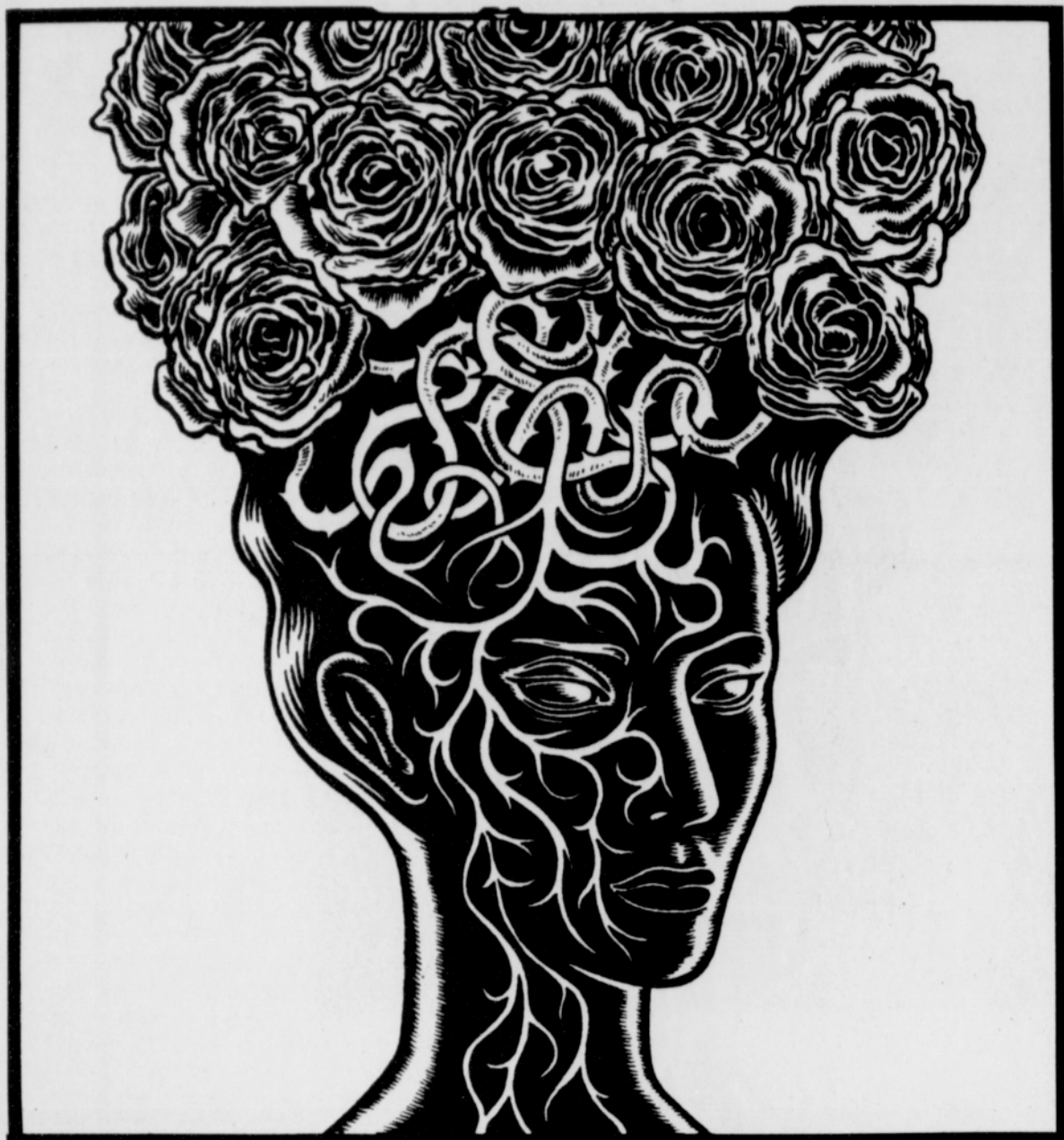




TIM LANE

POETRY

LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE, 1986

There is a book on the windowsill,
Anatomy of a Fly.
 Two hundred and nine pages for a speck creature.
 The manila envelope arrived in June, well before Indian summer.
 When sailboats still dodged container ships
 just past the river bar.
 The enclosed note said "required reading for freshmen,
 to teach studying the smallest things
 carefully." Deconstruct may be
 a word they used.
 I never read the book. It's not that it was too big or I have anything
 against flies.
 I didn't even want to try.
 I read the back cover. It has a good drawing of a fly on it.

Remember the discussion questions after the poems
 in high school English? It took time to get those out of my head;
 to get to this point where I could write without asking them.
 My roommate Emily is in the corner
 Reading the speck book for the second time. Look, I tell her,
 there is a fly sitting on my book and she frowns at me
you better read that book she says, disapprovingly.
 She will do well here. She wants to be a teacher.

Me, I don't even bother unpacking.
 I leave the book and the fly on the windowsill,
 go back to my car, point north towards the river and
 head back to Brownsmead.
 I figure I'll become a waitress.

~DEBBIE BARENDSE REED

Still beating soul
 of a broken body:
 conceived by two so
 solitary
 their dreams for now must be buried methodically
 beneath a sentinel rooted,
 generations to over-sea,
 at the land's edge.

When I dreamt of your form
 you were playing on top of the hard earth —
 head bent in the sun —
 your promise was bright against the darkness
 like the clear night running light of a fishing boat
 seen from the edge of land

Out where the sea owns every horizon,
 where the pulse of the water
 moves free wooden islands,
 there is one more child
 to call out the names of solitary fishermen
 those drifting in a fog,
 rocking sleepless in a hold.

~HELEN PATTI HILL

'Summer treads On heels of spring'

~HORACE

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING

we paint our sidewalks green. you see
 it's not on purpose really —
 once upon a time there lived
 wild and unspeakably beautiful tiny
 pieces of chlorophyll and magic —
 before there was a sidewalk,
 before Progress (with a capital P that means
 concrete and Big Ideas)
 be We came, before we needed cars
 to drive ourselves to places we don't like.
 the green shoots remember everything
 and stubbornly defy us, they persevere
 ever upward, damn them, up through
 concrete, uncivilized and unspeakably
 Alive. we persevere too, outward and
 unfalteringly angry,
 pouring Death upon them, staining the
 sidewalk green but still they refuse to die.
 they laugh at us in inaudible cries.
 it's not alive or soft beneath your feet
 but even still it's green.

we paint our history black you see
 it's not on purpose (really)
 once upon a time there lived
 wild and unspeakably beautiful
 mothers and horses and
 naked babies, before there were
 boundaries to be defended,
 before War (with a capital W that means
 fucking blood burnt crops and children dead)
 before We came, before we needed land
 to build boxes upon and fill with
 things that we don't need.
 our history remembers everything
 and stubbornly defies us.
 it perseveres ever upward, damn it,
 up through schooling uncivilized and unspeakably
 Raw, inward and unfalteringly angry,
 pouring Death on ourselves,
 leaving the young ones lost but
 they refuse to forget entirely (damn them).
 we laugh at ourselves in ironical gasps,
 it's not alive or meaningful
 but even still it's here.

~TERESA BARNES

what we've got in this world and
 what we haven't
 have come to odds again —
 oh — that crackling paint and those sky-filled roofs like some surrealist tomb;
 fields of crisp daisies blinking at the sun
 and curled fiddlehead burnt from the shade; it smells like
 rot and more like humankind:

come now; we can't all be poets

~MARGIT BOWLER

BAPTISM

They named you Ophelia, a lovely liquid name,
 though they didn't know what it meant.
 And when your hair was long enough to float,
 they found a tall thin man of God
 to hold you under the waters of a muddy stream
 until you knew that sin was not to be trifled with
 but sanctity made the chest ache and the breath come hard.

Ophelia, sent harshly into the universal nunnery,
 expand your lungs, braid up your streaming hair.
 Swim harder away.

~ELIZABETH HOBBS

you married a physicist
 but you couldn't marry the physics.
 he'd come home late (doing research
 work at a particle accelerator) and you could tell
 he'd been eating the numbers again. no,
 you suspected no 'other woman'
 (as counselors put it), but you
 begged him to come home on time
 just for your anniversary, just once
 he might, and when he walked in at six thirty
 and you squeezed in to your cocktail dress and
 the lights dimmed down way low (the room
 smelling like candles) and some champagne and roses on the table,
 you asked why he couldn't have at least made the effort.
 those elementary particles
 shadowing you in that little dress, hair primped and skin
 freshly exfoliated, nails finally painted a sticky red.
 'love,' he said looking at you,
 'just let it go, and he kissed you (but his breath
 smelled like mathematics.)'
 'you're like an electron anyway,
 you're so damned negative.'

~MARGIT BOWLER

FIRST LOVE

They say
 the first love's most important.
 That's very romantic,
 but not my experience.

Something was and wasn't there between us,
 something went on and went away.

My hands never tremble
 when I stumble on silly keepsakes
 and a sheaf of letters tied with string —
 not even a ribbon.

Our only meeting after years:
 the conversation of two chairs
 at a chilly table.

Other loves
 still breathe deep inside me.
 This one's too short of breath even to sigh.

Yet, just exactly as it is,
 it does what the others still can't manage:
 unremembered,
 not even seen in dreams,
 it introduces me to death.

~WISLAWA SZYMBORSKA

FULL FLOWER MOON

The moon develops the earth, and prints it
 platinum, the sky's gray a bit bluer,
 barely distinct against the stars.
 "Full Flower" they call this moon
 when people noticed degrees
 of bloom, but there was little
 but blooming to notice, and all the blossoms
 opened in their proper time.
 High over the fields, the radio signal
 winks its red eye, competing, knowing
 where the Northway stretches its coils.

The valley stretches from here out
 as if it would never close, the land
 still breathing through mouths of clover
 and vetch. Beauty is this openness:
 your hand that won't turn against me,
 the width of your untroubled cheek,
 the pollen of lashes fanning across.

We drive out the old haytrack, buoyed
 by alfalfa and light, the scent of thyme
 released by crushing, the lollop of hills
 running parallel, each taking eons
 to move into its own shape. So surrounded,
 we try to say what beauty is, or makes —
 our standing awed together here, inundated
 by space and shadowless light. And how
 when something stretches so open and limitless,
 someone who feels himself made small
 in comparison will itch to enter,
 place his mark on a body so trusting, so
 unsuspecting, he thinks it will be easy
 to make it his own size, as the red eye
 gives him its blessing, more constant
 than the moon, but bringing nothing to flower.

~JOAN ALESHIRE