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Spring 1973

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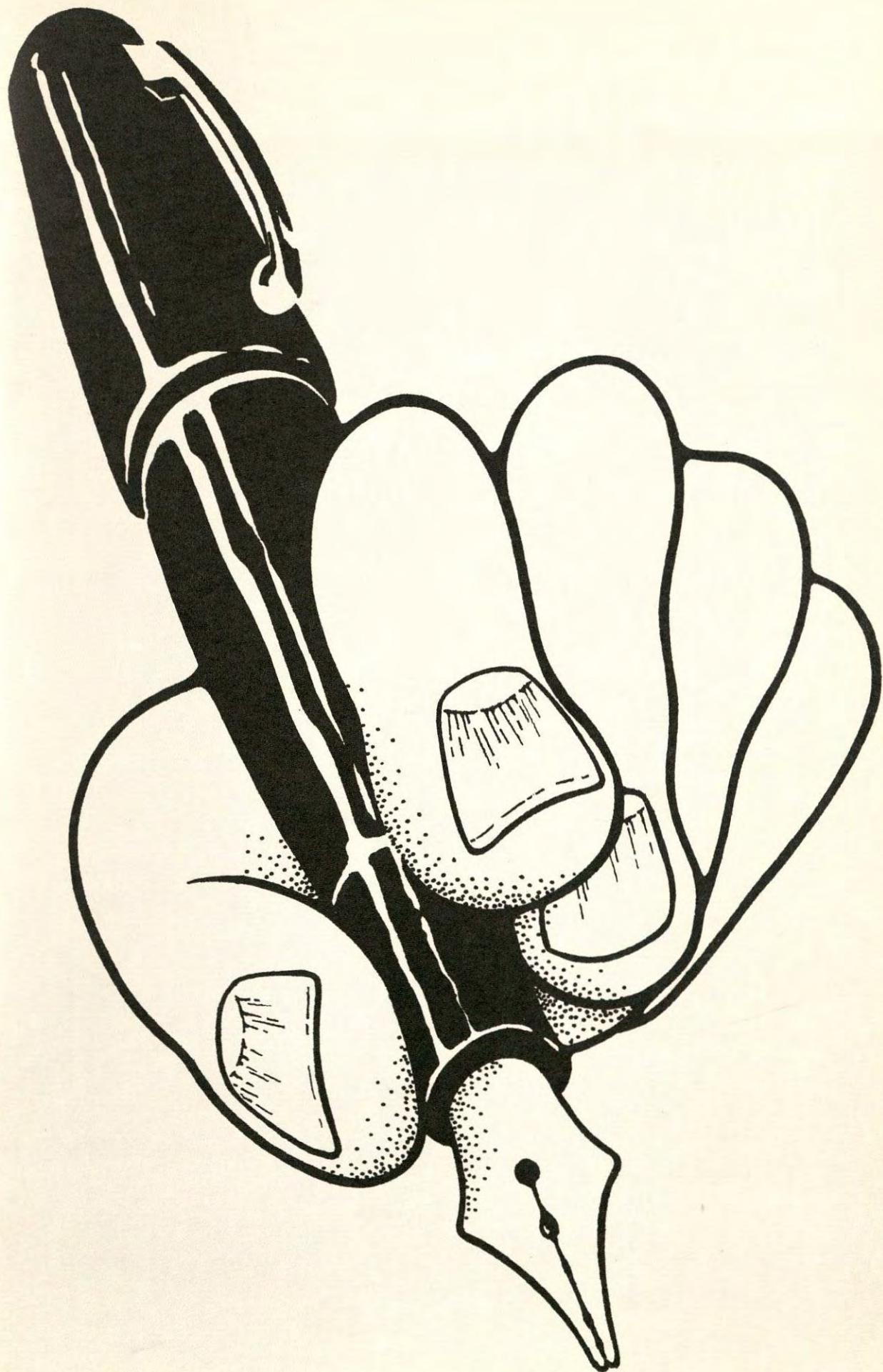
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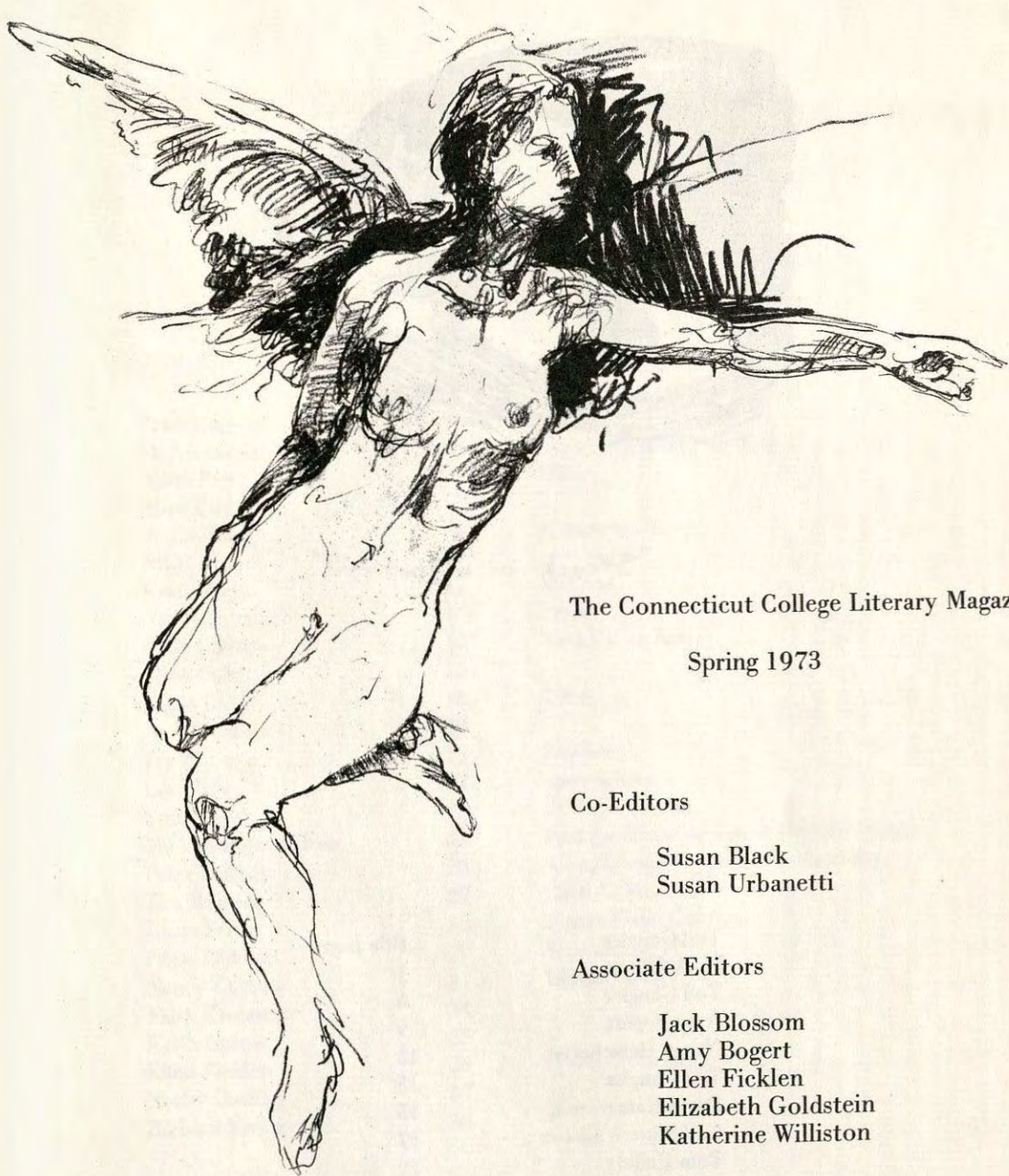
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The Connecticut College Literary Magazine

Spring 1973

Co-Editors

Susan Black
Susan Urbanetti

Associate Editors

Jack Blossom
Amy Bogert
Ellen Ficklen
Elizabeth Goldstein
Katherine Williston



"Struck in a Spotlight"

Art

	title page
Tod Gangler	1
Mark Wilson	6
Tod Gangler	9
Amy Bogert	12
Nancy Herschatter	13
Tod Gangler	15
David Katzenstein	17
Katherine Williston	20
Tom Hallett	21
Tod Gangler	25
Sarah Lipson	28
Tom Hallett	30
Katherine Williston	32
Mark Heitner	33
Tod Gangler	35
Tod Gangler	36
Sarah Lipson	

Writings

Peter Carlson	4	Shadows
M. Alexander Wilson	5	Early Morning, Late Winter
Anita Perry	6	Chairs
Ellen Ficklen	7	
Susan Black	8	Afternoon Sleep
Nikki Lloyd	11	river view
Kevin Smith	12	Walking
Nancy Cutting	13	Pietà
Peter Carlson	14	You Hit an Artery
Ellen Ficklen	15	
Susan Black	16	Scene
Jack Blossom	18	
Jay B. Levin	19	Physics
Lee Mills	22	open winter
Tom Hallet	23	In Conversation
M. Alexander Wilson	24	Past Sundown on North Rossiter Street
Peter Carlson	26	A September Weekend in Alton Bay
Tim Reinsch	27	Café du Mort
Anita Perry	28	Writer From Georgia
Ellen Ficklen	29	September, 1921
Nancy Cutting	31	Indian Pipes
Faith Kiermaier	34	
Kevin Smith	35	
Ellen Ficklen	36	(Parenthetically)
Nancy Cutting	37	
Richard Kirkpatrick	38	

Shadows

Come here

Look

walking in the crusty snow

just down beyond the lilac bushes

and we're not hearing a crackle

The light from the kitchen window nearly reaches it

but not quite

Walking in the gray circle

on the edge of light and dark

Go on

Look

You can't hear it

stepping in the mud

under the grape arbor

Go on

Look

You can't hear it

brushing the tall grass

right out beyond the lattice

Go on

Look

You can't hear it

even as it crawls through the dried leaves

piled against the foundation

Go on

Look

PETER CARLSON

Early Morning, Late Winter

The shadow of our truck in this early winter morning
Runs across and ahead, staying close
Only when the long, low hills
Which channel the icy fury
Huddle in,
Near to the travelling road.
But when a country side road angles off
And curves to the bottom of a valley
Parallel to our course, this other thing,
This alter-ego in unbreakable grey,
Rushes to run along the lane,
Rushes to escape,
Rushes to become one with the wind,
Which slides, and slips,
And can never even touch the silver shading.
But that elastic form cannot escape - - the very next muscle
Of mere dirt and rock
Pulls it in,
Pulls it back,
Pulls it in, inexorably,
Bringing the fruit of my image
Close to its parent once again.
But some metaphors do not quite work.
My daughter is six; next week, sixteen - -
And then beyond.
And I realize that,
In spite of early morning testimony,
Some shadows break.

M. ALEXANDER WILSON

Chairs

Maple syrup roads flow through the small Vermont towns
past the red faced barns, frowning cows, and healthy cheeks.
There are cottage size cemeteries softly mowed
and still the people stop to read and pick dandelions.

The child's grandfather is there:

grey wash towns and birch logs bare.

A wooden chair faces the woods with so many souls sitting there.
Writers are in love though fields apart; it is what Donne has said:
"souls united in love are inseparable." Dull sublunary lovers love
-what Keats calls the fine excess. "Look down the rhyme scheme
and see who won!" cheers Frost from the raspberry thicket in the shade.
"Make your insanities work for you -- when a reader comes to the end
of a poem, he ought to go through the windshield," someone said.
Talks and talks across the field
for "literary is a word very difficult to do."

Let's say the chairs all walk away
beyond the willow white curtain folds
and there is nowhere for writers to flee.
Who will read the tombstones and write a sonnet
to the child's grandfather
the grey wash town, the old birch tree?

ANITA PERRY



I come with deepest apologies from the poet.
It seems there was a poem here previously,
Well-rounded and tightly constructed,
But a gnawing started somewhere
Near the middle, and before
Anyone could stop it,
The poem had consumed itself - -
From beginning through to end.
We wish to express our regret at
This unfortunate incident.

ELLEN FICKLEN

Afternoon Sleep

After class, she returned to her room, propped herself up on the bed with a pillow, and tried to read. It was no use. The room was warm - - the old radiator buzzed like a fly on a lazy summer afternoon - - rain fell steadily in the gray beyond the window - - her eyes drooped over the pages. No use, she said aloud. She got up, locked the door, and turned off the lamp. Getting back on the bed, she pulled up the quilt and snuggled her knees to her chest and her head down. Rainy days are only fit for sleeping anyway, she thought. Slept.

She spent a lot of time sleeping. She defended herself to herself, saying that schoolwork kept her up late, and it was too noisy in the dorm to sleep late mornings. Besides, she had early classes. So she had to make up the lost sleep.

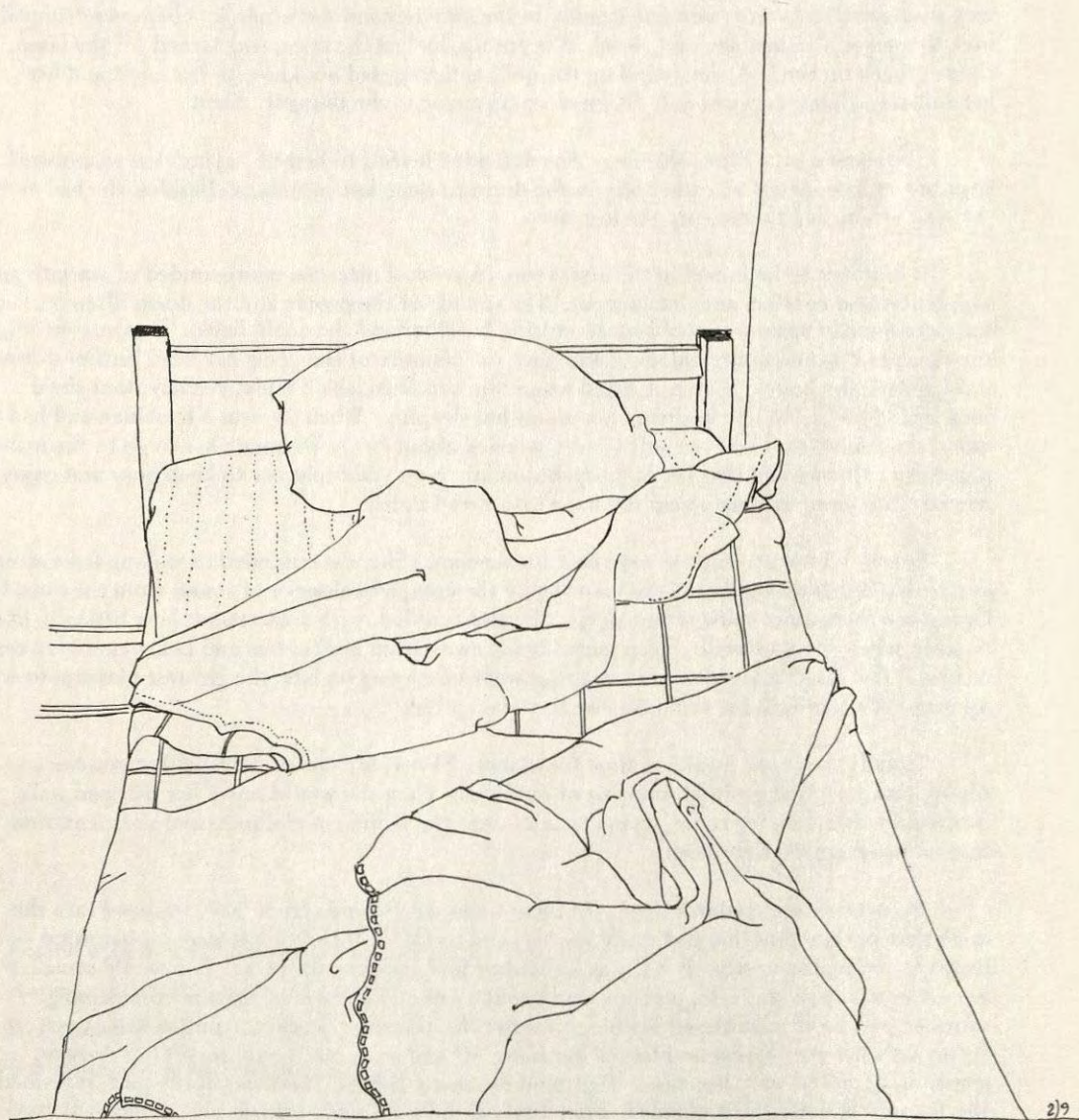
It was nice to lie in bed in the afternoon. A sensual niceness, compounded of warmth and suppleness and comfort and detachment. The sounds of the people and the dorm filtered in to her; occasionally someone would speak outside her door and she could listen. Or someone might knock on her locked door, and she could have the pleasure of snuggling her head further down and ignoring the knock. Later, if asked where she had been, she'd reply, vaguely, that she'd been out. Mostly, no one bothered her about her sleeping. When she was a freshman and had a roommate, the roommate had been sufficiently worried about her to persuade her to go to the college physician. He had said that she had psychosomatic mono and told her to keep busy and enjoy herself. But since freshman year she wasn't bothered much.

Snowy winter afternoons were best for sleeping. She was reminded of waking from sleep, as a child, and knowing that it was snowing by the complete absence of sound from the outside. Ever since then, quiet snow meant sleep. She also recalled, with amazement, how little she liked to sleep when she was small. Sleep meant being away from her parents and being unable to read or play. The greatest problem was to devise ways of staying up late; the greatest pleasure to wake up very early and wait for someone else to wake up too.

Usually, now, she awoke in time for dinner. She would curl and uncurl her muscles and finally stand, enjoying a brief moment of dizziness. Then she would brush her hair and walk downstairs to the dining room, trying to hold onto the feeling of chilliness and disorientation that comes from daytime sleep.

Sometimes she couldn't sleep. At these times, she would stay in bed, wrapped into the quilt that her grandmother had made for her, and think. A lot of things were on her mind - - projects and plans, mostly. But it was so hard to find the time for them. She would visualize herself as a college graduate, perhaps working at a job. Or she would visualize the coming summer: mind-slides of herself learning to water-ski, traveling, working. But so little time. If she shut her eyes harder and forced her mind off and away, she could forget her drowsy, warm body and be only her mind. Her mind did many things. It rehearsed the past, it probed the future. It dreamed, it planned. Sometimes it did nothing but float.

She often played games before she slept. These games were to help her fall asleep more easily, when she didn't want to think. She had long since stopped counting sheep: the attention to detail that she gave this process made her too alert.



Relaxing each part of her body didn't work either, because she usually became so conscious of herself that she would lie rigid and awake. However, thinking about intricate plans, such as planting a large and varied garden, often worked. And imagining herself in a swing, going back-forth-back-forth under cool green branches, was very effective. She was still experimenting with deep breathing.

So she slept. Later, when she awoke, the room was dark and the dorm was silent. She lay in bed under a vague sense of oppression and realized that she had dreamed. Never dream during the day, she murmured, and stirred uneasily under the quilt.

In her dream, she had been a child sick with a fever. It was night. The quilt folded at the bottom of the bed seemed to grow and swell and become a massive shape in the darkness. The child was afraid to move her legs and disturb the growing thing, so she stayed still. Then she was in a small room with a television set. She tried to turn it on, but her fingers were so swollen and soft that she could not manipulate the knob. Looking down at herself, the child saw that her whole body was too big, too soft, too swollen - - she could no longer fit in the room - - she burst out - - Sitting on a couch between her parents, she was asking them, Will you eat my hamburger meat? They were shaking their heads slowly, No. It is good for you. But the child kept saying, I can't eat it. Her grandmother came into the bedroom and unknowingly dispelled the brooding quilt - thing. She bathed the child in rubbing alcohol to reduce the fever, while a television station signed off in the background: bong - bong - bong. The child tried to sleep, but hallucinations of giant, swollen shapes floated in the darkness.

She lay in her bed in the dorm room. Although the dream was fading away fast, she could not shake the oppressiveness that surrounded her now, as it had surrounded the fevered dream-child. She shivered slightly, feeling the sweat start out on her body. The dream had been too real and too fantastic. She quickly got out of bed, crossed the dark room, and unlocked the door. The hard hall light made her wince as she held onto the door and fought the momentary waking - dizziness. The hall was empty. She walked down to its end and back. Someone? she said aloud. The doors were all shut. No one.

She went back into her room and changed into pajamas. She stuffed the quilt into the closet and got into bed, leaving the door to the room open. Under the blanket and sheet, her body was rocking baby-like, her eyes were wide and straining open. She was afraid to sleep.

SUSAN BLACK

river view

ivy twines lazily
around insect-inhabited
mildewed wood

* * *

the boards
of the ancient river-bridge
creak beneath unaccustomed weight

* * *

long-undisturbed grass
temporarily crushed, waits
then straightens slowly

* * *

silent raindrops
make small craters in the mud
and bracelets for the river

* * *

wild lilies along river-edge
rock nervously
from sudden wave-shocks

* * *

bashful sunlight
plays between the honeysuckle vines
and crystallised cobwebs

* * *

a water-spider
waltzes dreamily
from lily to lily, smiling

* * *

mud-caked shoes
lie forlorn and forgotten
beside the now-calm river

NIKKI LLOYD

Walking

The soft rain falls
as it always does this
Time of year
(seasonable tempests)
Both sides of the path
Hold their dangers couched
in unfamiliar forms.

KEVIN SMITH



Pietà

I took you into my arms
as you lay dying,
the head-wound staring
like the black and broken lens
of a camera which once sought
to photograph the ultimate
star-point of light.

Wild with frenzy came a man
who chipped away the nose, and
cheek, and arm which had
turned to stone above you.
"What right have you to hold this Christ? Sacrilege!"
Irretrievable:
Like that moment high-up on
the precipice
when you had the
urge to step into the exquisite blue.

December 6, 1972

NANCY CUTTING



You Hit an Artery

Long shadowing talk,
speaking on, timeless,
A winter day falls
ripe on your face and
hair, sunk beneath strands,
and gray becomes a

black winter night.

White vapor breath
reaching through silence,
another ocean,
colder even than
Long Island Sound in
December; words like
ice, frozen and sharp,

things not said when
hopes were higher.

Now biting deep, you
draw blood and hold it
in your mouth, like a
winetaster, clearly
you're a connoisseur,
a vampire with style.

PETER CARLSON



Today as I shelved a
591 page volume called
Sexual Life in Ancient India,
I wondered if it had ever
gotten around to mentioning
that there certainly had been enough to
make sure there'd be
plenty of Modern India now.

ELLEN FICKLEN

Scene

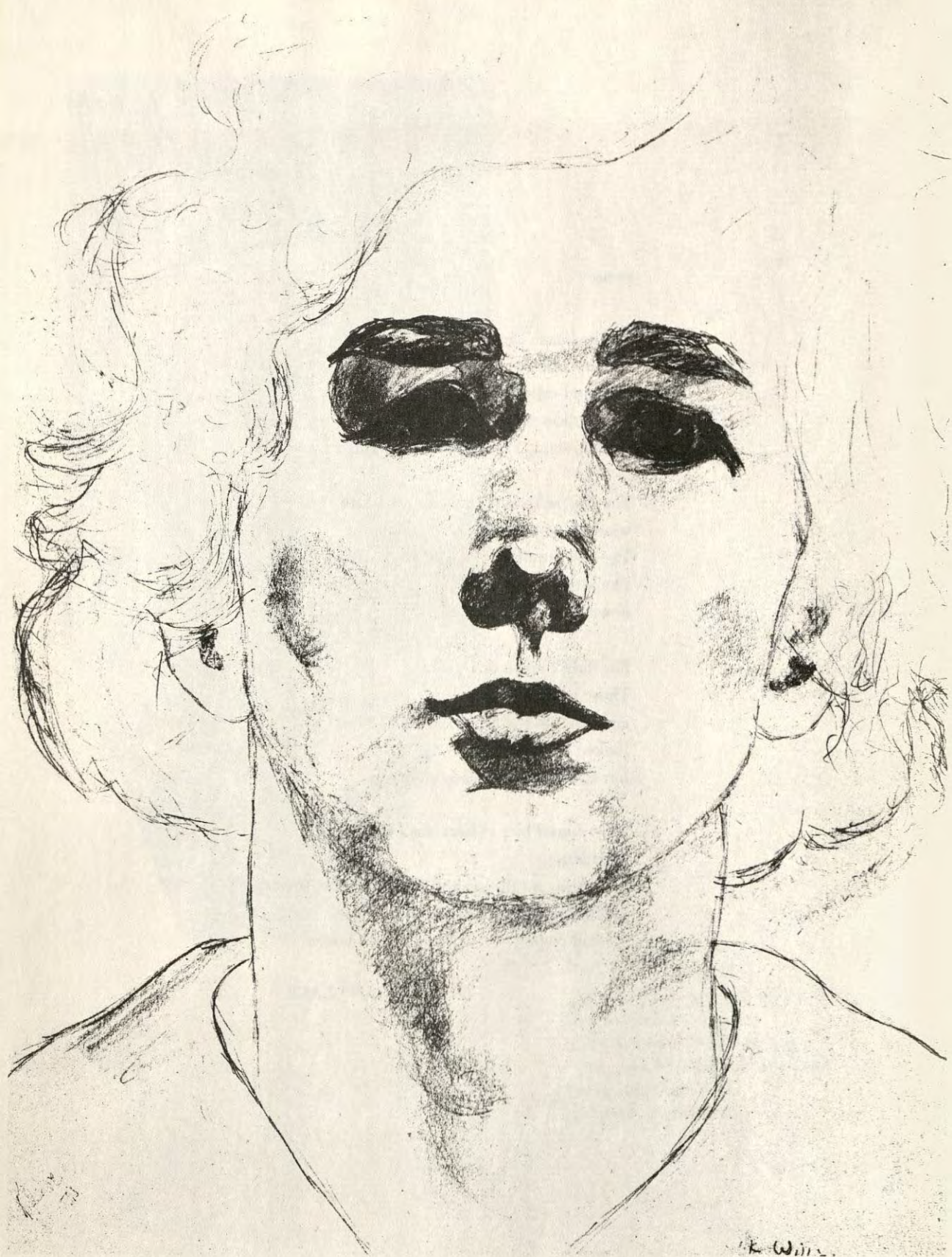
On the beach the day that it happened,
the boy was flying a kite.
High and calmly it went
as he followed below at the sand's edge
with its string held looped in his fingers.

The day, with wind enough for a kite,
was hot, so the woman was sunbathing.
The boy stumbled? An air pocket?
The kite plunged down,
down hard into her face.

She didn't move or cry out.
Those who saw
and came to the bit of spreading blood
looked about,
but the boy was already running.

They found him a short ways away,
not hiding
but sitting on the ground, looking at his fingers,
still looping the string around.
He had come to its end and ran no longer.

SUSAN BLACK



I remember the night's coldness,
now,
how its voice cried through the
still-green forest,
winter
winter
winter's coming soon.
How in dawn fraught with numbness
mother sun stirred the ashes
finding Yes, still some embers
to start another day.
And Dad, I would say, Dad,
Let's walk to the pond today.
So down the ever-green, ever-gold,
ever-turning, changing path
we would walk
together.

Ever green
Ever Gold
Ever blood-green sweeping tide
We cannot feel alone,
The path is not so long

As it used to be, I said.
No,
it just seems that way,
Dad would say.
Over the leaf-carpeted path

we would walk,
threads of gold maple,
blood dogwood
and oak, always oak first,
the same dry brown
crackling beneath our feet;
Yes, down the sun-warm path,
to the still-summer pond,
to the pausing geese and
hurried dragonfly,
down the sun-happy path
we would walk,
while the rushing breeze
whispered its lament.

Ever green
Ever gold . . .

JACK BLOSSOM

PHYSICS

- I. There is an inherent hopelessness in movement.
It is, as Newton knew, unless straight,
not the natural state of affairs.

Long affairs of peoples' hopes and nation's cares
are what we travel on with hurtful and many collidings:
These disturb the roots, being not the wanted healing ---
There are other forms of medicine
only Brutal on Xmas
That balm the moving
That relax the legs
That fill empty wallets
with bloody dreams.

- II. There is an inherent truth in the lies told to us.
Politics as truth is a lie and yet
There never was anything else:
magnificent movings, remembrances, petty decidings ---
Why the crusading tries to alter the ordained direction?

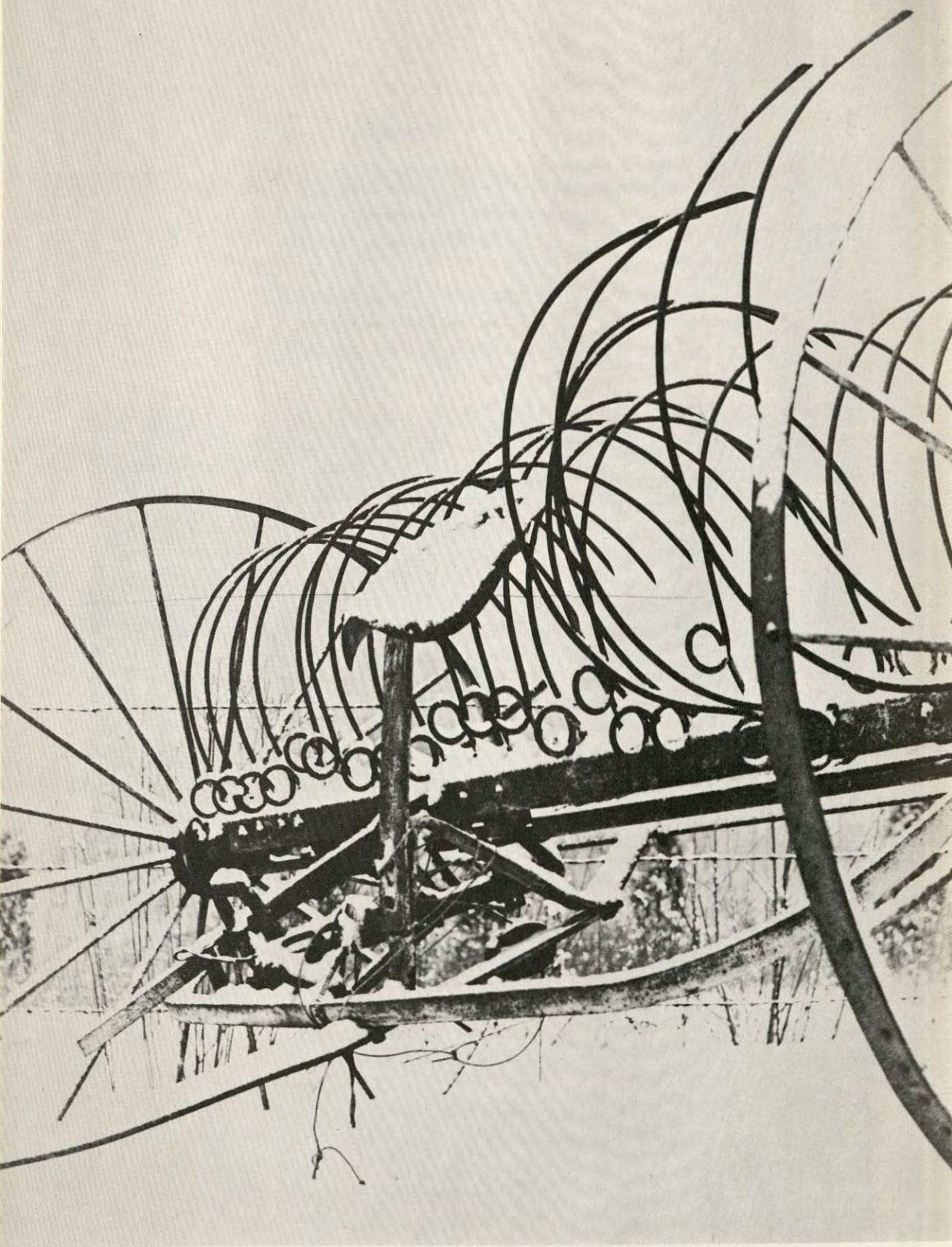
- III. Viewing the morning's destruction:
Are not all the universal laws collapsed?
The buildings, people, and their dogs,
drift off into the sky ---
No, no foundation's moved:

It's me who's drifting
with all my profound hopes and polite executions
Aren't I really the drifter constantly
dragging up yesterday's tarnished, whimsical miracles ---
Now proven wrong, shown to be a waste
(George McG's tortuous 300,000 miles)
Only the straight line's simple perfection
holds success
(Richard Nixon's miraculous nothing ---
the victory of our two century Revolution):

- IV. I've discovered gravity.

JAY B. LEVIN





open winter

under damp trees of an open winter
came dog and I
and we were racing over open graves.
His tongue bouncing as he jogged,
my tits jogging as I bounced
our feet printing us in the mud.
Across the corn field, over shrunken ears of corn,
green and red bullet cartridges,
and little piles of grey feathers and orange claws.
Running at the hill overlooking the highway,
breathing deathlessness into us, and motion,
car wheels, hubcaps flung off.
And dog's face into mine,
my face into his.
He wonders, too.
Words . . . motion
Not just the words, but the feelings, the tangled smells,
rooted loudly in the ground,
some fresh, some long dead,
all the smells and feelings deathless,
all the words coming from living throats.
Dog and I, we speak in sign language,
we twitch our behinds at each other,
he smells the bitch in me,
sharp and hot,
always ready to fall backwards on the dirt.
So over and over we go,
over the mud and the brambles,
till he straddles me,
till his muzzle is above my head,
white teeth showing, grey sky above his head,
and little grey bird corpses all around,
He pants, dog smiles on top of me,
and we are cloven together in it.

LEE MILLS
Recipient of Connecticut College's 1972
Benjamin T. Marshall Prize
for the best original student poem.

IN CONVERSATION

And then
there are the times
when
out of nothing
a feeling comes
seemingly
without provocation.

Then
I call to God
saying GOD
what is it
isn't there
some way to
control a notion?

But he doesn't speak to me
right then
except
his silence insists
he can
at least
hear what I say.

You know I can't
really say
what it is
I want to ask.
This love for you
does not grow
succintly.

TOM HALLETT

Past Sundown on North Rossiter Street

He strode high and sepulchral
Across the town's broad plain
At midnight.
His legs reached out
Pulling yards behind
Out of sight.
He went across, not along - -
The town all seemed not
To exist.
But he went on, alone,
Wrapped up in the town's
Gaslight hiss.
My lids stretched wide, I shook
At his body, dangling down
From his skull
As though stuck up there,
His bones stretching to reach.
That was all
There was - - some bones,
Some joints, and a wind he seemed
To carry
With him like others
Take a coat, or a ring to show
They're married.
That was all, but still I shook,
My lids strained wide, I licked
Arid lips,
Then broke for home! The leaves
Flew in behind, as he turned
At my steps.
With covers and night-lights,
I dozed by five. Next morning,
He was dead.

They couldn't find a box
To fit, so he was folded in the
Dirt, instead . . .
Merely a man
Who lived too long,
They said.
But I knew that more
Than a single man
Lay dead.

Requiescat in pace.

M. ALEXANDER WILSON



72

A September Weekend in Alton Bay

Now all the clouds are in the lake,
The water dripping from the eaves
is all that remains of the rain,
The waves are exhausted and lie
slowly breathing very deeply,
The air is tired and allows
the leaves to rest wet on the path,
The storm still has possession
of only me.

Sitting in the warm circle spread
by the applewood in the fire,
I can recall the memories
that bind me to this property,
Each summer lengthening stonewalls,
First season swim made ritual,
Polishing the ancient musket,
and winding the old railroad clock
Sunday mornings.

My grandmother sat in that chair
teaching fingers and laces with
smiles and patience, a child's view
of a woman unknown, long dead;
My grandfather resurrected
the toy in a thousand pieces,
His perseverance balances
The rocks that ring the property,
I felt him die.

So many changes have occurred,
The families that held this cove
all have now been thinned by death,
No longer the smell of lobster
drifts on the clear summer night air,
Melodic vacation voices
are gone, the houses are empty;
the living have died, and the dead
are quiet here.

What is cannot be soft as past,
present having one side open
to the cold unknown of future,
The past is mellow, closed all in,
safe and sacred; But memories
will continue to cull my dreams,
If I cannot restore, I will rebuild,
This is the calm endowment of the storm.

PETER CARLSON

Café du Mort

My Sauterne, and a glass,
 Upon the blank-faced waiter's tray;
My three friends crowd my table
 As the concertinas play.

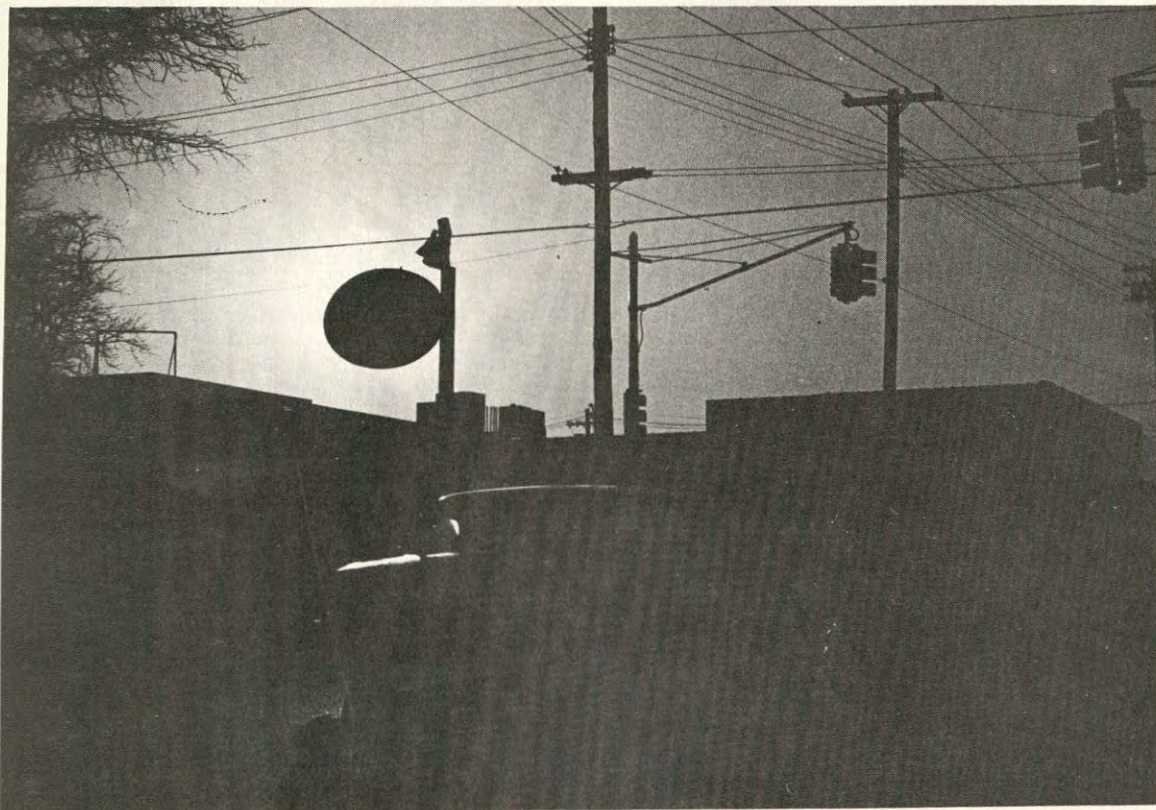
The smoke curls upward from my pipe
 And dulls the gaslights' glow.
We all recall the times long past
 And friends we used to know.

William reached his peace at last
 On board a sinking ship;
Tell of your trials that now are done
 (Don't let your sorrows slip):

I got mine in an auto crash;
 Manfred, a pistol shot;
We sit and talk of good things now
 And bad things that are not.

"The Colonel, here, was at Verdun;
 It's there that he was gassed."
We sit and drink in the Café du Mort
 And speak of things long past.

TIM REINSCH



Writer From Georgia

Nervous, beady-eyed, curly haired, pierced ear, square jaw
sweaty forehead, cut lip, tilted pose, trembling hands:
he is a writer from Georgia.

We have been playing him all day long.

Tonight he stood before us and told us all about his daddy.

Died when he was eighteen months.

His mother took to raising two sons.

Had four pictures of his daddy.

Seems his daddy had a full set of teeth marks
in his left cheek, had eyes to make Satan curse.

As a boy, this writer saw men cut off their own hands
in farm equipment. Saw one or two die outright.

Now the writer raises hawks. They remind him of his daddy's spirit.
He strokes them softly with a feather to make them come home
like his mother'd do to her boys with a kiss.

A bat flew in to escape the storm; the rain grew louder,
louder, cruder, until the writer's eyes gleamed with terror
and we in horror watched the boy become a man.

ANITA PERRY

September, 1921

The day before had been his ninth birthday, and his mother, sweet and waddlingly pregnant, had given him the party that he never forgot. Even when later he ate so much watermelon that he couldn't eat it again for forty years, he would remember that party and the special treat of yellow watermelon. And his mother, round and smiling with her dark black hair and tray of sharply sliced yellow flecked with black. That's the way he always remembered her, the round face and round belly, with those crisply defined halfmoons of yellow as partial echos, and the black hair and black eyes and black flecks in the yellow so that your eyes just naturally followed down to the rounded stomach.

Then she wouldn't go to the hospital, and she said it was because she had been a nurse and knew what those hospitals were like. And she lay in the shadowed room, suddenly deflated, and smiled quite slowly and softly at that doctor and asked to see her baby boy; and that doctor, that fool, fool doctor said, "Well, now Miss Ruth, I don't think you want to see that baby just now -- he's not quite right." The fool.

So then her eyes and mouth and river opened simultaneously, and that screaming shuddering sob came out, and that fool doctor stood there with his mouth open while the whole room filled with blood, and weeping, she bled herself to death.

So then there were the first two children left without a mother, and in her place there was that new, too quiet baby. Jim-B., the new nine year old, being the oldest, would stand beside him and try to help the tiny hand to clutch his finger, and looked at the twisted little mass and knew it was too wizened and sad to keep on living.

So their Aunt Lizzie quit her job in that college library up in West Virginia and came to help her brother and the three children, and began by bundling up the too quiet baby and taking him to a specialist in Atlanta who only shook his head. And now when Jim-B. felt that doomed infant's fist as he held it tightly to his finger, he wondered if the baby could feel the difference between the two, and know that one was living and one was dying. By now Jim-B. knew that he's never have a brother, and he knew now that this silent, twisted baby was going to spend his whole life dying.

Jim-B. stood there, and in the afternoons when the sun was going down there was usually a slight breeze in the darkening room, but the only movement was the organdy curtains (their white echoing the boy and the baby) billowing out and flattening on the screen. Then as they all knew it would, there came the darkening billowing afternoon when Aunt Lizzie came in to close the window, and afterwards she came over to Jim-B. and put her arm around his shoulder and they both stood looking down into the crib. Then gently, so gently that neither boy could be hurt, she unfastened Jim-B's clasp from the baby's fist, and then the little fist from Jim-B.'s finger. And in the turning and walking towards the door, both of them knew that Jim-B. was no longer the eldest, but had returned to being the elder.

ELLEN FICKLEN



It resembled a kind of image
of God or a holy mask, half
male, half female, ageless, as
purposeful as it was dreamy, as
rigid as it was secretly alive.
This face seemed to have a
message for me, it belonged to me.
It was asking something of me.
It bore a resemblance to someone,
yet I did not know whom.

Demian - Hesse (69)

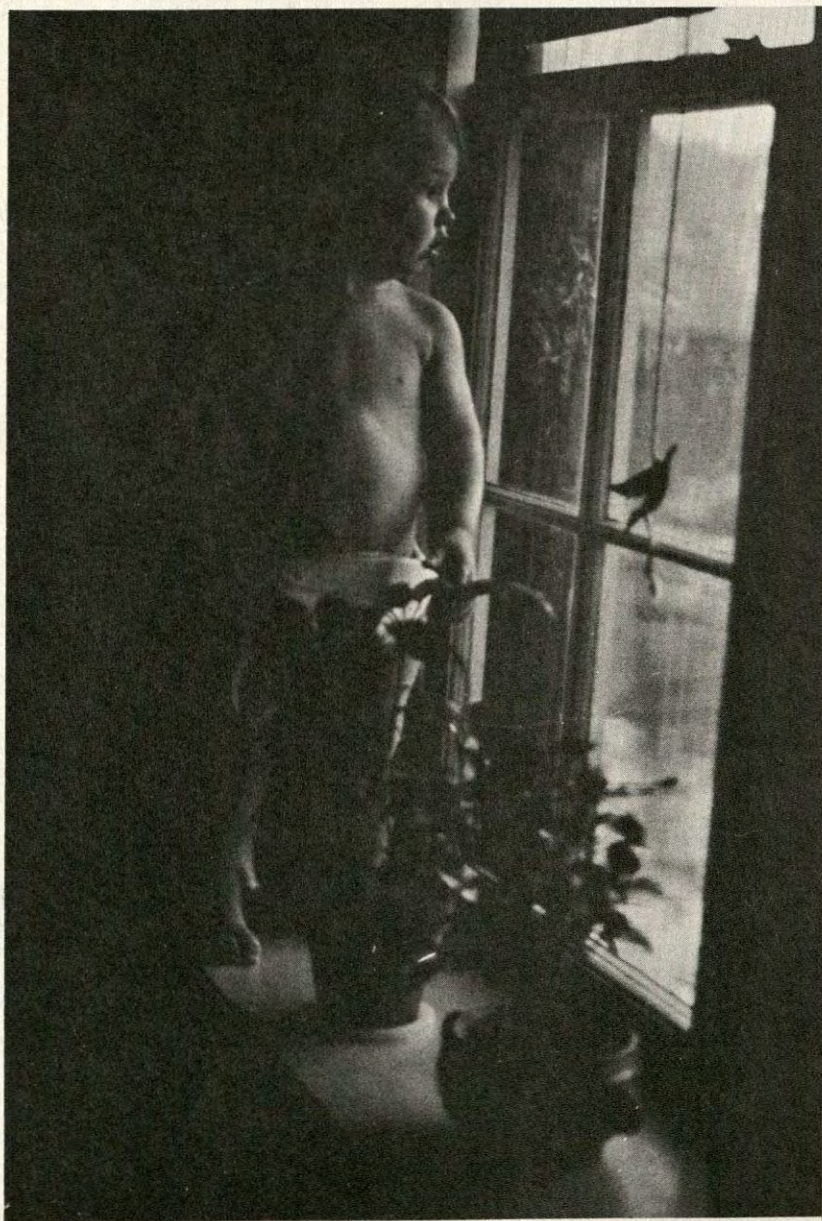
Indian Pipes

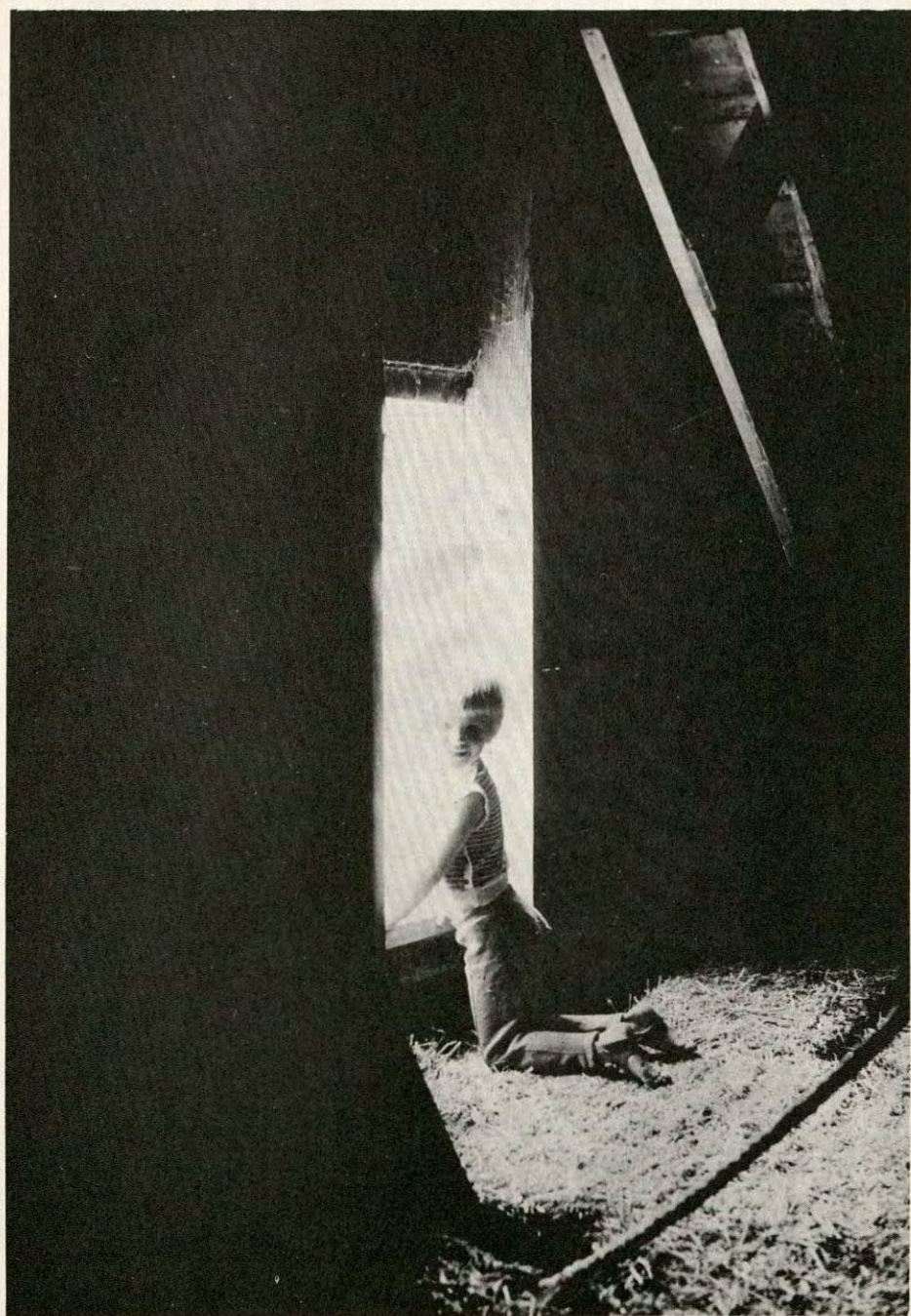
Seven Indian Pipes in one shy gasp
of breathless ivory have pushed themselves
into the smouldering blush beneath the
pines, and felt the unsharp stabs of needles torn
from clusters high above, now rounded, worn.

Seven Indian Pipes like one clear cry
four times reverberated, then twice more:
echoes leaping, shamelessly outspoken.
From afar they creep back shuddering, broken,
bent with the knowledge of sharing in shame.

Seven Indian Pipes with necks arched high - -
whose swollen throats have felt the surge of sighs
full given into voice and then reclaimed,
who thrust themselves into the blush of life - -
now stand smouldering in smug purity.

NANCY CUTTING
February 15, 1972





more time was all, to feel.
closing in
walls lacking doors
to meet the needs of indecision
heart to head together
unyielding
to slightly liquored lips
human needs deceived
once again
too much human
to let the animal wild
heart shut
legs closed
but the world cheered yes
 the crowds roared
shrinking space
expanding disillusion
shut eyes searching blindly
 sad silly lids
oh to give a little
later
hold out, muscles flexed
tenderness rises
with wisdom.
time was all, to know.

FAITH KIERMAIER



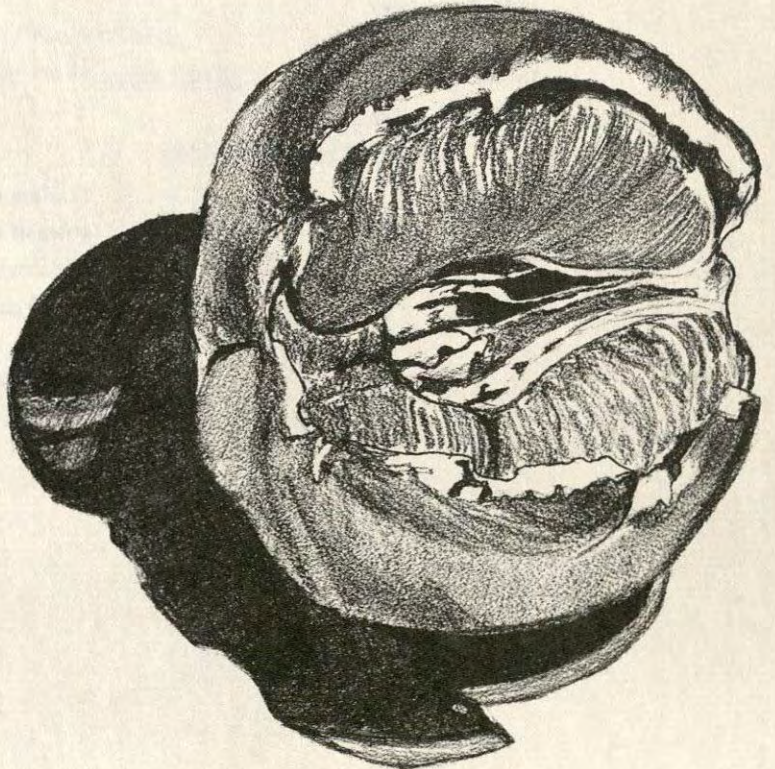
Melancholy is a self consuming thing.
It burns away at the nerve and the fiber
Of the soul itself, leaving only cold gray
Ashes that do not lend themselves to
Be mourned, but only to be swept up and
Thrown out of the house into the cobbled streets.

KEVIN SMITH

(Parenthetically)

(My life consists of
parenthetical thoughts,
sidelights-strung-together
without a unifying major
theme.) (Trivial footnotes
that I can never remember
the next day.) (John Donne
preached his first sermon in
Paddington.) (Fragments)
(Thoughts (within thoughts)
that lead back in -
to themselves and can't be
gotten out of.) (Let alone
move back into the flow.)
(Yet, they're the glimmers that
make life real, explain the reasons,
tell the truth, the insight, why.)
("My wife," wrote Paul Cezanne,
"likes only Switzerland and
lemonade.") (And sum it up.)

ELLEN FICKLEN



Ten red men dance while the priest intones,
his voice gray and insinuating
like the incense smoke.
I cough and finger the transient coin
saved for the offertory basket.
I watch those red men,
set into motion by a match-tip,
forced to rage against the candle glass
by black-veiled women whose thoughts
and prayers rattle unprivately
into the slot along with the quarters and dimes,
those tender offerings to the dead - -
a few hours' worth of wax, and wick, and light - -
puffed out later.

I send no coin to chatter with the others.
And my head is bare.

(I offer this mass for the endless
rows of candles, specifically for
the single blue one among the red
that I caused to dance for you.)

December 26, 1972
NANCY CUTTING

My dog, Mozart
He make muzak with the best o'dem
All day long he happy to be lazy in the sun
Sometime he set and sing a song for me
But by and by he just smile
Just smile at the mailman and the moon
And he be pleased to keep his shadow company
Once a week he stroll outside
And watch that water sprinkler
Move and move from side to side.

My dog, he a good dog
He really do know how to live.

RICHARD KIRKPATRICK

