

January 1994

First Day

Alan Soldofsky

San Jose State University, alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/eng_complit_pub



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alan Soldofsky. "First Day" *Manoa* (1994): 16-17.

This is brought to you for free and open access by the English and Comparative Literature at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

memorized. We drop our seeds
each season, fields of us

flourishing as dust that
drifts down the coastline of heaven.

STARRY NIGHT

A great river swirls in the skies
above Arles. Vincent loved its whirlpools
and eddies, its blazing spheres and milky
streams. It is as if the day of judgment
were upon us, the curtain torn open,
every secret revealed. As if the beauty we give
ourselves up to had long before degraded him.
Impossible to stand close
without it scorching the skin.
How many of us truly want love
to tear us open, to burn its triumphant
thumbprint into our foreheads? The villagers
have put candles in their windows
for protection. Theirs is a dim heaven,
monumental and consumed. The hills sway,
an almost undetectable rhythm, a wave
pulsing in the earth, lapping
a moonlit field. The cypress
in the foreground smolders, a ruin of flame
beyond which the delirious wheels of Blake
and Ezekiel spin above the distant, gray
needle of the village church steeple.

FIRST DAY

Hand in hand, we go across the grounds
until under 8:30's hard brilliance
we stand—father, mother, younger
son—in a knot, talking with others
who've come like us out of the sheen
of summer. The children, spying
playmates on the playground, look past
the perishable faces of their parents.
The ball field has turned brown,
the spiky grass in clumps, the dirt

cracked. Nothing too old or new
here. We compose our kids
for the cameras as though what
they were they should remember.
As if they would change the moment
the door opened, beneath
a jet's rumbling roar, and
the teacher greeted them,
their fingers loosening in our hands,
and asked them to line up,
boys here, girls there, to enter
through that sun-filled room
lives they couldn't have imagined
we had not given them.