Christopher Gilson: "Remember what peace can be found in silence."
(Desiderata)

Jack Driscoll: "Brilliant teeth promenade in rows, spastic hands
curl into smiles." (Herb Scott)

Jeannette Flick: "Some things I want to tell you: I still fall
off the horse. He's bigger now. I'll never learn."
(Herb Scott)

Dawn Banghart: "...how often I saw where I should be going only
by setting out for somewhere else..." (Peter Renich)

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

John Hilliard: "It will be at our peril if we put all our faith in the measurable, and dishonor that which lies beyond statement." (Florida Scott-Maxwell)

Joy Worland: "So, little girl, when you speak greetings, when you tell jokes, make wishes or prayers, be careful, be careless, be careful, be what you wish to be." (Carl Sandburg)

Karla Landsfeld: With a sweep of her hand, she stakes a tango. "Burlesque?" I ask. (Melancholy Baby lies in the air.) Perhaps she will stop smoking cigars. (David Freihofner)

Laurie Borns: Plays the flute in the shower, her dark hair draping her shoulders. Her roommate protests.

Julia Silverman: Cuddles Golden Retrievers. Do you think oregano makes the casserole?

Jon Burston: No.

-a Countess Furnace and an OLIVE FIG TREE on WALLY STREET (a parable)

Sue Rubin: "I will not sing the death of dog/who lived a fool to please his king." (Maxine Kumin)

Paula Smith: If she winks, don't show surprise, she'll ignore you. "Thinking is a symptom." (Hugh Prather)

Susan Glasscock: Buys Saudia Arabian opium pipes.

Roberta Kennedy: "This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy; in the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown on the altar round about." (Leviticus 7)

Paul Preston: shift in character, will laugh hysterically with no apparent cause. "The word problem implies an illusion: that this trouble I am having has definable limits.--Everything runs into everything else." (Hugh Prather)

THE RED WHEELBARROW
volume, number
2 4
editors: preston & flick
So of course they were placed in a box and painted identically blue and thus passed their days living happily ever after—a kind of coffin, a kind of blue funk. Is it not?

Until this giving up, the young man has been developing. Suddenly Sexton severs the growth, and the happy ending is not realized. In this poem, as in the others, marriage is the point of immobilization. In the previous tales, events occurring before wedlock often foreshadow the arrest of growth, whereas in “The White Snake,” the events prior to marriage suggest the opposite. The marital union is the single incident that causes blue funk.

The poems in Transformations forcefully and overtly betray Sexton’s personal experience with marriage and reveal her negative views concerning it. She observes wedlock as a trap that immobilizes individuals and arrests growth, and her bitterness surfaces in her poetry. Her final poem explicitly asserts the inevitability of blue funk, the thread which runs through all the other poems.

Anne Sexton, the speaker in control of the fates of Briar Rose, Snow White and Cinderella, describes herself as “...A middle-aged witch, me—/tangled on my two great arms,/my face in a book,/and my mouth wide,/ready to tell you a story or two.” She tells seventeen stories, each centered upon the notion that marriage is a destructive experience for women. There are, in other words, no happy-ever-after endings in Transformations.
In her poem about Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty), Sexton adds a new dimension: Briar Rose becomes an insomniac after her marriage.

She could not nap
or lie in sleep
without the court chemist
mixing her some knock-out drops,
and never in the prince's presence.

When she sleeps, she dreams she is ninety, and she "eats betrayal like a slice of meat." Her betrayer is essentially her father, whose incestuous love for Briar Rose freezes her at childhood. It is her father who neglects to invite the old fairy to the christening, bringing a hundred-year curse upon the castle. While Oedipally fascinated by and attached to him, Briar Rose also feels horror for the relationship ("Daddy? That's another kind of prison.") She dreads, therefore, the prince who merges with her father in her vision. The first imprisoned her. The second freed her—but he placed her in a different jail, the confines of insomnia and age.

I was forced backward.
I was forced forward.
I was passed hand to hand
like a bowl of fruit.

Briar Rose, trapped by father and husband, reflects another example of lack of growth. She, too, is "stuck in the time machine."

The last poem in the book, "The White Snake," most clearly reveals the voice of Sexton. A young man who understands the language of animals leaves the security of the castle for travel. After he completes a number of tasks, he wins the hand of a princess:

Their bodies met over such a dish.
His tongue lay in her mouth as delicately
as the white snake.
They played house, little charmers,
exceptionally well.

John Hilliard

BETWEEN LOVER'S EYES

between lover's eyes lie
all country springs bark
crawlers of the black dark creep
into green morning suns.

the road smiles under foot,
birch-sang fishes branch blue
the rest in autumn.

puppy days of county boys
rock and sand toys brown off their backs,
they dream of weasel tracks.

between lover's eyes lie
lush lanes, full spaniel bays of daffodills,
swan rivers talking black tide laps
into every sun and star.

the road smiles under foot,
birch-sang fishes branch blue
the rest in autumn.

wood shelter torn shore softly storms
with lack of berry-boats sailing the lake,
they dream of seed in the brake.

between lover's eyes lie
all streams sewed side-by-sight
full milk country seas sigh
out of the downy mouths.

the road smiles under foot,
birch-sang fishes branch blue
secret hearts wax spring.

clean sun mornings
creep back bright,
fern in shadow,
cedar in light,
born between lie lover's sighs.
The heroine in "Cinderella" is indeed the epitome of that common story; hers is the tale of chance riches, complete with Sexton's touch of futility at the end. Devout, good Cinderella loses her slipper and passively discovers a prince, unbidden, at her door. She does not seek change: marriage, title, and money are chance gains. Cinderella and the plumber are separated from their instant wealth because there was no maturation involved in acquiring it. Thus Cinderella and her prince, their pattern of life delineated by chance, live unchanged ever after, "never telling the same story twice, never getting a middle-aged spread, their darling smiles pasted on for an eternity, Regular Bobbsey twins. That story."

The poem, "The Maiden Without Hands," presents an additional picture of non-growth, prefaced by an explanation of the king's matrimonial motives:

Is it possible he marries a cripple out of admiration? A desire to own the maiming so that not one of us butchers will come to him with crowbars or slim precise tweezers? My apple has no worm in it! My apple is whole!

After marriage, the king rides off to war, leaving his pregnant wife with her substitute silver hands. Because of intercepted messages, the queen takes her son and escapes to the forest. These actions show growth, or at least change on the part of the queen. But, while in the woods her hands grow back, and eventually the king finds her and brings her back to the castle. Instead of expressing joy about the healing of the queen's infirmity, he is afraid: "Now the butchers will come to me, / he thought, for I have lost my luck. " To insure his safety, he enshrines and worships the silver hands as a "kind of purple heart, / a talisman, / a yellow star." Thus protected from any disfigurement, the couple lives happily ever after, although the king, in his fear, forces the queen backwards, repressing her growth. This poem portrait embodies the contemporary counterpoint of the tyrannical husband whose wife must blindly obey.
Lisa Saffer

LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER: ANNE SEXTON'S TRANSFORMATIONS

Everyone knows the story of Cinderella, who married her prince and lived happily ever after. Sleeping Beauty traditionally awoke to her future husband, and they lived happily ever after. In some stories, Little Red Riding Hood's mother marries the woodcutter, and they, too, live happily ever after. In Transformations, however, the archetypal marriage culmination pattern remains, but the experience is portrayed in a consistently negative light. Sexton transforms the old tales to reveal a characteristic lack of growth in females as the predominant evil. The reasons for this lack of growth, or repression of it, vary, but are all reflected in the marriage experience.

Sexton uses the confessional approach in her poetry, relying on self-searching and personal experience. The women in Transformations present her voice, her insight. She knows these women well, and she opens their situations to reader recognition.

Sexton's poem about Snow White is an example of marriage arresting individual growth. Snow White has "cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper,/arms and legs of Limoges,/lips like Vin du Rhone,/...she is unsoiled." She is also vacuous and doll-like, devoid of emotion. At the end of the poem, Snow White calmly holds court, "sometimes referring to her mirror, as women do." Her marriage crystallizes Snow White's inability to feel and also maintains this condition.

The next princess in the book is a princess only by fortuity. The poem reads:

You always read about it:
the plumber with six children
who wins the Irish sweepstakes.
From toilets to riches.
That story.

Joy Worland

WHAT IS BURIED UNDER THE STONES?

In the field in back of the house
I stand by a grave,
a pile of stones thrown
from the wall at the wood's edge.

Behind me sunlight
filters through trees,
and across the flat pasture
where the cows graze on green shoots

I see a farmer against a backdrop of clouds
dragging his plow
behind a red tractor.

Is it an animal
he has buried here under stone?

He does not see me
lifting them one by one
and fitting them back
into the wall. By nightfall

I am down to bone:
the white skull of a horse
cracked like a map,
under the falling snow.
Karla Landsfeld

SOIL (TO GRANDPA)

The soil on our farm,
five miles from Imlay City,
cracks white.

With no rain,
the blueberry bushes
shrink like old men.

There were five hundred border rows, enough for
three hot children to play like mosquitoes.
Bandanas tied to our wrists,
we stood in Michigan dust, waving down
cars before they reached the Anderson farm.

Always the red bandanas snapped
like the August fire
that worked our peat.
My father pulled
fourteen hundred
tumbleweed that spring.

Always our mouths
were full with berries,
licking peat dust
from the sweet blue.

Grandpa worked
the scales
(they say he had peat in his blood)
balancing berries
like children's eyes.

Dawn Banghart

AFTER ALL

"I know how to make this world
so peaceful and calm,
if I could only get my hands
on a hydrogen bomb."

Todd Rundgren

Make hydrogen is the answer.
We die a thousand deaths too often
and cry a thousand tears until
salt rusts and anyway I am
no longer master
of my own life but maybe
a bomb to end all bombs is
what would feed hunger. Tombs
would no longer comb the air
as the earth rolls away
from a God that could be
the sun. At least
that is what people say.
Ross says death is
only a tunnel and that we see
light after and feel nothing.
After the sun explodes
what is left? The sun is
only gas after all.
Blue as the bruises on our small spines sliding down crate ramps.
Blue as the bush I fell in, tripped by some exposed root.
I cried to Grandpa, the peat stains stung.

But he was busy.
The scales snapped like the red bandanas,
Snapped like the branch that whipped my father's blue eye.

All of us were there to see his blood moisten the soil.
Laurie Borns

FEEDING THE BIRDS

Anchored here
in seawater
the sand fills the spaces between my toes
as I toss bread into the air
for seagulls.

Every morning
suspended above the shoreline
they wait on black-tipped wings
curving and looping
to catch a crust of bread
in their yellow beaks.

The last crust
tumbles through air
in front of a gray gull
with one eye.
She snags it, swallowing
with a jerk of her head.

My hands hang empty.
The birds begin to scatter
winging their way over green waves
that leap up
to touch their bellies.

Jeannette Flick

WISCONSIN BIKEWAY

I
Cycling over county roads
hills stretching to bluffs
we make fifty miles a day.

Halfway to Sparta two retired sisters
sit at the edge of eighty acres corn.
They show us their house
without electricity, and fill
our bottles from the well.

Miles later we help a dairyman
and his dog drive a herd
of Jerseys across the road.
He talks about milking,
slips homemade cheese
into our packs before we leave.

II
The second morning
riding on a railbed
stripped of ties, we go
blind into the tunnel
for half a mile.

At the end three does
turn from the squeak
of brakes and jump single-file
into the woods, their tails
white against the green of planted pine.
Jeannette Flick

THE SHOWING

In early morning Lew Smithe drives to the showgrounds, his red stock truck shedding paint-chips on the parking lot.

Watching his neighbor school a Thoroughbred with toothpick legs, Lew unloads half the Percheron team that pulls his manure spreader.

Steady in April mud, the draft mare works like a machine over water and brick walls in hunter classes. On the flat she backs straight, her chin tucked. She doesn't place--she's a hand too big for showing.

An arm on her neck, Lew leads her past winners with smooth ears and fetlocks. After the last class he loads her into the truck and hauls her home for evening chores.

Julia Silverman

BREAKER BOYS INSIDE BREAKER: PENNSYLVANIA 1909
(after a photograph by Lewis W. Hine)

Inside an unlit breaker forty boys pick slate from coal, their eyes glare white in faces smudged black their clothes stitched with soot and sweat, they turn and stare into the flash of a camera.
Jon Burston

THE CINDER CAT

The cold mist of afternoon crawls off the bogs too soon today for any work to be done on the drystone wall.

Crumbling, the wall persists in the fog's silent fury, preventing as it did in Roman days, the sheep from losing themselves in the moors.

The wall itself seems lost, its expansive borders groping in time gas, invisible.

Only the cinder cat has eyes to find it in this mist. His home is the wall's bottom and the marshes that lie beyond.

His padded feet steal him there, across the muddy pastures from the house, as the field mouse darts to his hollow in the rock.

At the house, echoes from stones that fall to the ground fling themselves at windows as the cat walks the wall.

III

What comes to mind watching this home movie is the sound of the wind in each still frame.

It is spring when you walk outside. Your father, pruning trees in the nursery, steps up on the ladder and hands the shears down to someone who is walking away through ten years of scrubby pine:

backtracking, where the wind shifts, lifting the pages of a book, open on the top bunk. Your wife is asleep on the floor, the cabin filling with old friends.
Jack Driscoll

THREE SKETCHES ABOUT GOING HOME

I

Let’s say that your baggage is full of silt
that the handles pulling off in the driveway
are the hands of your children recently gone.
Say even that the numbers on your tongue
are the addresses of empty mansions
on the Newport coast. Go on,
say it. Already your wife
is walking down the stairs, a flower
blooming in her throat. She has dropped the dishcloth
on the grass. As you bend to pick it up
you notice the pail at her feet is the pail of ink
you have emptied in dreams. You want to tell her
but she is pulling you up
outlining the field with her finger,
outlining the shadow of a horse.

II

On her dress
is a brooch you have never handled
and now you are squeezing it
in a dream. You wake, smelling its fragrance
strong in the palm of your hand.
Mr. Shine's outfit furnished by Dressright of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Buy-Rite Utopia cannot be held responsible for the performance of any of the products mentioned on this evening's show. (Fast Curtain)

Scene IV

The aisle of Buy-Rite. This time Eric, with mop in hand, is pictured on a large glossy placard holding a bottle of Mr. Gleem, a lace white apron, and a large smile. Billy is a revolving display in which he is embracing a pretty girl. On the other side there are bold letters reading: use Mr. Gleem for a happy floor and a proud husband. Among the shoppers are the fat lady and the store detective, once again dressed in his blue uniform. Billy and Eric converse without the shoppers hearing them.

Eric: All this for a set of guitar strings. For all I know, they don't even have guitar strings here.

Billy: Quit being such a poor loser and enjoy. (Ecstatic) This is fantastic. Why, think of the great product you're selling to these fine people. (Curtain lowers slowly as Billy rambles on) Making life easier for millions of deserving housewives. No more yellow floors, no more scrubbing on hands and knees.....
First, the Pixie automatically cuts the dental floss into premeasured lengths found most effective for good flossing. Second, and probably most importantly, anyone can possess a flossing box off the rack; but the Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser is truly a mark of distinction. Those who own a Pixie are apart from the rest, ahead of the crowd...(Buzzer)

Johnny: Sorry to have to interrupt, Billy, but the debate must now go to Eric.

Eric: It's pathetic for one to gain self-esteem through what he possesses. I quote from the great Eastern philosopher, Hu Shih: 'The civilization under which people are restricted and controlled by a material environment from which they cannot escape, and under which they cannot utilize human thought and intellectual power to change environment to improve conditions, is the civilization of a lazy and non-progressive people. It is truly a materialistic civilization.' I'm sorry to say that this applies to American society today. (A silent pause, and then the buzzer sounds.)

Johnny: A tough act to follow, Billy; take it away!

Billy: I think it's outrageous the way my opponent has been slandering American people and their fine society. I don't think his Eastern philosophies are worth sawdust... (Buzzers and sirens sound as confetti showers the characters)

Johnny: Yes folks, our magic word for this evening is sawdust. This evening's protagonist, Mr. William Henderson, Jr., from Cincinnati Ohio, is our automatic winner. (Billy is jumping, and screaming and hugging and kissing Mr. Shine. Eric assumes the role of a good loser) You've both won an eternity as displays for new Mr. Gleem, the floor wax which won't turn yellow. Makes mopping up easy. Don't scrub, Mom, use new Mr. Gleem. (Loud applause and commotion while Billy is overwhelmed with winning. Voice over the P.A. system as applause and noise continue)

Sue Rubin

A PARKED CAR

I follow my dog across the street to a car its frosted windows rolled shut exhaust fogged brake lights

fraying night. I open the front door and a snow pale hand slides from a man's lap to the ground his eyes fixed on the radio.

Reading "empty" I turn the key and hear the dog whine his nose brushing the man's wrist.
They were standing in one corner of the large pet shop where beams of colored light filtered through the aquariums and formed bright, wavering patterns on the linoleum floor. The front of the shop was stacked with plastic dogfood bowls and bird feeders. Chemical air freshener filled the shop with a smell of distant, synthetic pine trees. There were no puppies or kittens, only shelves of aluminum birdcages and the aquariums.

The pet shop man, blinking his red-rimmed eyes, plunged one hand into the aquarium and scooped the goldfish into a plastic bag. He handed the dripping bag to Jeff before wiping his hand on a checkered rag. It took him a long time to finish wiping his pale, blunt fingers.

"That be all?" he finally asked. Jeff said he needed some fish food. The man, barely nodding his huge head, went behind a counter to get it.

Jeff looked at the goldfish he had chosen. It was the most perfect one he could find anywhere, pure gold, without a speck of black or grey. He thought it looked like a miniature Japanese kite, black eyes circled with pale gold, clear fins rippling in the water. The crescent-shaped mouth opened and closed silently, as if asking a question.

"That'll be a dollar thirty-four." The pet shop man sounded bored and was looking out the window.

Still holding the fish bag in one hand, Jeff came forward, dug in the pocket of his jeans with the other hand, and paid the man. Then he stepped out of the pine-scented shop into the clean October afternoon.

His mother was waiting in the car, drumming her fingers on the steering wheel. Jeff slid onto the blue plastic upholstery of the seat beside her, as she turned the key in the ignition.

If Billy wins the vote, however, our two contestants will spend eternity as a display for Wilson's new Mr. Gleem floor wax. Now on with the show. If I may have the envelope please. (An envelope is lowered on a wire from the ceiling. Drum rolls sound as Johnny opens the envelope with much ado) And this evening's topic item is... (A pause)...the new Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser. (Loud applause) Our first topic concerning this fine appliance will be its convenience. Billy has won the toss! He shall therefore start. Billy.

(Billy: (Quite excited) Well, as we all know, plaque is of growing concern to our nation's dental health. It has been proven that flossing once a day can effectively combat this supporter of cavities. Now dental floss, in itself, is in a very unmanageable form. The new Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser can put an end to this. I can't think of anyone who wouldn't be proud to have this beautifully designed dispenser in a prominent place in his bathroom. Why, it even comes in three decorator colors. (Loud Buzzer)

(Johnny: Bessie the Buzzer tells us that it's time for Eric to take the spotlight. (Boos and hisses)

(Eric: I would just like to say that anyone who would pay nineteen-ninety-five for this mess of pressed plastic would have to be either insane or grossly rich. As for myself, I find that the little white case that dental floss usually comes in serves its purpose just fine. It's apparent to me that this gimmick was thought up solely to take the money of the poor fools who have nothing better to do with their hard-earned cash. (Buzzer)

(Billy: Well, aside from the fact that our antagonist thinks our audience is comprised of poor fools, I feel that he is overlooking the advantages that the Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser has over the drab, common white box.)
Eric: This is crazy~

Johnny: It seems that this evening's antagonist isn't familiar with the rules of Buy-Rite Utopia. Once you have been chosen, there is no backing out. This evening you have a chance to become the floor wax display of your choice.

Eric: (Stunned for a moment) But I don't want to be a floor wax display. I just want out of here.

Johnny: Sorry, personal preferences cannot be taken into consideration. Just look at Mr. Wilson here. (Points to mouthwash display) He was in your position last week, and now just look at him! He couldn't be happier.

Billy: (Ecstatic) Come on, let's get on with the game!

Johnny: O.K. In case you're not familiar with the rules, I'll give you a quick rundown. Our studio audience has selected a product of their choice for this evening's big debate. We have also chosen a magic word. Should it be mentioned at any time in the debate, the person using the word is the automatic winner! Now I must add for legal purposes that this product has been selected in a totally democratic manner, and Buy-Rite Utopia hasn't received any funding from the corporation to do their particular item. Nor can Buy-Rite Utopia be in any way responsible for this product's performance. Now, the two contestants will debate the item's good and bad points. Eric has been selected for this evening's antagonist, and he will therefore take the negative side. (Boos and hisses) At the end of the debate the studio audience will vote for the contestant who they feel has presented the best argument.

Eric: This is crazy!

Johnny: Should this evening's antagonist win, the contestants will go home with our home version of Buy-Rite Utopia.

"What took so long?" she asked.

Jeff glanced at her, sensing the annoyance in her voice. There were tight lines around her mouth, and her brown hair was in a youthful ponytail that did not match her face. He looked down at his knees.

"Had to choose the best fish," he explained. "I think Kenny will like it," he added, looking up, trying to get her into a better mood by mentioning her favorite. She did not respond.

He could not tell her why it had been necessary to get Kenny a goldfish for his birthday. It went back to the summer before, when the two boys had gone to camp. Kenny had been different then, away from their parents. He had lost some weight, and Jeff had found the opportunity to teach his younger brother a couple of knots. On one of those summer days, Kenny had mentioned that he'd always wanted a goldfish. Now, of course, Kenny was his old self again. But the fish, Jeff hoped, would remind him of the summer.

The car rolled across the grey asphalt of a McDonald's parking lot. Jeff slid down in his seat, looking at the fish, as his mother stopped the car. It looked like an intelligent fish. Maybe fish had fantastic little brains, but they kept it a secret.

"What kind of milkshake did Kenny want?" his mother asked.

"Chocolate, I guess," said Jeff, staring at the fish. His mother looked at him for a moment, her mouth getting thinner. Then she began to speak rapidly.

"No use asking you to help carry them," she said, her voice shaking. She got out of the car, slamming the door. Jeff frowned and slid further into his seat until he couldn't see out of the window.

His mother returned with a paper bag of hamburgers, french fries, and milkshakes. Jeff reached for a french fry as she got into the car.
"Don't start eating already," she said sharply. "There won't be any left."

She means there won't be enough for Kenny, Jeff thought. He did not try to talk on the way home.

Kenny's new bicycle was lying in the driveway, and Jeff had to wheel it into the garage before his mother could drive up to the house. They went into the kitchen. Kenny, wearing a yellow T-shirt with Snoopy on it, was sitting on the edge of the kitchen table with a box of sweetened breakfast cereal.

"I'm starving," he announced, taking a fistful of cereal from the box. Jeff noticed how plump Kenny's wrists had gotten since the summer. Kenny began to toss cereal into the air, trying to catch it in his mouth. His mother did not interrupt the game.

"I've got a present for you, Ken," said Jeff, holding the fish bag behind his back.

"Chocklit milkshake?" guessed Kenny in baby-talk, his head to one side. Without answering, Jeff brought the bag from behind his back.

The goldfish glimmered through the plastic, its gills gently fanning the water. Jeff imagined it in a clear Japanese pond, under a little bridge, with children flying kites over it.

"It's just like in JAWS!" Kenny jumped to his feet and tossed the cereal box into the sink. "A fish! How'd you know I wanted a fish, Jeff?"

"You said so last summer," said Jeff. He scanned his brother's blue eyes for a sign of recognition. Seeing the white eyelids, he turned away. "You'll have to take care of this fish. It's special."

Kenny made noises like a submarine as he pounded up the stairs. Their father laughed in the living room.

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Billy: But nylon combs and rows upon rows of Toast Kings. It's overwhelming!

Eric: Getting off on a Toast King is a little too heavy for me.

Billy: I'm all right now. (Eric lets loose. Just then drum and trumpets sound. An announcer's voice comes in over the P.A. system.)

Announcer: (Dramatically) Welcome once again ladies and gentlemen to Buy-Rite Utopia! The gameshow where the contestants play for keeps. And now here's the main man of materialism: Johnny Shine! (Enter store detective now dressed as a television master of ceremonies in a flashy three piece suit and carrying a microphone. There is applause as he takes a bow. Johnny takes out a standard index card and reads from it.)

Johnny: Today we have two fine young men from the university here in town. Mr. William Henderson, Jr. from Cincinnati, Ohio! (Small spattering of applause) William is studying law and hopes to someday open his own practice. Good luck, Bill. May I call you Bill?

Billy: Sure Johnny.

Johnny: (Correcting) Mr. Shine.

Eric: (Apprehensively) What is this?

Billy: Isn't it great? Who'd ever have dreamt it?

Johnny: And our second contestant is Mr. Eric Stevenson from Berkeley, California. (Applause) Eric is majoring in philosophy and hopes to someday overthrow the establishment. He'll be tonight's antagonist. (Booing and hissing)

Eric: Listen. Mr. Shine, I really appreciate being chosen and all, but all I really want is to get out of here. Come on Billy, let's go.
There is a revolving placard which is on one side, a picture of a middle-aged man gargling new Pinemint; on the other side, he is in the arms of a beautiful model. Billy is not in sight.)

Billy: (From off stage) Just look at this, will you? An onion slicer and an electric toothbrush in the same appliance. What will they think of next?

Eric: Maybe someone stupid enough to buy this junk? (Billy appears in aisle with slicer-dicer still on his hand. Eric picks up a bottle of Pinemint and stares into it’s green contents.) Do you know that the average American spends more than two hundred dollars on this garbage each year?

Billy: How can that be? It's only been on the market for a week. (Billy starts to run wild among the merchandise.)

Eric: (Raving) I can see it now. At midnight the silly string comes off the walls to bury everything in a mound of acrylic.

Billy: What's that you're mumbling, Eric?

Eric: Nothing, nothing.

Billy: Look at this, a pimple cream guaranteed to satisfy me or my money back. 'Teen Sheen' they call it. Must be amazing stuff.

Eric: (Holding his head in his hands) Yes, yes, simply amazing stuff.

Billy: (Increasing enthusiasm) A new highly concentrated wormer for dogs, Puppy Pleaser. A steak made from synthesized sea weed, acrylic eggs which taste like the real thing. No more high cholesterol. A longer lifetime through man's technology. (Billy comes down aisle with his new findings in hand.)

Eric: Billy, Billy, get a grip on it man! (Eric grabs him and shakes him to bring him around. Billy's prospective purchases drop to the floor.)

joined by canned laughter from the television set.

"He hasn't even looked at it," Jeff said, realizing that he still held the fish. His mother sighed and began to take the little hamburger cartons out of the bag.

"He won't notice any of his presents for weeks," she said, almost talking to herself. "I guess it's just too exciting for him, getting all these things at once. I just hope he doesn't get overtired."

Jeff saw Kenny's new tape recorder on the kitchen table and was about to speak, but he heard Kenny coming downstairs with the aquarium. Jeff joined him in the hall.

"I found some colored rocks...," began Kenny, halfway down, but he stopped, seeing the fish for the first time. "Hey, Jeff, that's a great fish." They looked at it for a few minutes.

"Jeff," said Kenny, balancing the aquarium awkwardly in his arms, "you know last summer by the lake, when we saw those..."

He was interrupted by the sound of their father switching channels in the next room. A voice began to sing the national anthem over a loudspeaker. Kenny quickly set the aquarium down on a bookshelf.

"Must be the Dolphin-Packer game," he said, without looking at Jeff. "I told Dad I'd watch it with him." Jeff did not say anything. Kenny went into the living room.

"Dinner will be..." began their mother in the kitchen doorway. She was interrupted by a yell from Kenny, who burst into the hall.

"They ran it back to the thirty-six yard line!" he said importantly. "Know what that means, Jeff? It's a first down for the..."

"You'll have to think of a name for your new fish," said his mother, who had seen it in the aquarium. Jeff didn't think
human names were really appropriate for fish, but he turned to Kenny, who was already half-watching the television screen.

"Joe Namath," said Kenny.

"No, kid, this is the Dolphins and the Packers," said his father's voice from the living room.

"I meant the name! I think I'll name my fish Joe Namath," said Kenny. "How about it, Jeff? What do you think, Dad?"

"Sure, now let me watch this replay. All this noise, I missed the third down." Jeff heard the top of a beer can being ripped off.

"Joe Namath," Kenny repeated to himself with satisfaction.

Their mother began to carry hamburgers and milkshakes across the hall to the living room. Kenny followed her with a blank expression on his face.

"I'll be there in a minute," said Jeff. He looked down into the water. The goldfish, Joe Namath in a plastic aquarium, looked back at him. Its golden mouth opened and closed as if asking a question.

Jeff did not know the answer. He decided to feed the fish since Kenny, drunk on milkshakes and touchdowns, would probably forget. He slid his thumbnail under the lip of the fish food can, opened it, and shook some food into the water. Over colored rocks, the goldfish rose slowly to the surface and began to eat.
Detective: Standard procedure, gotta check for shoplifters. O.K., you're clean, turn around.

Billy: We weren't doing anything wrong, officer.

Detective: I'll decide that. Meanwhile you better get your friend here some shoes. Store policy: no bare feet allowed. (Starts to walk away, turns around) By the way, thank you for shopping Buy-Rite.

Eric: Nothing to worry about, huh? No one's going to roust me. (Exploding) What the heck do you call that?

Billy: He's just doing his job, Eric; don't be so sensitive. (Suddenly excited) Look over there, do you see what I see?

Eric: Where, what are you talking about?

Billy: A Bronco slicer-dicer. And there's only one left. Quick, I've got to grab it. (Billy lunges at the item only to be blocked at the last minute by an obese lady pushing a shopping cart that's piled over with goods. She grabs the slicer-dicer)

Lady: Sorry buster, it's mine.

Billy: But ma'am, I'm afraid that I saw it first and it's rightfully mine.

Lady: Listen buddy, I don't give two hoots who saw it first. All I know is I've got it now, and I'm not giving it up.

Eric: Come on, Billy...what the heck does it matter? Let's split.

Billy: But it's rightfully mine, and it's the last one. (Billy grabs at the slicer-dicer and begins a tug of war with the lady.)
Eric: Man, the glare from those Toast Kings is killing me.

Eric and Billy are in the aisle of a very busy Buy-Rite store. People are bumping into Eric, but Billy dodges the crowd quite easily. He is at home here.

Scenic: Look at this, Eric, isn't it great?

Eric: Geez, I hate Buy-Rites.

Billy: Just think, four pieces of toast at a time in only fifteen seconds. And they all carry a full year warranty on parts and labor. If you drop it, you know, it doesn't count.

Eric: All these people, man, I'm getting paranoid. Look over there, that guy just hit his kid.

Billy: But just think of all the good people here. The people of America.

Eric: All I see is illiterate slobs.

Billy: But these are good people; they won't hurt you.

(Enter a store detective dressed in a blue uniform. The detective takes one look at Eric's bare feet and approaches the culprit.)

Detective: All right, buddy, what do you think you're doing?

Eric: I'm trying to buy guitar strings, but all I've seen are Toast Kings and ladies' underwear.

Detective: Cute buddy, real cute. All right, hands on the counter and spread your legs. (Eric and Billy follow orders, detective to Billy.) Not you pal, this freak here. (Billy stands around during officer's search of Eric)

Eric: (During search) What's this all about?
Eric: That I am, a regular social disease.

Billy: That's terrible!

Eric: And a pervert too. Why you've never seen such perversion. When you were in the suburbs eating your white bread on mayonnaise, I was roaming the streets peeking in the windows of Madame Zelda's House of Delights.

Billy: (Realizing the joke) All right Eric, you've made your point.

Eric: I'm glad you're not as dumb as you look.

Billy: (Seriously) Why, thank you.

Eric: Any time.

Billy: (After a pause) Do you need anything at the Buy-Rite? I'm going out there this afternoon.

Eric: As a matter of fact, I do. My guitar strings are shot.

Billy: I wanted to pick up another Beach Boys album and maybe that new release by Maria Muldoure.

Eric: Man, when are you going to develop an ear for music?

Billy: Just because my musical tastes differ from yours doesn't mean that I don't have an ear for music. Thousands of people listen to the Beach Boys everyday.

Eric: Yes, tone deafness is a serious problem in this country.

Billy: There's no need to be cynical.

Eric: (Sarcasm) Please excuse me.

Billy: You're forgiven.

Eric: Thank you.

Billy: We better get going: the store closes at nine.

Robertta Kennedy

OPENING A TRUCK

A parked truck sits, hidden under the low branches of trees on this back road. The truck has been alone for days. "Traverse City Woolen Co." spreads across its side in the afternoon sun. I imagine flannel shirts inside, boxes of cloth in the dimness.

When I rattle the rear door open, light walks in. It outlines a shape, green, woven wool threads with tartan plaid. I watch as the cocoon quivers. At twilight it splits in the middle. The halves separate, showing a light, wet bundle. That night, a white moth stoops in the truck, edges forward to nibble my sleeve as I stroke its muslin wings.
standard torn blue jeans, army surplus T-shirt, and sporting bare, dirty feet. Eric is reading intently and occasionally giving a grunt or two of approval. A key clicks in the door and Billy enters

Billy: (Strolls in like he's got the world on a leash and very carefully begins putting his armload of books in precisely the correct place on his shelf. Eric doesn't even bother to look up from his book. Billy walks over to the stereo and hits the switch, emitting Beach Boy music into the room.) Hello fun seeker, how's the world been treating you?

Eric: (As "Surfing Safari" comes on, obviously disgusted at his roommate's choice in music.) Fine, fine, do you really have to play that garbage?

Billy: But Eric, I thought you liked music.

Eric: Which is why I'll ask you again: do you really have to listen to that junk?

Billy: What's the matter, you trying to study or something?

Eric: (Quite disgusted) Yea, that's it! I'm trying to study.

Billy: (Turns off stereo) Watcha reading there partner?

Eric: The Redbook.

Billy: Oh, that's a very nice magazine. My mother reads it all the time. She learned to sew through a six-week-stay-at-home-class published in the Redbook.

Eric: (Absolute disgust at Billy's WASP attitude) Where the heck you been, man?

Billy: What do you mean?

Eric: I mean this is Quotations of Chairman Mao, not a ladies' magazine. You really scare me sometimes, you know that?

Billy: (Shocked) I didn't realize that you were a radical.

The boys run bare-backed across the grass lot. John follows as they pour into the woods, and shoot from behind trees like rebels between Lexington and Concord. Their wooden pistols fire rubber figure 8's, knotted from inner tubes.

John's dirt face peeks around the elm trunk. Arm extended, he sights along the two upright nails. Pressing his thumb on the clothes-pin trigger, he releases the rubber band to sting the bare flesh of another boy's back. John flees, laughing, through the woods, while the welt puffs up, a blister on the boy's skin.

Paul Preston

DUELING
Characters:

Eric - University student with long, unkept hair and a half-grown beard.
Billy - University student who is neatly dressed in plaid pants and silk shirt. He is clean cut and has the constantly happy look of a used car salesman introducing himself to a prospective customer.
Store Detective - Wears a blue uniform
The Lady - An obese and determined shopper
Johnny Shine - Television master of ceremonies wearing a three-piece suit.

Setting: The main action of the play occurs in two locations:
(I) A small, typical dormitory-type room, painted a dingy off-blue. Although this room is uniform in design, an imaginary line is quite evident down the center. On the right side of the room, the bed is made with an old wool blanket and a beat up pillow without a case. An old poster of Bob Dylan is on the wall. A guitar perches in the corner. The desk is piled high with papers and paperback novels. Clothes dangle on the back of the desk chair. On the left side of the room the bed is made neatly with a scarlet bed spread. Assorted throw pillows are arranged ever so neatly around an old, stuffed dog. There is a small stereo and a very neatly arranged desk with an electric typewriter. The top of the dresser is blanketed with every imaginable man's toiletry that's ever been made. Large aerosol cans loom over small flat jars of pimple cream and are complemented by the half dozen odd bottles of after shave, every one of them containing warnings right on the back saying that the wearer would be defenseless against hordes of attacking females. (2) A Buy-Rite store.

Scene I

Eric is lying, very casually, on the bed on the right side of the room reading Quotations from Chairman Mao. He is dressed in the

Paul Preston

SMOLDERING PILES

I

In Alton, dry piles line the gutters, the wind sucking loose leaves from the top. I jump into mounds in the yard while Father shuffles them rake by rake to the street.

I wanted to pour gas on the brown leaves, but Father threw the match. First the pop, like lighting a patio stove, and then a steady flare that settled into the pile.

The smell of burning leaves hangs in October air, the smoke rising into the elms where a few leaves remain.

II

Fifteen years later, fall in Minneapolis. Here the rows of leaves are hosed down, so they won't blow.

Woodlake Sanitation men toss the rotting clumps into trucks and the breeze spreads a wet decay.

Back in Alton, the charred lines smolder for hours, and sparks crackle across leaf veins.
Christopher Gilson

DRIVING AT NIGHT

Last night
I didn't sleep,
Choosing instead
To drive
Past familiar places,

Past cornfields where
I rested
On spring afternoons,
The stubble of
Autumn cut grass
In my back.
Crickets with
Rosin feet
On my neck and face.

I drove past Doc's Ice Cream
Where the old man
Served those generous servings
In the early June heat.
Now it is boarded against snow.

Past the ranch
Where I rode Ace
Round the ring
With Mary in the center
Barking orders.
My legs aching,
I would watch her
With dust masking my face.

Finally, I drove
Into the restaurant.
Taking a seat
And drinking coffee,
I saw the sunrise
Through the window.
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**ROOMMATES**

Characters:

**Eric** - University student with long, unkept hair and a half-grown beard.

**Billy** - University student who is neatly dressed in plaid pants and silk shirt. He is clean cut and has the constantly happy look of a used car salesman introducing himself to a prospective customer.

**Store Detective** - Wears a blue uniform

**The Lady** - An obese and determined shopper

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Setting: The main action of the play occurs in two locations:

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2. A Buy-Rite store.

**Scene I**

Eric is lying, very casually, on the bed on the right side of the room reading *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. He is dressed in the
standard torn blue jeans, army surplus T-shirt, and sporting bare, dirty feet. Eric is reading intently and occasionally giving a grunt or two of approval. A key clicks in the door and Billy enters.

Billy: (Strolls in like he's got the world on a leash and very carefully begins putting his armload of books in precisely the correct place on his shelf. Eric doesn't even bother to look up from his book. Billy walks over to the stereo and hits the switch, emitting Beach Boy music into the room.) Hello fun seeker, how's the world been treating you?

Eric: (As "Surfing Safari" comes on, obviously disgusted at his roommate's choice in music.) Fine, fine, do you really have to play that garbage?

Billy: But Eric, I thought you liked music.

Eric: Which is why I'll ask you again: do you really have to listen to that junk?

Billy: What's the matter, you trying to study or something?

Eric: (Quite disgusted) Yea, that's it: I'm trying to study.

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Paul Preston

DUELING

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Eric: And a pervert too. Why you've never seen such perversion. When you were in the suburbs eating your white bread on mayonnaise, I was roaming the streets peeking in the windows of Madame Zelda's House of Delights.

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Eric: I'm glad you're not as dumb as you look.

Billy: (Seriously) Why, thank you.

Eric: Any time.

Billy: (After a pause) Do you need anything at the Buy-Rite? I'm going out there this afternoon.

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Eric: (Sarcasm) Please excuse me.

Billy: You're forgiven.

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Robertta Kennedy

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When I rattle the rear door open, light walks in. It outlines a shape, green, woven wool threads with tartan plaid. I watch as the cocoon quivers. At twilight it splits in the middle. The halves separate, showing a light, wet bundle. That night, a white moth stoops in the truck, edges forward to nibble my sleeve as I stroke its muslin wings.
Susan Glasscock

AUNT MILDRED'S MASHED POTATO COOKIES

Mashed potatoes become a volcano when I pour molasses into the crater, the brown liquid running over the sides like lava. They avalanche together when I beat them with a spoon.

The quiet world of the egg is shattered by one tap on the side of a bowl.

On the marble counter, under fluorescent light, I spoon natural honey from a jar and watch it fall like slow water.

Now the flour shaken like snow is turned under only to surface, mud covered and smooth.

I spoon hills of dough on to a cookie sheet. I put them in the hot oven and press my nose to the glass, watching tiny volcanoes erupt one at a time.

Eric: Man, the glare from those Toast Kings is killing me.

Eric and Billy are in the aisle of a very busy Buy-Rite store. People are bumping into Eric, but Billy dodges the crowd quite easily. He is at home here.

Eric: Geez, I hate Buy-Rites.

Billy: Look at this, Eric, isn't it great?

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Billy: But just think of all the good people here. The people of America.

Eric: All I see is illiterate slobs.

Billy: But these are good people; they won't hurt you.

(Enter a store detective dressed in a blue uniform. The detective takes one look at Eric's bare feet and approaches the culprit.)

Detective: All right, buddy, what do you think you're doing?

Eric: I'm trying to buy guitar strings, but all I've seen are Toast Kings and ladies' underwear.

Detective: Cute buddy, real cute. All right, hands on the counter and spread your legs. (Eric and Billy follow orders, detective to Billy.) Not you pal, this freak here. (Billy stands around during officer's search of Eric)

Eric: (During search) What's this all about?
Detective: Standard procedure, gotta check for shoplifters. O.K., you're clean, turn around.

Billy: We weren't doing anything wrong, officer.

Detective: I'll decide that. Meanwhile you better get your friend here some shoes. Store policy: no bare feet allowed. (Starts to walk away, turns around) By the way, thank you for shopping Buy-Rite.

Eric: Nothing to worry about, huh? No one's going to roust me. (Exploding) What the heck do you call that?

Billy: He's just doing his job, Eric; don't be so sensitive. (Suddenly excited) Look over there, do you see what I see?

Eric: Where, what are you talking about?

Billy: A Bronco slicer-dicer. And there's only one left. Quick, I've got to grab it. (Billy lunges at the item only to be blocked at the last minute by an obese lady pushing a shopping cart that's piled over with goods. She grabs the slicer-dicer)

Lady: Sorry buster, it's mine.

Billy: But ma'am, I'm afraid that I saw it first and it's rightfully mine.

Lady: Listen buddy, I don't give two hoots who saw it first. All I know is I've got it now, and I'm not giving it up.

Eric: Come on, Billy...what the heck does it matter? Let's split.

Billy: But it's rightfully mine, and it's the last one. (Billy grabs at the slicer-dicer and begins a tug of war with the lady.)
human names were really appropriate for fish, but he turned to Kenny, who was already half-watching the television screen.

"Joe Namath," said Kenny.

"No, kid, this is the Dolphins and the Packers," said his father's voice from the living room.

"I meant the name! I think I'll name my fish Joe Namath," said Kenny. "How about it, Jeff? What do you think, Dad?"

"Sure, now let me watch this replay. All this noise, I missed the third down." Jeff heard the top of a beer can being ripped off.

"Joe Namath," Kenny repeated to himself with satisfaction.

Their mother began to carry hamburgers and milkshakes across the hall to the living room. Kenny followed her with a blank expression on his face.

"I'll be there in a minute," said Jeff. He looked down into the water. The goldfish, Joe Namath in a plastic aquarium, looked back at him. Its golden mouth opened and closed as if asking a question.

Jeff did not know the answer. He decided to feed the fish since Kenny, drunk on milkshakes and touchdowns, would probably forget. He slid his thumbnail under the lip of the fish food can, opened it, and shook some food into the water. Over colored rocks, the goldfish rose slowly to the surface and began to eat.

For God's sake, Billy, what are you doing? (He begins to pull Billy away from the lady. After this struggle goes on a bit, the lady sees that she's overwhelmed in the battle, with Billy tugging at her and Eric pulling at Billy.)

All right pal—if you want it so bad, it's yours! (She grabs handle of the slicer-dicer and cranks it hard, jamming Billy's hand into the grinding mechanism. Billy lets out a piercing scream. The lady moves on down the aisle with shopping cart.)

What is it? What's the matter?

Let me try turning the handle in reverse.

No, don't touch it!

(Disgusted) Well, what are you going to do?

I'll just have to wait until I get back to the room and take it apart.

And until then you're just going to walk around with that ridiculous thing on your hand?

I don't know of any alternatives. (Just then, a voice over the P.A. system.)

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for shopping Buy-Rite. Come again soon. (Billy and Eric are, for the first time, alone in the aisle. The lights begin to go off.)

This isn't happening to me.

Scene III

(Billy and Eric are trapped in the Buy-Rite. The scene is a cosmetic aisle. Eric is propped against a free-standing mouthwash display.)
There is a revolving placard which is on one side, a picture of
a middle-aged man gargling new Pinemint; on the other side, he is
in the arms of a beautiful model. Billy is not in sight.)

Billy: (From off stage) Just look at this, will you? An
onion slicer and an electric toothbrush in the same
appliance. What will they think of next?

Eric: Maybe someone stupid enough to buy this junk? (Billy
appears in aisle with slicer-dicer still on his hand.
Eric picks up a bottle of Pinemint and stares into
it's green contents.) Do you know that the average
American spends more than two hundred dollars on this
garbage each year?

Billy: How can that be? It's only been on the market for
a week. (Billy starts to run wild among the
merchandise.)

Eric: (Raving) I can see it now. At midnight the silly
string comes off the walls to bury everything in a
mound of acrylic.

Billy: What's that you're mumbling, Eric?

Eric: Nothing, nothing.

Billy: Look at this, a pimple cream guaranteed to satisfy me
or my money back. 'Teen Sheen' they call it. Must
be amazing stuff.

Eric: (Holding his head in his hands) Yes, yes, simply
amazing stuff.

Billy: (Increasing enthusiasm) A new highly concentrated
wormer for dogs, Puppy Pleaser. A steak made from
synthesized sea weed, acrylic eggs which taste like
the real thing. No more high cholesterol. A longer
lifetime through man's technology. (Billy comes down
aisle with his new findings in hand.)

Eric: Billy, Billy, get a grip on it man! (Eric grabs him
and shakes him to bring him around. Billy's
prospective purchases drop to the floor.)

joined by canned laughter from the television set.

"He hasn't even looked at it," Jeff said, realizing that
he still held the fish. His mother sighed and began to take the
little hamburger cartons out of the bag.

"He won't notice any of his presents for weeks," she said,
almost talking to herself. "I guess it's just too exciting for
him, getting all these things at once. I just hope he doesn't
get overtired."

Jeff saw Kenny's new tape recorder on the kitchen table and
was about to speak, but he heard Kenny coming downstairs with
the aquarium. Jeff joined him in the hall.

"I found some colored rocks..." began Kenny, halfway down,
but he stopped, seeing the fish for the first time. "Hey, Jeff,
that's a great fish." They looked at it for a few minutes.

"Jeff," said Kenny, balancing the aquarium awkwardly in his
arms, "you know last summer by the lake, when we saw those..."

He was interrupted by the sound of their father switching
channels in the next room. A voice began to sing the national
anthem over a loudspeaker. Kenny quickly set the aquarium down
on a bookshelf.

"Must be the Dolphin-Packer game," he said, without looking
at Jeff. "I told Dad I'd watch it with him." Jeff did not say
anything. Kenny went into the living room.

 Alone in the hall, Jeff filled the aquarium. He watched the
fish swim around in it, exploring.

"Dinner will be..." began their mother in the kitchen doorway.
She was interrupted by a yell from Kenny, who burst into the hall.

"They ran it back to the thirty-six yard line!" he said
importantly. "Know what that means, Jeff? It's a first down for
the..."

"You'll have to think of a name for your new fish," said his
mother, who had seen it in the aquarium. Jeff didn't think
"Don't start eating already," she said sharply. "There won't be any left."

She means there won't be enough for Kenny, Jeff thought. He did not try to talk on the way home.

Kenny's new bicycle was lying in the driveway, and Jeff had to wheel it into the garage before his mother could drive up to the house. They went into the kitchen. Kenny, wearing a yellow T-shirt with Snoopy on it, was sitting on the edge of the kitchen table with a box of sweetened breakfast cereal.

"I'm starving," he announced, taking a fistful of cereal from the box. Jeff noticed how plump Kenny's wrists had gotten since the summer. Kenny began to toss cereal into the air, trying to catch it in his mouth. His mother did not interrupt the game.

"I've got a present for you, Ken," said Jeff, holding the fish bag behind his back.

"Chocklit milkshake?" guessed Kenny in baby-talk, his head to one side. Without answering, Jeff brought the bag from behind his back.

The goldfish glimmered through the plastic, its gills gently fanning the water. Jeff imagined it in a clear Japanese pond, under a little bridge, with children flying kites over it.

"It's just like in JAWS!" Kenny jumped to his feet and tossed the cereal box into the sink. "A fish! How'd you know I wanted a fish, Jeff?"

"You said so last summer," said Jeff. He scanned his brother's blue eyes for a sign of recognition. Seeing the white eyelids, he turned away. "You'll have to take care of this fish. It's special."

Kenny made noises like a submarine as he pounded up the stairs. Their father laughed in the living room.

But nylon combs and rows upon rows of Toast Kings. It's overwhelming!

Getting off on a Toast King is a little too heavy for me.

I'm all right now. (Eric lets loose. Just then drum and trumpets sound. An announcer's voice comes in over the P.A. system.)

(Dramatically) Welcome once again ladies and gentlemen to Buy-Rite Utopia! The gameshow where the contestants play for keeps. And now here's the main man of materialism: Johnny Shine! (Enter store detective now dressed as a television master of ceremonies in a flashy three piece suit and carrying a microphone. There is applause as he takes a bow. Johnny takes out a standard index card and reads from it.)

Eric: Isn't it great? Who'd ever have dreamt it?

Listen, Mr. Shine, I really appreciate being chosen and all, but all I really want is to get out of here. Come on Billy, let's go.
Johnny: It seems that this evening's antagonist isn't familiar with the rules of Buy-Rite Utopia. Once you have been chosen, there is no backing out. This evening you have a chance to become the floor wax display of your choice.

Eric: (Stunned for a moment) But I don't want to be a floor wax display, I just want out of here.

Johnny: (Angrily) What, are you crazy? This is the chance of a lifetime. It seems that this evening's antagonist isn't familiar with the rules of Buy-Rite Utopia. Once you have been chosen, there is no backing out. This evening you have a chance to become the floor wax display of your choice.

Eric: (Stunned for a moment) But I don't want to be a floor wax display, I just want out of here.

Johnny: Sorry, personal preferences cannot be taken into consideration. Just look at Mr. Wilson here. (Points to mouthwash display) He was in your position last week, and now just look at him! He couldn't be happier.

Billy: (Ecstatic) Come on, let's get on with the game!

Johnny: O.K. In case you're not familiar with the rules, I'll give you a quick rundown. Our studio audience has selected a product of their choice for this evening's big debate. We have also chosen a magic word. Should it be mentioned at any time in the debate, the person using the word is the automatic winner! Now I must add for legal purposes that this product has been selected in a totally democratic manner, and Buy-Rite Utopia hasn't received any funding from the corporation to do their particular item. Nor can Buy-Rite Utopia be in any way responsible for this product's performance. Now, the two contestants will debate the item's good and bad points. Eric has been selected for this evening's antagonist, and he will therefore take the negative side. (Boos and hisses) At the end of the debate the studio audience will vote for the contestant who they feel has presented the best argument.

Eric: This is crazy!

Johnny: Should this evening's antagonist win, the contestants will go home with our home version of Buy-Rite Utopia.

"What took so long?" she asked.

Jeff glanced at her, sensing the annoyance in her voice. There were tight lines around her mouth, and her brown hair was in a youthful ponytail that did not match her face. He looked down at his knees.

"Had to choose the best fish," he explained. "I think Kenny will like it," he added, looking up, trying to get her into a better mood by mentioning her favorite. She did not respond.

He could not tell her why it had been necessary to get Kenny a goldfish for his birthday. It went back to the summer before, when the two boys had gone to camp. Kenny had been different then, away from their parents. He had lost some weight, and Jeff had found the opportunity to teach his younger brother a couple of knots. On one of those summer days, Kenny had mentioned that he'd always wanted a goldfish. Now, of course, Kenny was his old self again. But the fish, Jeff hoped, would remind him of the summer.

The car rolled across the grey asphalt of a MacDonald's parking lot. Jeff slid down in his seat, looking at the fish, as his mother stopped the car. It looked like an intelligent fish. Maybe fish had fantastic little brains, but they kept it a secret.

"What kind of milkshake did Kenny want?" his mother asked.

"Chocolate, I guess," said Jeff, staring at the fish. His mother looked at him for a moment, her mouth getting thinner. Then she began to speak rapidly.

"No use asking you to help carry them," she said, her voice shaking. She got out of the car, slamming the door. Jeff frowned and slid further into his seat until he couldn't see out of the window.

His mother returned with a paper bag of hamburgers, french fries, and milkshakes. Jeff reached for a french fry as she got into the car.
Paula Smith
THE GOLDFISH

They were standing in one corner of the large pet shop where beams of colored light filtered through the aquariums and formed bright, wavering patterns on the linoleum floor. The front of the shop was stacked with plastic dog food bowls and bird feeders. Chemical air freshener filled the shop with a smell of distant, synthetic pine trees. There were no puppies or kittens, only shelves of aluminum bird cages and the aquariums.

The pet shop man, blinking his red-rimmed eyes, plunged one hand into the aquarium and scooped the goldfish into a plastic bag. He handed the dripping bag to Jeff before wiping his hand on a checkered rag. It took him a long time to finish wiping his pale, blunt fingers.

"That be all?" he finally asked. Jeff said he needed some food. The man, barely nodding his huge head, went behind a counter to get it.

Jeff looked at the goldfish he had chosen. It was the most perfect one he could find anywhere, pure gold, without a speck of black or grey. He thought it looked like a miniature Japanese kite, black eyes circled with pale gold, clear fins rippling in the water. The crescent-shaped mouth opened and closed silently, as if asking a question.

"That'll be a dollar thirty-four." The pet shop man sounded bored and was looking out the window.

Still holding the fish bag in one hand, Jeff came forward, dug in the pocket of his jeans with the other hand, and paid the man. Then he stepped out of the pine-scented shop into the clean October afternoon.

His mother was waiting in the car, drumming her fingers on the steering wheel. Jeff slid onto the blue plastic upholstery of the seat beside her, as she turned the key in the ignition.

If Billy wins the vote, however, our two contestants will spend eternity as a display for Wilson's new Mr. Gleem floor wax. Now on with the show. If I may have the envelope please. (An envelope is lowered on a wire from the ceiling. Drum rolls sound as Johnny opens the envelope with much ado) And this evening's topic item is... (A pause)... the new Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser. (Loud applause) Our first topic concerning this fine appliance will be its convenience. Billy has won the toss! He shall therefore start. Billy.

(Billy: Quite excited) Well, as we all know, plaque is of growing concern to our nation's dental health. It has been proven that flossing once a day can effectively combat this supporter of cavities. Now dental floss, in itself, is in a very unmanageable form. The new Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser can put an end to this. I can't think of anyone who wouldn't be proud to have this beautifully designed dispenser in a prominent place in his bathroom. Why, it even comes in three decorator colors. (Loud Buzzer)

Johnny:
Bessie the Buzzer tells us that it's time for Eric to take the spotlight. (Boos and hisses)

Eric: I would just like to say that anyone who would pay nineteen-ninety-five for this mess of pressed plastic would have to be either insane or grossly rich. As for myself, I find that the little white case that dental floss usually comes in serves its purpose just fine. It's apparent to me that this gimmick was thought up solely to take the money of the poor fools who have nothing better to do with their hard-earned cash. (Buzzer)

(Billy: Well, aside from the fact that our antagonist thinks our audience is comprised of poor fools, I feel that he is overlooking the advantages that the Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser has over the drab, common white box.)
First, the Pixie automatically cuts the dental floss into premeasured lengths found most effective for good flossing. Second, and probably most importantly, anyone can possess a flossing box off the rack; but the Pixie Dental Floss Dispenser is truly a mark of distinction. Those who own a Pixie are apart from the rest, ahead of the crowd...(Buzzer)

Johnny: Sorry to have to interrupt, Billy, but the debate must now go to Eric.

Eric: It's pathetic for one to gain self-esteem through what he possesses. I quote from the great Eastern philosopher, Hu Shih: 'The civilization under which people are restricted and controlled by a material environment from which they cannot escape, and under which they cannot utilize human thought and intellectual power to change environment to improve conditions, is the civilization of a lazy and non-progressive people. It is truly a materialistic civilization.' I'm sorry to say that this applies to American society today. (A silent pause, and then the buzzer sounds.)

Johnny: A tough act to follow, Billy; take it away!

Billy: I think it's outrageous the way my opponent has been slandering American people and their fine society. I don't think his Eastern philosophies are worth sawdust... (Buzzers and sirens sound as confetti showers the characters)

Johnny: Yes folks, our magic word for this evening is sawdust. This evening's protagonist, Mr. William Henderson, Jr., from Cincinnati Ohio, is our automatic winner. (Billy is jumping, and screaming and hugging and kissing Mr. Shine. Eric assumes the role of a good loser)

You've both won an eternity as displays for new Mr. Gleem, the floor wax which won't turn yellow. Makes mopping up easy. Don't scrub, Mom, use new Mr. Gleem. (Loud applause and commotion while Billy is overwhelmed with winning. Voice over the P.A. system as applause and noise continue)

Sue Rubin
A PARKED CAR

I follow my dog across the street to a car its frosted windows rolled shut exhaust fogged brake lights fraying night. I open the front door and a snow pale hand slides from a man's lap to the ground his eyes fixed on the radio.

Reading "empty" I turn the key and hear the dog whine his nose brushing the man's wrist.
Voice:  Mr. Shine's outfit furnished by Dressright of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Buy-Rite Utopia cannot be held responsible for the performance of any of the products mentioned on this evening's show. (Fast Curtain)

Scene IV

The aisle of Buy-Rite. This time Eric, with mop in hand, is pictured on a large glossy placard holding a bottle of Mr. Gleem, a lace white apron, and a large smile. Billy is a revolving display in which he is embracing a pretty girl. On the other side there are bold letters reading: use Mr. Gleem for a happy floor and a proud husband. Among the shoppers are the fat lady and the store detective, once again dressed in his blue uniform. Billy and Eric converse without the shoppers hearing them.

Eric: All this for a set of guitar strings. For all I know, they don't even have guitar strings here.

Billy: Quit being such a poor loser and enjoy. (Ecstatic) This is fantastic. Why, think of the great product you're selling to these fine people. (Curtain lowers slowly as Billy rambles on) Making life easier for millions of deserving housewives. No more yellow floors, no more scrubbing on hands and knees....
Jack Driscoll

THREE SKETCHES ABOUT GOING HOME

I

Let's say that your baggage is full of silt
that the handles pulling off in the driveway
are the hands of your children recently gone.
Say even that the numbers on your tongue
are the addresses of empty mansions
on the Newport coast. Go on,
say it. Already your wife
is walking down the stairs, a flower
blooming in her throat. She has dropped the dishcloth
on the grass. As you bend to pick it up
you notice the pail at her feet is the pail of ink
you have emptied in dreams. You want to tell her
but she is pulling you up
outlining the field with her finger,
outlining the shadow of a horse.

II

On her dress
is a brooch you have never handled
and now you are squeezing it
in a dream. You wake, smelling its fragrance
strong in the palm of your hand.

Jon Burston

TO JOSHUA, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS BAR MITZVAH

On Saturday nights
at Aunt Ruth's house on Ridelle
we fought over the tattered grey dog
your sister Roz kept on her bed
until you ran downstairs
wailing when I punched you
in the stomach.

Later we played vet in Roz's room
examining the dog's button eyes
consulting one another's professional
opinions, assuring Mrs. Robbins
that Maggie had no distemper.

Now Roz has moved away and left
the dog behind for you.
It lies on your bed, the stuffing
gone from its middle. The red felt tongue
partly torn from its mouth
drools on your pillow.
Jon Burston

THE CINDER CAT

The cold mist of afternoon crawls
off the bogs too soon today
for any work to be done
on the drystone wall.

Crumbling, the wall persists in
the fog’s silent fury, preventing
as it did in Roman days,
the sheep from losing themselves
in the moors.

The wall itself seems lost,
its expansive borders groping
in time gas, invisible.

Only the cinder cat has eyes
to find it in this mist.
His home is the wall’s bottom
and the marshes that lie beyond.

His padded feet steal him there,
across the muddy pastures
from the house, as the field mouse
darts to his hollow in the rock.

At the house, echoes from stones
that fall to the ground
fling themselves at windows
as the cat walks the wall.

What comes to mind
watching this home movie
is the sound of the wind in each still frame.

It is spring
when you walk outside. Your father,
pruning trees in the nursery,
steps up on the ladder
and hands the shears down to someone
who is walking away
through ten years of scrubby pine:

backtracking, where the wind shifts,
lifting the pages of a book, open
on the top bunk. Your wife is asleep
on the floor, the cabin

filling with old friends.
Jeannette Flick

THE SHOWING

In early morning Lew Smithe
drives to the showgrounds,
his red stock truck
shedding paint-chips
on the parking lot.

Watching his neighbor school
a Thoroughbred with toothpick legs,
Lew unloads half the Percheron team
that pulls his manure spreader.

Steady in April mud,
the draft mare works
like a machine over water
and brick walls in hunter classes.
On the flat she backs straight,
her chin tucked. She doesn't place--
she's a hand too big for showing.

An arm on her neck,
Lew leads her past winners
with smooth ears and fetlocks.
After the last class
he loads her into the truck
and hauls her home
for evening chores.

Julia Silverman

BREAKER BOYS INSIDE BREAKER: PENNSYLVANIA 1909
(after a photograph by Lewis W. Hine)

Inside an unlit breaker
forty boys pick slate
from coal, their eyes
glare white in faces
smudged black
their clothes stitched
with soot and sweat, they turn
and stare into the flash
of a camera.
Laurie Borns

FEEDING THE BIRDS

Anchored here
in seawater
the sand fills the spaces between my toes
as I toss bread into the air
for seagulls.

Every morning
suspended above the shoreline
they wait on black-tipped wings
curving and looping
to catch a crust of bread
in their yellow beaks.

The last crust
tumbles through air
in front of a gray gull
with one eye.
She snags it, swallowing
with a jerk of her head.

My hands hang empty.
The birds begin to scatter
winging their way over green waves
that leap up
to touch their bellies.

Jeannette Flick

WISCONSIN BIKEWAY

I
Cycling over county roads
hills stretching to bluffs
we make fifty miles a day.

Halfway to Sparta two retired sisters
sit at the edge of eighty acres corn.
They show us their house
without electricity, and fill
our bottles from the well.

Miles later we help a dairyman
and his dog drive a herd
of Jerseys across the road.
He talks about milking,
slips homemade cheese
into our packs before we leave.

II
The second morning
riding on a railbed
stripped of ties, we go
blind into the tunnel
for half a mile.

At the end three does
turn from the squeak
of brakes and jump single-file
into the woods, their tails
white against the green of planted pine.
Blue
as the bruises
on our small spines
sliding down crate ramps.
Blue
as the bush
I fell in,
tripped by some
exposed root.
I cried to Grandpa,
the peat stains stung.

But he was busy.
The scales snapped
like the red bandanas,
Snapped like the branch
that whipped my father's blue eye.

All of us were there to see
his blood moisten the soil.
The soil on our farm,
five miles from Imlay City,
cracks white.

With no rain,
the blueberry bushes
shrink like old men.

There were five hundred border rows, enough for
three hot children to play like mosquitoes.
Bandanas tied to our wrists,
we stood in Michigan dust, waving down
cars before they reached the Anderson farm.

Always the red bandanas snapped
like the August fire
that worked our peat.
My father pulled
fourteen hundred
tumbleweed that spring.

Always our mouths
were full with berries,
licking peat dust
from the sweet blue.

Grandpa worked
the scales
(the say he had peat in his blood)
balancing berries
like children's eyes.

Karla Landsfeld

SOIL (TO GRANDPA)

"I know how to make this world
so peaceful and calm,
if I could only get my hands
on a hydrogen bomb."

Todd Rundgren

Make hydrogen is the answer.
We die a thousand deaths too often
and cry a thousand tears until
salt rusts and anyway I am
no longer master
of my own life but maybe
a bomb to end all bombs is
what would feed hunger. Tombs
would no longer comb the air
as the earth rolls away
from a God that could be
the sun. At least
that is what people say.
Ross says death is
only a tunnel and that we see
light after and feel nothing.
After the sun explodes
what is left? The sun is
only gas after all.

Dawn Banghart

AFTER ALL
LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER: ANNE SEXTON'S TRANSFORMATIONS

Everyone knows the story of Cinderella, who married her prince and lived happily ever after. Sleeping Beauty traditionally awoke to her future husband, and they lived happily ever after. In some stories, Little Red Riding Hood's mother marries the woodcutter, and they, too, live happily ever after. In Transformations, however, the archetypal marriage culmination pattern remains, but the experience is portrayed in a consistently negative light. Sexton transforms the old tales to reveal a characteristic lack of growth in females as the predominant evil. The reasons for this lack of growth, or repression of it, vary, but are all reflected in the marriage experience.

Sexton uses the confessional approach in her poetry, relying on self-searching and personal experience. The women in Transformations present her voice, her insight. She knows these women well, and she opens their situations to reader recognition.

Sexton's poem about Snow White is an example of marriage arresting individual growth. Snow White has "cheeks as fragile as cigarette paper, arms and legs of Limoges, lips like Vin du Rhone,...she is unsoiled." She is also vacuous and doll-like, devoid of emotion. At the end of the poem, Snow White calmly holds court, "sometimes referring to her mirror, as women do." Her marriage crystallizes Snow White's inability to feel and also maintains this condition.

The next princess in the book is a princess only by fortuity. The poem reads:

You always read about it:
the plumber with six children
who wins the Irish sweepstakes.
From toilets to riches.
That story.

Joy Worland
WHAT IS BURIED UNDER THE STONES?

In the field in back of the house
I stand by a grave,
a pile of stones thrown
from the wall at the wood's edge.

Behind me sunlight
filters through trees,
and across the flat pasture
where the cows graze on green shoots

I see a farmer against a backdrop of clouds
dragging his plow
behind a red tractor.

Is it an animal
he has buried here under stone?

He does not see me
lifting them one by one
and fitting them back
into the wall. By nightfall

I am down to bone:
the white skull of a horse
cracked like a map,
under the falling snow.
The heroine in "Cinderella" is indeed the epitome of that common story; hers is the tale of chance riches, complete with Sexton's touch of futility at the end. Devout, good Cinderella loses her slipper and passively discovers a prince, unbidden, at her door. She does not seek change: marriage, title, and money are chance gains. Cinderella and the plumber are separated from their instant wealth because there was no maturation involved in acquiring it. Thus Cinderella and her prince, their pattern of life delineated by chance, live unchanged ever after, "never telling the same story twice,/never getting a middle-aged spread,/their darling smiles pasted on for an eternity;/ Regular Bobbsey twins./That story."

The poem, "The Maiden Without Hands," presents an additional picture of non-growth, prefaced by an explanation of the king's matrimonial motives:

Is it possible
he marries a cripple
out of admiration?
A desire to own the maiming
so that not one of us butchers
will come to him with crowbars
or slim precise tweezers?...
My apple has no worm in it!
My apple is whole!

After marriage, the king rides off to war, leaving his pregnant wife with her substitute silver hands. Because of intercepted messages, the queen takes her son and escapes to the forest. These actions show growth, or at least change on the part of the queen. But, while in the woods her hands grow back, and eventually the king finds her and brings her back to the castle. Instead of expressing joy about the healing of the queen's infirmity, he is afraid: "Now the butchers will come to me,/he thought, for I have lost my luck." To insure his safety, he enshrines and worships the silver hands as a "kind of purple heart,/a talisman,/a yellow star." Thus protected from any disfigurement, the couple lives happily ever after, although the king, in his fear, forces the queen backwards, repressing her growth. This poem portrait embodies the contemporary counterpoint of the tyrannical husband whose wife must blindly obey.
In her poem about Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty), Sexton adds a new dimension: Briar Rose becomes an insomniac after her marriage.

She could not nap
or lie in sleep
without the court chemist
mixing her some knock-out drops,
and never in the prince's presence.

When she sleeps, she dreams she is ninety, and she "eats betrayal like a slice of meat." Her betrayer is essentially her father, whose incestuous love for Briar Rose freezes her at childhood. It is her father who neglects to invite the old fairy to the christening, bringing a hundred-year curse upon the castle. While Oedipally fascinated by and attached to him, Briar Rose also feels horror for the relationship ("Daddy? That's another kind of prison.") She dreads, therefore, the prince who merges with her father in her vision. The first imprisoned her. The second freed her—but he placed her in a different jail, the confines of insomnia and age.

I was forced backward.
I was forced forward.
I was passed hand to hand
like a bowl of fruit.

Briar Rose, trapped by father and husband, reflects another example of lack of growth. She, too, is "stuck in the time machine."

The last poem in the book, "The White Snake," most clearly reveals the voice of Sexton. A young man who understands the language of animals leaves the security of the castle for travel. After he completes a number of tasks, he wins the hand of a princess:

Their bodies met over such a dish.
His tongue lay in her mouth as delicately as the white snake.
They played house, little charmers, exceptionally well.
So of course they were placed in a box and painted identically blue and thus passed their days living happily ever after—a kind of coffin, a kind of blue funk. Is it not?

Until this giving up, the young man has been developing. Suddenly Sexton severs the growth, and the happy ending is not realized. In this poem, as in the others, marriage is the point of immobilization. In the previous tales, events occurring before wedlock often foreshadow the arrest of growth, whereas in "The White Snake," the events prior to marriage suggest the opposite. The marital union is the single incident that causes blue funk.

The poems in Transformations forcefully and overtly betray Sexton's personal experience with marriage and reveal her negative views concerning it. She observes wedlock as a trap that immobilizes individuals and arrests growth, and her bitterness surfaces in her poetry. Her final poem explicitly asserts the inevitability of blue funk, the thread which runs through all the other poems.

Anne Sexton, the speaker in control of the fates of Briar Rose, Snow White and Cinderella, describes herself as "...A middle-aged witch, me—/tangled on my two great arms,/my face in a book,/and my mouth wide,/ready to tell you a story or two." She tells seventeen stories, each centered upon the notion that marriage is a destructive experience for women. There are, in other words, no happy-ever-after endings in Transformations.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

John Hilliard: "It will be at our peril if we put all our faith in the measurable, and dishonor that which lies beyond statement." (Florida Scott-Maxwell)

Joy Worland: "So, little girl, when you speak greetings, when you tell jokes, make wishes or prayers, be careful, be careless, be careful, be what you wish to be." (Carl Sandburg)

Karla Landsfeld: With a sweep of her hand, she stakes a tango. "Burlesque?" I ask. (Melancholy Baby lies in the air.) Perhaps she will stop smoking cigars. (David Freihofner)

Laurie Borns: Plays the flute in the shower, her dark hair draping her shoulders. Her roommate protests.

Julia Silverman: Cuddles Golden Retrievers. Do you think oregano makes the casserole?

Jon Burston: No.

"-garig
 a Countess Furnace and an OLIVE FIG TREE on WALLY STREET (a parable)

Sue Rubin: "I will not sing the death of dog/who lived a fool to please his king." (Maxine Kumin)

Paula Smith: If she winks, don't show surprise, she'll ignore you. "Thinking is a symptom." (Hugh Prather)

Susan Glasscock: Buys Saudia Arabian opium pipes.

Roberta Kennedy: "This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy; in the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown on the altar round about." (Leviticus 7)

Paul Preston: shift in character, will laugh hysterically with no apparent cause. "The word problem implies an illusion: that this trouble I am having has definable limits.—Everything runs into everything else." (Hugh Prather)
Christopher Gilson: "Remember what peace can be found in silence."
(Desiderata)

Jack Driscoll: "Brilliant teeth promenade in rows;/spastic hands
curl into smiles." (Herb Scott)

Jeannette Flick: "Some things I want to tell you:/I still fall
off the horse./He's bigger now. I'll never learn."
(Herb Scott)

Dawn Banghart: "...how often I saw where I should be going only
by setting out for somewhere else..." (Peter Renich)

THE RED WHEELBARROW