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Spring 1974

The Connecticut College Literary Magazine

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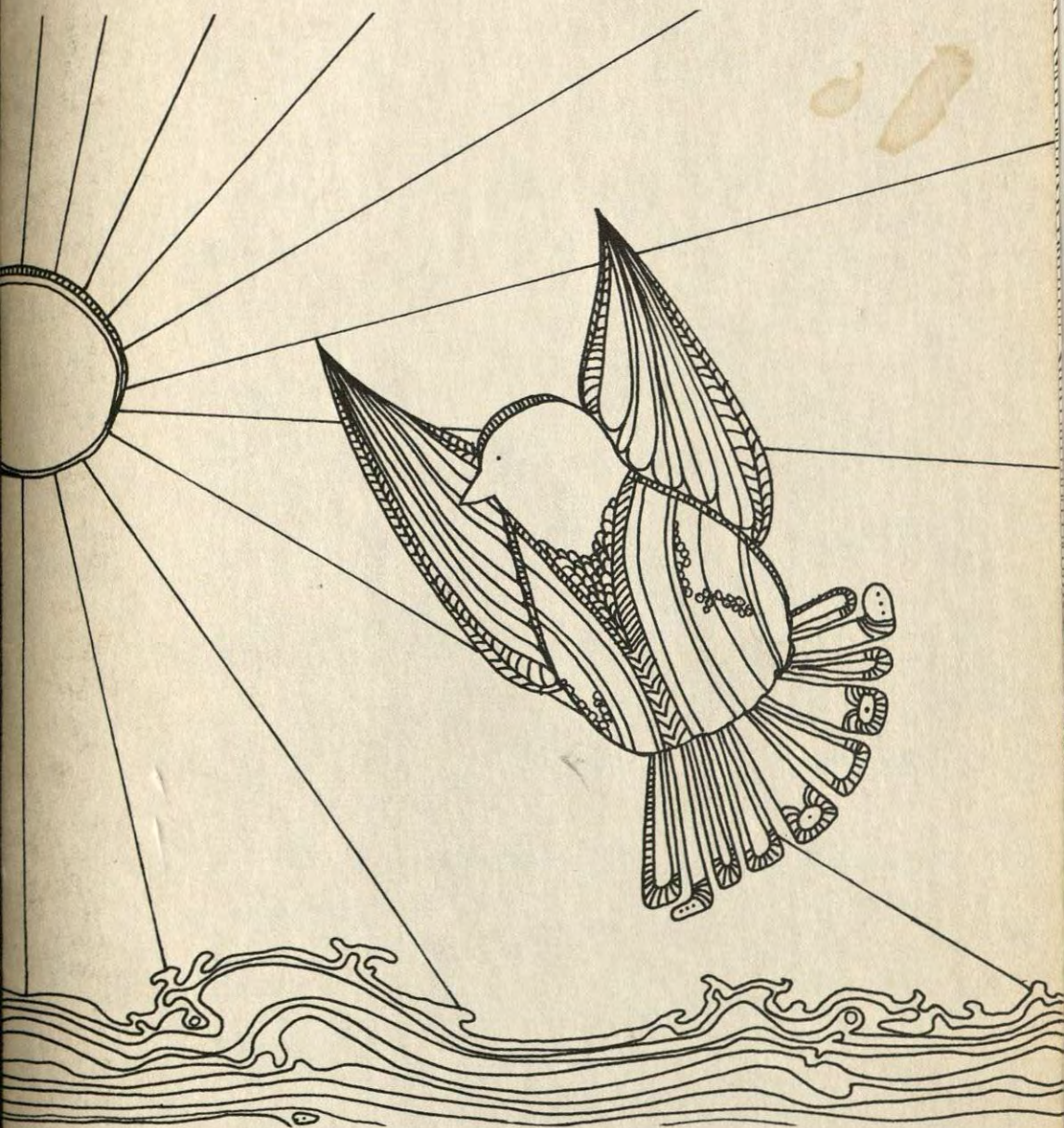
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Dean Watson





The Connecticut College Literary Magazine

Spring 1974

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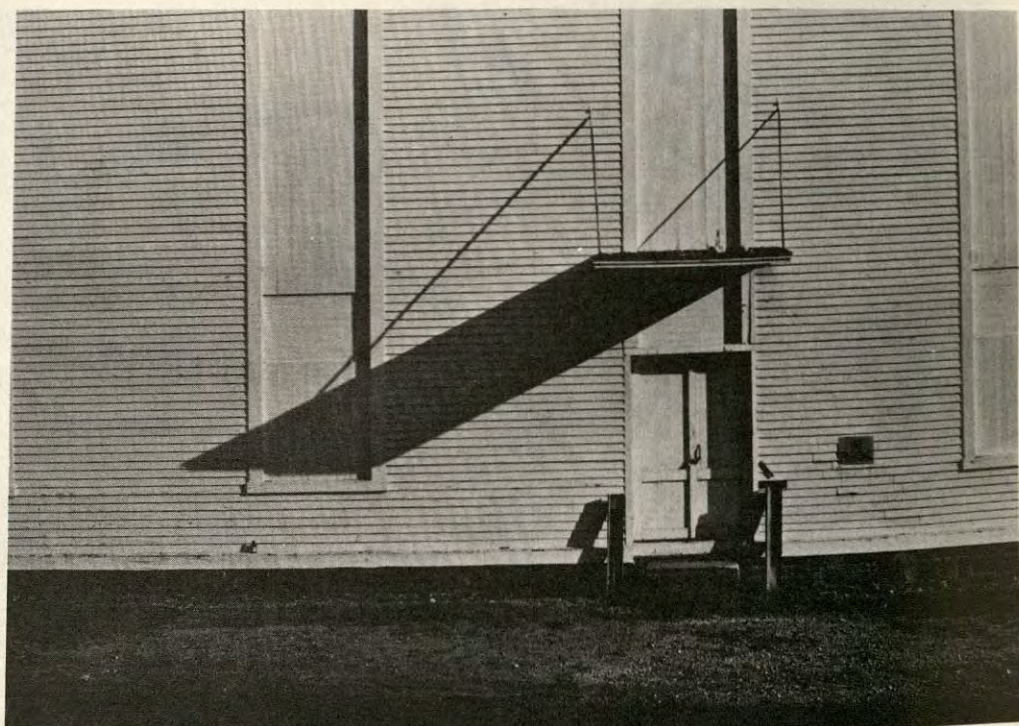
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ENDING

My first thought, as I read the headline in the *Pundit*, was that I was lucky to be alive. "World Will End Tomorrow," it ran, and beneath it, "President Shain Cancels All Classes; Festivities Planned." I felt the way I imagined a citizen of Philadelphia must have felt on July fourth, 1776: I was going to be part of a great event. I began to consider the opportunities such a happening would provide. There would be newsmen, of course, and possibly a camera crew from WTEV in Providence. Preparation, I decided, was the order of the day.

My good friend, Peter, lives in a room just down the hall from me. This was my first stop.

"Have you heard?" I said as I burst through the door, "They're going to end the world tomorrow."

"Really?" Peter was interested but not convinced.

"Look here," I retorted, and thrust a *Pundit* under his nose. Peter read in silence.

"No classes, huh? That's pretty good. Hey, that means my Sociology paper isn't due until Monday."

He was missing the point.

"That may well be," I said, "but just stop and think for a minute. They're organizing a full day of activities for us. They'll probably get someone famous to speak. And full, live, color coverage of the whole thing! Peter, we're going to be on television."

"I don't think I want to be on television. I'd rather to to Boston." Peter has a girlfriend in Boston.

I was outraged.

"What do you mean you don't want to be on television? Everybody wants to be on television. You can go to Boston any weekend, but how often does the world end?"

Just then, Jack, who lives nearby, knocked and entered the room.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

"We were just discussing it," I replied.

Jack sat on the edge of the desk.

"I think it's a joke. Somebody put one over on the whole college. Like the time at Columbia when someone sent a memo around cancelling finals there a few years ago. What do you think?"

Peter said, "I don't know. If there aren't going to be any classes, I'd just as soon go to Boston."

"Ridiculous," I interrupted, "What a waste. Here," I said, turning on the radio, "Let's see if they mention it."

And indeed they did. Almost every station was having a special report on the end of the world. I tuned in WNLC for some local news:

"-- expressions of disbelief. But, as we've said before, this is not a hoax.

"Word came early this morning from the White House that President Nixon will be spending the historic day at Camp David with members of his immediate family. The President was not available for comment, but a source close to the Oval Office said that plans were already under way to have tomorrow declared a national holiday.

"On the local scene, a Coast Guard Academy spokesman has announced that the cadets will stage a special parade and program of patriotic music to mark the occasion. The parade will start at one in the afternoon and the concert will follow at three.

"Connecticut College will be the scene of a full day of celebration tomorrow. Festivities planned will include a picnic, an all-campus rugby game and a free outdoor concert featuring Death, a well-known Boston rock group. Depending on the exact time of the world's end, there may be a fireworks display in the evening.

"Repeating the big story, the world will cease to exist sometime tomorrow. Now we return you to our regularly scheduled program, which is already in progress. Please stay tuned for further developments as they occur."

I switched off the radio and beamed at Peter and Jack.

"That's good enough for me," I said, and left the room. I have a morning class on Thursdays.

By lunchtime, everyone knew about the end of the world, and a holiday mood had set in. There was a food fight in the Marshall section of Harris Refectory, and outside on the green, men from Physical Plant were setting up tables and stringing lights in preparation for the picnic.

It happens that Thursday is my busiest day and my classes run all afternoon, right up until dinnertime. I was walking back to my dorm after my last lecture when I fell in behind two girls. I have always been an avid eavesdropper, and I stayed close enough to hear their voices. The tall blonde was talking to her brown-haired companion:

"I swear, Martha, I was so surprised you could have knocked me over with a feather. I thought it was some kind of joke at first (her friend nodded vigorously) but when I saw it on TV, well . . . I can't wait 'till tomorrow. Seth asked me to go to the rock concert with him. I almost died, but of course I said yes. He's so intellectual. Anyway, I called Mom and she wanted me to come home for a long weekend, but I talked her out of it. I wouldn't want to miss the fun."

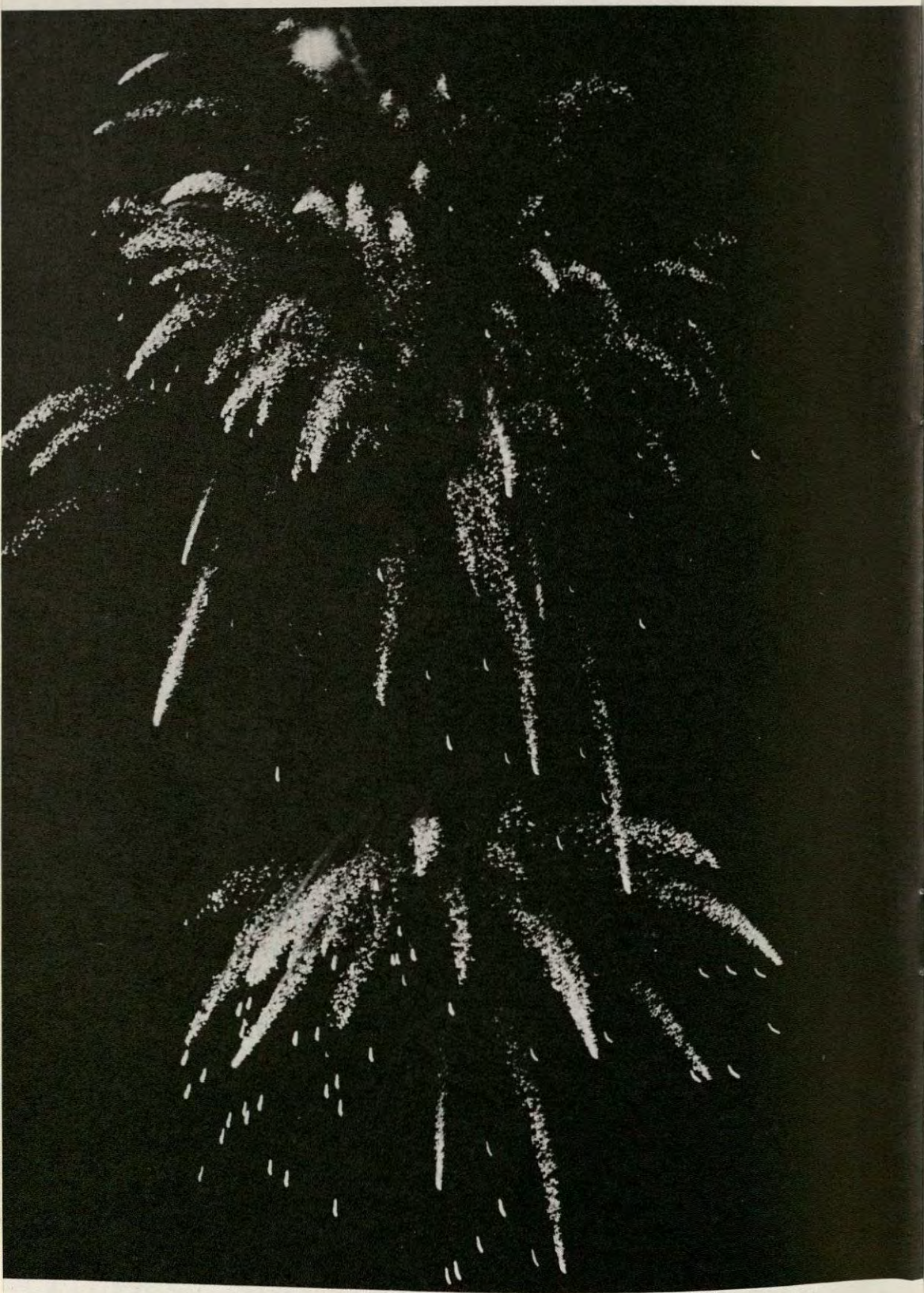
Abruptly she broke off, aware of a third set of footsteps behind her. She turned her head and fixed me with an angry stare. But that didn't bother me. After living ten years in New York City, I'm used to overt signs of hostility. I continued to trail the girls. Now Martha was asking a question:

"Did they have this last year? I don't think so."

"No," the blonde replied, "this is something new. I guess it's supposed to be like Earth Day, you know? But who cares. I mean, the important thing is," she giggled, "no classes."

By this time we had come to the entrance of my dorm, and I was forced to leave my fellow travellers. I went straight to dinner, where one of my favorite dishes, Salmon Lasagna, was being served. I filled a plate and sat with a group of people from my floor. The novelty of the news had apparently worn off, and the only comment came from a freshman, who said he hoped it wouldn't rain the next day.

Following dinner, I went to my room and spent the evening revising a story for my Expository Writing class. Around ten o'clock, Peter poked his head in to tell me that he would be staying on campus after all, as his girlfriend had already made other plans. When I finally went to bed, Friday had begun, and just before I drifted off to sleep, I recalled that the end could come at any time within the next twenty-four hours. I hoped it wouldn't come before daybreak.



Friday turned out to be a perfect fall day. The sky was clear and blue and the air was refreshingly crisp. I awoke freezing; according to the thermometer, it was just under fifty degrees outside. I showered and shaved and quickly dressed in a sweater and jeans, for it was already nine-thirty, and I didn't want to miss any part of the day. I went downstairs and in the lobby of the dorm I saw a notice, which read:

Calendar: End of the World Activities

10:00 a.m. - 12 Noon: Games and booths -- Soccer Field
12 Noon - 1:00 p.m.: Lunch -- Crozier-Williams
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.: Chapel Service
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.: Beer and Rugby -- Soccer Field
5:00 p.m. - ???: Picnic and Concert -- Harris Green

N.B.: All scheduled activities are subject to cancellation in the event the world ends prior to 5:00 p.m. Chief of Security O'Grady has asked that students keep in mind the solemn nature of the day and hopes that they will avoid unnecessary damage to the campus as a result of high spirits.

I walked to the Post Office and collected my mail. My father had written and had enclosed my allowance. This, as it did every month, called for a celebration, and I hurried to the South Lot, passing the soccer field where booths and tables were being set up. I drove down to Hodges Square and parked in front of the Yellow Front Package Store. The shop was empty except for the older of the two Gordons who run the business. He greeted me cheerfully, and I wondered for a moment if he had been sampling his wares.

"Hello, hello, hello. What can I do you for?"

"Well, I'm just going to look around for a bit, if you don't mind."

"Go right ahead," he said, and waved his arm expansively to indicate that his entire stock was at my disposal. I stepped to the cooler and examined some bottles. As soon as he saw where my interest lay, the old man began his pitch:

"Looking for a rosé wine, eh? You like something dry? This is a nice wine and it's from Portugal. Only six-fifty a bottle. Too expensive? Well, this is a good little wine. Only five-sixty-five. You like something sweeter? This is something new; we just got it in from Spain and it's only four-ninety-nine a quart. Yes, I think we've got two bottles. Of course, here we are. Will that be all?"

I said it would, and the monologue continued as Mr. Gordon rang up my purchase:

"Well, you're having quite a day up there at the college, aren't you? You are from the college, right? Mind if I see your I.D.? Well, Mister Jonathan M. Kromer, what do you think of it all? Quite a day, quite a day. Yes, I remember when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. That was quite a day, too. But this is nothing like that. There's fun in the air today."

"I'd like to cash a check, if I may."

"Sure, sure. How much? Five hundred? A thousand?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Only fifty? Well, I'll deduct the wine. Just make it out of A.A. Gordon's Sons. Put your dorm on the back there would you? That's fine. And here's your cash. Now listen, don't you spend it all in one place, okay? And come again."

"Right. So long."

"Bye now."

By ten-thirty, I was again on the soccer field, which, with its banners and signs, looked like a circus midway. I was standing on the Knowlton steps when Peter approached and hailed me. I offered him the bottle, which was already half empty. He took a healthy swig, and together we stepped off into the gathering crowd.

The first booth we came to was advertising "End of the World Tee-Shirts, Personalized with Your Name in Six Different Colors." Neither of us was particularly interested in such gimmicks, which, we agreed, the shirts obviously were, so we strolled on. I noticed a table with various pieces of sculpture arranged on it and dragged Peter over to investigate. We couldn't make out the significance of the pieces, which seemed to be rather amateurish attempts at human figures. I spoke to the girl sitting by the table:

"What exactly are these items here?" I was beginning to feel the effects of the wine.

"Nihilistic art," she replied.

Peter and I exchanged looks.

"Oh," we said, and walked on.

Suddenly there was a great commotion from the far end of the field. We moved along with the crowd until we stood at the edge of a semi-circle which enclosed a smaller group of people. Theater One had arrived and for the next half-hour they presented a series of improvisations based on their view of the end of the world. In one, they showed a confrontation between a group

of Conn students and Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates. In the end, the students opted to go to Hell, as Saint Peter wouldn't allow them to drink beer or smoke grass in Heaven. Peter and I agreed that the scenes were quite clever, but by now the bottle was nearly empty.

The next booth we came to was advertising a time capsule. Scattered on the table were dozens of books, records and other items. The two guys in charge of the capsule were engaged in a heated argument over whether or not to include a packet of Zig-Zag cigarette papers. Peter and I read a description which was taped to a pole:

This cylinder is made of one hundred per-cent stainless steel and was manufactured by the United States Steel Company. It measures exactly four feet by one foot, and is guaranteed to last indefinitely. The cylinder will be buried fifteen feet beneath the surface of the ground directly in front of Fanning. Directions to its location will be broadcast all over the world before the final holocaust, and succeeding generations will one day unearth the capsule and find many perfectly-preserved artifacts of our culture.

I turned to Peter.

"Holocaust?" I said incredulously.

"That's what it says," he admitted.

"Do you really think so? What about that poem? You know, 'Not with a bang, but with a whimper?'"

Peter shrugged and thought for a moment. I scanned the field for any signs of a television crew. There were none.

Finally Peter spoke.

"Jon, is this how you visualized the end of the world, spending your last hours surrounded by such crass commercialism? It seems to me that we could be doing something just a bit more meaningful. That's just the way I feel about it."

"What do you suggest?" I asked.

He paused. Then he said, "Come on," and began walking toward Fanning. I followed silently. We passed the time capsule and I handed the empty wine bottle to one of its keepers.

"Put this in your capsule and bury it."

Peter and I strode past the Guard House and down the winding drive. We crossed Route 32 against the light and passed through a small field. We

continued until we drew near the Thames, then followed a path through dense woods until we came to a clearing. There, alone and silent, we sat and watched the river flow past us and the submarine base, looming gray and forboding in the distance. We did not speak; words seemed unnecessary. From time to time we looked away from the river and glanced at each other. Somehow, although we were doing nothing, those moments held a great significance for us.

Peter and I sat for a long time. After a while, the sun began to sink lower and lower in the sky, bathing the opposite shore in an intense glow. I stood and looked at Peter, and together we retraced our steps until finally we stood again by the Guard House. It was empty as usual. The campus was quiet now and when we rounded the corner by Fanning, we found the soccer field deserted. The banners still waved in the breeze and trash dotted the browning grass. I looked inquisitively at Peter.

"Dinnertime," he explained.

We followed the road past Smith-Burdick and Cro, encountering only a wandering dog, which sniffed us and wandered on. We passed in front of Morrisson and climbed the steps to the deck above the kitchen. Standing on the edge of the roof, we had a sweeping view of the green below us -- empty. There was no noise: no cars on Williams Street, no trash cans banging, no voices. The silence could have been the stillness which accompanies sunset, or it could have been the world holding its breath.

"The end has come and gone," I said slowly, "and we missed it."

Peter turned and looked into the distance. Then he faced me.

"I'm hungry," he said.

JONATHAN KROMER



The Beachcomber

Beachcomber,
tall and thin, barefoot,
like a young god you appear
from within the cliffs
and walk with liquid motion
over sand strewn with gifts.
Pausing, you rest upon your haunches,
hovering over a potential morsel
washed up by the waves,
flung from the depths of some water-bound cave,
or perhaps dropped by a wanderer.

Beachcomber,
I trace the clear-cut imprints
left by your feet with my own,
and collect the shells you've not touched,
or which you've fondled then replaced.
How you tempt me!
Aloof, you wait, the sun glancing
from those silken limbs.
One day I'll climb atop the cliffs
and hurl myself into the sea.
The waves will nudge my form - -
a water-softened remnant, stunning
in a seaweed cape--onto the sands.
Eagerly you will crouch, those
freckled fingers reaching with a gesture
of exquisite pleasure.
I shall be a new and glistening treasure.

NANCY CUTTING
June 2, 1973

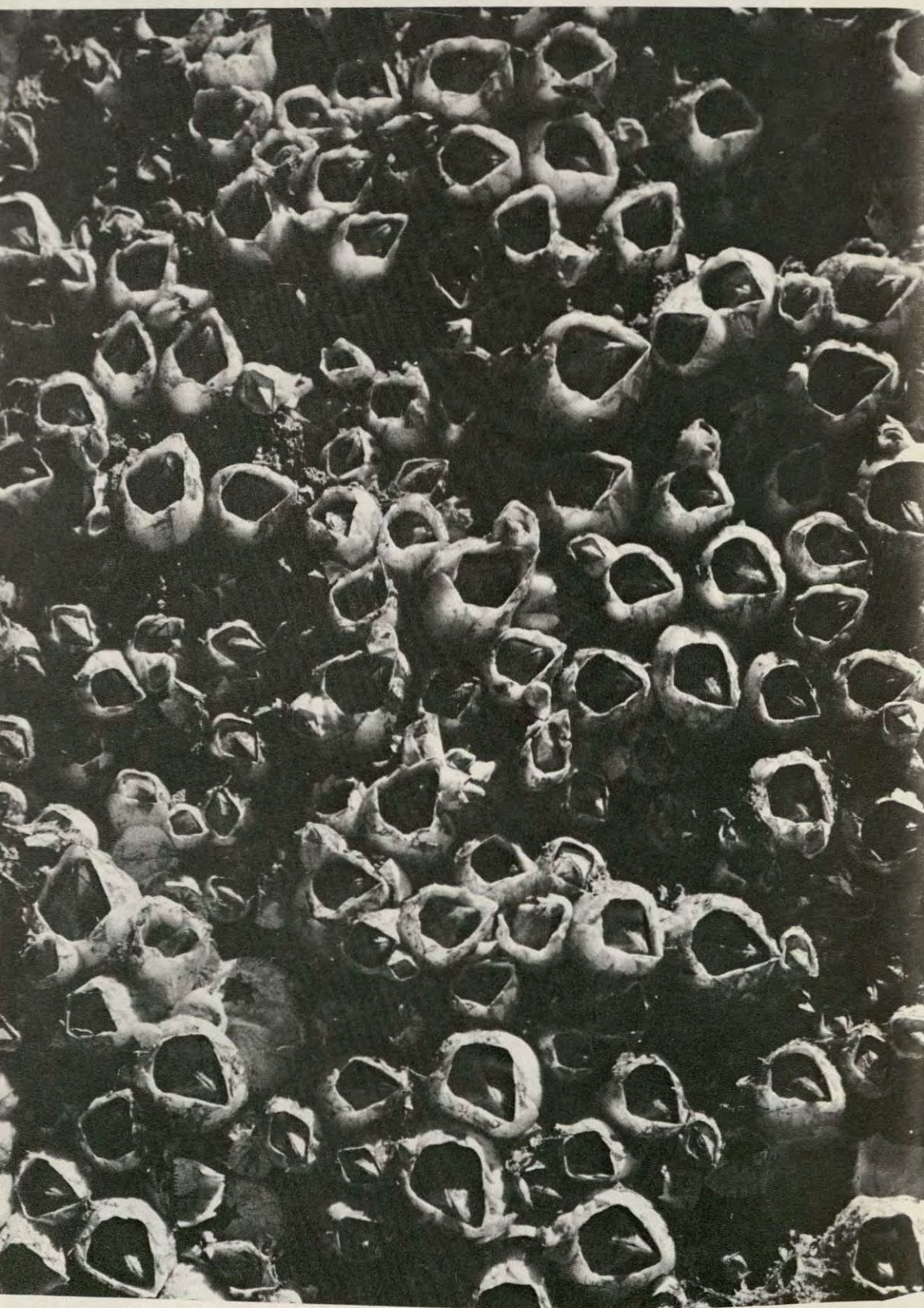
A Soft Summer Sadness

Early autumn sandpipers came
to a late summer beach,
Playing their perennial tag games
with every wave, as my mind
scampered likewise
between seasonal senses.

I squatted, like just one more
barnacle
attached to a foamy jetty's end
and watched God pour
grenadine into the lemonade sunset
For a thirsty dusk to drink.

ANN JACOBS





Beached

I found her on the beach
squirming on the sand
crowned in seaweed
She did not see me,
not at first,
Not until my moonshadow
fell across her face

Her eyes
Her eyes that knew the sea
caught mine, desperately
Pleading, but I didn't know
how to help
She had a long thin gash
coloring her ivory side
Above the gray-green scales
beautifully glistening
As were her vocal eyes

What more could I do
but lift her
Gently off the sand, and
wade through the surf
And send her back to her
alien home below.
She surely must have friends,
one as beautiful as she

KEVIN T. SMITH

My Brother

Intricate as water:

He rolls in with a tide of wonders

Bubbly, Hissing, Fizzing, Foaming
Suddenly cooling to a gentle Calm.

As he subdues the wave ahead and succumbs to the wave behind,
He drenches rocks and shells,
Juggling them indiscriminately
Polishing them to beautiful smoothnesses
Or creating jagged edges

Then he vanishes,
Leaving traces of his existence in the sand.

NICKIE WOOD

Deadly is the Pool that From Your Body Dipping

The car door knock against my head,
and I am down upon the gravel
waitin for the devils in my brow
to cease their silly laughter and their noise.

The moon is out and I can hear the boys;
I can hear them splashing in the row
and branching out their words in secret huddle,
and I can hear them swimming in the spread.

Wet flesh sings and winks its slippery cloak
into my eyes and once again from light
made white from moon and other friends
piercing down in laughter at our cheeks.

Our bodies shiney-laugh all cleanly squeek
with rubber water slipping down from when
we'd slip out and get dressed in the night.
Our hair would tumble-gurgle from the soak.

Our hands will tumble-tingle at our sides
as wrapped in terry-warmth we stride
along the lawn with wakeful youthful waiting;
we are infants born again from all our playing.

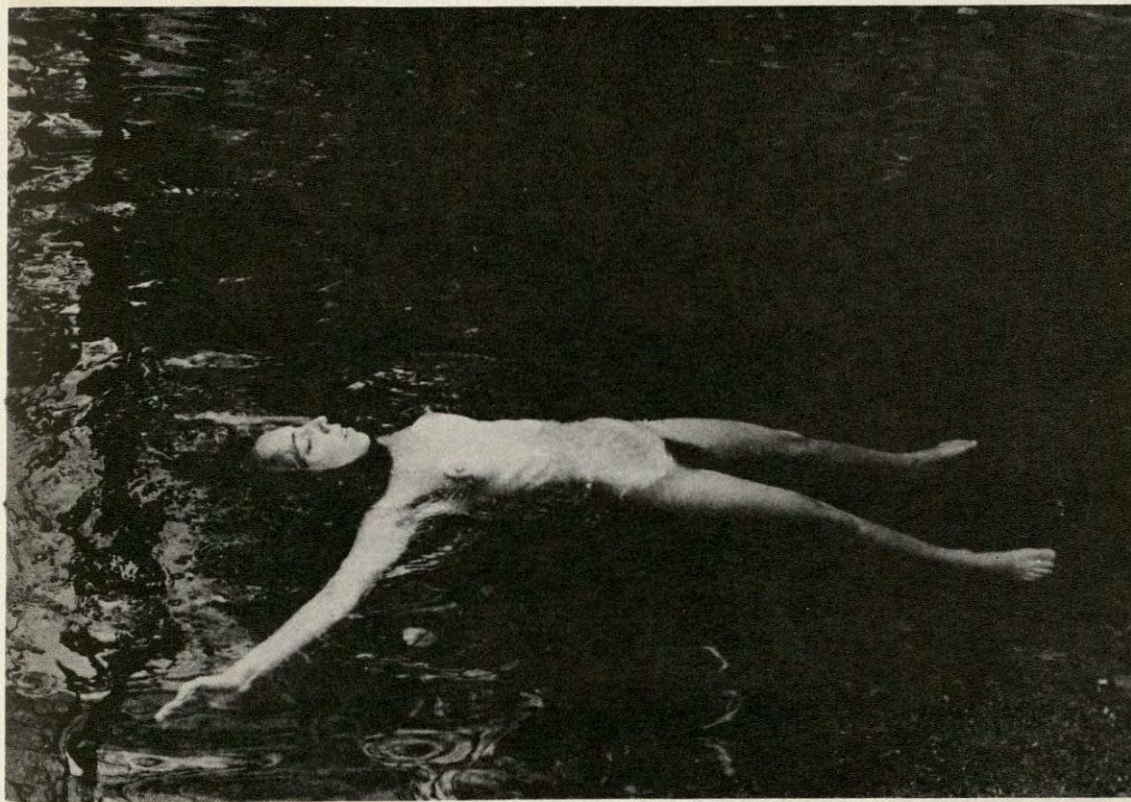
You and I have smelt the summer evening
in one complete and harmonizing nose.
And beckoning the forearm of you leaning;
solidly to eyes and cheeks of rose.

Deadly is the pool that from your body dipping
for he has made me start out with new air
into the song of chlorined faces dripping;
experience a way from passion here.

Hollowed lungs in glinting bodies glowing
match the hollowed heaving in our ears;
Your is sleep and mine is only fathom.
And hollowed is the collar-bone of you.

Opening to sky and stars and lovers new,
the night bakes smooth into our youthful skin;
water which reverberates like tears
makes knowing you the half of why I'm going.

LAUREN KINGSLEY



When I held her this morning,
before she left,
her skin was cool and quiet,
without substance
like water flowing away.

The heat of one rises as the other wanes.
As love's stone grows cold,
the sand shimmers in the heat
and night's tenderness becomes the tears and recriminations
of a falsely lit day.

DAVID REID & TONY EPRILE

Libraries are conducive to fantasy

Shhhhh!

Listen

the book bindings cracking

the brittle pages turning

This is the Library

do not speak, do not.

Consume those paragraphs

eat those words

nibble each syllable,

a delicate belch is permissible

but do not let escape one article or conjunction

(You may pick your teeth with the punctuation).

Rolling under the carrel with my tome

we frolic and dance in printed meadows,

she coyly hides behind a stump.

I suddenly discover her, blood beating

I seize her and mount her and ride her

breathless, through the radiant literary firmament.

Rape, she cries

Rape, the librarian sneezes.

She is exhausted, I think, and

I abandon her, satisfied.

Just one more chapter now she pleads

No, I say, and indifferently turn

striding out into the brilliant spring sunshine

in which things of this sort happen only infrequently.

PETER CARLSON



CHRONICLE: Threads, here and there

The wind carried a coolness with it those days, and though the sun burned clearly, the suggestion of winter was felt in the deepening blue sky. The world was sharp and hard, clear like cold glass. Sunlight glinted and splintered over chrome: white, direct, lacking the warmth of earlier months. Trees, bald and skeletal, exposed like nerves in the bare light, bent stiffly, sighing at the inevitable harshness of the breeze. Sighing as one lover at the other's mood. A line of cloud lay low on the edge of the sky, a small threat to the expanse of blue arching over him at that moment. He thought of the future. Turning his head, however, his eye was caught by a random ray that, exploding on his retinae, showered his vision with flashes of splotchy brightness, lingering, fading...lingering...

The hard click of ceramic billiard balls. He watches them complete their courses and come to rest in their newly transformed configuration. Chance and hazard illustrated, he thinks, judging his shots, chance and... Making a slow turn on his heel he weighs the angles, balls, pockets, his skill. The stick balances loosely in his hand by his side. With a quick motion he snaps into position, crouched, leaning slightly back, stick drawn like a bow, intent. He slides the stick smoothly, with a fluid motion on his outstretched hand, bringing arm, cue, balls and pocket into exquisite linear perspective. Eyes on him; quiet. He waits, feeling for the time, kairos...he feels, is, the situation, movement, game. Release- action, reaction, clicking kinetics and the ball blurs in speed at the pocket, rebounds at the mouth with rapid excitement and rests on the lip. A new situation, an endless sequence. Next.

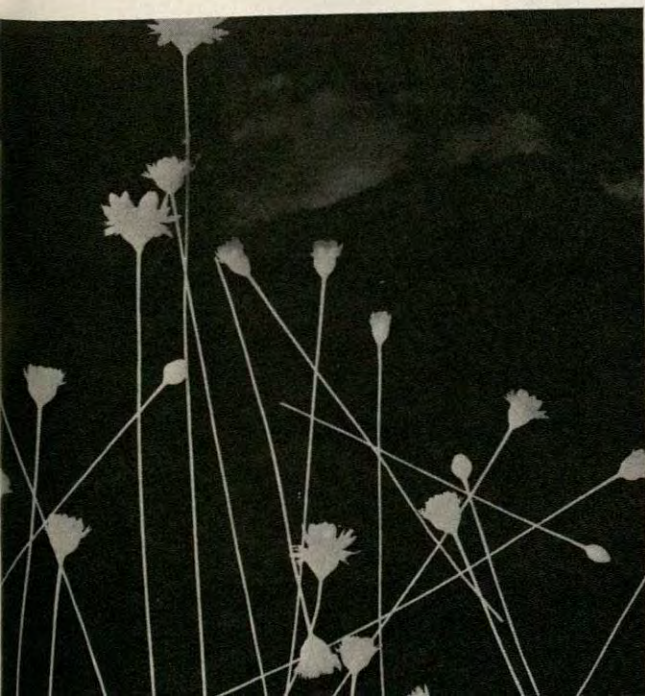


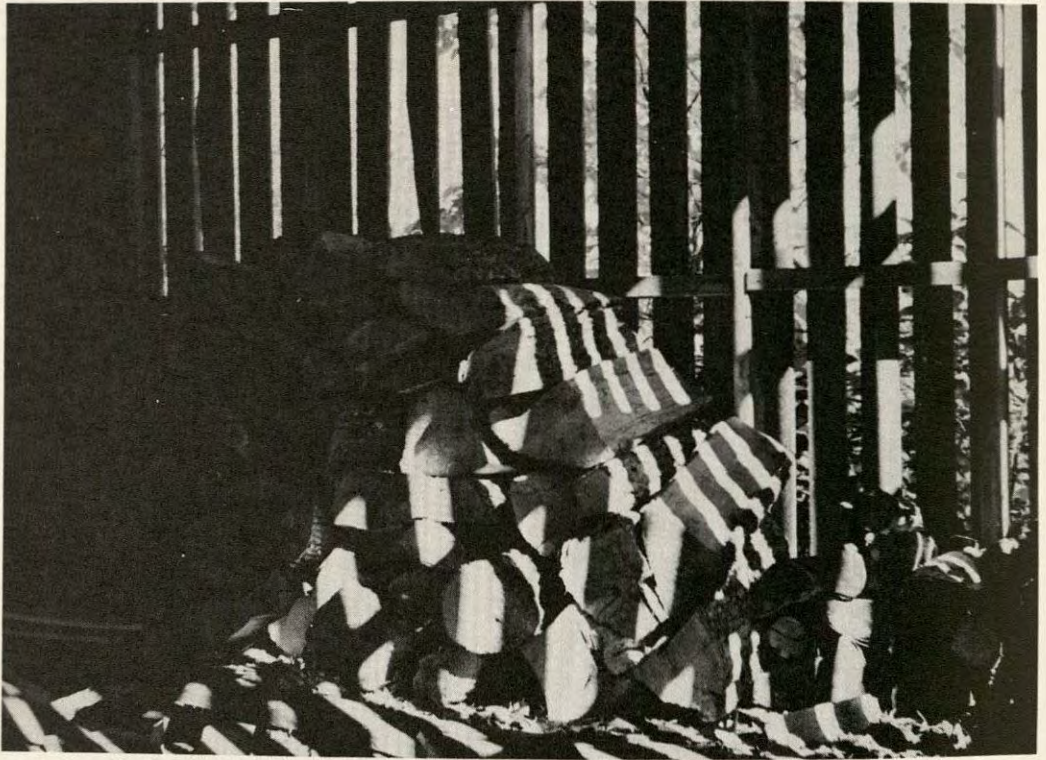
The food was warm in his mouth as he chewed. He felt its texture and pulpi-ness with his tongue, tasted it. The sound of a meal, clattered silver, seraping china, and chinking glass intertwined forming an atonal type of harmony, underscored by the seething murmur of human voices. The sound welled up around him, diffuse and steady, punctuated occasionally by a shrill laugh; the sound of a strange sea. He glanced across the table, she was looking at her plate. What did she do today?

Watching her talk, her lips move, eyes, expressing. Her words blended with, augmented the existing atmosphere. He breathed her words and their immediacy became part of him, flowed in his veins establishing a link between within him and without him. The windows were black now, shiny with reflection. Sipping the warm bitterness of his coffee he leaned back, listening.

He will venture out beneath the stars. He will be as a lens, blurring away into nothingness the near, focusing on a point...focusing beyond...The stars strewn silver, spanning the icy depth. Focusing farther...he shudders, his body throbs against the earth. Pinned on one plane he stares at the other before him; light lancing through the void, lancing through time to his eye. A clock ticks, syncopates with the rhythm of his body as his eye perceives eternity; chronos and kairos fuse, begin an orbital dance within him. The weaving dance works back, weaving all into itself, the nebulae, the naked tips of the tree, roots plunging and twisting into the dark earth, his blood-bathed cells and the tear trembling on his lash in the star-light. All threads gathered and woven, the fabric danced in his eye.

MICHAEL WOLLAEGER





I lived, once upon a time, among children
Do you remember? You were there;
We walked together, wide-eyed, moving
With grace, for we carried nothing on our shoulders

We had little knowledge, but were filled
With wonder, and our wonder was surrounded by high walls
Dark walls made of stone; when we touched them
Our young hands bled

But the bleeding soon hardened our wondering hands,
We tore the walls down, stone by stone
And lifted the stones onto our shoulders
Now we walk with eyes closed, you and I; moving
Without grace

BARBARA CLAYPOOLE

First Summer

Remember the summer
I taught you how to eat Honeysuckle
and make clover chains
and how to play "Pooh-Sticks"?
You taught me the mysteries of
cocoons and rain-drop races
and tall climbing trees.
I shared my yo-yo tricks
and bubble blowing secrets
in exchange for the way to
the best spot along the canal,
and how to make grass squeak.
We were experts in our own ways,
you know . . .
Remember the summer
You showed me the waterfall
and all the good shortcuts?
I made it fair and square
by demonstrating how to tune a Coke-bottle
full of water
and I told you the legend of
the butterflies.
In early morning puddles
We found pleasure in wading
to the end of nowhere
and we discovered an African Jungle
in the moonflower bush and
it belonged to Us,
because . . .
You led me through the
uncharted world of string
and funny blunt Kindergarten scissors
and I always blew Dandelion fluff at you
because it would make you angry.
I untied the knots
You could never have tied
if you had been trying
and I would always let you
beat me running down the Hill
because at the bottom
You would laugh and I
liked the music of your voice
as it settled in the
grass.

NINA GEORGE

Early Presence

daybreak

when small creatures stir

and it is jonathan

tagging down a

fence-clickety-clack-with-a-stick

alley

looking for shy rabbits

and taking care

not to curdle violets

with his heavy child-ness

and quick inquiries

as to what might constitute

the morning's underwear.

NINA GEORGE

Grey Sundays

In these days
When the heavens are lard
When the cold drizzles in
When the champagne you gave me
is water again - -

Send me Fire;
Let it glow in the hearth
Till the Sun shall be mine
And the dishwater days
will return unto wine.

BYRLE SUSAN BOMBERO

She feeds on shadows
her own cast silently among the others,
and willingly obscured

moods touch her petals lightly
naked leaves, whispering, mock her deceit:
she weeps at a word

but she laughs for laughter, and for love
the distant sun
her own slow strength encouraging

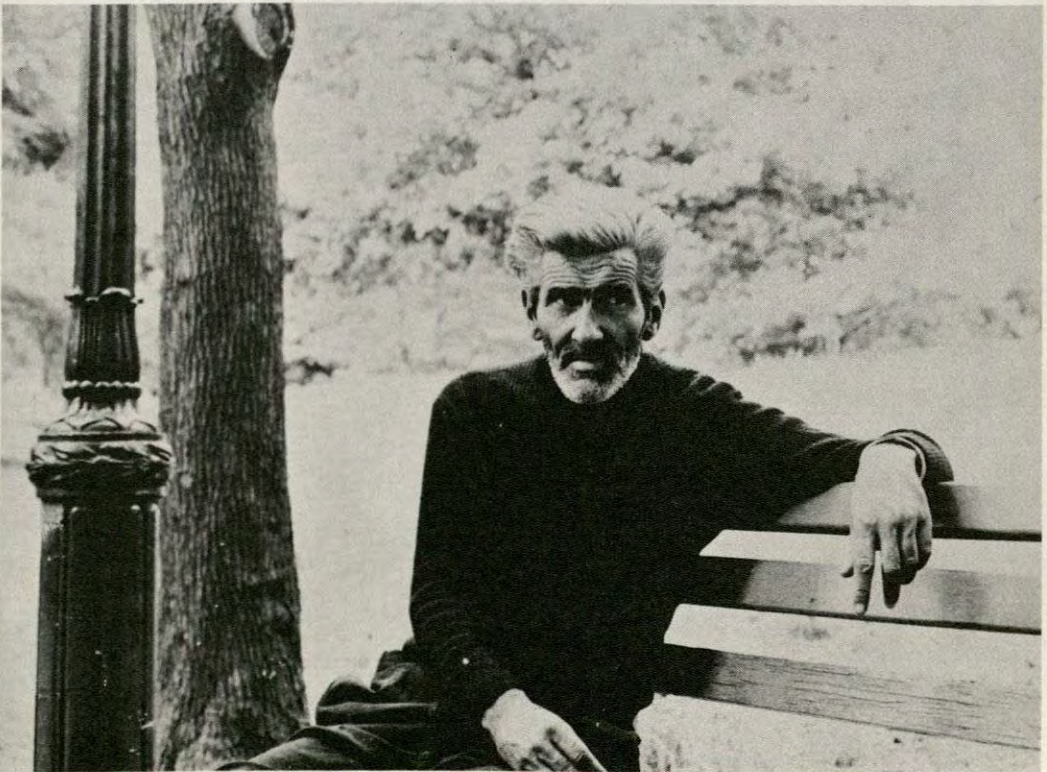
and she struggles, a darkly rooted struggle,
and grasps the dreamless earth
forgetting fear, forgetting loneliness

BARBARA CLAYPOOLE

Cambridge Man

Crooked legs in loose, torn pants
 kicked at the sidewalk as they passed.
A man with crinkled white hair frizzled to the sides,
 carried with him a small paper bag and an old green suitcase.
His sneakers flopping gayly like mongrel's ears,
 he would hobble, pause, then grin into the storefront windows
Past the Bingo results and into his shining black armour of skin
 gleaming, bejeweling his neck, his jaw, his round cheeks
And oval lips. He stooped to brush the long white hairs
 from his eyes, to soften, to pet the hairs flatly at his ears
And re-adjust his plaid cap and tuck in his cotton shirt and
 hike up his left sock. Then from his bag he pulled
A thin tin cup, squatted on his standing suitcase
 and sat swinging his cup from side to side
Like an angry child, until someone's
 smudged nickel made it ring.

ANITA PERRY



REUNION

You raise your glass politely,
meeting the rim
with a nervous smile.
You say you would have
recognized me anywhere,
and I am laughing blankly
at this forced familiarity.
I can't tell you
that I'd rather not discuss
vacations, deaths, and the weather . . .
I want to know
if sunsets make you cry -- and
do you still see autumn
in that special, subtle way?
But I will never see
your cloudy lining,
anymore than you can know
how love had made me old,
yet new,
that sometimes I give up
on life,
but still I'm satisfied.
It all seems very easy now --
we part with hugs and handshakes;
I suppose that it's been nice
and tell myself
it wasn't half as bad
as I'd expected . . .
Yet all the years choke in me now,
and I can't stop
the tears unshared,
as soon as you have gone.

NINA GEORGE

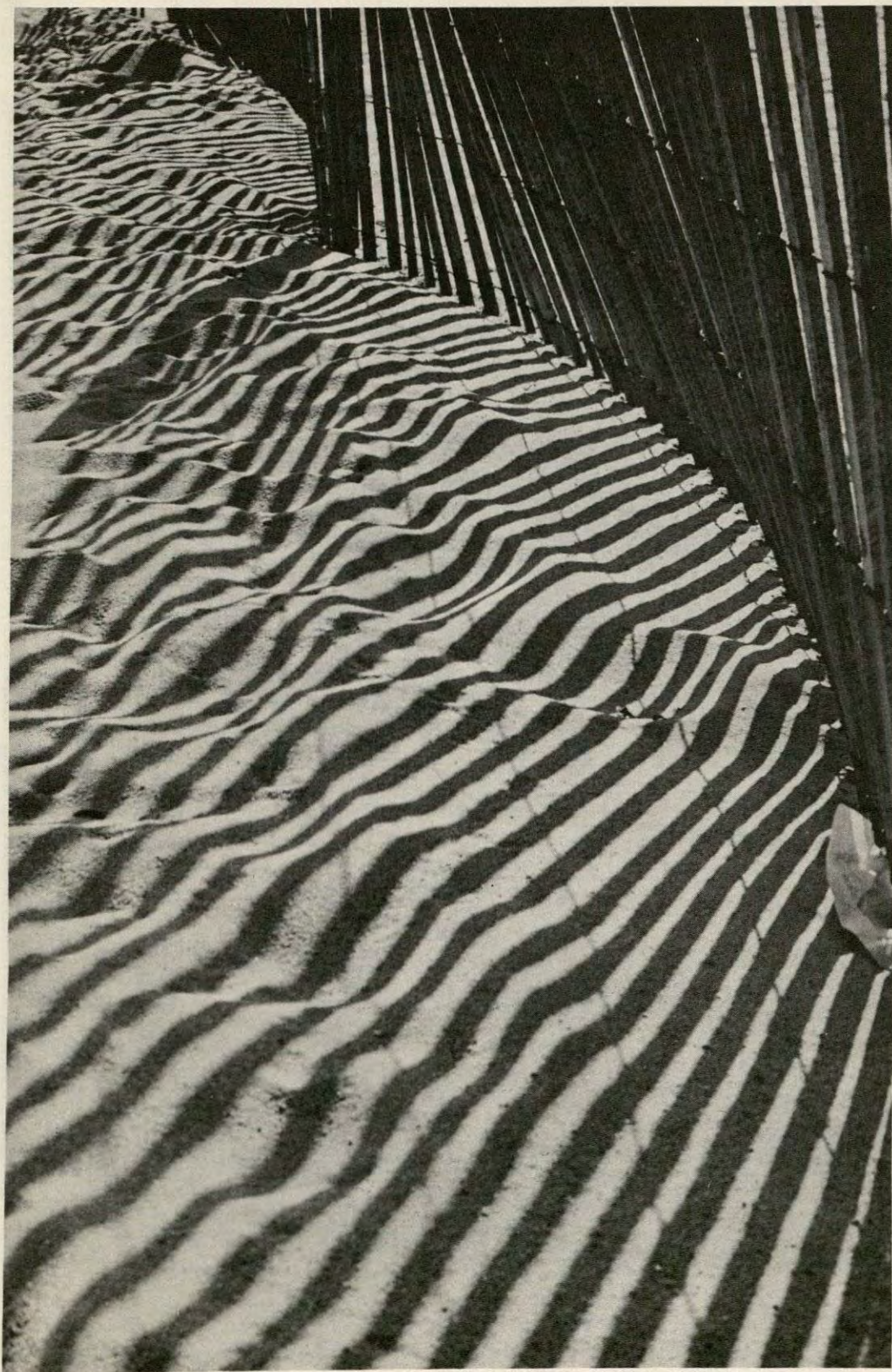
Reunion

A match struck in waiting
nervously he curses her.
She will bring him sadness
like a bouquet, to wither
and die on the mantel.

She on her mountaintop
He at his ocean, her nose
in the chamomile breeze,
his nose pickled in the salt.
Fertile earth, barren sand.

Not mountain nor ocean,
the country in which they meet
has no geography,
needing each other more for
loneliness than for love.

PETER CARLSON





Advantage

Miles Davis was his favorite. He certainly liked Miles Davis. He heard some bars high above in an apartment somewhere; didn't look up, though. He quickened his pace in time with that beat, and, although the noise was long out of range, he knew that whole song. He knew that whole crazy album inside out. He grinned down at his leatherbooted feet shooting out from under his small body and onto the pavement in time to the music. Little men. They seemed like little men to him, his feet, and his grin widened. He drew himself up and breathed deeply; the song was still in his mind. He began to spring a little with each step; his gloved hands made fists in his coat pockets. He thought of himself as in a movie, one of those movies where the main character is walking along and something fantastic just happened to him and he's just bouncing down the street, and they've got music playing. The song in his mind now is what they'd be playing; Miles Davis.

Don't ever think of yourself as in a movie. It's the worst thing for you. He saw her say this, across the car seat, her face lifted, her collar turned up, giving him this psychology crap. He thought of how she looked in those days; young, pretty, but very hard in her eyes, and she would grin at him quietly, looking into his eyes, but only really looking at her reflection in them. He could imagine her sitting there, in the car, the rain falling all over the window, making a strange pattern on her face from the streetlight lamp shining down. He thought of her in a science-fiction movie. But she would've cringed at the thought of being imagined in the movies.

He sniffed and crossed Sixty-fourth street, breathing visible carbon dioxide out into the cold New York air. He hurried up and onto the sidewalk. He looked at the traffic, splurting, pausing, foulsmelling, and he looked at his feet, quick, brown, shallowsounding, and he wondered why the song in his mind faded away, where it went. He might've struck it up again, but did not. But he kept his step springing, bending semi-deep at the knee, his torso dipping, dipping to a song which he figured would be dubbed in. He breathed the air, and watched it vaporize before him, and felt it come against his face as he walked into it. He imagined his cheeks as very rosy, his ears, his nose, red, and this street, freezing, but it was only just very cold. He wished it would snow. If it was going to be this cold, he thought, the least it could do would be show something for it. Indifferent cold. Will ya snow, for God's sake? Prove how cold you are and snow! He shook his head. Probably only wanted it to snow because it would make it complete, make this picture complete: the red cheeks, nose, ears, the you-can-

see-it breath, the infernal cold, and him in his overcoat, the immense collars turned up, like petals of a flower. Just like out of *War and Peace*, or *Doctor Zhivago*, he wanted snow to come and settle. But there was more, he remembered, as he sunk into the street's world as when it is snowblanketed. He guessed there was more than how perfect it would look in the movies. His memory tantalized his senses. They knew the comfortable warmth in such cold air, like the still in the eye of a hurricane, when all the streets are insulated with the lacey stuff; and the strange stillness and silence, after the flakes have so subtly muted-over the street, wrapped the cold, hard, naked concrete in white flannel, and the people are trapped inside, and their voices are swallowed before they can be heard from the mouth-windows, or from the mouths upon the street.

Never on a screen. They couldn't do it. He glanced across the street at a clock in a shore-repairman's window. Nine-thirty. He said aloud, "Oh", and let back in his pace, slowed himself up. But within half a block, he was up to the same gait. He had not been going hurriedly, but he was early, yet, and wanted to take his time, but more than that, he wanted to waste time; he was early.

On the phone, he saw himself as cruddy looking. He had not shaved, his hair was matted and tangled, he was in a five-day worn shirt. He remembered he smelled. He had not pictured himself then, on the phone with her, but, now, in the street, memory told him he looked like a drunken bum. He felt embarrassed, going down the street, imagining himself being seen by her, on the screen, split or something, or just being seen next to her. He realized the ridiculousness in it, laughed, but was still embarrassed. She always was perfect. Perfectly dressed, perfectly combed, perfectly painted. Perfectly assembled, he thought, trying to remember her body movements. Nothing. He could remember no movement, just action, but vague, stylized, monomorphic, her body, monodimensional. He wondered to hate it or respect it, next to himself. ...And how he sounded, embarrassed, hesitant, confused. He thought she held him as a child. Only now did he regret ever having called her. He shook his head, and felt a sharp pain in his chest, deep, hollow; he squinted against it. Too subtle, too often, he knew it too well, but never wondered, and if he did, he would've given up trying to understand. He held his breath until it went away, and stepped down off the curb, with a few other people, crossed the street.

Again he remembered how it was once; how, when he had first met her at some communications seminar way uptown, how he kept looking at her speak and move, couldn't really believe or understand, or both. She seemed to him then a goddess, not of love, beauty, war, but of Mind, Intelligence. She knew

herself, was proud and sure, and although it wasn't that he admired these things, or that he agreed with what she was saying -- for, indeed, he disagreed violently -- her confidence amazed him. He remembered back then, trying to recall how it was for himself, then, as compared to now. And he held himself, now, walking along Third Avenue, as sad and broken, and tried to remember how it was then, but couldn't, and sulked, for he knew that even if he could recall how things were, he wouldn't be able to understand how he could have ever been that way, ever thought that way.

And here he was now, in early December, having just received his academic warning. Well, he figured, it couldn't've been long before they caught up with me. Sleeping, walking, mostly. Never any work, anymore. He hadn't studied his law since early October, and Jesus, he thought, all this time put in. All this lousey time. He felt his conscience grip his muscles around and behind his ribs. They have a right, it's their money, the school's money that's paying for him to flunk out of Law school. He shook his head and felt himself grin at the irony. Whatever possessed him to want to go into Law, he simply could not imagine now. If he knew himself now as he was then, he would not recognize himself, he thought.

What the hell was he going to see her for now, he asked himself. He guessed that at the time he called her up, he really didn't have a reason. But, nevertheless, he wanted one now, not so much to offer her, but for himself. He guessed that he must've, inside somewhere, subconsciously, probably, thought that she could help him. Help him out of what? He couldn't say. Help him, though. He wanted to be able to say, to himself, to her, but couldn't, and he didn't think that that was so important, because, he liked to think, once they got talking it would all work itself out.

Once in that stupid seminar he almost believed her, almost felt her words touch his soul, the way she usually intended them to, but for everybody, she said them, not somebody, but everybody. He caught himself half believing they were for him. And she would say that they were for him, but he would say that they were for everybody else at the same time, and she would not deny it, but talk around it, all the time just confirming his supposition. Maybe it was this half-belief that made him call her, though he'd forgotten about it at the time. Maybe he wanted them to be for him for real so much that he just folled himself into believing they really were. Or maybe they were anyway.

Oh, God, here I am. He looked up, and the awning told him he was where he was to come and meet her. He walked in through the heavy, dark, plated doors, passing a couple turning up their collars in preparation for the cold. He moved past them and out into the lobby where a few waiters stood

around. He looked over the plant assemblage separating the cloak-room from the bar, and saw she was there just sitting down.

"May I take your coat?" asked a man of him. He turned around and shook his head, said No, without looking into his face. He walked into the bar and sat down next to her in this miniscule booth for two people. She was smiling as she took off her hat and gloves.

"Hello, Bobby," she said; watching him sit down in his big coat in that small booth, he guessed.

"Hi, Steph", he murmured, adjusting himself to the close seating apparatus. He saw her hands hold each other, her fingers interlock and then set upon the small table, the bracelets knocking against the edge.

"How are you Bobby?" she asked, smiling at him.

"Okay, I guess." He didn't look at her, but he felt her smiling. He must've been nervous, for he found his finger stroking the table edge, back and forth, almost immediately.

"What are you so tense about?" she said, smiling, and one of her hands took itself from its partner, and firmly grasped his moving hand, making it stop, and she squeezed it. "It's good to see you;" and she took it away and put it back where it had been before. She was still smiling.

Yes, he remembered that about her; her way of asserting affection, or something; she'd lean forward and squeeze his hand or his arm or foot, whichever was closest, and, smiling, would release and sit back again.

He still did not look at her. "How are ya?"

"Tired," she said, but didn't sigh, or move, just smiled.

"Oh, yea? Why?"

"I've been keeping too tight a schedule."

"When will you get the doctorate?" he asked.

"In June or July, I suppose."

He thought about the seminar and how she hadn't told anyone there that the only reason she was doing it was to put toward her dissertation. He wondered if she knew that he knew that, there, in the bar.

"And you?" she asked, smiling, her hands still immobile upon the table with their gold rings.

"I've been okay." He again stroked the table-top, looked at his lap, his lower face receding behind the turned-up collars. "I guess," he added, remembering she would never enquire further with any real interest. It was then that he began to wish he had never called her, never come, for he was beginning to remember, now, as he felt her smile on him, how hopeless the whole idea was: how, when he first met her, he had never really believed that she meant or believed anything she said, the caring and kindness, the helpful citizen, concerned.

"I'm broke," he said, not meaning to sound shocking or blunt or dramatic as he heard his words come out, but it was too late. It was a line out of some melodrama, short, with impact and importance. But she did not react or respond, smiled, after a while said:

"What's gone wrong?"

He sighed, looking across the bar-room, watched the waiter come up and take the orders, watched him go away. She was waiting, grinning at him and still he had not looked at her, dreading her gaze in his eyes, which deceived.

"Don't know," he said, and suddenly wished he could get out of there, wished he could just forget it all. He changed the subject. "How's Frank, Steph, I hear he was transferred," and looked at her. She nodded, closing her eyes, lifting her eyebrows way up, and he watched her face do this and remembered how she'd always been doing this. And she did not open them again until after she had started talking.

"Yes," she said. "Frank has gone up to Harvard to study under Fallon." She opened her eyes and swallowed. "... You know, the innovator of this new dream experiment stuff."

"Oh, yea," said Bobby, but didn't remember. They were looking at each other.

"So I suppose I'll have more time to work, now. He only left last Saturday."

"No kidding. You want a cigarette?"

She smiled that smile all over again, taking a cigarette from his proffered pack. He lit a match and lit his cigarette, then hers, she watching him all the while, he, knowing it and feeling it.

"Quite a guy," he remarked. The waiter came up and set the drinks on the table. Bobby sat and looked at the sweat on the outside of his glass, at the light on the stem of her martini glass, and back again. And he began to feel the silence, but didn't want to talk. (He figured she was waiting to be talked to or entertained, but he did not want to speak, or rather, he wanted

to, but wanted her to ask him to; but remembering, he remembered she would not. He puffed at the cigarette and watched the room through his cloud.) He was reminded of how she made the silences, never embarrassed, awkward, but she grinned and smiled her eyes.

"And you?" she said, startling him. He did not expect it, but, figuring, reasoned that she was faking her interest, was saying concerned things to sound concerned, never concerned. He knew himself to be reasonable, now, in his thoughts, thinking this, but tried to imagine ever explaining this to an onlooker; to another present it would seem sincere; he could never put it into a movie. He laughed. Movies.

"What's so funny?" she asked; she'd been watching him.

"What? I'm sorry, I wasn't listening."

"What's so funny?"

"Nothin' ." He sipped his drink.

"What's on your mind these days?" she recapitulated.

"Goddamn nothin'," he said, and after a pause said, "I haven't got anything to do."

"What are you talking about? Look at all the work you could be doing? The studying, and your friends, your job?" she said, unpleading, calm, smiling.

"Oh, Christ." He shook his head. "I don't mean that. I don't even mean that anyway."

"Then what do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. You know, I just don't have anything to do. You know what I mean."

"No, I don't," she said, cool, unmoving her body, her face still smiling.

"Yes, you do. Don't hand me that crap."

"I don't. Really. Tell me." She almost touched his arm with her cigaretted hand, but put it back.

"That's all I know, there's nothing to do." He stopped, realizing his inexpression, but not bothering with any more. He sighed and drank some more.

"You're lonely," she said.

He almost choked on his bourbon. He looked at her, still smiling, as if everything she said was the result of someone pulling a chord in the back of her body, she, the doll, her face the same, the voice coming from somewhere else entirely than from her face.

"Oh, God, that's a lot of crap. You could say that about anybody. Anybody's lonely. Everybody's goddamn lonely, for God's sake."

"No. They're not."

"Sure, Sure they are. Everybody. You grab any son-of-a-bitch off the street and they'll be lonely."

"It's been my experience that there are quite a few people on the street who are quite happy. They're not lonely."

Oh, the hell with your experience, he thought, and thought that he was beginning to do more than just beware of her, mistrust her, but to hate her.

"Well, ya' got them at the wrong time. You get anybody at the most truthful times and they'll admit it."

"When is the most truthful time?" she said, her voice lowering to prepare for the drink.

"Oh, any time. You know, times when people are normal. You know. When they're in the mood."

"You mean a lonely mood by a normal mood?"

"No, no. You don't see it at all."

"If you don't feel that I'm hearing you, just tell me."

"No, it's not that. " He remembered her obsession with this 'hearing' theory from the communications seminar. It seemed stupid and cruel to put it in there, in the conversation. He talked no more for a while, drank and smoked.

"Why did you call me?"

And he couldn't figure out how she meant it, or how she meant it to sound, and thought that a lot of how he answered her depended on knowing how she meant to ask that. He shrugged his shoulders. And before he could understand -- and if he could have understood, he would have stopped it -- or even realize the content of his action, or the very action it self, he spoke and

said: "Some crazy notion I had," but stopped. Quick. What had he said? But before he could remember she was upon him.

"What was that?"

"Oh, I dunno," he said, still stunned.

"Sure. What were you thinking?"

Quickly he remembered his words. They were nebulous in fact but his utterance of them, uncontrolled, them escaping: and his response and recovery from them, panicky, sloppy. And he tried to set it right, put it vague again, or really, put it concretely, but far off the mark.

"I just felt like having a drink. Having a little conversation with an old friend." He laughed awkwardly as he awkwardly patted her hand. He realized she was no more of a friend to him than he was to her. He recovered it: "You get bored with the same old people," and drank.

"Oh, I see," she said, smiling, thinking she really did see, he thought; but she didn't see, he knew this in his thoughts and thought he knew it in his body. But it seemed okay, now; he seemed safe. But he still marveled at that runaway sentence. What could possess him? And if he had continued? If he let the rest out? What then? She would have questioned, dug his mood from him and have it lay upon the table before her. And she would grin at it. And he would have been spent.

Suddenly he was aware that he had violently flushed. His face seemed red and hot from his shoulders on up to his hairline. And he felt his nose swell up, his eyes go red. He looked hard at the glass in his hand on his lap, clenching his teeth and setting his eyes, staring, straining his eyes against some flow he felt in his body, but which would take effect and relief from his eyes, and then spread across his face, down to his shoulders, which would rack and break, his stomach, heaving out every sob.

He wondered if she could tell this, but dared not look up to meet her eyes, her grinning eyes, mocking eyes at him and his readness. Presently, however, he looked up across the bar, sighed.

"I'm waiting," she said with small laughter in her voice.

"Yea?" he said, glad she brought some comic relief into this all too melodramatic scene. "For what?"

"For some conversation." They smiled together, now.

"I really have none," he replied. "I guess I expected you to supply it."

"I see. Well, how's this: How's school?"

"Perfect question," he said with a sarcastic tone.

"Why? How is it?"

"Absolutely sparkling." He began to feel bitter toward it, toward himself.

"What's the problem?"

"Well, I'm sort of failing." FAILing, he guessed she would say, but she didn't, and then he remembered that she wouldn't have said that, but rather, she would grin on in silence, urging him to continue, and she did. "I don't blame them. I haven't been doing anything, really."

"Why? What's on your mind?" she asked again, and wasn't grinning. And he cringed at her question, pained at the thought of the answer, ached at the idea that he could never tell her, or as she would say, WOULD never tell her. He was annoyed.

"Why does there have to be anything on my mind? Why can't I just feel like not working?"

Her grin returned. "I agree." She sipped her martini. "But I feel as though something's been bothering you. Maybe that's why you don't feel like working." She put down her glass. "And maybe it's not connected at all."

"I don't know, I don't know," he murmured half to himself.

"You don't know what, if something's been bugging you or if it has anything to do with - - ?"

"Oh, for Christsake, Stephanie!" His hand slammed upon the table, the ice in his glass rattled. "I hate it when you play dumb!" He felt himself flush.

"I just want to get this straight, so that I under --"

"Oh, what difference does it make?" he shouted, and again his hand came down hard upon the table-top, and Stephanie was quiet.

She sipped her drink and looked at him awhile. He felt her eyes upon him, steady, steady, like those eyes in photographs which follow you around the room, always looking at you, as he frowned into his lap, there, in the bar.

"You seem to be afraid," she said softly.

"What are you talking about?" he said, also softly, but not without urgency.

She shrugged. "I feel you're resisting."

He looked into his glass, then drank. He knew what she meant, and how it sounded, which was different than how he supposed she meant it. And he wondered how to behave, wondered whether to avoid it, play dumb, or deal himself into her game. He cringed again.

"I'm just tired." He rubbed his eyes.

"I understand," and laid her ringed and bangled hand on his wrist, squeezed, let go, sipped her drink. Presently she said: "When you're not so tired, Bobby, call me. I'd like to hear it."

He wanted her to have intended that as a hint to depart, and began to pay the bill. "Yes, I will."

"Hey," she said. He looked up. She took his forearms. "Will you promise to call me?" She was looking at him, clear, steady, almost warm; he felt a small warmth reach inside, but guessed it was only the light in the room, or the liquor.

He looked into hers, said, "Sure," and felt the cringing pain.

He got to his feet and helped her on with her coat.

"Where're you living now?"

"Downtown, still."

"Oh, yes."

They walked out to the street and stood under the dirtied pink awning, the scallops wrinkling, rapping, flapping in the evening wind. He laughed.

"You know, when I was a kid, whenever I had to split up with someone, after I'd gone, I would sing to myself 'You take the High Road and I'll take the Low Road, and I'll be --' You know that song?" She nodded. "Even though it doesn't have anything to do with going separate ways, like home for dinner or anything." He shrugged. "I was just reminded of it, now." He looked out onto the street and felt the good, new cold air stroke his warm cheeks.

"That's very true, though. I think it's very appropriate." She was smiling inside the lapels of her coat. He looked down into her face. It was very bright, and very nice, it seemed; he felt himself almost begin to love her.

Just standing there. He ached suddenly inside. He coughed back something in his throat.

"Listen, then, take it easy, Steph, okay?"

"Sure. I'm sorry I was such poor conversation."

"No sweat."

"You'll call me, Bobby, you promised. I want you to know I care."

"Sure. I promise. I'll see you, then." She nodded. "Goodbye," he said.

"No, no. Never say goodbye, say 'so long'."

"Okay, s'long", and he turned and walked in the direction in which he had come.

Walking, thinking, he wondered about her. She certainly looked different in the end as they were parting. He could never remember how she looked again, even when he shut his eyes hard and tried to envision her. He only remembered that horrible pain behind his ribs, and it swelling up into his head, as he stood there, looking into her eyes, and he almost believed her. She cared. He shook his head and breathed deeply. She cared enough to oblige him when he wanted to have a drink with her, never to call and enquire; she cared enough to say she cared, but cared only for keeping everyone from feeling uncared about. And he remembered the bitter taste on his tongue as he sat next to her, under her gaze, under her questions. Nosey questions.

He walked on, in contrasting thought and feeling about her, because of her. Her, her, what was his problem, now? Not her, school. Himself. God, god, himself. He thought about his thinking of her. It seemed a relief and he longed not to have been reminded of himself and school to worry over, think over. Nowhere, thought; he felt he was getting nowhere. No matter how hard you think, worry, cry, pine or mourn, nothing is done. But he felt he had had a strange relief when he had been with her, though probably he only recognized it now because he was back into his worries. He felt as though he were drowning.

He walked down Third Avenue, passing the stores and buildings he had earlier, wondering if anybody knew he had just been by an hour before. How foolish; how should they know, and who would care anyway?

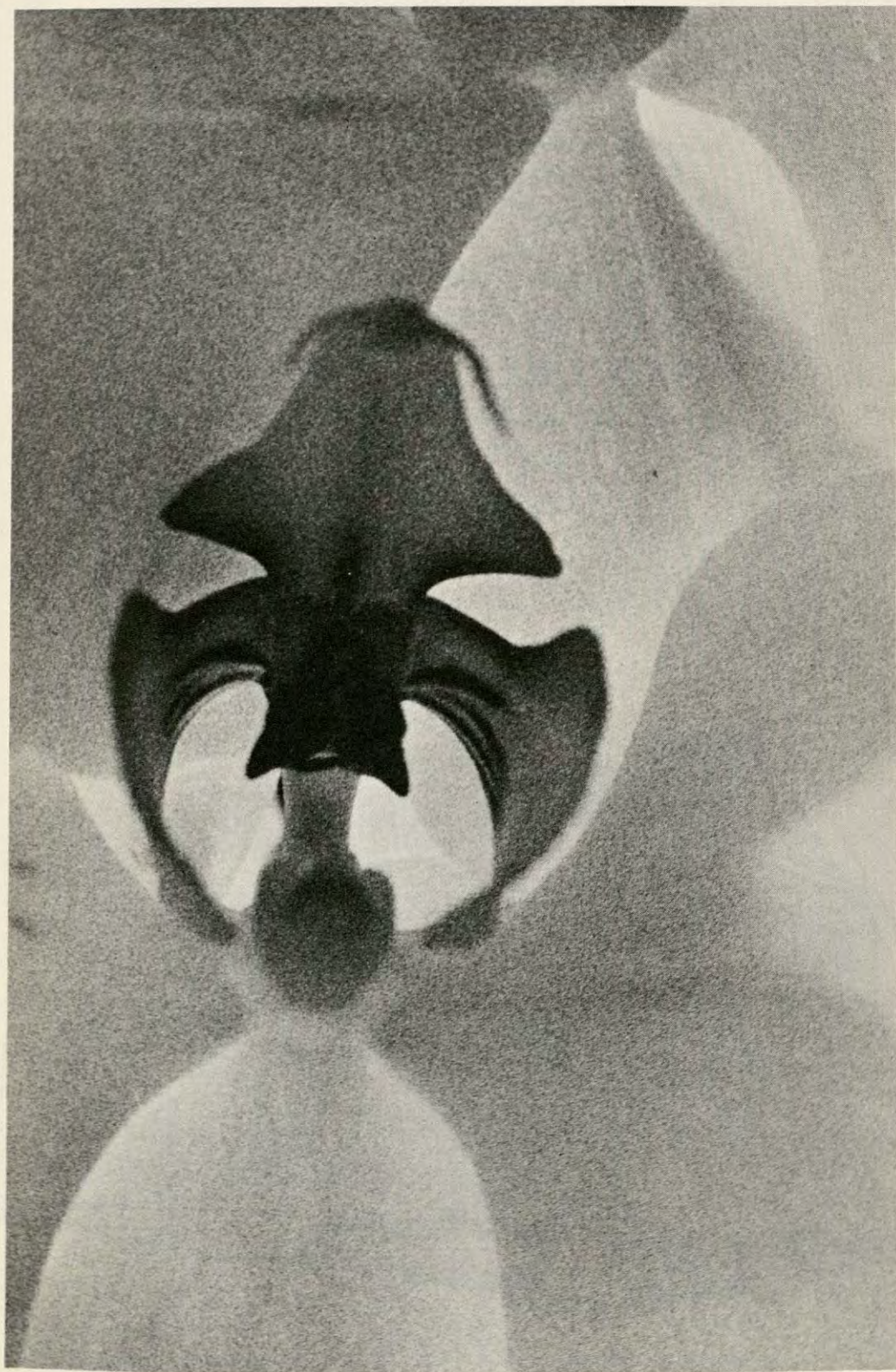
He crossed the street, a strong gust of winter wind licked him in the face. He felt a cold, small droplet resting near the side of his mouth. He touched it with his tongue, tasted salt, realized the tear. But he could not figure out why. There were so many things to cry over, but the trouble was, now, after all these thoughts and events, which one?

He entered his building, swimming, sinking, floating, drowning in his thoughts. Was she sincere? Did she care? Did he just want her to care, her words to be true? How could he know, he, a sick and hungry, sleepless being, flunking out of Columbia Law School? Was this why he had cried? He was almost starving, had not slept a night in weeks, was poor, was sick and he went on in his mind, but made himself stop, because, he thought, how ridiculous it would sound in dialogue. A nagging, selfish, self-pitying old lady in the movies.

He entered his room and removed his coat. He sat on his bed and looked around. Books, that was about it. He laughed at it, laughed and put his legs up. Suddenly his laughter stopped. He stared up at the ceiling. He was tired, and could almost sleep. He undressed and went to the dresser to look for some pills. He looked at himself in the mirror. He laughed again, this time harder and was still laughing as he swallowed the pills and lay the bottle on the window sill. He pulled the covers over him and lay, naked, in bed feeling the old sheets settle over him. He could hear the traffic talk outside. Lower Manhattan. He laughed again. He turned on his side, and felt that the pillow was slightly wet against his temples. He closed his eyes and sunk into his body feeling at extreme peace.

He did think of her again, her smiling, half-believable eyes that touched him. And he was suprised he felt no ache in his insides as he thought of her. And he thought of how trite it would be in the movies, the using of the pills for such a dramatic idea. Dramatic. He laughed. He knew they couldn't quite get his story in the movies. It wouldn't've been exciting enough. No, but the pills and his body being found -- that might make it. He could just see it, could just imagine it.

LAUREN KINGSLEY



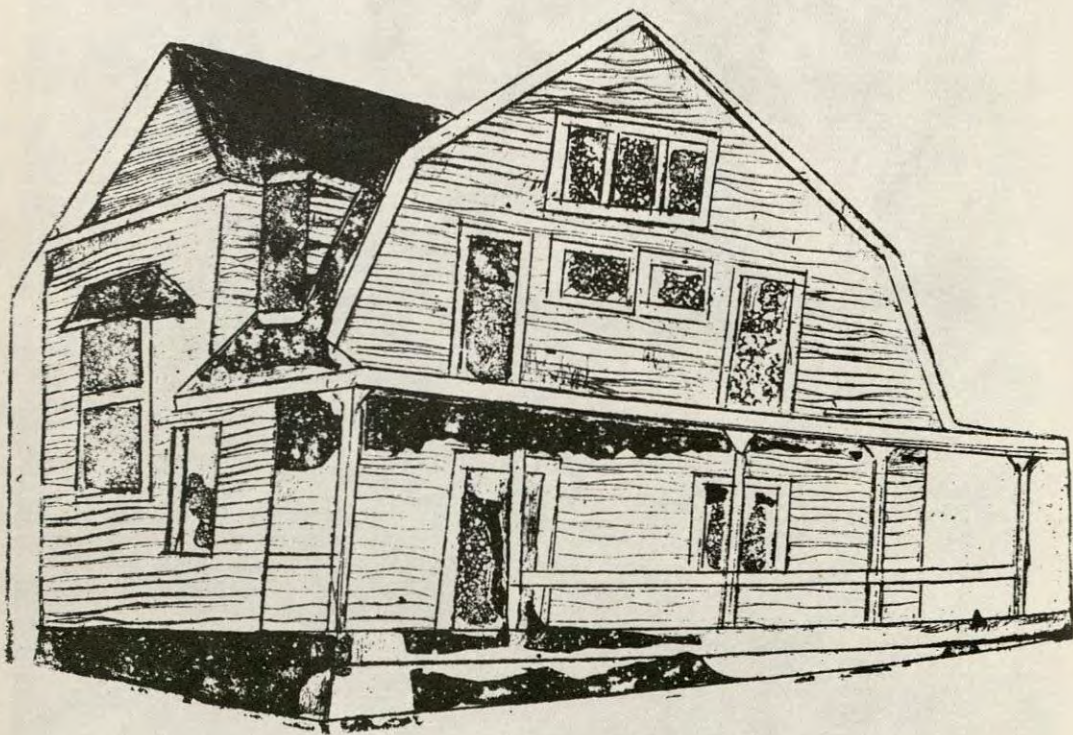
Old Man Vermont

Abandoned clapboard barn on its knees:
This Old Vermont Town glistening with blue birch
Etchings scrawled beneath the glass of the winter river.

Raspberry brier now berried with silver dew
That splats at the brown base of a prickly pine
So worn like the crook of a gentleman's walking cane.

A coughing horse trots in the distance and jingles
Over the bald, white hill away from the mallard's crunching
Promenade from a mangled autumn fern toward a sunken lap of snow.

ANITA PERRY



Anna Kuerner

(Anna Kuerner is the subject
of a Wyeth portrait)

Sun streamed through
 the panes and withered hands
veins marked blue
 by the ice wash water
rubbed together
 to bring long dead warmth
from weather
 forever to be frozen
dim eyesight
 stared out at the snow
glared fierce white
 by the incessant sun
it had pained
 the eyes to look but when
the day waned
 the loneliness hurt more
so the hands
 again went into ice
and golden hands
 of light gave way to dark.

NIKKI LLOYD

Play it again, Sonnet

A sonnet is the snowy woods
At the start of golden twilight
And aging evergreens around me stood
And children playing with delight.
Reckless laughter fills the night
As they slide on a near-by hill
The ice provides a rapid flight
And snow keeps safe a reckless spill.
Fools! They know not the world's vice
Must they ignore the presence of woe!
For children skim right over the ice
And find their solace in the snow.
But then a child came and said
"Would you like to try my sled?"

WALTER PALMER

laugh / cry
differences coexist
beyond preference.
each opposition
supports / is supported by
underlying faith
too easily forgotten
and mistaken for
absurdity.
futures lie equally
in calculation
and crossed fingers.

LISA DINTIMAN



the Bissel electric nicene purple corporate-politico architect's blues

the new buildings in the wealthier universities
are monolith gray and extended space,
the chairs, usually purple (psychedelic purple, oh Jefferson Airplane,
has gone institutional
embarrassing but true, Ms. Slick)

the olde libraries were wooden cathedrals,
stained glass ivy and ivory where
there were still Real books
and all one person's existence was not
recorded on a microdot.

The Evidence, politicians and Gods
was not on tapes
for the general public to consume and vomit,
then run scared -
sweeping the vomit under a wastebasket
for none to see.

Well now there are Supreme-Majesto
ultra-purpose Vacuum Cleaners oh congregation of space travel
to clean up those messes
in an instant.

So magical quicko-instanto
that not even the one who did it
will see his own puke;
it will vanish before even
hitting the ground.

Amazing Property this; Instant Salvation!
There are no more sinners of the world,
we have vacuum cleaners to take care of that
amen.

Our libraries, monolith gray and extended
have full blown photographic murals of a real man
yeah real, man, at the altar,
walking on the moon.

And our institutions, oh brothahs and sistahs,
are Very Clean
due to an Accidental (the Company, ladies and gentlemen
regrets its error but . . .) overproduction of vacuum cleaners
apparently.

Nevertheless Psychedelic Parishioners
passing the humble remnants of a chapel
at one of the Older Universities,
don't bother about that wave of nostalgia;
it is really nausea
and try to get in.

the churches are locked now
you couldn't get in if you wanted to.

SUSI EILERTSEN





to e.e. cummings'
honour corruption villainy holiness

the Renaissance

they are pilgrims,
wakened from a chill dark sleep
(accompanied by bright dreams of death)
they stretch their aching limbs, long used
and long unused, and slowly, sleepily
shake off the chill and the darkness
(memories of the dreams remain)
they move half-real and half in dream,
moving until, in a moment, they feel
the sun, the spring
and feel forgiven
(and in that moment the dreams are dead)
and they move in celebration
noble and serf, scoundrel and holyman
in celebration of living without dreams
a moment's celebration:
for each and equally return to their sleep
(without dreams)

BARBARA CLAYPOOLE

Dandelion Vestiges

We were in a crowded room-

Hot,

Sweat percolating on my body,

Temples throbbing, skin vibrating

with the prickly tune of a rock band.

People next to people

Barely room to move

Faces are indistinguishable,

like stars obscured on a cloudy night,

Until . . .

Your face.

Our eyes touched and exchanged hellos.

(the first time you acknowledged me was in that
people-plastered room)

Your smile was refreshing like a dive in the ocean

(quenching a secret lust)

Our arms opened in a mutual welcome (!)

The contact was gentle, like a breeze hugging daisies,
begotten of spring.

Surrounding sounds were obliterated,

As we merged in a bliss like that of a contented seagull,
poised on a warm shore.

Now

I sit on lonely hilltops,

Blowing dandelion fluff free,

Wishing you were here to catch the remnants,

NICKIE WOOD





Morning

I part the curtains
casting 5 AM dimness upon you
as you sleep among the blankets
and sheets and pillows.
Pools of ecru and gray, of
still quivering dreams, shimmer
near your face.
This hour is my wilderness,
my chance to seek the gods
you will disperse upon waking,
the visions you will put asunder
with a smile.
For a while I am free
to spill blood
to spill my fears into a kleenex,
to trace the movement of a fly upon the wall.

NANCY CUTTING
July 9, 1973

Thoughts on the Eve of Mary's Departure

Whistling smoke effigies
Of half-past dancers
(kicking up sawdust and tenn penny nails)
Winging wicked ways past
Clouds of luminous fog
(rising from the blasted heath)
Weighing down the world
In sparks of light now bright --
Now dimming as all things dim
Except some love and some hate
Singing to my eyes bewildered.
How long these memories will last
I don't know, but
They will keep for now
And maybe she will write.

KEVIN T. SMITH

Shopping with a Humanist

"Your doctrine of the fall of man,"
She answered, locking all the doors,
"Is quaint, but false. Man never fell."
(I held my tongue for once, and listened,
As we walked the moonlit streets.)
Her face was set in confidence
For soon, she said, the world would run
On Love and Trust. Utopia
Was in her eyes, and yet her feet
Were anxious in the city night.
She held an anti-rapist whistle
And she sighed out in thanksgiving
When we found an open store.
She bought a theft-proof gas-tank cap
--Then she combed twice through her change--
Refusing all the while to see
That her life belied her theology.

BYRLE SUSAN BOMBERO



The Marriage

- I. She sang loudly, and quite straightforwardly,
so intense as to be off-key.
Beneath her rousing passion, the songbook
withered, the pages curling in
her damp and hot-pressed hands; and in her face
a blazing sun arose and burned
exultantly, casting a fiery hue
into the eyes. Her companion,
thin and hunched, raised no competition, nor
did he dare to raise his eyes
to the strangely animated goddess
who (garbed in knee-length dress, with eyes
veiled) had married him last Thursday with not
a trace of vibrant commitment,
with no sign of fleshly vitality.
Yet here she stood, blushing richly,
for all the world to see (and all for God).
- II. She slipped from the bed each morning into
the gray minutes of before-sun,
and cast a grave image into the large
oval mirror. Her spouse deeply
slumbered and would not rise until her run
among the willows and grasses
had erased the pale tint left by restless
nights. As the sun arose, she sang
and smiled and sought its warmth. With cringing
step she crept into the lifeless
rooms, leaving the sun outside; for within
these walls her husband's eyes compelled
her to become a shadow of her own
expression, to boil his eggs with
no glint of humor, to butter his toast
to the very edges, and then
to draw the shades and dine in nuptial gloom.

NANCY CUTTING
October 10, 1973



Tears

This was July. In the coursing heat of the sun, in the bleached colors of the roses and wreaths, in the fading eyes washed in the heartfelt tears - - something there made me wonder. The man in the casket I helped to carry lay dead at twenty-one. Dead at eighty miles an hour and a tree that got in the way. Dead, and me two steps behind. This in July, and the heat filled my head. In the sweat I do remember some consciousness of sweet pain protracted and glad suffering nourished by the sun as it sang in the ultra-high frequency of pure, white heat.

Tears met expectation. At the funeral mass, when the others went up for communion (the flesh and blood) I stayed in the pallbearers' pew, alone and cold with sweat in the air-conditioned church. The washed out years and heartache lurked in the row just behind. With the painted, woodcut Christ, I gazed at the deep polished mahogany, through it to the corpse within, astonished at its lifelessness, uselessness: twenty-one years of breathing and pumping blood that never had a chance to learn anything about love or fate, much less how to drive a car.

Then the black hearse and the grim, grimacing undertaker who urged us to be careful. To the cemetery - - the long procession of memory and regret, sustained for fifteen miles and lit by headlights in the sun. The aging priest had told us to envy the dead man's grace with God. Wrong: If he ever had grace, he lost it when he died. I grieved: for him, for Jesus and for whatever soul is ours that I listened for to reflect through the dark emptiness of cold, mathematical space, void of time, substance or light. Nothing there in the changeless silence of lust, sickness, anger or pain. Jesus - - how he must yearn for the flesh and blood. How he must yearn for sweat.

So we put the casket on a rack suspended above that gaping hole where there would be dark silence and no rest. There have been a few days since, not many, that I haven't looked down to see it there. Listening to the last rites, I mused that I could feel the sprinkling of cool holy water on the already wilting roses falling from atop the box. After it was over and the mourners were leaving, I stood there amidst the wreaths, amazed and sweating in the heat of the sun, gazing for a moment at the box and at the hole. The sweat got in my eyes and I knew as the grave rose to meet the casket that those tears of sweat were the truest I had ever cried.

RICHARD LEE KIRKPATRICK



