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GYRE

VOLUME VII

NUMBER I

SPRING 1972

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FOREWORD

We are hosting our first annual Festival of Arts this year with Erica Jong, A. B. Jackson and David Madden as our visiting artists. To supplement what you may learn from these artists we have published an addenda to this issue. This magazine is small, but it contains exceptional student work which we hope you will enjoy.

RODOLFO GAONA AT LAST

*First dust devils
Torros' picadors*

*Then Gaonera's
Sculptor.*

*Plucked onto the ring
Bones' blood lubricant
Whittled and strewn
For display*

*It took all afternoon to finish.
And all they had left was the art*



NO TITLE

THREE POEMS

By Deborah K. Abernathy

SUICIDE SEQUEL

His clothes are cud in the furnace
too damp with mud to burn.

Plastic tubes suck,
spitting blood in white pails.
I pur and flush
busy myself sewing
lids closing the tight jaw
stretching lips over teeth.

I snip nails,
shave stiff hairs,
filling nicks with cream.

I press him in his box,
starched and ready.

FLOWER SHOP MOWER

I trim rugs all day
the lawn mower spits grass
on the walls.

Green rugs grow low on hardwood
floors, circle chair legs,
amputate toes.

In the back room carpet
creeps into air, prods the ceiling

Grass hides in bedspread folds,
quilts new patterns in the quilt.

I smooth it across my bed
and close the door to doze.

Customers pounding counters
wake me, eager for flowers.

Gulping air, I squirm and pant
bound by florist wires.

SPORTING IN SKATELAND

I, an amateur,
skate across cracks,
scratch boards
of the hardwood floor.

Pine lips slide
apart, grinning.
Skates thump grooves
like boats bumping waves.

Boards jerk apart with sudden laughter.
I scream, fumbling down.
They close above me and lie quiet.

Janitors push dirt through cracks
blink to focus darkness in dust.

I have shouted until hoarse,
pounding bruises on fists and feet.

Someone is coming.



DRIFTWOOD NO. I

Denise E. Divito



HOUSE FOUNDATION

Janie Mosby

NOVEMBER'S POULTRY AND MAIZE-STALK

Best of the crop
Buy here if you want to.

Milk-nosed kids in season
Dad brought them up from the back pastures

Got a hole in his boot
Tromping through the mud

If he'd a gun
He'd have shot them.



The meadow grass grew deep and rich in the early spring. Sprouts of golden rod sprung up as if a handful of seed had been thrown to the wind. In the middle of the field, hidden by the overgrowth, was a musty old, rain-mildewed mattress. Across the head of it, through the pillow-ticking pattern, was slashed "Martha." A dandelion grew from a red kerchief pocket on the side.



NUDE REPOSING

Rugene Seaton

BRAVE COOKING

Avocado please. Two dozen
Swollen peaches and a few concrete
Apples. Huckster sighed after three hours
Of watching her squeeze.

Pungent sweet odor wafting
Water mouths only she
And the huckster know
It's the avocado. Color and shape
Like a pear but a taste and feel
Its own. Unique image,
Either it transforms the others
Or reverse. But good combination
Baked in perfect order
Just right amounts, strong results.
One of these went to the fair last
Year and even in the heat
With no foil, only napkins
It stood the test.

Powerful smell, Mrs. Braille, whatcha baking?
Ain't goinna tell ya, Frank. I call't
Abstract pie but you gotta try it.

THE FLARE OF A NOSTRIL

Things are colored with meaning
"Spice of life," they say.
Hell, look at the flared nostril
Carve it of clay
Reach in, poke the darkness in.

The darkness of a nostril

God, the meaning in there.
Imagine all the angles.
It's something to be shared.
It's something to be shared.

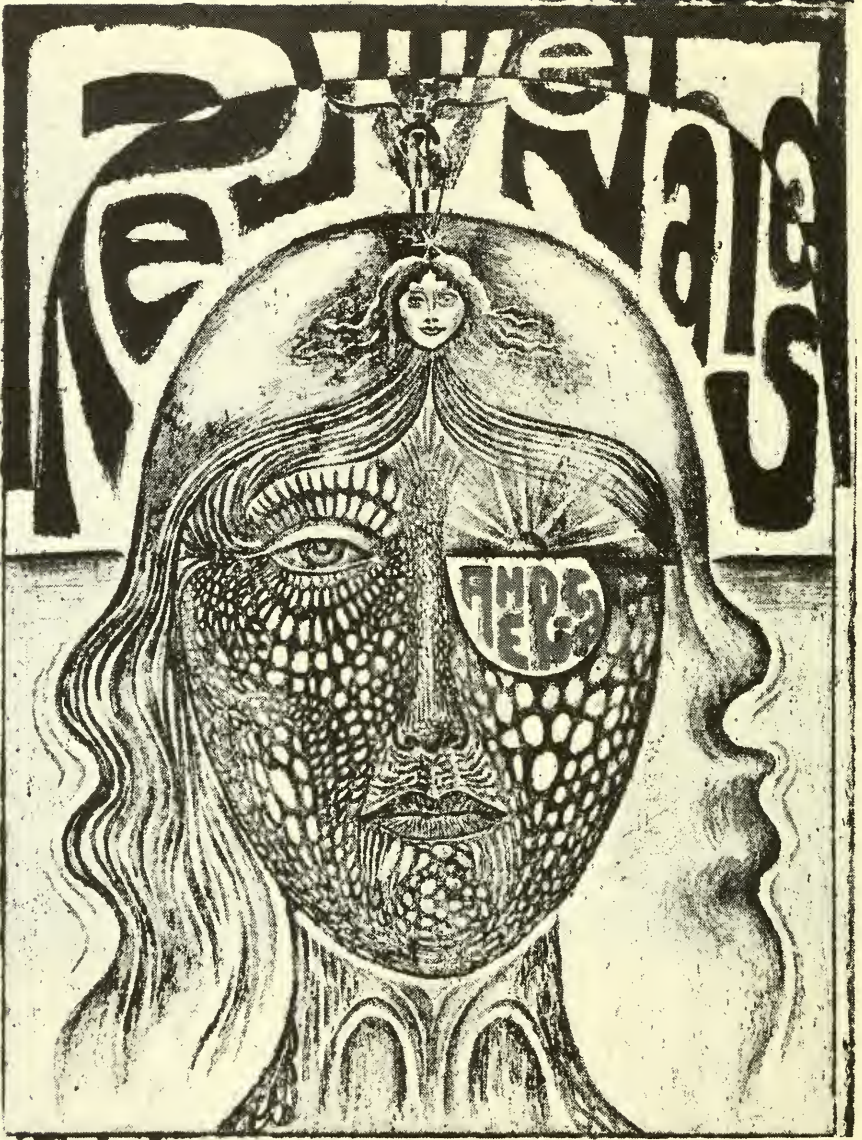
Disregard clay in the nails
Look at that darkness
And poke away
poke away

Glare up into them
The enormous holes
Only light can slam them against the wall
Splatter them there.
Glare up into them
There's nothing to fear.

The flare of a nostril.



DEATH RESURR



AMERICA REJUVENATES

Cathy Heinrich

CATCHING GERMS

To the green waterlilies scabbed over by frailty's scum,
I say: Hypertension makes youth quease.

(i want to be left alone)

The man with the zoo-faced animals has a chalkboard
And every day at quarter past one he unlocks the doors of
their cages,

Sifting a flourly box of havoc

On the strawcaked cement sandbox bathroom

And they scale past the bars

Out into the foyer of freedom.

However, they are afraid and swiftly return to their nests
Where comfort once crouched, hammerless.

Tails wagging in unison,

Eyes smiling with pain,

Padded paws clutched together, killer sharks included,
They stare in silent prayer.

The man also has a glass jaw

And two artificially inseminated children

(who are oftentimes left alone)

Wait til you hear the come on, old man.

I'll stop by your office and you can fill out my schedule

On your unimaginary chalkboard,

Since you need the company

And I need the time.

Phone my friends in advance to say I won't be coming.

And tell them not to worry.

(have they ever?)

The Preplanned Alibi: I was walking home one afternoon
when one pervert in a red '53
Chevrolet with mesmerized decals
stuck on by sun and water and a
crushed-in fender (the faith-healer

did what she could but the wound never healed) stopped the car and slobberingly offered me a bar of Snickers. I reluctantly got in, never weighing the consequences and we drove off to who knows where.

Most of them never even came to the phone.
 Some were taking showers.
 Others were defrosting refrigerators or watching television.
 I let it continue for an effective sequential ring; then, fell
 asleep,
 Left alone.
 (i want to be).

Anna Morris

JAR #I

When I was a little girl, there was an old man
 Who gave me a quarter for every inch I could grow.
 He'd flatten me against a fence post
 Marking the progress I showed.
 The coin clutched in my fist,
 I ran back home
 To scrape my shoes clean
 And pile their dirt in a jar in my room.
 My favorite words were when, then and there
 Because they were the words I first learned to spell.
 Today I'd give up every word in the world
 For the sake of when, then and there.

Barbara Kellum



AT THE ZOO

Mary Ann Bentley



CHRIS

Mary Ann Bentley

DARBY RIKER'S MILITARY FUNERAL

*I saw Darby Riker's
Military funeral
stalk by my house
on a heavy Sunday afternoon.
Saw them bury him
with guns and flags
on the vine-tangled, summer-green hill.
I saw his 1958 Dodge
the "stars and bars" peeling from the window
a grass skirted girl breeze-wobbling on the dash.
Saw his mother, a dry-eyed pine tree.
His father, the bootlegger,
would have preferred
the sudden anguish of a car blown to flames
and twisted metal on a mountainside.*



Said on news yesterday this is the record drought since year 1907. It's hit the whole country, but I bet nowhere's got it as bad as right here. Why all us kids have to wash up from the same little pan and yesterday Hurly got a bad whippin' just for leaving the pump run over a little bit.

Grandma warned us last fall. We were outside pickin' berries when we heard a terrible scream. We ran around shouting till we finally found where it come from. A full blown cow had tried to squeeze through the barbed wire around the heifers pen. Seemed they'd just been fed and their trough was running full with water. In her struggle she split her bag wide open and now she was hanging halfway over the gate with her face buried into the mud. On the dry cracked ground around her ran streams of milk and blood mixed together, rapidly being soaked down into the earth. Only a few hours later she died.

Grandma stood quietly by the feed shed as they carried her off. "Drought next year," she whispered.



UNTITLED

Janie Mosby

A D D E N D A

A Supplement To The GYRE



Erica Jong

The Poet As Housewife: Notes On Being A Woman Poet

Not all women writers would agree that feminism plays any part in the struggle of a woman writer to find her own voice. For me it did. But it was a private sort of feminism rather than a public one, and the struggle for self-acceptance was much more painful than the struggle for acceptance by others.

I knew I wanted to be a writer from the time I was ten or eleven and starting then I attempted to write stories. The most notable thing about these otherwise not very memorable stories was that the main character was always male. I never tried to write about women and I never thought anyone would be interested in a woman's point of view. I assumed that what people really wanted to hear was how men thought women were, not what women themselves thought they were. None of this was quite conscious though. I wrote about boys in the same way a black child draws blonde hair (like mine) on the faces in her sketch book.

It may also be relevant to point out that until I was twenty or so, all the characters I invented had WASP names - names like Mitch Mitchell, Robert Robertson, Elizabeth Anderson, Bob Briggs, Duane Blaine. Names like you see in school readers. None of the

kids I grew up with had such names. They were all Weinbergers and Hamburgers and Blotniks and Briskins and Friskins. There were even some Singhs and Tsangs and Kwombehs and Bielovouchics. There were even some McGraths and Kennedys and McCabes. The Mitchells in my high school class could be counted on the digits of one severely frostbitten foot, or one leprous hand. But there they were in all my stories.

I spent my whole bookish life identifying myself with writers - and nearly all the writers who mattered were men. I could scarcely even imagine a woman as an author. Even when I read Boswell, it was with him that I identified and not with the women he knew. Their lives seemed so constricted and dull compared with his dashing around London. I too loved word play and clever conversation. I too was a clown. I too was clever and ridiculous. I was Boswell. The differences in our sexes honestly never occurred to me.

So naturally, when I sat down to write, I chose a male narrator. Not because I was a man - or a lesbian - but because I was very much a woman, and being a woman means, unfortunately, believing a lot of male definitions (even when they cause you to give up significant parts of your identity.)

Of course, there were women writers too - but never enough of them, nor enough good ones. There was Dorothy Parker whose stories I had by heart and whose bitter-sweet verses I'd recite whenever I could find a baffled adolescent boy who'd listen. There was Edna St. Vincent Millay whose sonnets I had memorized from my mother's old leather-bound, gold-tooled, tear-stained editions (with the crushed violets between the pages). There was Simone de Beauvoir who seemed so terribly rarified and intellectual and French. There was Colette who wrote of a baffling theatrical world of lesbian love whose significance eluded me then. And there was Virginia Woolf whose style, at that point, was too rich for my blood.

Except for Parker and Millay (whom I mythicized as much as read) it was to the male writers that I had to go. I even learned about women from them - trusting implicitly what they said, even when it implied my own inferiority.

I learned when an orgasm was from D. H. Lawrence, disguised as Lady Chatterley. I learned from him that all women worship "the Phallos" - as he so quaintly spelled it. I learned from Shaw that women never can be artists; I learned from Dostoyevsky that they have no religious feeling; I learned from Swift and Pope that they have too much religious feeling (and therefore never be quite rational); I learned from Faulkner that they are earth-mothers and at one with the moon and the tides and the crops; I learned from Freud that they have deficient superegos and are ever "incomplete"

because they lack the one thing in this world worth having: a penis.

I didn't really become an avid reader of poetry until college. The modern poets I loved best were Yeats and Eliot, and Auden and Dylan Thomas. Diverse as they were, they had in common the assumption of a male viewpoint and a masculine voice, and when I imitated their work I tried to sound either male or neuter. Despite Emily Dickinson, poetry, for me, was a masculine noun. It came as a revelation to me to discover contemporary women poets like Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, and Denise Levertov, and to realize that strong poetry could be written out of the self that I had systematically (though perhaps unconsciously) repressed. And it was not until I allowed the femaleness of my own personality to surface in my work that I began to write anything halfway honest.

Because of my history I think women poets have to insist on their right to write like women. To do otherwise is to deny their identity and the denial of identity is the one thing an artist can't afford. Where their experience of the world is different, women writers ought to reflect that difference. Without militance, without defiance, they ought to feel free to write about everything from pickling peaches to menstruating. You ought to feel free to write about erotic experiences. Too many descriptions of female sexuality (from *Fanny Hill* to *Lady Chatterley*) have been written by men and too many women have grown up measuring their own experiences against the ones described in books by men. But most important, our definition of femininity has to change. As long as femininity is associated with ruffles and flourishes and a lack of directness and honesty, women writers will find it hard to explore their own femininity.

When I was in college, I remember listening (and growing increasingly depressed) as a visiting writer went on and on about how women couldn't possibly be authors. Their experience was too limited, he said. They didn't know blood and guts and sadism and war and puking in the streets and fucking whores, he growled. At the time this silly cliché made me miserable. How could a girl hope to be a writer unless she had a history more lurid than *Moll Flanders*? (It never occurred to me then that this let out most men too). It was the old Hemingway-Miller-Mailer routine. The writer as tough guy. The writer as Tarzan crossed with King Kong. Naturally if you believed that machismo garbage, you had to believe that (most) women couldn't be authors. And certainly women who liked children and knew how to cook were excluded. And certainly men who had empathy with women were excluded too.

A few years later, when I got to know Neruda's elemental odes, and Ponge's prose-poems about soap and sea-shells and oysters, and William Carlos Williams red wheelbarrow, and Gary Snyder's essay about the poet as tender of the earth house-

hold, I was able to reconsider the relationship between the poet and the housewife and find them far more congenial than I'd been led to believe. The trouble with the phallic-warmongering-whoring image of the damned, doomed artist was not only that it so often backfired (literally in Hemingway's case, figuratively in the case of others), but that it was essentially so destructive and so false. It came out of a sensibility which can only be called imperialist: man against nature and man against women. What was needed was a different concept of potency (and poeency) and a different concept of the artist. Perhaps all artists were, in a sense, housewives: tenders of the earth household. Perhaps the female sensibility had never been more needed. Besides, it was the inner experience, not the outer one which was crucial. One of the things which makes a poet a poet is the ability to see the world in a grain of sand or eternity in a wild flower (or an onion). As Valery says: "It is with our own substance that we imagine and create a stone, a plant, a movement, an object: any image is perhaps only a beginning of ourselves."

I think that as we become more aware of the deep relationship between poetry and ecology, we will begin to revalue the female sensibility in poetry. We will value the descent into the female darkness (as many ancient civilizations did) rather than to reject it.

But if there's too much male chauvinism in poetry and in the world of poetry, the answer to it is not female chauvinism. Beyond the initial freedom women writers need (of allowing themselves to write like women) there's the greater goal of the mature artist: to become artistically bisexual.

Virginia Woolf points out that the process of developing as an artist means at some point transcending gender. It means having empathy with both sexes, partaking of both halves of humanity and reconciling them in one's work.

This image of the artist reminds me of those African Votive figurines which have breasts, a pregnant belly and a penis. I think of Leopold Bloom giving birth, of Orlando changing sexes with the centuries. I think of the poet as a kind of mental hermaphrodite or as a shaman who exploits sexuality in order to go beyond sexuality. The connection between sex and poetry is, of course, intimate. They are both forms of intense energy. They connect and correspond. The relationship between the poet and the Muse is a sexual relationship in which it is impossible to tell who is fucking and who is being fucked. If sex and poetry are often seen by dictators as subversive activities, it's because they lead to the knowledge that you own your own body (and with it your own voice) and that's the most revolutionary insight of all.



A. B. Jackson



I did this drawing following a four month stay in Mexico in the winter of '66. Working with head and figure drawings has been a long-time habit with me and I was particularly moved by the strength of the Mexican peasant features.

I chose the Tondo or round format simply because the problems of controlling the round shape is unlike those problems associated with the rectangular shape.

The drawing was started with large, loose ^{stipia} washes working from light to dark.

The natural color of the paper was left for my lightest areas.

Ink + chalk were used for the final strong darks.

The drawing is now in a private collection.

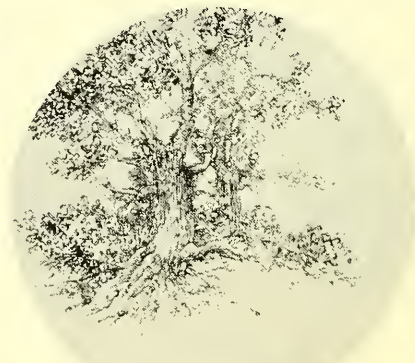
While this painting bears no relation to the thematic series of Porch People, it is included here to show another facet of this artist's fine sensitivity



VERONICA'S VEIL OIL 36 X 36
Top Award, Virginia Beach Boardwalk Show, 1966
 Collection, Longwood College
 Dabney S. Lancaster Library



STUDY CHARCOAL
 38 x 44
 Collection, Dr. and Mrs. F. Herman



TREE TONDO
 INK 10 3/4



David Madden

On Story Telling

As I look back at the writing of *Cassandra Singing*, play, novel, and film, I am fascinated to see the extent to which early influences upon me of movies, radio plays, country music, comics, and other forms of mass media and popular culture are not only reflected in the work, but are incorporated organically into the lives of my characters; and I am interested to see how a particular popular culture medium thrives best in each of the forms *Cassandra* has taken. Each media in which I explored *Cassandra's* possibilities made its own special demands for changes and revisions. With James Joyce as a model, I have always aspired to high art, but I see now I have taken my generating energy and impulses from folk and popular forms.

One major reason why I have written this story in two forms simultaneously for over 15 years (while writing many other things), all the time anticipating writing it in a third—the movies—is that since age three, I have been acutely receptive to media; and I've been unusually eager to assert myself, impose myself on audiences—the distinctly different audiences each of the media creates. Like my older and younger brothers, I am a natural born con man. While they take his money (which has a limited appeal for me), I thrive on conning a man out of his own consciousness for a time. To get at audiences, to captivate them, I have worked, written, or taught in nearly all media.

The first voice I can remember was that of the Homeric scop: my grandmother, looking, I often thought, like Wallace Beery, telling me a story about an old man who used the money his wife saved for their twelve children's Christmas presents to buy himself a handsome tombstone. In winter, my grandmother sat with her feet

on the fender of the warm morning heater, in summer, on a quilt in the grass. Firelit rug, moonlit grass—both were magic carpets. Her voice was like the sound track of a movie, and as she gestured, her body was like a stage.

At age four, I began to pass my own version of my grandmother's stories—along with my renditions of the adventures of Buck Jones and Zorro (accompanied by throaty simulations of symphonic background music)—to my two brothers, curled under the quilts, to neighborhood kids, huddled on our high front steps, and later to classmates during recess in grammar school. What began as play has metamorphosed through many stages. The suspicion that all my writing is play in many guises delights me.

Telling stories as a child, acting out all the parts, doing all the voices, I was an actor on a stage, my spectators within reach. I sensed that my grandmother was aware of the effects her storytelling had on me, and, even as a child, I was aware of another part of myself that stood at a distance, observing the dynamic interplay between teller and listener. I have been fascinated all my life by the teller's compulsion to tell a story. And looking back, I see that my own compulsion, on one or another level of sophistication, has always, consciously and unconsciously, reached out to explore every possible medium in which to express what has always been a rich and abundant raw material. Each medium, and each genre within each medium, has its own special attraction, offers its peculiar way into the relationship between teller and listener. My reactions since childhood to media, purely as media, explain my experiences as a writer.

I share with Cassie and Lone this compulsion to tell a story.

In my stories, I try, first of all, to imagine putting my reader through an experience; I don't think of him as a passive receiver, but as a collaborator with me in creating a living experience. The emphasis may be the story line, character study, or beauty of language, but I never allow theme or message to dominate the story. People don't read stories to experience messages.

Over the years, I have learned a delight in making, as well as expressing. For me, expressing is remembering, but making results in something made which is separate from myself and is cherished by others. If you truly make a story—as opposed to simply expressing yourself—it becomes the property of other people. Writers often say that they seldom re-read their stuff after publication; they become estranged from it, dispossessed of it. The difference between expressing and making turns up in the process of re-writing. You write the first draft for yourself; although you will learn to love the hard work of re-writing, you are making something for others.

I cherish inspiration but don't trust it beyond the first draft. I have discovered that technical solutions to problems in writing can be inspiring, too. They make me see aspects of a story I wouldn't otherwise have seen. It is fallacious to think that with inspiration you can simply plug in to the muses' switchboard.

More important than experience and inspiration is imagination. I don't want to give a faithful report on real life incidents, I want to transform them in my imagination so that the story itself becomes the event; it isn't just a report referring to something else. The imagination invents. My son doesn't want me to read him a story; he urges me to "make up a story." He wants to experience the process itself as my imagination invents. The imagination at work is a form of play-play that involves a fusion of intellect and emotion.

My purpose as a writer is to make you see, feel, and think simultaneously. My unending task is to cultivate a creative vision that enables me and you to see what isn't there, to see analogies between things that are there, to invent new combinations, to achieve a transforming vision. I write fiction not to report on life nor to express myself but to transform this world into another equally vibrant world.

ERICA JONG

lives in Manhattan and teaches a poetry workshop at the 92nd Street Y. Educated at Barnard College, Columbia Graduate Faculties, and Columbia School of The Arts where she studied under Stanley Kunitz and Mark Strand, she won Poetry's Bess Hokin Prize (1971) and a New York State Council of The Arts Award (1971) which sent her all over New York on a reading tour of high schools, colleges, and prisons. **Fruits & Vegetables**, her first collection of poems, was published recently. She has published in a number of magazines including **Poetry**, **The Southern Review**, **Epoch**, **The Nation**, **Mademoiselle**, etc. She is presently completing her second book of poems as well as a novel.

A. B. JACKSON

is Professor of Art at Old Dominion University at Norfolk, Virginia. After earning his B.F.A. and M.F.A. degree from Yale University, he spent three years as a designer for an advertising agency. Then he began his teaching career in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at Southern University. The following year he went to Norfolk State College. In 1966 his "Veronica's Veil" won best in show-purchase award in the Virginia Beach Boardwalk. A. B. Jackson has won numerous regional and national awards for his work and was asked to contribute to the February, 1968 **American Artist**. His paintings have been purchased for permanent exhibit by Yale University, Howard University, Dartmouth, Longwood College, the Norfolk Museum, the Mint Museum of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Virginia Museum of Art. A. B. Jackson's most recent shows were in Roanoke, Virginia, February 13-March 11 and at the University of Tennessee. Last spring he was artist-in-residence at Dartmouth and is currently serving as part-time artist-in-residence at the Humanities Center in Richmond.

DAVID MADDEN

is writer-in-residence at Louisiana State University. Educated at the University of Tennessee, San Francisco State, and Yale, where he studied drama on a John Golden Fellowship, he has taught writing at six colleges and in many summer workshops. He is the author of two novels, **The Beautiful Greed**, and **Cassandra Singing**, and a third, **Brothers in Confidence**, will appear in August of 1972. **The Shadow Knows**, a book of short stories, won a National Council on the Arts Award. His literary works include **Wright Morris**, and **James M. Cain**, and a collection of essays on creative writing, **The Poetic Image in Six Genres**. He has edited five books: **Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties**; **Proletarian Writers of the Thirties**; **American Dreams**, **American Nightmares**; **Rediscoveries**; **The Popular Culture Explosion**. Former assistant editor of **The Kenyon Review**, he is associate editor of **Film Heritage**, **Film Journal**, **The Falcon**, and **This Issue**. His stories have been reprinted in several college text books and in **Best American Short Stories**, 1969 and 1971 editions. In 1969 he was given a Rockefeller Grant in Fiction to work on his novel in progress, **Bijou**.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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