IASON

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JASON—WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY—SALEM, OREGON

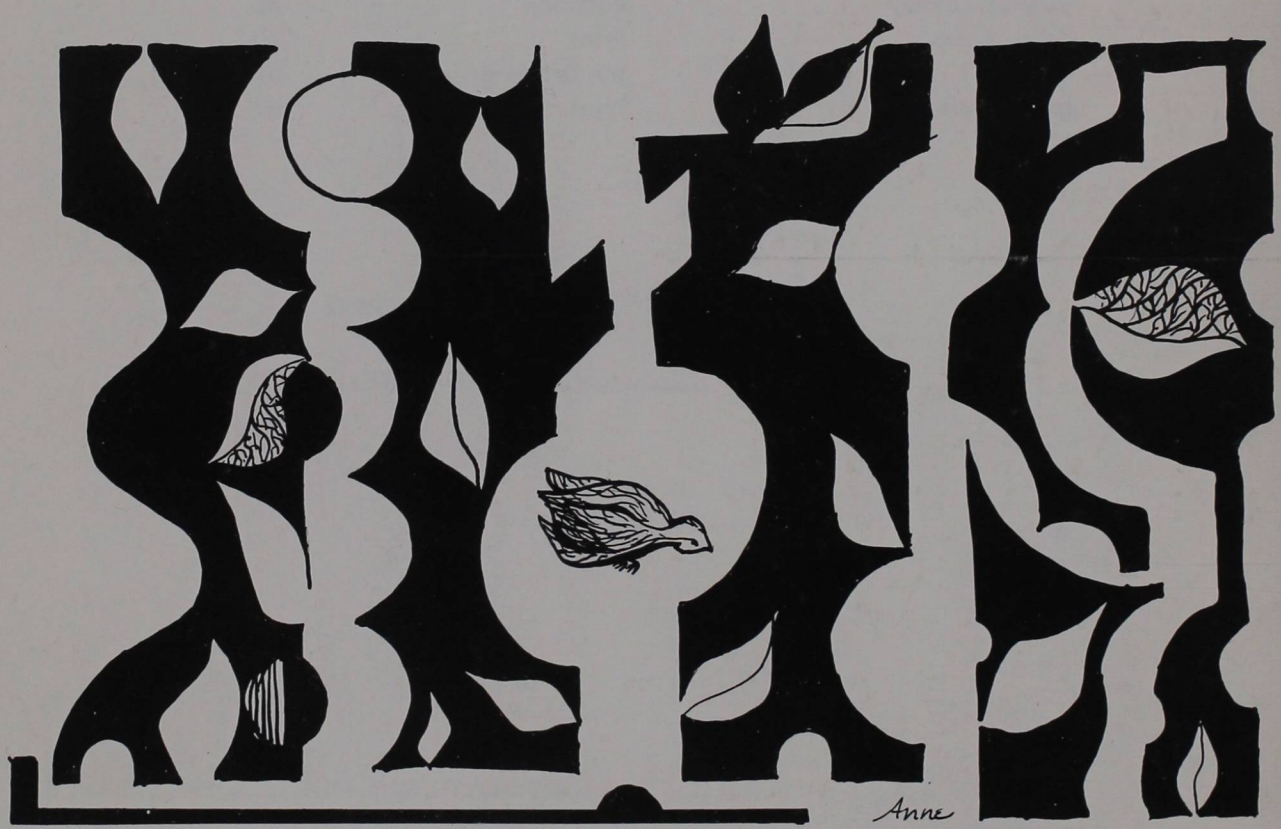
1970

ART

The Creative Writing Contest is held annually for the express purpose of stimulating creative thought at Willamette. The winners this year were selected by a panel consisting of Mr. Carl Hall, Mr. Richard Sutliff, Mr. Kenneth Nolley and Dr. Donald Smith.

Eric Yandell and James Foster have been chosen to receive the cash prize for the academic year 1969-70. Eric is a freshman from Merced, California majoring in English and French. He is currently working on a play based on the life of Vladmir Mayakovsky, a Russian poet of the twenties and thirties.

Jim is a senior English major from Dallas, Oregon. His works have appeared in JASON 1969, and he shared the Creative Writing Award that year, also. Jim has been accepted as a Graduate student in English at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.



PROLOGUE TO THE POEM

(for Hugo Claus)

Antwerp in February:
snow and soot, two forces
giving a vector vision of gray,
a gray which pollutes awareness,
chokes the mind.
(Is it smoke that dusts the portals of perception)
(Is it distance that permits understanding)
The music of misery is cosmopolitan:
The gurgling sewer,
the howling hound,
the creaking hinge,
the thunder of rolling sweat:
the Universal Scum Quartet
playing Mozart of the Alley,
groaning the gutter's gutteral drones;
Even the lyrics are scratched in smudge.

For the perceiver, the pile of rags,
the busted spring, the dingy lamp,
the newspapers sweeping along the street
produce a sentiment
not to be distinguished from grief,
nor pain.

Upon this heap of broken words
the poet builds a reality
of five dimensions minus one,
fashions a metaphorical world,
a world of "is" and "is to be".
where he himself must play the hero.

One night at midnight
when all was asleep
I gathered the grimy scraps of Antwerp,
took them down to the banks of the Schelde,
and set them adrift upon the water;
I followed the vessel far out to sea . . .

I wonder whatever happened to eric?
(That raucous rhymer-dreamer! Why?)
Goodbye!
Goodbye!

Eric Yandell

AGNI

I. Autumn's Last Lyric

Cracked, brittle bodies on the western plain
Dead leaves flying through final streets
Feeding fuel to the hearthland of the winter.
This is the last summer, the early winter,
The season of tales told by babbling idiots
Writhing on street corners,
Stumbling through alleys,
Scratching in empty trash cans,
And lighting twisted cigarettes on an asphalt sky.
These are time's angered, fearful people—
These are the black masses darting into the night.
Hard and cold is this autumn,
The autumn of the plague year,
And the autumn it thundered upon the earth.

II. Invocation

From fiery things the good Lord protect us.
From the fates of the nine starry spheres
The good Lord shield us.
From decline and death, and old age sitting
On winter's hearth, the good Lord hide us.

III, Baptism of the Fire

There is he whom men call the watcher—
He who has recorded the descent of the plague—
He who has set the sun in the roaring inferno—
He who watches death's final decay emptying itself
Across the bridge that ends at the river.
All this season he has watched them—
Seen the dead flies on cracked windows
And the decayed husks of bees
In the burning garden.
From the edge of the plain—bathed in fire
From the sun's thunderous collapse—
He watches the beginning and the end
In his journal of the plague.

IV. Invocation

From the tortures of clocks
And the stellar night
The good Lord hide us.

Of the dried city's new death
The good Lord make us wary.

And from old age and decline
The good Lord disguise us.

V. The Baptism of the Sperm

Dried, floating embryos on the desert's arid plain—
He finds them through the black, belching blasts
Of the idiot's tale.
Rambling wide through dust-filled bins
He shows us hope in a handful of death
And wonders on the night's edge—
The razor between.

He sees the carrion triangles
Drifting over the cracked fetus,
Plucked clean by the last
Of the recurring Euclids—
Those difficult and indifferent
To escape—
The parchment of their bodies drifting
Into the gray city's mist.

VI. Invocation

In the beginning was darkness
And in the end shall be night.
The good Lord keep us
From the night
And scatter us among
The great rocks and stones—
Those that will not crumple
In the final black fog
That covers the planets.

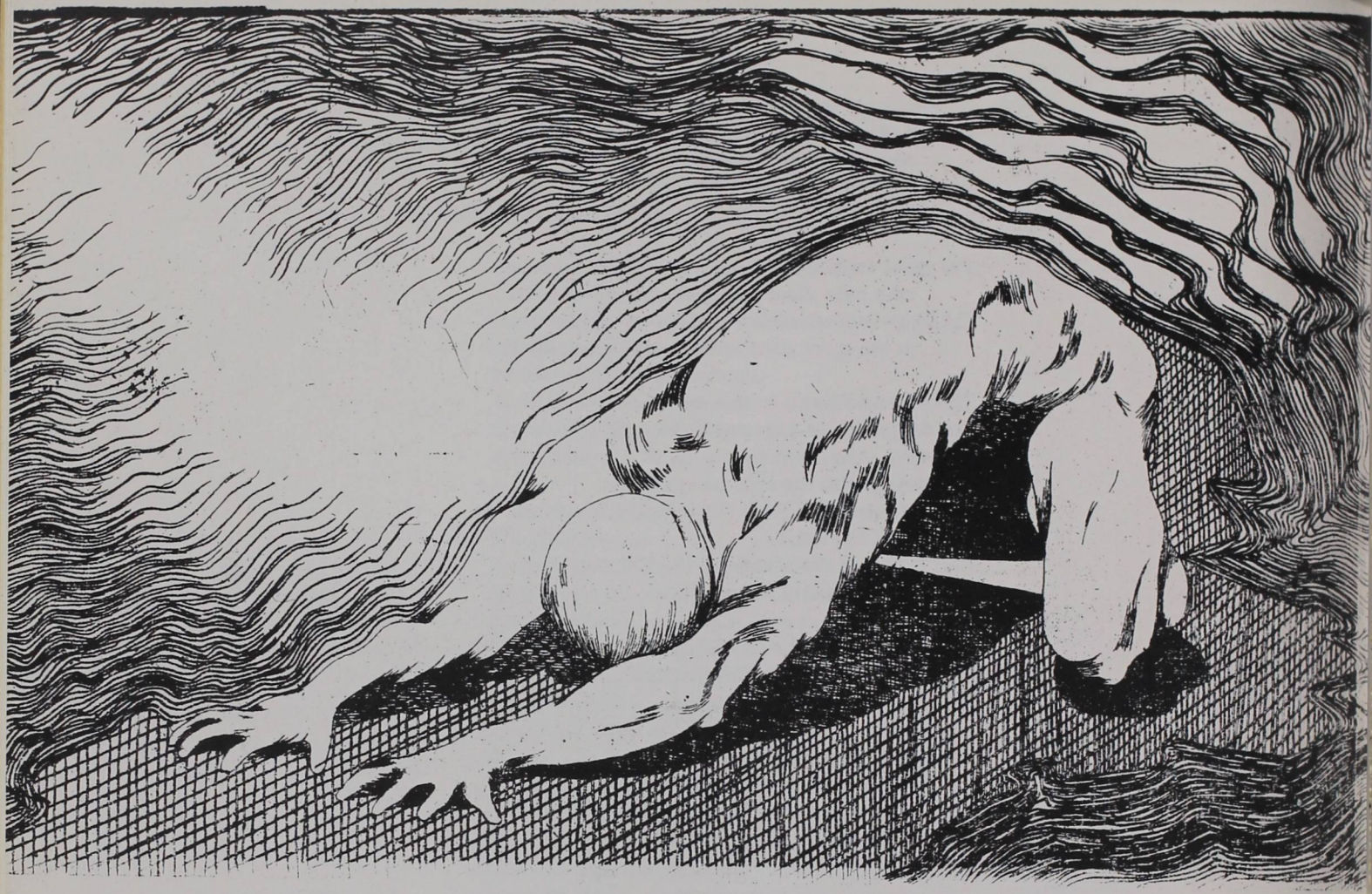
VII. Baptism of the Earth

Strained faces at the window
Saw the river turn brown,
Saw the great god drown
And watched the waters flow.

The river was time, he told them.
The river changed and was the same
At the same place.
From the desert came the river,
From the river came the garden.
From the garden came the wilderness
And again the desert.
From fire and iron came the earth
And in fire and iron the earth shall go
With the river
Which is dead now
In the autumn lands
At twilight.

VIII. Invocation

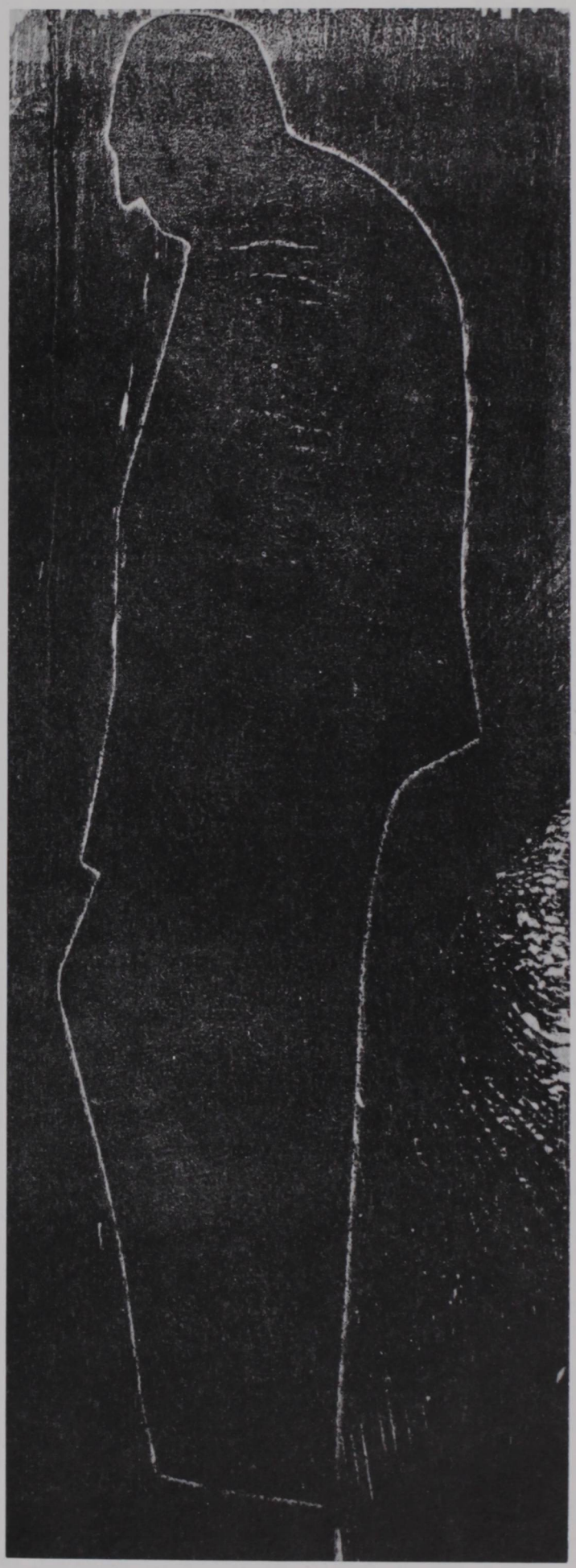
There is blood upon the earth.
And there is death in the air.
May the mighty Lord—ruler of
The infinite suns—



Two poems by Steve Wells

The heavy rain falls on the warm day.
water fills the street and laps the sidewalk.
high tide in the city streets.
Making love in the lake that was a street
that was a path that was a forest where
there were trees and animals fucking
in the rain.

The dead man lies sprawled in the street
the dogs forsake their fire hydrants
and piss on him.
Half the population has no hands
the rest no eyes.
Help does not come, the ambulance drives over
looking for wallets,
not finding any—smashes a dog and
leaves the blood mingles as
people never do.
They all speak in tongues and none
understand that tongues make no
sound.



THE NECROMANCER

Sondra P. Isom

I can't remember how they got me there, I only recall waking in a strange room. The room was large, both in height and circumference, furnished in the manner of an elegant living room, complete to the last detail, yet I knew it was not a living room. I was being held prisoner there..

I was aware that I was being held for interrogation in connection with a crime which had been recently re-opened for investigation. I didn't know precisely what formal charges would be brought against me, yet I knew I was guilty and that the skill of the game would rest in my not betraying my guilt to my captors. The keepers might try to lull me into a false sense of security with pleasant surroundings, but I would have to remain vigilant and never allow them to trick me into confession. They might realize my guilt as well as I, but I felt that as long as I kept my defenses up and protested my innocence, there was some chance of acquittal. The crime itself was not important now, it had lost whatever meaning it may once have had: the important thing to me then was to delude my captors and keep my guilt safe within the recesses of my mind.

I never saw my captors and was left alone in the room during the day. I had time to consider all aspects of my captivity and realized that I could never escape without aid. The room appeared ordinary enough at first glance, but the windows were locked from the outside, and the doors were of thick oak and likewise locked from the outside. I could well imagine that keepers as clever as mine would have a cunning set of alarms attached to all possible exits in addition to the locks. I felt helpless against their superior power and it seemed futile to struggle, yet I would have to play the game of wits as long as I was able.

Each evening a door, at the top of the staircase which rose along one side of the room, would open and the cutodians would bring me dinner and lock themselves in the room with me for the night. These young women never spoke to me nor responded to my inquiries, but stationed themselves silently at their posts, and left one lamp burning in a corner of the room as they watched over me until dawn. As soon as daylight shone through the east windows the leader would nod to the others and they would quietly ascend the staircase and close the heavy door on my solitude until the next evening.

My captors had been thoughtful in furnishing the prison room. There was a decanter of brandy and a decanter of fresh water provided on the sideboard. I was given clean clothing each day and the surroundings, under any other circumstances, would have been considered beautiful. The room was beautiful but empty, there was nothing to read anywhere and the bibelots placed about for decoration seemed trite and meaningless at second glance. I was left alone with nothing but my own thoughts for day after day until I felt my grip on reality and my self confidence begin to slip bit by bit. I had been held captive in this manner for several weeks when the phenomena began to occur.

I was lying on my couch, but was not asleep although the night was far gone. My mind was a welter of confusion and despair for I had no idea of what my position was in relationship to my captors. I could get no information about my condition or what was to be done with me from anyone. I was, it seemed, condemned to perpetual, maddening incertitude. It mattered not what I said or did, for no one responded to me in any way whatsoever. Depression had grown inside my being like a heavy weight, adding additional mass to its substance until I could neither eat nor sleep well but endured each day with a gnawing sensation akin to nausea which at times rose to the level of pain, but which mostly affected me as oppression of body and soul. It was in such a state that I lay upon my couch that night when I began to experience strange sensations. It was as if my body were expanding and contracting; undulating, rising and sinking. I felt so heavy that it hurt me to attempt to move. The sensation slowly subsided and I was able to breathe and move normally once more. I still lay on my bed recovering from the odd feeling when a series of little raps sounded in the wall beyond me. The guards started at the sound and turned their eyes in silent alarms as the knocks kept up a steady cadence and began to move within the wall, making a complete circuit of the room before stopping. The guardians moved in toward me and kept a close but restless watch over me for the remainder of the night. I feigned sleep, by my inner world of thought and emotion was in an uproar. What could this new power be?

The following night at the usual hour I lay down to rest, my mind tired from ceaseless speculation as to the meaning of the last night's occurrences. I waited, in dread of what might happen, yet fearing that as intensely that nothing would happen. All was quiet. The hours passed by silently, darkly. Gradually the custodians loosened their apprehensive posture and relaxed against the walls. Exhausted from the tension of anticipation, I closed my eyes and slipped over the edge of wakefulness into the dream limbo which is neither restful slumber nor yet consciousness. Colors flashed across my dreamer's vision: purples, magenta, black. In the midst of all these colors there appeared the disembodied face of my dead accomplice, my partner in crime. In the distress of my captivity I had forgotten him! A knowing smile touched his face as he gazed directly at me. He seemed about to speak when the swirling clouds of color swept between us and obliterated the vision. I awoke with a start, my head was swimming. When I regained my balance I looked up to see the women whispering excitedly among themselves. The guardians had left their stations and were gathered at the opposite end of the room where the lighted lamp was moving about the table upon which it sat. I realized the spirit was the source of the phenomena, and wondered if it could be working through me, if I could command it. Mentally I issued an order for the lamp to stop moving—it stopped. I found I could command the unseen power to move furniture about the room at will, to tap on the walls and finally, to raise small objects off the tables and suspend them in mid air.

I had to test the power as inconspicuously as possible that night in order to avoid alarming the custodians again. My sense of strength waxed with each new manifestation. I could not wait until I was alone during the following day to test the power, for by then it might lose potency and I would be left to curse my lost opportunity. After I found that I could control inanimate matter I began to feel invincible. I would have to cautious; I must not show my captors the feats of which I was capable. I must try my powers quietly and await my chance to escape. My partner would help me . . . . . of that I felt sure.

After the occurence my captors kept guardians with me by day as well as night. The keepers had been made uneasy over my suspected power, even though I took great care to hide my abilities. In the late afternoon I would be

left alone for a few minutes after the day guards had ascended the stairs and before the mistresses of the night watch came, down. During those precious moments alone I exercised my powers until finally I learned to fly. Arms outspread, I would lift first one foot then the other from the floor; thus hovering suspended. By pushing my arms downward I could rise and ascend to the top of the ceiling quickly. I flew around the room examining the casements from above, hoping to find a way out; but the windows remained locked and triggered to the alarm system. In spite of my necromancy I remained imprisoned. [

My sense of desperation grew as I realized that the day of my interrogation must surely be drawing near, (hastened, no doubt by the recent unusual occurences). I was losing confidence in my ability to conceal my guilt for I had been so long out of touch with the reality of normal human contact that I no longer had access to guidelines by which to maintain a grasp on reality. To add to my fear I had wild imaginings of the bizarre and subtle methods my captors might use to extract a confession from me. In truth I did not have my defense in order as I had once so vainly thought and the desire to escape had now become a desperate necessity. The only possible way out of the cunning trap in which I existed would be through paranormal intervention.

My partner's power worked through me yet I could not summon his presence or communicate with him at all. I could only hope he would sense my mad desperation and manifest himself to me.

One night as I tossed fitfully beneath my covers a dream took form. At the same time I was aware of the almost painful sensation of my flesh expanding as a presence permeated my being. I felt as if my own consciousness were shut up in a box and that it was from this enclosed and constricted position that I heard the voice of my accomplice speak to me. He told me that he was aware of my unrest and had been waiting for the right moment to help me. I did not have a clear visual image of his face as he spoke, yet his presence was so totally with me that I saw without seeing. He told me that he would create a disturbance outside the door of my room which would cause the guardins to leave. It was at that instant that I would have to make my break: he would show me the exit. Then the presence faded and my accomplice was gone. I realize now the folly of calling him my accomplice, for in fact it was I who was doing his bidding, I who was depending on his greater power to guide me.

I awoke from this dream communication with the same strange taste in my mouth as when waking from a sleep of fever and illness. The room seemed larger than before and the furniture loomed out of the shadows like huge dark rocks piercing a night fog. I felt as if I had shrunk and had been engulfed and swallowed by my usual surroundings. I scarcely had time to become fully awake when the strident noise of a bell clamored loudly just outside the door of my room. Something had set the alarm off! Shocked into action, the guardians rushed up the stone steps. their shouts drowned out by the harsh noise. I knew my time had come and I too rushed up the steps, my eyes staring straight ahead, my ears not heeding the cacophony, my brain centered upon one consuming thought – escape! I must get away! The guardians were clustered in a confused group in what I now saw was a long gallery. From the darkness at the far end a group of men came running toward the sound. Wildly I looked around me and saw to the left beyond the guardians, an open double door. The mistresses still hadn't noticed my escape from my room and I had an instant in which to lunge past them, counting on sheer force and surprise to overcome their numbers. I shoved past just as they noticed my escape. I heard a female voice scream "Get him!", as I careened out the door. All action was focused upon my fleeing form. Their captive was out, he must be caught. The guardians were after me in an instant, mouths open, arms outstretched, hands grasping for a hold on my clothing. There was no hope to escape by running, I'd have to fly. In seconds I was aloft, rising as rapidly as my thrashing arms would allow. I just barely cleared the guardians clutching hands and rose rapidly to the first story window level, then second story level and finally topped the roof of the building. I was free, free!

The noise below me became faint in the distance as I swam on through the chill night air. My eyes were starting from my head in my effort to find a place of refuge in the dark and unfamiliar terrain. The land was an uninhabited and unfamiliar wilderness. Ahead of me I could see the beginnings of a large pine forest which appeared to stretch for miles in all directions. The trees stuck up jagged and black in the obscurity of night. I flew on and on over the forest until my arms became leaden with fatigue. I was losing altitude in spite of my best efforts and knew I must soon find a place to rest and regain my strength in the forest below. I desperately desired to put more distance between myself and the awful prison, yet try as I might, I was coming down. I could barely clear the tops of the tallest trees.

My stream of thought was suddenly interrupted by the startling sound of a racing motor. My heart too was pounding and racing as I saw a car's headlights flash suddenly around a bend and illumine a reddish brown dirt road directly below my path of flight. I must get away from the road and hide in the timber, but before I had time to change course, I was stabbed by the brilliant intensity of a searchlight shining directly upon me. I must get away. . . my freedom, my freedom. Frantically, clumsily, I moved my arms and legs in a crazy dance trying to make headway, trying to get away from the light which was blinding me. If only I could get down into the safety and obscurity of the forest I could hide from my pursuers.

"Surrender!" A male voice shouted up through the blackness, "Come down. You must surrender!" I heard footsteps running across the ground below. No I wouldn't have to surrender. I thought, I'd make it yet. The light followed my movements, but I was nearly into the safe masses of the tree branches. My smooth descent was shattered by several shots which rang out. I felt no pain, only a heaviness in my stomach as I tore head first through the meshed branches and fell with a thud on the ground. Life was nearly spent from my wounded body when the pursuers arrived at my side. The last thing I heard was a voice saying, "Poor fellow, his only fault was that he wouldn't confess his guilt."

Epilogue:

You might wonder how I am able to narrate my story to you from the far side where I now am. My sole explanation is to tell you that to those of us who know necromancy many things are possible; and you must understand that every human being has his accomplice.

the congregation opened their puffy eyes,
And noted that a flower on the altar
Was out of place.
The congregation opened their stuffy ears
And heard the small choir sing
Off key as usual.
The congregation opened their dragon mouths
And voiced hypocritic versions
of age-old hymns.
The congregation opened their sweaty folded hands
And grabbed up bits of bread
Which slid forgetfully down their throats.
The congregation opened the buttoned vests
Of their foreign silk suits and delicately fanned themselves
With their Sunday bulletins.
The congregation opened the big front door at noon
And one sick and tired, fed up
Spirit of God
Left.

Anne Huber

T.E.I.

What are you coming back to, Apollo?
Is mankind behind you, spoiler of dreams?

Keep taking a hard look down
And see if you can wander
Through the valleys of your times:
    Blinking sign; laughing chimes;
    Warnings to stop; stopping to warn;
    Private delusions; public seclusions.

Will the strife of this vague 3rd planet
Still allow a full cycle around the sun?

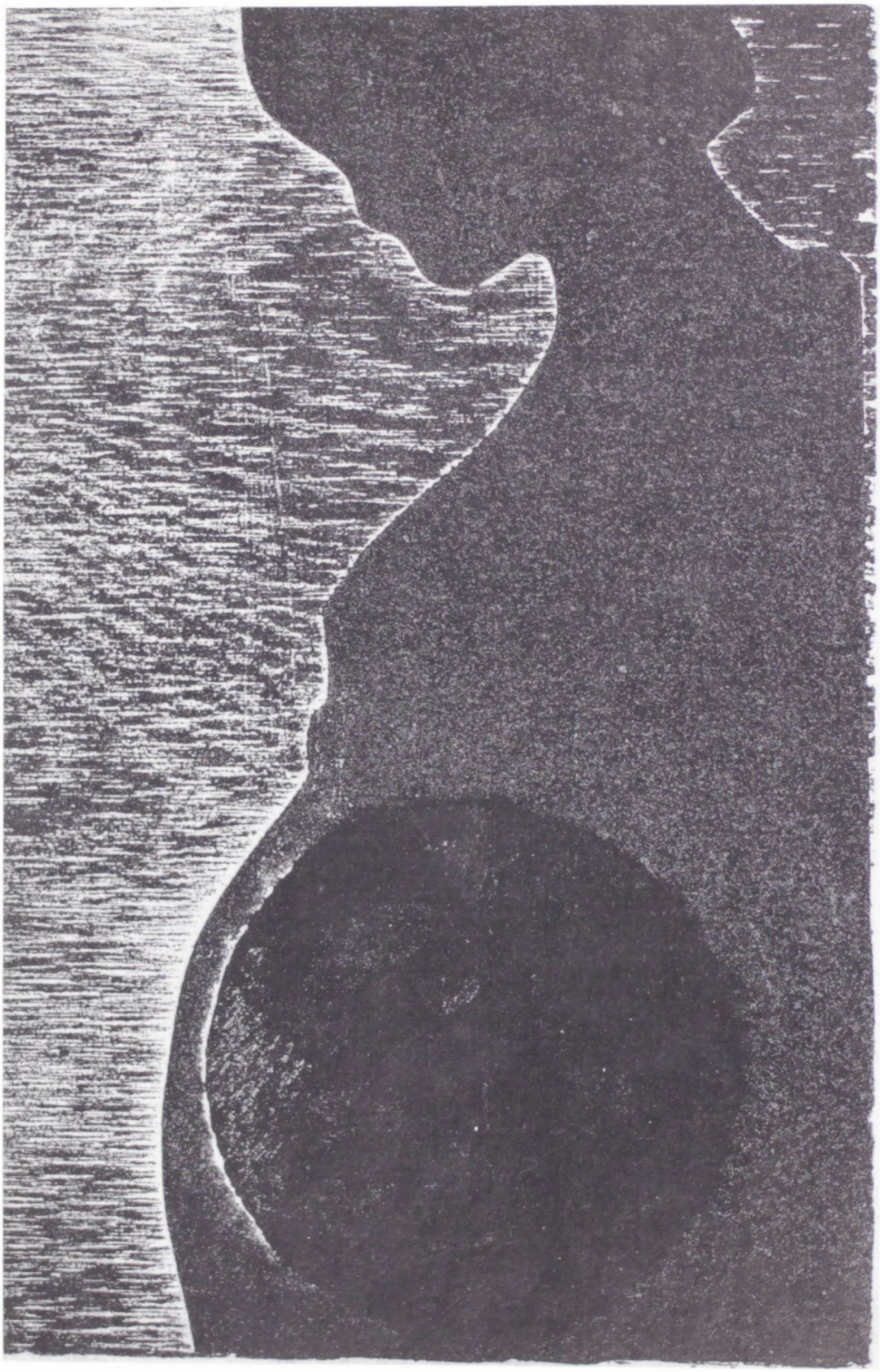
Understand it that
I fear not for the life of the earth,
But for the past cries
That have given birth
To problems waiting to be resolved.
Yet, here is space ready to be involved.

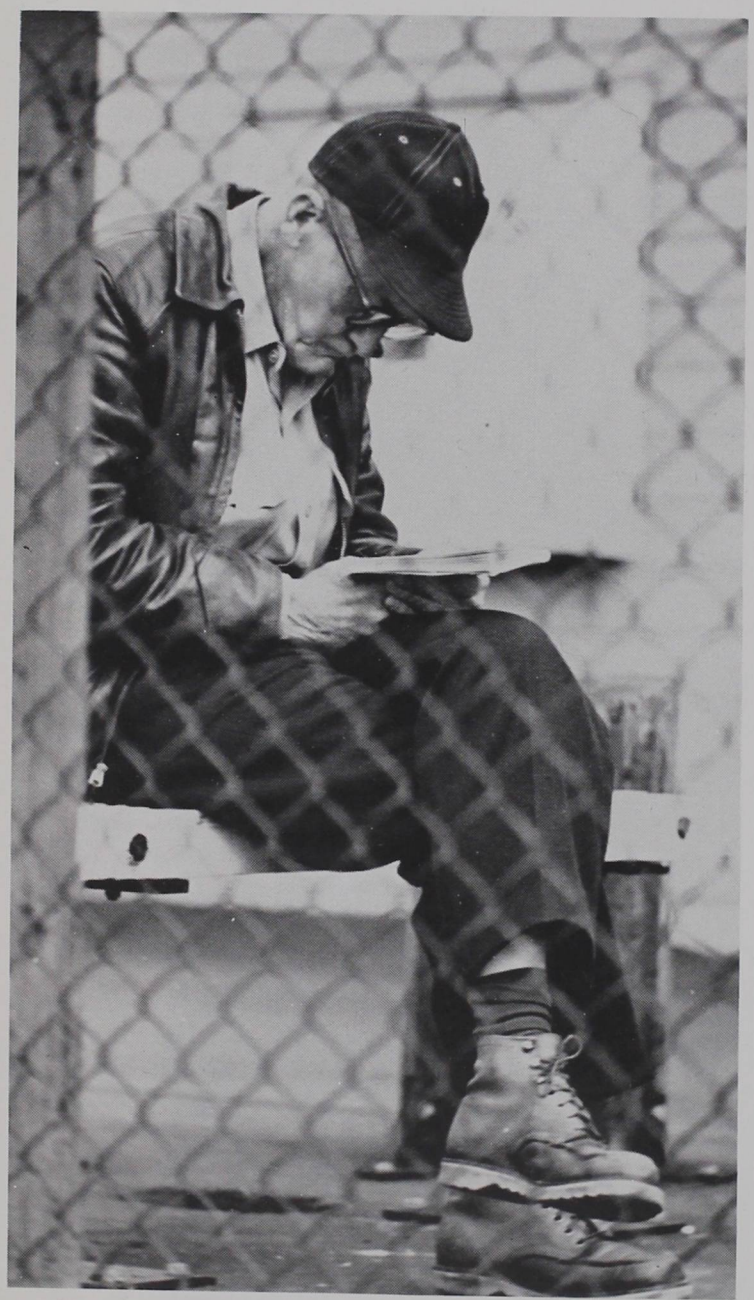
And wander through the crevices of your minds:
    I can't take the time.
    What it is it isn't,
    Therefore, not mine.

Moon-shot, is what you left behind all that it seems?
Does man unite under the boundaries of science?
Or does he crumble with the weight of his dreams?
You return in a great and glorious glow
To an era which you abruptly close.
What is there left to know?

Summing up twenty-one years is not easy.
But, before completing that task,
I ask:
    Whether or not we've gained the moon,
    And lost our fantasies much too soon?

Duffy Lederman





day of desert wind

two hawks amazed
at the hot air
rising off
the sticky licorice road
soaring effortlessly
held aloft
by thermal fingers
shadows lost
in the asphalt
they dip and glide
and freeze
with stillness
cheating both
gravity and time

white on brown

do seagulls
talk of ancient days
of sardine feasts?
as they stand
tripodal black legs
sunk in the irrigated mud
eating cocktail bloodworms stunned
and caught unaware first by plow
and now by the plague
of these strange adaptive epicures
from the sea

drain jail

i saw a rainbow disappearing
down the drain
another splatter on the street
tendrils grasping at our feet
like a portugese man-of-war
on an asphalt sea

all the colors are going down
tired of being grey and hollow
i think that i may just follow
all the colors that are going
down

across aloud

cars pass
swings creak
children laugh
cars pass
swings creak
children laugh
cars pass
swings creak
children laugh
cars pass
swings creak
children laugh
cars pass

shattered crystal
obscures my sight
the vapor of sound
fades into the night
tunnel two eroded
go down three up to eight
but they're blocked
oh my God
its too late

round and round
we go
where it stops
we must go because
we can't retrace
the step before

she hides behind a young tree
he climbs the ladder
the stricken tree bleeds
this morning more makeup
more dust upon the mirror
more rust upon the nails
plant ahead this fall
a promised spring won't fail
she hides behind an old tree
he's found another ladder
the tree no longer bleeds
yesterday's milk
declares decay
and we can't afford
to throw it away
yesterday's news
crumpled and brown
huddles resolved
on the ground

passageways everywhere
which one to choose
so little time
so much to lose
we waited too long
for a lighted path
to the world beyond
yesterday's footholds
eroded away

trapped
alone
we await
the hour dissolves
our hourglass fate
is now erased

Ninety Degrees North Latitude—Heading North

S. James Fitzpatrick

He shifted stiffly on his bunk, his bloodshot eyes fixing on the red alert light that had burned all night and now lent an unnecessary tension to the pre-dawn quonset. The red eye glared back at him ominously, tauntingly, hideous, he thought, in its very being. Consciously trying to break away, his eyes darted about the long room. Though he knew they were there, he could scarcely make out the rumpled profiles of his buddies so seemingly peaceful in their sleep. He bit his lip as an aroused emotion swept over him and settled uneasily in his stomach. His face flushed with anger, or was it self pity in the recognition that only in the fleeting hours of deepest sleep did he or any of them know anything of the warmth of well-being.

Again, he wrenched his thoughts back to his survey of the quonset. On down the nearest wall his gaze stopped at a partition. He knew what was beyond; lounge chairs, a pool table, magazines, a color television, and a collection of bosomy centerfolds adorning the otherwise pale green walls. But there was no one there enjoying himself at this hour when the room's synthetic amusements seemed pale indeed, when compared to the warmth of his bunk.

His eyes moved on. In the warm red glow he spotted a patchwork of light and dark. Oh yes. . .the bulletin board with its sheafs of duty rosters, safety bulletins, memos from the "Old Man", and all that other peripheral trivia peculiar to organization.

He rolled his head away. He needn't press his survey any further; as a matter of fact, he needn't have looked at all. He knew all too well, and without looking could picture in exactly what order, hung the helmets, chutes, G-suits, and boots, like drained and broken corpses of each pilot. Very, very mortal men who the "Old Man" termed the world's most sophisticated weapons system. He shuddered and tried to close his eyes on the horror with which he met these latest musings, but it was no use, his day had begun and was no longer his own.

It was now O-five hundred hours and he found himself well into the trance-like boredom only operations manuals can induce, when the atonal voice of the P.A. presented its standard-form greeting:

"Attention! Attention! Combat Crew weather advisory for Zero Five hundred through Ten hundred hours Greenwich mean time." The men stirred themselves for notebooks and pencils. "Barometric pressure 29.93 and holding. Surface winds 15 knots from N. NW. Winds aloft holding from N. NW. and increasing to 85 knots above forty thousand feet. Updated forecasts will be provided as available." Some static, and the voice was gone as quickly as it had entered. But the mood of the room had changed. Maps blossomed at every available table as each pilot quietly and not-so-quietly cursed the addition of this latest data to their basic flight plans. Plans! Plans which had become to most of them a complete scenario of a play conceived by madmen and damned by its actors. He retraced a few lines, then folded the map and zipped it back into his flight suit, out of sight.

He stood up and stretched himself, his gaze once more sweeping the room. "Hellishly homey," he mumbled as he stepped over to the coffee pot.

"Attention to orders!" Once more the voice in the box on the wall spat out its demand. "Officer of the day will be....." He was remotely aware that these were the routine daily operations orders which he'd finally learned to tune out altogether. He smiled at this small victory over that damnable voice. It was the first time he'd smiled that morning.

Back in his chair, he retrieved the previously discarded stack of manuals, and once again began passively sifting through their pages. His mind shifted gratefully away, and for the first time since he'd been up, he became aware of the barely audible whine of the generators and warm air blowers that continuously primed the sleek interceptor air-craft housed in the alert shed through the swinging doors. He tried once more to focus his attention on the pages before him, but his thoughts wandered back to those doors and the row of lights mounted above. There were exactly three red bulbs, a simple fact he had long ago established, yet continued to reaffirm every waking hour of his duty.

The first bulb burned continuously, day and night, a red-eyed reminder of where they were, and why. The second red bulb, heralded by the voice, indicated a state of combat-ready alert and the accompanying pandemonium of suiting up. The third bulb, in simplest terms, meant GO! In reality, when all three were lit, it would mean only one of two things, either a full-dress exercise, or what was to most of them, unmentionable.

"Attention! Attention! This base is now in condition red-two!!" Now two bulbs glared back at his upraised eyes. "All pilots will report to their flight commanders immediately!!"

His reflexes long since automatized, he grabbed his gear and slipped into its maze of straps and buckles with the ease of experience. Now no words were spoken, none needed to be, the system had been activated. The chargers champed at their bits.

They all stood there, silent, tense; waiting in the traditional role of the soldier waiting for the word to come down from above; waiting for the hollow voice from the little grilled box high up on the wall. He was the first to notice it, but the others caught on quickly. Though barely audible a few minutes earlier, the whine of the generators and compressors in the hangar was rapidly risen, now almost a roar. The voice momentarily brought their minds snapping back. "Attention! Attention!! Condition red-three! SCRAMBLE!!"

In a headlong rush he crashed through the swinging doors and sprinted for his plane. Grabbing the rungs of the ladder, he hauled himself up and into the narrow confines of the cockpit and buckled in. "Ignition, power, fuel...ON!" The turbine screamed to life. "Canopy-Down!" As the heavy steel hangar doors slid away, he started rolling. The voice cut in. "Tango Five-zero cleared for immediate take-off." He smiled to himself again. He hadn't even thought of asking!

One hundred, one-fifty, two hundred miles per hour, the sandy blur of the runway careened past him. He felt the wheels lift and tuck into the belly of what he liked to think of as the metamorphosis of himself and his machine into one super-being. He noted with assurance that both his air-speed and altitude were climbing rapidly, that all navigational systems were functioning. Only then did he reach for the secret operational orders fastened to the lower right corner of the instrument panel. Carefully breaking the seal, he slid out the card noting the classified combat communication frequencies and tuned them in. The voice was already there waiting for him.

"Tango five-zero, this is Delta control. Come in! Over!"

"Delta control, this is Tango five-zero, over." Once

more the voice assumed command of his attention.

"Five-zero, proceed on intercept 357 and await further instruction. Out!" Just as directed, he cranked 357 into his inertial navigation system, then settled back for the ride. The moments ticked into minutes, and as each course adjustment came over his headphones, he dutifully responded. Cloudbank after cloudbank passed skittering over his wings, their filtered light doing little to alleviate the confining atmosphere of this three by five world of dials and digits.

"Tango Five-zero, this is Delta control, over!" Once more the voice pulled the strings of the puppet..... "This is Delta control. The exercise is completed. Return to base,".....and he danced.

Easing the stick over, he began to turn back. Suddenly he was blinded, not by darkness, but by light. The tail shuddered violently and the plane rolled uncontrollably into a spin. He jerked the stick back and punched at the rudders, but no response. Now he was, in fact, along for the ride. Struggling to overcome his onrushing sense of panic, he started to reach for the eject lever. No good! At this altitude he'd suffocate or freeze to death. He smiled grimly, his rationale had overcome his panic, and he siezed the controls once more.

Just as suddenly as it had all begun, the control again responded to his hands and feet and he plunged out of the cloudbank into the blue.

He twisted about in his harness to survey his aircraft as best he could, and seeing no damage, he turned back, but the sun shining on a wing tip caught the corner of his eye. He rolled his wings and watched the sparkle of sunbeams dance across from tip to tip. He looped and rolled again, now as one with his plane, a modern Icarus languishing in the freedom and beauty of flight, free of earthly bounds. A mood of peace and serenity such as he had never felt before swept around him like a warm ocean current. He was Mercury, Apollo, Prometheus unbound. He was a man. He was himself! He rolled again, and watched the earth and the heavens revolve around him. He was free; free of pressures, free of monotony, free of the voice!

The voice? It seemed to snap him back as it always had. Obediently, he tuned the radio...nothing...it was dead. No matter, he could well do without it. As a further matter of routine, he gave his instruments a quick check. Fuel....OK! Thrust...OK! Altimeter.... 45,000 feet...Air speed....Zero? He rapped furiously at the glass with his gloved knuckles. It wouldn't budge. He swept his eyes across the remaining dials. His mind reeled, then he looked again. Inertial Guidance Navigation reading ninety degrees north latitude, gyro heading..... North....

Frozen city
Night gnaws your barren streets
Red lights halt the absence of movement
Streetlights illumine the shadows they cast
Ice crusts the park fountain;
Watch the grotesque splashings freeze
Watch a slice of winter moon
Through gnarled fingertwigs
Through throat-rubbing fog
Hear your steps crunch
On grass frosted white
Feel the emptiness emerge
Sloshing in the pit of your stomach
The fear born of eerie beauty.

Damn city
Your silence echoes through stillness
Your cold enfolds
To beg with emptiness
Before the bottle shatters,
Lest the liquid saviour
That has become this life
Spill out with clouds of visible breath.

Carl Knappe

LEGACY

Vile moon, while we die you watch.
What is there between your crotch
That makes you wither and wax;
Secreting juices from external sacs?
Progress of man: a two-layered bus.
Yet, a 42 D still makes a fuss.
You, moon, with a silent intent
Have waited for man and his ascent.
Where? Where is down? Underground?
No, you're not smiling. It's a frown.
Moon? Welcome to the faces of man.
You're fit now to watch the land.
Now, moon, earth can see you alive:
Our love's rust is syphilic inside.

Duffy Lederman


karen stephens 11-19-69

METAMORPHOSIS

Then it was right as I felt
And held the world close to scrutinize.
Then the trees folded their arms,
The people peered through prisms.

A change began to slowly dissolve
The prisms of would-be eyes
That turned staring—even to no harm.
Then they built a wall.

At last crumbling began —the wall built
Firm—supposedly wise.
Suddenly life
Hid.
How one did fall.

LABRYNTH

He opened his eyes to nothing.
Closing them the shadows
deepened and images appeared.
Soaring, slicing the
creams into dancing.
Madly hurling ideas into
frames and patterns feared,
Head throbbing, he grips
and tears.
Images become cycles,
repeating . . .
What genius created this pattern of
brilliancy,
While his head can turn, and his mind
ends as
meeting?

BACKGROUNDS

Maybe crocodiles, she said,
Or bears and lions in the woods.
Rugged cliffs and berries in backyards?
Time—days at the zoo and
Today is Saturday in the mountains.
Echoes and scouts penetrating,
Hungriness and whining,
Fishing poles and cameras,
Thirst,
Yet throughout is a silence ;
But what of its dimension?

SHADOWS

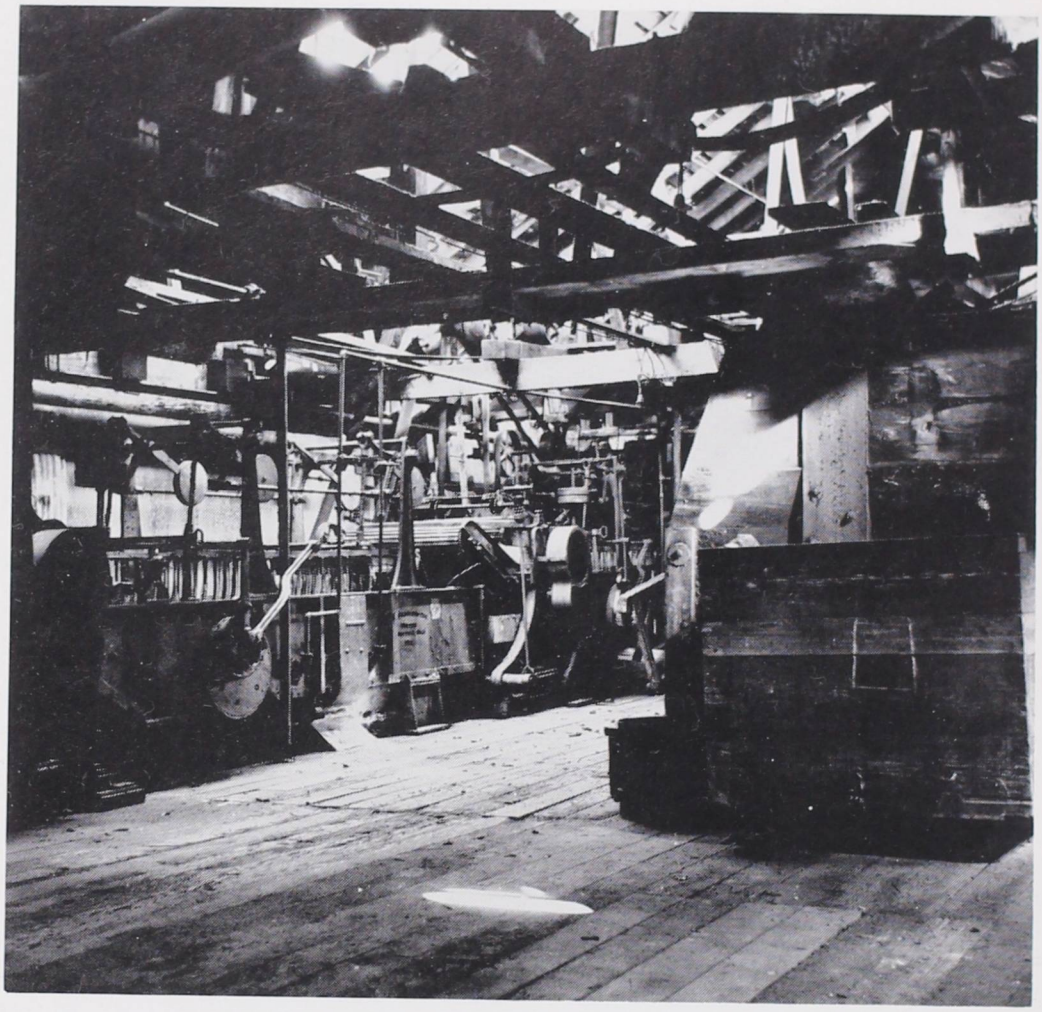
Laughter bubbling quietly
Through the veil a sigh
Of pity for what could be.
The candle slowly passes by
The window of dimensions.

Wails droning mercilessly,
Piercing opaque silence—scream
Of hate—what was not to be
Sounded through silence serene—
Bursts the narrow tube to bits.

Here and there fall whispered hints—
Blowing ovation everywhere.
Pure what is and haunts, convinced
Of quietness and peace near the
Threshold of a dawn.

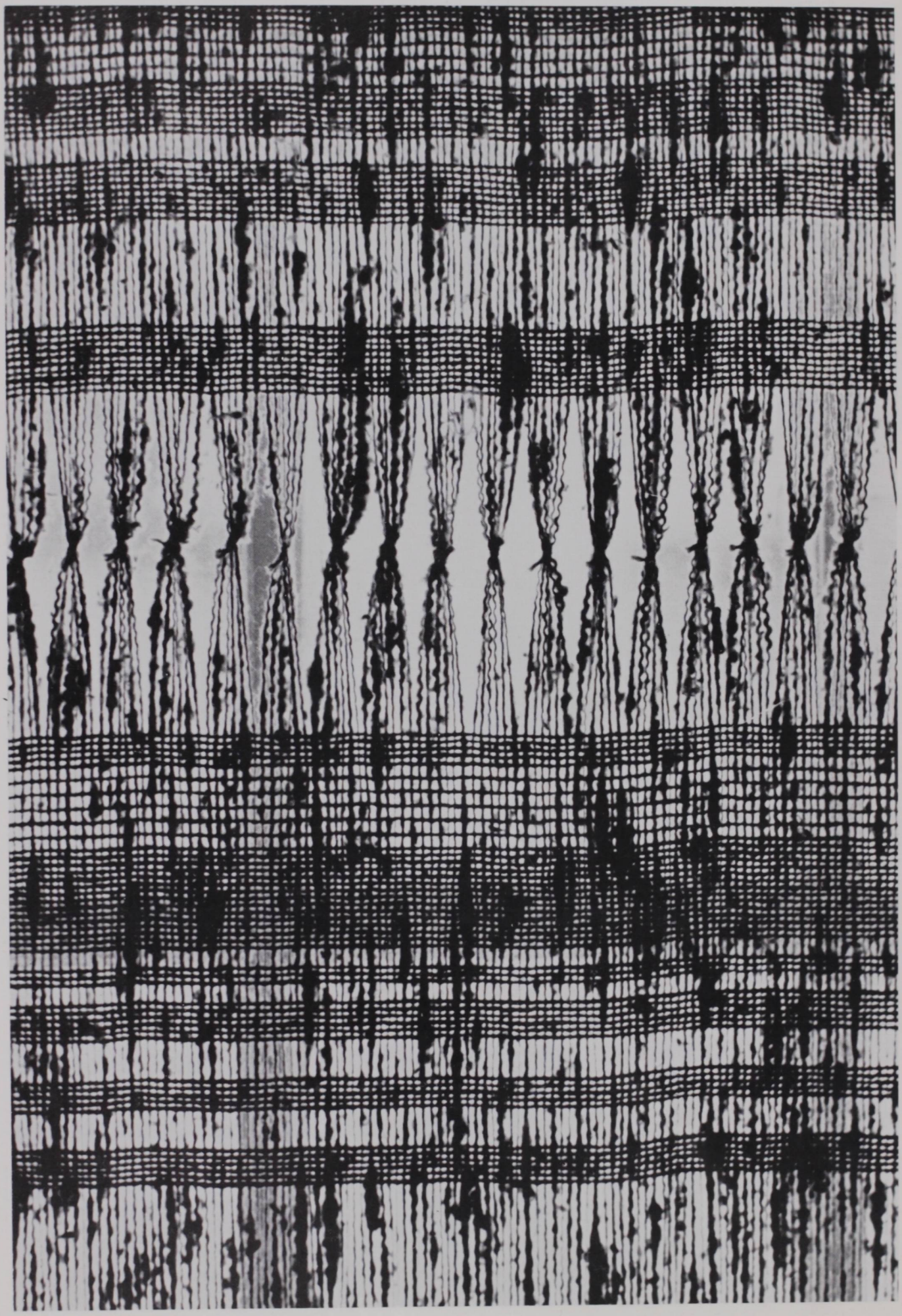
Diane McKenney

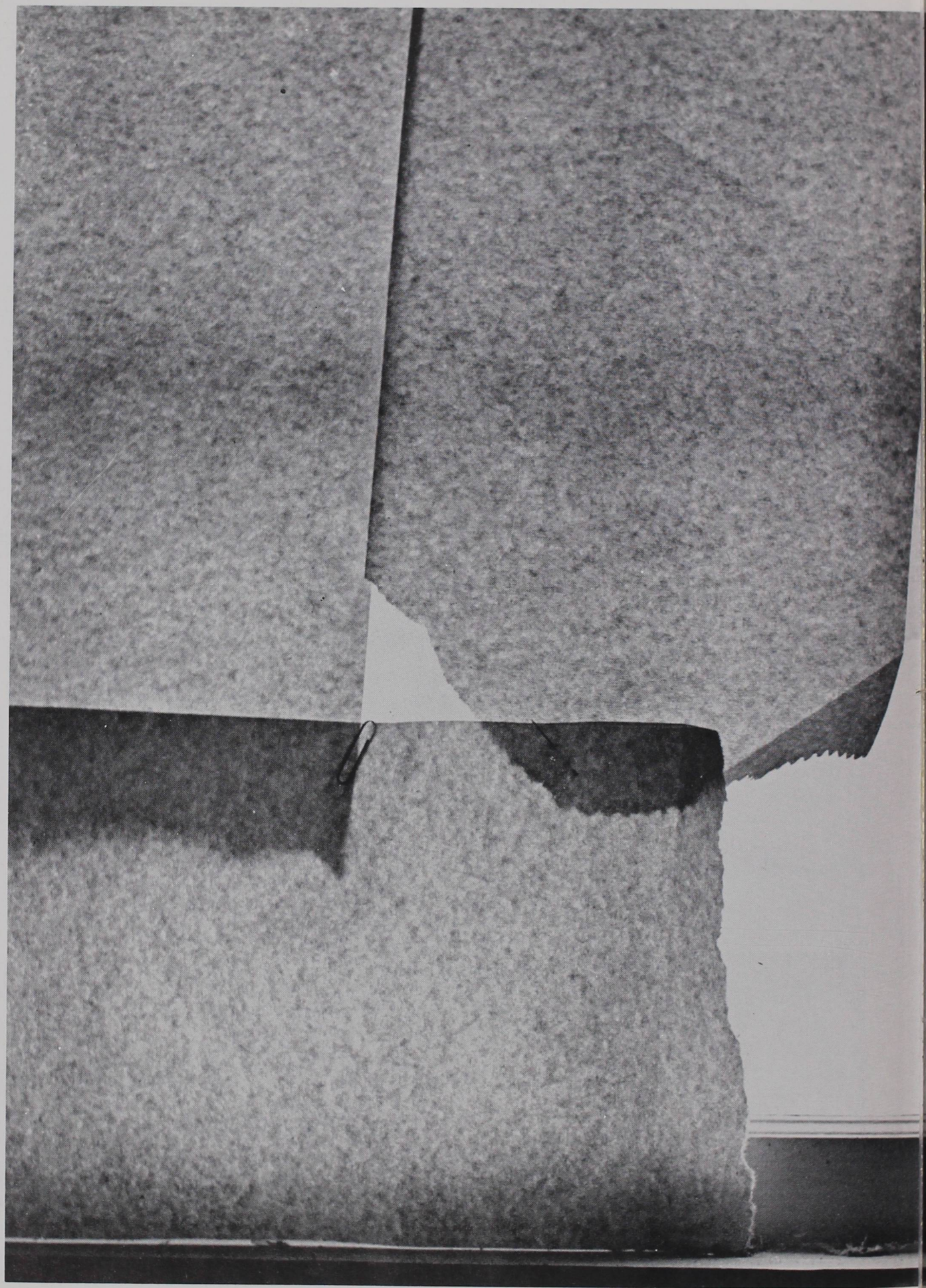

12-1ST-A

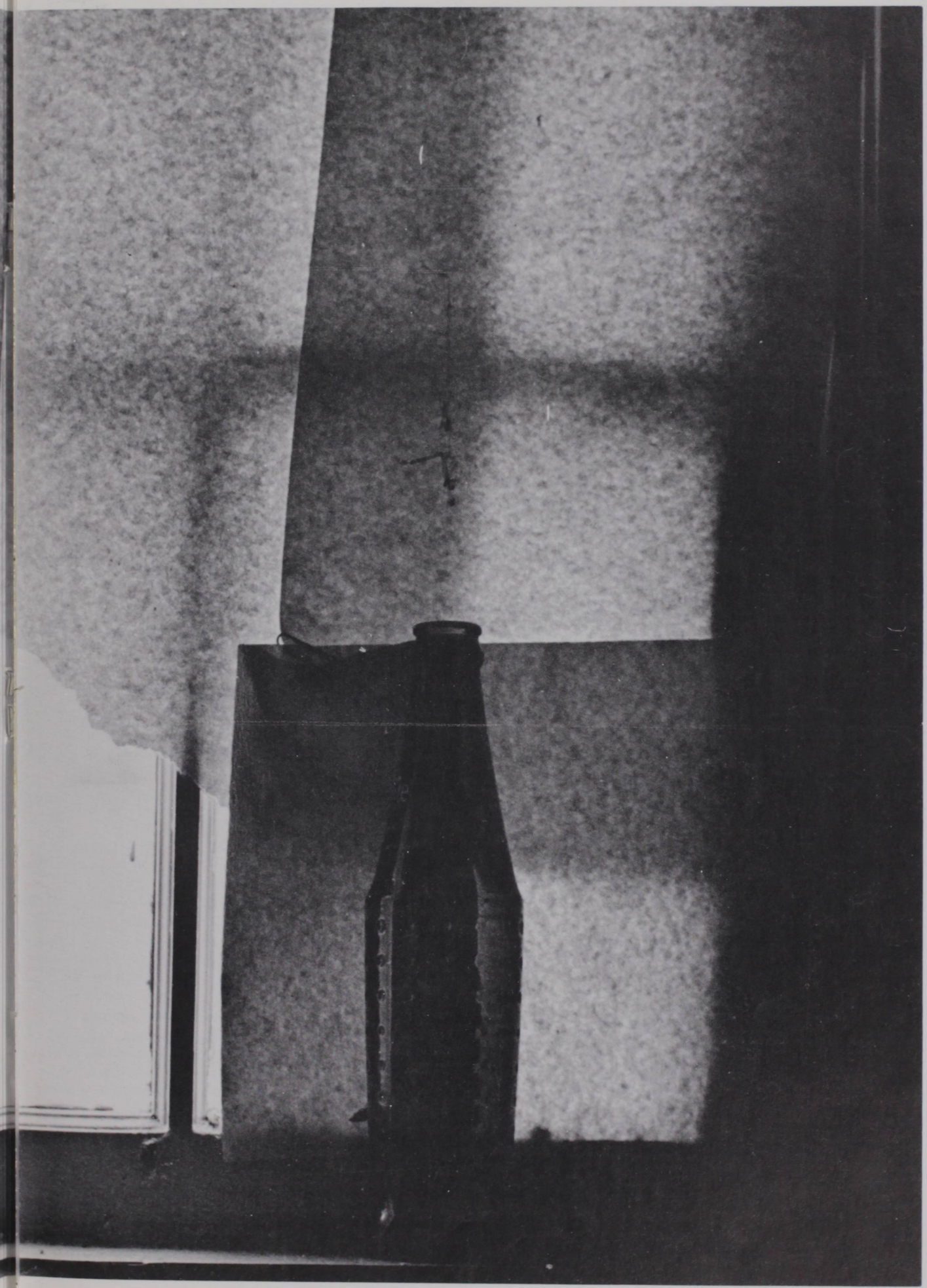


Photographs by David W. Pearson

The instantaneous capture of light and form is the photographer's sole medium. Through the process of visual selection he isolates those elements of reality which in themselves become a new reality. The two-dimensional photograph asserts itself as an existential moment—related to—but wholly different from the original moment of light and form.







OUR TOWN in Our Time

Ushering in the decade of the Sixties, which has undergone so much recent analysis as one of radical change, violence, and confusion, was a production of Thornton Wilder's **Our Town**, at the off-Broadway theatre, the Circle in the Square. This play, first produced in 1938 and revived again during the closing year of World War II, had a very successful run in this 1959-60 production. Brooks Atkinson, reviewing the play in the New York **Times** of March 24, 1959, wrote,

> ...**Our Town** is not familiar because of Thornton Wilder's script. It is because this is the story of mankind in a tender and poignant idyl. There by the grace of God go all of us — growing up under the care of parents, going off two by two in marriage, dying and settling down for eternity in some burying ground. ...He compounded it of the simples — the essentials of youth, the wonders and worries of the benevolent conspiracy of neighborhood life, the crisis of marriage, and finally the awful fact of death and the mystery of eternity.

Closing the decade of the Sixties, there has been another production of **Our Town**, sponsored by the American National Theatre and Academy (popularly known as ANTA) and starring Henry Fonda in the role of the genial, philosophic stage manager. The production brought forth this response from the venerable New York **Times** critic, Walter Kerr:

> We bring a curious intensity to our visits to **Our Town** these days, going to each revival in a strangely mixed hope and fear that the work will seem tarnished. I think we hope that it will tarnish so that it will stop affecting us. It does make us cry and we dislike being thought subject to such emotional impress. We are embarrassed to be found fond. At the same time we are fearful it will turn up tarnished because it is one of our remembered pleasures and, while we have just about decided to give up all present pleasures, we hate surrendering the few we had locked in the trunk. We still like to think that dawn, at least, was decent.
>
> But the fact of the matter is that **Our Town** doesn't change at all. It functions in the theatre exactly as it always has. Our changing responses and awareness muddle us, make us to ask questions of ourselves, put the tremulous "What should I think?" in the foreground of our minds trying to bar the way. The play is indifferent to all that.

Our Town thus makes an assertion about life and goes quickly away, leaving us to do a little thinking about our own life styles. It first appeared at a time of crisis when we were emerging from the Great Depression and could hear the pre-World War-II rumblings of armaments in Europe. It was revived in New York City near the end of the war and two more times to frame the decade of the Sixties. It has appeared in over two hundred anthologies, has been translated into more than two dozen foreign languages, and has received countless productions by high schools, colleges and community theatre groups during the first thirty-two years of its life. What does it have to say to us in our time about our lives? Let's have a look.

In his recent study, **The Plays of Thornton Wilder**, Donald Haverman stresses Wilder's indebtedness to Gertrude Stein for her appeal to the human mind emphasized in **The Making of Americans.** He quotes a key passage from her book:

> Repeating the whole of living and by repeating comes understanding and understanding is to some the most important part of living. Repeating is the whole of living, and it makes of living a thing always more familiar to each one and so we have old men's and old women's wisdom, and repeating, simple repeating is the whole of them.

In writing **Our Town**, Wilder was careful to emphasize all the humdrum daily actions through pantomime in nonsettings that had no real locale except in the minds of his audience. By viewing each act in its repetitive cycle, each of us is invited to participate in a ritual or celebration of "little unremembered acts" from somewhere in his past life. To call up these ritual acts in the human mind by making them transcend time and place was Wilder's chief concern in the play.

At the beginning of the play, the Stage Manager sets the locale as Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, and even specifies the latitude and longitude, but the specific location is not important. The panoramic view he gives of the town is meant to apply in its averageness to any American small town. It is near dawn on May 7, 1901, but specific time, also, will slip from our minds as we view the play. As we see the town awakening to face another day, we are put in mind of thousands of such routine days occurring in thousands of small towns the country over. The two neighboring families, the Gibbses and the Webbs, are average small-town American families. The fathers are two key personages in every small town, the doctor and the editor. The wives thrive on domestic duties and sing in the village choir. A boy-and-girl-next-door romance grows between George Gibbs and Emily Webb. The living of lives is of utmost importance. By the time the Stage Manager calls upon authorities for vital statistics of the town, the audience is laughing at the tedium of facts. Remembered acts have made them seem unimportant.

The townsmen are proud of their daily routine and want posterity to know about it. They place copies of the New York **Times** and the Grover's Corners **Sentinal** in the cornerstone of the new bank, proclaiming

> So — people a thousand years from now — this is the way we were in the provinces north of New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. — This is the way we were: in our growing up, in our marrying, and in our dying.

We are taken through a day in the life of the town: the early morning stirrings of the milk man, the station agent, and the paper boy; the women preparing breakfast, feeding the chickens, and getting the children off to school; the men doing their work during the day; the dismissal of school in the afternoon; the ladies returning home from the evening choir rehearsal and gossiping about Simon Stimson, the disaffected choir director who has had a "peck of trouble" and escapes in drink. When Mrs. Gibbs comes home, her husband says, "I guess I know more about Simon Stimson's affairs than anybody in this town. Some people ain't made for small-town life. I don't know how that'll end; but there's nothing we can do but just leave it alone." Over at the Webb home, Mr. Webb comes in to find Emily languishing at her window over the moonlight and the scent of the Gibbs's heliotrope. She has been helping George with his math by calling across from their upstairs windows (two

ladders). Back at the Gibbs house, George's little sister Rebecca tells of the letter that Jan Crofut received from her minister when she was sick:

> REBECCA.....He wrote Jan a letter and on the envelope the address was like this: It said: Jan Crofut; the Crofut farm; Grover's Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America.
>
> GEORGE.....What's funny about that?
>
> REBECCA.....But listen, it's not finished: the United States of America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God – that's what it said on the envelope.

This revelation placed at the end of the first act carries on the process of transcending time and space and universalizing the small town.

In Act II the Stage Manager invites us to pick up the lives of the Gibbses and the Webbs three years later on July 7, just after the high school commencement. As Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb come downstairs to make breakfast, the Stage Manager refers to the thousands of meals they have each prepared,

> . . .one of 'em for twenty years, the other for forty – and no summer vacation. They brought up two children apiece, washed, cleaned the house, – and never a nervous breakdown. It's like what one of those Middle West poets said: You've got to love life to have life, and you've got to have life to love life. . . . It's what they call a vicious circle.

he reference is probably to Edgar Lee Masters' epitaph for Lucinda Matlock in **Spoon River Anthology**. When she died she was a respected village matriarch. She recalls a worthy life of joy and hard work:

> At ninety-six I have lived long enough, that is all,
> And passed to a sweet repose.
> What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness?
> Anger, discontent, and drooping hopes?
> Life is too strong for you,
> It takes life to love life.

The last line is essentially the message of **Our Town**.

Act II is the heart of the play and focuses on the young – the marriage of Emily and George. To show us how it all began, the Stage Manager takes us back to a high school courtship scene at the drugstore soda fountain. They decide not only that Grover's Corners is a pretty good town but that they are pretty good people – good for each other. Rather than George's going off to school, they plan to get married and work his uncle's farm.

When the Stage Manager, as the minister, is about to perform the ceremony he gives a little sermon on marriage:

> The real hero of this scene isn't on the stage at all; and you know who that is. It's like what one of these European fellas said: every child born into the world is nature's attempt to make a perfect human being. Well, we've seen Nature pushing and contriving for some time now. We all know that nature's interested in quantity; but I think she's interested in quality, too, – that's why I'm in the ministry. And don't forget the other witnesses at this wedding – the ancestors. Millions of them. Most of them set out to live two-by-two, also, Millions of them.

After he joins the couple in wedlock, he says,

> I've married over two hundred couples in my day.
> Do I believe in it?
> I don't know.
> M . . . marries N . . . millions of them.
> The cottage, the go-cart, the Sunday afternoon drives in the ford, the first rheumatism, the grand children, the second rheumatism, the deathbed, the reading of the will,–
>
> He now looks at the audience for the first time, with a warm smile that removes any sense of cynicism from the next line.
>
> Once in a thousand times it's interesting.

Yet the Stage Manager would have us know that marriage is the normal pattern, the accepted pattern, the decent pattern.

Wilder's conception of Act III immediately suggests "The Hill" in **Spoon River**. The Stage Manager comments on the beauty of the spot, and we see the dead arranged in three rows of chairs on the stage. He mentions some of the townspeople that have been brought up there in the nine years that have passed since George and Emily's wedding – among them Mrs. Gibbs, Simon Stimson, and Editor Webb's boy:

> Yes, an awful lot of sorrow has sort of quieted down up here. People just wild with grief have brought their relatives up to this hill. We all know how it is . . . and then time . . . and sunny days . . . and rainy days . . . 'n snow . . . We're all glad they're in a beautiful place and we're coming up here ourselves when our fit's over . . .
>
> . . . everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings . . . . There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being.
>
> Pause.
>
> You know as well as I do that the dead don't stay interested in us living people for very long. Gradually, gradually they lose hold of the earth . . . They get weaned away from earth – that's the way I put it, – weaned away.

The dead are waiting for the "eternal part of them to come out clear." Affairs of the living grow less and less important to them.

We learn that the grave in the new Gibbs sectionof the cemetery is for Emily, who dies in childbirth. Umbrellas conceal the living in the funeral procession. Finally, Emily emerges, dressed in white like a young girl. She has yet to be weaned and wants desperately to go back among the living. The dead warn her against it in matter-of-fact tones, but when she insists on choosing a happy day, Mrs. Gibbs says, "No! At least choose an unimportant day. Choose the least important day in your life. It will be important enough." She settles on her twelfth birthday, February 11, 1899.

When she enters Main Street, she is delirious with the

joy of recognition:

> Oh, that's the town I knew as a little girl. And, look, there's the old white fence that used to be around our house. Oh, I'd forgotten that! Oh, I love it so! Are they inside?

She sees her family in the midst of the bustle of the day's trivia – her mother's telling her where her hair ribbon is, her father's talking about the weather. She is overwhelmed with how young her parents look and how beautiful. She wants to tell them how much she loves them, but they are preoccupied with mundane interests. Finally, with "mounting urgency" she exclaims:

> Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me. Mama, fourteen years have gone by. I'm dead. You're a grandmother, Mama. I married George Gibbs, Mama . . . .But . . . . just for a moment we're happy. Let's look at one another.

Emily finds that communication is futile. The living don't look at one another – life goes so fast:

> I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back–up the hill–to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look. Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by Grover's Corners. . .Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking. . .and sleeping and waking up. Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you.

When Emily returns to the hill, Simon Stimson meets her admission of futility with a bitter outburst:

> Yes, now you know. Now you know! That's what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those . . .of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion or another. Now you know–that's the happy existence you wanted to go back to. Ignorance and blindness.

But Mrs. Gibbs steers the talk to the stars, and Emily is well on the way to being weaned from life as she sees George come grief-sticken to her grave.

> EMILY. They don't understand, do they?
>
> MRS. GIBBS. No, dear. They don't understand.

What Thornton Wilder has done in the play is take Sinclair Lewis's wry comment that small-town life was "dullness made God," and do just that with life in Grover's Corners. Living life as Edgar Lee Masters revealed it through Lucinda Matlock and as Gertrude Stein understood it in advocating "repeating the whole of living" is a worthy dedication to the daily round of trivial tasks and an awareness of them as labors of love for those we serve. The aggregate of pantomimed "unremembered acts" during the course of the play serves as a massive objective correlative to Wilder's deification of the dull. It is our failure to be aware of these acts that impoverishes our living.

In its use of pantomime and evocation to elicit responses in the minds of the audience, **Our Town** has often been referred to as a religious celebration. It makes an affirmation about universal patterns of life and invites the audience to participate in a new dedication to commonplace life styles and human values. As a comment on the most recent production, the **Time** magazine critic quipped, "Essentially, **Our Town** says the same thing as **Hair** while keeping its pants on." This seems to be a startling comparison when we think of the contrast of a sleepy New England village at the turn of the century with the mad psychedelic whirl of life in Greenwich Village of 1968. Yet we must concede that the critic knew what he was talking about.

In technique alone the plays are similar. Both make use of the bare stage and few properties. Both use ritual as a means of involving the audience. Mom and Dad in **Hair** play multiple roles and comment on the action from the viewpoint of the older generation much as does the Stage Manager in **Our Town**. The involvement-with-death-and-return-to-life motif appears in Emily's visit to earth and Claude's "trip" in **Hair**. There are transcendental overtones in both plays: in **Our Town** Jan Crofut finds her identity in the mind of God, and the Stage Manager says that "everybody in their bones knows that something is eternal and that something has to do with human beings"; in **Hair** the "tribe" goes "on a rocket to the fourth dimension – total self-awareness the intention," and Claude sings "I believe in Gawd and I believe that Gawd believes in Claude."

It is in theme, however, that the two plays present the most interesting parallels . They both affirm life in the here and now and both call for greater awarness of the quality of life and a rededication to the process of living. The "Tribe" in **Hair** is conceived in terms of Marshall McLuhan's definition of the world as a "global village." The authors describe the significance of the ritual in these terms:

> . . . An extension of what's happening. A coming together for a common reason: a search for a way of life that makes sense to the young, that allows the growth of their new vision, however defined or undefined that may be; to find an alternative to the unacceptable standards, goals, and morals of the older generation, the establishment.
>
> The kids are a tribe. At the same time, for the purpose of **Hair**, they know they are on a stage in a theater, perfoming for an audience, demonstrating their way of life, in a sense, telling a story, in order to persuade those who watch of their intentions, to perhaps gain greater understanding, support, and tolerance, and thus expand their horizons of active participation toward a better, saner, peace-full, love-full world. They are trying to turn on the audience.

However, they accomplish their purpose through "vivid uproar," whereas Wilder accomplishes his with a quiet and leisurely appeal to the memory and mind. Both insist on a keener awareness of life. Emily Gibbs says in anguish, "Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." Claude Bukowski sings,

> Where do I go
> Follow my heartbeat
> Where do I go
> Follow my hand
> Where will they lead me
> And will I ever
> Discover why
> I live and die.

Emily's tragedy lies in her realizing everything too late. She can only return to her grave to accustom herself to the indifference shared by the dead. Claude seems to be on the right track in following his heart and hand. He could ultimately find his identity in loving and serving others.

There is an additional dimension in the conduct of life, however, that Emily insists upon. It is concentration on the preciousness of the present moment. Erich Fromm emphasizes the necessity of this ability in practicing "the

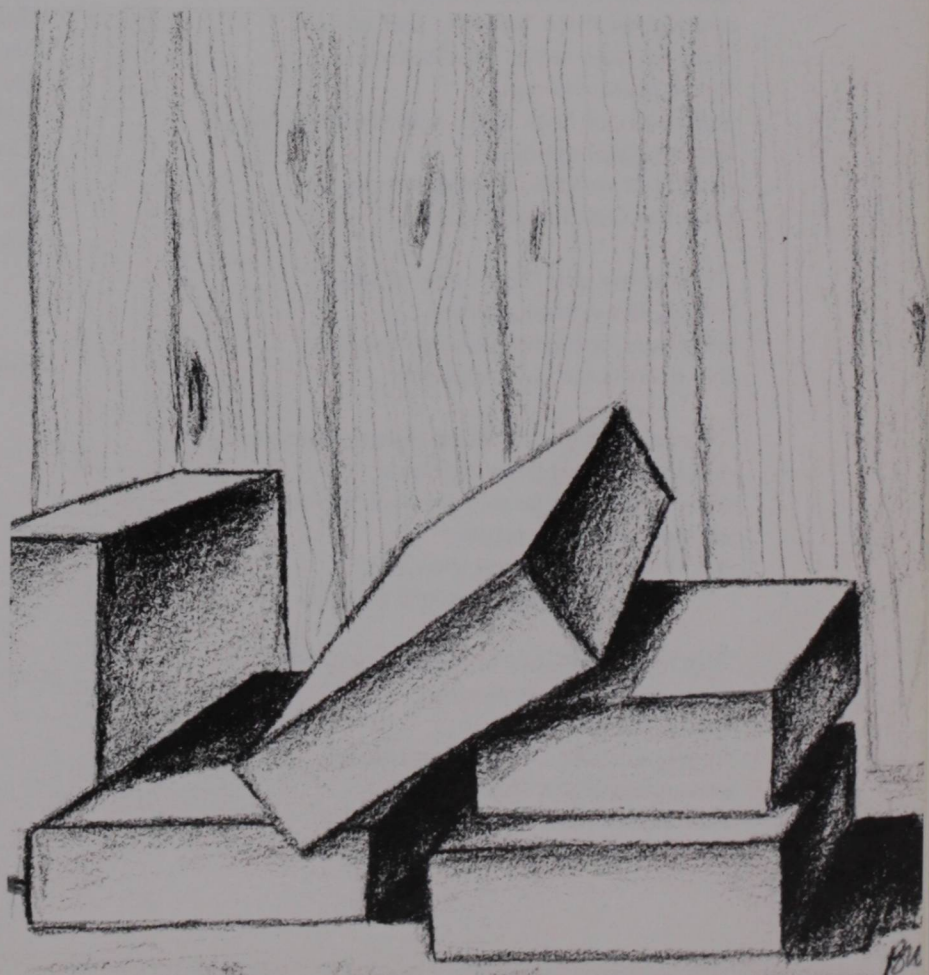
art of loving." He puts it this way:

> To be concentrated means to live fully in the present, in the here and now, and not to think of the next thing to be done, while I am doing something right now. Needless to say that concentration must be practiced most of all by people who love each other. . . . If one is concentrated, it matters little what one is doing; the important as well as the unimportant things assume a new dimension of reality, because they have one's full attention.

The things people do in **Our Town** are symbolic of the banalities that people the world over have to face. When concentration and loving care are absent, life loses its meaning and existence becomes a colorless expanse. The dramatic critic Brooks Atkinson once said, "In the deepest sense of the word, **Our Town** is a religious play." In addition it stands unmatched as the great apotheosis of the American small-town spirit. It conveys this spirit as an individual need, calling for an awareness of daily acts as expressions of love and concern.

In a sense, Willamette University is "our town" for a few quickly fleeting years. We are here to pursue what benefits a liberal education has to offer. Foremost among them is a growing awareness of the true nature of the self as it is reflected in the associations we have with others. The pressure of time urges us to live life with greater concentration and dedication. As Emily Webb says, "Let's look at one another." This is the first step toward realizing what the Stage Manager called a "vicious circle"; "You've got to love life to have life, and you've got to have life to love life." We can't make "our town" a Utopia, but we can make it better in our time.

Dr. James S. Douglas



LIFE BOAT

Morning,
yet the darkness lingers,
that spectre, clinging to the ship
like a suckerfish;
The wind whines high, the sea wails,
a surging, screeching symphony;
The ship groans through the grappling waters
and I, with a realization, ache,
a whirring, whirling nausea;
I stagger, eyes firmly shut,
and slump in a heap upon the deck,
unconscious, amid the seagull dung.

Noon,
I awake (or have I ever)
dizzy, floundering on the deck;
Before me a chalked word on the wall,
now like whitewash;
Above me a Heathcliff-ish mirage,
flame-beard leaping from his chin,
hand extended, grasping, bidding,
like a barnacled rope:

"I am the Captain of this ship
and you, shanghaied somehow, my guest;
You never thought we could exist;
You tried to stand the shock, bravely,
out of habit, you closed your eyes,
squeezing them, like lemons, shut
till the juice appeared around the edges;
But your eyes will turn no more away:
they have nowhere to turn away;
Darkness has seeped in through the slits
and ripped them from the sockets;
They've been rolled on the deck
in the scum and spit
and been put back then, splintered-riddled,
into the gaping holes;
Look out and see, although it pains—
I am the Captain of this ship.

"This is my ship, this hunk of scrap,
rotted, lice-ridden, slimily
we slither, infested, through this sea,
this disinfected, unloving sea.

"These are my men, these creeping forms,
good men, hard-working, loyal,
they man this derelict through the world,
asking nothing in return
but their wenches and their rum
(Wenches and Rum!)

"We know this ship and we can sail her;
We shall sail her to the end:
that is our glory;
In this solution of sweat and tears
you are somehow insoluble:
that is your glory.

"We, Samuel's slimy brethren,
inhabit this, his world;
You, his beloved guest,
must heed well his words.

"Quickly now, the time is short;
The sea is calm; the wind is still,
and you still have a time to live;
Quick, to the life boat, and away.

"You, stranger, who have seen,
you shall return to the other world
and your skin, soul, heart, and eyes
shall be cleansed of the heavy grime
of this, our ship, of this, our life;
Man is not beset with darkness,
he is just born unseeing—
Away . . ."

Evening,
sometime up ahead,
some girl asks me:
"In this poem you wrote of Belgium,
what is the meaning of the ship?"
I answer: "Ah, yes, I remember— ?"
When the moon shines high in a withered sky,
a gigantic eye, omniscient,
and his gaze skips dimly over the water;
In the shadow of this pallid life
the phantom ship is sailing, sailing,
bobbing like a charred cork
upon the dark water;

The captain, planted on the foredeck,
beard, blood red against the black;
And that whitewashed word in the light of time
has become my name, my n a m e . . ."
My voice quivers, twinged with doubt,
and, turning back to Donne, I muse:
"Soul, heart, eyes—cleansed ! . . .
the precious, the immaculate gift?. . ."
On my arm, an uncanny sensation,
clammy, running from finger to shoulder:
Barnacles ! . . .

Eric Yandell

It is April as my pen
scratches this page
yet the winter I thought was lost
beneath the snow
hangs heavy in the air
clogging the spring
don't cry, my love,
we must be brave
Far to the south
the thunderclouds are gathering
mumbling and grumbling
along the horizon
like old gods
headed for battle
don't cry, my love,
we must be strong
Around me marching
uniformly by
go the seconds
in boots that prick
the cheek in passing
ever so slightly
and disappear
don't cry, my love,
we must not fear
"Eternal love"
"Eternal life"
"Eternally eternal
eternity"
I know these words
by heart
I learned them young
and said them over
and whispered them over
eternally over
to budding seasons
but after all
the use of all
even the all
even moderation
must be moderate
In the west
the old sailor
put again
out to sea
the brazened tip
of his mizzen mast
dipped in the foam
don't cry, my love,
the world is turning,
turning,
turning . . .

Look I said to
the girl beside me
I've taken my poem
and sent her
whirling
like a top
or a ballerina
or a heart
touched by love
across the bare floor
You see she's spun
out the door
and into the night
don't cry, she answered
we must go on . . .

Eric Yandell

EVENING LANDSCAPE

I drive on a golden road,
The golden sun is in my eyes
And the earth is touched with fire.
Still ranks of shadow trees
Reach ebon fingers against the sun
Whose huge and firey disk
Hangs an hour away from night.
At the edge of the blue world
A jet streaks frost across the sky,
Curving upward in the vaulted air
As though climbing toward space
For joy of the burning sky.

Merrillee Hall

Life is very short.

Crowded into one
gigantic subway
on its way to
nowhere exist
some souls short
of the conception
of time. Packed
like slimy smoked
sardines in a
celophane-wrapped
tin can; beings who
know the speed
of sound and light
and yet cannot
concieve of the
importance of
their own velo-
city grasp into
emptiness. A
small wiry man
in a faded suit
crumples one
token after
another into
the shiny
meter of
infin-
ity.

Anne Huber

in the corner of
the lawn,
so very far away from
the heavy eyes of
age,
lay the greek hero
the nordic god
the northwest trapper,
all wrapped tight
in sear's sleeping bags,
drunk on peaches and giggles,
searching
the warm heaven
for flying stars.

Dennis Bosley

God damned cows.
He thinks there will be no place
To find it again.
At least it's warm.
Under a vacant tree
They begin their rite
But the ground is rocky
And he thinks of someone else.

Dennis Quade

Ah! Noontide sorceress
Does a sandwash,
The more-bland scatter-dusk.
"It's fogging out, Bathsheba.
Forget the sheep;
Let's walk.

Wheatspear dancing
Does in mime a
Wind-whisper. "Psst!"
And the earth gives up
An eternal interrogative:
Hymenpoke.

Crannied at the fooler wall
Exemplar Nero, melodious ascension
    Somehow fallen, writhing in flames;
And before, so shall again, once more, again.
Thought has it that Iscariot was a friend
    And more than even we, at best.
Kiss of death, kiss of life, kissbliss knows
No more of evergoing. And again,
    Against the towers, falling now.

Th'arbor sipped tea

    and th' old witsel
    shuckissaid
    sosayed,

        and gone into Crabby's

I stead, bore the wait of yours and years

    whittlecaps and blackletroughs
    ship's root, an men's root
    and wiveys weight the barley bell

Th'arbor sipped tea, ah yeah

    aye standeroot in blanched beams
    thun's ahead, blank's afoot
    and shifted on tetherleg

Into Crabby's

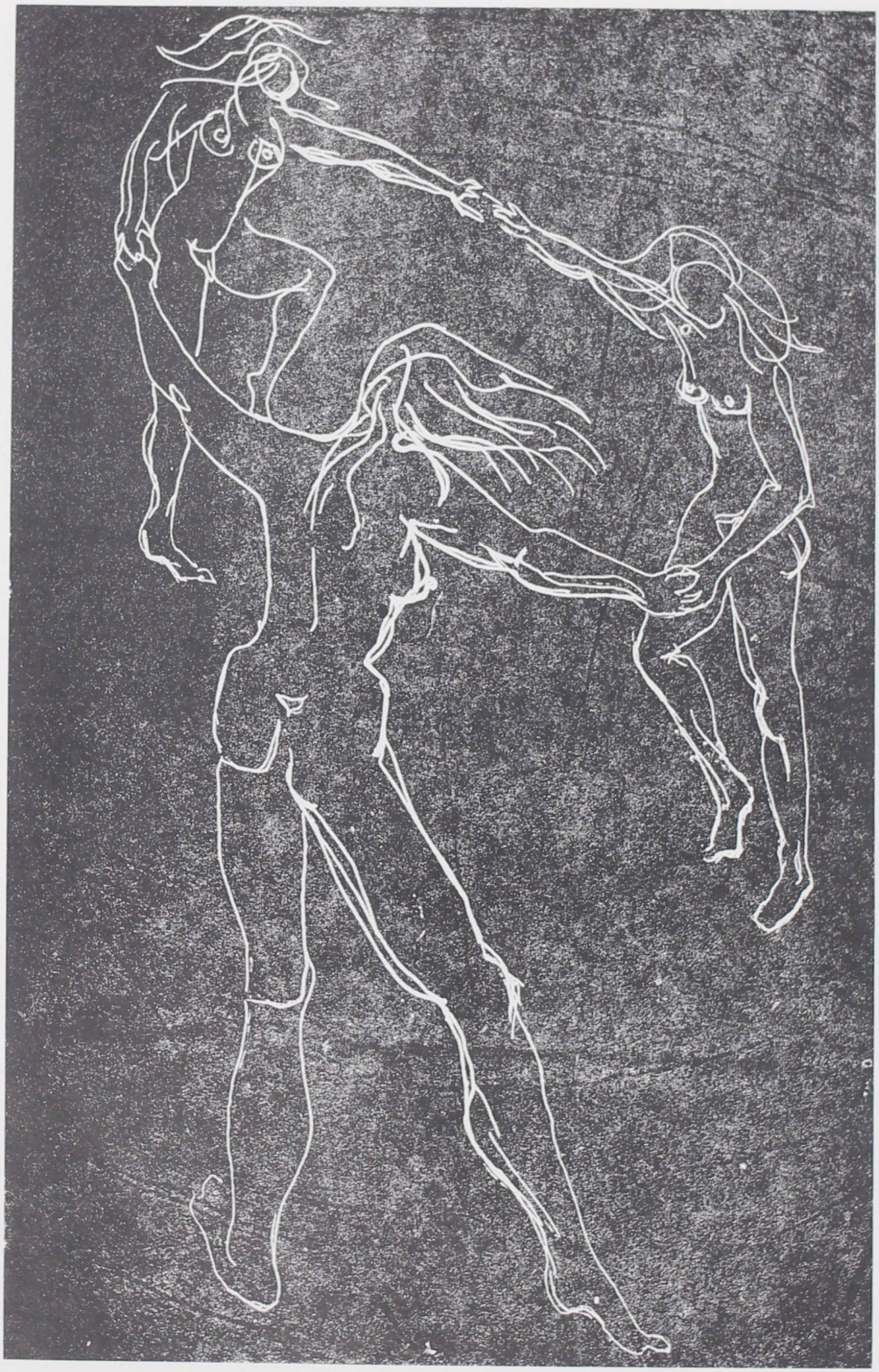
"BEST OYSTER STEW ON THE COAST"

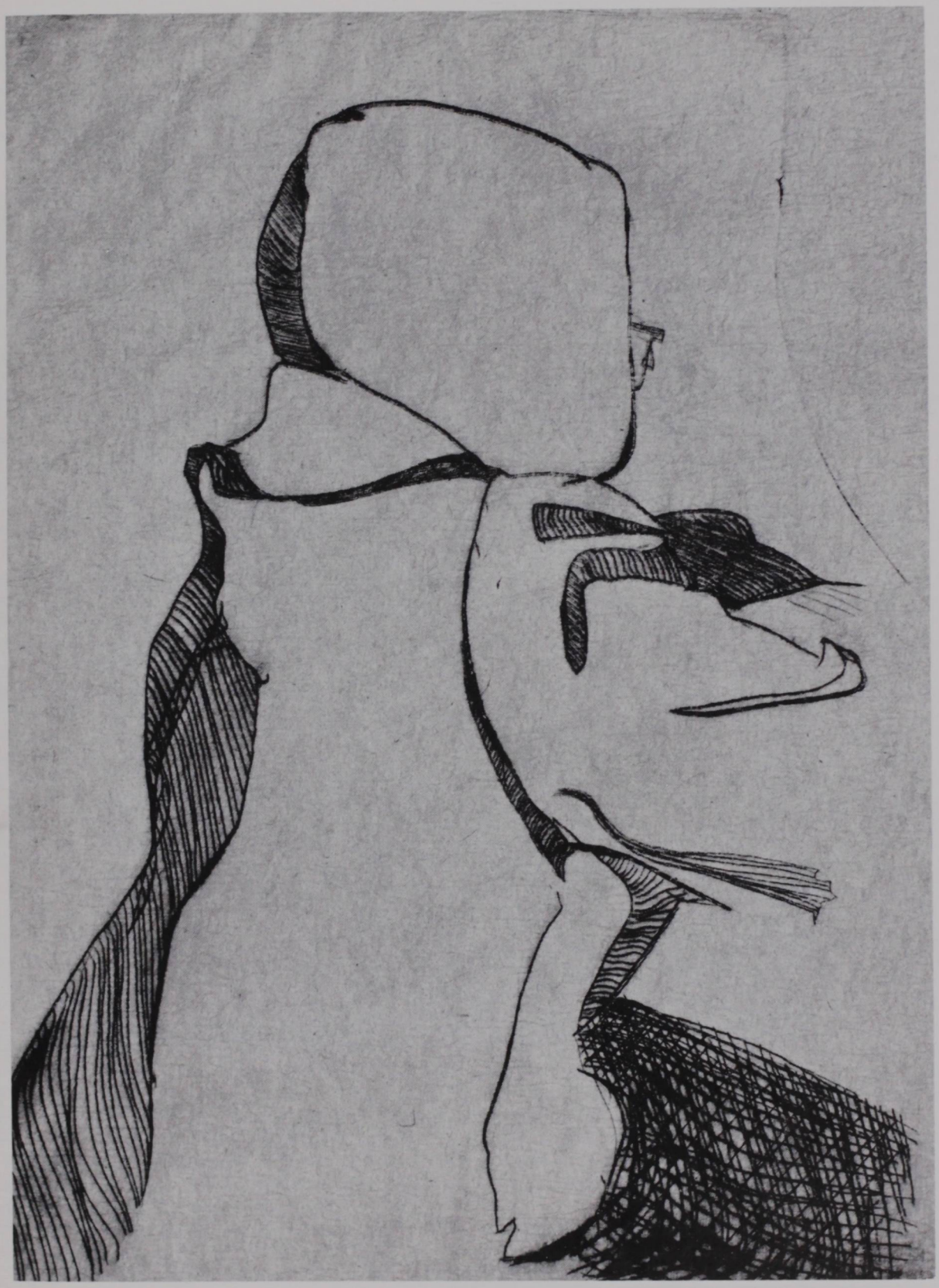
        crackimope
        lookerpearl
        tossimin
    boils and brills and blows
    round Crabby's namore; it'til's old

        pot'il lass along: Time

Eight again, clumb above th'arbor
Looked landward, billowward
Lit a lamp, and none an seaward

Bruce Robertson





OUTSIDE THE ARK

Ken Hansen

He walked along the street slowly and pensively, unaware of his own methodical plodding, unconcerned about time, and totally oblivious to anything but the melee upon which his black eyes disbelievingly feasted. He had always heard of such occurrences as this, watched news specials, read press reports and pondered the editorials, but to behold the drama itself, even the silent drama of the aftermath, transformed what had been head-knowledge and acceptance of cold fact into a numb awareness of absurd reality and finally, to a heart-felt sickening of actuality. Overhead, barely visible through smoke from the brush fires, and the smog which gushed forth from the giant industrial plants, the thickening cirrus clouds, together with the garbage air below, formed a shield, protecting the heat from the oncoming night. It was a muggy day, in all, a day when sensible people should have stayed indoors and thanked God or General Electric for the miracle of air conditioning. The barometer was at 30.24 and steady; the wind, three miles per hour from the Northwest; and the humidity 73 per cent — hardly indications of a severe storm. But then, he thought to himself as he ran his fingers through his thick, black hair, this was the day after the disaster, the calm after the storm. Still he thought it seemed strange that the weather conditions were the same yesterday as they were today. Looking at the demolished district one thought of the destructive capabilities of a tornado or a hurricane. But this was not tornado country or hurricane weather, yet nonetheless, the damage lay there before his eyes. It was fun playing the euphemism game.

Across the street stood a church which had been "gutted by fire" just as the newspaper had said. The once-white walls of the small square structure were a dull blend of blacks and greys and dirty whites, looking, he thought, like hundreds of pelts from a race of alley cats; the same kind that would now add the scrapped temple to their list of nightly haunts. He approached the church slowly, stopped in front of the three steps which lead to the cheap fir door with the blackened brass door knob, and climbed the fire-weakened steps which creaked under the stress of his weight. He peered down the narrow aisle that ran between two sections of pews, up to the one-step platform on which was centered a charred pulpit. He wondered how many times the cries of the man in black had echoed through the sanctuary in a high-pitched monotone forcing attention from the believers who periodically exercised their nostalgia by showing up on Sunday morning. How many times had his unfaltering voice dwelled on fixed fate versus free will, the unscriptural aspects of evolution, or the importance of brotherhood? So absorbed was he in his forced daydream that he did not notice the footsteps as they approached him.

"You...up there!" demanded a voice from behind him. "Who are you and what are you doing there?"

"And where am I going?" the young man added with uncommon quickness, yet feeling as surprised as the money changers of old when accosted by Christ in the temple.

"What was that?" the officer asked in a tone which was at once defensive and irritable.

"Nothing."

"Come on, cut the cute remarks and get on down here. Hurry it up! Move!"

He descended the steps slowly and confidently until he came face to face with the officer.

"I think sir, you must be either a strange comedian or a desperate philosopher to ask such involved questions. At least they are not common to a man of your profession."

"You damn smart-alec. Why don't you wise up? Haven't you and your kind done enough damage already?" the officer replied, his face red with rage.

"My kind sir? Oh yes, society's scheme of color categories and age stereotypes, like so much paint, and white houses are in and gothic colors are out...outdated, outmoded...primitive, I believe, is the better word. Yesterday, both dark and light houses were demolished, and yet you still find a singular object of blame. I think sir, man looketh on the outward appearance. And if you should be so ignoble as to entertain feelings of superiority, then would you please answer the same questions you just put to me?" His remarks fell on the deaf ears of the lawman, who, foresaking any attempt to think, resorted to the mechanism of duty.

"Alright. I've had enough out of you. Come on with me. Maybe a trip to the station will trim that fancy tongue of yours." The officer motioned for him to follow, but with no success.

"I understand again sir. It's the old force is the best solution' cure. Look around you. Do you think it worked? Look at that church which they call God's house." He pointed to the now multicolored structure behind him. The officer, finally catching the full import of his statement, but unwilling to acknowledge it or grant it importance, quipped back, "If that's God's property then He ought to take better care of it. And furthermore, I can't see that this talking or any talking is doing much good."

"I am aware of that particular attitude on your part," he retorted, as he reached for his back pocket. "Here is my driver's license. My identification is denoted by the name, and my temporarily permanent residence by this address, which is where I am eventually going. In addition, though trust does not seem to be an effective password these days, I can assure you that my only interest or reason for being here is that of observing this natural disaster, since I don't do much looting in an expensive sport coat."

The officer never heard the last sentence, for his mind had stalled on what he felt to be very peculiar. "You called this a natural disaster?" he sarcastically queried in a tone less pretentious than before. "Just try to have it declared as such. Try to collect federal funds for it. Natural disaster." He repeated to himself once again, mulling it over in his mind. "I would have given you credit for having more sense than that. And to think you called me the comedian. Natural disaster. What a helluva way to describe this mess. Now go on and get moving."

The officer, with reluctant respect for his victim's precosity and annoyance with disrespect, told him once again to get moving, while assuring himself that he would like nothing better than to cure the fellow's sassiness with a couple days of confinement in a concrete cell.

He walked slightly faster as he left the church, knowing that somehow the quicker pace would make the officer feel better; that his duty-like objectivity and cold confidence had done its office. He had no quarrel with the police, but today he just wanted to be left alone. For him the incident had already been forgotten. The seemingly endless path of debris once again captivated his senses. His

eyes stared in disbelief at the shattered grocery store on the corner, but his nose confirmed its reality. The interior, which had been an orderly system of numbered rows of stacked produce separated by aisles of space, looked more like the town garbage dump than a haven of finest food awaiting the hungry shopper. Everything that wasn't burned black; anything that resembled its original form and identity, became blackened by the house flies which swarmed over the putrid mess insuring themselves of a future generation. At his feet, blackened cans of Campbell's soup lay scattered among cans of baby food and fruit juice, (now cooked) black Cheerios, and shredded wheat, which looked more like steel wool pads. Near the middle-top of the pile lay a slightly broken bottle of Mr. Clean, who hardly looked like the Caucasian hero that resided in millions of kitchen cleaning cabinets. He wondered if housewives would buy a black Mr. Clean, but quickly realized his stupidity when he remembered that black was the antithesis of clean. As he got up to leave, he noticed that near what used to be the entrance, was a curious mixture of red and dark coloring, which, from where he stood, appeared to be clotted gore. He bent over to look at the dirty red glob. Through his transforming eyes, the sanguine mess proved to be only T.V. blood—catchup—unexplainably tainted with black, inky flakes. "Why couldn't it be catchup?" he asked himself. "After all, this is a grocery store." He told himself that it was only that; just so much catchup spilled in a storm. It certainly sounded better than saying it was the maroon remains of a martyr, or the last few drops of a dying dream. He stood up, walked backwards a few steps, and stared at the entire heap of the store. He realized that the blackened debris was now the ghost of some man's hope; a charred remnant of his greatest historical achievement. But with more curiosity than empathy he left the smoking hulk and walked on down the street, listening to the infrequent yells of others who prowled the slain district. They meant nothing to him. Not now. Not after this. One did not think of people or persons or even a person at a time like this. It was hard to think of specific causes of it all, let alone specific preventative solutions. The effect was overpowering. Positive thinking would come later; after he had seen all; after he had experienced the unreality of the actual thing.

He continued his slow progress as dusk eased into darkness, looking from one side of the street to the other; from the shattered window of a liquor store, and the damaged cars along the street, to the half-burned shoe brush lying in the middle of the sidewalk which was the tool of some man's 25 cent business. Further up the street, in the narrow space between two hideously filthy apartment houses which became "homes" in his game of self-deception, he saw an abnormally large, but dead rat. He threw a can at it. The maggots crawled out from the dark caverns of its nostrils and from between the straight, evenly spaced teeth, like tenants of a slum dwelling to see what had caused the disturbance. He winced and turned away, unknowingly observed by emaciated faces staring from behind glassless windows. He gazed ahead and to the right, a monstrous paper mill was five hours into the second shift of three shifts on continuity. The sulphurous white smoke fairly gleamed in the presence of the powerful electric lights. But the smoke was the only thing that gleamed. The building itself was coated with layer upon layer of smutty fumes and aged grime which became thick and dry and cracked like old house paint. He already knew the other ugly features of the place, including the desert of blacktop that seemed to be the panacea for the landscaping problems. His eye moved to the penned section of old junked cars situated a few blocks from the paper mill slough. The scrambled autos, long past all hope or caring, caged by a rotted wooden fence, which in turn was bordered with beer cans and broken bottles, lacerated his sensitive eye; and the mill's pond, which he thought of as a gargantuan, publicly tolerated cesspool made his nose beg for the temporary loss of smell. Suddenly, and sadistically, he wished that the natural disaster could have been directed if not controlled; directed to demolish the ugly, functional structures which he could take no pride in, even in the most perverse way.

For the first time that day his legs felt tired. Leaving the main drag of devastation, he turned up an alley which invaded on both sides of the filthy backsides of respectable business buildings. Because it was an alley, and because it was getting late, the darkness was more intense, interrupted only by distant lights which reflected off the smooth, well-worn surface of the greasy concrete. He heard voices ahead, angry voices uttering threats in harsh, but tensely restrained, tones. Looking intently into the night he discerned the forms of two young men, perhaps his own age. The white one was easier to see than the other one. As he approached them he could see that each of them was holding a knife tightly in his right hand, about waist high, in the same position as one holds a sword—straight out toward the opponent's midsection. He didn't know how long it had been since he first saw each of them moving their blades in quick, horizontal thrusts, wondering what effect such a slash would have on the soft flesh of the other. But it didn't matter. They began to talk less and in more hushed tones now, circling slowly and cautiously around each other as they spoke. Suddenly the taunting game ended, the slashing began, and the blood flowed to the ground as it dripped from saturated clothing. He wondered it anybody else was watching, and turned to look quickly behind him. As he did so, one of the fighters called out to him.

"You damned fool! How can you just stand there! Won't you even help one of your own kind?"

He looked at their faces and followed their profiles down to the smooth ground on which they stood. He stared at the pool of shiny black and watched it grow larger as similar trickles slowly blended into it. He took one last look at the pool which contained the lifeblood of each of the two young men, muttered something about a "lousy situation" and wished he could walk off into the darkness; half prayed that the door to the ark was still open.

abed on the night,
stroked by the
clammy fingers of mist
under the veiled sight of the
midnight corpse,
a wind's grizzled moan
speaks of aching labour
pimpled and purple,
rocking on the edges of
death
grasping at the hazy memory of
crimine aphrodesia . . .
that moment,
flooded in saffron circles
of heat.
the petals spread their
thick lips to the touch
of gentle and burst with
colour.
. . . now a neutral image in the back
of ash eyes
surrounded with pregnant shadows
and bitter soughs,
a fragile companion
while waiting for the birth
the hollow, still
birth.

Dennis Bosley


K. Akins

And
a good word to start,
one in a continuum
of melodious
soundings
on a life
Happiness
sounds
like one
of many many
laughters
passed
for
emotive
directions
all laughing
in
Anger
at my meaning
Less
than you could guess

Any way

again that
conjunction
in time
and
space
of fleets
of light
lighted

(So heavy, like man he said)

hurt
meanings
also
mistaken
feelings
floating
on
the rocky
cement
undercoated
Astroturf
Modern
BABY!
Interesting
comments: follow me: said the colon:
Lean on: said the ?
and continue
on the next
line
of the
next page
our discovery
in sight

Well in my being

You . . .
I get personal
pointed
perhaps ponderous

all
in
stages
You
are like that moonship
flying
to the
moon

Where else
would
that
Strongarmed: man: HIM:
(could i)
GO

So beautiful
curving in uninvented glory
on in uncharted
unfinished

so the history book does
paragraph
paragraph
into chapter

Another time
distinguished
meaning
TO live for

II.. Character
eyes down
knee sore
look into

Hell
is
down
there

So
Now
Can I be

Too
far
to
walk
to
Him
Or is it so:
Its a party
at my place
we can( ) ball
have a
and go out of our minds
and
transcend
into

a Drunken stupor

rolling
with the Punch

spiked with delirium
inspired
quotes
from
forgotten
memories
of unwanted
experiences
so
unlike
what is living
As
we can find in
your words
Come
Come
my dear
as you would say

Living is not all in the word
Life is not a simple four lettered

character
of our language
Expand
into eloquence
elegance
and existence

For here is where the forgotten yesterdays
of tomorrow
will gather
and lead to
today
and life
add infinitum

along with immortality
shall be a progression
geometric
in nature
of our unwitting wisdoms
deciphered from the incantations
of

Comment: Why do you keep leading me on?
Because: Said the colon:
(wait)
(in deviousness springs wonder)
(or vice versa)
(or maybe not)
(I wonder)
And:

our sweet-sour Chinese proverbs.

But back to beauty:

a rose in its week of loveliness
fluttering
like a heart cowering
in a
storm
of awe struck
lighting
of unpatterned rhythms

So we see and wonder
at the mystery
of its unspeaking
life,
its silent message of beauty
Sense its
power
Strong angelic influence

IMPACT

underlying,
petal gentle abruptness
edging in

Rose: rose?
Past of rise
so they tell
of my wonder
Wander
in
almost
circular
spirals
Continuum
of tragedy
the despair
an
crush
of unwanted trite grayness
close
in
close
in
my
already
forgotten
rose
Powerless strength that holds on course
onto
already
repeated
signs
and
tracks
lain
repeatedly

floating

float

floating

float

Past the tribunal of
all consciousness

Was I wandering?
You were waiting: said the colon:

Flying unconscious
into the dullness of
my unreflection
Wonderland
unwondering
repeated
the madness
inspired
rabbit
rabbit
rabbit
My God
the
Rabbit

He who is
without doubt
the
Creator

worshipped in sublime wonder,
sub terranean seasons of joy forever
pilgrims all are
in our faith

forever seek
said our Mexican friend
(like wow, in sight to out of sight rhythms)
(it comes)
(beating)
(within)
(holiness)
quotes the hairy one

Continuum
must not become
marshland
so said in withdrawn
tones
on his countenance
we described

and interpret:

And

(to be continued)

-thesand-

Gales of storm,
quarried walls of rain
slam on bowed trees.
Beaten earth, sledged by skies;
deep honed winds
sharpen blackness.
Ancient power, rampant, deep,
forces dayness into dark.

Celia Smith

Bunches

Whole bunches of emotion
bundled up with strings of one-ness
scattered through a black-white life;
strewn across a flat, blah world,
plucked and tossed by careless hands.
Humps and clumps that catch the eye—
the pinky sunburned blush of youth,
a deep wine rose—the depth of love,
a newy green-ness, ecstasy,
with yellow joy and purple satisfaction.
Banded blue of pure delight
near the grey of indecision;
brutal red of starkest anger,
aging black of old despair.

All lie single.

Lonely bunches, picked up one upon a time,
Smelled and tasted,
halfly noticed,
tossed again in singleness,
tightly tied
and left to lie to act as one and only one.

It needs a wind across the field
to break the bands and loose the bundles,
mix the singles, make them one, scatter, sunder, give reunion.
Purple yellow green and orange
all together with the rest,
field on field of mellow mixing
flowing, flexive, merging mingles.

It needs a we across the field
to join, unbundle, spread, infuse.

Celia Smith

You ask how a man might live with a Van Gogh and Matisse
on the same wall,
You say it is like a man mad with chills and yet sweating with
ferocious fever,
You ask how a brown bear male might hotly handle a mother in spring,
only to desire the spring products for winter meal
I tell you to first see the solid white winter brings, but
leave your eyes open also to see the crystal rays
of an orange sun
I tell you to feel Christ slaughtered with nails yet burning
with redeeming love,
And search once more for a crevice where one
may find a place in a dipolar world,
Not neutral, posegative—only the young will search for the
key unlocking a universe of closedopen doors.

John Gordon

William Stafford, currently teaching English composition and literature at Lewis and Clark College, was born and educated in Kansas. He has been collected in many anthologies of American and Northwest poetry, and his poems have appeared in such publications as the ATLANTIC MONTHLY, HARPER'S MAGAZINE, the NEW YORK TIMES, and SATURDAY REVIEW. His first book of collected poems appeared in 1960 and was entitled **West of your City. Traveling through the Dark,** published in 1963, received the National Book Award for the most distinguished work of poetry by an American author. He was awarded the Shelley Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America in 1964, and was given a Guggenheim Foundation Award for the academic year 1966-1967. In 1966, another book of collected verse by Stafford, **The Rescued Year** was published by Harper and Row. The poems discussed in the following interview were drawn from this volume, and discussion of the unity of a book of collected poems centers around this work.

Most recently, Stafford was appointed Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress, a position held in previous years by Robert Frost and Archibald MacLeish.

The format of an interview printed here is somewhat deceptive, since what actually took place was, more or less, a combination of an interview and a discussion between Mr. Stafford, James Foster, Charles Bennett, William Mandigo and Knut Hoff. However, for the sake of clarity in both topic and speaker, the interview form was decided upon and the discussion edited as such.

Foster: Rod McKuen, in an article in "Life" stated that the most recent twentieth century poetry was taking a definite turn back to romanticism–the subjective experience in thought and feeling. What are your views on that statement, and, in connection with this question where actually are the "I's" in your poetry–that is, who exactly are the personae in your poems?

Stafford: Well, first about the romantic turn, it sort of surprised me that he'd say that. I thought that it had stayed romantic right along. I don't feel that American poetry has ever really turned very far from romanticism, so I don't really know what his reference point is. About the I, it's not always myself by any means. It's any location for the statement that seems to me to maximize the effect of the statements. So, I may say "I" pretending all sorts of ways. I don't know if I've ever felt that I was identifying myself in the poems when I say "I."

Foster: Well, as an example, could you comment on your poem "Passing Remark."

Stafford: In the "Passing Remark" poem it's true that the being who speaks there is a fairly mild, ridiculously tame kind of person and to some degree I can feel myself in that poem, but not to that degree–not that much. Often, when I write, I go in toward the center and then go to extremes. I may go duller than I am or try to seem smarter than I am–go in all sorts of directions so I may seem harsher or softer just in order to get the most out of the experience that begins to happen when I write.

Foster: For instance then, the last stanza of "The Farm on the Great Plains."

Stafford: Well, in the whole poem–even in the title–I begin to feel the mood that was on me writing it. It's an identification of a place. It's out in a big open space. Everything else is gone, so immediately for me the persona most resonant in that kind of situation could be a person who is lonely, who feels some kind of yearning–in the way the telephone lines have to go so far in that country, in the way that your sight goes so far. So at the end when I say myself will be the plain, that's just the extreme.

Foster: In essence then, the speaker can be divorced from the poet.

Stafford: Yes. In fact it seems to me that one of the things about writing poetry–or any kind of creative writing–is that you opt for any maneuver that will enhance what you start with. So, if the landscape is a certain way, then that influences what the persona will be. And if I'm in the way, I kick myself out of the way and become somebody else.

Foster: Would you then call your poetry a meeting of subjective and objective experience?

Stafford: Yes. Actually, if I could say something from the experience of writing it, I would exaggerate the objective part. Writing seems to me to be like finding something. So it seems more objective than subjective, though I realize a person outside may say, "Well, it's really more subjective." So all I'm saying is that as far as my feelings are concerned, it's an objective experience. It's stumbling over opportunities and using them.

Bennett: In thinking back over some of the remarks you made when you were here earlier this year, in the one poem you read you talked about going around a bend in a road, and then the road suddenly opened up. It seemed to be the whole point of what you were saying in relation to that poem is that it is an objectification of all of these different subjective experiences. It seemed that some of the time you were saying that something didn't even have to be your own experience.

Stafford: Let me put it this way: In the process of writing, one has experiences right there and then. They are not things that have happened–they are things that are happening. In the pursuit of the immediate you don't identify with yourself, the past, or the way you thought you were going to be in the present. It feels as if you are discovering something right there at that time.

Bennett: Then, in your poetry, how do you use time? Is

time flat in your work, that is, an immediate experience?

Stafford: The poems often at least pretend to reminisce. They will say, "When something happened." But, in the writing, anything that you hark back to is a present experience. So, it feels that you are having that experience all over again. In fact, that's the only way to remember, I suppose. You can't really recapture, you just live in the presence of something that has happened in the past. Writing is a current feeling.

Bennett: In referring to a book published within the last few years entitled "Five Northwest Poets," is there a school of northwest poetry?

Stafford: Robin Skelton, the editor of that book, did a heroic job in trying to yoke those five together because they're in the same general area. When I read the introduction, I admired his adroitness, but I didn't really agree with the harmony that he was forcing those people to have. I don't think there is a northwest school.

Bennett: I had thought that perhaps the experience of a certain environment had caused a certain type of poetry to be produced.

Stafford: Some people have thought that environment does that, and I have the feeling that place is important. But, it's important to you because you are there. It's not decisive.

Bennett: About the relationship between poetry and revolution, do you see any strong tie, especially in Romantic poetry?

Stafford: Social concern now operates around in the ambience of this term "revolution." We're thinking about extreme things. Writers are like other people in that they pick up ideas and react to current happenings so that they are likely to write things that seem on the surface at least to refer to whatever is current. But, I don't think that writers are particularly full of insight into the way things ought to be, or that they are necessarily any part of a political spectrum. It is true that now most writers seem to be on the side of change. It doesn't feel to me to be inevitable, but it happens to be that way now.

Foster: So far the focus of your talk has been on the experience of place and the feeling you get by placing a speaker in a particular environment. Does that make the poem?

Stafford: When I say that a poet today is likely to refer to current things, in a way, that relates here, You are likely to refer to places that are near where you are–that are important to you. And you are likely to locate yourself and these experiences in terms of things you encounter. But, I have this strange feeling that once you begin to write you are exploiting whatever is around you, whatever is current, the people you meet. I don't mean exploiting in a bad way, but you are using these things. And it may be that you will see a chance to make an effective poem out of a political idea that would be sort of odd to you if you were voting. So, in the stress of writing – the excitement of pursuing a possible closure in a poem – you may opt in all sorts of lively, surprising, intellectual or emotional ways that may not really indicate what you would choose as your position. If someone would say to you, "What's your political position?" I at least would have to stop and say, "Well now let me think." I wasn't trying to express that, I was trying to make a poem.

Foster: In relation to the verse structure, meter and rhythm of a poem, do you consciously set out with certain patterns or verse schemes in mind, and, in essence, how do you view the form-content relationship in poetry?

Stafford: It would be hard for me to say clearly and definitely enough how strange I feel about this question, because when I write – now this is an awful thing to confess – often I don't really have that idea that you mentioned awhile ago that I want to express. Instead, I just put down any beginning, and then what is actually happening with me at the time is a consequence of what I started with and anything else that may influence me which brings the next thing about. That is, for me writing is not putting words to ideas I already have. It's entering the language to get help in discovering ideas that I haven't yet had. So it is for the form too. I hardly ever have one in mind. I would start by stumbling over some opportunities – or at least those more enticing than other opportunities– so I would follow a certain cadence or a succession of sounds. But, it's not conscious at the beginning. It's not a deliberate choosing of meter. Instead, it's a group of emergences and opportunities in succession. Afterwards, I might go back and be sorry about some things and change them around a bit. That's the way it is to me at least.

Foster: I do find definite meter in some of your poetry.

Stafford: It's a natural thing I suppose, and it's impossible for me to deny a kind of sophistication about meters. But, it's not deliberate. I think those meters come with the language. It's not usually– or hardly ever– an attempt to fit a certain meter.

Mandigo: Would you say that a certain word decides your direction more than an overall purpose?

Stafford: Yes. The strange thing is that the little things are more crucial than, say, my place in Western culture. Its sort of like taking a walk, scaring up a rabbit, and taking off in that new direction when you thought you were going in another one. It's that readiness to follow the rabbit that is the creative feeling. If you decide on a route to go–you know how you are going to go and how you will get there–it's not creative. But, if you start wandering off and let yourself be influenced by what you find, then you are writing creatively. This is how I identify that strange feeling of creativity.

Mandigo: The problem with a lot of young poets in beginning to write is that they consciously try for the theme–will it be important or not?

Stafford: I would be afraid of that–will it be important or not? If you decide what is important before you enter into an activity, then the activity is not helping you. I think that writing itself is a very productive thing. It makes things happen right at that time.

Mandigo: I'm interested in how much you revise poems.

When I write a poem that will be led by words and feeling without an overall purpose I will read it later and decide to revise it, but that seems to destroy it.

Stafford: Overcook it?

Mandigo: Yes.

Stafford: The issue about revision is one I have brooded about since I started writing, and I think I have arrived at a somewhat different attitude towards it. To me, revising what I have found my way toward is not a separate activity. It's like doing it again—leaving it and going through the same set of experiences. And if a new rabbit jumps up I may follow it. But it doesn't feel as if I do it one way the first time and then I do something that's more critical and "by the rules" the second time. Instead, it's as if I'm going headlong after that rabbit the second time through. Now, if you want to call that revision then that's what I'm doing. Many people think of revision as making something correct, but it's taking the plunge again and seeing if something new will occur.

Foster: A problem with revising a poem, in your sense of the word, is maintaining a feeling of unity within the work. Does it immediately split into two or three thoughts?

Stafford: I don't really have a "neat" response to that question, but I would like to put in this rejoinder: An almost unbelievable thing happens. If you enter that set of experiences a second time as you did the first time—that is, ready to go where it takes you— since you're pretty largely the same person and since I pretty largely do this same re-entry within a short period of time, then it stays coherent. I don't try to keep from tearing the poem apart, but I go back and find that it's coherent. If it isn't, I abandon it and follow the next thing. Another point I would like to put in here is that one of the good things about writing—one of the good things to do in writing—is not to try to force yourself all the time to do important, significant, coherent, coercive things. If I try to hold myself to something that's very significant, then I'm likely to be twisting myself out of the natural stance I would take and follow what someone else thinks is important at the moment. Then I have violated that process that I keep looking for.

Foster: Judson Jerome, in the Saturday Review, defines two types of poetry—that which we call poetry of social concern and the other which he terms that of "self's swamp." It would seem to me that a poem must have coherency and unity when following a feeling.

Stafford: Jerome is obscuring what is the essence of writing. He has the point of view of poetry being a premeditated art. I believe that he himself writes better than his theory. He has two options: You can premeditate it, which is a very mysterious process to me—it hides where the creative process comes from— or you can go into the swamp of the self. Well, alas—swampy or not— that's where the premeditation takes place, I think. And, the meditation part is to me the most interesting part. So you are leaping the part where you are having ideas—where nothing was and then it is— and you're pretending that you can use things that come along in some way that you are not even paying attention to. I like to pay attention to those ideas that come out of the swamp. I think there is another way. I think that the art activity requires of us the acceptance of apparently unimportant little hunches we have. We follow them, and the justification is that they occur to us. We keep doing it, and out of this apparently aimless, tentative process, we arrive sometimes at something that is significant. But, if we wait for something we are sure is right before we get into activity we just won't get into activity. We just won't write.

Mandigo: Jerome is fairly representative in poetry criticism, in classifying poets and in discovering who influenced who. There does seem to be a separation of the academic and the vernacular in poetry.

Foster: Jerome also makes the point that a poet like Eliot can write an essay on music in poetry, but his verse is unmusical. Would you you care to comment?

Stafford: For me it's hard to know what musical or unmusical is. Sometimes what you want in this art, which is not exactly music, is something that wouldn't seem musical, but you want it. Thomas Hardy said that he deliberately put in some of these roughnesses that people delighted in finding. I can understand that. There are all sorts of needs and opportunities as you pursue any certain poem. I think the rules derive from successful poems. Another point I should make is that, although it is good to know what is happening as far as the most current trends in poetry go, I want to keep from knowing too vividly what is happening. That is part of my job as a writer. I want to be what's happening, not following what's happening. The best thing to do as a writer is to use the voices, the influences, that come to bear directly on you. They make up what you are responding to directly at the moment. If you try to find the trend and join it, then it clutters the process. I don't really believe that you find your way to creativity by discovering analytically what other people feel is happening. You have to enter it, let it happen, and then some scholar can say what happened. So, there are two processes. One is to learn all you can about what is going on, and I like to do that. But, when I start to write, there are some things I don't want to know too well.

Mandigo: How do you feel, then, about the importance of small magazines such as "Poetry" and "Poetry Northwest" when compared with "Harpers" or "Atlantic", since especially, these smaller magazines are the only contact we have with the newest poets?

Stafford: The smaller magazines that give primary emphasis to poetry are significant in a special way. That is, they choose the best they can get—not in terms of fitting theme to their magazine, or of offending their advertizers—but they're after poetry. And I think that there is a kind of a dignity about them. What the editor is doing is zeroing in on the best that he has received. Those other, grandiose magazines, which sell more advertizing and are viewed by most people as more significant, will hire almost anyone to sit at the corner of a desk and be poetry editor and do

what he can. But he may not be doing as much about catching interesting and current things in writing as someone in a little magazine. So, little magazines are significant in that way. Many of the larger publications will drape their poems around more important enterprises, while in the small magazines often the editors are real fanatics about certain people. And they are only for a certain small audience.

Foster: What are your opinions on the position of the poet in the contemporary scene?

Stafford: First, I don't think poets are very important in our society. They have a very small place. Most of the people who are practicing poetry--and I'm not trying to separate myself from them at all--have very limited talents. They're not very important. But, poetry, or that element of "aliveness" that we keep associating with the arts, is important for all of us. There is a part of all of us that lives by seeing and taking options in immediate experience. This, for me, is the art element, and this is important for all of us. The poets themselves are an insignificant group and their poems almost all disposable products. I would hate to defend the importance of most of the poems we put out--or even any of the poems. But, that element is important.

Foster: Do you have any thoughts on the varying schools of so-called "angry young men" which have expressed themselves through poetry, and art in general? For example, take the play Look Back in Anger?

Stafford: I saw the play and I like it very much. That's true of many of the particular efforts that are made--I like them. But, if I try to step back from them and establish a philosophical position, I'm not really as much at home in the rhetoric of anger as most of my friends who are writing now are. My own attitude is more pacifistic then angry. Though the purpose of these people I do understand, the tactics I often deplore. I'm appalled at the strategic implications of some of the poems and actions that go on. I myself am a peace marcher, and, in general, some kind of activist. But, I don't want to scare that part of society which is important to me--their actual welfare to me is important. I don't want to kill anbody, and I don't want to burn anything. But, I want to persuade people, and I do agree that things ought to be different. Actually, I don't know quite what to make of a sustained diet of the rhetoric of anger. I'm not really very enthusiastic about it. When you write, so say something, I think that you ought to have a lot of dimension to move in, including anger. It's just that when you talk about what you're doing--as we are now--I think that angry words are alot better than angry acts.

Mandigo: With regard to what we term the "pop" culture, there seems to be a mass culture spread where the arts become commodity. It seems that the arts suffer, but that the people become more satisfied—become "wholer" people.

Stafford: You're afraid that the wholesale production will degrade the product?

Mandigo: Yes.

Stafford: My own impulse is to be in favor of this participation. It seems to be a good thing, and I get out of the negative part in this way: I have found that most of the things we do won't be lastingly important for others. The amount of lasting creation will continue to be small. But, the total amount will be greater if more of us are involved. In other words, I'm in favor of all of this participation in art, but I do not expect my own writings to bowl everyone over. Nor do I expect to be bowled over by most other people's writings. It's better to think of it as a participation rather than a monument.

Foster: When you read someone else's poetry, how do you judge it as good or bad? Do you keep any objective criteria in mind?

Stafford: I don't have any objective critera, though I do have a formulation. It seems to me that when we begin to read something or hear something, it may have in it a succession of little bonuses. It will call forth positive feeling from us. And if it calls those positive feelings forth from me, I call it good. If there is a preponderance of those, that's fine and I keep on reading. If the debits come more than the bonuses then I quit reading. A person must stay uncomfortable when reading verse. You can set up criteria—if it's too fat you won't consider it— but obviously we can't do that. You've just got to suffer or rejoice. As a writer I would like to stay with the attitude that most of what I read will not appeal.

Hoff: How do you choose from your own poetry? How do you want other people to see it?

Stafford; I judge by something that seems to me to have an incremental resonance about it. It doesn't have to have something I approve of intellectually, but if it just seems to me that it starts out to be a linguistic event and keeps on being a staisfying linguistic event I'll send it out. If someone says I mail, maybe one out of ten is published somewhere.

Foster: How do you choose the poems to be structured in a volume? Have they all been published before? Do they all fit a particular theme? For instance, in some of your books, there are divisions. Do these parts represent different developments of a particular theme? Are they related to one another?

Stafford: Actually, this bundle of questions adds up to the question is a book of poems a unified thing or is it something you bundle together? Usually, I just put in poems that have already been published in magazines. People agonize about the unity of a book. Editors argue alot about what to put in and what to leave out. I've pretty much given up the idea of a unified book. So, I just try to keep away from a sequence that would spoil both poems. And then I like to have some good poems in the beginning and some good ones at the end. Since you can't be careful at exactly the same degree everywhere, I try to be careful first and last. Finally, in the books I've made, the parts are related, but not very stricly. I've heard a lot of writers say that structure in a book of poems is so much bunk—you can't get the right order. I've always tried to make it have some kind of felt unity because I'm always trying to get a reader to read my book as a coherent book. But, very few readers read a book of poems that way.

Mandigo: It would seem that there is a problem of being too close to your poems.

Stafford: Yes. I see the problem, but for me it doesn't happen. I can't get close enough. I have to get inside that poem and decide for myself.

Foster: A professor once told me that there is a difference between a first-rate poem and a second-rate poem. For example, some of E. E. Cummings' poetry can be classified as second-rate. The poem may be a nice exercise, but it is little more than that.

Stafford: I think that it can be a good poem, but it's not as good as "Paradise Lost".

Hoff: "Paradise Lost" seems to be a completely different thing. Milton spent his entire life preparing to write an epic. He wasn't simply sitting down to play with a few words and textures.

Stafford: Then, is a big coherent, serious effort more valuable than a trick on a page? I say it is. I envy writers of big, sustained, central works. I think they are great. I can't find myself disagreeing very much with those great milestones—"Canterbury Tales," "Paradise Lost," Shakespeare's sonnets. If you read the great body of the work, I think that the same things come bobbing to the surface again and again.

Foster: A problem there would be whose originality is involved—that of the poet or that of the critic?

Stafford: For me it doesn't make any difference. What makes the difference is the impact of what is made. And some of these great poems carry with them a whole set of central and lastingly significant points of view and ideas.

Mandigo: Do you think there is a reason why no one can put out a great effort today—an epic say? Is it the society or is it the poet?

Stafford: I don't really know.

Bennett: What about a sustaining cultural theme? I don't think it's possible to come out with a work like "Paradise Lost" in the sixties, unless it would be something like Eliot's "The Waste Land". I think you need, for an epic or a massive work, a sustaining cultural tradition or theme.

Foster: In an epic you are setting up a hero which would embody the virtues of a particular culture.

Hoff: It would seem that you need a perspective from outside of the culture.

Stafford: Why, then, can't we do something like "Paradise Lost" now? Are we too far out of phase? We don't believe in the past, and certainly not the present. And the future?

Mandigo: Possible modern poetry can't be ordered. The modern world can't be ordered.

Stafford: This occurs to me,, that there is a difference between how we feel now and what people felt in the period of "Paradise Lost." Now we have perceived a very significant thing—that all of these systems, all of this ordered poetry, were made the way we are making our art now, out of fallible, individual people. We do not have the faith in that transcendent, in that outside, pattern. We say all these things—Bibles, laws—that men have made, they've made right here the way we are making them. Whereas they kept thinking, "God put that idea in here."

Foster: Poetry always, I think, reflects the science of any age. Milton could write the last great epic, but his age was breaking into an extremely rational thought. One could no longer use epic devices and the mythological machinery in an epic. In this sense, then, we now have Einstein's relativity. If it's all relative, it can also all be determined.

Stafford: But, Einstein himself thought that God doesn't play with loaded dice, as he put it. There is, he thought, a unified, coherent force somewhere. And this is still available for an artist today. What it takes is a certain nicety of attityde toward contemporary experience that would still enable a person to do a vast, resonating kind of literary work. He wouldn't have to relate it to Christianity. He wouldn't have to relate it to progress. "Paradise Lost"? I think that something like it is still to be done—and still can be done—today.

a self-imposed pedestal
quietly destroyed
leaving only i
still somehow suspended
where once nothing was

to discover now
existence in nowhere
is again to learn
to not determine meaning
for the super-me
reminded that good
is simply real-me happy
finding my place belonging
in a positive nothingness

bob harrison