Chrome

What a marvalous thing it is, to plunge
oneself really into the contemplation of
a color, considered simply as color!.....
The dream we bear in ourselves tends to
dissolve into a dream still more exquisite
and mysterious, in which can be found not
explication, but understanding.....

Ludwig Tieck

For Ruth Falk and Bogdan Sagatov

I Sun in Virgo, Moon in Virgo

"Colorless green ideas sleep furiously," says Noam Chomsky, is nonsensical but grammatical, whereas "furiously sleep ideas green colorless," is simply nonsensical. A small stone wall encloses the grass on one corner, long in front of the library, short in front of the red-brick building with the title "William M. Dey Hall." People walk on a diagonal nearby. A boy catches a red frisbee under one leg, drops it the next time.

The jays are talking to each other, harshly repeating calls from opposite corners. Some people have taken off their shoes.

"Um," says a lady in a yellow shirt emphatically, "I heard about your wild party." Two men walk together conversing up the stairs into Dey Hall, each opening one hald of the folding doors at the same time, not missing a beat.

Her hair is curly, red, his tennis shoes have red stripes on them, and his socks have both a red and a blue stripe. She says, "Is yours the house that burned? What did you do?"

The sound of walking through grass is crunchy, a brisk interference. The greeness of the grass and trees, big bushes, grows at not quite the same ~~rhythm~~ rate as the slap of soles against wooden clogs and rubber flip-flops, the tap of leather shoes - a squirrel rhythm, erratic, purposeful.

"Anyway, aawm ---" throatily froma lady in blue sun glasses, hitting her newspaper against the legs of a young man with a green tee-shirt and white shorts, laughing and kissing him. He gets up a little later, walks off aways, then comes back and kisses her. "Thank you," she says laughing again, her laugh just enough warmth and space.

II Sun in Libra, Moon in Aquarius

The laundromat for Married Student Housing is an oblong room with dirty white linoleum. The squares of linoleum have been arranged so that the streak pattern alternates, one running vertical next to one running horizontal, blocked on all sides, lock-step, except for the circular drainage hole with its metal grate. The ceiling is sound proofing board, also rectangular squares, with long flourescent lights along it, some panels dark, some lit.

There are windows along the wall facing onto the parking lot, closed, with heavy grates on them. A long row of attached plastic chairs, in alternating pastel colors, sits with its back to the windows. There's also a bigger chair with a hair dryer attached. The top-loading washing machines run in two long pastel blue banks, back to back, down the middle of the room. A set of long pipes, with different sized valves and handles jutting out of them, run from the ceiling into a plastic wood veneer median between the two banks of machines. Two huge "Big Boy" front-loading machines, with huge circular doors , stand at the end of the bank, by the door. The dryers line the long wall facing the windows. They are in alternating pastel colors, each with a circular door, a little circle with the money slot and on-switch, a long vertical temperature lever, and a red square with a switch on it for normal cycle or permanent press.

Above the dryers are four large glass framed signs:

Customers Are Requested
PLEASE
Do Not Load Machines And
Leave Them Loaded For
Extended Periods. This May
Cause Inconvienience To Others
That May Wish To Use Them
Thank You.

SPECIAL NOTICE
This Office Must Close Nightly
At 11:00 P.M., You Are Requested
Not To Start A Load That Cannot Be

Finished By That Time.
Thank You For Your Cooperation.

Please!
No Rubber Backed Rugs Or
Other Rubber Items In
Dryers. Such Items Are
FIRE HAZARDS

NOTICE
This Facility is For The Use Of
Students, Their Families, And
University Staff Only. All
Other Persons Are Requested To
Refrain From Using It.
Thank You.

There is a clock, stopped at 2:10, next to one of the signs, and a fire extinguisher in a glass case set into the wall. Down a little hall there are bulletin boards, a few offices, bathrooms, and a room, door open, with a ping-pong table.

It's hot inside, but not really crowded; people come in and out, putting their clothes in a washer or dryer and leaving. One woman watches her laundry in a dryer absent mindedly, a little sullen, then folds it, shaking out each item with a snap. A woman and a man greet each other and chat about plans and happenings. Most of the content is lost in the noise of the machines, but the modulations of friendliness and politeness come through, the man chuckling, the woman's voice a little more strained. The man shoulders his laundry, walks off, turning back at the same time, and says loudly, above the machines, "Drop in and see us sometime." "Uh huh, bye bye," she answers, not without sincerity.

III Sun in Scorpio, Moon in Pisces

A large reddish brown insect, its body coming to a point in back, and a big triangular hump before its head. One leg seems to be broken or injured so that it crawls along dragging it, stopping and starting in

A thin melancholy black dog walks by, nose down, to lie in the sun. Then gets up restlessly, sniffs some dry leaves, lies back down, walks away, sits with a man, follows another dog, finally lies down.

The bicycle racks in front of Dey Hall are full. Two ladies speak French, one lying back expansively in a red shirt, arms back under her head. Another lady eats a small yellow pear.

An older navy man walks by. He seems to be containing himself, with his blue hat turned over on his head, and his shiny black shoes.

"Sit down awhile." "I jogged Thursday, almost a whole lap." He laughs at her. His laugh repeated by three young men teasing a young german shepherd with a stick, feinting to one direction, throwing to another. One snaps his fingers, pointing for the dog to come to a spot. The dog surveys the fingers with condescension, picks up the stick and dodges the man trying to retrieve it.

One man holds his briefcase as if trying to avoid it, swinging his free arm broadly.

Each blade of grass is a separate color green , cigarette buts and gum wrappers nestling between them. The man calls his dog again, again pointing to a spot in front of him. The daog barks, ears back, attentive, tongue hanging out, with the stick in front of him. The man pats him and goes to pick up the stick, but the dog has it first. The man pulls it away, laughs nervously and sits back down, putting the stick down. The dog sits in front of him next to the stick and barks at a higher pitch, while the man reads a book with an orange cover. He looks up and mimics the bark, obviously unnerved by the dog's growing insistence, sharp teeth.

unpredictable slow motion. Yellow jackets hover around a half-eaten sandwich, at home with the trash - foil wrapping, a yellow paper bag and cup.

A huge flock of birds bursts from behing a building, scattering into the haze, and a young man in jeans and a work-shirt walks heavily on the concourse, the heels of his soft shoes thudding against the bricks.

"Logos Books" is closed. Posters in the window: a large tiger head-on, a clipper ship with a huge set of sails, an advertisement for a Star Wars Calandar, and a cartoon on two birds doing a dance step, with the caption "Toucan Tango."

Two men and a woman walk by softly. One man is talking, seemingly to himself. The woman between them looks displeased about something.

The sky is bright, but too hazy to be blue. The yellow and red of the bigger trees below the concourse seems unreal against red brick and concrete. The threesome walks back, now completely silent. The woman dodges out to put a cup in the trash, darts back between the two men.

A man in a light brown leather jacket, his short hair making much of his neck, sits under a small red tree, almost completely still, bending his head back and then forward slightly, the wind in his hair. Leaves scatter along the bricks, traffic sounds circle below.

A young couple runs up the stairs, laughing and talking sharply in mock argument, both in well-fitting high-belted pants, their hips with a life of their own.

The traffic lights at the intersection of Rosemary and Columbia swing back and forth in the wind; a man strides by vigorously in a dark blue three piece suit and a plaid bow tie.

IV Sun in Sagittarius, Moon in Aries

Inside the Wachovia Bank on Franklin Street the carpet is yellow-green next to white walls and dark green plants, and through the window two girls sight a friend, arching back and around at the same time, both faces lighting up.

Faces familiar to each other walk up and down the street and in and out of the bank building. This one takes yoga classes, that one goes to parties at a certain mutual friend's.

A man pauses a long time over his billfold, hurry struggling with meticulousness, jaw set, hands shaking.

A young man comes out of the bank still putting money in his wallet, to find his unlocked blue chrome Schwin bike, still there, resting on its kick-stand. A wide-lipped open mouth curved as he goes off.

Wet leaves on the pavement. A girl yawns in the line in front of the banking machine. A little boy walks by sucking on his mother's finger, she half-heartedly pulls away.

People coming in and out of the bank look down into their purses and wallets as they walk. A lady scratches her ear with her banking card.

A man unlocks the back of the banking machine. It hums louder with sharp clicking noises as he puts in more money, paper. He paces, waiting for some transaction, a sign from the machine, his face twitching slightly. A woman in a green velvet skirt asks, "What ~~abpit~~ number twenty-eight on that tape?" A little girl leans against the window eating ice-cream out of a dish, licking her lips, watching the huddle around the machine. The woman and the man roll out the tape like a roll of toilet paper.

Brakelights flash brighter in the dusk. People are carrying things, daisies, a lime green satchel. One man is carrying a beer in a plastic cup.

The bank is closed by a breezy woman in a pants suit. A thin older woman with grey hair and rouge is led along with restrained impatience by a younger man in Ivy League dress, chewing gum. Their faces are intransigent, ceremonial. He helps her into a car and they are suddenly gone.

V Sun in Capricorn, Moon in Taurus

Each of the post office's two doors has a little enclosed vestibule attached so that you come in the first door and then turn to the side to go through another door, and there's glass on all the doors and on the vestibule walls, so that you can look into the post office before you get there; first into the vestibule, then into the post office. With its lamps suspended from the ceiling, yellow globes with brass saturn rings and stars on them.

There's a painting on one wall of a man in a wig, knickers, white stockings and an apron, reading from a speech, while some other people, their backs to us with hats on, are laying a cornerstone with the date 1793 on it. In the painting its a sunny day and people are looking serious.

Underneath the painting there are two lines in front of the postal windows. A lady at the front of one line has a tiny little baby dressed all in white, a little white suit that goes over its head, just its face showing.

People are dressed depending on how cold they think it is. All bundled up, or breezy in a jacket. Sometimes they wish each other Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, or say, "See you when you get back."

There's some problem with collisions, if someone might look at the floor while walking from the door to their mailbox, or the high writing tables with the zip-code book and holes for ink-wells.

A man in pastel blue pants and a white wool hat surveys the stamp machine while his friends count their change. Another man is whistling, two children around him while he opens his mailbox, the smaller one in red pants.

A man with a very enormous stomach says he "sure would appreciate it if you would get off the xerox machine, it gets broke every once in a while, I sure would appreciate it if you would." He looks worried, concerned. I look sympathetic and get off the machine. The long corridor with the mailboxes, the flourescent lights suspended by long metal rods. At the end of the corridor at the farthest table two older women are talking. One is grey-haired with a white coat and a large red purse and a green head-band. The other has red hair and red lipstick and a black coat, and stands as if one leg is shorter than the other, one back and the other out-stretched for a long diagonal. They cluster in the empty hall-way fulling up the space, saying an expansive goodbye; before leaving, the red-head pauses to put on dark glasses.

VI Sun in Aquarius, Moon in Cancer

The tiny waves curl hissing and crunching pulling white sand up with them right at the edge; just back a bit the chlorine blue of the water clear to the white sandy bottom. A sailboat filled with wind glides out of sight. A pelican sitting in the water rocking its beak back and forth quickly. Some kind of long slender succulent grows on the shore; another pelican makes a dive into the water so steep it seems to have been hit, water reflecting blue under its wings. Shoals of snorklers, an elaborate sand castle, drawbridges.

One sun bather with white skin and a metallic blue bathing suit is reading <u>The Farthest Shore</u> by Ursula LeGuin, the book held to the side, the other hand shading her eyes. She is blonde, short-haired, with hair coming out from under her arm near the bulge of her breast. A red and gold bead bracelet,

her rib-cage breathing, reading, "His father had given him that sword on the eve of his departure from Enlad. He had received it solemnly, and had worn it, as if it were a duty to wear it, even on board ship." Turning over, she keeps reading with a slight frown, her legs in a scissor shape, one hand in a fist holding down the book, the other hand propping up her head. Stops to put sun-tan lotion on her injured leg, the knee misshapen slightly, a rash from where the cast had been, now holding the book from the bottom, fingers curled up over the book.

The sand castle builders are a having a swimming lesson. You don't need to stroke that hard. A cove; green tropical hills, another sail-boat, and close-by, another island.

VII Sun in Pisces, Moon in Leo

The mouths are moving, one near-by is cruching on toast with butter on it over an almost clean plate, a few remains of an omlette with mushrooms and onions. At the next table black-bean soup is eaten fastidiously, measuredly.

Voices rise and fall under and over each other. Now I feel better I wrote down everything I want to tell Jack. Heavy weight champion. Ahahhah. Wanting him to fight amatoohers.

Putting tablecloths on the table for dinner with a square pattern, flowers in the middle of each square. Someone talks about a stomach ache. Someone talks about a letter to the Chapel Hill Sun. Shaking his shirt to get rid of crumbs.

Let me leave a tip. I'm paying for it. I'm paying this time.

The owner is eating a bowl of fruit, one leg propped on the other knee. Not so many people are eating now but there was a line earlier. So that now

he has time to talk to the man in the suit and tie and a plastic covered notebook.

He's giving me ha ha sorry. I have some fifths. I have plenty of fifths for now. I'll try to. That's normal, o.k., well, what we should do is sit down sometime and work on a new list. My reaction maybe I will. He's just consistently done this. Muscadet.

Carlyle I'm still up for a lunch date sometime. Me too. The next couple of weeks are going to be. Take my break sometime.

Looking into space face let down, playing with a spoon, turning it on end, hand sliding down, then on the other end, like turning over an hour-glass; then talking quietly, quickly whirling the spoon sidewise.

VIII Sun in Aries, Moon in Libra

"Mucho, mucho," says the stocky man in the red tee-shirt; his accomplice repeats right after him, "mucho, mucho," emphatically cocking her head to the side to smile at him, her long straight yellow hair jumping. They are leaving the library with a bounce in their step.

The velvet orange carpet between Circulation and Reference is a models' promenade, and everyone knows it - it feels good to walk right down the middle, or to stand and converse, the elegant squares of flourescent lights just hinting at futurism.

What I'm talking about is society's t.v. dinner warmed up eventually

I know don't really want to get together I agree

excuse me satiate some craving desires when did you get your masters

I've never seen your legs before

A little girl, maybe eight, walking along confidently, carrying the Durham Morning Herald under one arm, her long blonde hair pulled back with a barette and hanging straight down her back, disappears behind a partition, then re-appears suddenly out of an elevator, smiling tentatively and walking right ahead, goes to the card catalouge, then comes back, right down the middle, hoisting up the unwieldy paper in both arms to readjust it, sparkly errings, holding the paper precariously under one arm as she puts her hand to her nose, snuffling and grimacing, on the edge of an emotion, not clearly pain.

IX Sun in Taurus, Moon in Scorpio

Red roses, pink carnations, daisies, narcissus, pansies, snowballs, dried plants and butterflies under little glass bells, pussy willows. In big tin cans, labelled for apricots, oysters, green beans. The woman sits among them in a red and yellow pants suit, singing a tune with a gospel feeling under her breath, the Musak in the corridor joining in.

Serious faces, inquiries as to prices, hesitating over the choice, a certain melancholy; can a bunch of daisies be worth three dollars? The busy arcade, with mirrors behind the woman and her flowers, facing into the bank, with its wide window panels and huge open entrance-way. At the end of the hallway the window-paned doors opening onto the street, the noise swelling and receding as they open and shut.

Two high school girls bend with their books over the carnations, one kneeling down to be closer, eating a cookie with pink frosting. A middle aged couple stroll by, talking disjointedly. The woman's high-heeled shoes are hurting her, the small black plastic straps cutting into her feet.

Small stones set into concrete, the smooth polish of the terazzo walkway

disconnects the passersby, rustling and tapping, shoes, packages and gestures, the whirr of bicycles, caught in the mirrors they watch out of the corner of their eyes. The landmarks are equivocal seductions, the mirrors' fascination and the tired red of the bank's interior, red plastic chairs, worn red rug, modern pictures; mirrors and bank bouncing back and forth over the smooth stone floor.

A man comes to help the woman pack up the flowers. I ask her the name of some flowers. Snow balls, she ways, then turns angrily, are you writing on my flowers? I figured you was up to something. She fights with her helper, answers him loudly, tomato seeds. And teaberry chewing gum if its come in over at Revco.

She sits for a while longer waiting for the man to return. The crowd back and forth, the swell of the Musak, flowers, mirrors. After she leaves another woman walks by lively, singing "protect you when....."

X Sun in Gemini, Moon in Capricorn

The air-conditioning is overpowering and I put on a sweater. The locked cases of books lining one wall are glass covered: worn leather, gilt, tall portfolios, reflecting trees, brick buildings and sections of window lattice work, the humid air outside, clouds low, breaking up to some blue sky.

The other walls are lined with books, with thin white strips of tape on the top of their spines saying Reference in brown letters, and on the bottom little squares for the call numbers: ML134
.A27
K6

The books have names like these: La Musica, Reiman: Musik Lexicon, Who's Who

in Opera, Blues, Variety Music Cavalcade. The magazines are in a tall rack with clear plastic dividers so that they overlap each other , some hiding behind, others facing out with their whole covers: Jazz.Hot, Keyboard, Bach, Fontes Artis Musicae, JEMF Quarterly.....

Two junior high school girls are doing a research project, and come into the room briefly only to smile at the floor and walk out. They are large,with gold chains around their necks, errings, and one has low socks with blue pom-poms at the back to appear out of her tennis shoes.

The flourescent lights shine on the tables, wide flat surfaces of formica, imitation wood veneer. Now theroom is empty except for a woman surrounded by peacock blue reference books, in safari shorts, high gym socks with gold and blue stripes at the top; and a man reading behind the magazine rack, one leg pulled up high on his otherleg making a sharp right angle. And very quiet, lights buzzing, voices through the door from the circulatinn desk and catalouge, the flutter of pages from the man reading.

XI Sun in Cancer, Moon in Gemini

The juke box: Somebody said let me take you to bed/ With money and lies messed up your head/You were only sixteen, a girl from the villages....

The food counter has a deli ice-box, containing chocolate cake, pound cake, fruit cup, canolli, everything individually wrapped in plastic. On top of the ice-box a rack bulges with differenct kinds of chips, and a separate rack with health food snacks, little bricks of nuts and honey. Coke machine, Vitality orange juice machine with a picture of oranges sliced in half and a pitcher pouring orange juice. There's a glass door suspended at an angle over the salad bar that sometimes nudges people's heads as they're getting

their salads.

Some afternoon pool on the Monday before 4th of July, their heavy hiking boots on. Hand perched on hip in a gentle self-caress, fingers a bit tense, a moment of watching, collecting. Itching his nose quickly just before shooting.

Imitation wood siding, wooden tables, people bending over over sandwiches and salads. Little Feat on the loudspeaker. I don't want the potato chips take them back. In this little glassed in vestibule when you come downstairs, before you come into the main part, a tropical painting with all the shades of green, some kind of winged dinosaur resting under atree.

Willie Nelson sings, Can't make it without you, don't get around much anymore. The way hips and legs, ass, stand and walk in blue jeans. Walking holding a light jacket in one hand, then the other, then across his shoulders.

Both sandwich maker and customer purse their lips to see it on the plate, heaping, the top part of the bun floating on the filling, creamy tuna fish. Sunflower seeds and broccoli at the salad bar, her friend sitting smoking and watching her at the salad bar, both intent. Behind the counter, a man delivering Stroh's beer, in uniform, reddish blonde hair and beard.

XII Sun in Leo, Moon in Sagittarius

Sitting next to me, slouching in her chair, is a pink satin woman in a blue satin evening dress with blue fur at the bodice, yellow, pink and blue yarn hair, and big striking green plastic eyes. Staring eyes, off-center red yarn mouth, her hair shaking in the breese from the air-conditioning vent.

Some of the other sculptures, from summer session sculpture classes, are assembled from pipe: one is called "French Waiter" -- it looks just like a

waiter carrying a tray with a napkin draped over his arm.

Three people come to look, two men and a woman. The two men are wearing sandles and ties slung around their necks, undone. They talk self-consciously, in and out of a whisper, in the large entry-hall of the church; there's just the three of them and me, still sitting next to the pink satin lady.

Well that's it, says the woman, and they walk out. I am staring at a huge brass sculpture, not part of the exhibit, over the door into the church proper, of a flat bronze being somewhere between a bat and a man, arms stretched up and feet stretching down as if from the tension of flight, with the inscription below in flat bronze letters, "A Little Lower Than the Angels." On another wall, a neon sculptuer -- three streams of pink, orange and red neon on an aluminum box, with a piece of dark plexi-glass curved over it and curving out and away from it, the edges of the plexi-glass catching the light of the neon from different angles in pencil-thin lines.

At home I help Ray unload the bench seat from the back of his van so that he can use the space for hauling lumber. Once set out back of the house, the seat seems just right; we sit listening to the birds, noisy in the green heat.