Spring 1961

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Connecticut College

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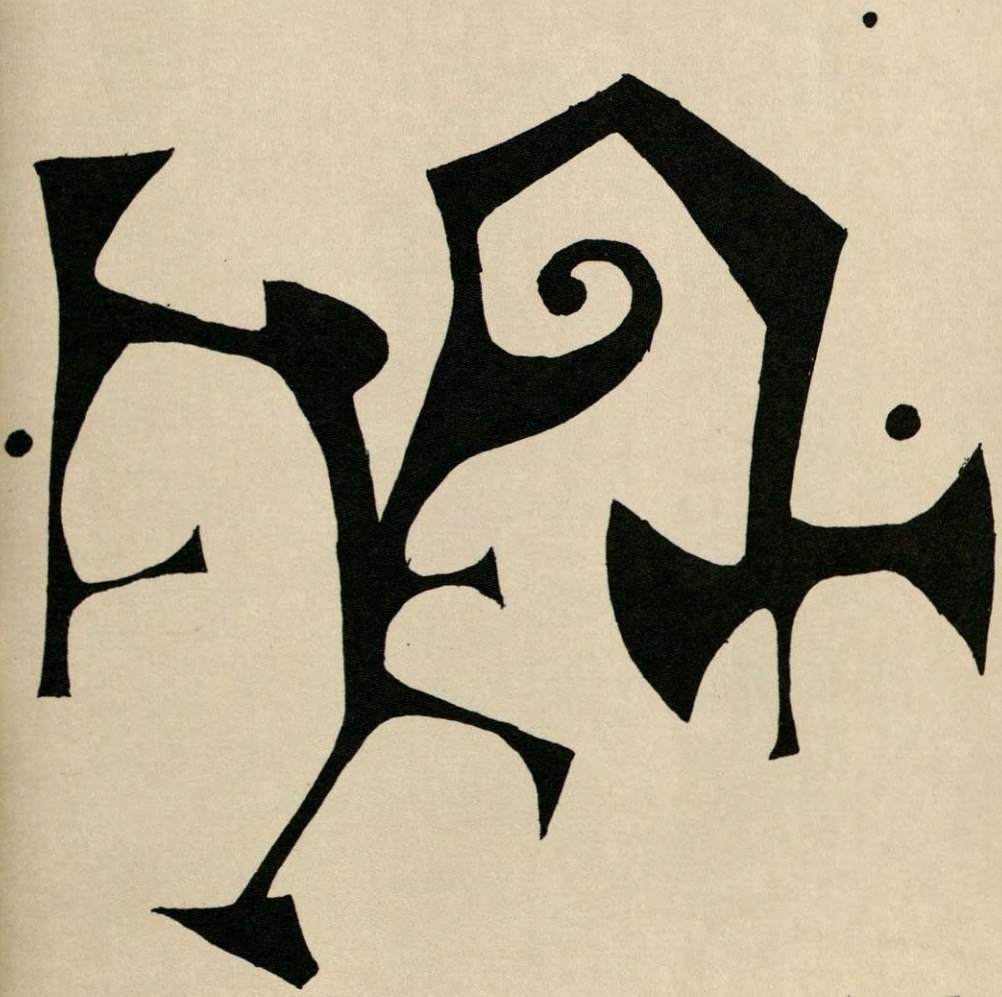

Vol. IV No 2

INSIGHT

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

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EDITORIAL

In a recent lecture given at Pembroke College, August Heckscher, Director of the Twentieth Century Fund, spoke of the artist as the prophet of our time. He emphasized the need for recognition and support of the artist in a society whose standards of excellence have been largely determined by industrialization.

The relationship between the artist and society is often misunderstood. The rôle of the artist is that of both the destroyer and the creator: he must modify and sometimes violate the world-view of his own period in order to construct the outlines of an image which will one day be consistent with the values of a new generation. In our dedication to the material achievement of this century, we neglect to look at ourselves in terms of those human resources which have enabled us to progress beyond the primitive environment of our ancestors. Bound up with each of these resources is the power to create.

As members of a modern society which is richly endowed with modes of communication, we cannot overlook our responsibility to co-ordinate cultural growth with economic growth. The failure to integrate the work of the artist into our contemporary perspective is to deny the validity of self-evaluation and of change. As a prophet, the artist believes in life. He is the advocate of progress, which is measured by the magnitude of the sacrifice required. And this sacrifice is the abandonment of extraneous values in the interest of a more vital form of experience.

ROSALIND LISTON

my Christ

my Christ
drags himself
through the streets
of an ancient city

afraid in the way of mortals,
reduced to man

the symbol of his
failure
crushes him beneath it
his eyes are blurred with
fear

my Christ,
stumbling slowly
to his death

drags his cross
through a city
of infinite loneliness

up the long hill
to a final question

MARCIA SILVERMAN, '61

Moment in Montage

I am in a square room with only three things in it. Me the bed and the light. Distance from here where I am on the bed to the light approximately four yards. The light is a remarkably stupid protrusion with its 75-watt bulb thrust into a red ten-cent lamp shade. If the cavemen came back and saw this Thing sticking out of the wall, what would they make of it? Now that I see it and I see its stupidity, I . . . I what? . . . I do nothing . . . I try to think. Why not think about the light? You know, start from the easy, progressing slowly (it's always a slow process) slowly, slowly, slowly, and then . . . Boom . . . IDEA. So I look at the light and I think: Ugly. Ugly . . . mugly . . . pugly . . . puddle . . . puddle . . . umbrella. Train whistle outside. Must be a freight train. Last year, down on the beach, we got up as far as in the 80's counting the cars. Lost track because of that damned dog that kept yapping his fool head off at us. She kept on counting. Dogs never did bother her. Should get over the habit of biting my cheek. For one thing it looks so unattractive. Everyone does it now. Sort of a fad, like the trench coat or Zen. Always meant to pick up one of those pocket books to catch some quick cocktail knowledge. Couldn't understand where she ever found the time to read up on all that sort of thing and sound so authoritative, until she told me the trick of it all: "Darling, you don't *read*. Heavens no. You imbibe. It's always amusing see how far you can get with it. But the real talent is in bowing out gracefully. Manage to spill your drink and then everything's forgotten in the rush for napkins." Why is it that radiator heat smells so strongly of radiator heat? The little knocks that come out of it are vaguely reassuring. Inevitable is what it is. Sure sign of winter. Her favorite winter sport used to be skating. She looked splendid in her red scarf. Peter, in the old days, would tease her about how long it took her to knit it. God, they were once a handsome couple. He tall, Scandinavian, athletic. She small, long dark hair, rosy-faced. You'd think she had lived to laugh. All of a sudden it's turned cold. When I said I didn't want a blanket, they should have known damn well I was only being polite. That's the trouble: people are only too willing to Believe. Play it by ear and you'll be much better off. Only hard and fast rules you can count on are consuming, digesting, and respiring. Everything else is as changeable as toothpaste. It's so cold I'm sweating. If she could see me now, she'd never forgive me. Even to the last she scorned such "nonsense" as she called it. Ah yes, the church bells. There is something very naked about the sound of bells at dusk. It's as if the moment were prolonged so that you could arrange yourself for the next leap. You say, "It's Tuesday, it's five o'clock, and when I get back I know I have to feed the cat and put the things in the oven." The sort of baneful regularity

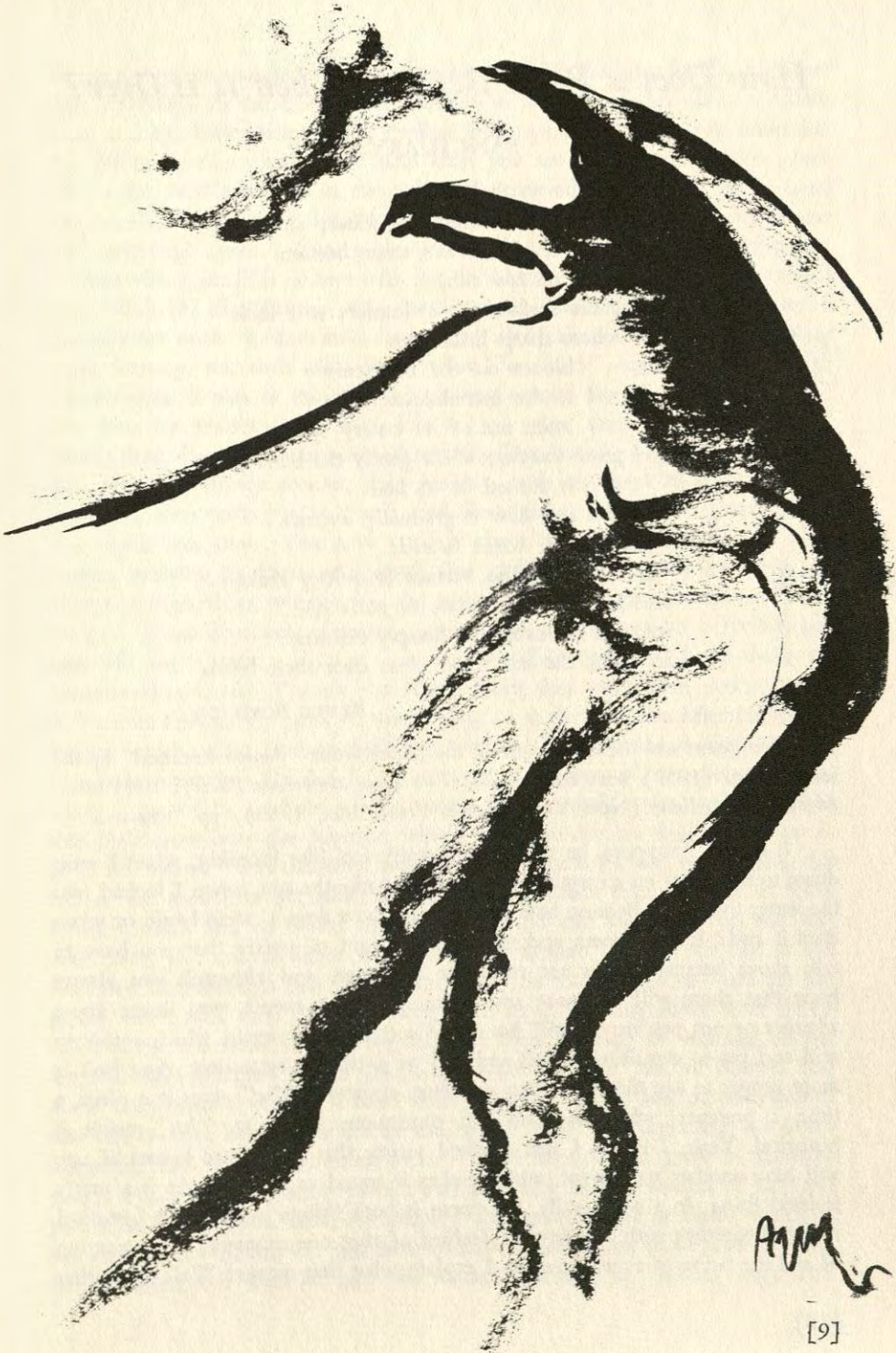
she adhered to, addicted as she was with Peter's scheduling of time. Each evening, before the train got in, she would painfully prepare. The dishes, left over from the day, the beds in each of our bedrooms, the sofa pillows, the dusting and emptying of wastebaskets—all furiously, nervously attended to within a half-hour upheaval. With nervous satisfaction, she knew the house, her conversation, was in readiness. When Peter arrived, the scene laid, all he needed to know was that she forgave. He'd come up the cellar stairs—we could hear his tread even if we were in the living room—the cellar door would open. From her voice I could tell how the evening would go. It was either, "Oh, again, Peter," in a flat half-sigh, if she saw the bulging payer bag, or else, "It gives turkey soup tonight, darling. Pleased?" Bottles . . . pottle . . . nottle . . .nutmeg. Stew. The chicken pie, left as it was for Peter, on the table with a cake-tin cover over it, left as a souvenir for his dried-up taste buds. It would stay there until God knows when in the morning, when he'd lumber up out of his stupor. The only signs left by morning were the chair with its five-hour sunken indentation, and the soggy crusts on the plate in the dining room. Brown liquid producing stumbling steps and unconscious leers. I could almost hear the smell on his moistened lips. Seeing it, smelling it was what anyone could do. But the shame became the secret for just the three of us. And now the shame . . . The nurses come, the nurses go. Gather the hearses unto the nurses. Distribute a pill among the ill. And pills, those poisonous plastic tubes which dribble down the esophagus; pills, which ally-oop their slimy way into slimier recesses; their ineffectiveness decries institutionalism. One thing, only one thing, relieves me: she never was subjected to the formula of medical aid. God knows she needed help when Peter didn't even go to the office anymore. It was then that she took up drinking. Coming back from my job, in the afternoons, I was met by the stillness of a house whose inmates were silenced by the dulling effect of half-drained glasses. The days became one long string of stumbling foot falls and stammering excuses. That was two months ago. Oh, here comes the nurse at last. I wonder if she'll bring me a blanket.

MARY ASWELL, '62

SONNET

I hear the crickets singing in the night,
The sweet oppressive scent of summer air
Lies softly on my nostrils, and my hair
Goes tumbling down my back as if in flight.
If my appearance may not be quite right
And in my dress there seems a lack of care
I say to you, of soberness beware
For circumspection seldom yields delight.
Someday I shall be old and too correct
To let my hair go flying down my back.
Then girls like me will greet me with respect
As I pass by all dressed in sober black.
But I am young and cannot now connect
A summer night with solemn winter's lack.

AMELIA FATT, '64



How Does a Poem Begin? When is it Over?

SANCTUARY

because the warm honey
    is never dissolved, by water,
but drifts on the river's stone bottom
like wads of raw silk,
under the surface the swimmers still look
    where sharp little stars
        bloom on the bone-tree
    and tender incredulous fish
        swim out of its watery eyes
and grow warmer; while gently the bone-tree
        is turned in its bed
    and sees how it gradually wakens.
around it the water is still:
but the sheet-glass surface is quietly shaken
and breaks into ripples, as gulls rise
into the rooms of the hungry children
to watch the tall water close over their heads.

BRUCE BOYD '58

This poem and the quotations in the paper from "Venice Recalled" by the same author (1959) were taken from: *The New American Poetry*: 1945-1960, ed. Donald Allen, (New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1960), pp. 158-160.

It began, I suppose, he said, if you really feel like listening, when I went down to the water on a certain day a couple of months ago, when I looked into the water that time. Because how can you say: how does a poem begin or when does it end? It's the poem and not a certain unit of poetry that you have to talk about because poems are each one an event, and although you always hope that there will be more and more particular events, you never know whether or not you maybe will have that sort of event again which seems so acid and yet so exquisitely sweet and full of daring in retrospect. And isn't it more proper to say *the* event than *an* event, anyway? "The" gives it a place, a time, a presence, which is vivid and continuous somehow. "An" makes it historical. Yeah, I know, I just finished saying that one never knows if one will have another such event, which makes it sound as if I thought it a pretty isolated thing. In a way, really, the poem is both things in time: an historical moment together with the flow of feeling of that one moment. The mention of and the being of time. How can I explain what that means? Well, it's rather

like going to the movies, and the characters, an old Southern family, have lost their plantation in the Civil War, and they're sitting in a dim little Northern room and the belle turns to her mother and says: Mother, do you remember the White Cotillion last year? And then you see in a flashback the whole thing—the swirling skirts in the ballroom, upstairs the heroine's being laced into her stays by a leering, kindly old Mammy, a mass of soft strawberry blonde curls tumbling down a firm, pink, unblemished expanse of back, the tender moment when she falls in love with her dark haired escort. Oh, but I'm carried away. Well, it's like that . . . time for the poem. The idea for it did happen in human time once. I came back here and walked along the sea wall thinking about nothing, but with ideas about what "Sanctuary" might be like, though I knew what it was in itself, felt it darting around the corners of my mind, very like the 'tender incredulous fish' in fact. And then, in another part of human time, I sat down and started to write "Sanctuary", first the rough draft, then jiggering things around, then reading parts out loud to myself in the bathroom, then testing more words, and then putting in and taking out things, and—well, you know. You have feelings about things going on in your head always, growing in there very much like children, I suppose, and they are always feelings about more or less the same kinds of things. Leitmotives. Something, a chance observation, perhaps, something reminds you of a feeling, but now you see it with a flash of new light—different angles of the thing are illuminated suddenly. Though you always knew they were there, you re-realize it. You see how to say parts of that feeling or at the time the reflection of the feeling which seems at once the most true and basic side to it. Strange . . . I vaguely remember the day I began to think "Sanctuary", the few moments when it grew into a whole rounded poem in my mind. I was walking beside that little river near the Junction which runs into the sea half a mile or so from the house. I was thinking about Japan and how I could get together the rest of the money to get back there for a while next year. I began to think of the curious and particular things I would do and see again the first few days back, and one of them was seeing the women lay out the silk in the river that runs through that little town I told you about—Ogichu—and the sun in the water. And then I walked along some more, thinking about other things and cursing the sand for slowing me, not even thinking of walking on the sea wall even though I had to get back in time for some "do" of Mary's. You know, sometimes I wonder if one's best, the most fruitful sort of observations that one can use later, come not as you would think: walking along the beach inspecting the twilight; mmmmmmnn—I used to play that game of sensitive young writer alone with his private and painfully unique version of life and nature in college, too. And one keeps it up unconsciously at times, which is the amusing thing. Anyway you have to have a destination to be able to really observe along the way. So near the house I climbed up the sea steps with

"Sanctuary" lurching along behind me. And then that night, I could get it out onto paper, or at least some of it. First the feeling, the idea of sanctuary—womb. I was the hungry child once; well, now that I am older I become the "hungry children" — hungry for the warmth of the honey-days. I remember years ago I used to walk along a river bank a very little like the one near the Junction. It was dirty, polluted, with odors of decaying fish and deserted dwelling places, and dead and mutilated animals of various sorts lay scattered beyond the large rocks, and there were beams and broken bottles, and people's old shoes and underwear. And one time, in the lovely peace and gentle lapping of the water, I had a great longing, as one occasionally does, to be a cradled child again. So intense a feeling it was—I remember looking cautiously about to make sure none of the old men who ferquented the place were near, and then I furtively slid my thumb into my mouth—a great hulking boy of fourteen or so, and slipped down into the soft, decaying grass and lay for a while, rocking a bit and frightening all the bleary little grass spiders. But it grew cold, and so I left the place and loped back towards the highway—sheepishly—and to the house, leaving a trail behind me of squashed rats spilled out into the sand as a remembrance of my hungriness. So in a way the poem could be said to have begun there, you see.

Oh, but you really asked me how one ends one's poems. Was it *when* a poem ended? I talked about time, didn't I? The time of the poem . . . once I said in another poem: "Venice Recalled," that—yes, there it is ,that 'a new poem always was something/ the making, something/ that asked to be shared at once: seldom a "result"/ to praise or blame, and never this only.' I guess I can't talk about the caught moment of the present in a better way now—the "making" and not the made it is. You see? I used to think about why people did write poems, paint pictures, all that. It seemed, when I was younger and more cynical, perhaps, as if that sort of activity must at best be a sad little attempt but a never-ending one to wall up the threat of eternity, of the future, of the forever of our own namelessness. Ah, look: this is mine, remember me; once I knew these things just as you do, but look—I made this. Does anyone create something and then sign an anonym to his creation, unless he feels that his name should not be known is possibly degrading connotations? And how many Works of Art are known, by the express wish of their creator, as being of his family and not of one particular member? And yet all of our creations are known first as the work of the animal, man, and then as our own unique expressions. Perhaps because they have to be a sharing, no matter how much one might want to believe in islands. Same thing as when I said in "Venice Recalled" that language was not the 'substitute' but the 'enlargment' of our living. But even though we betray first allegiance to the species rather than the individual, the poets and the artists can, in a way, make their own provinces. Time is a good example of that, you see. When I enlarge the moment of

feeling or of some special occurrence with which the poem deals (in "Sanctuary," the swimmers looking hungrily for the sanctuary and the whole mood of the landscape under water into which they have come, and the gulls, the gulls), I give it that present time forever. I know when the poem as a poem ends because of the limits of my own feeling about the subject and because of a near satisfaction when I have shown some of those angles which I suddenly rediscovered and which themselves help to define the poem as an entity. In "Sanctuary," I wanted to describe the search for sanctuary in one of its more intimate and characteristic instances—caught at the unconscious level, outward-turned. I wanted to re-create the warmth and mood of the sanctuary for which they look, translated into terms of nature. Simplicity. The poem's time can "go on" forever . . . just as this little soliloquy might seem to, unfortunately for you! Well, we'll go into supper soon—ah, how nicely you protest! But you did ask about the ending. The time of the poem can go on forever, but it is as if it were a circle in which the artist has inscribed the event of the poem. The circle of special time sets it off from other sorts of events in their flow of circumstance and gives the poem-event an identity; as this special time is related to actual time, so the poem-event is to the actual event. The event in the poem is described by its time, and yet it is a separate, defined entity, also. In "Sanctuary," I made the event of the poem a kind of pyramid in its circle of time, whose base is formed of an actual, natural base: the river bottom. The pyramidal ascent progresses in the poem from the swimmers lying under the surface of the water and drawing in its warmth, to the bone tree before them, to the irony of the rising gulls (and the writer) watching detached from above. And so the scene, you see, has to be set, and the action occur, and then comes a sort of alien sentiment to shade the whole. And perhaps this 'alien sentiment', in some cases, is so mixed with the other that you can't tell where one begins and the other leaves off. To me, every poem seems to work this way. You try it and see. The poet provides his own ending, according to his plans for the poem and his sense of poetic rules and finally the satisfaction he begins to feel—an indication that the poem may soon be finished off. Yet the ending is already foreseen and provided for in what he has chosen to work with. Come, now, don't look so skeptical—is that too simple an answer for you? I suppose it must be. However, we must really go in and have a bit of supper, and we'll talk again later.

JENNIFER DUNNING, '63

The Fire Crackles On

The fire crackles on.
The red-topped flame was yellow when
We came and it is almost dying now.
You want to poke it? Do.
The white logs crumble at your touch,
So add a log and make them burn:
The flame will twist and turn
And rise in different shapes. You see?
It never is the same.
The warmth is good, you say. I think so too.
It's what attracts us to the flame,
Linking the changing sparks
In one effect on me and you.
It helps to reacquaint us.
Of course we changed while far
Apart; the fire did so too.
The warmth, like what we had before,
When given time will take
Its hold on us. Again
We'll be the same; don't fear
The change will disappear.

MARION HAUK, '61

The Pidgeon

Dull maroon velvet draped the tall windows of the Smoking Room. Dark red plush covered the chairs, and waiters in maroon jackets stepped noiselessly around the room on thick red carpet.

Fletcher loved the thick carpet. "I am like a cat," he thought as he glided through the room, clinking the crystal quietly and tinkling the paper-thin china. In his ten years as a waiter at The Club, Fletcher had never raised his voice above a whisper. He listened to the sounds of crystal and china on his tray and thought, "Glass bells herald my presence." He glanced at his thin, rigid form each time he passed the great gilded mirror on the wall. "I am Dignity," he thought.

The wind whistled one grey afternoon, and there was no rain. The Smoking Room was empty, and Fletcher stood at the window that was never opened, watching the people far below clutch their coats about them to keep out the wind. A white pidgeon huddled in the corner of the sill.

"Go away," Fletcher thought. "Go away, you filthy old bird. You'll mess up my window sill."

But the pidgeon endured the cruel stare of the waiter to keep out of the wind. Fletcher knitted his eyebrows and forced the full strength of his thinking upon the bird.

"Go away," he thought. "Go away, dirty smelly creature, go away."

The pidgeon cringed, but remained on the window sill. Fletcher glared into the little red eye. The pidgeon turned away its head and huddled closer to the window.

"Good evening, Fletcher," said a quiet voice behind the waiter. "Bird-watching?" Fletcher jumped. "Good evening, sir," he whispered. He cast a last stare at the pidgeon. "I hate you," he thought, and the pidgeon flew away.

Quiet, sleeping city under a dark sky. Whistling wind and no rain. Fletcher hugged his warm coat about him as he walked home through the dark streets. A car hissed by over sticky pavements. Fletcher saw a cat moving on a fire escape. It was a huge, furry animal creeping stealthily along the railing. It crouched, and then leapt suddenly, noiselessly out of sight.

"Wonderful," thought Fletcher. "Silent, graceful. Like me." Then he thought that it would be a fine thing if the cats could eat all the pidgeons in the city. "The cats would be well fed and it would rid the city of a disgusting pest," he thought as he walked on in the wind. "I think it could be arranged." And he thought of writing to the Sanitation Department.

Fletcher walked down four steps and unlocked the door of his apartment.

His one room was small and spotless, and the furniture was sparse, but expensive. He turned on his phonograph softly and listened to the music of Debussy as he undressed. He poured himself a small glass of brandy and sipped it as he read the evening paper. Then he got into bed, turned out the light and lay in the dark with his eyes colsed, listening to the soft music of Debussy.

He did not go right to sleep as usual, but stayed awake long enough to hear the phonograph turn itself off. He got up and turned the record over. Then he lay down again and tried to put himself to sleep by thinking of sleepy cats. Large, furry cats, their yellow eyes blinking drowsily in the noonday sun. Soft, graceful pussycats falling softly, softly asleep.

He was walking along the block toward his apartment. It was night, and he was thinking about cats. He could feel a cold, raw wind blowing but he could not hear it. It was quiet, and he began to wonder if he was deaf. Then he heard a soft, rhythmic beating. It grew louder, the flapping of great wings. A white pidgeon swooped passed him. It froze the second it passed his face, then flew on. It had stared at him with its little red eye. "What a funny eye," Fletcher thought. Harp and triangle playing Debussy, softly, softly growing louder, loud, then quiet. Quiet. Then a sudden light, and Fletcher saw shining black bodies twisting and writhing around the trunk of a palm tree. The noonday sun shone on the black limbs, glistening sweat, and they undulated up and down the tree trunk. Horns and tympanni playing Debussy, fortissimo, and the wet black bodies moved like snakes on the tree. Then dark quiet. Fletcher was still walking along the block toward his apartment. He became conscious of the sound of his heartbeat and the feel of his blood rushing through his veins. He felt his pulse throbbing in every part of his body. He dug his fingernails into the palms of his hands and he could not see, but he knew he had drawn blood. He wanted to wash his hands but there was no water, and he dug his nails harder into his palms. Flute and piano playing Debussy, caressing. His heart and blood stopped pounding. He saw blue. The feeling of looking up at the evening sky through the leaves of a grove of trees. The leaves began to clear away, and he saw the stars suspended in the deep blue sky. His heart beat louder. He saw a shining star move out of its place and come toward him. His blood raced again. The silver speck came nearer, grew larger. It began to take shape. Above the screaming of his body, Fletcher heard wings flapping. The star was a bird hurtling toward him. The form of a white pidgeon filled the entire sky. He saw the red eye. And then the face. A woman with white skin and silver hair blowing. And red-brown eyes. Then it was gone. He was walking down the four steps to his apartment. His pulse was bursting his eardrums. His blood eddied through his body. He put the key in the lock. Heart beating. Then he saw that the lock was the pidgeon. Blood

swirling. He turned the key. The heavens burst, and rain poured forth.

He was sweating, and he felt dizzy. He sat up and looked about him. The grey light of dawn filled the room.

"I'm alone too much," he thought, and he lay down again. Then he thought how strange it was that he should feel lonely because he had always loved to be alone. "Damn that pidgeon!" he thought. He was still shaking, and he thought he could feel his pulse in every part of his body. "Music will soothe" he thought, but he shuddered when he remembered the music of his dream. He turned on the radio, and a cheery voice relaxed him.

"I'll get a cat," he thought. "That's what I'll do. And I'll call the Sanitation Department about the pidgeons this afternoon."

Fletcher closed his eyes. He heard the dry wind whistling. "Who was that face?" he thought. It was familiar, but he could not remember who it was. Then just as he dozed off to sleep again, he remembered that it was his mother.

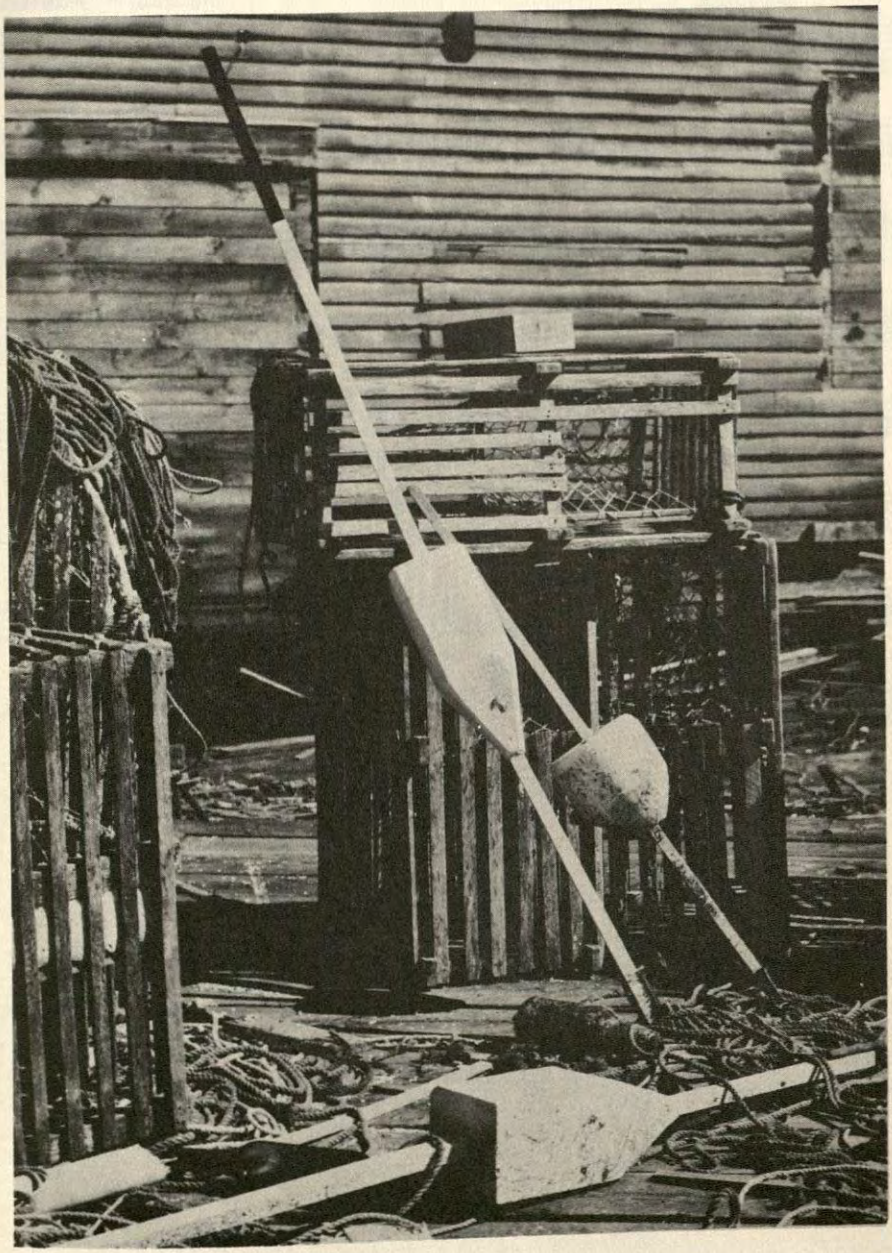
SUZANNE TUCKER, 61

TRIBUTE

There i
sam
an who iskno
wn by what
he wou
ldc
all ana
lmost name
: e.e. cummings

HE
(we think)
is byfarther
wOnd
erfu
lthan
anygu
y like alan
ginsberg

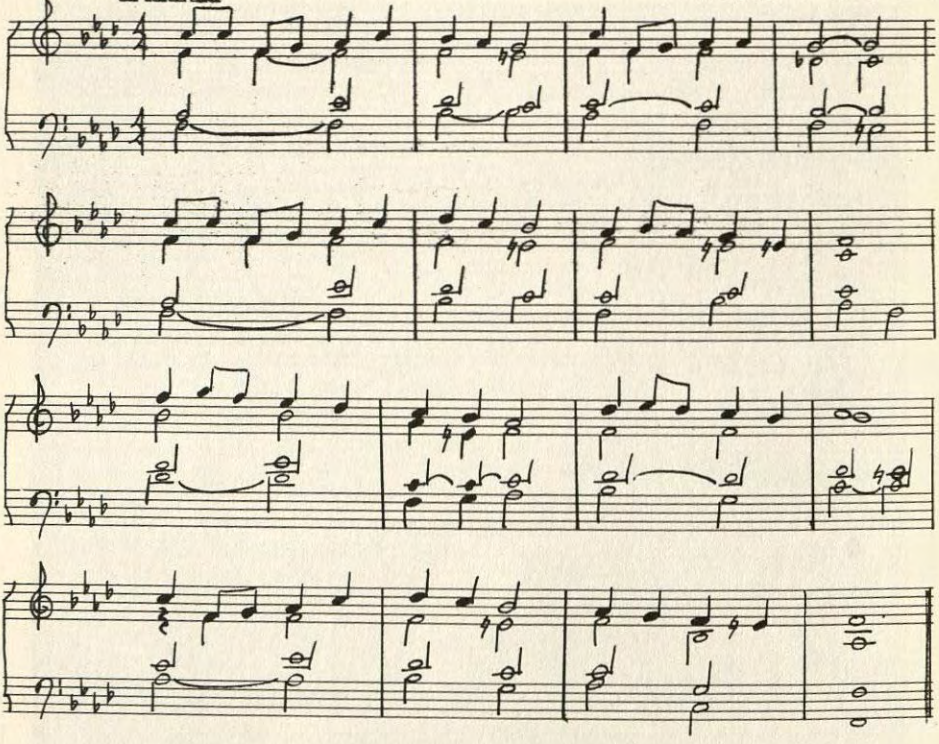
ELIZA AMES, '63



A Song in Folk Style

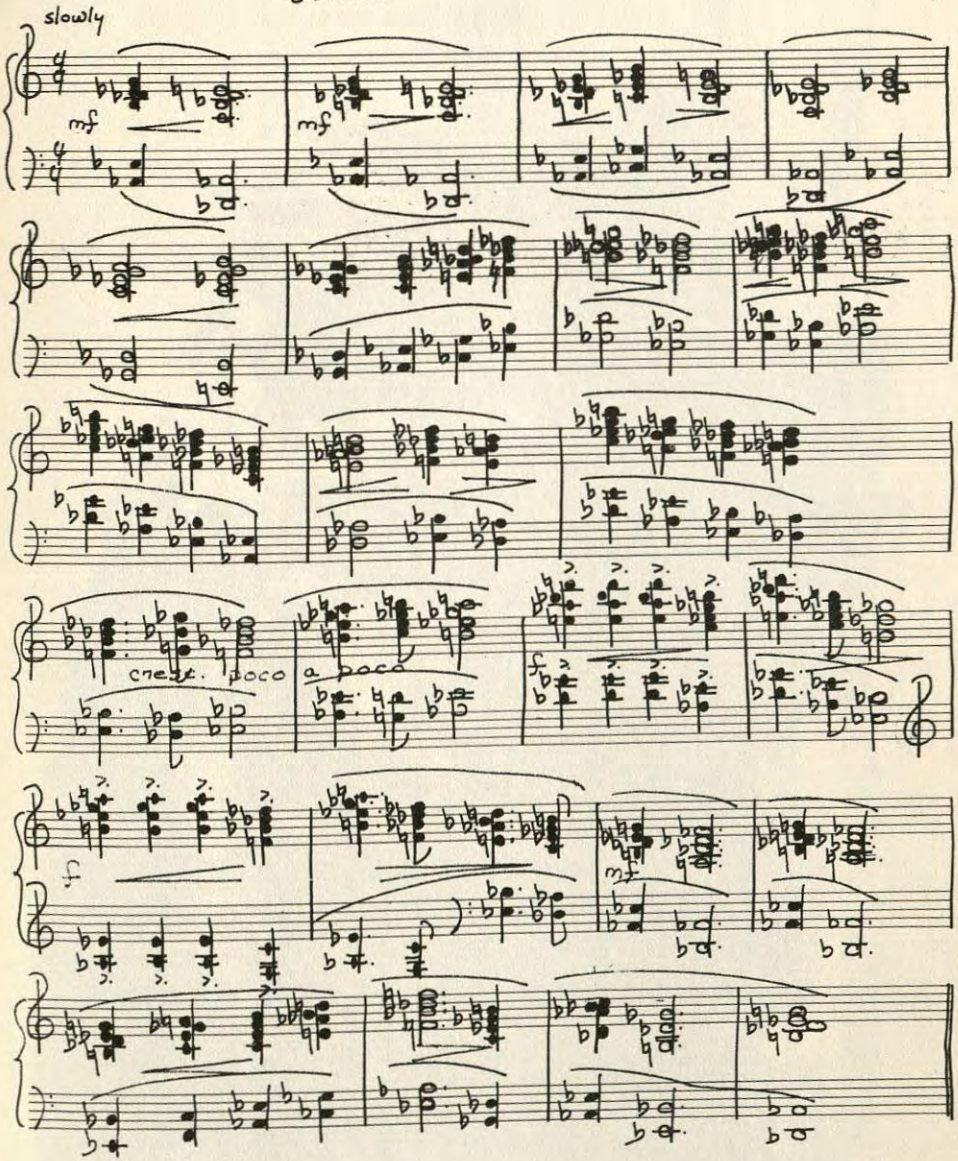
Andante

Marcia A. Mueller '63



Jeanne Hubbell
1961

Evening



[22]

before the noisy crowd
in the bright glare
of praise
a ceremonial gift
of roses
black-red and lush
with petals thick
and moist
they droop
upon my arm

tomorrow they
will take their place
among the dried and curling leaves
of triumph
and but once a year
I'll lift the lid
of their brass coffin
where they keep
their scent

for one brief instant
I inhale
the smothering sweetness
honey-bright
and black
as swooning
summer nights
then quickly shut it
lest I lose
myself in their decay

AMELIA FATT, '64

montparnasse

dans une grande rue
dans un quartier bien connu
pour ses jeunes—
"les artistes et intellectuels
de Paris"
(on ne mentionne pas
les expatriés)
un vieillard se promène
le long de la rue
d'un côté à l'autre,
les mains derrière le dos
la tête baissée;
il porte une grande affiche
il se courbe sous son poids
les barres de bois l'estropient
on ne remarque pas son visage
sous le vieux béret . . .
c'est un visage marqué
par la grille du metro
sur laquelle il dort chaque nuit
rechauffé par les lourdes odeurs
des trains
qui le parfument.
l'affiche annonce
la boxe, le judo, et tous
les sports
des forts
des hommes braves
qui ont des exemples
d'un monde courageux—

pour aujourd'hui
le vieillard se promène
les yeux fermés sur
l'endroit de Paris bien connu.
        attendant leur Messie
        dans les cafés,
        les artistes et intellectuels
        (on ne mentionne pas
        les expatriés)
        lui tournent le dos,
        ferment les veux
        courbent la tête
        en regardant les verres
        devant eux—
prenant exemple
sur un vieil homme
qui absurdement
porte sur son dos
un monde courageux
qu'il ne voit pas.

MARCIA SILVERMAN, '61

POEM

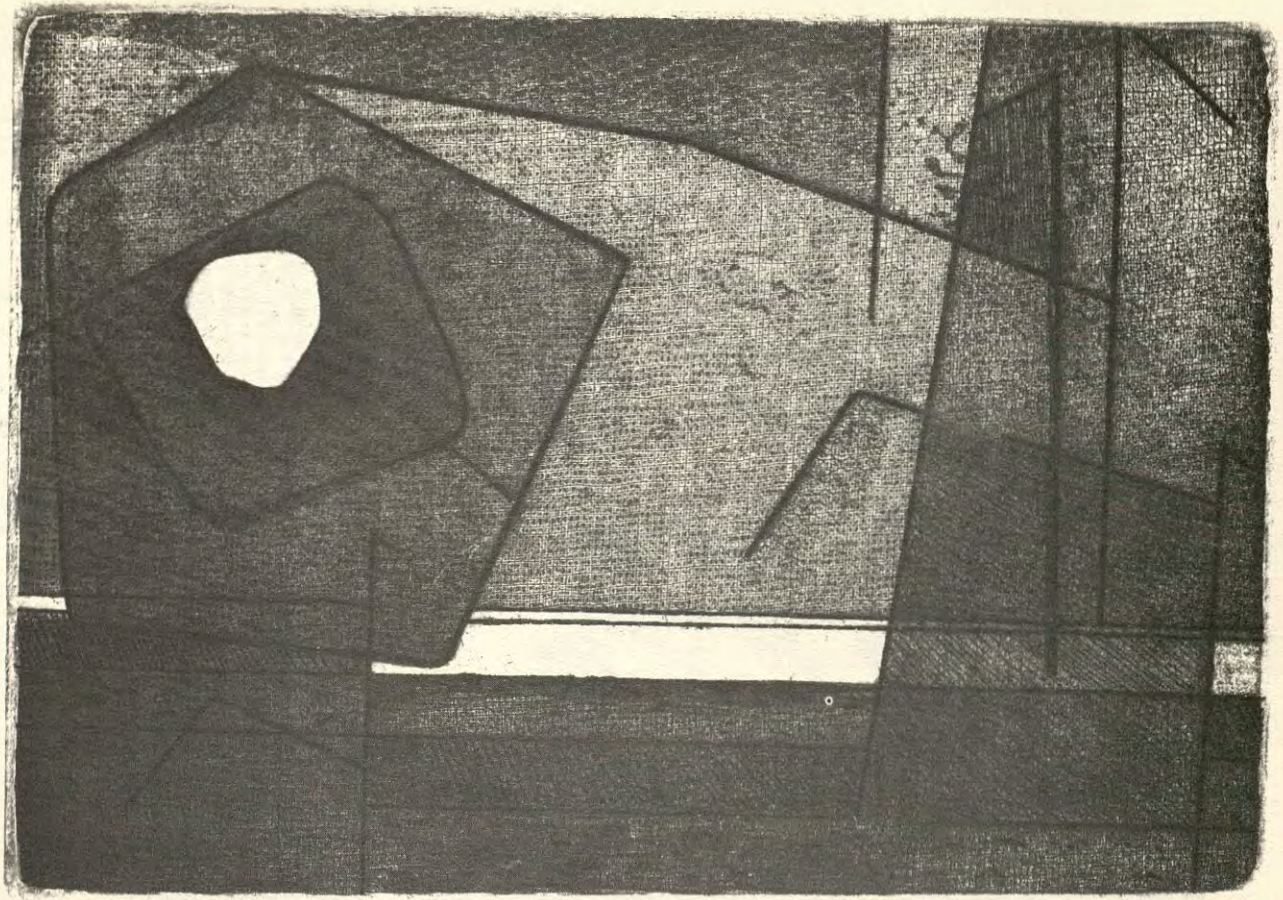
she was her own
cold and quiet girl
whose whispers of hair
wrapped her face round
as a cloud on certain days
will wrap the sun about with sadness
and she walked
with head bent back against the wind.

she was her own
cold and quiet girl
who never shared a face
with any man, nor called herself
by words unknown to strangers
and indeed, stranger
she was to all except herself

days come
and moments go
like sun and clouds
that alternate in any wind
and she travelled through them
most untragically:
which we would never understand

she was her own
most cold, most quiet girl
misted in a world outdoors and
hands and hair like all of us:
what made her safe and sorrowful
was that her hands belonged in pockets and
her hair whispered about her face like autumn,
whose heart hides itself from us in changing seasons

MARCIA SILVERMAN, '61



INCANDESCENT FIELD

Ann S. Mullin

Amonagain

Joice Killmeer

nylonrun slippsyslidesy isisihtaragorically paso Victoriasses und Abusymbol et karrnacal inter hamidbar notresüdensee dripping. Osirispieces scattered totetemdestroyedem how? Reincarnalcation, rampant. Ghea lacrymose—boohoohooboosmiffdripbookleenex. Isis remishmoshed Osiris allsortspieces. Big fish, little fish y one unseed, Raward defalling excumulus. Veronica hasderchif knows thirdmantheme, tayo, Magie alone underthe dogwoodtree. Equilateralimrhamabodiam, wedlighter bïtte, avatar bumpybovine transverses ex yad Siva upo sputnickwise moon. Overhump, over Burmaroad anit wasso. Clinglangchingchong, boommuchrome, bikinesunk atoll, andtherewasM.M.swingontheouthousedoor, da, da, da, da, —thru E PLURIBUS UNICORN terrain posturing past ourladyoftheharbor and then, amen, alone, along

The Clue

A Reader's Guide to *Amonagain*

This prose poem, though brief, is fraught with pregnant symbolism. It is highly evident that this intensely symbolic, polyphonically constructed, tale is an allegory encompassing not only a complete history of man on earth from the pyramids of the Nile to ICBM's, but also a stirring and thought provoking analysis of man's faiths, taboos and mores. Never before, and probably never again, will such passionate prose spring to life for the edification of mankind. To show the many faceted essence, and to indicate to the reader the scope of this great masterpiece of modern endeavor, we shall analyse the first word, and from then on the intelligent reader should be able to comprehend, without difficulty, the totality of meaning. Obviously, the word nylonrun incorporates the following nuances: "nylon" signifies the shabby synthetic quality of modern human ideas, and it also indicates the sheer inventive power of modern science. The small, but Jungian, phrase "run" suggests: the rivers of life, the rivers of paradise, the stream of ever passing humanity, time, the stream of consciousness, and the necessity of learning geography in this ever shrinking world of ours. Once the reader has become oritented via the first word, he finds himself inextricably interwomen in the fabric of this undying epic.

Christel Brendel, '62
Tamsen Evans, '62
Judith Klein, '63
Barbara Nichols, '62

My Brothers' Reefer

And you, brothers, profess a
care for My being, and offer
your concern to
My welfare
free from recompense.
Instruct Me. Give me your
ways.

My back ———— to your wheel
Mature potential chained,
effecting kinesthetic; brute
force for steel foundries.

My eye ———— to your sky
Telescopic vision tried,
expending myopia; sight to
suspend nuclear excrements of
latent migrating flocks.

My ear ———— to your mass media
Perfunctory cadence initiated,
to permeate immature, sterile
sense; mute transposition for
counterpoint.

My hand ———— to your assembly line
Augmented montony eulogized,
prescribing complacency;
listlessly implanted bowels
within the Body.

My feet ———— to your highway
Diapered wanderer pulled,
modulating at whim;
corduroy ruts for
a concrete way.

My voice ———— to your wind
Whip-lashed monotone routinized,
hiccuping chaff; sawdust to
quench the drought.

My heart ———— to your family
Palsied organ relinquished,
sperm for altruism; apathetic
contribution to humanity.

Consecrate My parts, My being
the only prerogative -
My consciousness to the altar
of your common good.

B. KRAAI, '63

Karl

Outside the sun was melting some of the snow off the asphalt paving that encircled the garage, causing short ribbons of steam to rise. But the winter air was still cold and the radiators inside hissed away. They did little good in trying to heat the center room of the garage; it was high ceilinged and wide, and had seldom been filled with heat, or noise, or cars. So the occasional cold clank of the mechanics' steel tools tried to send diagonal sounds to the hollow corners of the room but went no farther than the immediate working area. And the grease that had melted its way about the whole garage during the warm weather was now hardened; in smudges on the floor, in a film on the windows, in the supply cans, on their work shoes, under their nails, and in the surface dents of the side bench where Joe was refilling his grease gun.

A careless blob fell to his shoe. Funny shoes; they always settled to the stained cement floor more like they belonged to the garage than to him. He smiled vaguely, remembering the first time he had worn the heavy things. He had stubbed the steel enforced toes on the bus steps and lurching forward, had practically made falling dominoes of the line of children before him. That had been the first time. Now Karl Laber boarded the bus at Allerton every day and rode the hour's distance to Medford to be Joe, one of the mechanics at Benicak's Garage. He might have worked in his father's hardware store, in the same way his father had worked in his grandfather's, but he wanted to earn his own money and become himself, not just another Laber. His father hadn't said no, but only nodded his head steadily and silently in that so-that's-the-way-it-is manner.

Joe paused idly in his work; half listening to the radio coming from within the office and half thinking about getting off at three. All the mechanics got off at three on Saturday. That was the way Mr. Benicak had run his garage; give the boys time to be with the wife and children he said. It didn't matter if you weren't married, you still got off at three.

"Hey, Joe, did you see that female that come in here earlier this morning with that car of hers? I swear she didn't know the front of the car from the tail-end. 'There's something wrong with this car,' she says, 'and you boys better fix it good this time or I'll write to the Company.' So I took a look at her, the car, of course . . . " A snort came from under the car on the lift. Then a small acned face rolled from under the edge of the car. It was Arnie.

"A-and d-did you t-t-tell, c-could you tell her f-front from her t-tail-end?" The face disappeared and small nasal snorts could be heard again from under the car. The mechanic started to laugh, but looking at Joe, he continued, "So as I was saying before Arnie so rudely interrupts me, I took a look at the car.

Nothing I could find. So I says, 'Lady,' figuring I'll be real polite and all, 'Lady, there ain't nothing wrong with this car that I can lay my hands on, if you want to leave it with us for a few days, until the boys can get to it to give it a real going over,why . . ." Joe turned away from the car toward the bench again. The smile returned and his eyes went out the window, across and down the street to the bus stop and from there to Allerton and the evening that was to come. The radio's raspy echoes of prompted applause on some quiz program brought him back to the garage and he turned to the car. " . . . because the buzzer out front rang. So when I come back from pumping the gas Mr. Benicak was taking care of her. What a female. When it come to cars, it's always . . . "Another series of snorts from under the car on the lift. The hands and then the face appeared again.

"D-d-did I ever t-tell you about the d-dame I saw when . . . "

"Shut up, Arnie."

"B-but, Ray, I th-th-thought you l-liked to . . . "

"Shut up, I said."

The head and then the hands disappeared again. The three worked along for awhile in silence. A soup ad jangled away on the radio and then the beep that radio stations sound on the hour. Then the 'news-at-noon.'

Arnie sat on an empty crate at the far corner of the warm office with his legs crossed tightly and at the upper thigh. He wiggled one foot rapidly as he husched over his sandwich. From time to time he glanced quickly at Ray and then at Joe and then back to his food. Mr. Benicak had gone home for his hot meal at noon and Ray was stretched out in the swivel chair; his firm weight pushing the spring as far as it would go. One hand was in the pocket of his levis, the other was free to reach over to the desk and into his lunch pail without disturbing the balance of the chair. Joe sat relaxed on the other chair, folding each piece of wax paper and putting it back in his paper bag after each sandwich and cookie. Aunt Emma asked only this little thing of him. Ray watched him while he slowly wrinkled his own wax paper into a tight ball and snapping forward in the chair, threw the ball into the wastebasket by Arnie and swiveled toward Joe.

"Hey, Joe, what do you think about women, I mean, you know, going out and trying a few things and all. Do you ever think of doing that, huh?"

"Sure." Joe couldn't manage anything more. He blushed and moisture broke out in his palms for he had been thinking about Cecelia and about getting off at three.

" 'Sure,' he says," said Ray, winking at Arnie who wiggled his foot even faster and snorted again into his sandwich. "Come on now, Joe, how about coming out with Arnie and me this evening? All you do is get on your old bus and sit and smile at those dumb kids from the institute and then go on

home to your mother or your aunt or whoever makes you fold those damn papers like that."

"No, uh, Ray, I couldn't tonight. I mean I'm busy." He shifted his position on the chair and started to search in his lunch bag for some suddenly missing item.

"Come on now, Joe, are you really busy? I mean, you earning all this money here as a mechanic, and you're a good one, too, you know, why don't you go out and spend a little on some fun? I mean, what's your father? Somebody told me once, a plumber, hardware man, something like that."

"Hardware."

"Yeah, a hardware man, they make good money, too. He wouldn't mind your having some fun. I mean, it's not like the family was starving so Joe has to go out and work. I got the wife, no kids yet, but I mean we go out and live it up now and then. Arnie, he's a poor grease man and he don't make much and he goes out."

"Yeah," said Arnie as re started to echo the sentence, then stopped short and gave Ray another look. Ray continued.

"Hell, you're what, twenty, twenty-one?"

"Twenty-one."

'Yeah, you're twenty-one and not that I'm old grampa here but when I was twenty-one . . . "

Joe couldn't just blurt out, "my grandfather was Mr. Laber, the hardware man, and I'm earning money so that I won't have to be just another Mr. Laber like my father is and sell the same stupid things in the same old dirty store all my life and then die and leave it for my son to die in. I'm not going to make Cecelia fade out like my mother, or leave her behind like my Aunt Emma was. My brother Sebastian is smart and will learn; Father doesn't think of giving him to the business. I'm a mechanic, so I'm earning money so Cecelia and I can be something of ourselves and our doings." And Joe couldn't say Cecelia's name to Ray who had 'the wife' and to Arnie who didn't.

"Come on, Joe, what do you say?"

"Yeah, c-come on, Joe," said Arnie.

"I'm busy, that's all. If I . . . "

The buzzer out front rang. All three quickly rose from their seats, picked up the remains of their lunches and stepped into the cold center room again. Mr. Benicak was back and as usual had discreetly managed to trip on the buzzer cord.

* * * * *

"It's going to snow again. Can't say I'm glad to hear it; makes the driving of this thing kinda delicate on those curves up around Thrall's Corners."

"I should think so," said Joe.

"Humph, it's only 4:16; guess that's not too bad considering. Do hate to lose you time on a Saturday evening though, boy." The busdriver turned slightly in his seat to give Joe a wink as he threw out a wheezy laugh that turned into a deep chested cough and finally died out. On every other evening the bus would have been at least half filled with the children from the institute. Joe liked to watch them talking to one another. Their hands moved so deftly in the alphabet and their eyes never left the other's.

"Miss the kids on Saturday night, you know? Agnes and me was always going to have lots of kids. Things just didn't work out right. They just didn't work out, that's all I guess." There was quiet for awhile.

"You like the kids, boy?"

"I miss them, too."

"You got many brothers or sisters?"

"There's my brother Franz, but no sisters."

"You're a lucky fellow, ought to be thankful, boy. You got to be thankful for things like that, that you got in this world. Ha! I'm sure showing my age, talking like your father probably does." And he gave a forced laugh and another wheezing cough. Again there was quiet. Joe looked through the dusk at the man's tired face, glowing pale blue from the dash board lights.

"Almost there, humph, 4:34. Guess it's taking me longer than I thought Here you go."

Joe zipped his jacket and picked up his lunch bag. He paused for a second by the driver.

"I, uh," he rubbed his moist palm on the circular top of the token box. The driver smiled quickly, "You're gonna be late, boy." Joe squashed his hat on to his head and jumped off the bus. He turned around as soon as he was off; the driver held the door open for a second.

"See you Monday," Joe said, looking straight at him.

"Take care, son."

The door shut with a soft padding sound and the bus pulled away. The cloud of exhaust froze in the air. He pushed his hat down again and turned up his collar. It was going to snow. He cut across in front of the post office and down the side street to the house. Lights were going on and shades were being pulled.

"Hey, Karl. Wait up!"

A bicycled form came down the hill from behind him. It was Franz. Karl smiled.

"I was waiting for you at the depot, but you must have been late. Anyway, I went over to the drug store and talked around with Edie Dvorak and ordered three glasses of water." He rode down the hill along side of his brother, jerking the handles to keep his balance at the slow pace. "Hey, and you know what

we did today? Alex and I took our bikes for a ride down by the wharfs. Don't tell mother though. Aunt Emma packed our lunches for us because we said we were going to the Y and you know what they . . . "

Cecelia, tonight, thought Karl. He wanted to go to her door and knock and have her mother open the door. Hello Karl. Come in and talk to her father. And before he would get into the parlor she would come down the stairs and. . .

"Hey, Karl, you're not listening. I was telling about . . . "

"Please, Franz, keep quiet, for now will you?"

"Well, sure, Karl, but I didn't tell you yet . . ."

"Just for now, please."

They came to the door that opened to the stairs leading up to the second floor apartment. Franz paused for a few minutes, standing beside his bicycle.

"Come on," said Karl," I'll help you up the stairs with your bike." Franz smiled again and pulled his brother's hat down over his eyes. After some horseplay and a call from Aunt Emma the two boys opened the door to the apartment. The warmth and smell of gas heat fell on them. Karl went through the motions of kissing his mother and his Aunt Emma who stood side by side, while Franz buried his head in the back of Karl's coat.

"Must you not come home on time every Saturday?" asked Mother.

"Playing around with your younger brother and delaying both of you," said Aunt Emma. Franz stopped playing and pulled at his falling knee length socks.

"I'm sorry, Mama, it was the bus that was late."

"It's always something. Now go wash and look in on your father."

"Look in?"

"Yes, look in was what I said. He's feeling it again now like it was the last time."

"Should have worn his sweater is what I say," said Aunt Emma.

"Franz, you go along, too. Take your brother, Karl."

"Yes, ma'm."

"Yes, ma'm."

* * * * *

Dinner had been with the two boys and the two women. Franz simply ate and shot his Aunt with his fork from underneath the table. He even managed to slip a pea into her tea—to his delight, it floated. The women talked as one echoing voice to Karl, about the sick father, about the store, about why did he have to go to see Cecelia every Saturday night? How was the work at the garage? When was he going to grow up and realize his responsibility toward the Laber family and the Hardware store? He wanted to indulge in his thoughts of Cecelia, but the two would not leave him a minute. Yes, he had

spoken hard words to his father just then. Yes, he was aware that his father was sick. No, it was only because he was tired. But not too tired to go out on a date they supposed. Yes, he was only too aware of his responsibility to the family again, Yes.

"I've got to change for the evening now. Please, Mama, may I be excused."

"I don't know how *I* can stop you."

"Mother, couldn't you just once please . . . "

"Franz, put your fork on the table, dear."

* * * * *

"Cecelia, did you ever feel like walking and walking until you had walked right off into nothing?"

"How do you mean, Karl?"

"I mean like when I'm on the bus and I look out the windows . . . " They walked silent for a way. " . . . and like when I look at the children on the bus; they're so quiet and still, but their eyes are like windows for me. But then there are different kinds of windows . . . and . . . on, I don't really know."

"Go on, Karl."

"Well, it's not really walking off into nothing with the children. I mean, other people stop you from looking in. Like Mother, she says something, or Aunt Emma, she won't look straight at you to begin with unless she's gossiping in her mind. I mean, we can look right at each other and . . . well, it's not really like walking right off into nothing, like I said, but . . . it's walking right into something else that's different from where we are now. You know?"

"Uhm-hmm." She slipped her hand inside of his gloved one. He stopped and from her hand gently eased her glove. And removing his own, grasped then her hand in his again and tucked their warm dry clasp into his overcoat pocket. It was lined with silk and flannel.

"Karl, I . . ." she leaned more toward his shoulder and repeated, "Karl," as though assured of his presence and pleased at the sound. They walked on quietly. At the end of the block,—she thinking they were to turn right, he thinking they were to turn left—they turned and gently bumped. He brought one warm hand from their pocket to caress her cheek and found the under side of her hair by her neck to be warm, too. She took in small breaths that were warmed by his, and pressed her hand to his side within the pocket.

"Cecelia." He wanted not her hand in his pocket, but her whole self folded within his coat; to walk as one off into that place within their eyes.

"Tomorrow we shall talk to the families."

* * * * *

He fumbled for his latch key in his overcoat pocket. Silk and flannel. His other hand was on the door. As he tried to put the key to the door, it

opened without his unlocking. Strange. And the lights are all on. The same heavy smell of the gas heat settled on him. He wiped his feet slowly as he unbuttoned his coat, he listened to the murmuring in the next room. He closed the door gently.

"Karl?" It was Franz's voice. "Karl, oooh!" He ran to cling to his brother's legs.

"Hey, hey, what's the matter. What's happening?"

"It's father. He's really sick Karl, and they won't let me come down from my room or anything."

He put his hand behind the boy's head and led him to the next room. "You sit here, Franz. I'll find out what's happening."

He went up to the door, knocked softly and walked in. The smaller boy stared at the closed door and shivered in the corner of the worn velvet couch.

Karl leaned back to the door as he shut it behind him. Mother, Aunt Emma, on their knees saying the rosary, the priest bending over the form on the bed, the doctor standing to the side of the room. He walked up to Karl.

"Karl, we sent the neighbors looking for you. There was a sudden relapse, son. I don't know why it should have come."

Karl stared at the two women muttering their prayers, their eyes to the floor. Aunt Emma looked up once, blessing herself as she gave a quick cold glance at Karl. The priest pronounced the final blessing and turned quietly from the bed. He looked at Karl "Pray for his soul. Karl, and help your mother."

Karl walked to the bed. That form under there couldn't be his father. He wanted to rip back the sheet for certainty. He thought that at any moment the form might sit up. The heavy smell of the gas heat and the still steaming vaporizer closed in on him, he turned to find a face, but nobody had any eyes. There wasn't really anyone in the room and why had it to happen now. He walked over to the women, and stood looking down at one for awhile. He touched her shoulder briefly then turned from the room.

It all seemed to him almost an inconvenience. Cecelia, Cecelia, tomorrow. But no, now tomorrow would have to be . . . he couldn't focus his mind on the scene behind the door.How long he stood there he did not know. He felt warm wet drops on his hand. Franz had been holding it against his head and swaying from side to side. Karl started walking toward the outside door.

"Don't go, Karl, please, don't go."

'There was a sudden relapse, son.'

* * * * *

'Don't know why it should have come! Don't know why. I don't know why. The bus was filled with sailors from the base and smelled of cigarettes and fruit flavored gum. Karl sat very still and looked out the window. The driver

had the side seat lights on, making the windows like half mirrors. One moment Karl could see the lights of the cars and towns flashing by on the outside and the next moment he would be staring at this strange blank face. At times he could see the both at once. His hand mechanically twisted two coins over and over inside his coat pocket. Karl Laber. 'Now go wash and look in on your father. Put your fork on the table, dear.' 'There was a sudden relapse, son, don't know why.'

"That will be eighty-four cents, please. Oh, you got a school pass. Going down to the institute?" Voices came from outside the open bus door. "Oh, O. K. Didn't know because it's my first time on this route. What! Oh yes, I know where. He'll be fine." The door padded shut and the bus moved on again. "Better sit near the front, young fellow, there's not many seats near the rear. Besides you only have about a fifteen minute ride."

The bus droned on and the young boy and Karl sat in silence. Why now? It's not right . . . but why now? 'Take care, son.' He let go of the coins and gradually felt the silk and flannel of the pocket. He turned to the boy beside him. He looked at the boy and saw a person with eyes and another world, another window. He turned toward the real window and saw Karl Laber with tears. 'Karl.' Oh, God, what have I done? 'Don't go, Karl please, don't go.'

The bus had stopped at the depot, the end of the line, and everyone had left. The busdriver waited just outside for his relief driver. But the boy was delaying on the top step, looking toward the crying man. Then the relief driver climbed on.

"Hey, young fellow," he said roughing the boy's hair, "good to have you back with us." The boy touched the driver's sleeve and looked again in Karl's direction. "Oh. You go along now," said the driver, "It's alright."

"Now, son, you got a round trip ticket?"

DOROTHY HEARN '61