in mud, and stripped
off his jeans. He hosed himself off and walked around the house
carrying his wet clothes.

Aunt Jemima was setting a platter of small pancakes down
by the couch. Jan was pulling up the strap of her slip when
she saw him and started laughing.

"What happened to you," she said in between giggles.

Teagarden flopped his wet jeans over the railing of the
porch. "I hate those craphead birds."

He tipped over a bowl of syrup sitting on the porch floor.
The brown syrup rolled off the porch down into the weeds. A
flock of sparrows flew by.

"Jemima," Tesgarden said, "why don't you just put strychnine
in those pancakes, so we can get rid of every last one of those
bastards."

Aunt Jemima put the spilled bowl upright. "I'll do that
when you stop being so clumsy."

She walked back into the house. Teagarden sat on the couch
and picked up a pancake with his hand. He wiped the inside of
the syrup bowl with it and started eating. Jan leaned back and
watched the wind blowing rivers through the wheat. Teagarden
looked down and watched a drop of syrup roll down the hair on
his belly. Jan turned and watched the drop too.

"I'm done with the flag," she said. "Let's go upstairs."

Teagarden put down his pancake. "Wait, let's see it."

She stood up. "Jemima, come out here a minute."

"Is Mister Naked afraid of the big birds again," Aunt Jemima
yelled from inside. Teagarden heard her footsteps come across
the kitchen to the screen door.
"I want to show you my new flag," Jan said.

She unrolled the flag which consisted of a piece of brown cloth with a big yellow circle in the middle. A gold shape that looked like a bird held the yellow circle in its mouth.

"This is my sparrow-eating-the-pancakes flag," Jan said.

Jemima bent over, laughing, with her hands on her knees. Teagarden burped and, frowning, picked up another pancake.

Jan folded up the flag. "Let's go upstairs."

Teagarden sat staring across the wheat field. She nudged his shoulder. "Come on."

Teagarden looked up. "Oh," he said.

Jan took Teagarden's hand which was sticky with syrup and said, "Let's go upstairs."

"Sure, O.K." Tegarden said and got up. "Wait, you go on up without me. I want to finish Jemima's pancakes, I'll be a minute."

Teagarden listened on the porch until he heard Jan walk up the stairs. He jumped off the porch and crawled under the floor-boards. Under the porch were cases of whisky. Teagarden picked up a case, lugging it across the yard and down the path to the pancake pile. Opening the case, he looked over his shoulder and then poured each bottle over the giant pancakes.

"Take this, you goddamn birds," he said.

Teagarden stopped when the pancakes looked like wet golden sponges. He put the empty bottles in the case and ran back to the porch. He picked up his pancake and started to nibble. A flock of ten-foot sparrows landed in the field and started gobbling up the whisky pancakes.

Teagarden walked back into the kitchen licking his fingers. Aunt Jemima was pouring batter on the griddle.
"Don't you go walking around naked in my kitchen," she said.

Upstairs, Jan was lying on the bed. The springs of the bed had just started their rhythmic squeaking when something crashed into the house, shaking Jan and Teagarden to the floor.

Teagarden stood up. He peered over the ridge of the window and saw three sparrows rolling around on the ground like crazy bulldozers.

"What's going on?" Jan whispered from the floor.

"It's just those goddamn birds trying to cause trouble," Teagarden said and sat down beside her.
52. Do you believe that men who write poetry are less masculine than men who drive trucks
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Sharon Doane: "We lost the plantation in the civil war. My grandmother owns it now because her mother married an Irish immigrant.

Eric Schneider: "I think, therefore I am...peeing on the railroad tracks near Westinghouse's Ceramics Division in Derry, Pa."

Brooke Cushman: "Sometimes I want to crawl into the river and float upstream and spawn."

Clovis Price: "I findthroughexperience that Artinasmuchandinsofar as the individualis concerned is an unbridled and unintermittent pursuit of oneself."

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Martin Keogh: "Eyes replaced by motionless navels, trees replaced by legless carcs, Bio. replaced by senseless drug."

David Bowman: "Yes, I am a pancake freak which started in Ann Arbor where a friend's liberated aunt got me to cook breakfast and I decided to make banana pancakes, a process of cutting up bananas and putting them in the pancake batter. Since then I have developed watermelon pancakes, tulip pancakes, moose pancakes and Empire State Building pancakes. Pancakes have been proven to be an effective aphrodisiac and in Sweden pancakes are used as contraceptive devices. In Medieval times it was believed that if a virgin slept with a pancake on her forehead she would marry a plumber."

Rosalie Matchett: (Ed. Rosalie gave Beth her bio, who then gave it to me in the cafeteria. I put it in my pocket and lost it somewhere in Traverse City...I blew it.)
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