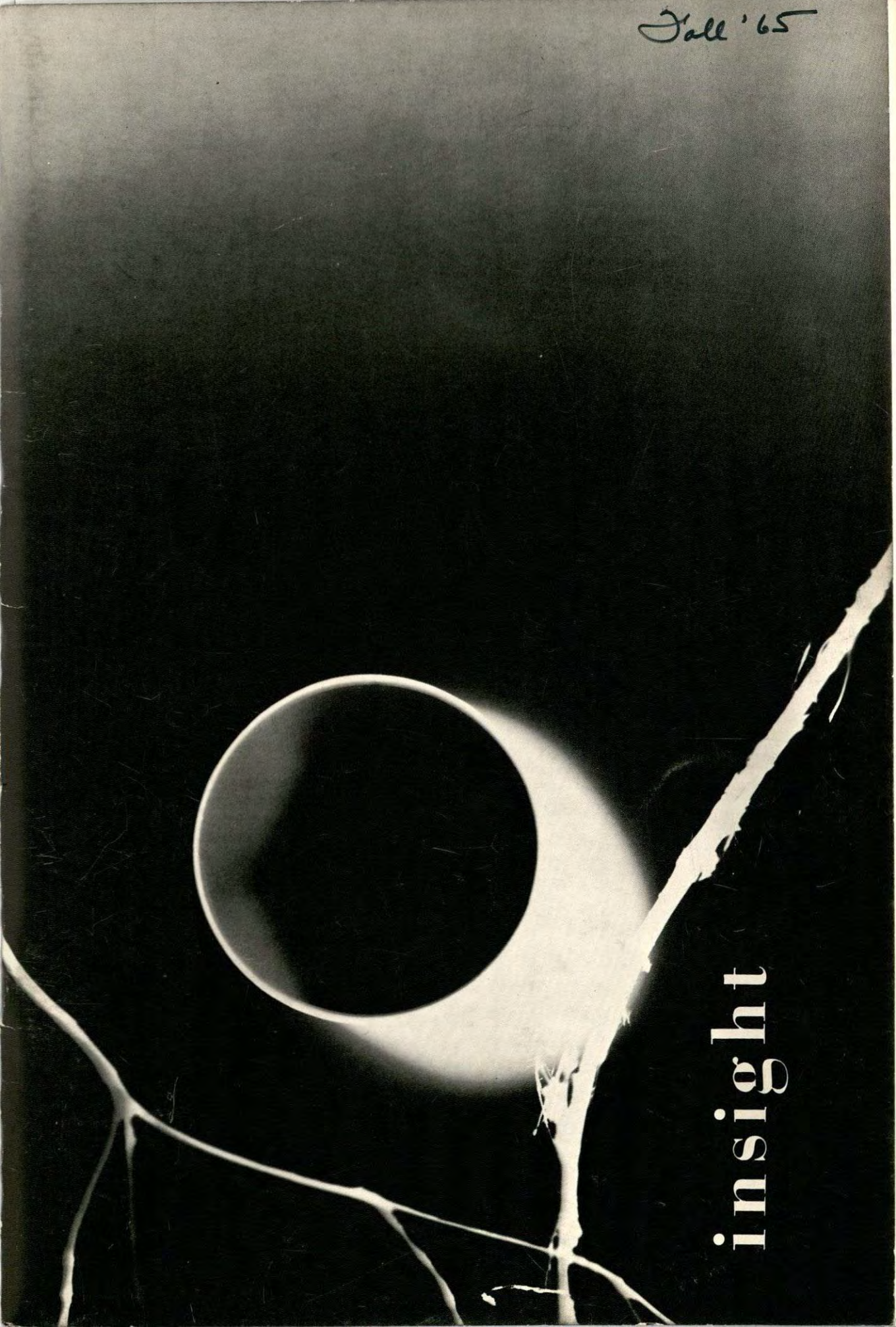
Fall 1965

Insight, 1965 Fall

Connecticut College

Fall '65



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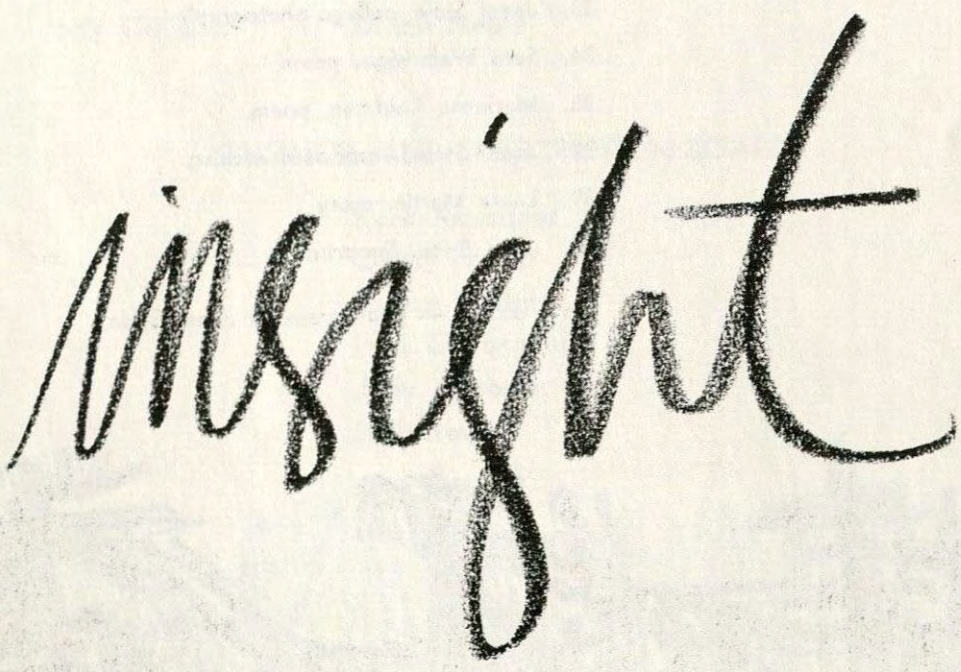
new london, connecticut



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THE OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGN

Donna was a radiant bride. Oh, I know that they say that about all brides, but you must understand there isn't an ounce of sentimentality in my use of that word. If I had meant blushing I would have said blushing. I was an usher, of course; all of us who were left were in the wedding. It was one of those late afternoon, High Episcopal weddings, one of the god knows how many thousands that happen every June. But there was more to this one. You can say that I "got more out of" this one because I was an usher, but that isn't the reason, anymore than Donna's being a bride accounts for her radiance.

I'm not sure I understand how it all came about. But I think about it, even now, because there seemed to be a ritual going on at that wedding that had nothing at all to do with the Solemnization of Matrimony. And I began to think about ritual in general, because if you look you see it all around you.

At least that's the way it looks to me. Ever since I've known Donna she has been performing a ritual. This bride in peau de soie began her particular pilgrimage when she was in knee socks. And I guess the altar is the beginning of another, but that isn't the one I want to tell you about.

It started when we were freshmen in college and Bruce was dating her. They were prep school sweethearts, if such a thing is possible. Bruce babbled about her all the time, which pretty much disgusted us because we didn't have old ties like that to begin college with, and because Bruce was generally hard to take. But he was mad about her, absolutely embarrassingly in love, in the way that freshmen love. He used to hitchhike up to her college every weekend, and write to her every day, and take her back to their prep school football games and that sort of thing. He had a picture of her on his desk, one of those private school yearbook pictures with the chaste white collar, straightish hair, demure expression and halo effect around the head. The only way to describe the way she looked is vulnerable. You couldn't tell about Donna from the picture. I mean there was a lot to her, but vulnerability was not the least of it.

Bruce saved up his money and had her down for a big football weekend in November. He bought some gin, it was Gordon's, I remember, and bragged about it for a week and kept telling us that it was for him and his girl and the rest of us cheap bastards could buy our own liquor. And he worked up this cocktail party — in later years these functions were unnamed and simply assumed, or at worst dubbed, aftergame festivities — but freshman year we had cocktail parties. It involved a whole crew of their prep school friends, and all of us roommates, and some other guys who lived in our entryway, and much ado about getting ice from Liggett's, and wood for the fireplace, and red lights for the desk lamps and stuff like that. God we were green.

Anyway, Donna came down Saturday morning. Bruce had a class or something and left us with instructions to handle her with kid gloves until he got back. As it turned out we were in the bedroom and didn't hear her when she wandered into the living room. At some point Winston said, "Hey, I wonder what Bruce's girl will be like. This I gotta see."

And she just said, "Then why don't you come on out?" So we did.

She was sitting there smoking a cigarette, a damned mentholated variety she never got over, and she was wearing knee socks and one of those pleated skirt and shapeless sweater outfits that freshmen girls wear for uniformity or comfort or whatever reason they wear them. Donna always looked terrible in knee socks and after freshman year she stopped wearing them and had tolerably good legs.

What can I say? She was more vivacious than the picture indicated she was. Or maybe it was nervousness at being in our room for the first time. She had her legs crossed, of course, a real skittish virgin type, although she would never have thought of herself that way.

Anyway, the only thing that mattered about Donna then was that she was Bruce's girl. Who remembers anything else about her from freshman year? I'm sure she doesn't. She fit that role so perfectly that it was impossible to imagine her in any other.

Well, to get on, the game that day was cold and rainy and we all rushed back to the room and the fire and the red desk lights. Bruce and Donna polished off their gin in about an hour. Everyone else was singing dirty songs to somebody's guitar, but those two were billing and cooing in a corner. True to prep school form they couldn't hold their liquor worth a damn. They were talking pretty loud and everyone started to watch them. They kept kissing each other and smiling and talking about how they loved each other and were going to get married. Some ass started making up dirty songs about them, but to tell you the truth they were kind of sweet. Afterwards people always said that about them: that they were sweet.

Anyway, Bruce got sick and passed out and Donna took care of him when everyone else went off to dinner. When I came back she was sitting on the couch and he was passed out beside her with his thumb in his mouth. He was dead to the world, but she wouldn't leave him. She sat with her arm around him and watched him. Let me say that no one would mind being looked at the way she looked at him. I went over and offered her some chocolate fudge we had in the room, because she had missed dinner, and by that time she was sober enough to eat chocolate fudge. But she thanked me in a whisper and never moved from beside him. I don't think I'll ever forget the way she looked, this kid in knee socks. It was three years before she was sure enough of herself to look like that again. At the time it was a

kind of miracle, considering the way Bruce was. I mean he was always hard to take and was what is called a flamer. But he was as good to Donna as he could be, even though he passed out on her that time.

She came quite often after that. I don't think she liked her college much, and all she really cared about was Bruce. At first we rehashed the weekend and the ninety proof rug, but later there were other things. She sometimes cleaned our room, and we all played hearts on Sunday afternoons. We got used to having her around. But really she was just Bruce's girl.

Sometime in the spring they broke up. We were pretty surprised, to tell you the truth. I don't know who called it off, but it was a messy ending. I think actually Bruce was the one, but it doesn't matter because it would have happened sooner or later. I didn't see that at the time, but there was something all wrong. Something in Donna needed more than sweetness, I think, but she always blamed herself for it, and thought it was something wrong with her.

She called him once after that, from her college infirmary. I think that was the last time they talked. I heard him say on the phone that he wouldn't go to see her. He said he still loved her, but he couldn't help her anymore. He said they both had to forget the whole thing, it would never work. Even from where I was sitting I could hear her on the other end, crying and begging. I don't know exactly what happened. Bruce said she had a nervous breakdown, but he was probably exaggerating. But neither of them ever really got over it. They never went out together again, or even sent Christmas cards, as far as I know, but Bruce dropped out of college and joined the Navy. And Donna — well, that's what I want to tell you about.

We saw her once again that year, the very last day of exams, when Bruce had already gone home. She looked different, her hair was longer and she had lost weight. She was tired and pathetic. In her own mind she was still Bruce's girl, but she was brave in her sad female way. She had to come back, she just wanted to touch the fireplace, and ask about the ninety proof rug and belong, but she waited until she knew Bruce was gone.

Mike made a sort of play for her that day. No, I guess it was the other way around. I think Donna still had hopes of getting Bruce back, and she was not above using Mike to get what she wanted. I'm not saying she was a scheming bitch; Donna was only aware of wanting Bruce. But Mike just simply was not in her league. He never knew that he had been used, not even after he slept with her.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. That happened the next year. Donna saw to it that Mike didn't forget her over the summer. She was in our room a lot the next year, mostly with Mike, but Winston and I dated her too. At first it was just kind of funny, and we all laughed about it. But Donna always had to prove something. She couldn't take it for what it was, just casual. She had to make it mean something. She had to make it painful.

You see we took her very lightly. We thought she was making a fool of herself over Bruce, and that she was not very bright generally. We didn't care much about her one way or the other, and somewhere along the line we made a bet to see which one of us could get her into bed.

We never got very far on that score. Of course Donna knew what we were up to, and it gave her one more thing to prove. She used to babble about how comfortable and familiar our room was, but she was never comfortable there. She always had to defend her ability to love and her intelligence and even her virtue. It turns out she had all those things, but it

took us a long time to see it, because we just saw her hysterical and fatuous and desperate. She was fidgety and nervous as hell every time she came near us. Every visit must have been an emotional ordeal for her, but it was like a goddam pilgrimage she had to make. Sometimes we invited her, but mostly she just came.

You should have seen her. There would be a tentative little knock at the door, and there would be Donna, with an infinite variety of excuses for being at our door. She spent half her life apologizing for herself. But we would take her coat, and light her cigarette, and make her a good stiff drink. She always seemed in need of a good stiff drink. She often drank too much and then she would talk about Bruce and cry. Maybe it was good for her. I guess she never talked about him anywhere else. For that matter I don't think anyone but us saw her as a pathetic, desperate person. She came to us to be weak.

She probably could have got out for good then, if she had wanted to. She would have forgotten Bruce in time, and the next guy would have made her feel happy and loved. But that isn't the way it happened.

One night when she was down with Mike and we were all drinking too much, she started her routine about how beautiful her relationship with Bruce had been, and how meaningful, and how pure, and all. And Mike, who was fed up with her, told her to cool it, because Bruce had never really given a damn about her. He also said that with what Bruce had told him, Donna was just lucky she hadn't gotten pregnant. Donna believed him and cried in the saddest way. We all felt awkward. But she stopped crying very suddenly. She asked for another drink in a perfectly normal tone of voice.

A little while later she disappeared into the bedroom with Mike. The next thing we knew she was standing in the doorway in a faded old flannel nightgown. She told us she was going to spend the night with Mike. Not one of the five of us will ever forget the queer, bitter expression on her face when she said that. And then, as though there was nothing out of the ordinary, she took her toothbrush and soap and towel into the bathroom to get ready for bed.

So Mike won the bet, not that he got any glory. You can't even credit him with having any idea of what kind of effect what he said would have on Donna. We all felt lousy and responsible, and we made it rough for Mike. There was a lot we didn't like about him, but after that we never bothered to put up with him. No one blamed Donna at all, and Mike moved out of our room the next semester. Mike was just a tool for Donna. He told Bruce all about it when he visited us on leave, just as Donna had intended him to. It was all just Donna's way of saying that she had stopped believing in love and in herself. She'd never slept with Bruce or anyone, you see, because it was supposed to belong to the "beautiful, meaningful relationship." By throwing it away on Bruce's old roommate she let him know that she wasn't his girl anymore. She hurt him in the only way left to her. That's what she wanted.

Well, Donna had a real flair for the dramatic, but she didn't pull it off entirely smoothly. She hated herself a little more after that. I know that because it was three months before she could come back to the room. It was three months before she could look us in the eye.

But of course she had to come back. It wouldn't have done Donna one bit of good to confess the whole thing to her roommate or her god or herself. By that time our room was her only confessional; only we could give her any sort of absolution. You could have handed Donna the moon on a silver

platter (or whatever it is that girls think they want) and it wouldn't have made any difference if she thought we didn't accept her.

It was subtle, the way she forced her way into our group, into our room, and into our hearts, eventually. She used every trick in the book, in fact. Just by being around she absorbed a lot. Little surface things like the expressions we used, the music we liked, the courses we were taking. And she noticed how we all felt about each other. She figured out how to treat us all. As a group, as the room we were too much for her, but she got to know us individually. She talked to Eric about the newspaper and admired his executive abilities. She listened to Winston talk about his mother and his girl at home. She laughed at all my jokes and made me feel witty as hell. Things like that.

But she was subtle about it. I couldn't say exactly when she became a part of the room. But she did. The time came when she could walk in without apologizing and everyone was glad enough to see her. She managed to turn the tables a little, so that we all secretly and separately needed her a little. She became something positive.

But you see that was only half the battle for Donna. Remember that she was just a girl after all, and all the painful things were focused in our room. That was where she kept her inadequacies, and even when she could look Bruce in the eye and look Mike in the eye she wasn't satisfied. She had to be sure that we knew everything "bad" about her. She made bad things happen so she could have our forgiveness.

If one of us had a date with her she would dump him for another. Or she would do something to embarass us in front of people who mattered. Or she would just be sullen and bitchy and boring for no apparent reason. I'm certain she wouldn't have behaved that way any other place in the world but our room. I swear she couldn't help it. The girl was obsessed. There was nothing you could blame her for. It was a vicious thing all around. Our room contained a part of her, and she kept coming back to perpetuate that part even though she hated it. The criminal returning to the scene of the crime, over and over and over.

But she wasn't just a criminal, she was a stage director, too. Our room was her arena. She staged painful little scenes to dramatize her weaknesses. We were a good cast of supporting actors. We played our roles over and over and over.

Well, you can see how futile it all was. Eventually Donna must have understood that these little revivals of old pain and guilt were getting her nowhere. No matter how much she wanted us to be angels of grace, we weren't. You can say we failed her, but it wasn't our fault either. She miscast us.

At any rate, she just stopped coming. She left when we were just beginning to understand her. Maybe she decided that a room full of old memories and ghosts was not the place to come to terms with the ghosts. I don't know. But it probably had something to do with her decision to take her junior year in Europe. We remembered her more often than we might have thought we would. It was hard not to see the room through her eyes. The gin on the rug, and the mantel she always checked for dust, the mirror she always stopped in front of, the finger painting she never liked. She was our newest ghost, wandering in and out like the ghosts of Bruce and Mike, but more vividly, because she was more vivid, maybe, but

mostly because we felt bound to her in a relationship of guilt.

While she was in Europe Donna started writing letters to Stephen. That came as quite a surprise, let me tell you. Not that she should have written to us, but Winston had already married his girl from home, Bruce was gone, Eric was never much involved with her and she had nothing but contempt for Mike. As for me? You see, Donna and I understood each other a little too well. We hated what we saw of ourselves in each other, so that we could never communicate. But it seemed odd that she should want to write to Stephen.

You are wondering why I never mentioned Stephen before. Stephen was our roommate for four years, it is true, and it is true that he was well aware of Donna's presence. But Stephen was strong, he refused to act in her little plays. Yes, Stephen was our brightest and best. If we never knew him well, it is because he was essentially alone. He was something of an absolute, if that word can be applied to a person. All his faith was in himself, in his power of reason, perhaps. He simply trusted himself to find the truth, and he was skeptical of emotional and social ways of knowing. He was a bit of an ascetic, in that he stripped away anything and anyone that wasn't necessary to his way of being.

It isn't easy to talk about Stephen. We all were too much in awe of him to see any weakness in him. But now I suppose that he was a lonely person, incapable of communicating his need for human understanding. He had to believe in his self-sufficiency. I never knew Stephen to comprise himself.

I don't recall his ever talking to Donna. He watched her, he listened to her, no doubt he was amused by her violently emotional way of being. It is hard to imagine that he could have understood her, his contact with the real world was so tenuous; but on the other hand, he had a detachment the rest of us didn't share, and perhaps he had an intellectual grasp of the situation.

Maybe Donna sensed that in him. She probably was attracted to his very coolness. At least she knew she couldn't manipulate him. It was never in her power to play on his emotions. She wrote him good letters. There was nothing desperate or hysterical or introspective about them. They were lively, perceptive letters about what she was doing, what she was reading, the people she met. He usually read them to us, they were the kind of letters you might want to read to someone.

One day when he had received one of these letters, Stephen said to us, "Donna sends you all her best. She says she hopes the mantel is dusted."

Mike happened to be in the room that day. He said, "She just can't get away from us, can she. That poor kid."

Stephen was disgusted. "How the hell can you guys be so obtuse? For two years you fed on her weakness, and you think that gives you some right to call yourselves strong. Donna got away—and in more ways than you think—but you clods have managed to hang on to your little delusions."

Tell me that wasn't a surprise. You see we had never heard him say anything about Donna before, and we had just assumed that he felt something between contempt and amusement. We didn't expect him to think of her as a person, he'd never had any use for girls anyway. But now he seemed almost to admire her.

He never read her letters to us after that, but we noticed that she wrote more often and he spent a lot of time writing long letters back. It was for us to imagine what sort of relationship theirs could be. We didn't know until the next time we saw Donna. Sometime in the course of that year they fell in love by air mail, although I don't really think it was really a matter of "falling" in their case.

When Donna appeared again, it was in September of our senior year. She had just flown in from Paris that morning. She came to the room without warning, as she had so many times before. I wish you could have seen her. She didn't fling herself into my arms when I opened the door and I don't think she even noticed that the old ninety proof rug had been replaced. She said hello, warmly enough, and came in and sat down. She sat still. There were no excursions to the mirror or the mantel. She didn't fuss with her hair or demand matches. She sat and talked to me, perfectly serene, perfectly at ease. Oh, she knew what room she was in, all right, but she had made her peace with it.

After a while, of course, she asked about Stephen, and I told her he was asleep in the bedroom. She said, with all her new-found confidence, "I think he won't mind if I wake him, just this once."

I walked to the door with her, and opened it. She went in and sat on the edge of his bed and looked at his sleeping face for a few seconds. My mind went back to freshman year, when that same look had been less wisely directed. Yes, the quality was the same, tender, trustful, and a little proud. I'm convinced that the way a woman looks at a sleeping man can tell you more about how she feels than her whole diary. She pressed the arm that curved around the pillow and said, "Stephen, wake up. It's Donna." He opened his eyes and smiled up at her. "Donna," he said, "I've been waiting." I closed the door.

So Stephen was Donna's priest after all. I am tempted to say that Donna had to come back, to us, the old ritual, but that isnt' the point. The important thing is that she could come back, that she was willing to be held accountable for all her old sins. How many people would be willing, given some choice as by this time she was?

I had become so accustomed to thinking of Donna within the context of our four walls. But of course our room was never her whole world. She tried to keep that past in there, so as not to let it touch the present. She had clandestine little rendezvous with her old self, so it wouldn't try to catch up with her at the wrong time in the wrong places. Of course it didn't work. Don't you see that it doesn't matter, because Donna did get away, and got away so completely that she could come back. Donna did make peace with herself. It wasn't a question of needing Stephen's love or acceptance. That could only come afterwards.

Yet I can't imagine that anyone else could have been so perfectly right for Donna. Only he knew her both within our walls and outside them. No one else could have understood and accepted and forgiven all that he did. In that way, Stephen was her priest, but Donna's state of grace was not a gift from anyone.

Oh, you can call it good old maturity if you think that's the right word. Or you can be really collegiate and say that Donna survived the identity crisis. Sure, she had to "know herself" before she could love Stephen the way she did. Granted she was just another college girl. But I will continue to think that she achieved a state of grace, and that it was a more courageous achievement than we can really understand.

I think courage is a word that says a lot about Donna. She had it all along. The most misguided things she ever did, the things we saw her do, were courageous. Because you can't forget that other word, the word that describes Donna in the picture—vulnerable. Everything affected her, everyone touched her, even a room could hold its sway over her. Her vulnerability got her into trouble, there's no doubting it. None of us could really help her then, I mean after Bruce, at least I tell myself this, because what to believe is everybody's own choice. But we made it worse for Donna. Her courage to try something, and to to give up trying, was met by our lack of courage. We were so absolutely gutless. We let Donna call the shots. We couldn't give her anything she came to us for, not even credit for believing in us.

But I'm not trying to say that she ever overcame her vulnerability. That's something Donna will always have to live with. But she turned it into something more positive, call it sensitivity, a more outwardly directed quality now that she has some faith in herself.

And god knows she is no saint, I know all the bad things. But remember she came to our room when it was the hardest thing to do, and she left when it would have been easier to stay. I'm just saying that the "truth" of her situation was painful and difficult, and I admire not only her final triumph, but her courage all along.

Now can you understand why Stephen loves her? Can you imagine that he understood her all along and was wise enough not to interfere? Isn't it possible that he saw in her the courage to become, by herself, a person both he and she could accept and love? I think he did. I think he was waiting.

He was waiting at the altar when she came down the aisle to marry him. It was just a garden variety Episcopal wedding, if you want to look at it that way. I think of it as a kind of symbol, myself. I know that the Episcopal Church would take issue with me on this point, but I still contend that Donna's marriage to Stephen, coming as it did the summer after we graduated from college, was a sacrament.

Marjorie Lipshutz

POEM

Silenced in awe, preserved in speech
    I viewed the ministers of my world
And in the cacaphony of my mind

    I heard Nureyev unseat Rodin.
The Hand of God, the Kiss
    Fast fade to serpentine limbs
unfurled saluting her.

A halted leap, a stalking pause
    now brings the cat to earthen air
To land by colored shrubs of lights.

Patricia Chock

Karen Stothert Stockman

PHANTASMA OF SAMENESS

Weeping legions leave foot prints across the sky;
Their tears blur the world's grays
And choke the earth's deep breaths.
In the alien jungle staggering from the blows,
Paying for the wrath of the heroes at home
And ripe for the reaping of the foe,
Are the soldiers:
Something different from the hearts of home
That make the wars the soldiers fight,
That voice the pride and promises
Which the hoards must live to believe.
The soldiers are dully dressed fingers
Of that distant working body,
That mechanism unaware of the lewdness
In those somewhere jungle places:
Details, like dust in some lost recess,
Never touching the Father curator.
The remembered and forgotten soldier
Fights beside his mongoloid brother
Against a mongoloid brother
In a massive revival of brotherhood
Between the hoards of substitutes
Who fight the real fight in an obscure battle
Where there is no epiphany of grace.
Soldiers prophesy in a vase of liquid blood
Which, like tears, will dry and disappear
Until some emperor will hurl his thunderbolt
For the weeping legions to rise and march once more.

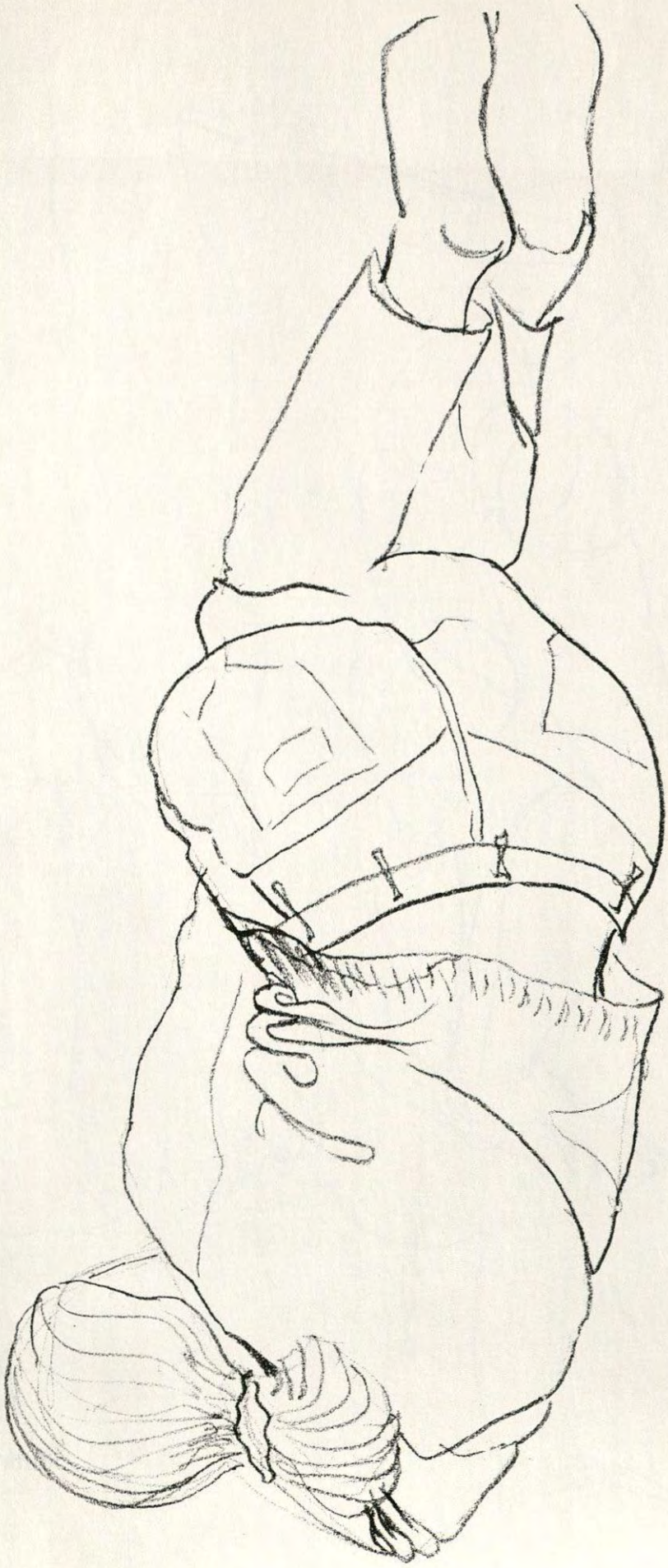
Karen Stothert Stockman

THE VISIONARY PURIST

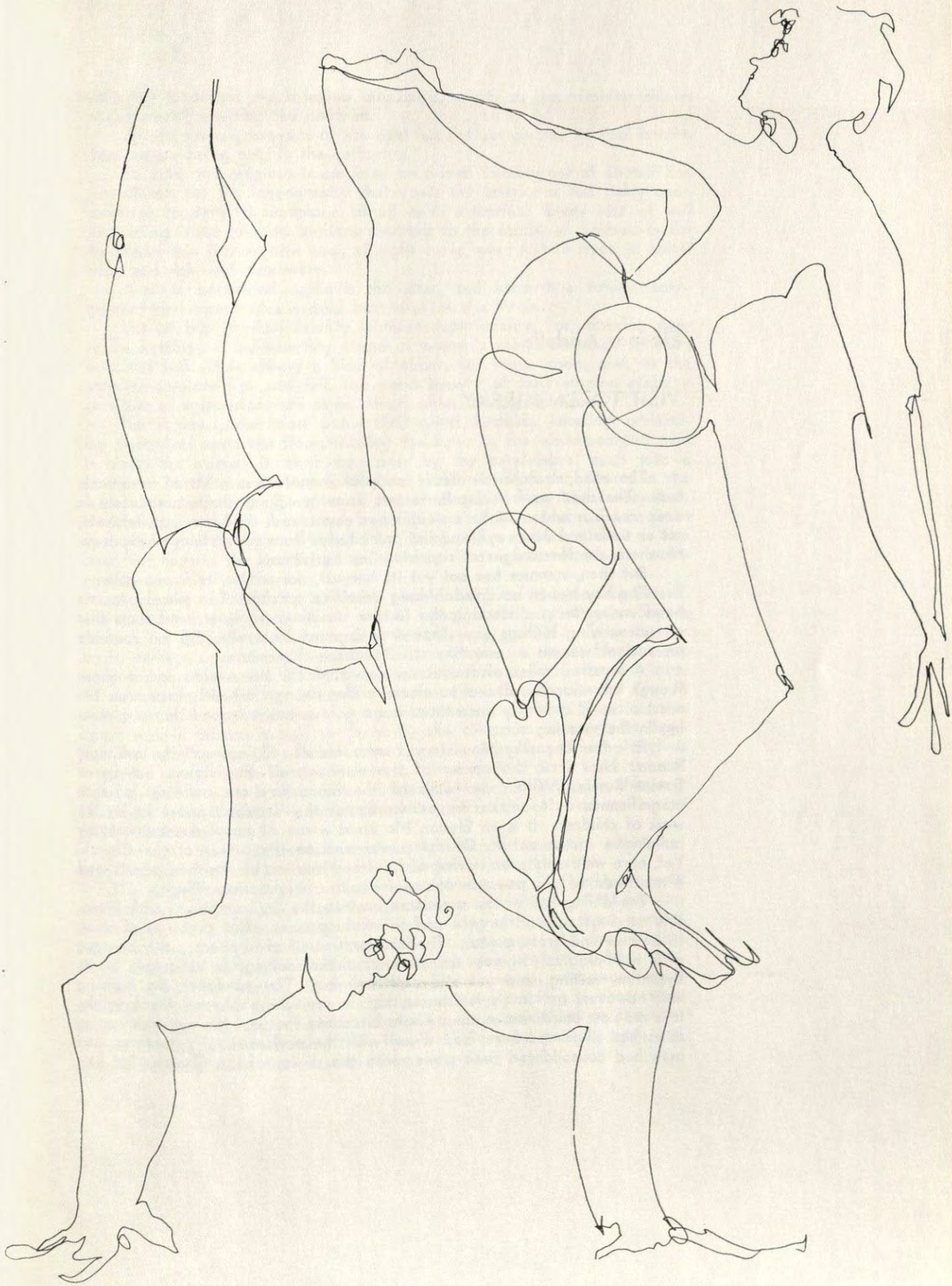
People make their darkish ways
With their bodies through this life —
Earthworms, forcing tunnels for themselves,
Resting in dug-out tightness,
Then moving darkwards.
Mindless annelidas drive on,
Living by the coarseness
That grinds against their innards,
Purging senseless veins.

He is white and thinks on their remains,
The slate and smooth nightearth
Where he will sow and nurture
His own conscious seed,
A nameless germ to be as white a flower
As his young future.
The world is an outsider's plain
Strewn with nightearth in alien forms,
And he must grow his precious hours
As much in their rich waste
As in his own heart's product.

Lisa Altman



Ruth Kirschner



Eleanor Abdella

VISIT TO ZAGORSKY

The road stretches endlessly on past monotonous miles of ramshackle huts. Thatched roofs hang in tatters from low-slung shelters and fold in deep crevices where winter's weight has conquered. Folk-carvings, intricate, rot on walls and doorways, and the paint fades from generations of exposure. Nowhere are there signs of repairing for the future.

But then, summer has not yet its harvest, nor winter its frozen gale.

The hay has to be dried. Along primitive patches of farmland peasants bend under the sun, stacking the fodder on innumerable crossed sticks that on surrounding hilltops are silhouetted against clear sky. By the roadside an ancient woman or one tiny child tends a single cow.

A hundred miles of feudal squalor is all for the eye to see, until, as though intentionally placed to electrify the stranger's heart, from over the crest of a hill suddenly arise three huge golden onion-shaped domes glistening in the morning sun.

It is the Zagorsky Monastery, center for all religious activity in Czarist Russia. Now it is the center of the remnants of all religious activity in Soviet Russia. Within the walls of the monastery are buildings of such magnificance as to make the cathedrals of the Kremlin appear to be the work of children: it is an Elysian Isle amid a sea of peopled vacuity, every building a monument to Czarist power and to the power of the Church. Yet, here walk only a scattering of Western tourists, black-robed priests, and a multitude of old peasant women from the neighboring village.

The dining hall of the czars scrapes into the sky, sumptuous with Byzantine carvings painted in gold and in what appears, after centuries of wear, to be blue and green pastels. The interior, vacant of furniture, richly baroque with mythological figures spread across the ceiling, is ridiculous in its Byzantine setting, and yet still overwhelming. The power of the building lies, however, not in its lavishness, but in something beyond the tangible. It is the vast emptiness within. Aeons back into the past the greatest Russian czars had pilgrimed here, had dined with the ecclesiastical potentates, and here had consolidated their power with the power of the Church. But now

all is left to decay. All is hollow emptiness, empty as the nameless missals strewn about, awaiting the junkman.

But the living graveyard of the past has not yet gasped its final breath. Services are being held in the cathedral.

To enter the religious house is to be driven forcibly out of oneself and into silence, for the iconography that coats the interior is too richly overpowering to deny its command of all one's attention. Every inch of wall and ceiling is set off into sections devoted to the saints, all painted in the traditional thin figures with long, straight noses, even narrow eyes, in colors deep and rich, but time-worn.

A silver, bejeweled coffin is the altar, and beneath a totally iconographed dome protrudes a gold bas relief of the Virgin.

Yet all this physical beauty is mere superficiality, for, drawing near to the worshipers, the haunting sound of women's voices demands all one's conscious self. It is almost a kind of chant, yet still a song, and, as the antiphonal voices rise and fall, the eerie beauty of their singing elicits a sensation of suspension into some other, older, time and place.

The women gather close about their priest, bending, kneeling, prostrating themselves upon the floor. Kissing the hand of the white-bearded man in black, the women in their turn pass by the candelabra, each with a prayer on her lips, each face illuminated in the candle light. There, in the semi-dark cathedral, in the glow of the candles it is clear that every face is old, that every face is cracked by a lifetime of toil. And, as each looks up to the light, the faintest trace of smile magnifies itself so that it is also clear that there is the fiercest pride in the privilege of worshipping in every aged heart.

Against a wall, pressing her body close to an icon and crossing herself, one emaciated wisp of a figure stands apart in solitary prayer. She is dressed like the others. On her feet are an ugly pair of weather-beaten boots, perhaps once owned by a husband or a son. A simple black smock hangs to her ankles and a black shawl covers her face and hugs her shoulders. All meaning in life for her is inseparable from the Church, for the Church alone can offer compensation for her life-time of suffering. And as this simple woman crosses herself so fervently she clings to a fading heritage that the next generation would never know, in the place where religious orthodoxy had, deep in the past, thrived. Uncanny that Boris Godvner and his whole family were buried in the shelter of these walls, that in this very church the voice of czarist hegemony had rung in worship of God and praise of Mother Russia.

And now this little peasant woman tightens the babushka about her head and turns to join her scattered comrades before the altar.

The singing never ceases. None who intrudes on that private world can turn his head, to look at another, or chance revealing a silent burning in the eyes and a hollowness inside. The air, saturated with those ancient voices in song, hangs heavily with a sense of long ago. All that is past seems museumed within these walls, just as old wine is preserved for generations within the barrel. And, as the wine becomes, with age, more precious to those who drink, the song becomes more precious to those who, aged, sing. But when unborn generations will quench their thirst on the wine of their fathers, the old who sing their hymns will long be gone to dust, and all their haunting music buried with them.

Marianna Kaufman

I A DOMESTIC QUARREL

"The Winter's Tale" (Cambridge Pocket Shakespeare) sat snug between "Electre" (Giraudoux) and "Voix - du Siecle."

"Baby's still got to cuddle," said an aging Webster's Collegiate.

"Now listen," snapped Electre. "You did a lot of cuddling in your day, too. And you weren't just wanting attention, the way he is. You were out for——." She stopped turning and pulled up a page which was showing. She remembered when Webster's really used to be a glad-book. How he had flirted with the Cassell's — both French and Italian. Even now, she could imagine what he was thinking when her page had been showing.

"Don't you think he's getting a little old for that? Shouldn't he be out boying with plays of his own size, instead of cuddling up between you two, watching your print?"

Webster's was getting irritated, she could tell. It was true, "Othello" and "Petite Anthologie" had been gone ever since they could open and close their own covers. And their other neighbors, the Seven Theban kids, had left the stacks months ago. It was no wonder Winter's Tale wanted to stay around the shelf now.

"Webster's," she said, "it'll be O.K. He starts school soon. And that new family down the aisle will be joining him. The O'Neill's — The Complete Works."

II THE GOOD LIFE

"Araby" was a modern short story. Her plot had been formed; she was In, on all the best sellers' lists. Though she would never admit it, this really did thrill her. It almost gave her a swelled cover.

She thounght of all the years she'd spent dating all those O. Henrys and Jack Londons — nondescripts. Well, it wasn't every short story who could say, at the age of —, (this was confidential, of course,) that she'd just been out with the toughest short story to hit Publisher's Weekly in a long time — "The Battler." "Roman Fever" would be jealous as hell. So would "Sabrina Fair."

And just wait'll I tell "My Old Man," won't his pages flutter, she thought. Lord, it was good being on the reserve shelf. She could get in any anthology she wanted, now.

Marianna Kaufman

FOG HORNS

The dogs of Weird
(Long hounds of Night)
Now bay to clear
The bay of dark.

Static moans
Chronic admission
Of souls gone lost
Of ships that listen.

Cautious hands
Muzzle the whimpers.
The mechanical dogs
Bark of disaster.

Marianna Kaufman

GOD TO ALICE — ACT I

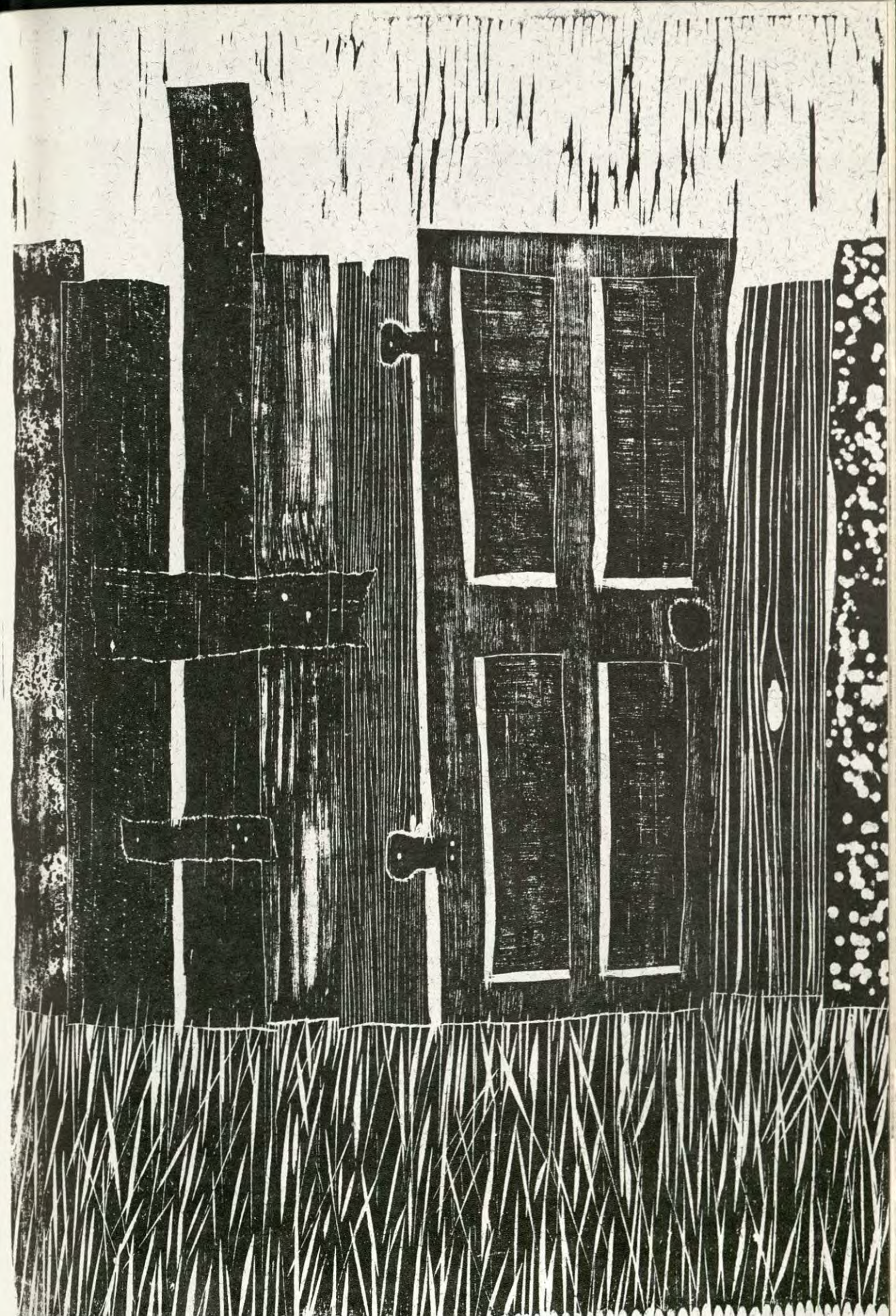
Tiny Alice, are you there?
Did you fan the fire of my boy's confusion?
Don't you care
That I've already made arrangements?

I see you contrived his seduction without a slip
(Those asylum years didn't leave him cold).
But Alice: pull your final trick
And you'll snuff his soul.

You'll have to work your games
On some unpolitic fellow
(Who shys from the screens of truth — someone tame).
Him, you can smother.

But Julian's part of the Plan:
Why Alice, remember he's My man.

Joanne Hess



Janet Stein

Janet Matthews

THE RAINBOW COMES AND GOES

Time was, and mostly is, and you may say that the present becomes the past at a continuous, even pace. But then you weren't there. When time just ceased to exist in any important way. But this may be too lofty a tone to describe what was a wretched summer in Edmonton, Alberta. I'll begin again.

I am an Edmonton girl — what am I saying? — I grew up in Edmonton. I grew to be twelve in Edmonton, to be accurate, and then I moved away, and moved and moved; and became very cosmopolitan, and lost every vestige of my provincial beginnings. I lost even the memory of them, in fact, and so it came as an absurdity that at twenty-one I was to go back to Edmonton — the absurdity of going backwards to a meaningless past.

The regression was for a summer, and set the summer apart, like something floating in space, untouched by May or September. There had been college and the east and a lot of more or less important people, and there would be again, but for a summer I was at loose ends. Call me irresponsible. It was the irresponsibility of having no identity, no roots, no strings.

Of course there was my family — mother, father, six-year-old brother — a compact little unit if I ever saw one. There was no place for me except a room which was called the guest room, and was at least as personal as a good motel. Likewise the blue-fixtured bathroom with complimentary shower cap. But I sound bitter; one can't expect much from family relations when she is making sure that she is an independent woman of the world. And yet it was bitter; we worked at cross purposes all summer; I was a wretched trespasser.

I: Do you want anything at the drugstore? I think I'll walk over.

Mother: No, I don't think so.

I: Could you lend me forty cents? I'm out of cigarettes.

Mother: If you'd get a job instead of sleeping all day you might be able to afford cigarettes.

I: I'm looking for a job. It's about the fact that fifteen thousand backwoods types take precedence in this hole.

Mother: Sometimes I wonder how much good that college does. You dont' know how to do anything, you just sit around and call everyone else ignorant.

I: All I want is a pack of cigarettes.

Mother: Well, I wish you wouldn't smoke anyway. It's a waste of money and it stinks up the house.

I: Except when the bridge club does it. Then it's a little breath of heaven.

Mother: If you're looking for something constructive to do, you might start with that pile of ironing in your room. It's been sitting there for weeks.

And so on, and so on, ad nauseam. That was the less attractive element of the timeless quality of the summer, the constant nagging, the unending petty bitchery. I never learned to shut up. We licked small wounds, and fed on our grievances; each convinced that the other had the hide of a rhinoceros.

One more beginning. I met Tony. I met Tony again, rather. Although again is the wrong word, but there are few English words that imply timelessness, except God, which probably has nothing to do with it, but maybe not. Tony, thin, effeminate looking, almost too graceful and economical in movement. When wasn't he part of my life? I have known him forever, at least before we were people at all. Whatever people are when they form secret clubs and meet in dug out holes, and explain the facts of life to one another, and sometimes pick gooseberries and other times shoot at telephone poles with beebee guns. Tony, at ten, was painfully thin and rather sickly. We played football after school, but his lips turned blue when we went swimming. His house was bigger than ours, but bare and ugly. In the living room they had only one chair, and a red couch and a television. We had no television. But I was hardly ever in his house, except once when we tried to make pull taffy, and one time when he made lunch for me, I remember salmon sandwiches and canned pears. But mostly we were outside, having garden raids, playing baseball, poking around in old deserted houses, and in houses under construction. It was that sort of neighbourhood.

As I said, I moved away when I was twelve, and it was away from that sort of neighbourhood for good. It was a matter of putting away childish things too. I don't think I ever played those games again, or ran in packs the way Tony and I had, at night, after the dishes were done. The next place was all dancing class in flat suede shoes, and going swimming at country clubs with other girls, and tennis lessons. All of which I hated, and for a long time wished I could go back to Tony and my tap dancing lessons. Now I suppose that the tennis lessons and ballroom dancing were an inevitable part of adolescence, as was the pain of those years.

Of course it all ceased to be painful eventually, and I had other groups

and other things to do, and I was adaptable enough. I came to wonder how I had endured the flatness of Edmonton life. I saw how it had been for my parents, and knew that going back was as unthinkable for me as it was for them.

But Tony was never unthinkable. His was the only name I remembered from those years. We had been too much together for too long. If we had met for the first time that summer, we would have called ourselves kindred spirits, but at eight or nine or ten we had only beginnings of spirits and they must have grown up side by side. We grew together in ways that no amount of separation could undo.

But how much of that did I realize when I called him. It was late in June, a matter of desperation. I had no job, no friends, for familial purposes, no family. He came right over, took in the new house and the new me in a few sharp glances which I was sharp enough to see, and then? I don't remember what we did. We may have gone to a root beer stand, or a coffee house, or maybe we sat around at my place and drank. I don't know. I can only tell you that there was no beginning. There was nothing twelve years old about either of us, but we had very little to learn about one another.

This much about him: he was an art student, he still lived in the same place, he wanted to go to Italy. Those were little things, predictable if I had ever bothered to predict. What I didn't know about him that first night of summer I don't know now, and never will. Only some things are communicable, and between people, the communicable things don't require communication. We were (are) friends as only twelve-year-olds can be.

Let me interject at this point that my parents abhorred him to the extent that they never spoke to him. To them he was just Edmonton, of course, an unwelcome, all too substantial ghost, harkening back to the mean years, the years we would all like to forget. But if he was ever a symbol to me, he stood for the hope that springs eternal. He was always whatever it is that transcends Edmonton, whatever endures. And his art (he was extremely good) encouraged me; he had a fine Italian sensuality, although he was only fractionally and remotely Italian, and a terrible craving for beauty and luxury which never came close to satisfaction in that banal prairie land.

His house was the same except for a few incongruous oils of his hanging in the living room and dining room. He had created a room for himself in the basement, with cinderblock structures covered with pillows for chairs, oddshaped painted stones on the floor, bottles filled with coloured water, dry branches and pieces of driftwood, a string of birds' eggs, a tombstone engraved with a rose, and a few of his paintings, all orange and blue-grey, so startling that I always wondered at how much of person can never be expressed in words at all. The room was almost a confession. We went there often for cigarettes and coffee. Tony always served coffee in a special set of stoneware mugs, it was a kind of efficient, graceful ritual.

That was the year that the folksinging cult finally swept Western Canada, and we were very ethnic. We being a fluid, motley group of art students, folksingers, some newspaper photographers ,and a bunch of uninteresting hangers-on who ended up supplying the liquor and cigarettes. I remember a fat, loose bank teller in textured stockings. On weekends we hung out at the Yardbird Suite, which featured coffee in paper cups, and the local talent: fat high school girls with beautiful voices, hoarse bearded

types who sang prison songs, hoards of imitators, dirty jokers, country western fiddlers.

There were always parties. Tony knew everyone and late at night we could almost always be found in the kitchen of some grubby apartment, hustling up cheap beer, wine and grain alcohol, dancing to Spanish music, singing, mostly talking: to a queer monk turned sculptor who made collages and small sculptures, using saints' relics; he also had a collection of astrology books and magazines, or a stringy haired very pregnant girl who always wore bedroom slippers and always took one off to play a washboard, a sullen photographer who had ulcers and only drank chocolate milk. Tony's friends, he knew a million people well, and no one came close to knowing him. Tony's world, alien to me, although I was closest to him, and, naturally, hateful to my parents.

Mother: Where are you going?

I: Tony's coming in twenty minutes.

Mother: Are you going to that Yardbird again?

I: Probably later. We're going to Giuseppi's first.

Mother: I don't know why you want to hang around with Tony anyway. He doesn't even have a job. Your father thinks he's just a bum.

I: I don't see that it makes any difference what 'my father' thinks. Nobody's asking him to go to the Yardbird.

Mother: Mary Rhodes told me that place has a terrible reputation. I don't know why you want to grub around in a basement on Saturday nights anyway. Why don't you go out with nice boys?

I: Like Peggy Rhodes' bus driver pal?

Mother: Mark is very nice, and anyway that's just a summer job. Some people work in the summer, you know. He's stuying to be a junior high science teacher, I was talking to him the other day.

I: I can see that it was a very stimulating little talk.

Mother: Well, at least he wears shoes.

I: That's what really counts, after all. That separates the men from the boys.

Mother: Your father isn't sure that Tony is either.

I: Oh, for God's sake.

I tried to keep my parents out of my life with Tony, what they had to say was never true or relevant. I juggled two worlds, neither of which moved, or ever melted together. This from my journal:

> July 20
>
> After we had been apart a whole day and night, I knew I couldn't stand it any longer. I pocketed my pride, as girls mostly have to do, and my cigarettes, and a particularly good nectarine, and went to see him.
>
> He opened the door, and there was an uncertain moment. I held out the nectarine. He looked at his hand, and I looked, and there was a round of Edam cheese. He held it out to me.
>
> And then, because you can't fight those things he said, "Would you like to come in and have breakfast with me?"
>
> We didn't talk about not talking, but that afternoon he went out to the store and came back with armloads of peaches and

grapes and apples and oranges and pears because we were so happy to see each other.

And this:

July 29

He'd said something again, and I hurt again, and I wondered again if the happinesses ever cancel out the hurts, or if people should be forbidden intimate knowledge of each other altogether.

I couldn't speak to him, but words are my only recourse, so I wrote myself a letter on the sticky table top.

"What did you do?"

"I wrote myself a letter."

"May I hear what it says?"

"Why, do you want to laugh at me again?"

Now he hurts.

"All right. It says, Dear Wendy, Don't you get it? No matter how much you try to give someone, all you give them is the power to hurt you."

He hurts very much more. He says "Oh, well" with such despair.

"Oh well what?"

"Oh well, you know I can't talk."

"Oh well, I love you anyway." I can't help saying that, he can't help saying nothing. I love him anyway, and also he has such articulate eyes. This is the way it is.

You see we had our differences, but they always ended this way. They didn't leave us farther apart or even closer together. They were ripples on a quiet surface. We weren't in love, because illusion was impossible. Because it was summer, we understood it was temporary, and because we were who we were, we knew that time had nothing to do with it. If our worlds hadn't been so wide apart we might never have dared to be so close. And I suppose, if our time hadn't been so short, we would have been less careful with each other.

The summer ended, and it was time to go east, back to college, to a safe, inevitable future. The choice to go was my own, but there was never a decision. Tony and I said goodbye almost imperceptibly. He gave me a little bunch of night-blooming flowers and was gone. Next morning I packed, and noticed that the flowers were lying wilted on the table by my bed where I had left them. That was as it should be, there was no place for the perishable claptrap that goes along with the endings of summer. We knew we would never write, we supposed we would never see one another again. Nor would we miss being together, back in our separate worlds. If I ever go back, he will be there. I know that.

I said goodbye to my parents with tears of remorse and relief. We are stuck with each other, it is a durable but not a precious thing. We would write newsy letters, and I would remember that they are intelligent, kind people, and only want the best for me. They would remember that I am a good student and a good daughter, and would be proud of me. Mother would tell the bridge club all about it. We will agree to forget that living together is too painful.

I will never be able to tell them what it was with Tony. For now let them think that I was being nostalgic, or 'making do' with the substandard prairie product. I have taken all they can give me, and that is a lot. But I got farther away from Edmonton, and this is what I want them to understand, in time. Life moves on, and I with it, but sometimes standing still takes me farthest.

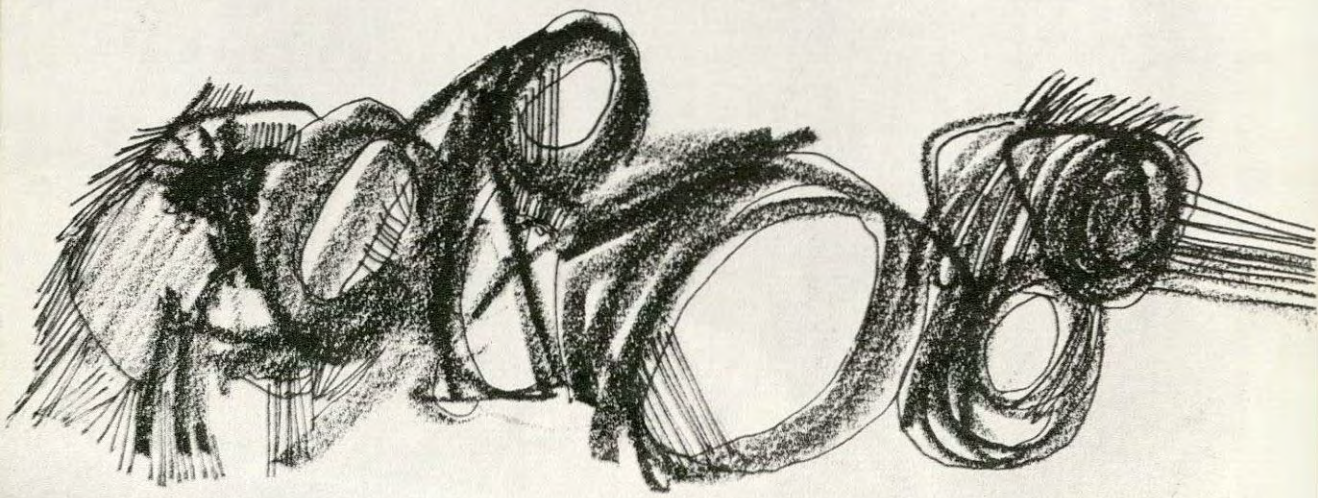
Sara Walbridge

POEM

Orange is the color of Melissa's dress,
Swirling sexily above rounded knees;
Eyes wide circles, she always was a tease,
Orange is the color of yes.

Orange is the color of Melissa's gown,
Clinging shinily to her hips;
Revealing lace panties, she never did wear slips,
Orange is the color of down.

Orange is the color of Melissa's shirt,
Tightly buttoned across her breast;
Half-undone, she never could stay dressed,
Orange is the color of dirt.



Marianna Kaufman

COUNTER-GIRL

She's a bugger woman for sure,
Little woman, says my man.
No need for you to work up a frown
About her. She's got that trick an it
'll hold her a while yet.

On the stool the bugger woman twitches and shifts her eyes around.
The trick rests easy by the stool in a bag.
She is a tad red when we push open the door.

It is a while yet:
But I have got to right now get at it,
thinks bugger woman
I suspect. What with all those goddamn people around.
The trick has got to stay in the bag and on the floor.

We leave. Checking, she hits the trick.
Since it's not really up the creek
this time. God is it awful the way it goes down.

Me, it's important to keep my man.
I don't have a need that looks at the door.
I don't even think on a trick.
Besides, I don't even walk along beside the creek.

Janet Stein

ROMAIN ROLLAND

Cette année, on célèbre le centième anniversaire de la naissance du grand auteur français, Romain Rolland. Erudit et artiste, la pensée de Rolland fut influencée en plusieurs façons par le climat intellectuel de l'Europe au début du Vingtième Siècle. Ses oeuvres montrent la trace de la pensée Nietzschéenne, des sympathies révolutionnaires et de la sensibilité aux problèmes esthétiques et theologiques qui tourmentaient les écrivains de l'époque. Un de ses romans, Jean Christophe, est dedié "aux âmes libres de toutes les nations qui souffrent, qui luttent et qui vaincront" et représente le nouveau "roman de l'individu," innovation de la fin du Dix-neuvième Siècle.

Romain Rolland fut aussi grand connaisseur de la peinture et de la musique. Il y a dans son art un écho des thèmes spirituels de l'Europe et c'est peut-être pourquoi le héros de son roman, Jean-Christophe, est représenté comme un artiste qui a besoin de s'exprimer. La communication honnête entre tous les hommes est le thème principal de Rolland, qui pressentit la menace de la premiere guerre mondiale. Chaque aspect du livre reflète sa préoccupation avec l'avenir de l'humanité et les arts: l'histoire, le style, les thèmes. Rolland traite de la vie d'un musicien qui naquit dans une petite ville typique de l'allemagne, mais qui n'est pas du tout typique de l'allemagne lui-même. Jean-Christophe a besoin de communiquer, d'aimer et de révéler la verité aux gens. Il se trouve cérne par une populace hypocrite, aux vues étroites; ce sont des gens séparés les uns des autres par la souffrance. C'est par la même souffrance et la misère que Jean-Christophe se rend compte que l'humanité y est unie et la vision de la mort par Jean-Christophe tout jeune, renforce cette idee.

Jean-Christophe est victime de plusieurs dogmes sociaux ancrés dans le caractère allemand, en particulier celui de la supériorité de la race et celui de la distinction entre les classes et les religions. Chaque personnage du livre représent un des défauts sur lesquels les hommes se tourmenent, et puisque le tempérament artistique de Jean-Christophe le rend toujours sensible, ses relations avec les autres personnages sont passionnees et agitées. Son égoisme qui lui fait croire qu'il peut montrer les maux aux gens, part souvent d'une triste rencontre avec un individu qui le met hors de lui, lui qui ne peut pas supporter l'injustice.

La musique montre encore un thème du livre: une rage contre tout ce qui est faux, pas seulement la société. Jean-Christophe se sent étouffé par la tradition romanesque de la musique allemande. Il écrit donc une musique qui vient de son âme, de son expérience et de son imagination, mais elle n'est pas bien recue et le compositeur est brisé. Il avait taché de vivre comme son oncle sage le lui avait enseigné, honnêtement, mais ses efforts sont repousses par ses voisins. La musique qui peut unir les hommes, les sépare à cause des traditions aveuglantes. L'attitude défensive que prend Jean-Christophe l'aliène davantage des autres.

La nature joue un grand rôle dans cette oeuvre de Romain Rolland, car elle reflète le climat d'humeurs et de thèmes dans le livre. Une image frappant est celle du fleuve qui coule à travers la ville. Rolland implique que la vie est comme un fleuve: elle coule dans une seule direction, vers un

seul but malgré des obstacles. De plus, tous les fleuves sont égaux et la mer qui les reçoit est commune. Cette mer est, dans ce livre, la mort, qui rend les hommes égaux et unis. Jean-Christophe qui, depuis son enfance se rend compte que la mort domine inconsciemment la vie, lutte contre les forces qui gênent l'harmonie et la verité temporales. Il y ajoute même la hyprocrisie religieuse, car son Dieu est en lui — il n'a pas besoin de se declarer. L'éternité des fleuves et des âmes suffisent pour la satisfaction personnelle.

Le thème de la mort et l'obligation pour le héros d'agir est une indication de l'influence de la pensée du Dix-neuvième Siècle sur l'auteur. Mais la croyance que l'homme doit souffrir pour être homme, la préoccupation avec la communication de l'artiste, la sensibilité aux émotions franches, montrées dans l'oeuvre Jean Christophe, établissent Romain Rolland comme un des précurseurs de la pensée et de l'expression modernes.

Laura Martin

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