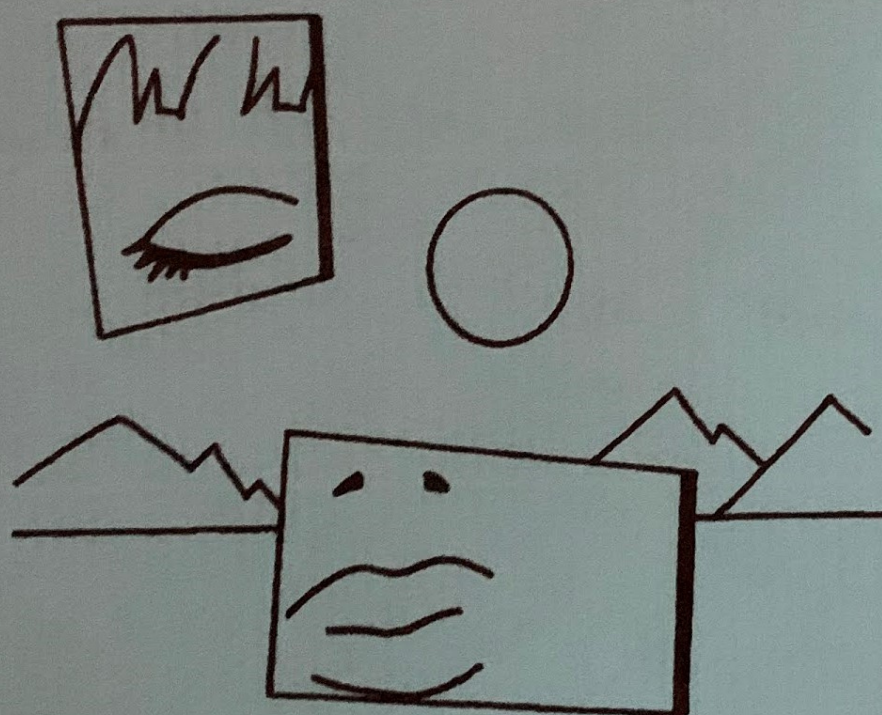


# Niederungasse

The Journal of Winning Poetry



WALT PHILLIPS

Issue Four

July 1999



# Niederngasse

The Journal of Winning Poetry

## Poets This Issue

D. W. Bohn

Silva Brandon Pérez

Janet Buck

Pasquale Capocasa

Cerridwen

Catherine Daly

Regina Coeli deWinter

Cindy Duhe

Frances Mancuso Durler

Donna Hill

Scott C. Holstad

Abbe Huston

Irène Kaesermann

Ric Masten

Sonia Mcsweeney

Christine Mooers

Walt Phillips

Joan Pond

E.W. Richardson

Jude Roy

Ron Travis

## Summer 1999 Poetry Contest Winners

### First Prize

Mati Sicherer

### Two Second Prizes:

Chris English and Jack Hoot Stull

### Also Winners

Anne Chudobiak

Angela Hope Kinder

Jane Pek

Robert Taylor

Line Art by Walt Phillips



**SHE IN THREE PARTS****Part One****Drawing The Circle**

On her knees she scoops a handful of white sanded water  
salty to her lips  
and scrubs the taste of her mother's mouth off her skin.  
Preferring the bitter taste of salt  
to her mother's laying claim to her  
maidenhood is like a noose around her pelvis  
she wants to throw off and free herself  
of being a daughter  
who wants to make love to the ocean  
or to anyone for that matter,  
just to lose that word, virginity,  
when she is not innocent inside,  
having shuddered at her mother's touch for too long now  
to be happy with her scent on her face like she once was.  
It does not make her drowsy or safe anymore,  
violating, instead, her senses like a sharp slap  
and keeping her eyes wide at night  
waiting for womanhood, ready to be broken.

**Part Two****Magic**

She licks her children's eyes when they are sick  
to make them well again, she says, witchcraft,  
brujeria, laughing as she rubs a stick of sulfur up and down  
their backs and sighs  
when she hears the "crack" healing broken noisy yellow stick.  
She places small glass cups on their backs and pulls them off, leaving red  
circles in rows.  
She is marking herself on them,  
her children,  
treating them, loving them as she has learned to do.  
Mother healing, skin touching, this they do not mind,  
it makes them drowsy,  
the taste of heavy lidded sleep on their tongues,  
clouding their thoughts as she rubs and pulls and teaches them  
the magic that she knows.



### **Part Three**

## **Cordelia Watching**

Filling her role.

She has put away the bright outfits,  
the flowers on her skirts,  
withered and shrunken and dry,  
not knowing they were not in a real garden,  
just colored vines and leaves on woven thread.  
She has lost teeth, gained weight,  
spilling out of herself onto me,  
next to her on the couch.

Dressed in images of blacks and blues  
dark and betrayed colors of bruises  
on her lips where she pinches them together  
to keep me from seeing her cry.

She has fallen into herself  
by accident

and no longer practices the magic  
that made lights turn green for her children  
when they were small.

Having lost them to life  
(the best of all possibilities)  
she has let the spaces they left  
fill with the dark colors of her clothes,  
making it easy to stumble  
before reaching to touch her.