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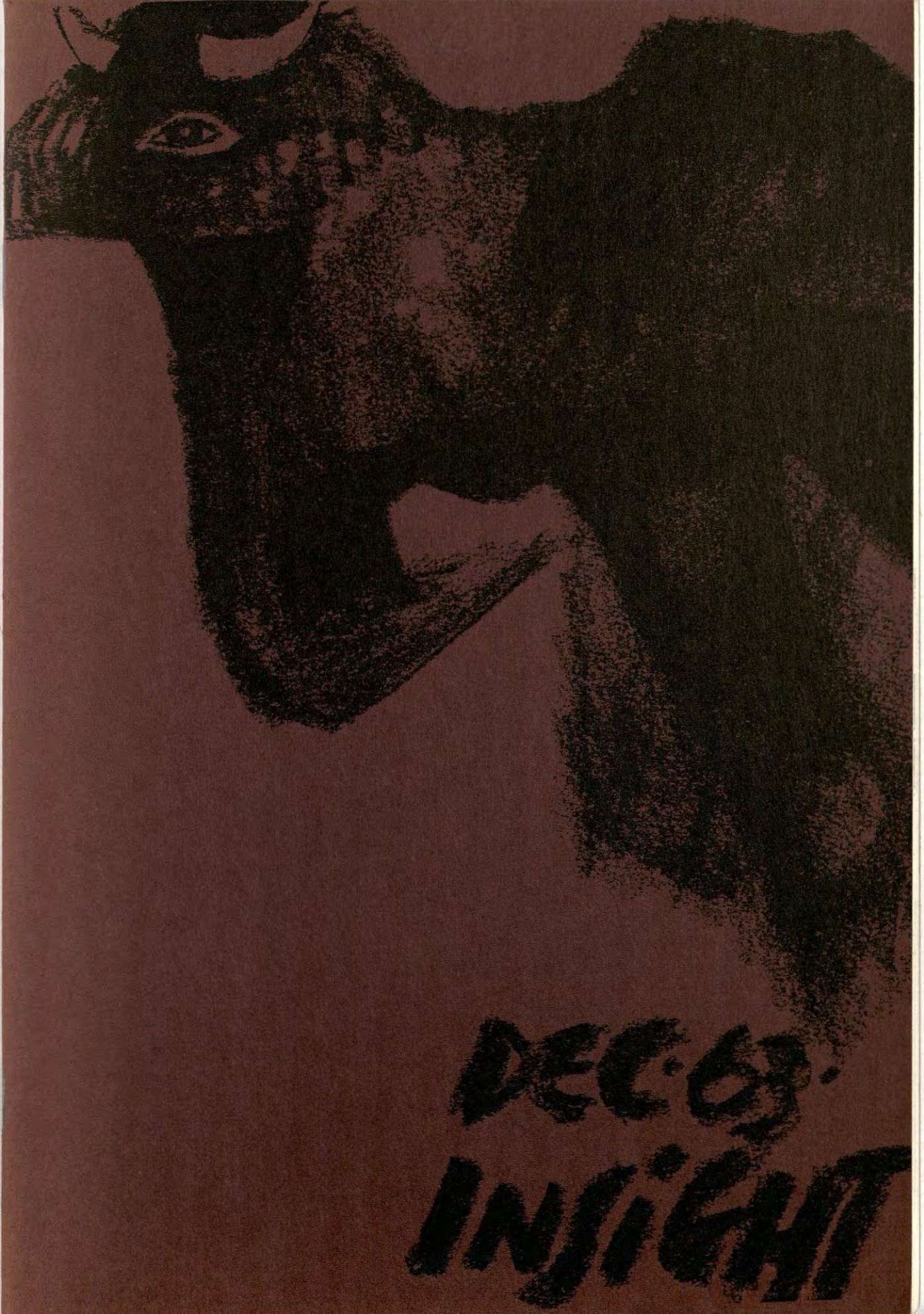
Connecticut College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INSIGHT

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DECEMBER 1963
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
VOLUME 6 NUMBER ONE

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Miriam Ercoli:

AN INVITATION TO DINNER

Claire's cat was responsible for their finally meeting the young couple next door. The cat, a sad creature with an incredibly long back, had slipped out one evening. Claire had been terribly upset because it had been raised in New York City and hadn't even been out on the street alone. Then, they heard it scream piteously. Claire rushed out to save it from its peril which turned out to be another cat making friendly advances, but Claire's cat had never seen one of its own species before. At any rate, the happy cat belonged to the young couple who had apologized for it and invited them over for dinner the next day. There had been no introductions, so Seth continued to think of them simply as the Young Marrieds.

From the window of the living room, Seth could see the finished patio. He had mocked at the young couple during the spring when they were laying in the stones, but that was before he had had any idea of how hot summer in Cambridge could be. Now he had to admit that at least it was a cool spot in the general torpor. He was pleased that the cat for once had proved so useful because he disliked the animal and did not see how Claire, who had a good deal of aesthetic sense, could stand the creature. She just said, when he asked her, that she was lonely in New York and at least the cat was something alive. Still, he could not forgive the animal for looking at him as if he were an intruder when he first began to spend nights at Claire's apartment. That was in the winter when he was really intrigued with her long hair, the coolness of her manner, and her dedication to her music. He had taken the shuttle flight down to New York nearly every week-end.

Now the sound of her flute bore down on him.

"Hey Claire, let's go. You've practiced enough for today. They're setting out stuff. They've got a barbecue, too."

The flute continued until it came to the end of the Debussy piece. A minute later Claire came down the stairs, dressed in a muted loose-fitting shift. She was wearing narrow horn-rimmed glasses, and her hair was skinned back into a knot.

"Aren't you going to do something with your hair? I don't like it that way."

"But last week you told me it looked good like this," Claire said. Her voice was always slightly nasal, and Seth noticed that it got more so when she was agitated, as she was now. Claire was very sensitive about her appearance.

"All right," he said. "Let's go."

They went down the flight of stairs to the street and walked the few steps to the house next door, an old four-story apartment building exactly like the one they lived in. The door was open and they could see the patio through another open door down the hallway. They advanced toward the patio, and a young woman, hearing their footsteps, turned and came toward them.

"Hello," she said. "I'm Lee Johnstone. You know, it occurred to me this morning that I didn't tell you our name, so I left the door open. It was silly of me because there wasn't any way of your finding us, except by ringing all the doorbells or standing outside the house and yelling "Hey you with

the cat." She laughed. "Yes it really was silly." She led them out to the patio where her husband was very busy laying hamburgers on a grill over a bed of coals.

"This is my husband." She waited a moment until he raised his head, and then, looking him full in the face, she smiled. "George," she said.

The man looked at his hand, wiped it on his large white apron, although it had appeared clean, and extended it to Seth. "Glad to meet you," he said.

"Seth Flaude," Seth said. He waved his hand in the direction of Claire who stood a little behind him. "And this is Claire Hellman."

Lee's eyes turned toward her husband's for an instant, but then she dropped them and began to arrange the iron chairs around the table.

"Here. Sit down. Now let's see. What will you have to drink?" she asked. "Do you want beer or a cocktail?"

"Beer would be fine for me," Seth said. "You too Claire?" He turned to her, and Claire nodded.

"George, I know you want beer." Lee turned to her guests. "He drinks a lot of it now that it's hot but never in the winter. Then we have this big thing about hot toddies. It's so nice to walk home from some place in the cold, then come into a warm house and have a hot drink. Well, anyway, I'll get the beers." She walked across the stones and into the house.

"You have a really nice place here," Seth said to George who was still concerned with the cooking meat.

"Yes," George said, looking up from the barbecue. "We're lucky to have it. By rights, the yard belongs to the people on the ground floor, but they didn't want to be bothered to fix it up, so they're letting us use it. It was a lot of work, but it was worth it because we've spent so much time out here since this heat wave started." He looked around and smiled at his handiwork.

Lee came out with four beers on a tray and carefully put coasters down before she put the glasses on the table. When she saw that Claire was looking at her, she gave a little laugh.

"I don't really care about the table," she explained, "but George made the coasters and I like them so much that I use them every time I get the chance."

Claire picked up one of the wooden circles and looked at it. A forest scene had been burned into it, and the work was meticulously, even artistically, done. "They really are lovely," she said. "It's so nice to see something that someone has put time and effort into making." She turned to George. "You must really be good with your hands."

"Well . . . " George began.

"Oh, he is!" his wife said. "He's really wonderful. You should see the things he's made. And it's not as if he has a fancy workshop with all kinds of power tools. He just has a tool box that his father left him. But, he can make just about anything he wants to. If you want to see some of the things, I'll show you later."

"I'd love to see them," Claire said, getting up. "Why don't you show me now?" Lee started walking into the house, and Claire followed her.

"I'll stay here and keep George company," Seth said. "I'll see them later. Well," Seth said when the women had gone, "what do you do with your time when you're not busy around the house?"

"I'm an electrical engineer. At Sterling's. And you?"

"This year I'm teaching — a course in the philosophy of science. It's actually a way to get co-eds who think they shouldn't like physics and math to learn some, but next year I hope to get an appointment to do some research on my own."

"Sounds impressive. And how about your. . . . How about Claire?"

"She's a musicologist." Seth said.

"Oh, I thought I heard somebody playing. What is it? A flute?"

"Yes," Seth said. "She's giving a concert next week. One of the pieces she's going to play is her own. She studies under a very good man in New York. Gorowitz? You ever hear of him?"

"No. I can't say that I have. But then I don't know that much about music. We go to Tanglewood sometimes, but I think I like the music there because the place is so pretty." He went to look at the hamburgers again and, finding them satisfactory, he put them on a plate which he covered. He laid another batch on the grill. "We should have supper in about ten minutes. Hope you're hungry," he said.

The women came out of the house, both of them carrying bowls of food which they set on the table. George brought over the hamburgers.

"Sit down," Lee said. "I think everything's ready. Help yourselves and if you don't see what you want, ask for it."

"Seth," Claire said. "You should see some of those things. That spice shelf is really lovely. All carved." She turned to Lee. "I never know where to keep spices. Our apartment doesn't have much storage space, or counter space either, for that matter. We were going to put a table in the kitchen but somehow we never got around to it. But, I don't do that much cooking. We eat out a lot."

"Yes," Seth said. "We're really not established here because Claire is going back to New York in the fall, and I might be going to Princeton. But how long have you been living here?"

"Since last fall. We got married in September, then went up to Canada for a month for our honeymoon, and moved here at the beginning of October," George said.

"We like it a lot," Lee added.

They ate for some time in silence, as if Lee's last words had closed conversation.

"Excuse me a minute," Lee said. "I'm going to get the coffee-pot. It's an electric one, but George ran a wire out, so we can use it here." She returned a moment later carrying a tray with the coffee-pot, a plate of cookies, and a bowl of fruit.

"This is so nice," Claire said. "And especially today. I worked this morning — it's a filing job and as dull as it can be — and practiced all afternoon, so you can't imagine how pleasant it is to be served supper, and such a good one. I'd really like the recipe for the potato salad. It's different from any I've ever had because it's so tasty. Usually potato salad is flat."

"Chopped-up pickles," Lee said. "I'm glad you like it. The coffee's stopped perking, so it must be ready." She began pouring it, the movements of her hands deft and almost unconscious.

They drank coffee and ate dessert, as the evening grew stiller.

"Can I help you clean up?" Claire asked when they had finished dinner.

"No," Lee said. "There really isn't much to do and you might have plans for the evening."

"Well, as a matter of fact," Seth said "we did sort of say we would meet some friends for the early show."

"But I wouldn't feel right leaving you with the dishes," Claire said.

Lee laughed, "Don't feel at all badly. For me doing dishes is a special occasion because George reads to me while I wash and dry. We're on our fourth book since we've been married. It's about the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it's really very interesting. We remember a lot because we only read the book then, so it means keeping things in mind for a whole day until the next installment."

"Then we should start going," Seth said. "I hate to eat and run but the movies start in twenty minutes, Thank you very much. It's a pleasure having you for neighbors."

"Yes," Claire said. "It's been lovely. Everything's so nice here. I'm glad our cats brought us together."

They laughed a little, said good-by, and Lee walked her guests out to the street. Seth and Claire retraced their steps to their house and climbed the stairs.

"I had a good time," Claire said. "It's like an island of peace there. They mean so well, and they do lots together. It's sweet the way she's so proud of him."

Seth opened the door of their apartment, entered the living room, and lit a cigarette. Claire sat down on the sofa.

"Anyway," she said. "I like them better than most of the people we know here. They're awfully kind and they really like each other, don't you think so?"

"They like each other all right," Seth said, "but they sure are simple. Did you hear that bit about reading together? It's like something advocated by the Reader's Digest."

"I don't think it matters if things sound a little ridiculous sometimes, and they're not ashamed to do silly things because it comes from feeling good and from being open."

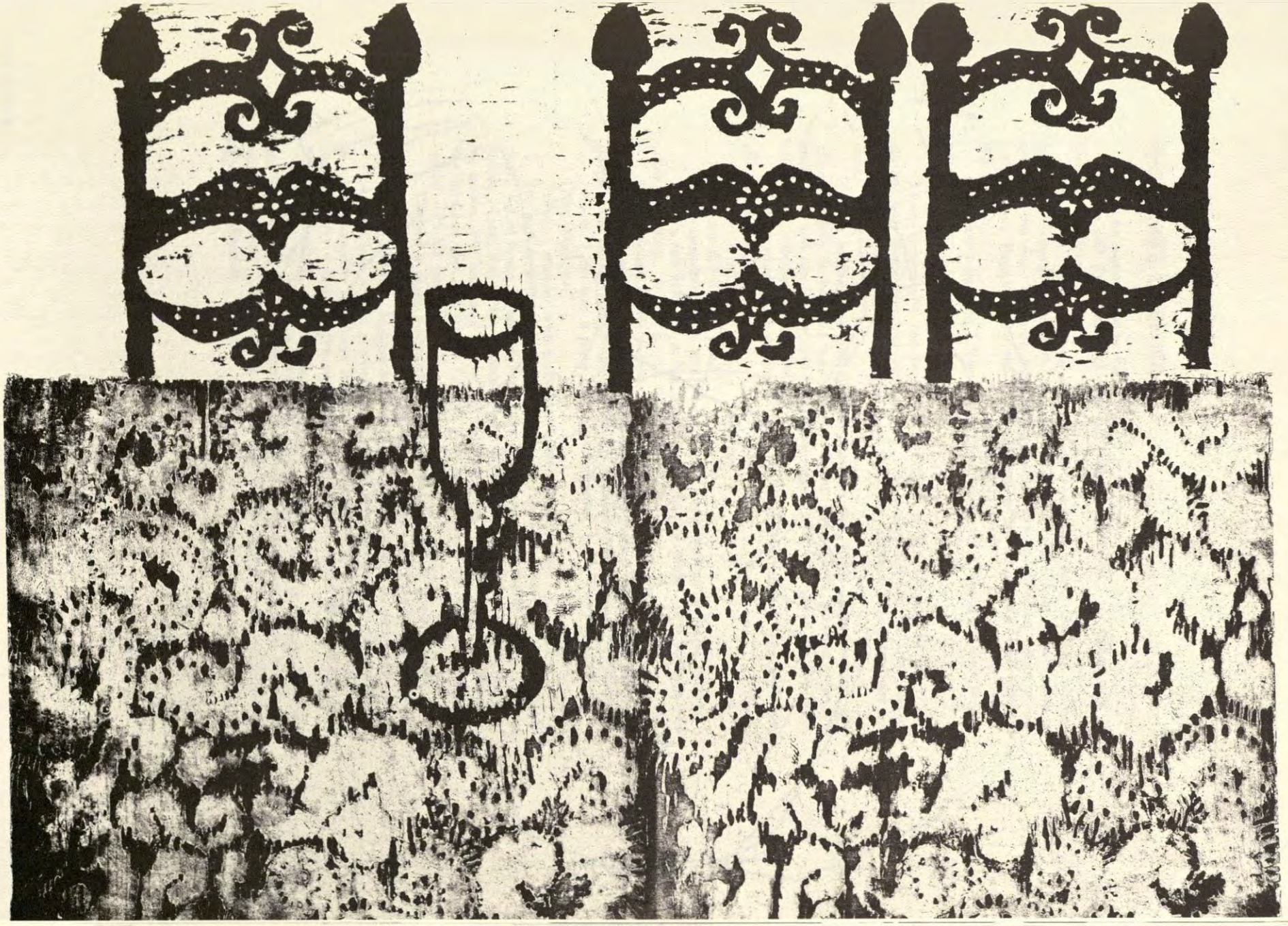
"Look, Claire, I don't want to talk about them. Most young married couples are just dull, even if they were interesting people before they got married. It's something about the institution that does it. Too much security, I'd say. Anyway, they're not important to me and they're not anything I want to be like, so let's forget it and go to the movies." Seth went into the kitchen, turned on the water and reached for a glass. From the kitchen he said: "They sure are conventional though. I bet they were never together before they got married. And, did you see the way they looked at each other when I said your name? Like they never heard of people living together." Seth came back into the living room carrying the glass of water. "Hey, what's wrong with you?" he said, as he saw the tears rolling from under Claire's slim elegant glasses.

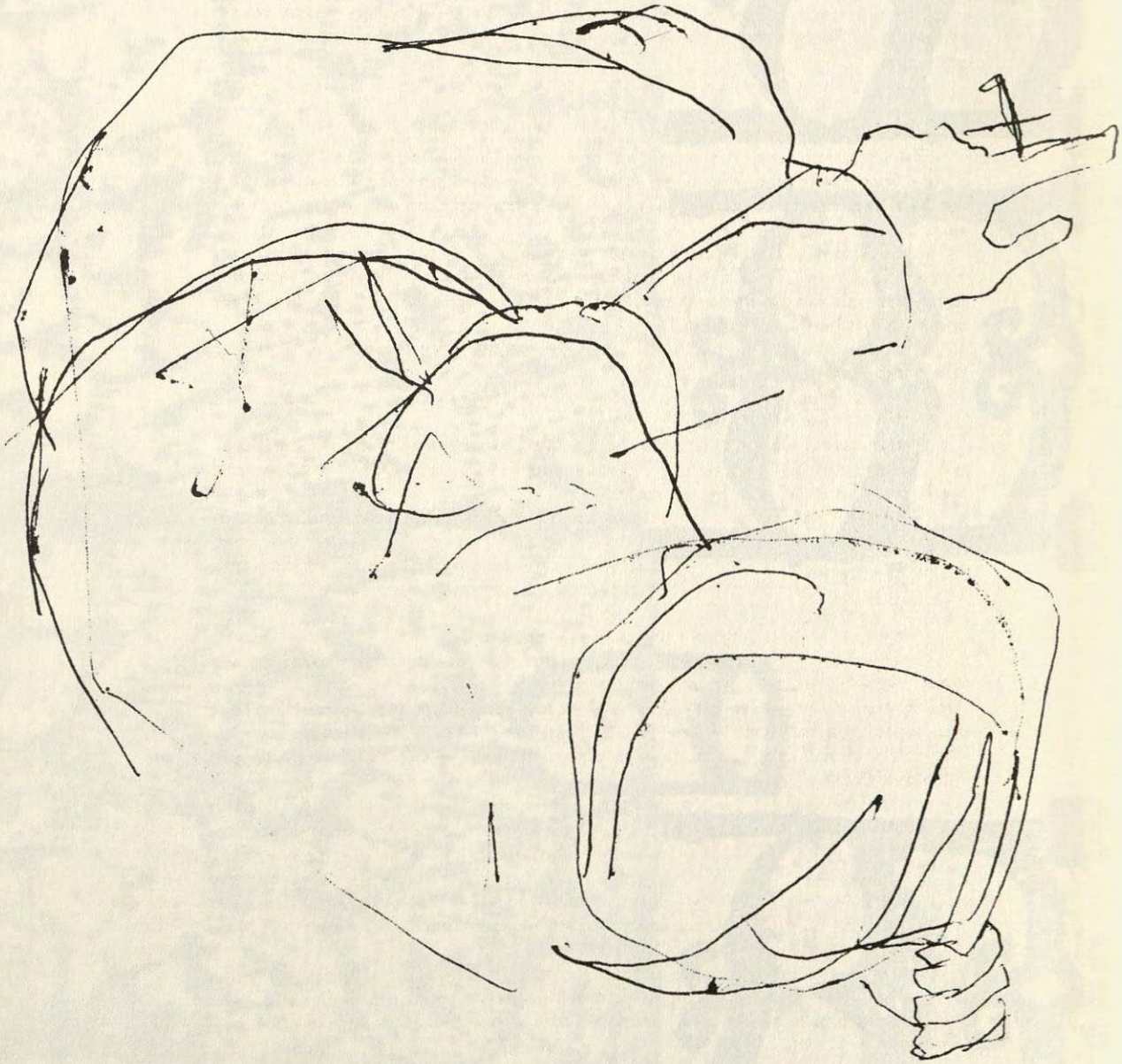
Pat Arnold:

AN APOLOGY

I could not wait for you, dear, at the crossroad.
I paused before the gate but dusk crept in;
The leaves were dry, and little things that scuttled
Seemed more than little — indeed the devil's own
Was scampering through those woods! You should have heard
The way the wind whispered names of those
Long gone — (Gone? and yet last Christmas
Three hours before sunrise that lighted church
(some say) was filled with them) — while restless
Fingers from the trees pressed on my shoulders,
Vines clutched my thighs, the very grass
Impeded me, and once a coldness brushed
My face (I knew it well, Death's touch)
While down beneath my feet the ground
Quivered so I couldn't stay, I ran in fact
Far from the road, till something shouted
Stop! I had to turn, to see the loose dirt
Pushed aside, and there that figure, shaded
Like midnight, but no mere shadow, fingers
Clutching still (Oh I can see it now) the heart
Pierced by a sword — the very sword, I swear it
That our burgher thrust in the heart of Crawford
(Died by his own hand) that July morning
With all the village there. How we all breathed again
To know that Crawford was done in for good!
For how could he return now with that sword?
And yet (sweet Virgin save us all!) I swear
I felt the ground beneath my feet give way
To that boned hand, and saw the burgher's sword
Still there in the heart, still dripping red
And coming up like that — I couldn't stay
One minute more. The ground itched under me;
I turned, with one last thought of you, and fled.

Ellen Shulman:
THE DINNER PARTY





Rebecca Smith:

THE KING'S QUESTION

"Go on home! You're too little."

Kevin felt the small rock nick his leg. "I won't tell," he yelled and it pinched his throat.

His sister, Peggie, stood a little way down the road. She had on her jeans and frayed sweat shirt. Her hair fell in her face over glasses with a crack in the rim. A young boy and girl from the neighboring house stood behind her. Peggie threw the stone she had in her hand and it hit Kevin's leg harder.

"You can't hurt me," Kevin said, wanting to rid his eyes of their moisture.

"Go on. Beat it!"

Kevin turned and ran over the dirt road to his house. His short and clumsy legs made him trip over a rock. He pulled himself up and pushed the hair and tears out of his eyes and the other children's laughter hurt his ears.

Kevin's mother had just finished washing the dishes. The morning sun played lightly in her red hair and her warm green eyes frowned into the sink. Her son ran to her and buried his head in her skirt. He let the tears come now, silently and painfully.

"Kevin, what's the matter?" and his mother lifted his face with her still damp hands.

"I . . . I fell."

"Where did it hurt you?"

Kevin searched for a scratch on his knee and showed it to his mother.

"That's too little for a big boy like you to cry about. Go upstairs and wash your face. It will be all right."

Kevin looked at his mother and he bit his lip. The most beautiful woman in the world kissed him on his forehead and turned him toward the door, patting him on the tuft of hair that stood straight up at the back of his head.

"Kevin, I just had a pack of cigarettes here. Have you seen them?"

"No, Mommy."

"Well, I wonder where they've been disappearing."

He had an attic room with a big poster bed. In the corner was an old desk. Kevin loved to search the many cubbyholes and secret nooks. He had hiding places for all his treasures and in the shelves at the bottom he kept his books. He had read Robin Hood three times. He put his head down on the fold-out top and let his fingers play with one of the small drawers and talked with his friend.

"I'll find a place tomorrow that no one else knows about and I'll fix it up pretty. Then one day I'll move you out there and we'll stay there for the rest of our lives. Maybe Mommy will come live with us and cook."

A little boy with a cowlick and clad all in green sat with his many men in a large clearing in a huge forest. In the center of the clearing a deer was cooking over a fire. In the corner sat an old desk where the men put their bows and arrows.

"Men," the little boy they called Robin said, "I have a surprise for you." He turned to a beautiful woman with green eyes and damp, cool hands who sat beside him. "This is Maid Marian and she has come to do our cooking." The men shouted, "Hurrah."

Jane Stein

One of the men came running from out of the woods. "Robin," he gasped, "there's a girl who wants to attack us and take over our home."

Robin thought for a while. "Bring her to me," he said.

A girl in jeans and a sweat shirt came into the clearing, followed by a young boy and girl. Robin spoke to her, "Do you and your men plan to attack?"

"Yes," she answered.

"How 'bout if you and I have a fight and the winner gets the clearing. Just you and me."

"All right." And they both drew their swords. Robin's men did the same and Robin shouted, "Leave her to me, men!" The fight was long and hard and finally Robin wounded the girl. "Shall we kill her?" the men asked. "No," said Robin and he turned to the girl lying on the ground.

"We will make you well and you and your men can come live with us if you promise one thing. You have to swear that you will be good from now on and never be bad. Do you promise?"

"Hi Daddy. How ya doing?" Peggie shouted from the yard below. Kevin jumped and ran to wash his face to see his father.

"Why are you in such a big hurry?" Peggie asked Kevin at the breakfast table.

"I'm not in a hurry," and Kevin tried to slow down.

"You're going someplace, aren't you?"

"Maybe."

"Where?"

"I'm not going to tell," and Kevin ran toward the door.

"Mom! Kevin didn't finish his milk."

"Come back and finish, Kevin," came the sound of his mother from the next room. He returned.

"Come on. Where're ya going?" Kevin shook his head. "You and your secrets!" Kevin walked toward the door. He stopped.

"Peg," he said.

"What do you want, stupid?"

"Margaret, stop that talk!" said the mother and Kevin left.

Kevin found his haven right before lunch time. It was beautiful. A large rock lay warming in the sun, surrounded on all sides by cool grass and encircled again by the woods. It was invisible to all outsiders. It was a spot of light in the dark, warmth in the coolness, the perfect setting for Kevin's blond hair and blue eyes. He stretched out on the rock and nestled his face in the soft moss growing on the side.

A group of men from a very large country were looking for a place of their own in which to settle. The leader of the expedition was a small boy with blond hair. He seated his men around a circular table.

"Men," he said, "we have to find a place where we will be safe. We need a beautiful place that's green and warm. I've looked everywhere. People have taken over the Frogpond, the Spring and the Fort with the vines. They won't let us in. I sent my scout out to find a place. Here comes the scout now. The men turned around and looked and murmured, "A girl for a scout." She was a warm woman with red hair and a smile like a birthday cake. "She's the best scout in the world," the boy said. Did you find a place?" he asked her.

The scout was out of breath. "Yes," she said. "Follow me." The men formed a line behind her and went to a small clearing with a rock in the

middle, protected on all sides. "This is it!" they all said and everyone talked at once.

"Quiet," the leader said. "We must make plans. This will be our country. It will be very good. We won't allow any guns or knives or even scissors. Nothing bad. No cigarettes or whiskey or anything. And anybody who lies or yells or hits can't come here. We will be the best country in the world. We'll have . . ."

"Kevin lunch!" Kevin scrambled and his short blue pants carried him home.

"Kevin's got secrets," Peggie said.

"Oh," said her father.

"He should tell me, shouldn't he?"

"Mm mmm."

"See, bratty, see. You have to tell me now."

Kevin walked away from his airplane. "I don't have to tell her, do I, Daddy?"

"Will you both be quiet so I can read my paper?"

"He has to tell me his secret, doesn't he?" asked Peggie.

"Kevin, you shouldn't have secrets. Now leave me alone."

"But I don't want to tell. It's my secret. I won't tell her! I won't!"

His father put the paper down. "Now what are you crying about?"

His mother came from the kitchen. "What's the matter, baby?" she asked.

"Daddy said I had to tell Mike my secret."

"You don't have to if you don't want to. Now stop crying."

"Why is he always crying? Isn't it past their bedtime?" their father asked.

"Come on, Kevin. Let's go to bed," said their mother. And Kevin sobbed himself to sleep and dreamed of being tied to the railroad tracks and being saved by his mother.

Kevin found a good hiding place near the clearing for his bike, Black Beauty. The spot was still there. He took off his shoes and socks and walked around and felt the life in the ground. The wind bowed the limbs of the trees and they paid homage.

The king of the country sat on a moss covered throne. He was a small boy with blue eyes. His red-headed first lieutenant came up to him and bowed.

"King," she said, "we've caught a girl trying to bring cigarettes into the country."

"Bring her to me," the king said.

The prisoner was skinny with long hair and glasses. She fought with the guards to get away.

"Leave her alone," the king said. "She won't run away. What's your name?"

"I won't tell," the prisoner said.

"Why did you bring cigarettes here? We don't like them."

"I do."

"Why didn't you stay where you were to smoke?"

"I stole them," the girl said.

"Why?" the king asked.

"I had to leave."

Everyone around let out a gasp. The king raised his hand for silence. "That's very bad," he said. "Do you have a family?"

"Just a brother."

"Why didn't you bring him with you?"

"He's too little. Besides, he's stupid."

"Don't you love him?"

"Naw."

The king looked sad. "Does he love you?" he asked.

"Hey! I found it!" Peggie came tramping through the woods followed by her two friends. "So this is your secret. Hey, it's a neat place. But not much of a secret."

Kevin sat on his rock. "It's mine," he said.

"Hey! We could have a clubhouse here. I'd be the leader. Pretty neat, huh?" The other children shouted approval. "Kevin, run get some wood. We'll start a fire."

Kevin got up. "But it's mine, Peggie," he said.

"Go on, baby. Don't you want to be my lieutenant?"

Kevin hesitated and then his short blue pants speeded him toward some twigs.

The king looked sad. "Does he love you?" he asked.

Marianna Kaufman:

ON BEING WATCHED

The door not open wide:
A novelty of night —
Unwanted now
When the mind's asleep,
Knocked out in fight.
Other times
No light extensions
Hang or geometrize;
The beams
From after-hours
Antagonize.

The time of solitary
Lies open and awake,
While watchful eyes
Keep eager guard:
Preparation
Against
The break.

Marianna Kaufman:

FIRST CANTO

First

On the isle of Lesbos
A tall Greek goddess
(High-breasted, tough)
Found the going rough.

(Her impervious mother'd
Too much loved her,
Or not enough)
Anyway, called the bluff
Of still another.
Wanted arms around her —
But no more!

Then

The arm would secure her:
As in the dark, warm comforts cover.
The need was to blurt
Every inward fear out.

Once I watched a tall Greek goddess
Alien to the isle of Lesbos;
But she, most impervious,
Scoffed my inward thought.

Marie Birnbaum:

MEMORY AND CHANGE

The playworld changes
from one honeysuckle to another.
Can a name, honeysuckle,
be the right metaphor?

What fell to Orpheus is common.

There are things other than honeysuckle,
but not now. Once we were warned
against that kind of play,
cautioned of honeysuckle evils
in other terms.

Now Orpheus bring your girl
from the cold to the world.
Compel the honeysuckle change.
But Orpheus' doubt dislocates
the playful intended progress.

There is no dispensation from memory.

Holding all these sorts of dreams,
honeysuckle, sand castles,
recollection orbits
to save our expectations.

Leilani Vasil:

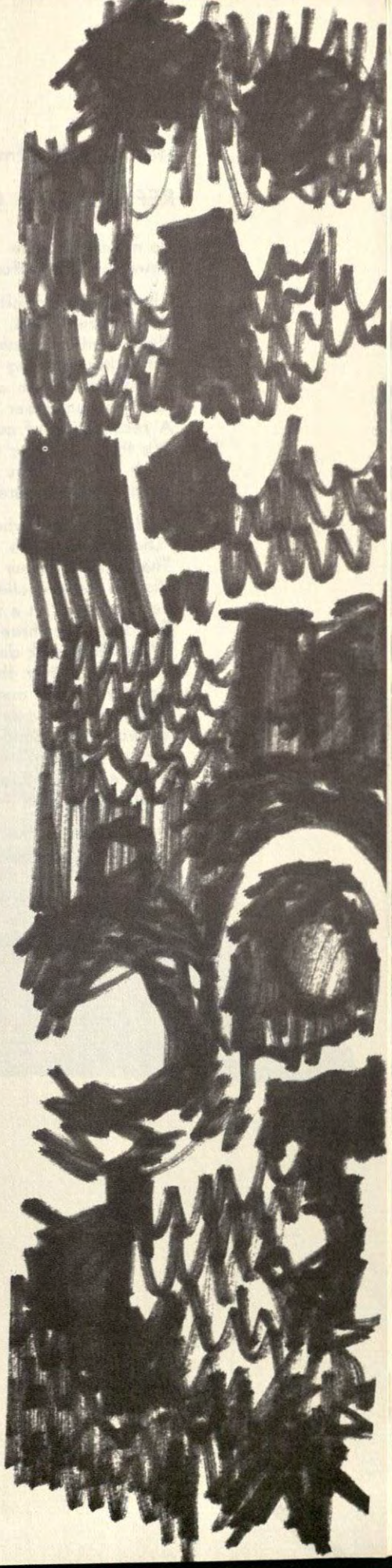
A DIALOGUE

Hello —
Would you really like to know me?
I am the Ice Queen
Purest, Crystal Clear.

See those notches on my heart?
Those are the hurts I've given.
That hole? Unhealed, raw. . . Yes,
It's the lone hurt I cannot forget.

Why do my eyes stare hollowly so?
From too many nights of thinking of him
From too many days of staring into the past
Questioning why. . . .

I was a snow princess then,
Proud, righteous in my pureness;
I could not make the sacrifice then.
Do you think I can make it now?



Marianna Kaufman:

REFLECTIONS ON THE WEDDINGS OF FRIENDS

Do memories glide
Down the aisle before a bride?

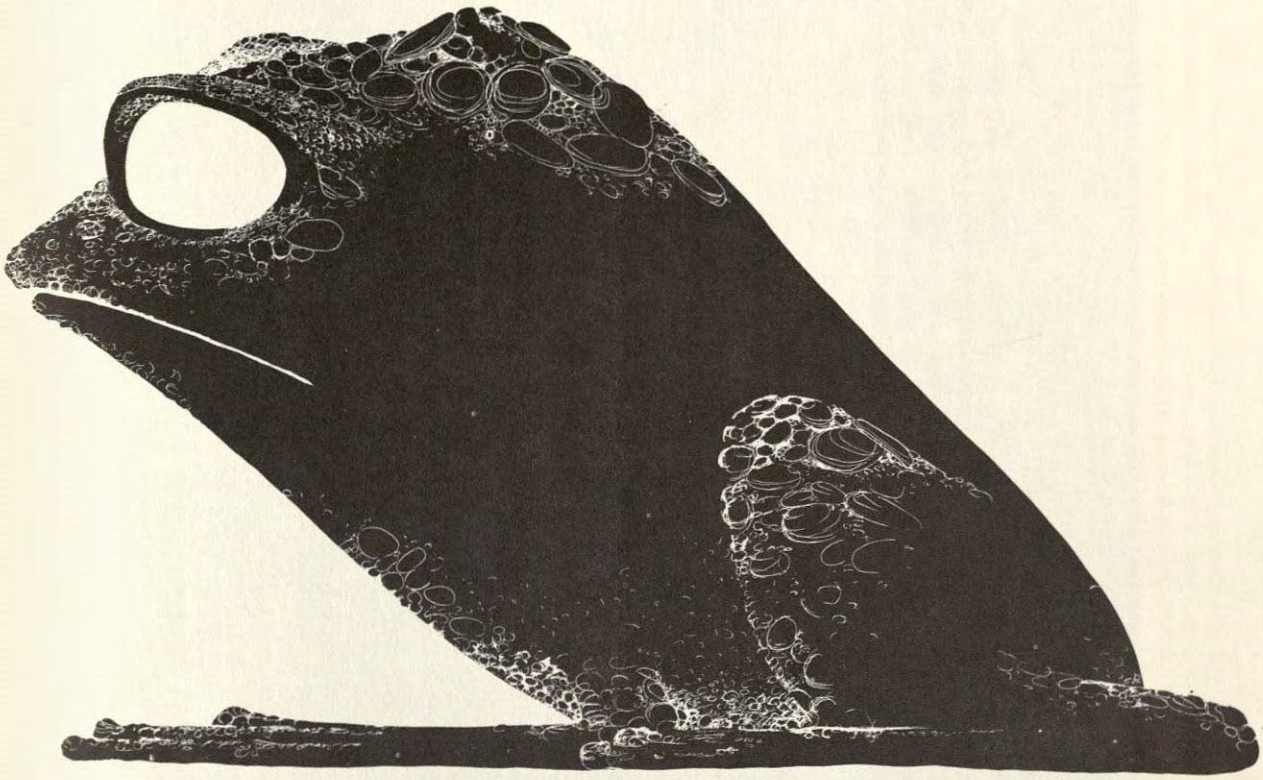
I have been inquisitive of friends
Who recently wed.
Have wanted to ask softly one
(After her wedding
While standing in a portentous receiving line):
"Do you remember Mrs. Gottrocks?"
A recollection of conversations
We three dowager ballerinas - I, Mrs. Stocking-Stretcher
Plush in the pillows of chauffered cars
Held when we were ten.

And to another (whose vow was watched alone by God)
"Did you ever tire of all-day Black Jack games?"
That summer in our living room, -
Visored by a coolie's cap,
Leaning hard on a teakwood table,
Eyeing politic three unmarked decks —
Were eight slick dealers
Eminently better than fourteen year olds.
Royalty enticed our red-tipped bets,
"At-eased" us only for smarting swizzles
Of hot coke opened on a playhouse door,
Or to "annie-up" four-flushing
With a one-eyed jack, split-beard king
And deuces wild Poker hand.

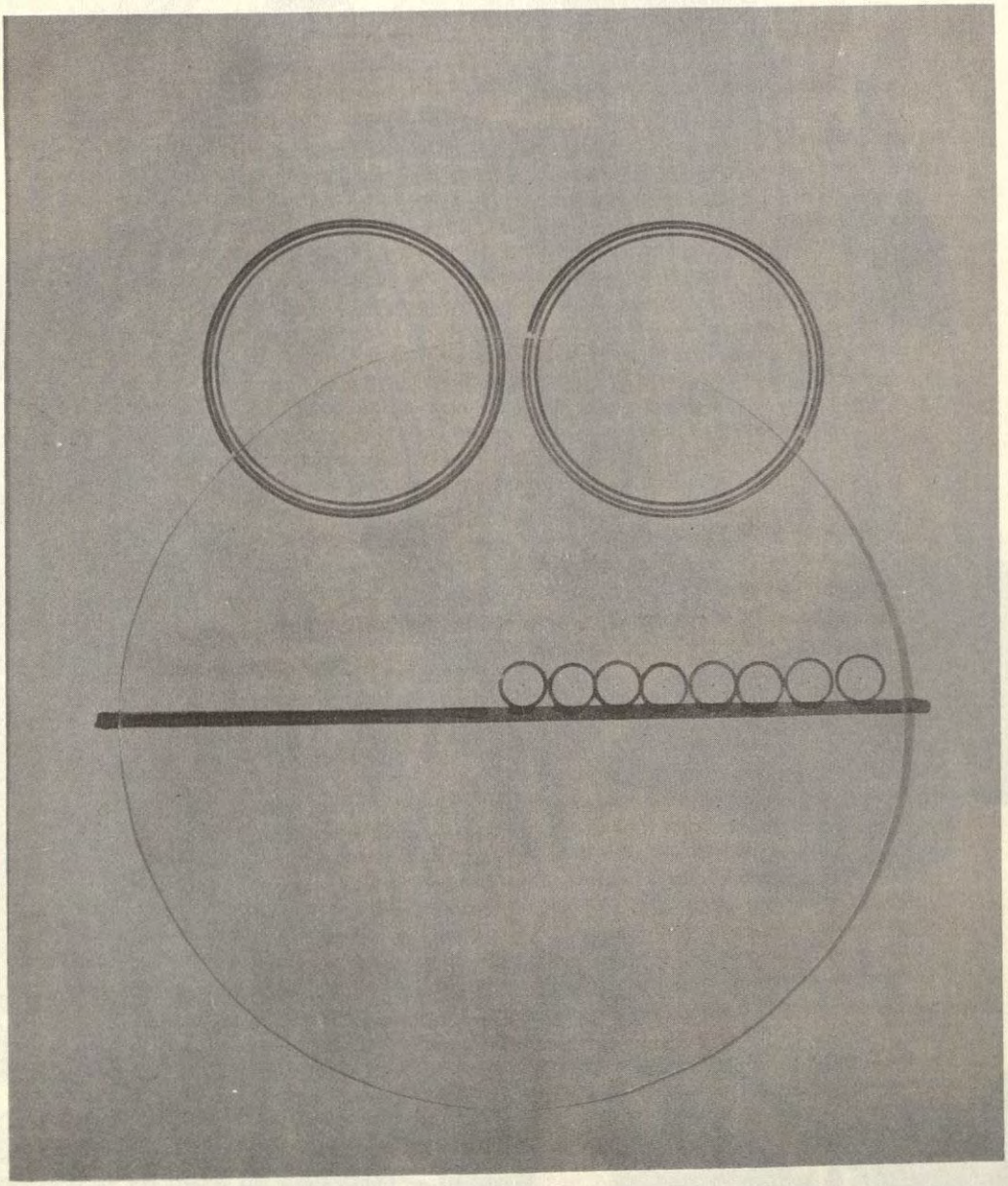
I wished to tell the first
That Mrs. Gottrocks still survives
— (In furrowed verse) —
And to the other, that some still war
In the sawdust pile down in their burrows.
And even in the Stream the dogs still lie,
While tree-housed above, their children play.

Karen Cornell:

FROG



Karen Cornell:
FROG II



Susan Pettibone:

ELYSIUM

Want some coffee, Pussy Cat? She had been awake for an eternity. Now she turned to him, wondering how long he had been looking at her. She stretched long and hard. She had good breasts. Yes, she said, I'll make it. He kissed her shoulder. Bring some cheese, too, he said.

She got out of bed, glancing at her bathrobe, which lay in a heap at the foot of the bed, deciding against it, and walked to the kitchen nude. Her stride was long, and very proud.

She made the coffee carefully. She could never remember how long it took to drip. She washed two cups, and put sugar in one of them. Then she looked out the window until she could no longer hear the steady drip, drip.

He liked the coffee. Said it went well with the tight, dry baroque music she had found on the radio. She liked the music, thought it was marvelously incongruous with the nature of her relationship with him.

Want some cheese, Pussy Cat? She looked at him. He ate like an animal, making loud smacking noises. No, thanks, she said.

It's a nice courtyard, am I right? She looked out the window and sipped her coffee. It was too strong. Yes, she said. I saw some kids down there in that little inclosed place when you were at work yesterday. They were screaming and laughing . . . it was beautiful. She smiled, remembering.

There's a kindergarten in that building, he explained.

There were colored kids and white, and Puerto Rican. . . . Oh, they were so beautiful and happy! She lit a cigarette: it tasted bad. She looked at him and thought how really good he was, how gentle. The telephone rang. Good morning. Then he laughed. I'm kind of busy. He grinned at her. Pussy Cat is here, and she keeps me kind of busy. Yes . . . he laughed again. Well, you know.

She didn't listen anymore. She smoked, escaping into the coldness of the music.

Immanuel wants us to go see The Trial with him. It's playing at RKO on 24th. Want to?

What? Oh, yes, let's. Orson Wells is always fantastic, and even Time didn't pan this one. She felt happier. She picked up her cigarettes. The pack was empty. She squashed it. I have to get out, she whispered. I'm going to buy some cigarettes.

Okay, Pussy Cat. He kissed her, and resumed his telephone conversation. She dressed quickly, in the bathroom, and brushed her hair carelessly. She was leaving when he shouted to her: Listen. Buy some milk, will you? She nodded and left.

Pussy Cat, she thought. She wished he wouldn't call her that, but she had never asked him not to. How could she expect him to know she disliked it so? Hell, did she expect him to be a mind reader? She chastised herself for being such a shrew. She had a headache.

Main floor. The elevator boy smiled at her as she left the building. It was a nice smile, though, like he somehow respected her. She smiled back.

It was glorious to be out; cool, and fresh-airy. Nice day, even though there was no sun. All the grey looked so citified. She walked up 87th to

Joan Ross

Broadway, and stopped at the coffee shop on the corner. She decided to have a cup of coffee, to kill some time, no, she wasn't in the mood for more coffee. Tea. Tea, and some English muffins. The muffins came. She took a bite. They were good, but they were sliced, instead of broken apart. She looked in the mirror at the people sitting beside her along the counter. They looked back. She put on her sun glasses and sipped her tea casually. Lousy tea. She put more sugar in it. The people were still looking at her. One man winked. She felt terribly self-conscious. There wasn't enough marmelade. May I have some more jelly, please? He hadn't heard her. But all the people along the counter had. Oh, well, she thought, skip it. She paid her bill and left.

She walked up Broadway to 91st, and bought the milk and some cigarettes. It had started to drizzle. God, it was so good to be out. She looked at her watch. 3:30. It was amazing how fast time went when she was in New York. She tried to think of something else to do with herself. She was too full of tea to go into another coffee shop. 3:30. She really should be getting back.

She made a point of saying a happy sort of Thanks to the elevator boy, because he was nice. Then she wondered if he was just trying to make it easier for her or something.

Damn. She wished he would give her a key. She hated to have to ring the bell. It made her feel silly, like she was some kind of visitor, or the delivery boy with the milk or something. The door to the apartment next to his opened, and a lady with her hair in thousands of little pink curlers came out. The woman looked ugly. She really looked ugly. The girl wondered if she'd ever get that way. Jack was taking forever to come. She rang again. The lady with the curlers emptied her garbage can and returned to her room. The girl heard her lock her door and put the chain on.

He was happy to see her. Did you remember the milk? She smiled at him and put the milk in the refrigerator. He kissed her. Oh, Pussy Cat, he said, oh, Pussy Cat. Come to bed.

At 7:30, she reminded him about Immanuel and the movie. She convinced him that it would be healthy for both of them to get out of the apartment. Like I feel chained to this bed, she laughed. She lit a cigarette.

You're right. We have to get out. Come, Pussy Cat, let's get dressed. Come. Shall I wear my monk's suit?

She laughed and put her arms around him. You nut, she said. God, she adored him.

The elevator boy was nice again, but subtly cooler with both of them than he had been with her alone.

Immanuel was in good shape on the phone. His parents are leaving for Israel next week, and he'll be living alone for about a month. He needs to live alone, Immanuel. When his parents are home, they run his life. He spoke of Immanuel all the way to 86th. He had grown up with Immanuel, and they were very close. Shall we take the car? he asked, no, I can't face it, there'll be no place to park. We'll take the subway.

She hadn't been listening, allowed herself to be led to the subway entrance. She was feeling very passive, rather lost.

The subway was crowded and oppressive. She stood next to a tall boy who looked German. He smiled at her, and his teeth were very white. She

liked being close to him, feeling a lean, strong calf touch hers. She looked at Jack. His stomach brushed her hand. He smiled at her. She looked away. Twenty seven wasn't really so old, but he did look older. She had read a divine poem about baldness, by she couldn't remember whom. It was called Baldness and the Swan. It was grand. She wished everybody would read it.

Immanuel was in good shape. He was full of puns and witty chatter. He made her feel bright and happy. He complimented her personality, her intelligence. She liked Immanuel.

While they were waiting for the movie to start, they met a girl. She was pretty and young and fun, and she sat with them. Her name was Gretchen.

At the beginning of the film, he started talking. Making obvious observations about the symbolism, the meanings, etc. She wished he'd just shut up. She was smarter than he was, and she had read more Kafka than he ever would. She understood at least as much as he did, for God's sake. The people sitting in front of them had to turn around twice to ask them to be quiet. But he just wouldn't stop, he just wouldn't stop. She felt ashamed and embarrassed for him. The things he was saying were so trite and obvious. She was afraid Immanuel would hear and laugh at him. But the comments didn't stop, even when the people in front of them got up haughtily and moved to another part of the theater.

Look at that — Do you know what that means? All those little girls, he has a guilt complex about sex, or maybe he thinks he's a homosexual. You notice how he's so frightened?

Please. She begged him to be quiet, and he put his arm around her and kissed her. I'm sorry, Pussy Cat, he said. After that, the comments came less often.

After the movie, Gretchen asked them to come up and have some coffee at her place, but it was late, and they declined.

On the way to the subway he talked about the surrealism and the psychological symbolism in the movie. His analysis was inconsistent, but she didn't feel like discussing it. Immanuel and the girl were several paces in front of them, giggling about something that must have been awfully funny.

Gretchen said goodnight at the corner of 26th. Immanuel offered to walk her home.

The night was very cold and damp, and the city looked dead. Even the subway was almost deserted. While they waited for a train she read the ads posted along the yellow, tiled walls. Mary, Mary . . . Camelot . . . N. Y. Times says "BRILLIANT . . ." . . . gay . . . a delightful fantasy. . . She watched a group of teenagers descend to the platform, listened to the sharp clack, clack of wobbly-high heels. They were Puerto Rican. The girls were wearing flashy net and nylon dancing dresses, and they carried gaudy evening bags. They tossed their hair, and shouted flirtations in Spanish at the boys. Their eyes were heavily made-up, but bright, and alive. The young people's raucous gaiety seemed to make the tomblike subway creak and groan with cantankerous objection. Jack watched the group with an air of amused superiority.

The screech of the subway hurt her ears. She was very tired. On the way uptown, she pretended she didn't know him, and when he spoke to her, she answered coldly, so that the other people in the car would think he was just another lecherous old man, trying to pick her up.

Pat Arnold:

HYMN

How, man? in this age? Victim
At the altar, crazed desire,
Prostrate, heart on fire
Shouting, shouting, shouting at a dim

Image? Hear his words—how
They shatter glass boundaries!
How he, groveling on his knees,
Loves it! Hear him come through now —

The word he shouts — A plea
To be forgiven? Hah! God grant
Us more than that! He rants
And foams, screams,"Guilty!"

Guilty, your honor, Guilty!
God give me a bed of nails
Each night for life! Flail
My bare flesh! Drag me

Through cities — don't forgive
Nor look benevolent. Say damn
You, damn you. Damn!
Praise be to God on high! I live

In the fire of your breath
And your right arm. Don't prattle
Of forgiveness. Let me hear that rattle
In my throat: sweet, strong, firm death."

Karen Stothert:

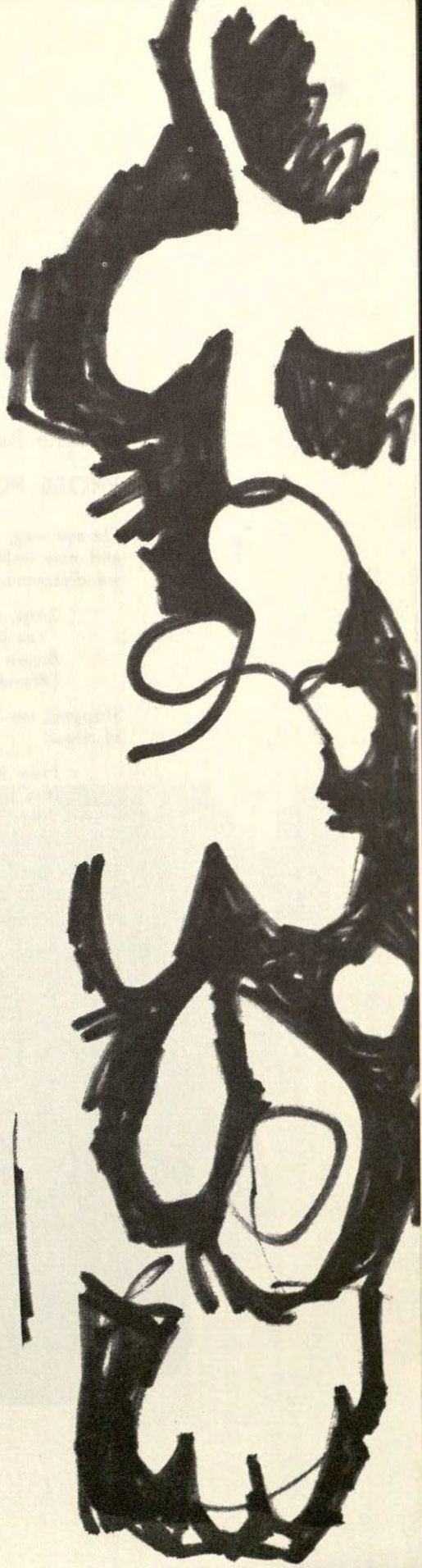
JUMP, JUMPING ROPE

There's something on the end of this
Jump
Jumping rope,
Something that won't meet my fingers.
A prize to grasp if I keep
Twirl
Twirling —
Keep going in and out the windows.
Something when I'm big
(like winning at marbles
or catching the jack ball in air)
Which won't come
(I'm told)
'Less I keep playing
(like riding a bicycle to heaven).

Kathy Eberlein:

CINQUAIN

Longing
We sat apart
Beside a silent candle
On the roof our shadow-heads were
Touching



Carylle Bartholomew:

PROSE POEM

On our way, you and I, on our way to ancient
and new walls — statue-filled, poem-filled —
we discovered the tiny creature, slain.

Legs, color of unborn calf, stretch upward
as if to grasp undisguised sympathies —
Brown gray speckled feathers now blood-disarrayed,
(Wonderful, how long ago?)

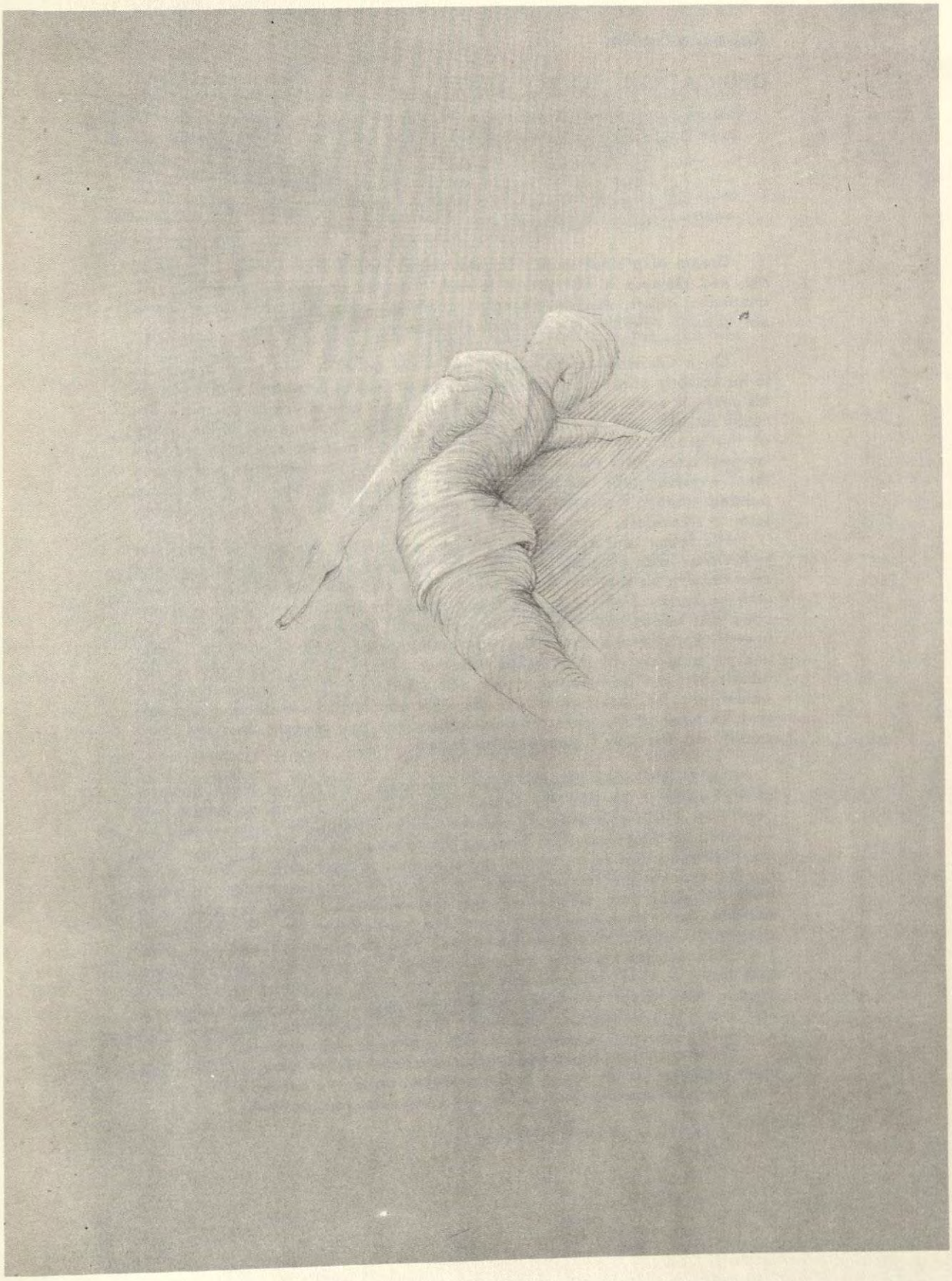
Stopped, we had to ponder the necessity — the necessity
of ritual.

How time seeps into unsuspected apertures
(the balloon of yesterday's carnival)
Pours transparent, masks the inner tulip velvet,
(first rainbow under tissue-paper lace).

The decision made, the spade obtained, we turned the
season's earth and on the grave we laid the
season's gaudy gifts.

(When did we become neophytes?
How entered the world of phosphorescent minds?)
Waking to play under fruit trees did we so soon forget
the towels drying in the sun,
the morning's voices?

Karen Cornell



Rebecca Smith:

DEDICATION: TO MY SISTER

> Why shouldn't I be proud? Hell, it's purely selfish. You reflect credit on me. I've had more to do with bringing you up than anyone. I wised you up . . . so you'd never be a fall guy, or make any mistakes you didn't want to make! Hell, you're more than my brother. I made you! You're my Frankenstein!
>
> O'Neill

Dream of a deaf mute. Urgent, vague, wierdly breathing, it came to me, and because it was you it is real. You, an unwinding, emerging self, deepening colors, shading, changing qualities — you are what forces me to act quickly. And this is your dedication — my sister Cynthia.

* * *

On a Christmas morning the boy woke up early and went downstairs in his cowboy printed pyjamas and a look of fearful hope and excitement in his eyes. It was a big New England living room with a fire place and a fire ready to be lit and outside the snow falling softly. The tree was in the corner of the grey, early-morning room and the boy roamed and dreamed and laughed among the treasures lying underneath it. So many toys and among them a plastic farm set which, because it was a toy, had all of its pieces painted white. It smelled new and manufactured and not like his Uncle's farm in Minnesota.

His father and mother came down and lit the fire and his father sat in his chair with his pipe and his voice boomed with pride as he read the directions to his son. The fence was erected this way and the barn this way and the hands of all the human figures could be interlocked. Among all the cows and horses and chickens the boy found the people and he took the grandfather's hand and put it in the grandmother's and he took the farmer and his wife and fit their hands together. There was a young girl off by herself and the boy looked at her and wondered. Then he saw the hired worker with his back turned and the little boy turned him around and saw that his hand fit the girl's. It was strange, the boy thought, that the hired worker was the only figure painted brown.

* * *

The land around Boulder Rock, Tennessee, didn't yield much because of the copper in the hills and erosion of the soil. But a farm, no matter how poor, was always a satisfaction and this one had taken Jim Murphey and his wife through the depression and the times when he had been laid off at the plant and now in his seventies he wanted to stay here for the rest of the life that was left to him. Jim knew that even in a town where the fumes from the plant were suffocating, and the river was a great temptation to suicides, that a man could find something worth living for. The Murphey's daughter, Ophelia, was down for a visit with her husband and two girls. There was another visitor, a friend of Ophelia's from North Carolina, along with her son. The three women sat in the living room and talked about people. Mrs. Murphey brought her daughter up to date on the town gossip and wasn't it a shame that Mrs. Flynn took her life and she had been such a wonderful teacher. The women talked and wept and tsk tsked.

The drone from the women in the next room reached Charron, Ophelia's older daughter, as she lay in bed and looked up at the ceiling with a smile. Tom, the hired man, lay beside her and looked up, too, frowning.

"It's not right," Tom said.

"A platitude, dearest," Charron said.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Well, it's not right."

"It's not right! It's not right! Why does everything always have to be right? I like it when things aren't right. It's more fun." She propped herself on her elbow and ran her hand across Tom's chest, shiny from the heat. "Besides, I've enjoyed myself, haven't you?"

"You like sleeping with a nigger, huh?"

Charron lay herself across Tom's chest and put her head in the crook between his neck and shoulder. She pressed her nose and mouth hard against his skin and laughed softly. "It's wonderful," she said.

Tom held her. "I love you," he said.

"I know."

"I want to marry you."

Charron rolled over on her own side of the bed. "Sure, sure," she said.

The drone from the next room became louder and then the door was open and Ophelia stood there looking at her daughter.

"Mother, I . . ."

Tom sat up. "I love her," he said.

"Shut up, both of you." Ophelia closed the door behind her. "Tom aren't you supposed to be washing the windows?"

"Yes ma'am, I . . ."

"Well, get going. Charron, you get cleaned up and dressed. The minister's coming to dinner. I'll talk to you later." And she left.

"We'll get married, Charron."

"Don't be silly, Tom."

"No, we can get married and go to France. They don't mind things like this over there. If we just had the money. You can get it for us, can't you?"

"I don't know, Tom. I'll think about it. We can talk about it later. Hurry up. I don't want another scene."

"I love you. Do you love me?"

"Yes, Tom, I love you, too. Now go."

"You will get the money, won't you?"

"Yes, yes."

Charron lay in bed a while after Tom had left. Then she got up and put on a terry cloth robe and tied it around her waist. It's dirty, she thought, I'll have to wash it. She walked over to the window and held her hands up over her head and stretched on her nineteen year-old legs, hard from years of ballet. She was tall and slender and her hair was long and reddish brown. Two small boys walked down the road near the window, both smoking stolen cigars. They saw Charron and stopped and nudged each other. Charron stood there for a few minutes, smiling, watching them as they looked at her. I could teach them something, she thought, and then she turned and retied her robe.

In the next room Charron's father was in bed with the sheet coming up to his waist, exposing his bloated chest and stomach and his flabby shoulders, sprinkled with pimples. His glasses lay on the bedside table and without them his eyes were small and swollen in a red, greasy face.

"What have you been doing?" he asked and each syllable was heavily stained with beer.

"Nothing."

"I bet." He turned and spilled the ashtray that had been lying beside him on the bed. "Damn it, now I've got ashes all over. Come get these cigarette butts out of here."

Charron felt the tears smart her eyes. "But I don't want to. Why do I always have to . . ."

"Shut up and do as I say."

The tears ran down her face as she knelt by the bed, picking up cigarette butts. "You never make Cynthia do anything. Why always me?"

"For Christ's sake, I ask you to do one lousy thing." He turned his back toward her. "Get out."

In the next room Charron's sister, Cynthia, and the woman friend's son, David, were taking a nap. They both lay in their blue-jeans on top of a brown bed spread. They're too young, Charron thought, and stopped in the doorway. David moved in his sleep and his leg touched Cynthia's. They both moved away. It's all right, Charron thought.

"Cynthia?"

"Yes, David."

"I'm sorry we have to go."

"I am too. Maybe you can come back and we can play some more baseball." It's good, Charron thought, and she wanted to cry again.

Jim Murphey sat over in the corner of the kitchen and the three women milled around the sink and stove preparing dinner and talking. Ophelia saw Charron come in. "Aren't you cleaned up yet? Didn't I tell you the minister was coming."

"Yes. I'm going now, Mother."

"Here. Here's some money. Give it to Tom and tell him we no longer need his services."

"Mother, I can't."

Ophelia turned to her own mother. "Mama, you and Daddy have to come up and visit us in Connecticut some time. We have the most beautiful home, ten rooms. It will all be Charron's some day. And she's supposed to get the cutest little blue sports car this year."

"Give me the money," Charron said. "I'll give it to him later."

Charron looked at herself in the bathroom mirror. Her mascara had run. Daddy shouldn't make me cry, she thought. She put the money on the clothes hamper and ran the water in the tub. She made it steaming hot so that it would fog up the mirror. Why don't I want to look, she wondered. She got in the tub lazily and looked at her body. Her chest was black and dirty as though with soot. She scrubbed at it. The color would fade and then instantly come back. She scrubbed hard and long until the water was cold. She got out of the tub and quickly hid herself in her dirty robe. She picked up the money. I'll have to give this to Tom quickly, she thought. My God, please don't let Cynthia see me like this!