
Endings

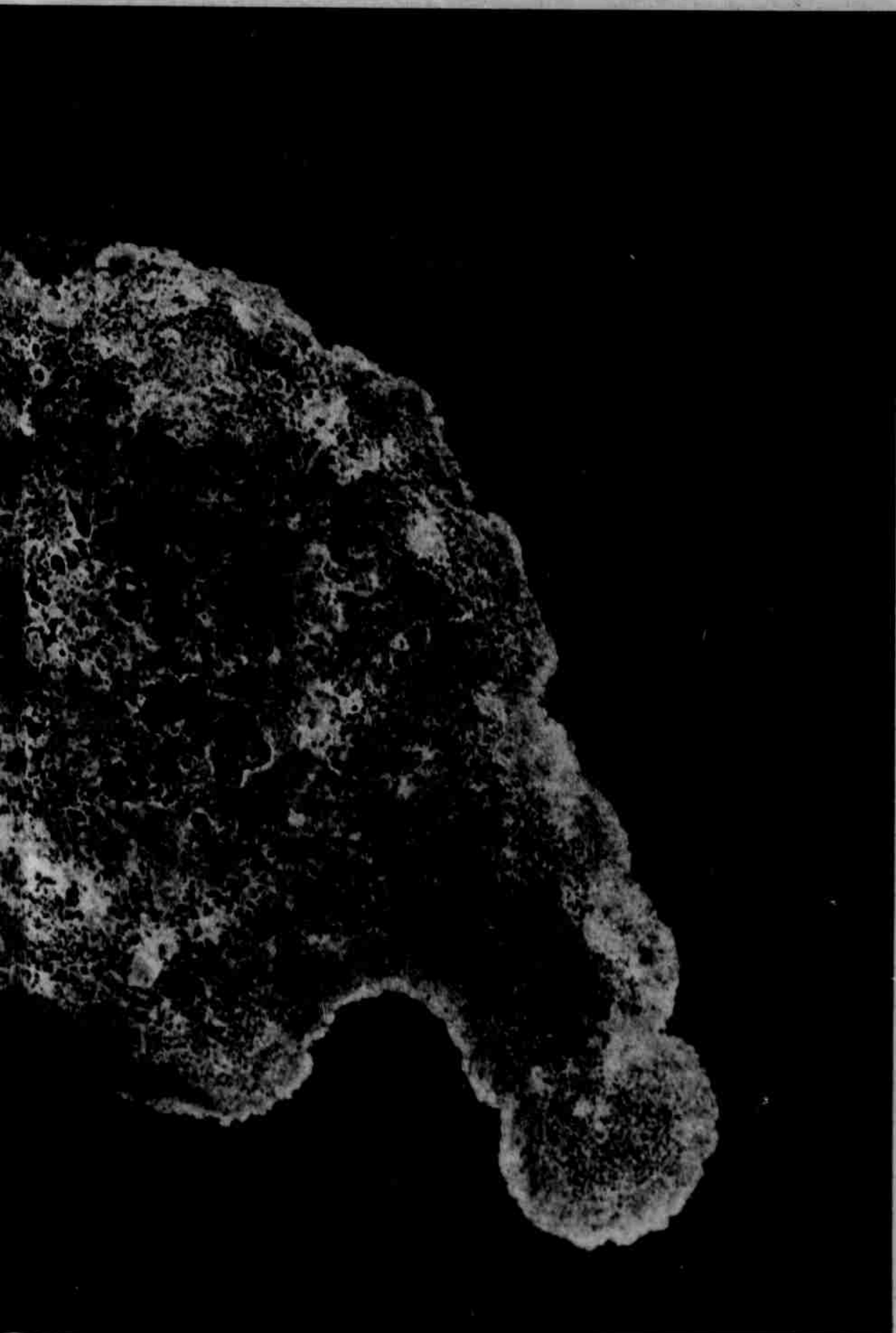
The slime of the soured semen
strings into a cold toilet.
The omniscient 50 watt bulb
feeds upon the glare of guilt.
The story is painted in milky white colors
on the canvas of a wrinkled sheet,
the plot easily washed away
by a detached washing machine.
In the distance a muffled whine
brings pangs of haunting remembrances
of a dead child.
The door slams shut,
the faucet is running cold,
the cat has just thrown up in the kitchen.
Standing in the corner,
illuminated by the harsh light of the moon,
the rocking chair is squeaking,
back and forth, unceasingly.

Lee Wheeler
second place
poetry

L.A.

What force now squats astride us? Sitting on
The arid face of Southern California,
Loosing its passed-gas alike on stars
And starving, flatulence that flattens out
All heights but social in this desert land,
What force now squats astride us? Few the eyes
That dare to gaze beyond the browning pall.
Beneath the stagnant lake of burning air
No purity can long survive the stress,
No honesty but withers in the drought,
No utter joy can cast the cloud aside.
The film of some disease spreads out its arms
O'er beach and freeway, guarding its preserves.
There are no shadows in this sterile land.
There is no black, no white, but only brown:
The brown hands reaching out, the brown of skin
Beneath the sun-blond hair and sea-blue eyes,
The brown of air. There is no right or wrong
Amidst this glare. Impertinent replies
To questionnaires reveal the lure of gold,
The lore of "I", near-dead souls bought and sold.
What glare, what lack of shadows, sky-imposed,
What sunlight glazed by each diffusing mote,
What mountains of regret spread wafer thin
By bodies' beauties, crowned by empty grins
And vacant eyes has this brown poison caused.
What raucous laughter, and what dearth of smiles.
Behind the burning heat there is no warmth.
Within the burning flesh there is no warmth.
Transfixed by frigid eyes there is no warmth.
What empty bodies, empty minds, and souls.
Fertility of loins there is, but love
Has smothered in the brown sterility.
What force now squats astride us? Tell me now.

Ed Christian
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Gregg Pejsar
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