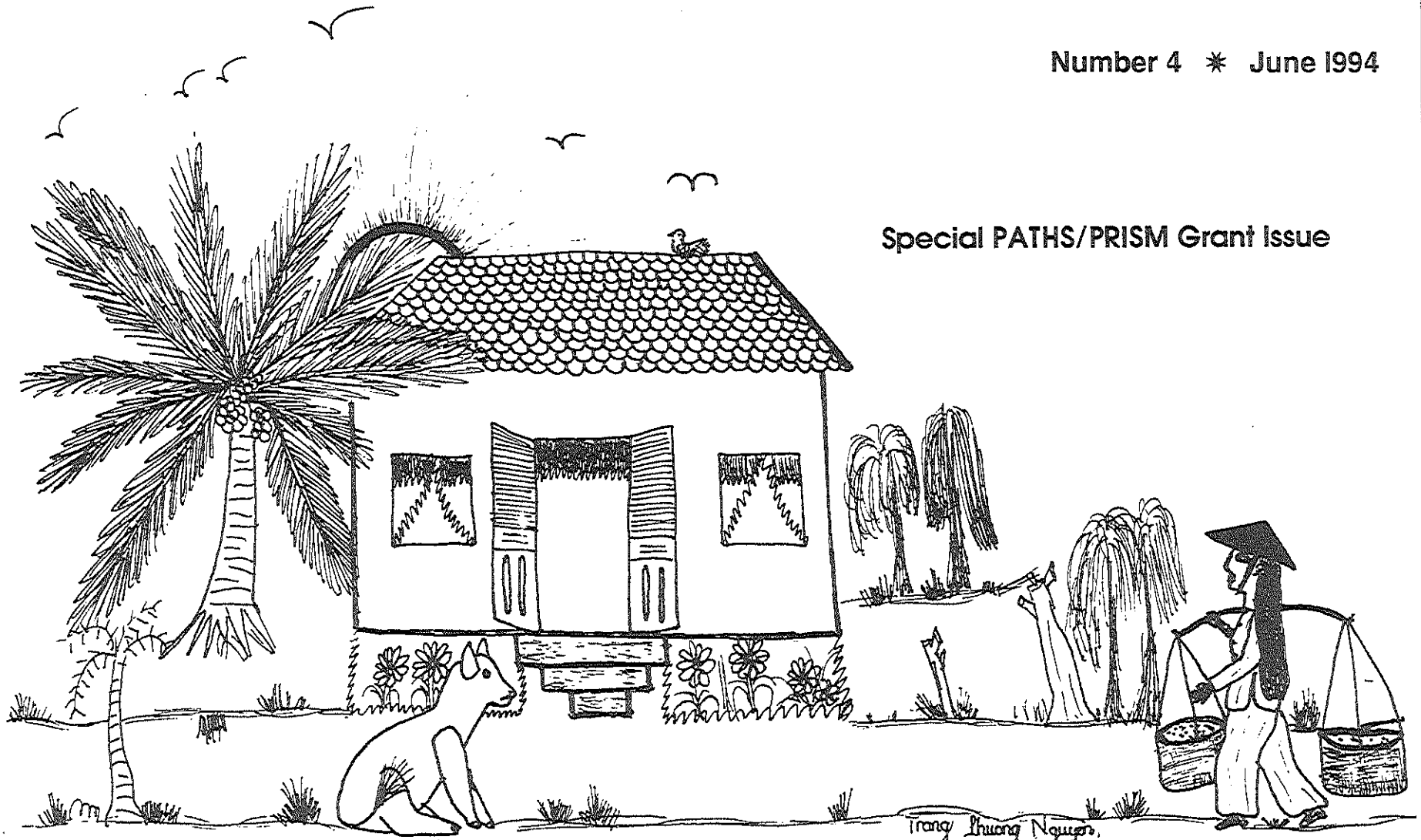


In A New Voice

Poems of University City High School ESOL Students

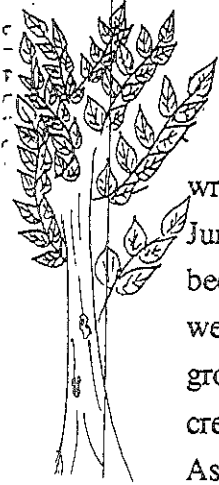
Number 4 * June 1994

Special PATHS/PRISM Grant Issue



Trang Luong Nguyen

To the Reader



"In a New Voice," a magazine containing poems written in my advanced ESOL classes, has appeared each June for the last few years. This year was different, though: because of a grant I received from PATHS/PRISM, we were able to hold live readings by poets of various ethnic groups. These stimulating events, and the atmosphere they created, helped inspire the students' own creative efforts. As the year went on, even many of those who had started out tentatively took giant steps toward becoming poets.

It's not easy to write poetry in a language you haven't grown up with. But those who are up to the challenge reap rich rewards: finding just the right word or structure to express a deep feeling, a distant memory, or a subtle perception can be a powerful experience -- not just emotional and aesthetic, but pedagogical as well.

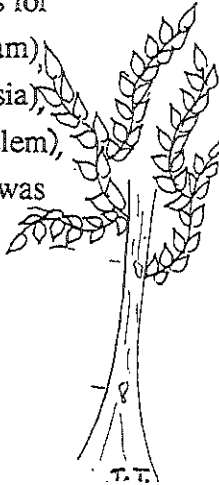
For adolescents everywhere, poetry is as natural as breathing; and as long as it is valued and encouraged -- and above all, shared -- they will continue to write it, discovering valuable new dimensions of experience in the process. These young people are no different. They responded to the inspiration provided by our visiting poets by opening their eyes, their memories, and their hearts in order to reveal to you, the reader, who they are and what they've experienced. Much of this consists of those perceptions of self and others which can be so amazingly keen in adolescence -- and of course, the tumultuous emotions that go with the territory.

I think you'll also find, though, that these young people are truly "the brief and chronicle of our time" in a way that CNN and Newsweek can never be -- for they and their families have experienced first hand many of the wars and struggles that have defined recent history.

So, read these poems! Though they vary a lot in sophistication, you will find most of them quite rewarding. And after you've read, share them with others -- especially the young. It's just possible that as a result, someone may look at a non-native American classmate in a different way -- maybe even pausing to wonder what it was like for her growing up, what she's seen, what the world is like through her eyes. Always bear in mind that, in the words of storyteller Rex Ellis, "it's really hard to hate someone whose story you know."

Finally, I would like to thank PATHS/PRISM for making possible both the readings and this expanded issue of the magazine, as well as the following excellent poets for so successfully inspiring our students: Lin Dinh (Vietnam), Catalina Rios (Puerto Rico), Valentina Sinkevich (Russia), Aschak (Trinidad), Abd-al Hayy Moore (American Moslem), and Henry Kapenstein, a late Jewish poet whose work was read by his wife Dorothy of PATHS/PRISM.

Claudia Gellert Schulte
University City High School
School District of Philadelphia





Distant Lands Recalled



The Farm at Evening

There was a rice field
 full of rice, grasses,
 people and cows, too.
 A little river beside it
 with many boats landing.
 A pond with many kinds of fishes
 and some snakes.

I liked the rice field
 in the early morning and early
 evening;
 it made me feel happy.
 In early morning
 I heard the crowing of the cock,
 and the birds singing.
 When the evening came
 I liked to look at the sky;
 it was covered with red
 before the sun set.
 Birds flew low to the ground.
 Kids let their kites fly on the wind.

Night time was a great time,
 the sky full of stars and the full moon.
 Because it was so quiet
 I heard the sounds of insects singing
 the river crying
 the trees dancing.
 The lotus smelled so good
 and the wheat's smell made me
 hungry.

Being alone at that time
 made me recall everything
 that had happened to me.
 I hope I'll get there again one day,
 when I come back to my country.

Trang Tran
Vietnam

Remember the Time

So long
 So far away
 in Africa
 Not even dreams alive

For someone
 who has loved ones
 far, far away
 speaking a strange Negro tongue

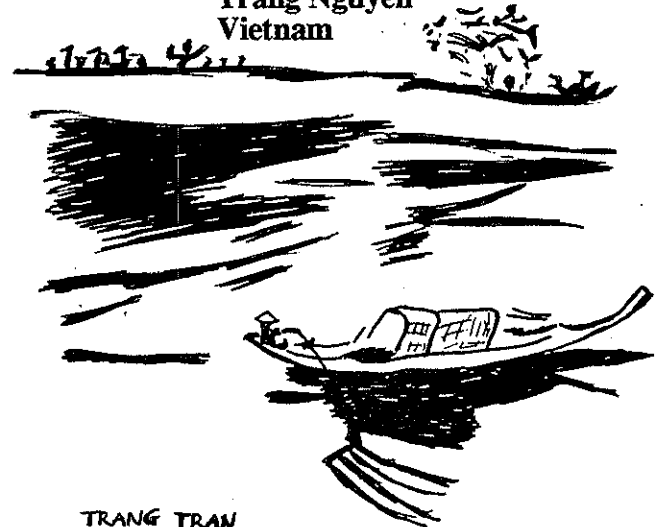
So long
 So far away
 in Africa

Abdulai Bangura
Sierra Leone

Kids

There were many people
 about my age.
 They were my friends
 as we grew up in
 the small village of Haison,
 which means "of the
 mountains and the sea."
 Every day we walked
 to the lake
 washed clothes
 and played.
 One time we were playing
 and forgot to watch the clothes;
 they flew away
 and we cried,
 scared of parents yelling.

Trang Nguyen
Vietnam



TRANG TRAN

Memory

I remember when I was in Vietnam
just nine years old
I met an old man in my
neighborhood.
Every day we went to the mountain
to see the sunset.
He told me a lot of things
and taught me how to live
in the communist way.
He told me when I grow up
I must leave the communist way
to find freedom.
I asked him why they took my house
and didn't let me go to school.
I said, "I'm a human being,
not an animal."
He answered, "That's what life
is like now."
I learned many things from him.
One day he left me and went to
a different world,
and I left the mountain and
the sunset too.

Tuan Tran
Vietnam

Poem: Culture & Life Style on the West Side

Feelings of love for
the throng of People,
Cattle, Sea, River,
the Greenness of the
Leaves/ feeds the throng
of the People/ the Cattle/
and the Animals. The Mines
developed the Nation, Input/
Output/ raw materials, River/
Energy/ power. The Heartland
area (Interior)/ power/ fire/
Drywood, the shining rising Sun/
Energy/ Plants, the richness/ of soil
produced food for their needs. The
Roots/ Stems/ Leaves/ provided
Medicines/ Curer to the throng
of people. Government act/
Reputation/ World Power.
Strangers/
Welcome/ Amusement/ Hotel/
Motel/ Friend

Rufus Weyeah
Liberia

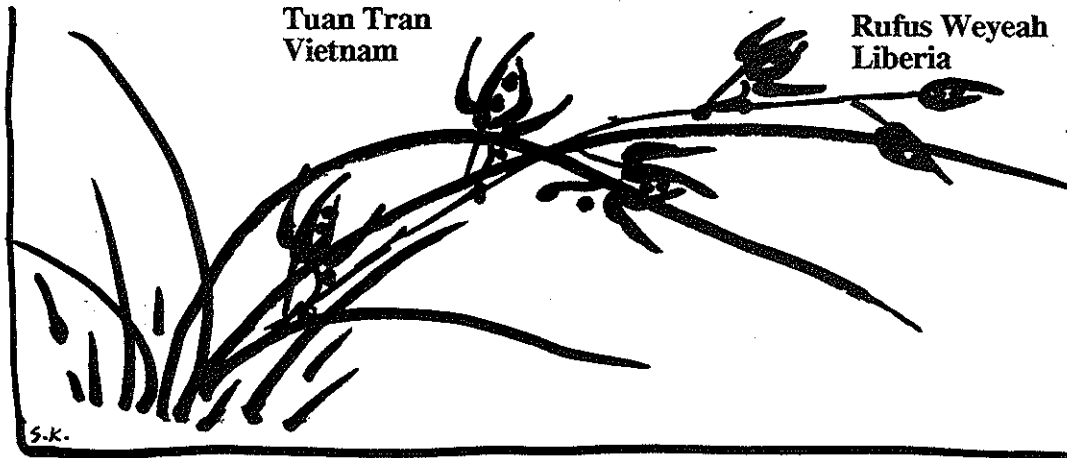
Airplanes

The time I
went into the air
I passed through the clouds
inside the airplane
without looking or stopping;
I heard the sound of the air.
Sometimes I was
swaying like a swing,
the armchair grabbing me
like an octopus.

I remembered an airplane
of my childhood
made from notebook paper
folded into airplane shape
thrown into the air.

When the airplane hit a pocket
it forced my breath out
like an explosion.

Trang Nguyen
Vietnam



The Vietnamese New Year

I love Vietnam at New Year.
I have new clothes, new shoes;
From my parents, relatives and
neighbors
Lucky money keeps coming into my
hand.
On the last day of the year
People want to make bad things go
away;
They get lucky things by burning
firecrackers.

The next morning is the first day of
the year.
Outside on the street the colors
sparkle:
Beautiful flowers, and nice new
clothes.
The flicker of colors and sun makes
your eyes close.
I can't believe this wonderful day --
The sunshine, blue sky, green leaves
The colors of the flowers.
Bicycles keep moving;
Noise of music and firecrackers
keeps going.
Some people just stay home
And eat fruit preserves.

Duyen Do
Vietnam

Africa! Where Are We Now?

Africa! where are we now?
Are we going forward or backward?
Are we still going to be called
"third world?" Are we still
going to be called "sleeping dog?"
Are we going to sit and let someone
do the walking for us? Are we
going to allow strangers
to vacuum our land?

Africa! where are we now?

Are we going to sell our resources
for peanuts?

Africa! where are we now?
Are we going to leave our children
with anything, or ignore them
like mushrooms in the forest?

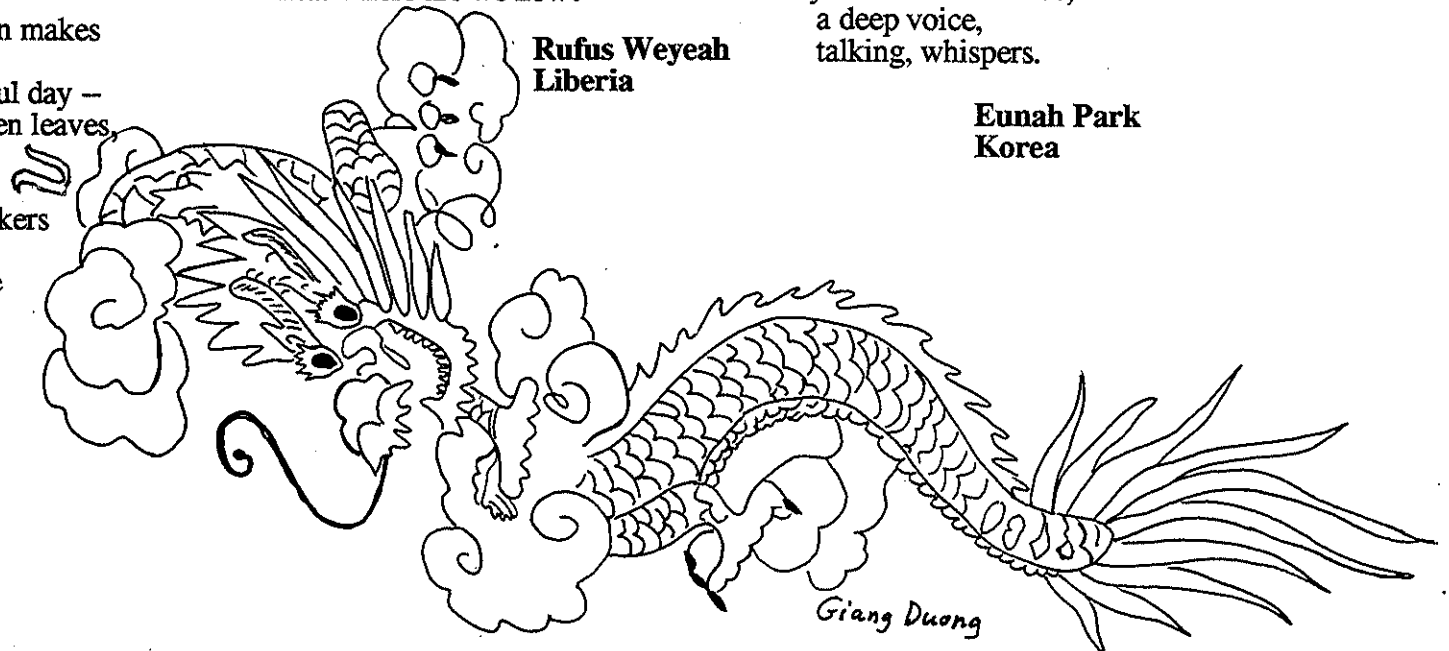
Africa! where are we now?

Rufus Weyeah
Liberia

Seoul, Korea

The night was very dark
and it looked like everything
had stopped.
As day broke flowers came into
bloom.
The sky was very high, and
deep blue.
The streets were crowded by
students going to school
people going to companies
in a hurry
people waiting for buses
a little girl running
a dog following a little girl
people walking down the street
complicated traffic
a traffic constable controlling it;
my mom's urgent voice, "You lost
your lunch box!"
my friend's thin voice,
a deep voice,
talking, whispers.

Eunah Park
Korea



Images

In the middle of the river
A shark breaks the nets,
Squeezing with difficulty;
The waves cross over him suddenly,
Like the ring of a telephone.
The water is very blue.

Holding over-ripened bananas,
A young boy is playing
His friend's voice
On a trembling mouth-flute;
The music curls, drifting
Like smoke from a factory.
The music uncurls with
The soft voice of guitar strings.
The clouds are as white as snow.

**De Thach
Cambodia**

Rice Field

Native country. I live in a small
hamlet;
It's gentle and quiet, with a large
rice field.
We work in the field and sing
country music.
We riddle to make the work more
joyful.
We make scarecrows to scare away
birds.
Our village lives in the gentle way.

**Hung-Thi Le
Vietnam**

The Hanging Watch

The watch was hanging
displayed on the wall
of an antique store
People walked by without
stopping and looking
The watch kept hanging
on the wall
I stopped and opened the door
and walked into the past
My father was far away
left my family behind
when I was ten
Then the war happened
my family moved
left everything behind

Sometimes I remember
those days of my childhood
Now life looks like the watch
hanging
it keeps going, keeps going
and can't go backwards
You might,
but only in your mind!

**Thuy Nguyen
Vietnam**

The Beautiful Islands

In the islands
the daylight is bright like
the stars

The beaches are lit up
from the sunlight, the waves
are calm

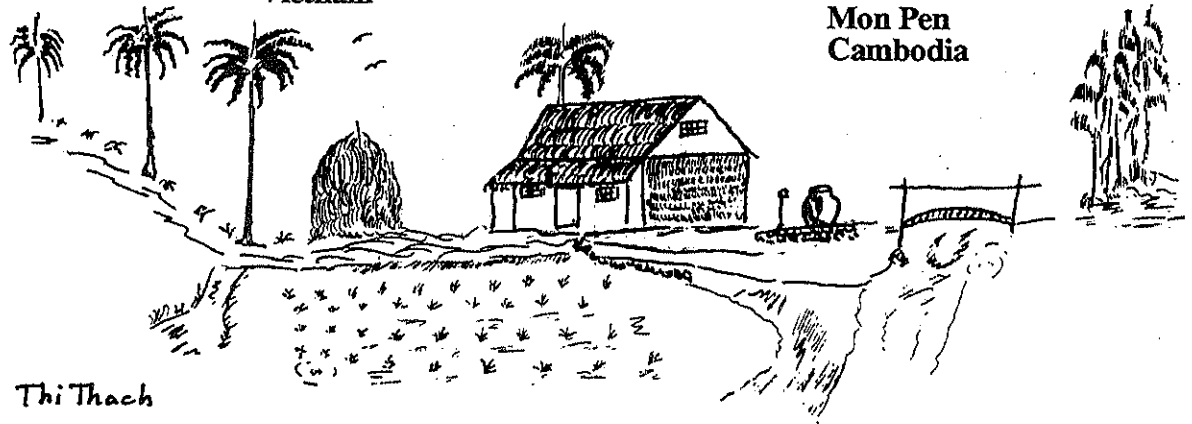
Diving from the rock
to the water it feels like
a hundred miles per hour

**Tyrone Prince
St. Vincent**

Wondering

As I looked at the blackboard
it was like I was looking
at a black hole in space
wondering
what it was like
back in my country

**Mon Pen
Cambodia**



Thi Thach



Family Stories and Memories



My Parents' History

A girl who will become my mom
Lives in that village
People make their living
By planting rice
That girl feels cold on her feet
Trembling in her heart
That girl really hates insects
Her heart is beating as she goes
To the rice field
She says to herself
She won't marry a farmer from
the village.

My father, a boy who is a carpenter,
Is always thinking of motorbikes
How they work and what fun
they are

Across the street, over the sand
With a motorbike
The boy with the blue jean jacket
And blue jean pants
Speeding, speeding
Until he chooses the right direction
And shoots away like a falling star

Duyen Do
Vietnam

(Based on "A Family History," by
Julia Kasdorf)

When Uncle Married

Celebration!
Blue sky,
Bright ground
On the green grass
A pretty woman smiled
He kissed her on the forehead
He kissed her on the hands
It is my uncle and his bride.
I can't believe it!
Oh, my God!

Please!
Don't leave me alone
Love me
Kiss my cheek
Kiss my hands
Not your bride's.

I heard the wedding song
A handsome man stepped onto
the beautiful floor
And then the radiant bride
showed up!
"No, my uncle!
Stay with me!"



Sohee Kim
Korea

To My Grandfather

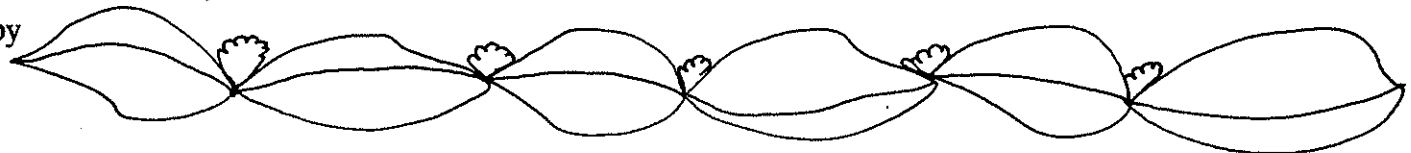
What will you
say to the hungry
boy, what will
you give to the
waiting boy

He was waiting
for rain from the
sky, the dry boy,
like a dry floor

He was waiting
and looking for
the love he didn't
have anymore

What would you
say to the angry
boy, he who was
waiting for a warm
hug

Kedija Abdella
Ethiopia



The Tears Dropped

At the pretended adult age of my father, more experienced he was than my mother. Mom, teen-aged, suffered from being pregnant. There was no medical care, both were adolescents; father had no specific destination, heavy duty operator; Mom did not know life, felt inferior to the others when she gave birth to her Junior at level four of education. She gave the two-week old baby to the adolescent-age father with streaming eyes. And that was the end of the love between my father and mother. Father raised the child to age eighteen.

**Rufus Weyeah
Liberia**

When My Parents Were Young

That fisherman who will become my father
at noon when the sun shines hard
on the ocean surface
sparkling with millions, trillions of stars
he imagines himself as a snowflake
in the ocean
as he busily catches shrimp.
The gusty wind is blowing;
he's isolated, working far from civilization
and only comes to the land once a week.
And the village girl who will become my mother
he met her amid the crowd
where they knew each other in another life.

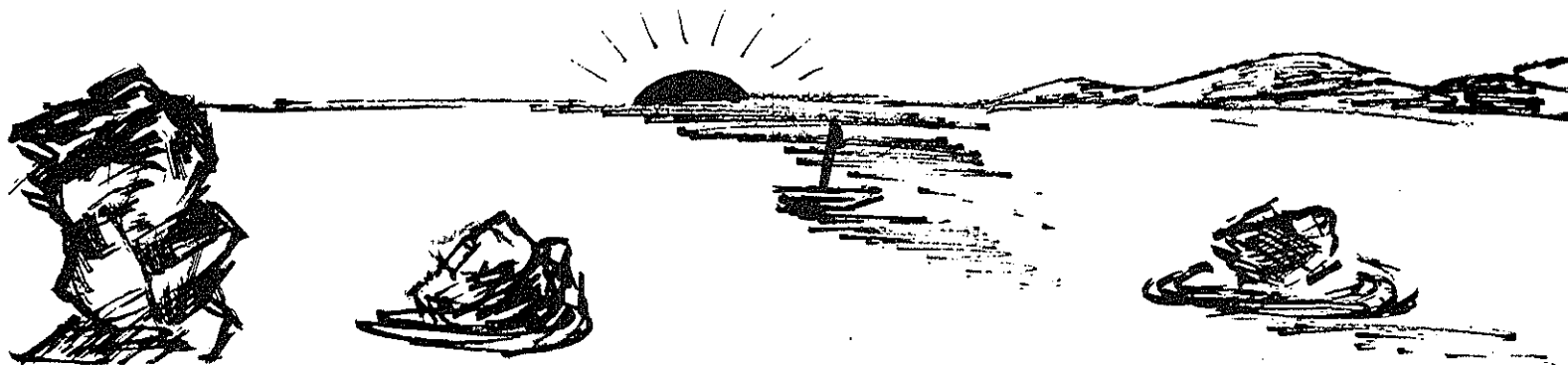
**Hung-Thi Le
Vietnam**

(Based on "A Family History," by
Julia Kasdorf)

Uncle Tu

Uncle Tu
He's skinny and has squinty eyes
He's tall like a bamboo stick
He's like a tree that gives fruit
and quenches my thirst.
He calms down my stomach.
He walks pigeon-toed
and always barefoot
His skin is like a withered flower.
Uncle Tu, Uncle Tu
Keep producing your good fruits
for I love them.
Uncle Tu, Uncle Tu
We all love U.

**Hung-Thi Le
Vietnam**



Sohee Kim

When My Parents Were Young

Always
Always
looking at their baby
they don't care about each other.

Always saying,
"Our hope, our peace"
holding baby's small hands
kissing her on the cheek;
Daddy, Mommy laughing
small baby following them.
"What's so funny, my baby?"
Mom says!
The baby's laughing again.

Parents make love and peace
in the house;
Daddy painting the roof
Mommy painting the kitchen
Baby painting the wall with
ink pen!
"Wow! Come over here honey,"
Mom says;
"Oh, my God!"
Baby's turning black with ink!



Sohee Kim
Korea

Grandfather and Granddaughter

Early in the morning
the girl saw the old man
go out to his
garden, to get
some fruits for his
granddaughter

The girl saw
the old man
hold in his hands
oranges, coconuts

and mangoes; his
oranges and coconuts
taste sweet,
his mangoes smell good

He loves his granddaughter
very much
but his granddaughter
cannot see him again
because he doesn't
live in this world
anymore

Ngan Le
Vietnam

The Smell of Rice

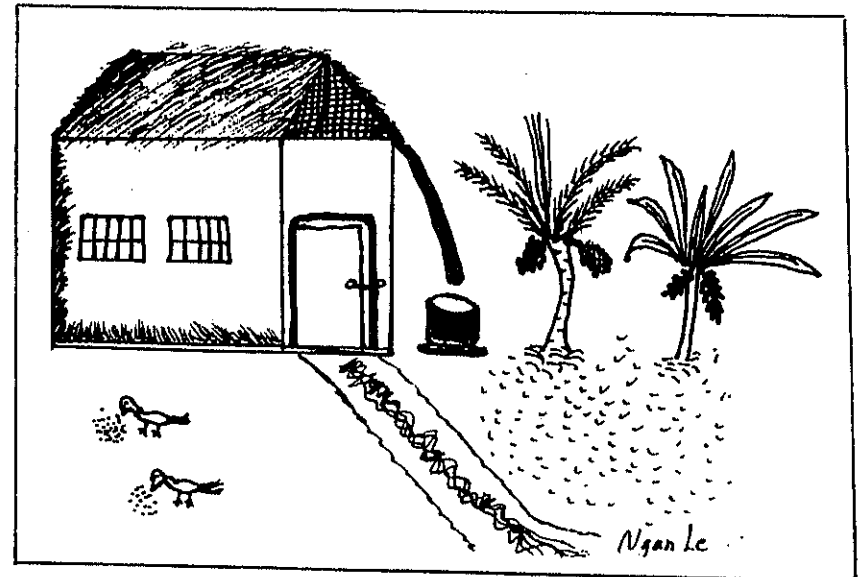
The beautiful day
smelled of rice
from Grandma's kitchen.

The warmth of the sun
like my aunt's sons
playing with each other.

Grandma cooked in
the kitchen; I sat
behind her and helped.

The wind blew the sugar cane
leaves over and over again
in the back yard.

Ngan Le
Vietnam



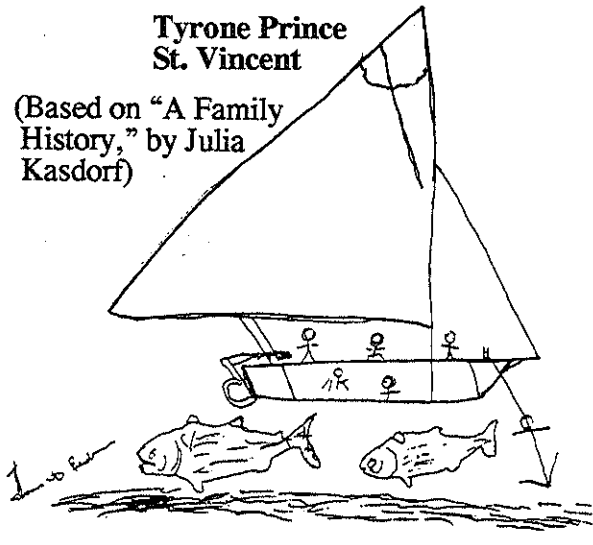
My Family

The girl who will become my mother must trudge through the woods, a caterpillar tight on her feet. In a coal-pit bed the fire burns her hand and she knows she'll always hate coal pits.

...While the boy who will become my father is thinking about rain, if it's going to wash away the trees; heading out in a boat when the waves are bad can't keep up the boat runs onto a reef In a few hours they get control.

**Tyrone Prince
St. Vincent**

(Based on "A Family History," by Julia Kasdorf)



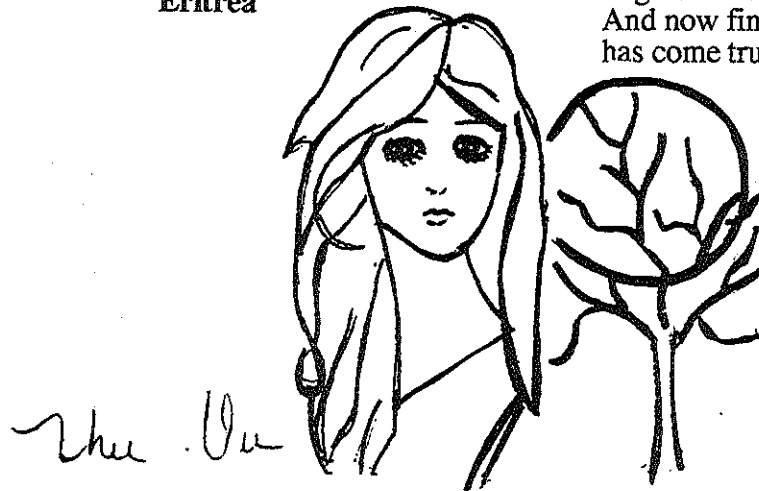
Mother and Father

I have imagined it all. In 1940 my parents were in love and living in East Africa above Ethiopia. My father owned a company. He liked to paint cabbage roses; he painted cabbage roses on their bedroom walls the night they got married.

I can guess why he did it. My mother's hair was the color of cabbage roses and she wore a velvet hat with her pajamas.

I was not born yet. I was remote as starlight. It is hard for me to imagine that my parents made love in a roomful of roses and I was not there.

**Daniel Ijigu
Eritrea**



Thu Vu

Mother's Childhood

Every day mother walked through the forest picking up wood from the ground or chopping it down from little trees with her axe. After finding enough wood for her cooking she went back home, walking with the wood on her shoulders. She told me she usually carried the heavy stuff and did all the chores in the house because she was the oldest. She told me sometimes she even played games with neighbor boys. Her dream was to go out into the city and live, And now finally her dream has come true.

**Thu Vu
Vietnam**

Father and Mother

A young man and lady
lived in the same neighborhood;
She loved to read stories
and he was a merchant.
Later on he would become
father of a child
And she'd become
the baby's mother.
They fell in love at the time
the moon went down
and the stars went up,
With the sound
of the water from the river
falling down,
Whoosh.....

Ngan Le
Vietnam

Mom's Story

A long time ago
there was a girl who would become
my mom.
They arranged a marriage for her
with a boy she didn't know anything
about.
This girl always worked in the rice
field;
at the house a pig sty was waiting.
Her younger sister and brother
played in the distance.
Busy at work, she could think of
nothing else:

"You have to marry that boy."
Her mind troubled like fine silk,
she ran over to Grandmother
and held her whole body tight.

Trang Nguyen
Vietnam

When Grandma Was Young

Like snow
Like the moon
Always smiling, talking, laughing,
and singing a song while I sleep.

When the sun goes down
Grandma carries her grandbaby
on her back
and hangs around...
Points to houses, cars, flowers,
trees, people, everything.

"Let's go back home."
Dark! Dark!
Sun rise! And it repeats...
Before anyone knows,
wrinkles appear on
her forehead;
She just smiles,
thinking how inconvenient it is
that time is passing.

Sohee Kim
Korea

The Story of My Dad

The day they ran away
from the country,
the day they reached the island,
they felt lonely for the others.

They had no food.
When he saw the others eat
he tried to take the kids
out to the beach.

He sat quietly,
looking back at the country.
He cried out, and asked himself
why he ran away from the country,
why he ran away from the family.

Then he dreamed we'd gotten to the
U.S.
He dreamed we were having a good
life
and the kids were going to school.
Now his dream is coming true.
God bless.

Duc Pham
Vietnam



Sohee Kim

Summer Skirt

Cleaning up in my room
I saw a skirt hanging in the closet
which my mom had bought for me.
I was holding it with my two hands,
with a lot of love inside my heart.
She'd bought it from
the store next door
for me to wear in the summer.
The skirt was full of bright flowers
of all different colors:
green, pink, blue, yellow and orange.
My mom told me
it symbolized the brightness
in my heart
and it would never let me down.
I really love it
and now I'm still wearing it.
Every time I wear it
a smile always stays on my face.

Thu Vu
Vietnam

My Uncle's Story

I'll tell you what I did
when I was young.
I liked dogs and cats;
always kidding children;
took dogs and cats,
made them fight.
Always kidding girls
but never loving girls.
I hated girls.
If they asked me, "Why not marry?"
I told them, "I'll never,
never marry,"
because all the girls in the world
are very, very complicated;
that's the reason
I'm still celibate now.

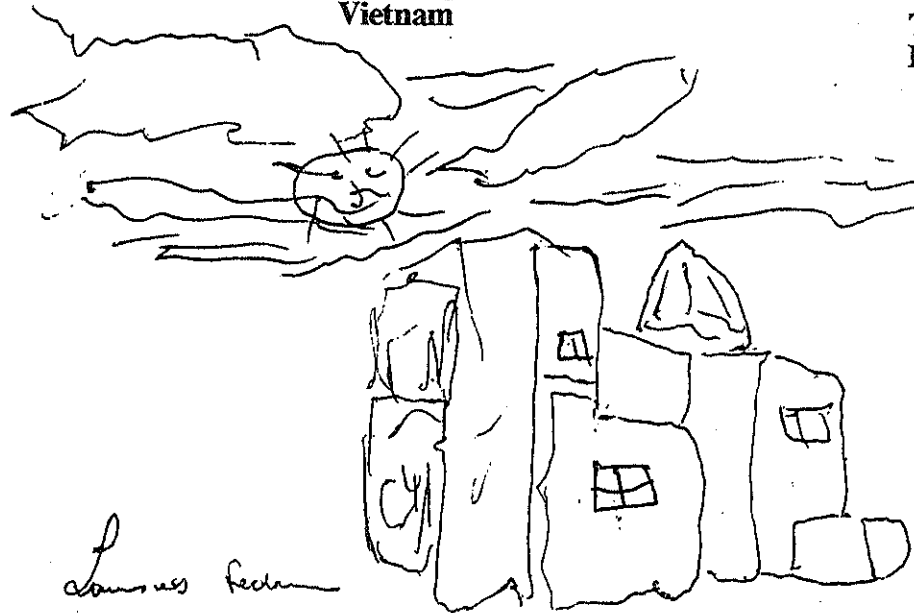


Thuy Nguyen
Vietnam

My Mother

When I was walking alone
on the street I heard
my mom's voice
calling out my name.
I turned around to see her,
but the street was clear behind me;
nothing in back of me, only
the voice of my mother calling twice:
Tawit, Tawit.
Tawit turned around real fast
to see Mom,
but she wasn't there for me.
I kept walking straight ahead.
I was crying, crying, crying.
I closed my ears so I wouldn't hear
her voice. If I did again
I'd just be crazy.

Tawit Yigzaw
Ethiopia



❁ *Love and Friendship* ❁

To The One I Love

You're like the autumn breezes
 That beckon me
 Lead me to the place where paradise is
 Past the park where the leaves fall, lost
 Past the alive desert full of singing birds
 Past the calm ocean with waves moving lightly
 like they're playing with the wind.

When we meet in paradise
 Then eternity will be ours
 You'll sing with an angelic voice
 That will make my heart ring:
 "I'll always love you,
 Forever isn't long enough.
 I'll never let you go.
 I'll always love you with all my heart!"

Hoang-Anh Nguyen
 Vietnam

Love

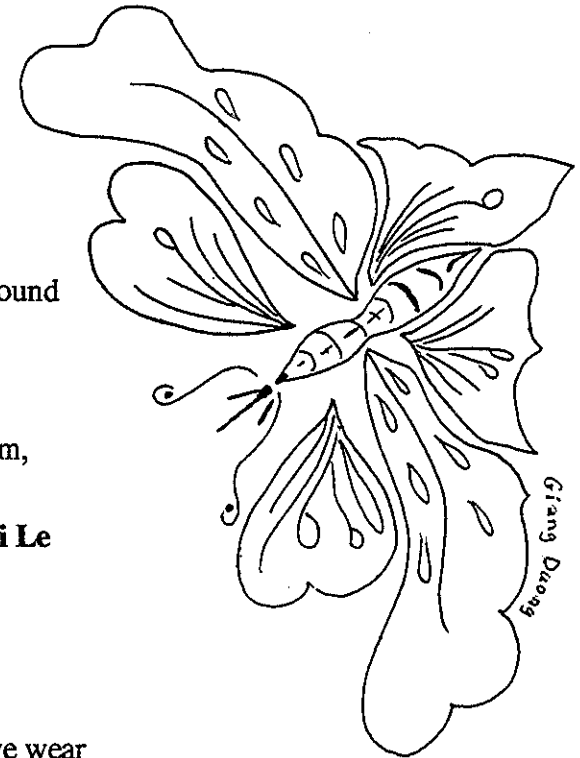
Love is like a snowflake
 that falls slowly to the ground
 Love is like a new world
 deeply dreaming, joyful.
 Love is like the sun,
 so far from our earth
 Love can be like this poem,
 ending very soon.

Hung-Thi Le
 Vietnam



Love is like the clothes we wear
 and change every day.
 Love is like a glass that can be broken.
 Love is like a mountain:
 you take your time reaching the top.

Kou Debleye
 Liberia



For You

You're very beautiful, you know.
Dark-eyed and amiable
A glance so unforgettable
There's a fairy in you.

You're very beautiful, you know.
I truly say what I see.
It is real, do you know?
I truly say what I see.

Dark-eyed and amiable
You're very beautiful, you know.

Hung-Thi Le
Vietnam

(Originally written in Vietnamese)

Into the Past

I saw a girl walking by;
Suddenly my mind went through
the door of the past.

She is a special girl.
Her hair shines from the sun,
And her eyes are like spring.
She is prettier when she wears jeans.
She eats too much but never gets fat.
She listens carefully no matter
whether it's fun or not.
That's the girl I like.
She doesn't use mousse but her hair
still shines.
She makes good spaghetti.
I don't have to think about money
when I'm with her.
That's the girl I like.

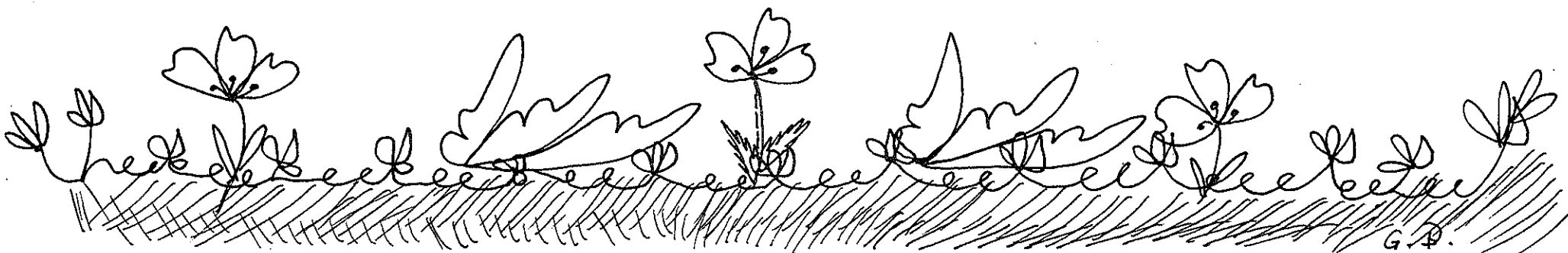
Then I woke up from the past.

Yongak Chun
Korea

Love

Love
Considered a holy power
With its magic
Stronger than water's flow,
Gentle as the lake's surface in fall.
When people are in love
Life fills with brightness
Like sunshine in the morning.
Open arms welcome you!
Though on the other hand
Love brings sadness
Crazy and awful...!
The world is ending.

Huy Pham
Vietnam

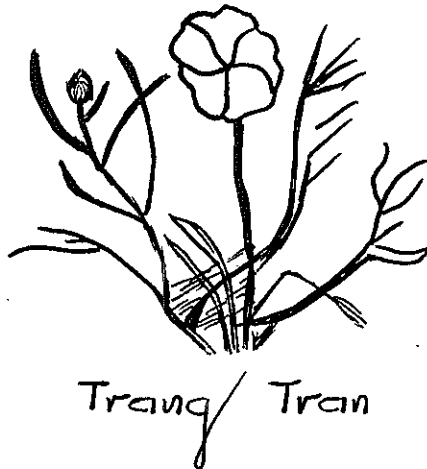


Friendship

Woke up in the morning
and stood in front of the mirror
taking out the earrings
my friend had given to me.
They were very pretty,
just the kind I wanted.
My friend is a person
who really thinks, and cares
for another person
And this is the truest
kind of friend.

Finding this kind of friend
is very hard.
This kind of friendship
you can only have one of.
So try to keep it forever.
Don't lose it; you will
never find it again.

Thu Vu
Vietnam



Trang/Tran

I'm Still Alone

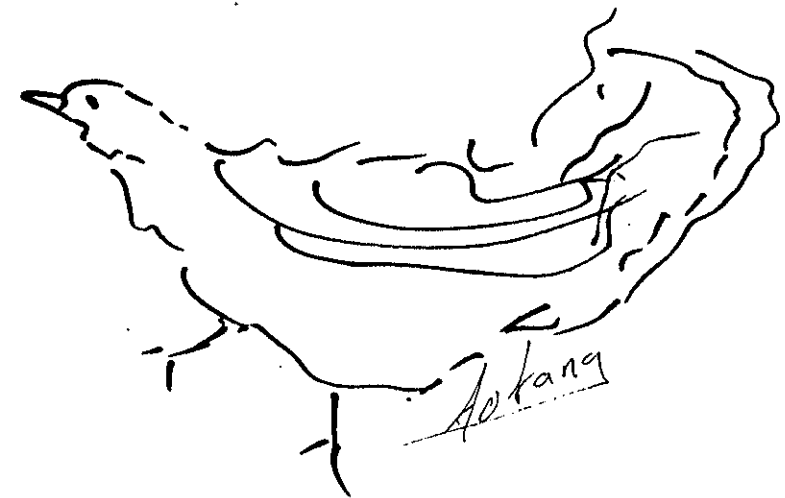
I'm still alone
whatever you are
I'm still alone
never talk about love
I'm still alone
No one loves me, no one misses me
I want to know you
but I'm so scared
I want to love you
but love is worth less than money
I know you have a lot of hopes
but I have nothing for you
Some days the sun goes down
some nights I keep hearing the rain
outside
I talk to myself, I'm still alone
It's OK with me
I'm still alone
never jealous of anyone
I'm still alone
it can happen to me anytime
Once again, let me talk about my
love to you
whatever happens to me
I don't care
Love is a dangerous game

Tuan Tran
Vietnam

A Beautiful Night

Do you remember
that time
we went together
to the ice cream store?
I always
remember that night
under the sky;
the moon and stars
were bright and beautiful.
It was the first time
we went together
and it made me
feel delightful.
I'll never forget that night;
I hope
one day I'll come back
and we'll have
another night like before.

Trang Tran
Vietnam



Memory

Gone, never coming back!
The flower shining
like snow on the ground
never came back.

It was raining softly
like snow, but stopped;
no more.

I know I'm not
going to see you
anymore.

Your memory is in my mind
but who's going to talk to me
like before the heart died
like a plant
without water.

Your respect is left inside me.
How could this world disappoint me?
The snow has melted,
no memory for me.
He's gone, never
coming back.

Kedija Abdella
Ethiopia



TRANG TRAN

Love

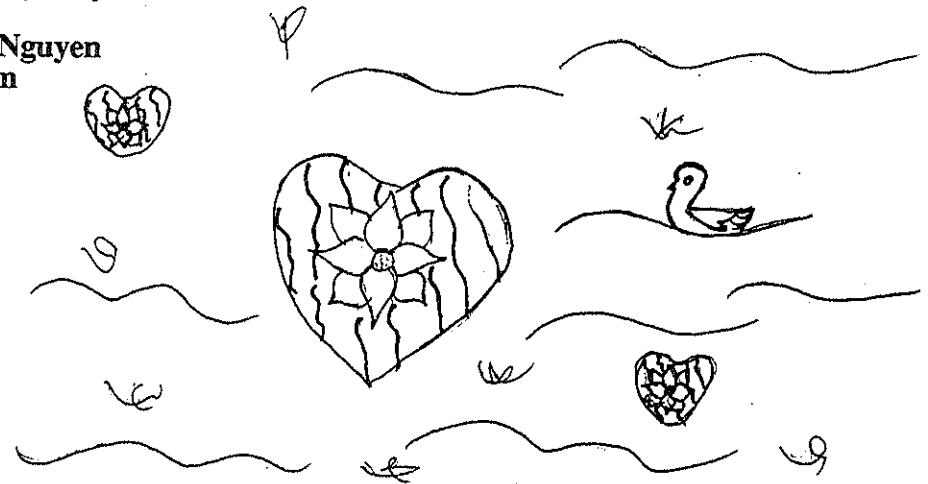
Love is like a candle that's
bright at the beginning and
dull at the end. Love is wonderful,
like an ocean that always flows.
Love is like a light
that turns on and off. Love
is like the snow that melts
when rain comes. Love is like
people, it's all over the world.
Love, what a beautiful choice.

Salmatu Bangura
Sierra Leone



love is water running forever
love is TV for everybody to watch
love is friends living together
love is enemies killing together
love is clothes you can change
love is like smoke, flying away.

Duyen Nguyen
Vietnam



Thu Vu

A Love That's True

Without hope I wander endlessly.
From the halls of my mind I call out
With no answer returning but my
own.

Through all the letdowns
And all the pain,
Beyond the dark cloud, a light
remains
Around my disappointments and
under my falls;
In some strange way I rise
above it all
To encounter happiness and
the love I need;
It's all I ever wanted and all
I ever dreamed:
To feel the love that's true
The love that comes from you.

Luom Tran
Vietnam



Pastimes & Other Favorite Things



Boring Numbers

Somebody likes poetry, somebody likes art
 Somebody likes women, somebody likes men
 And what do I like? In what am I smart?
 I love those numbers I draw each day with my pen

I draw strange symbols, I draw strange curves
 That not everybody is able to read
 They never betray me or get on my nerves
 They give me the feelings, they give me the hope I need

And under those numbers there's a hidden world
 The ideal world of equations and graphs
 It's strict and harmonious and I'm the lord
 Observing the properties, studying them using my crafts

I am moving ahead, I am making progress
 I follow the steps of famous guys
 This world is so wild but it lets me express
 My thoughts and my dreams, my laughter, my tears
 and cries

Andrei Belogolov
 Russia



The Track

Track is lonely.
 No one here to
 Show their faces
 But soon its joy
 Shall come along.

The people watch
 The race start;
 My feet are heavy,
 Then medium, then light.
 As I race, all around me
 is silence,
 which alone fills the air;

I race and come to the end,
 And I've won!
 People are happy
 and sad, and content.

Nejew Araya
 Eritrea



Pen, you're my best friend
 pen, pen, pen
 pen you'll always be in
 my hand
 pen you'll always be what you are.
 pen you are the true weapon
 you are the only peaceful weapon
 pen nothing could take your place
 you're the king
 pen, pen, pen

Seele Tsegay
 Eritrea



Sea

I like to go to the Sea,
Not just to go fishing with my father.

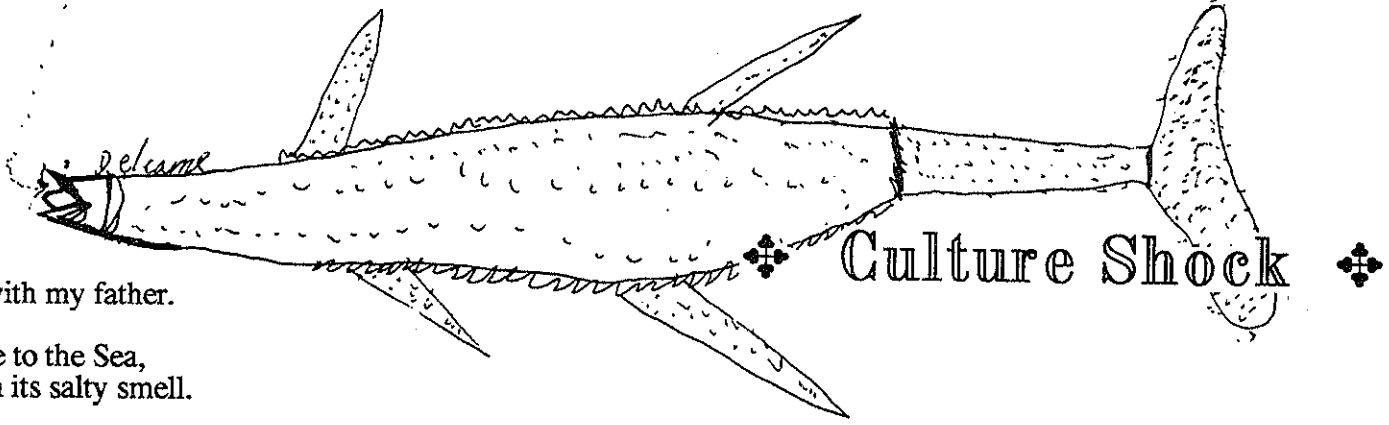
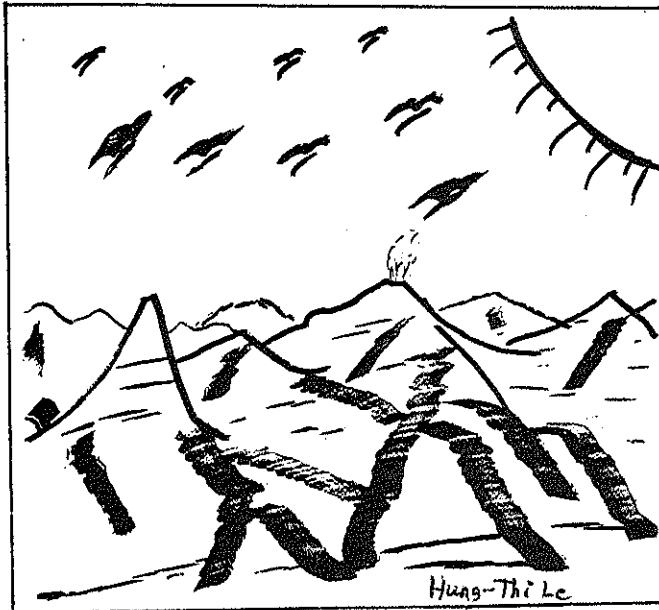
When I'm driving close to the Sea,
It tells me to come with its salty smell.

When I get there,
It holds me tightly like my mom's hug
And it fixes my heart;
It makes my heart big, so
I can think big.

When it's time to leave,
It tells me "Come back" with its salty smell,
And I say "Bye, I'll be back" with my smile.

I love to go to the Sea.

Yongak Chun
Korea



The English Spoken Here...

was very new to me.
Different groups' languages,
people's colors were very new;
names of streets,
names of things:
 bus, train, trolley.
Never knew how to get
the family to visit.
Couldn't speak with others
'cause I couldn't talk English.
Couldn't shop for food anywhere.
Couldn't find places I knew;
nobody shows you
where you want to go.
Can't cook
'cause you can't start the stove.
Can't go to parties.
Can't dance the way
they sing and dance.
Can't read when
the milk's going to expire.
Can't read numbers
on the money
they give you.

Tawit Yigzaw
Ethiopia



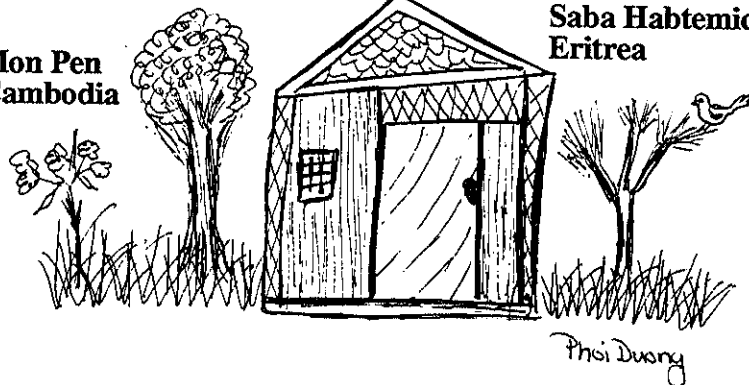
★ War & Liberation ★

Cambodia 1976

Many holes in the ground
 Bullets, guns, people lying on
 the ground
 Water was so brown
 People looked like they were dead
 Life was trouble
 Food was hard to find
 Brown water was everywhere
 People dying of hunger and sickness
 People drank the brown water
 They became sick and died.

Food was given out in camps
 People rushed and pushed to get it
 so they could give it to their families
 People were so thin and weak
 They had to work so they could get
 food to eat
 They worked every day
 Even when it was raining cats
 and dogs.

Mon Pen
 Cambodia



Camel

The most loving creature
 got into the war;
 the front fighter
 is one who cannot imagine
 his own unlimited power;
 we ask a camel's help
 for many kinds of work
 that can't be finished by human
 power:
 passing, transferring guns,
 food, people and water;
 he does what we can't do well,
 can't ask for relief.
 The camel is like a mirror
 reflecting the face of the land.
 At last the camel got respect
 and remained as a symbol of
 our country.

Saba Habtemicael
 Eritrea

Always in a War

Africa used to be a green land
 But now it has changed to red,
 Because it has been covered by
 blood.

African children are crying,
 looking for help,
 But there is no one to help them,
 Because everyone is fighting
 each other
 And killing each other.

When you used to dig the land,
 you got gold;
 Now when you dig the land
 you just get bones.

African animals are disappearing
 from their homeland
 Because their homes are burned
 by bombs and fire.
 Oh, Africa! Oh, Africa! My heart
 cries with you!
 We will be there for you, Africa.

Samual Kassa
 Ethiopia

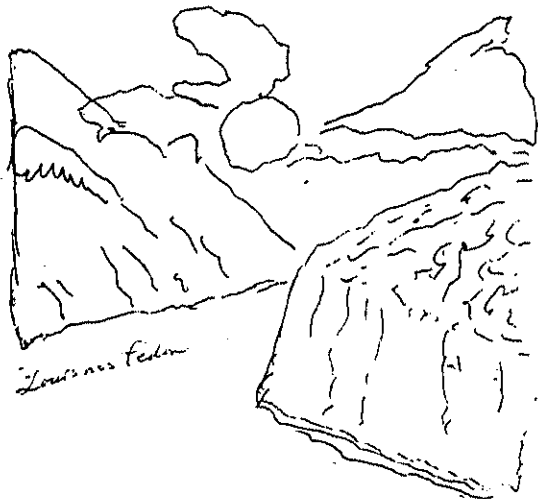
Life in Haiti

In Haiti, what you see are all wooden houses because the real houses are destroyed. And what you hear is the sound of the evil one, sounds just like thunder. People used to see all the wonderful trees but not anymore. There are trees in buckets, can't sweat because the real ones are dead.

What you smell, what you taste and eat, you have to be careful because it could be blood from all the ancient ones.

In Haiti there are no lands, there is no food, why, because it's destroyed. I don't see no peace in Haiti but I see fear, I see mercy and I see the ancient people.

**Tyrone Prince
St. Vincent**



What Was Left In My Country

The houses, cars, the trees
burned like wood
in fire

The youngest, the oldest
had lost the best memories
and dreams they had.

The dark night came
and left them without
a brain, no way to think
of how to get out
of there.

What was left in my country:
bones on streets, life
with crazy thoughts, traces of
strangers' voices.

What will be the future
for our children,
what will be the history
we will tell them?

Bombs just like stars
in the sky, the future
gone forever.

**Kedija Abdella
Ethiopia**

The Candle

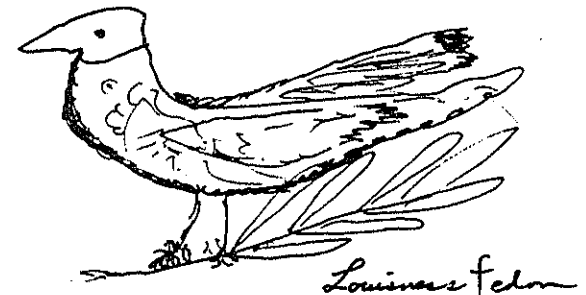
I closed my eyes;
In my mind
the waves beat wildly;
I felt pain in my head.

Stop blowing, wind.
Suddenly
a small boat is floating on the sea;
Now, I can turn on my small
candle of hope and peace.

No more war in my mind.
I'll never turn off my
candle;
My small candle
will protect my hope and peace
and I'll keep that
Forever....

Please
Don't blow, wind;
Just shine on the sea.

**Sohee Kim
Korea**



A Young News Boy

There was a young boy
whose name was
Chu Be Lun Lac;
everyone called
that name when they
saw him running.
Who knew where
he came from, which places?
Faster and faster
here to there
pressing, pressing on
escaping and coming back.
He had no home
yet he had many,
many friends, all
the soldiers.
He brought the news
from one place
to another so
everybody could know
what was going on.
No malice in him,
he was very kind;
anyone near him
was safe.
He always wore a bag
on his back
and a hat with
a tall top like
a leaf.
He was not stopped
any place,
always moved.

He always whistled like
a singing bird
and smiled...

....smiled
....smiled.

Trang Nguyen
Vietnam



Freedom Fighter (Mandela)

He kept fighting
no matter what happened to him
on the way to freedom.

He kept climbing up
no matter how many times
they knocked him down.

He got hurt all the time
but he had high self-esteem;
that made him stronger.

They put him in prison for 27 years
but still, he didn't give up
because he had faith
that no man could take
from his heart.

He didn't care what happened to
himself
but he cried for those who were
cut down by machine guns
for the color of their skin.
He fought for those
who were blinded by tear gas
when they asked for their freedom.

Freedom was too far, too far away
but he, he the undefeatable man
even though he knew
freedom was too far, too far away
from his people

He didn't give up the fight;
he kept struggling and struggling
and finally, yes finally!
things got to a stage
where his people had a right to
vote
and to live the same as
the others do.

Samson Sebhatu
Ethiopia



Hiding

I remember what my friend told me
about how her family
had run into the darkness of the
forest
to hide from the communists.
Stepping into the swampy ground
she and her two little brothers
were crying from fear of the
darkness
and the sound of wolves.
Insects were sounding
everywhere around them,
mosquitoes and centipedes,
frogs and snakes.

They were all scared to death,
scared that the communists
would find them and kill them all.
Running from them for three nights
they didn't drink or even eat at all.
Some of them were getting sick from
hunger.
But the Lord still loved them,
didn't let them die.

She will never forget those days,
what the communists did to her,
and neither will I. Even now
the anger is still in our minds.

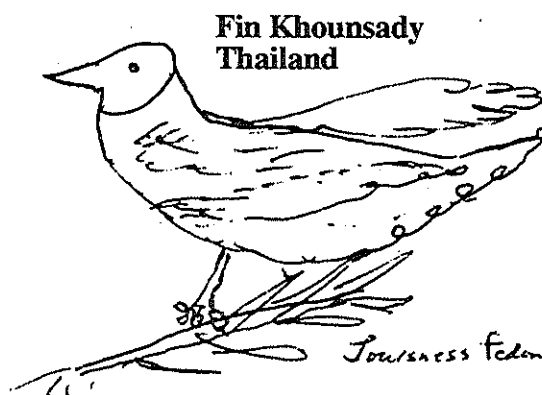
Thu Vu
Vietnam

Nothing Left

In Bosnia there is nothing left
There are lost souls, minds, and
people
People with no one to turn to
except bags of bones.
There are dirt and unknown guns
around.
They don't know what to do;
some just want to die.
People there are hurt and hungry;
No food, no place, nowhere to go.

Kids and parents running
back and forth looking for each other
People are so very dirty and dusty.
The kids look like toothpicks
as they search for families and
friends;
Men and women with torn clothes
look like they are wearing rags.

Birds are flying and picking on dying
people.
People are bloody and crying,
not knowing what to do.
Kids are crying, screaming for help.
Is help coming soon?



Living by Moonlight

The night like day
The moon like a sun
My teenage life went by
hiding in a forest

We had to get out of the city
before sunrise
so the Communists
wouldn't see everyone
to drop bombs on

After sundown
we'd get back to the city
and do everything we needed
at night time only

I lived using the moon
like a sun
and the sun like a moon!

I left my homeland
at night time
without saying good-bye to the sun

It's still painful to me
that I couldn't enjoy
the sun of my homeland

Samson Sebhatu
Ethiopia

War

Killing
loss
and hurt

The people walking on the mountain
Cross the stream all night
Hide at noon
Hide at sunrise

Not talking
Not singing
Not even breathing

Hungry, hungrier and hungrier
The baby crying
The mommy says "shh!"
The baby keeps crying
"Please stop it"
The baby doesn't know!

A lot of orphans on the street
hang around
looking for food, looking for mom

Please, God, I believe that everything
is untruth
Only God knows
How much I miss peace.

Sohee Kim
Korea



Freedom at Last

Freedom at last. It's not easy
being controlled and owned
by another country.
People fought and died to get their
freedom.
Because all the real soldiers were
dying
it didn't matter if you were old or
young
you fought in the war.
Because the war got worse,
people kept dying,
and instead of burying them,
they got thrown away like trash.
Because of hunger,
their bones were sticking out
and they were bruised
as if beaten with sticks.
Because of bombs,
people were cut into pieces.
Because all houses were destroyed
people had no place to live.
Women were treated like toys.
Families got separated:
father, no mother
mother, no father
or sometimes neither one.

Senait Araya
Eritrea

The War

The war that killed my
brothers and sisters
The war that has taken
things away from me that
I can't replace.

The war that has left
scars upon our nation
that will never heal,
taking what they had worked for
The war that left us wondering why

People died everywhere
They killed them like animals
They smashed them like
they'd smash a potato.

Yordanos Matusento
Eritrea



The Force of the War

There were many rotten people,
with minds buried deep
like animals.
They had hearts
yet they didn't know it.
They could sell their country cheap:
people, lands, houses,
to another country,
without thought.
They shot,
cut necks, killed, and
buried people alive.
Villagers had to dig
the holes.
When they heard the bombers
they went and
hid in the holes
with
 their animals.
Without food and drink
many people died
or were crippled
because
 the war pushed,
forced them to the sides of
the country.
They had no food or clothes
for their families,
nowhere to go.

**Trang Nguyen
Vietnam**

War

The young boys, hardly
become men, fighting
and shooting guns during
the war. They were
shooting because their
brothers sisters and
mothers were dying.
Shooting and fighting
with guns they'd never
seen before in their
lives. Brother, my
brother was
one of the fighters. His
fingers touched what
he wasn't supposed
to touch. He got hit
by a bullet at the
front. No one there
to try to stanch
the blood. He tried and tried
to press his wounded
leg. But no one was there
to help him.

**Kou Debleye
Liberia**



Thu Vu

A Man Got Shot in the Forest: Vietnam 1962

When the man got shot
in the back
he ran into the forest
for a couple of minutes.
Then he hit a tree
and fell down on the grass.

He felt so much hurt in his body.
And he felt blood
come out from his back.

At the last minute,
he could smell the things on earth,
trees, rocks, mountains, ocean
and the blood from his body.
He also heard the sounds of
animals, wind, rain,
and the leaves on the trees.

**Dong Bui
Vietnam**

(Based on "Gettysburg: July 1, 1863,"
by Jane Kenyon)

Korean War

There isn't silence.
 Nobody opens their mouth,
 yet there isn't silence.
 Big earthquake sound comes from
 the ground
 I can hear the sound of burning
 and I hear older guys playing with
 fireworks.
 Therefore I lose my ears.

We have to walk like ocean waves;
 going up, down, side to side,
 across a river without a bridge;
 going up the mountains,
 passing by trees to more trees,
 and some of us die because of
 hungry animals.
 We have to go between bombs to
 more bombs.
 Therefore I lose my legs.

There aren't any real humans.
 When I walk, I see all the parts of a
 human body;
 It is fallen apart like a mannequin's:
 legs, arms, eyes, and fingers.
 There are skeletons rolling around
 like balls.
 I see the animals come and eat
 humans' eyes, legs, fingers, nose,
 ears.....everything.

There is a baby on a dead body,
 crying for us to take care of her.
 Everybody just ignores her,
 and goes on to another hell.
 We've lost everything; and our
 hearts
 are just like mannequins' hearts.

Yongak Chun
Korea

War

Smoke forms black circles, sky
 above
 People form white circles, land
 below
 My friends and I walk into silence
 The silence of a night in the war
 Oh, war is a broken heart
 From the separation of families
 War is blood, tears, and dying.

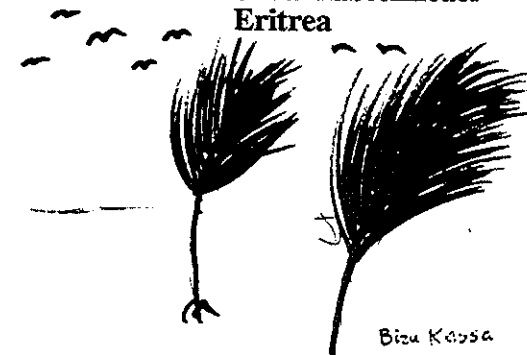
I hope, wish, there were only blue
 on Earth,
 The color of hopefulness and peace;
 In happiness, all people together
 singing and dancing
 Singing the song of love and caring
 Singing the song of lives at peace.

Hoang-Anh Nguyen
Vietnam

A Story

One day when
 my mother went to visit
 my grandmother
 she found that everybody
 in that village had run away
 to get away from the war.
 My mom wondered
 if my grandmother would be
 at home or not;
 she found her home alone
 and my mom said to her,
 "I thought you would run away."
 "Oh, sweetie!" said my grandmother
 "First of all I am old."
 And my mother said,
 "What do you mean by old?"
 My grandmother said,
 "What do you want me to say?
 It's my job; I have to feed
 those who fight against this
 government.
 But don't say anything to your
 children;
 it's our secret."
 Mother answered her,
 "I won't Mom, I understand."

Saba Habtemicael
Eritrea





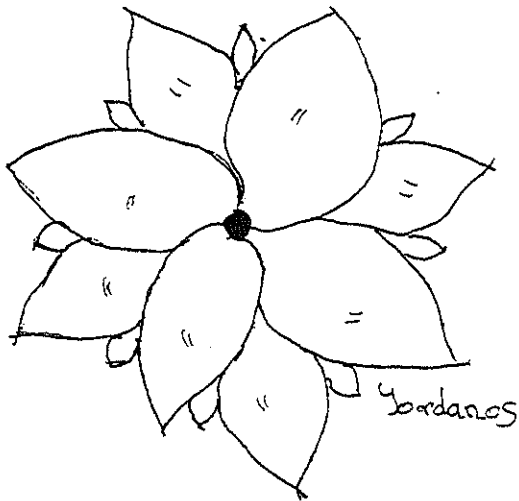
Portraits



Introspection

With a calm, intelligent face
 she sits posed:
 neither happy nor sad, just ordinary.
 Pain shows on her face
 but maybe joy;
 who cares and who knows?
 She sits still and watches,
 waits and gets up, looks around:
 not at someone else,
 but at her own
 smiles and tears
 laughter and fears.
 And she will be all her own.

**Hung-Thi Le
 Vietnam**



Portrait by the Sea

That man has remained
 In my memory.
 He sat in front of a night sea,
 Just looking at the waves.
 Darkness and the sound of the waves
 Surrounded him.
 His body and eyes were like ice;
 He had the expression of a loser.
 But his hair and his shirt
 Were dancing.

**Eunah Park
 Korea**

The Big Cigar

He sits in the middle of the restaurant
 The room polluted with his smoke
 The big cigar hangs out of his mouth
 Like a burning french fry.

A group of native ladies pass by
 They're not interested in him
 They leave him by himself

In the middle of the room
 Filling his lungs with smoke.

**Hung-Thi Le
 Vietnam**

Little Mice

Little mice can be very sweet.
 Little mice scurry about your feet.
 Little mice have coats of gray
 and ears erect.
 Little mice use their whiskers
 and tail to detect.

Their senses are their ears and nose.
 They get around on their feet
 and toes.

Little mice have beady black eyes.
 Watch out for little mice;
 they could be spies.

**Hung-Thi Le
 Vietnam**

(originally written
 in Vietnamese)



My Friend

Tall, skinny, thin, sick,
 In cheap shoes and blue jeans,
 With big, funny-looking glasses,
 Smoking marijuana and drinking wine,
 With shaking hands and pale face,
 My friend stands by me.

God! Who he's become!
 This boy, raised by his strict granny,
 This boy, who didn't feel any freedom
 In his long dark childhood
 Full of suffering and nightmares,
 And my friend has a baby's face.

Beaten by his sick mother,
 Mother, suffering from a mental disease,
 Hated by his drunk father,
 Father, sleeping by a garbage can,
 My friend now looks at me
 With sorrow in his blue eyes.

I remember him living with his granny,
 Shy, silent, sort of a nerd,
 Studying and drilling all his free time
 Never talking about his problems
 And only the gray tuft of hair
 Told me his terrible story.

My friend, who at the age of fifteen
 Started smoking and drinking wine,
 People didn't believe it;
 They didn't recognize that shy boy
 Who'd never spoiled the air with a curse word,
 And I don't recognize him either.

On the street he met those teenagers,
 Teenagers, raiding and robbing people,
 Forming the bottom line of society,
 Smoking drugs and taking pills,
 Carrying knives, brass knuckles and chains,
 And my friend joined that band.

I have never met a kinder person
 Than my friend, carrying a knife;
 I have never met a naiver person
 Than my friend wearing stolen things,
 Drifting slowly in the criminal world,
 The world that is killing his soul.

I left my friend for a whole year,
 A year that may be the last for him
 Or may be the first year of change;
 The year of studying at a university
 Of forgetting bad company and street life;
 And I just say, God bless my friend.

Andrei Belogolov
 Russia



The Children of Dark Streets

I know that if it's winter
It must be cold
And the rain is better than silver
Better than gold
One can observe the soul
While looking through
And the children of dark streets
Know it's true.

I know that if I'm thirsty
I have to drink
And my brother-in-law who is thirty
Don't like to think
I know there're only two colors:
White and black
And so do the children of night
Who smoke crack.

I know that since I was born
I must die
It's fine to be a unicorn
And just fly
I know our world is dying
In fight and fuss
But the children of dark streets
Will save us.

Andrei Belogolov
Russia



The Homeless Boy

I saw the boy
On the street.
He missed his parents
He missed love
From who?
Parents, neighbors
And friends.
He looked pitiful
He looked weak
No food,
No good clothes
To make him warm
In winter.
No one to play with
Why?
He's poor, dirty,
And homeless.



Thus he became a beggar.
He stood on the street;
The kind people gave him
Money, food, or clothes
To make him warm,
Fill his stomach, I hope.

One day his darkness
Will stop.
In my mind I see him
Getting a good life,
The darkness leaving,
And the beautiful light shining
Into his life.

Duyen Do
Vietnam

Farm Woman

If you say she's a strong woman
that's not enough to describe her.
She's also an industrious person;
she can do anything a man can do.

Her feet are always without shoes
as she works on the farm.
Her shoulders are strong;
she can carry heavy things.

She always works through the hard
times,
her hands on the cows as she plows.
Whether it's sunny or rainy,
it doesn't matter to her.

At night time on the farm,
she can see through her eyes
the moon and stars in the sky
and smell many kinds of vegetables.

In the early morning
she can hear the sound of the birds
singing
sound of the water babbling in the
river
with the cool wind of a beautiful
morning
and the blue sky covering all.

Trang Tran
Vietnam



Superman

Who was he?
His name was
Ababa Bkila.
Who was he?
He was
the man of men.
Who was he?
He was
the only son of
his mother.
Who was he?
He was
the hero of
his country
at the age of
nineteen.
When he was a boy
he was
a superboy;
but he never thought
he would be
a marathon champion.
He used to
run two miles
to get to school.
Two miles to
come back home.
At age 23 he became
the world champ,
in Rome,
And in Boston
he was Number 1.
Isn't it amazing?
What a man!
He is my role model.



He died at age 43,
by accident.
He is the Superman.
He is...
He is...

Iyasu Habtemicael
Eritrea

The Sailor

Now he is a sailor
He only comes to land to get
supplies
He lives with excitement and
adventure
Snow storm, it's a bit of a challenge.

He never sends mail or receives it
He's generous, equitable and
painstaking
His countrymen think he's slow at
talking,
Maybe reticent from many months
on the ocean.

Hung-Thi Le
Vietnam

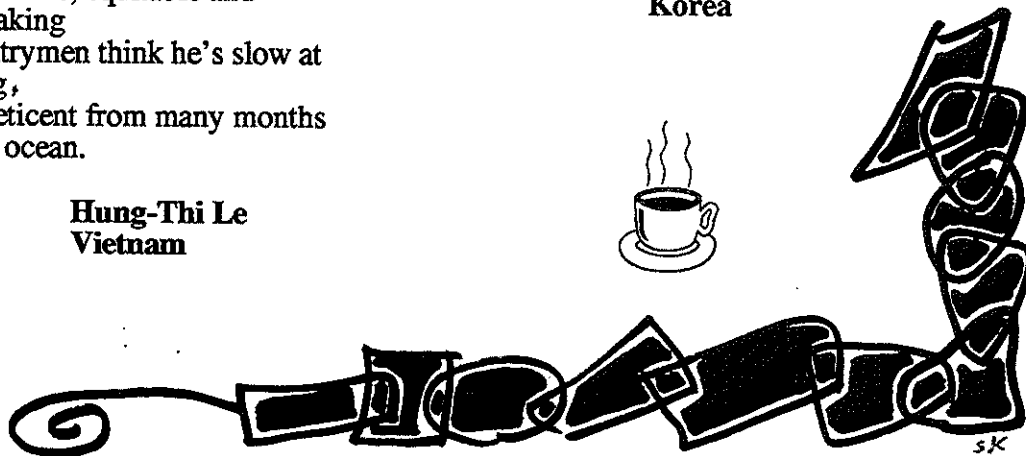
A Housewife

"Kids! Wake up!
Hurry up!
Here's breakfast, milk and a napkin."

Clean up!
in silence;
bell rings from washing machine
boiling water
phone rings
mailman rings the doorbell
little kid crying
oven signals cooking's done.

Sun setting
still no coffee break;
sweat on the forehead.
"Oh! Forgot to go shopping."
"Honey,
kids,
go hungry,
no dinner.
I'm too tired to make it."

Sohee Kim
Korea



My Teacher

My teacher
 A lady who teaches me
 How to read and write
 My teacher
 A lady who is kind and honest
 She helps me when I'm in trouble
 My teacher
 A lady who is cheerful and helpful
 She explains difficult words for me
 Helps me understand them
 She loves me and I love her
 She's like my mother
 Helps me walk through life
 Helps me understand the outside
 world
 She advises me to study hard
 I'll have a better life afterwards
 Because of her kind, honest and
 Her sweet heart

Duyen Do
 Vietnam



Men

Men: strong, powerful
 Sometimes faithful. Men
 They are hopeless. Careless
 In household work. All
 Over the world they
 Are called men because
 They are hard-working.
 But sometimes they act
 Like they don't care.
 Men O men they
 Are the soul of woman's
 Life.

Kou Debleye
 Liberia

A Pilot

The life of a pilot is on the air,
 or in the sky
 He studied hard, worked hard
 to be a pilot
 His life was given to planes.
 When he flew he saw clouds,
 Looked at the earth, saw
 Tiny houses, tiny countries
 And the big sea became a small river.

He cried when he flew
 He smiled when he arrived;
 He cried because he was happy
 he'd become a star pilot
 He smiled, proud of his job.

Duyen Do
 Vietnam

Superstition

I can still remember
 back in my native
 country: my uncle
 was a superstitious
 man. He believed in
 idols.

He was magnificent:
 sometimes
 he told people what
 was going to happen
 to them the next day
 and it would happen
 the same time he
 said it would.

He tried to confuse people
 into joining the church
 he was going to;
 some people did and
 other people didn't.

I really don't know why
 some people in Africa
 still don't believe in
 God. They prefer
 to believe in
 idols.

Salmatu Bangura
 Sierra Leone

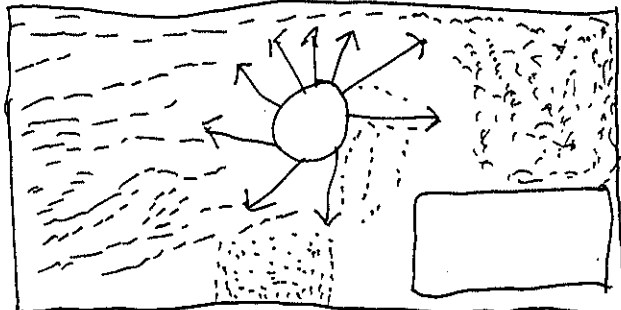
The Young Man Who's No More Like A Man

There is a young man
who's no more a man; he's not
dead but his mind is like a boy's.
Sitting on a truck when the side
broke, down he came like when
an airplane runs out of gas.

No one could save him; when
he dropped the car threw him about
four feet from the truck. He couldn't
talk, he couldn't say a word. In
about two weeks he started
speaking; he said, I saw the
doctors working over me, like
four to six of them.

I could...could hardly hear
my own voice; when the car came
and hit it was like a bomb taking
a building to the ground. I can
smell the food but I can't eat it,
I can smell sugar cakes but I can't
eat them. You all my friends
keep on praying because I am too.

**Tyrone Prince
St. Vincent**

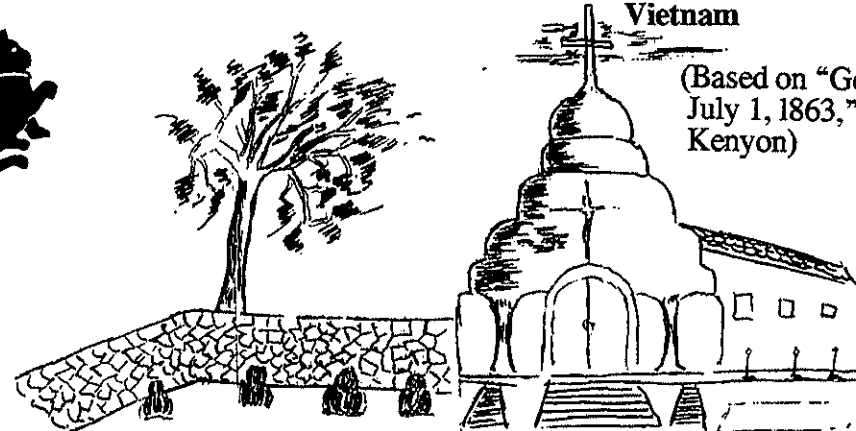


Abdirahman Mohamed

The Hunter Cat

Strange he seems, like a tiger.
Moves with gentle steps,
Eyes seeing through darkness.
Searching, hunting, he's the best.
In the corner, his private position,
Waiting patiently, quietly
Watching every moment
Listening to any sound...
And suddenly!
Oh! There it comes, a victim.
A little mouse tries to escape.
Faster he approaches his target,
Spreads front legs, jumps over
The catch like a flash of light,
Covers the victim and grabs it away.
Eating finished, he relaxes.

**Huy Pham
Vietnam**



**Ngan Le
Vietnam**

(Based on "Gettysburg:
July 1, 1863," by Jane
Kenyon)

Thi Thach

The Death

Beautiful day
nice sky
with blue clouds
and the man who
worked alone in
the forest
got hurt by a
tiger; the man ran
and ran towards
the river and
fell down
behind the river;
he breathed in and
out, and when he
breathed the last breath
he smelled the air
of the forest and the
smell of the leaves
and plants and the
air of death; he felt it
hard to breath and
he felt his spirit
go out of his body
and fly in the sky.

❄ *Feelings and Reflections* ❄

Memory Poem

Many years ago
 when I was a small, lonely kid
 I lived in a small house with one
 parent
 and slept in a small bed on the roof.
 One night, as long ago as I can
 remember,
 it was a summer night;
 I slept on the roof,
 covers wrinkling under me,
 open eyes waiting for sleep.
 The boards of the roof
 were smooth, shiny with white wax.
 The leaves were falling aimlessly.
 I looked at the stars
 and asked the Gods if they could
 really understand
 what I was thinking,
 and if they really saw my heart.
 Well, eyes closed, the brain stopped,
 heart beat regularly,
 Stars, Gods, me, good night!

Hoang-Anh Nguyen
 Vietnam

Sick Day

Sick day
 I'm a sloth
 Terrible feeling
 I feel lonely

 I closed my curtain
 Dark!
 Dark!
 Sweat on my forehead
 Fever!
 Fever!
 Tears in my eyes

 Someone holds my hands.
 Opened my eyes.
 Wow! My honey!

Sohee Kim
 Korea



Lonely and Cold

What can I do now?
 When I lock myself into
 the room, all around me

 Are four white walls. I feel
 very lonely, and cold inside.
 Without any homework,

 I sit beside the window,
 look up to the night moon
 and go back in my memory

 To the time when I was young.
 In my arms, I hold the picture
 of my grandparents. I miss them

 Very much, but I can't
 go back to visit them. The ways
 I want to go are far off.

Ngan Le
 Vietnam

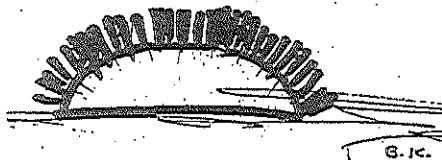
Today

I am starting my life today
 The white ray woke me up, the ray
 And I'm going far away
 On this beautiful day
 I don't wanna complain today
 I am happy, I wanna play
 And my life doesn't seem as gray
 As it was Yesterday.

I'm smiling and singing today
 I don't have any bills to pay
 And I say what I wanna say
 Everything is Okay.

It's spring, it's the first of May
 I am trying to find my bay
 In this life...and I start to pray
 That it's not just Today.

Andrei Belogolov
 Russia



G. Jc.

The Sun

The sun comes
 The people go away
 Time comes and goes
 and the people go and come back.
 That is the description of the world.
 Who can tell the secrets
 and change the world?
 That's all imagined
 in the mind of each
 person.

Thuy Nguyen
 Vietnam



Snowflake

The sky is dark
 The clouds are thick
 Snow falls on my nose
 It falls in my hair.
 Each flake is as different
 As a day of life.

Nejew Araya
 Eritrea

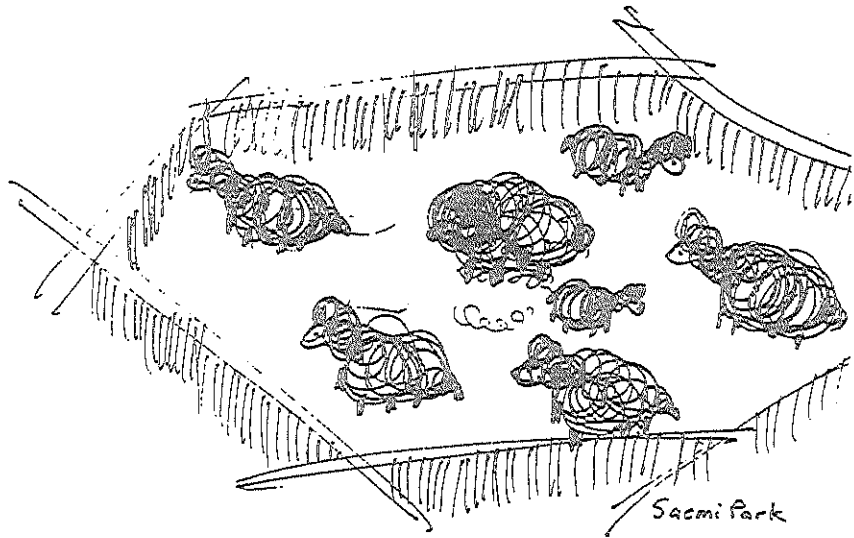
Memory

I remembered
 the time when
 my friend and I
 were looking out
 of the window
 to see if there
 were any deer.
 But there weren't
 any deer outside,
 just the rain
 falling down.
 Sitting by the
 window watching
 the rain fall
 slowly and slowly
 down, so sad
 that my tears were
 dropping slowly
 down on my face
 with sadness,
 I really don't
 know why.

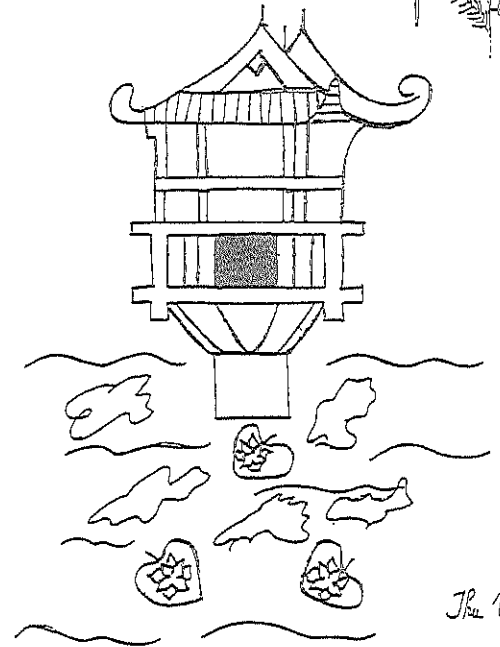
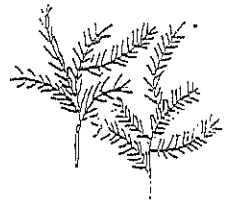
Trang Nguyen
 Vietnam



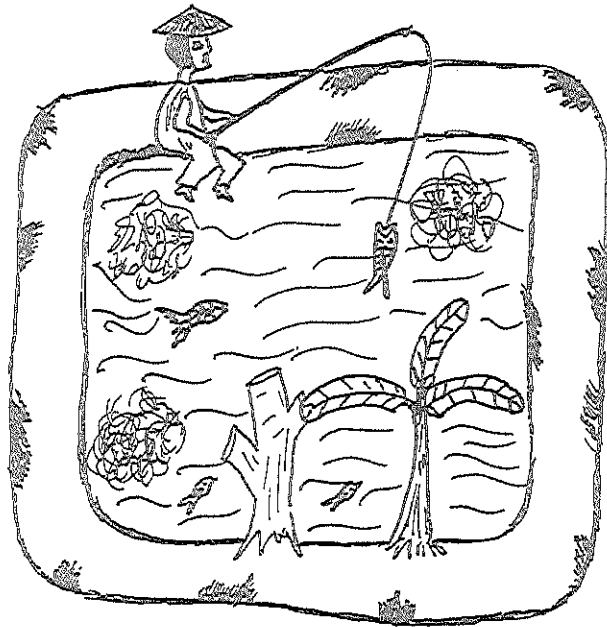
Hung-Thi Le



Sacmi Park



Trang Vu



Trang Huong Nguyen

