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# **The Et Cetera 1978**

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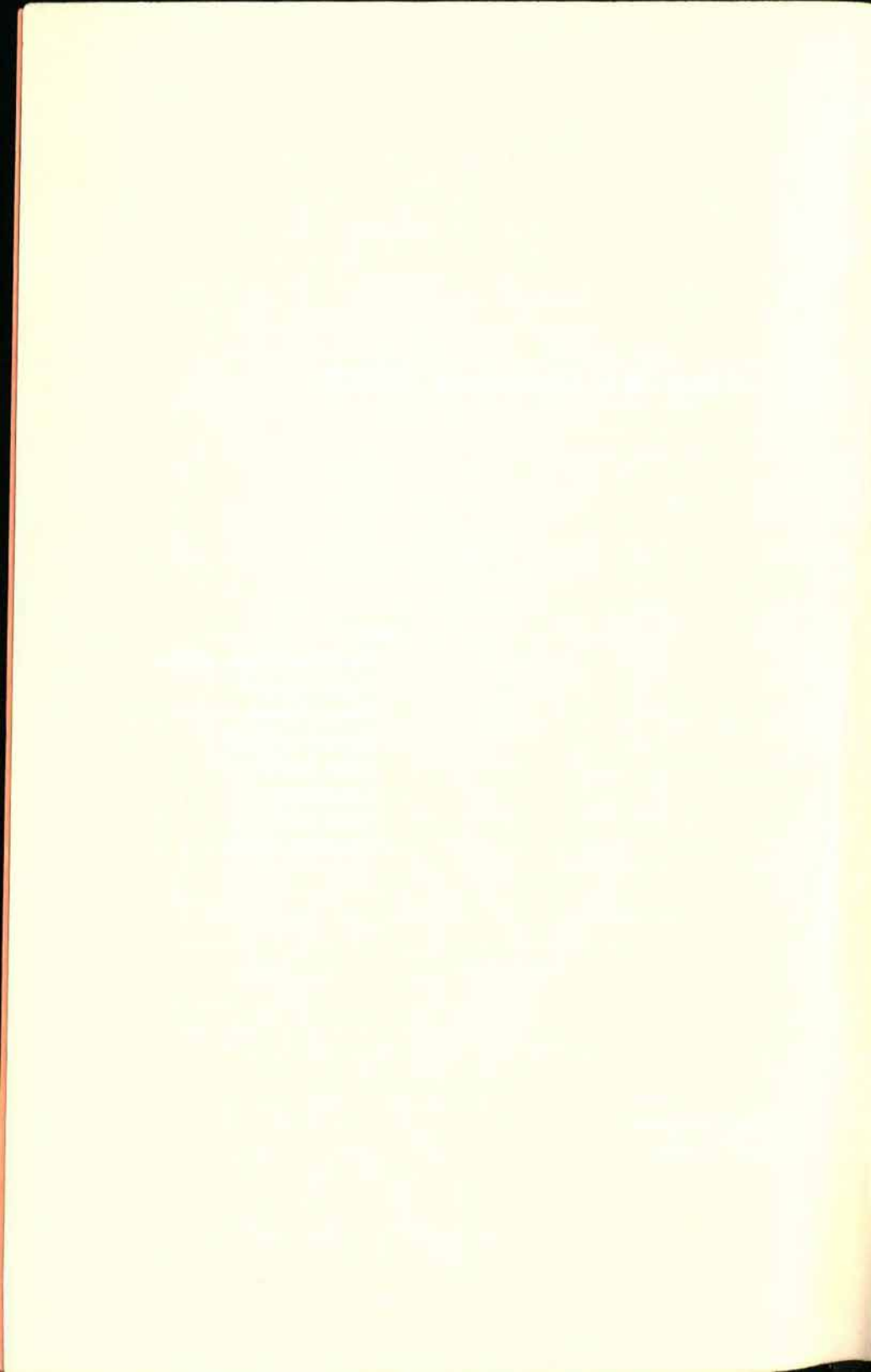
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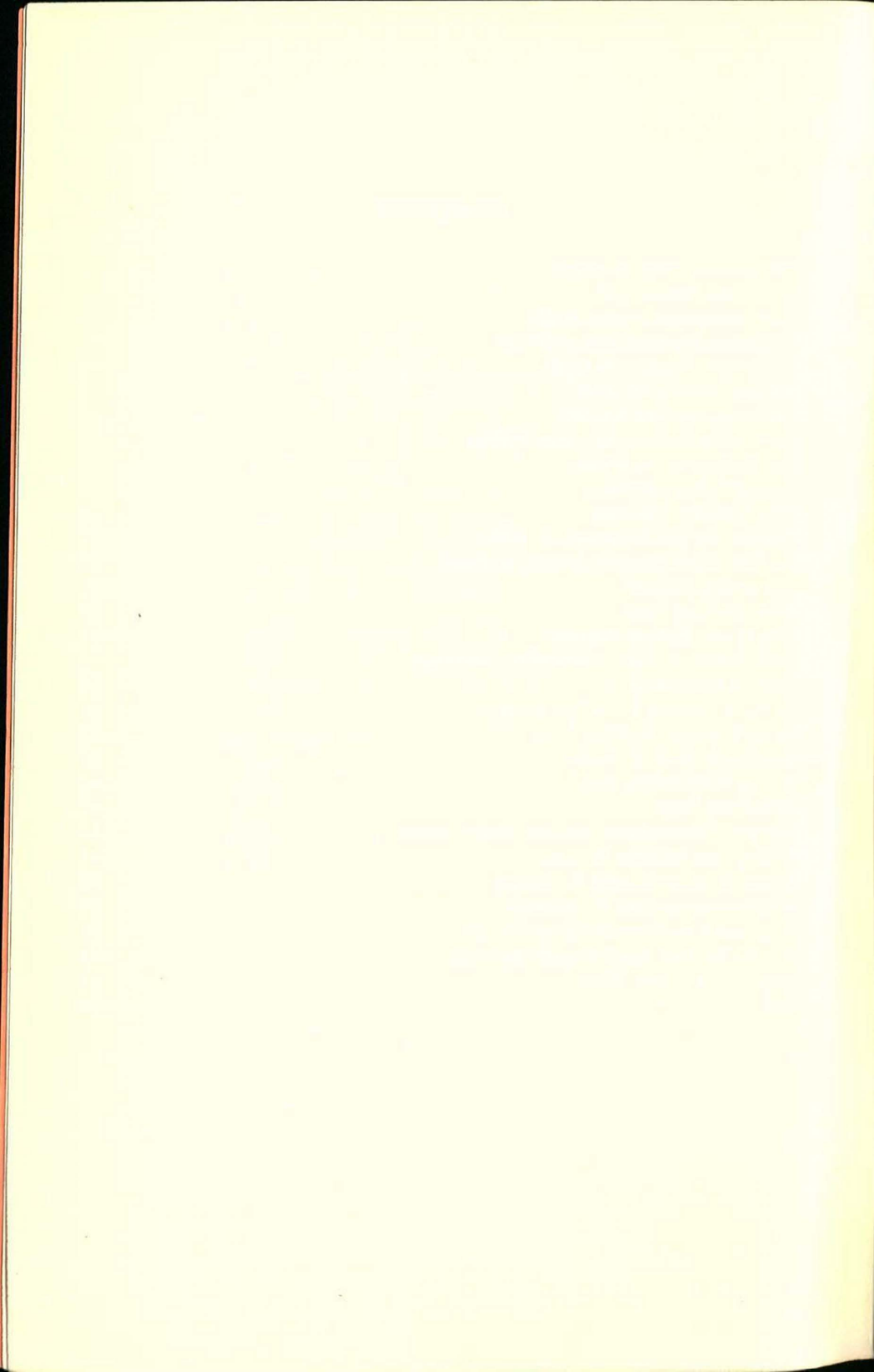
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**i remember**

i remember  
when you told me once  
that you could  
talk to trees  
and they would  
answer  
by swaying  
you didn't tell me  
about the wind  
i wish  
i hadn't found out

Cindy Arbaugh



### Rise of the Sea

All things give height to  
themselves somewhere  
Between a place where the world  
grows high to catch the  
sun  
And where there is no sun.

The tree will harvest only that  
part of the ocean which  
it needs  
While the rest will dance

The day with the moon  
and spin the  
Sand  
Until it finds a soul.

The rest will wait?

ULED



Illustration by Deborah Phillips

### Cathy Sleeping

I have seen birds crested like that,  
taU blue-gray birds with darkly penciled-in wings,  
the shadings of which extend up their meager neeks  
to form a mask against the eyes, eyes if belonging  
to humans would be called mad. The dangerous crest  
looms above the head in a gray, feathered half-halo;  
for you, the hatchet wound of your hair  
upon the pillowcase, not passive and reposeful,  
but arrayed in a stiff crescent of blades.  
When you move in your sleep and dismantle it,  
J feel a chill of relief.

Cynthia Wolfe

## Fragments

I sometimes think  
leaves had all fallen  
and that a misty, grey rain  
fell gently, yet not with comfort.

Often, I try recalling  
just if he was  
but can not, can not  
though, I know I should.

Memory of him, in  
fragments, does return...  
him sick, always sick.  
Mother constant by his bed.

Yes, that's it: they put  
big brother in the ground,  
and maybe I could not go  
or was made to stay away.

Still, I long to know  
just if he really was,  
but recover not many  
traces-no reminders haunt.

Yet, amid dust and old  
things rejected, I find  
fragments of a coloring book.  
And must suppose it was not mine.

Howard Martin O'Cull

In the 30's she knew two neighbors who killed themselves.

My Mother,

the family's only failure.

And once at a Moose convention she was a groupie.

She married the guitarist.

The 30's and maybe Dad was lonely.

She can cure the cramps with a shot of rum.

One morning a kitten found cut  
was quickly sewn in light blue thread,  
sterilized on the stove.

Yet she continued to heat the chocolate,  
and bag our lunches, never to be late for school.

I ask her to tell me more about Dad's wilder days

"I'd rather forget it and so should you!"

Her hands knead dough at incredible speed.

The un-done bread describes her.

Virginia Bicknell

**Massage**

She seduced me with her smiling eyes

And shy feminine ways. . . .

I seduced her with my sloe-gin

And an age-old, time-tested line,

"Would you like a massage?"

Jerome Bicknell

### Phantasia

a cow jumping over  
a silver-green moon  
the singers appear  
with a carousel tune  
and the actors come out  
with their unrehearsed lines  
for the people have hearts  
but none of them minds  
the ladies have susy-q  
curlicue hair  
as they pirouette gaily  
down garlanded stair  
their silvery chorus  
sings silvery tunes  
as cattle jump over  
the silver-green moons

the silver-grey spinners  
weave mazes of green  
and people see mem'ries  
that no one has seen  
the merchants sell candles  
that peirce through the dark  
the people bow down to their  
gods in the park  
like mannequins merrily  
marching through time  
the people preach reason  
but none of them rhyme  
and the dish runs away  
with the make-believe spoon  
as the cow gallops over  
the silver-green moon

Richard Hensley

## The Watchers

Brenda Haubrock stretched uneasily and turned her gaze away from the threatening weather outside the car window. The eastern Kentucky landscape had long before lost its appeal through sheer monotony. A harsh winter and heavy spring rains had washed away and generally deteriorated large sections of the Interstate, forcing them onto a two-lane blacktop. Added to that inconvenience, a punctured tire and a slipped pin in the gearshift had changed the expected two-and-a-half hour trip to Lexington into a five-and-a-half hour bore. No longer was it possible to hope to make the prearranged lunch date, but, if their bad luck was over, they still had plenty of time to arrive for dinner and the concert.

She turned to the driver. "Mind if I see if there's something on the radio?"

"Feel free," the girl replied without taking her eyes from the road. Dagmar McVey cast a doubtful glance at the lowering sky before checking the rearview mirror. The worst of the coming storm was still behind them; with any luck, it would remain so until they were fairly close to Lexington. She shifted in her seat, trying to find a more comfortable position for her aching back. Driving was no pleasure for such a nervous person. Her hands were sticky on the wheel.

"We got any more beer?" she asked her passenger.

"I'll check." There was a pause, then, "It's warm . . ."

"Beggars can't be choosers. Hand it over."

Brenda popped the tab and passed the can to her friend. Turning back to the radio, she made vain attempts to find something on the dial, but static wiped out any feeble signals in the area. With a small mutter of disgust, she flipped the knob off.

"Give me a slug of yoUJ beer, Dee. If I drank a whole one, I'd probably barf." Accepting the proffered can, she took a drink and passed it back, gagging slightly. "Brew of Cthulhu," she commented, bringing a laugh from Dagmar. Weird names and strange sounding syllables delighted Brenda, frequently rolling off her tongue merely for the pleasure of hearing them spoken. That was what had brought them together in high school, from which they had graduated earlier that year. The name Dagmar's parents's had felt compelled to inflict upon their daughter had caused her to suffer years of teasing. It was not until meeting Brenda in the tenth grade that the teasing ceased to bother her. Brenda considered the name to be "neat", as she put it in that overly exaggerated way of her's.

"Oh, shit!"

Brenda looked up from rummaging in her purse for a Winston. "What is it?" Her companion did not have to explain, however. She saw for herself the roadblock ahead and, in a brief rush of paranoia, thought of the stash in the unlockable glove compartment. But the barrier had been set up by some road crew. "Detour," read a sign on a sawhorse. They could not make out any sign of work as yet underway.

It was bad enough being forced to leave the highway, but this gravelly abomination had no right calling itself a road, in Dagmar's opinion. Finally, the gravel gave way to some semblance of pavement, although constantly dodging mammoth chuckholes was not anything she appreciated.

After twenty minutes of seemingly aimless wandering, patience was just about worn thin. "Where in the goddamn hell is the end to this thing?" Brenda voiced both their opinions out loud.

"Who the fuck knows?" Dagmar replied. Her skittish eyes moved from the fuel gauge registering near empty to the ever more ominous sky. "We'd better come across a gas station before long *and* I don't know if I want to try driving through the storm when it hits."

"Storm doesn't bother me, but how much gas you got left?"  
"We're running on fumes as it is."

It was not until the Volkswagen's engine had begun to sputter five or six minutes later that a town eventually came into view. Even so, they had to lock the car and continue on foot with a plastic container and a pouring spout. The equipment had been in the trunk; Dagmar believed in being prepared for the worst and constantly expected it.

The town was the typical redneck hole, a clutter of decaying frame houses clinging tenaciously to a crossroads. It took several repeated explanations to convey their problem to the tobacco-chewing gas station owner. One brown stream of slobber almost got Brenda on the leg. At length, they acquired the gasoline, hiked back to the auto, poured it in and got the heap started. They pulled into the station and Dagmar turned off the ignition beside one of the pumps.

She rolled down her window as their old 'friend' approached. He leaned his beard stubbled face uncomfortably close to her's, the strong odor of Red Rox and cheap beer making her gag. "Fill it up please," she managed to croak out. As he moved to comply, both young women felt the need to get out of the stuffy vehicle. They were stretching themselves and commenting on their perpetual ill luck when they began to take note of their surroundings. They seemed to have attracted a crowd.

"Guess nothing much happens around here," mumbled Brenda.

"Wish to hell they wouldn't stare so."

"Don't be so damned nervous. You'll die before your time." But the crowd did appear rather large for so small a thing as this. "Must be the Interstate."

"Huh?"

"The Interstate," Brenda elaborated, "I bet there's hardly been anyone through here since it was built. Visitors must be rare."

"I'll be glad to leave."

"Me, too, Dee." Brenda looked around. "Let's see if this dump has a Coke machine. I'm dying of thirst."

There was none, however, which made the tiny crossroads town feel that much more oppressing. Their audience was growing larger all the time. Those in the surrounding buildings had arrived first and now others were joining them. Barefoot children in faded overalls scuffled with one another, while their elders talked and nodded knowingly. One gaunt man of about fifty blew his nose into his hand and wiped the snot on his grey buffy pants. Several women endeavored to stir around the still, dead air with fans distributed by a local funeral home. The amateurish rendering of Jesus that adorned each fan also seemed to stare balefully at the two.

"I feel as if I'm in a zoo," said Brenda while **giving** the finger to an elderly couple on a nearby porch. She let a dull expression come over her face and began scratching at some imaginary cooties. "Hey, Caleb! C'mere 'n' see thuh city folks in theyur aujoomuhbeel. They's a-gittin' ga-yus!"

Dagmar laughed softly. "For God's sake, don't let them hear you-they'll lynch us."



"More probably take us to the local church and sacrifice us to Nyarathotep or some such shit."

"Somehow, I can't picture these goons prancing around and chanting couplets from the *Necronomicon*."

"It's always the ones you least expect. . ." said Brenda in a tone meant to be joking. It sounded more portentous than she intended; the constant stares were beginning to unnerve her, as well.

They both jumped when the gas man came up behind them. "Full up, young laydies," he said in that slow, dull voice that made it seem as if his tongue was too large for his mouth. He squinted as if he was in bright sunlight, although the clouds were to drop their load of rain. "You cud use sum awrl. . . you down a kort."

"Uh... go ahead and put some in, then."

"He's only **trying** to make a buck, Dee. 'Sides, I wanna get outta here."

"So do I. But my oil gauge is busted so I have no way of knowing."

"Hope he moves his butt. I don't appreciate being the topic of conversation for these weirdo hicks." Indeed, the buzz of voices had increased, as if the two were the hottest source of of gossip in decades.

After an eternity, the car was ready, the cash was paid and they were leaving the revolting place.

Brenda leaned far out the window. "'Bye! Don't expect us back anytime soon!" She brought her head back in as the first heavy raindrops began to spatter onto the windshield. The sprinkle soon became a torrent and thunder sounded not too far distant.

Dagmar reached to turn on the wipers and uttered a string of curses. "We certainly have all the luck. What the hell time is it?"

Her companion consulted her watch. "Almost four."

Dagmar made some silent calculations. "We were about an hour out when we hit that detour... Oh shit! I dunno how long it's gonna take us now."

Brenda was making her own calculations. "Y'know, it seems as if we should be headed back by now."

"Whaddiya mean?"

"I mean that we've been moving away from the main highway all this time and we should be travelling in a direction parallel to it, if not back to it."

Dagmar started to answer, but was drowned out by a clap of thunder.

"Jesus Christ, that was close!"

"Too close." A bolt of lightning struck the road about one hundred feet ahead. "Omigod, Brenda! I don't know if I wanna try driving anymore in this mess."

"Calm down, Dee. If we got struck, we wouldn't get fried 'cause we're grounded on rubber tires."

"But the gas tank could explode."

"Since when?"

"When the goddamn lightning strikes it, that's when!" She was shouting partly in near panic and partly because another bolt had struck a tree nearby, the resulting crash being loud enough to wake the dead.

"All right, all right. Find a place in the road that dips down a bit and where there ain't any nearby trees to fall on our fool heads and pull over." Brenda would have felt a lot safer travelling on instead of hanging around in one spot, but Dagmar shut off the engine. Approximately two minutes later, a b..ltered pick-up passed them by.

"He's crazy!"

"No crazier than we are, sitting around in this shit."

In the quarter hour it took for the worst of the storm to pass over, several more vehicles had gone by. Neither girl noticed that they were full of passengers. If they had, they might have recognized some faces in the windows.

"Well, the bad part's over. Let's get going."

"Jawohl, mein Herr!" joked a considerably more relaxed driver. "I will get ze Field marshal to his conference mit der Fuehrer in plenty's uv times, beliefs me!"

"You'd byetter, svine! Effens you dunk, I'll make you sign ze payuhpers!"

The old routine continued until they came to the bridge. Dagmar brought the car to a halt. "What d'ya think of that?"

"Not much."

They were refering to the condition of the structure. The dilapidated old bridge had obviously suffered in the thunderstorm and, even now, was swaying precariously in the gusts of wind that waxed and waned.

Eyeing the worn and loose planks they would have to drive over, Brenda asked, "Wanna try it?"

"Helj no, but it's either that or go back the way we came."

"And if we did that, we'd just have to head for home. There's no way to get through on the highway."

"After all the crap we've been through in getting this far, the last thing I wanna do is turn around and go back to Huntington... wanna risk it and hope it doesn't decide to collapse while we're on it?"

Brends gave the bridge and the swollen creek beneath it a jaundiced eye. "Gee... what a time for you to have a sudden attack of bravery..."

"I'm not brave, I'm just pissed."

"Okay. Those other cars and that truck must've gone over it. It oughta hold this little thing, it being no bigger'n a fart."

Dagmar shifted into first, let out the clutch and eased the Volkswagen forward. The bridge moved in the wind and, as their front wheels touched it, shuddered slightly.

"I didn't like that." The shaking continued as the full weight of the car eased onto the span. There were no visible supports from above. The only thing appearing to hold the rotten wood together were some cables along the side. They both hoped there was something underneath that was reinforcing this mess. Dagmar was tom between the desire to gun the motor and get off the swinging structure as quickly as possible and the fear that any untoward rattling of the span would bring it down altogether.

"Dee, look out!"

Three or four greyish planks ahead of them had suddenly come loose from their fittings, either due to the brief, but strong, gust of wind or the tremors from their vehicle. Before Dagmar could hit the brakes, the front wheels had slipped into the gaping hole. She threw the stick into reverse, trying to back out of it, but the effort was useless.

Dagmar put it in neutral and switched off the key. "We walk. Let's get going!"

"But... your car!"

"Forget the car! This damn bridge is fall'ng apart around us!" Even as she spoke, several more planks, behind them this time, worked loose and dropped into the silty stream below. "Hurry, before those holes get too big for us to get across!"

Almost simultaneously, the two grabbed their purses, opened their respective doors and climbed out. Brenda began to close and lock the door on her side.

"You idiot! Forget that!"

Brenda started, and realizing the ridiculousness of her aciton, abandoned her efforts and joined her friend. Together they began to pick their way to safety. A two-plank gap barred their way. As they were bracing themselves to leap across it, another shudder passed through the span and the hole widened considerably.

Brenda clutched wildly at a rusted cable as a sickening wave of vertigo swept over her. "Oh my God! Now what do we do?"

Her friend did not hear her. Instead, she was staring past at something on the near bank from which they had come. "Brenda." Dagmar's voice was dull despite her disbelief. "Look."

Brenda followed Dagmar's gaze. "What in the world!?" Almost at the edge of the bridge, crowding one another for the best view, were at least half the people from the town they had stopped in. While they watched, more cars drew up, disgorging full loads of passengers. The entire community was turning out for the event, from the smallest, unwashed child to the most antiquarian, toothless elder. All watched the tableau unfolding with a fascination that was horrifying.

"Hey, don't just stand there! Help us!" Brenda's cry started a drone among several of the men, but none came forward. "What are you? Some kinda weirdos?! Why..."

"Forget them! Let's get back to the car!"

"The car-"

"Maybe it'll float. C'mon, it's our best chance. They certainly aren't gonna help us." Weak with terror, the two made their way back to the Volkswagen and climbed inside.

Dagmar struggled to center her thoughts. "Um-shut your window and make sure your vent is closed." As she issued the instructions, she did the same, then checked to make certain the circulation vents were shut. "Hold on, we're bound to get knocked around when this thing goes... and don't fasten your seatbelt. If this thing tips over, we'll have to get out fast and, with our luck, the damn buckle'll get stuck."

Bracing herself with trembling hands, Brenda wondered if she would die of fright before the bridge fell. That possibility was quickly ruled out, however, for with a creaking straight out of hell, the old bridge gave one last, violent quiver and the bottom fell out of the world.

It was like those dreams you have when you wake to the sensation of falling, Brenda decided. With a teeth-crunching jolt, the little automobile struck the water. There was an unsettling moment as the water churned against the glass and the car threatened to tip over, but, finally, their run of ill luck came to an end and the Volkswagen righted itself.

The current began carrying them downstream. Brenda turned, grasping her bruised right elbow, and saw Dagmar clutching at the bridge of her nose. Vivid red blood flowed freely from her nostrils.

"Hey, Dee... you okay?"

Her friend moaned groggily and Brenda let go of her elbow to reach out a tentative hand. She eased Dagmar's head back against the seat. "Dee-"

"Fuckin' steering wheel caught me right between the eyes!"

Brenda chuckled slightly in relief. Then, a sloshing feeling at her ankles brought her attention to the floor of the car. Muddy water was seeping in rapidly around the doors. "Hey, Dee, it looks as if we're gonna hafta swim for it."

Dagmar straightened up- too quickly. Dizzy, she let her head fall back. "I . . . I think I'm gonna be sick." Her face had gone pasty white and Brenda knew there was little chance she would make it very far through the water in the shape she was in.

Feeling as if she was suffocating, Brenda cracked her window slightly. As she did, she noticed that the car was, ever so slightly, drifting toward the bank. "I think maybe we won't hafta swim. Do you think you'd be able to get out and wade to shore? I'll help you-"

"Christ, yes. Don't make such a big deal of it. . . . Wait a minute." Despite Dagmar's best efforts, a smile twinged at her lips. "Better not, that'd be breaking the law."

Brenda fell for it. "What law?"

"You know, I gotta go down with the-"

"Arrgh! I oughta leave ya to drown!" About then, the car scraped against the creek bottom and came scrunchingly to a halt. Brenda forced her door open after some difficulty and aided her companion in leaving the vehicle.

"The stash. . . ."

"God, yes." Brenda opened the glove compartment and removed the small plastic bag full of herb and papers, stuffing it into her purse.

It was as they were dragging themselves through the mire toward the gassy slope, that they heard the siren. A Kentucky state police car pulled over on the opposite shore. The trooper emerged from the front seat. In the gathering dusk, the flashing blue roof light lit him like a slow-motion strobe.

"Stay there!" he called, "There's a car coming for you on that side!"

"Dudley of the Mounties to the rescue," commented Dagmar sarcastically, her forehead resting on her sodden, blue jeaned knees.

"Yeah, about an hour late."

They finally made it to Lexington-in a state patrol car. At a local hospital, they learned that Dagmar was suffering from a minor concussion and a broken nose. Brenda had fared better; she only had a few contusions.

Eventually, they sat in some lounge, dressed in hospital gowns and wrapped in blankets, sipping coffee with a couple of interns and one of the troopers. It was from him that they learned the full story.

"Boy, those people in that town are damn strange. That's the sixth time they took that detour sign form in front of that decayed bridge and placed it on the highway. We were taking it back when we noticed the place was practically deserted. That's when we hit the siren and notified some guys on the opposite side to meet us there." The man paused to light a cigarette and run a hand through his hair. "Did you know those damned idiots were taking bets on whether the two of you would make it?" He shook his head in wonderment.

Brenda grunted in what the trooper took to be disgust. "Too bad we didn't get in on the betting," she commented to Dagmar, "we could've used a few extra bucks!"

Deborah Lleyon Phillips



Two distinguished authors visited campus in the fall 1977. Novelist John Knowles (*A Separate Peace*), and playwright Edward Albee (*Virginia Woolf*), were sponsored by the Et Cetera and the Cultural Arts Committee of Student Activities.

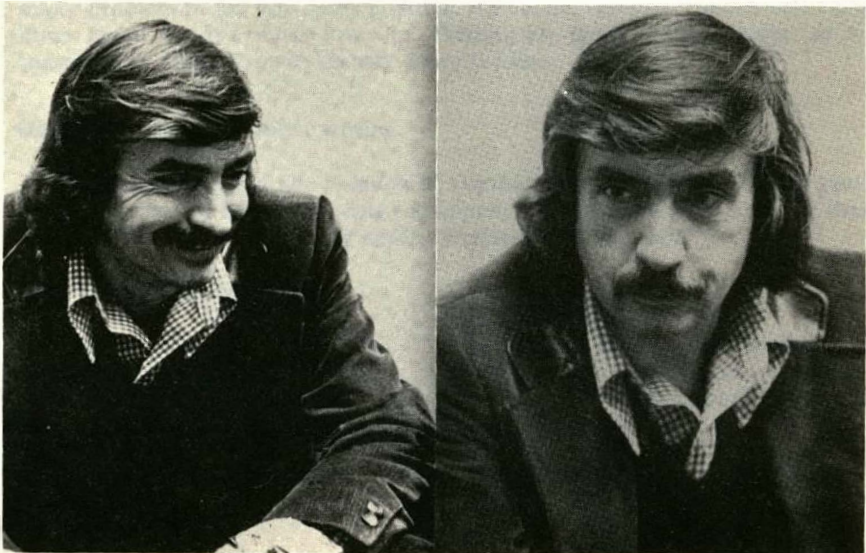
The two writers gave workshops and lectures to students, faculty, and community members as part of Et Cetera's "Power of the Pen" series. Excerpts from their best known works were presented in the coffeehouse during a program of readings in October 1977.

Et Cetera staff members interviewed both authors in private sessions during their visits. The following few pages contain selected portions of those interviews.



Edward Albee was born on March 12, 1928, in Washington, D.C. When he was six years old, he later told a friend, "I decided not that I was *going* to be, but with my usual modesty, that I *was* a writer." He started writing plays at age 29 after his early attempts at poetry and prose were unsuccessful. His first plays consisted mainly of one-acts—*The Zoo Story* (1959), *The Death of Bessie Smith* and *The Sandbox* (1960), *The American Dream* (1961), among others. His first full-length play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was written in 1962 and received polarized reaction from critics.

Albee is a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner: in 1967 for *A Delicate Balance*, and in 1975 for *Seascape*. His plays are currently performed in America more frequently than any other American playwright.



Photographs by Arza Barnett





On the subject of communication breakdown:

"One of the causes, of course, is too much communication. People are being bombarded with information and the responsibility to respond to information from all sides, far more than they ever used to. Even a hundred years ago there was no radio, no television; newspapers were not everywhere, and the news-magazines. One was not bombarded from all sides with information. You receive information and you are forced, you're expected, to respond to it in some fashion. People are bewildered and turned off by so much of the information they receive. Also, a lot of the information that people are receiving forces action from them that they do not want to take because it is too involving and too much trouble. Civilization indeed seems to be pressing in on people, and they're resisting it, they're turning off."

On being a writer and writing:

"When I'm writing it's a matter of getting up and getting to work before I find other things to do. Four hours a day is quite enough to work. My brain gets tired. I will write every day generally when I'm working till I get a piece finished. I don't write it until I've thought about it a long time."

Advice to young writers:

"Make sure that you really are one, rather than something you would like to be... It's not a decision. We you want to be a used car dealer because there's money in it or because you like to talk to people; no, it's something that you have to be, you discover that you are one. Then the problems start: are you any good, is anyone going to be interested in you. Those are minor problems. The major problem is: are you really a writer. If you are, there isn't much that can be done about it. It's what you are. Finding an agent (editor's note: as was suggested by John Knowles) is way down the line."

On being discouraged about writing:

"I'm never surprised about much of anything. Really I'm not. I know that a certain number of things are going to happen, some of them good, some of them bad. Any they don't necessarily have any relationship to merit."

The "message" of his writing:

"The awareness of being alive. Fundamentally. Most people prefer to go through life fundamentally avoiding confrontation and avoiding issues, avoiding anything that's dangerous; and that cuts them off from a great number of experiences that are very valuable and teaching experiences."

When asked which play was the most difficult to write:

"*Seascape*, I think. For very unimportant reasons. It started out to be one kind of play and ended up being another kind. I had to do more work on that one than any other play. . . I wanted to write a play about whether or not evolution had taken place. And since some of my anthropological research determined that we began as lizards, and that indeed we were lizards which came up onto earth and started mutating, and then when the glacier. . . came went back down under again and then came back up later and evolved into everything else, including man; that since it was the lizard-type or salamander-type creature that is always coming up from the bottom of the sea and evolving on earth, that indeed these people, these lizards, were the ones to do it. And it has anthropological fact as a background."

On the controversy concerning the Pulitzer Prize and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*:

"The Pulitzer Prize was awarded but it was not given. There's a distinction to be made there. Back in those days, the Pulitzer Prize was awarded by a jury of qualified theater professionals. Their award had to be passed on and approved by a governing board of newspaper editor. . . The jury, . . . all thoroughgoing theater professionals, voted that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* got the Pulitzer Prize that year. Now since the play had the reputation of being shocking and filthy and difficult, the newspaper editor. . . voted, something like twelve to eleven, not to give the prize that was awarded. The *New York Times* polled the twelve who voted against it and found that the majority of them had neither read nor seen it, and made their vote on hearsay. Nowadays the Pulitzer Prize is awarded strictly on the opinion of the qualified juror. . . Nobody has to pass on those awards anymore. That's why I started getting them. So I think I've gotten two and a half Pulitzer Prizes."

On the merit of awards:

"The only thing about prizes is since they're giving them out it's better to get them than not. If they didn't give them out it wouldn't make any difference. . . The Toni awards are fundamentally popularity. Just like the Oscar. . . they're basically worthless awards."

About critics:

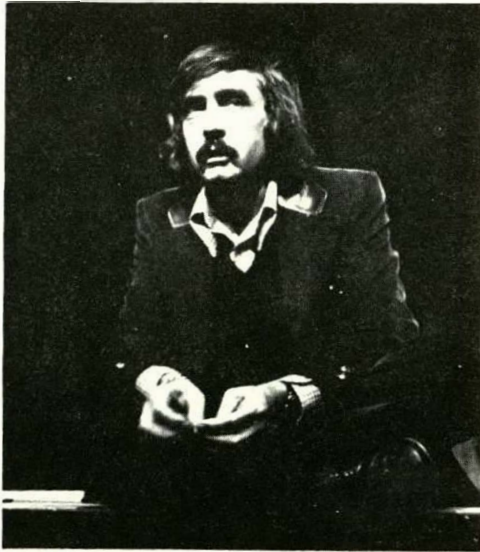
"What Noel Coward says about women applies to critics: they should be struck regularly like gongs. Most critics are not very good. Most of them are not critics, **anyway; they're merely reviewers.** **Anyway** they don't have the ability to educate and inform an audience intelligently, which is the only reason to have them around. All the arts would be a great deal better if all the critics would be practitioner. . . of those arts. If playwrights were drama critics, the audience *would* be receiving at least intelligent prejudice instead of unintelligent prejudice. We keep going to the newspaper. . . and magazines, all of us playwrights, and saying, "Come on, have somebody who knows something about the theater reviewing plays," but the newspaper. . . and magazines aren't interested in that, for reasons of their own."

On television and PBS:

"PBS, unfortunately, is not improving because the funding for PBS is so small that it can very seldom originate any ideas and has to borrow things from the BBC and other places. So it's not doing anywhere near the job that it could. Still, it's kind of an oasis in the television wilderness. But only 1/2% of the people who look at television ever look at public television. A very, very small percentage."

On writing for television:

"I've thought about it from time to time, but it would be a totally different kind of writing. Commercial television is not interested and public television lacks the funds to commission anybody to do that kind of work."



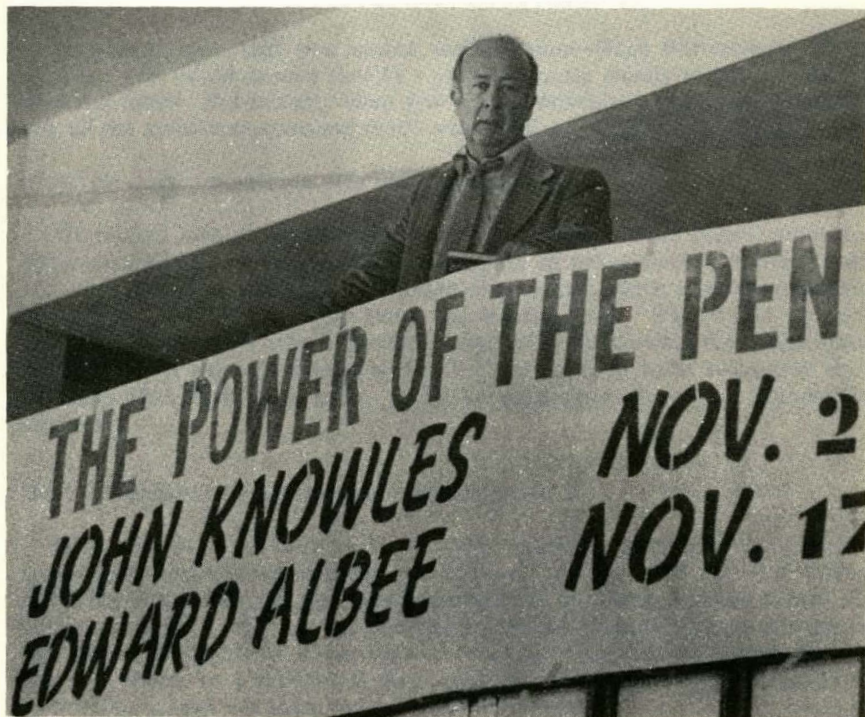
Photograph by Arza Barnett



John Knowles is a native West Virginian, born September 16, 1926, in Fairmont. His preparatory education having been completed at Phillips Exeter Academy in 1945, he received his B.A. degree in 1949 at Yale University.

*A Separate Peace*, published in 1960, established Knowles as a literary figure. The novel received both the Rosenthal Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the William Faulkner Foundation Award, and a film version was released in 1972 by Paramount Pictures.

Knowles' other novels are *Morning in Antibes* (1962), *Indian Summer* (1966), *The Paragon* (1971), *Spreading Fires* (1974), and *A Vein of Riches* (1978). Other works are *Phineas* (1968), a collection of short stories, and *Double Vision: American Thoughts Abroad* (1964), on travel.



Photograph by Juanita Steele



### *On A Separate Peace:*

Modernization of the English curricula has lead to students studying contemporary novels rather than the time-worn classics. Do you approve of this trend?

"I think it's about time that the English curriculum did do away with *Ivanhoe* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. They should get things that students can relate to more directly and I do think that's one reason why *A Catcher in the Rye* and *A Separate Peace* have been so successful to students because they can identify with these novels and the characters in them."

How do you feel about the critics' theory that *A Separate Peace* is a modern rendering of Milton's theme in *Paradise Lost*-the loss of innocence?

"That's the kind of far fetched literary theorizing which has nothing to do with writing creative pictures at all. You don't write creative art by thinking about John Milton. You think about your own experience and your own imagination, what means something to you. And it's ridiculous to relate most works of art to very old sources like that because in 99 cases out of 100, it simply isn't true."

How much of yourself did you put into your characters?

"I would think that you would safely assume-Gene Forrester relates the story-so you could assume that he's probably more closely identified with me than the others. But in fact, when you write a novel, you put a part of yourself into all the *main* characters and that's what I did with *A Separate Peace*."

What role does competition play in *A Separate Peace*?

"It carried into a deep hostility that became much more than competition. There was a level of very destructive hostility in the character of Gene... and you enter the area of a rather disturbed personality, which is another question altogether. . .I was writing about adolescent boys. Who could be more competitive with each other than adolescent boys? That's what their relationship is all about. It was just inevitable that if I was going to write accurately about that age that there was going to be an enormous amount of competition involved."

Did Phineas have to die to bring about the "peace"?

"Phineas would not have to die for Gene to achieve inner peace, not at all. It would have been far better if Phineas had not, but I just felt that that kind of simplicity and innocence that he personified, the out-going, trusting nature, dies in this world, I'm sorry to say. It can die physically, like Finny, or through Life experience. Had Phineas grown up, it would have died out of experience with Life, I'm afraid, so I thought it was artistically valid to actually physically die because his nature was going to be destroyed anyway."



On *A Vein of Riches* and West Virginia's influence.

Has the past had any effect on your career?

"Well, it finally had an effect in that my new novel, *A Vein of Riches*, is set in West Virginia and is based on the coal industry here in the early part of the century—the great coal boom in West Virginia from about 1900-1924, and that's the background. Except for a short story published years ago called *Summer Street* which is in a collection of mine, this is the only other thing I've written about West Virginia... I couldn't find a perspective on it earlier, I didn't quite know how to approach it; it's complicated, it seemed to me."

Do you visit West Virginia often?

"I came back often, until last July. My mother still lives in Fairmont, I come back every year."

Could you give us a synopsis of your new novel?

"It's about a family in Fairmont, the only name I changed, I called Fairmont Middleburg, which it once was. Actually it was Middletown in the 19th Century. I called it Middleburg because that's where the fictional characters are. But Charleston appears, Logan—they're all used as their names. . .and it's all historical.

The plot is about a wealthy coal family, father, mother and only child, a young boy who grows up during the courses of the novel, and their personal relationships. It gets a little complicated: there's a war, which went on around 1921 around Logan—a war between mine owners, hired guards and the union. They were trying to unionize that part of West Virginia, Logan County, which resisted unionization more than any other part of the state or really anywhere else in the coalfields. And so there was just actual warfare down there.

I'm not grinding any axes. It's true that my father was an executive in the Consolidation Coal Company, so I grew up from the point of view of management. It's focused on this family that owned a lot of mines, but I don't think anyone could describe the tone of the novel as pro-owner, nor would you exactly say it was pro-union. I tried to show both sides. It isn't the polemical novel, it's a story about a family and their emotional lives, but the background is the industrial history. And I've shown both sides. I've shown the terrible conditions the miners worked under and the ruthlessness that the owners used to resist unionization and I've shown the owners' problems as well. I leave it to the reader to make up his mind.

On writing:

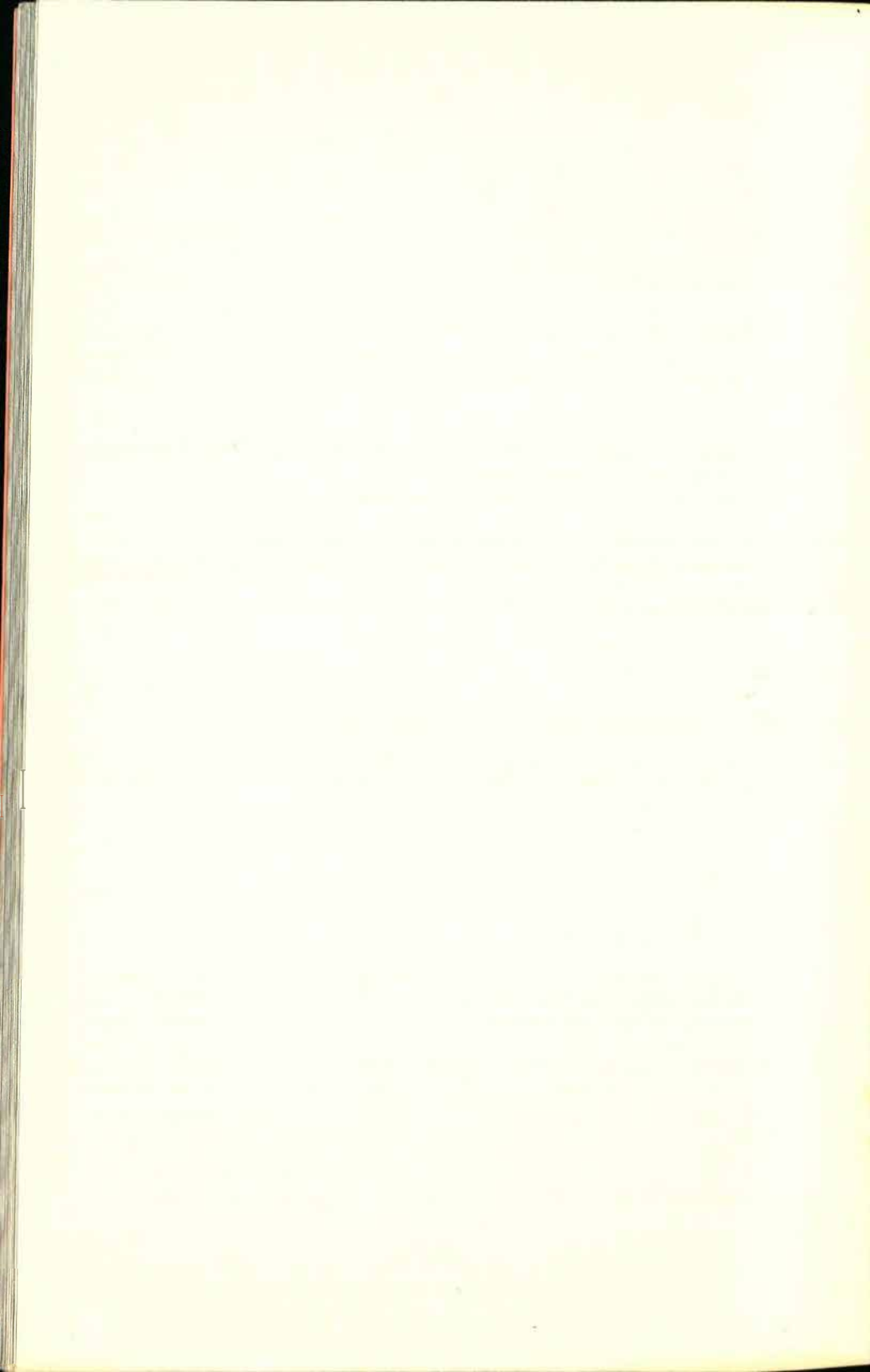
What does your typical work day consist of/

"My work day consists of getting up in the morning and having a very small breakfast, orange juice and coffee and a little piece of roll or something, and immediately starting to write. I won't answer the telephone, I won't go out of the house, I won't go out on an errand. I will let the dog out, but other than that I do nothing, I don't want to have any contact with the world until I've done my work. Because I'm a morning person, I suppose, and I feel that I'm uncorrupted the first thing in the morning. I want to use that part of myself to do my writing which normally takes me about three hours, in which I usually can write about a thousand words... and then I start dealing with the world after that. . .

I'm a professional writer, so I continue to be disciplined. But I can't just turn out book after book, for example this novel I just mentioned, *A Vein of Riches*, the one set in West **Virginia**. I finished it last February and I really haven't done a stroke of work since, because it was three years of work, a great deal of research and discipline and writing. I would have never taken this long an interruption ten years ago, but now I feel as though I can."

What is your advice to aspiring young writers?

"Get an agent. The only advice I think I can give to writers is find one or two good courses, either where they're studying or where ever. You don't need more than one, but let's say one term or two terms of a writing course. Usually you can learn technical things if the course is any good, which would be helpful. After that you're on your own, you just have to write as much as you can. If you can find some established person, a real writer, older, to read and criticize your work as I did with Thornton Wilder who wrote *Our Town*, when I was a student, that's invaluable."



### Dreams of a 102 Freshman

(Along with the following poem, *et cetera* received this note: "The following is something that I wrote last year in 102 but never turned it in feeling that my instructor might not understand the piece. So I filed it away and just counted it as therapy. However I ran across it yesterday and after reading it after a long time I still felt that it expressed some of the frustration each 102 freshman goes through every time he gets back an essay drenched in red ink. I really don't know why I decided to slide it under your door but here it is.")

Someday, I will write something true;  
Sometime, I will put into words what the red pen  
daies not to defy.

In a time when rhetoric impresses only the  
dictionary I will produce the genuine.  
Then I will write to express and they will  
read to feel.

Only then will my wordiness evoke a deep thought  
and my triteness be sincere.

Someday, there will be one reader who allows  
me to mean my words;  
Sometime, I will paint a word picture that can  
be seen by one looking only for misspelled words.

My point **will** be made.  
My motive understood.  
My thoughts uncontradicted.

Someday, I will write something true...  
And I will play my words like a virtuoso  
pianist who is the master not because  
he plays every note, but because he and  
his music are one.

Someday.

B. Miller

### It's Not Word Weather

Sitting on a bench in Ladeside Park, I was rewriting a story when a young girl walked by. The story's about winos. It's a good story, but I'd been having trouble with it-struggling with the words. Some of them were being stubborn: They didn't want to go where I put them. Words can be that way, especially when it's hot. It's been hot today.

The girl had big breasts and a firm ass. She was pretty.

As she passed my bench we smiled at each other and said hello. Her eyes spoke to me in that enticing sort of way that people's eyes sometimes talk. My eyes responded in kind.

I wanted to say more; after all, I couldn't let her just walk out of my life. Oh, no! She wasn't getting away that easily. Desperately I searched for the right word, but my head was fogged up with the words of the story I was rewriting and all I said was, "Winos."

I followed her with my eyes as she walked quickly down the path, glancing back at me over her shoulder, a puzzled look on her face. She's disappeared from sight now. I guess winos wasn't the right word.

Jerome Bicknell

fizzled  
faggJed  
faded  
frump  
head hangs  
like a heffaJump  
loaded  
bloated  
blither  
bump  
c'est moi,  
I mean  
it's me  
the wump

Eva Surnvan

### Rewards

I never got a trophy for crying  
Or sitting in bed with *my* socks on,  
Watching smoke climb up the heat ladder of *my* lamp to the moon.  
But I should have.  
Those times are *my* best moments.  
All I ever got was the applause of raindrops,  
And the admiration of crickets outside *my* window.  
And an occasional smile from God.  
But you can't put that in a grade book  
Or a personnel report  
Or on the mantle in the living room  
So I just keep it to myself  
And make *my* own trophies out of cigarette butts and tear.  
And line them up in the ash tray.

I think about them every time I empty that ash tray.  
And I usually make another one that night.

Kirk Judd

C'est la vie

Rich and wealthy  
  he had it all  
    (money doesn't buy happiness)  
    and his wife  
  left him for another man  
and the dominoes fell  
  one by one  
  and the children ran away from home  
    (three blind mice  
    see how they run)  
and the man of  
  health  
    and wealth  
    and riches  
put a bullet through his head  
  
  (ring around a rosey  
  we all fall  
  down)

Richard Hensley



in an illusion of unaleness  
we pretend happiness  
like the sea horse  
moving within the depths  
of emotion pure yet opaque  
coiling a tail around  
rooted vegetation  
swimming weakly  
unable to appraise  
our solitary swagger  
singing the prologue  
to our eternity we  
dissolve until  
washed upon the sand  
a spiny skeleton  
rests at last

Pia Cummings

### Memories

Gone is the smell of bacon and eggs at 5 a.m.  
Gone is the little white house  
With its sagging porch, peeling paint, and patched roof,  
Gone are the animals,  
The cow with its hand warming tits,  
The rooster, cocky when the dog wasn't around,  
And the dog,  
Loyalty on four legs  
Viciousness on two.  
Gone is my sister  
Off to school with pink ribbons  
From Christmas packages,  
And white knee socks  
And dusty shoes.  
Gone is my mother  
Standing in the damp grass of morning  
Hanging clothes,  
And my father bailing hay.  
Gone am I, sorting strings for bailing.  
All are gone, except the memories,  
Some, like old pictures, fade with years  
While others, blessed, from forgotten drawers  
Appear.

Glenn Lowe

## Mother's Grocery List

5 lbs suger  
5 lbs flour  
5 lbs com meal  
5 lbs pinto beans  
5 lbs white beans  
20 lbs potato  
1 bx bakin pow  
1 buck lard  
4 soup bones and fat  
I bot aspem  
I bot caster oil  
I jar hony *little*

Mr. Justice pleas put in boxes and let kids  
us your cart. Will make sure they bring it  
back to you rite soon. Pleas put on my bill  
and I know I owe lots but kids have bin  
auful sick an I promiss to pay soon. Pleas  
let kids get a pennie candy a pece and put  
it on my bill. Thank you a lot.

Joan Bell

Glenn Lowe

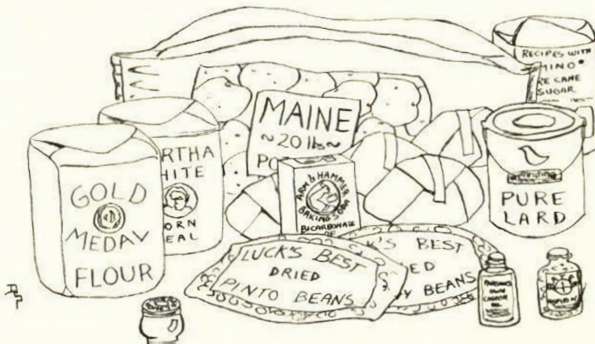


Illustration by Deborah Phillips

Winter's comin' on,  
And I guess I should write another poem.  
But there's been no colors this year.  
Only back-porches and fenceposts gettin' grayer,  
and crackin' a little more.  
And clothes-lines saggin' a little closer to the dirt.

Ah, I dunno.  
Maybe I'm just seein' good again  
after I've shook Summer's heat outa my eyes.  
Lord, what a promise a summer makes.

Kirk Judd

## The Watch

July is a saving month. Things go so slow in July a person can almost catch them if he has the instinct. Of course catching is one thing and saving is another, but instinct rules them both.

My father believes in instinct. Actually he lives it. By watching the sky and the animals, or even dirt, he can tell you if it's going to rain or snow. If it's snow, he can even predict the amount. Dad enjoys watching nature map out its battles across the Kentucky sky. He likes to be the first to identify each new season and boast that he and Mother Nature communicated. I guess it was this obsession that spurred him to invent "The Watch."

What happened was that my old man had his eyes bailing hay that summer and the doctor ordered him to stay in bed and shield them from any light. Dad was contrary, but he wasn't stupid, so he grumbled and grouched in the dark rather than lose his sight.

It just so happens that July is a pretty important month to my old man. In July the whole existence of autumn is determined by about two hundred and fifty wing-backed mallards. Because birds are finicky, the date of their arrival varies each year and their flight schedule was the cause of most of Dad's bad tempered acts during his confinement. Until he thought of "The Watch," he was getting very close to impossible.

About mid-afternoon still early in July, Mom called my sister and me into the kitchen. Doreen got there first. She always does, not because she is older or a girl or anything, but just because she is nice. I'm not.

Doreen never fails to be nice. If someone asks Doreen a question, she answers it. If a person needs help, she gives them a hand. When she is called, she comes.

When I finally reached the kitchen, my mother had to repeat to me what Doreen smilingly acknowledged. Dad wanted to talk to us and it was important.

As I entered his room, I could see a change in his face despite the darkness. He looked excited, but more noticeable was the contentment he seemed to breathe. We stood there, Doreen smiling, me fidgetting, and Mom wringing the daylight out of a dish rag. When the suspense was just about to drive me crazy, he began to tell us his idea.

In a voice almost as animated as his pre-July days, my old man told us about his plan. What it all amounted to was the old boy's crazy desire to see those mallards. Since he couldn't spot them himself, Doreen and I were elected to pass on the information second hand. Then he got to the part that interested me. As an assurance of our cooperation he would give five dollars to the first one who sighted the birds and told him of their arrival.

As the next day dawned, so did my enthusiasm. I attacked the cows with the same method I executed on my eggs, slopping through both of them. Whistling, I left the house assured even Doreen couldn't be up this early.

But she was. I found her perched in a maple that gave a view of the sky for miles. She would have completely missed me if I hadn't yelled at her as she craned her neck toward the northern end of the county. 'Ole' Doreen just smiled and waved, not taking her eyes off the horizon for a second.

I headed toward a place that overlooked the Ohio. I'd found it last summer during a campout. I was becoming a little hot due to my trudging through the woods and decided it was a good time for a nice cool nap. So like Doreen, I turned my face toward the sun and turned my mind toward ducks, or at least the five dollar ones.

The only thing I got out of that day was enough sleep to last me all summer and a sunburn. Doreen had abandoned her tree but was nowhere in sight when I looked around the house. I reported to Dad that the mallards hadn't checked in and he smiled before saying, "Soon... soon."

After supper as I sat in the porch swing, alternating between chills and hot flashes-trying to fan my sunburn, I thought of the end of summer and "The Watch." Those mallards would come whether I sat waiting for them or not. Five dollars wasn't so much. I could earn that mowing old Lady Johnson's yard. I had big plans for July because August and the beginning of school followed it.

Later when I walked through the kitchen to my room, Mom was washing the dishes. She lifted her eyes from the suds to me before glancing at Doreen's empty plate, the only thing left on the table. Then she stirred the dish water with her hand and I went to my room.

The screen door announced Doreen's arrival. Mom hurried to get her supper out of the oven, and my old man hollered to her from his bedroom. She confirmed my report and added that she thought they'd come any day.

Not to be outdone by a girl, I left the house the next day with every intention of watching for the ducks. But as I passed Billy Murphy's, he yelled something about a baseball game. I spent that day at Billy's and played baseball at Wilson's field most of that week.

My hours coincided with Doreen's although her's were long hours of bird watching. We began to call Dad's plan The Watch because he always greeted us, "Did you watch?" Doreen would nod and I would say, "Yes," but not without some guilt.

My pattern was broken one afternoon when Billy and a couple of guys had to go home early. The game broke up soon after they left, so I started toward the house wondering what I could do to fill the rest of the afternoon.

I had almost rounded the last curve on my way home when a thunderous noise upset the quiet and a shadow quickly passed over where I stood. My eyes whot toward the sky in pursuit of the cause. Ducks! There were close to three hundred wing-backed mallards in that sky.

When I saw those ducks making for the south in perfect flying formation, I wanted more than anything for my old man to see them. I wanted it more than anything five dollars could buy.

Before I knew it, I was running, running to share the arrival with him. But I didn't get very far. There was someone else I wanted to be there. Someone who knew the hours of waiting. Then I realized that it was Doreen who had the right to share, not me.

Later after Doreen had announced the arrival of the mallards to Dad, I went in to see him. He had been whooping and hollering when Doreen was with him, but after I entered he said nothing. He seemed to be searching my face, looking for something. His expression somehow reminded me of Doreen, the expression she had worn as she scanned the sky.

As I stood there wondering, he fumbled for my hand. This added to my bewilderment because my old man just wasn't the gushy kind.

Then as quickly as he had taken my hand, he released it. In its place was something far less valuable. As I unfolded the five dollar bill under his scrutiny, I felt something. This didn't need any words; there weren't any. What went between us a person could *only* feel.

That July I really caught something worth saving. Maybe I won't be able to cage it up forever, but I can remember that one July there was a "Watch," and I don't think it had a thing to do with wing-backed mallards.

## Bloody Harlan

I've seen 'em here,  
Black-blooded men with chains in their leather hands.  
They used to ride night winds,  
Durnin' our houses and the camp store.  
And Pap wouldn't dare face 'em.  
Said it was 'cause they was just people  
and they had a right to their way of thinkin' too.  
But we heard whispers 'bout his scar and his two missin' fingers  
and we knew.

Then they came in old pick-up trucks.  
Not bumin' this time, but still beatin'  
and some shootin' this time too.  
When they killed Bill and four more of our best dogs,  
Daddy took down Pap's old Smith & Wesson and went out.  
Momma nor Mam wouldn't say nothin',  
But you could feel the worry, cold and final-like  
on your face when you just walked in the door.  
I didn't see him again 'ti! that night in the court-house yard.  
They'd hung him right there, and coal-oiled the whole yard  
and fired it.  
I heard later he'd shot six of 'em.  
All through the hand. Didn't kill a one.

Now they say they're comin' back to Harlan County.  
Mitchell says we should leave if we want;  
He'll try to keep us in some kind of money 'ti! we get set up.  
I don't know what else I'd do, so I reckon I'll just stay.  
Most of 'em feels æ like.  
Damned coal gets in your blood.  
I can feel it in there as heavy as in the creases of my hands.  
Pap always said God nor Mam's lye soap could get it out.  
Yeah, I reckon I'll just stay.

Kirk Judd

## Rails

There's a lonely whistle every night.  
Somewhere a train rumbles past a solitary sorrow.  
The roar of the wheels grinding the steel rails  
Fills an empty heart with sadness.  
Watching the cars speed by,  
You see just about everything you ever loved and lost.  
And every passenger who doesn't wave back  
Is a relative or a friend.

Sitting in the grass, chewing on a weed,  
Feeling the ground rumble like your stomach  
When it hasn't had anymore satisfaction than your soul.  
Sparks from the tracks hit the ground like a drying tear.

The last car goes by and you feel like you're all gone.  
You don't even feel like trying anymore.  
All that's left is gravel and wood and steel rails.  
I think I'd probably take off if I thought there was another  
train coming.  
But I think me and the rails were made for each other.  
God, what a long way to go.

Kirk Judd



### Echoes: Vibrations of the Past

Once I skimmed this dusty land filling in the deep, black scars with my tears. Sometimes I gaze into the opaqueness of the mill pond yearning to see my future. But all too often I do not recognize myself. I am the hills and my face is furrowed and pitted by some pinstripe person I have never seen. There was once a time when I silently watched the cat-shadows flash across my window. On silver moon dusks I saw the autumn dew lick the sour cider apples. My sight was blinded by the sweet scent of sassafras. But, since then, my knees have bent to the god of progress.

Appalachia has changed ... a metamorphosis ... a caterpillar into ... no not a butterfly.

I am the hills and I hear the silent sound waves of a past reverberate through the valley. There are echoes that gently sway the tobacco to and fro. I hear eternal voices as they whisper their open secrets.

Young boy: I'll trade you my agate for your frog, but you can't have my pocketknife. My grandpa gave me that.

Old woman I: It don't seem fair. Look at these hands that once made a home with nothing but love and dirt. Now they shrivel like rotting tobacco in the scalding sun. I used to ... and it *was* good. It don't seem right that these wrinkles should tell the story of my life. It just ain't fair.

Man I: Yep, my boy he went to college. He ain't like his old man. No sir, he's gonna be something. Even when he was small he wasn't like the others. My boy went to college ... you see he ain't like his old man.

Woman II: How could you lie to me like that again? You promised!

Old Man I: Hell, nothing don't ever change none. Those young fools braggin' about all their modern gadgets. They slap chrome on it and call it superduper. I ain't never bought no spark plug for my mule. Nonsense.

Old Man II: It's your move jump me.

Old Man I: Take them politicians; they promise two chickens in every pot. Hell, I ain't even got a pot!

Young girl: Cindarella dressed in yellow went up stairs to kiss a fellow made a mistake and kissed a snake how many doctors did it take? one ... two . . . three ... four

Woman II: We're out of bologna. How about cheese again? I think maybe we stilj got lettuce.

Man II: It don't matter ... nobody can see it down there anyways.

Woman I: Mustard or horseradish?

Man II: When your tongue's black, who cares?

Young girl: Ribbons and lace and rosey face, sugar and spice and everything nice.

Young boy: No we ain't . . . No we ain't . . . / says we ain't thats who!

(pause)

Old Woman II: Don't stare at me! I ain't got no teeth; I don't haffta say nothin'.

(pause)

Young boy: Mommy are we poor?

(from stage left a black suited man enters)

Preacher: And, lo the rich man lifted up his eyes in Hell!

Unison: Amen. Brother. Amen.

Preacher: The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

Unison: Praise the Lord, Glory forever!

Preacher: All things work for good to them that love the Lord.

Unison: Preach it!!!

Woman I: I was once like you are now. I had a prince and a diamond bigger than a melon. Be patient child; you're so young and that's your flaw. Now say your prayers, and shut thoe big blues . . . tomorrow is another day.

Old Woman I: I went to the doctor today. He says I'm goin deaf. I told him he didn't have to shout cause I *ain't* deaf! It don't matter much anyways cause I ain't never got anyone to talk to. I just sit here, rockin in my chair, talkin to myself, and feeling old.

Man I: I'm looking for a bard-beaded woman and a job if ya got one. I'm strong and I'll give you and honest day. My back is a mule and my hand is a vise. But, I warn you, I'm too tall to stoop.

Old Man II: Wake up you old coot! It's your move.

Narrator: The crunchy soft snow melted warm today  
as it flowed by drops into the brook.

With the infant morning broken new of day  
flowing, sparkling, silently around the crook.

It trickles placid over polished stone  
so lazy easy, with eternity to kill.

Past the sapling pines and old oaks grown  
to the dam where it halts  
stagnant . . . and still.

Young boy: Barefoot Betty ain't got no shoes. Barefoot Betty . . .

Young girl: And I'll have a big house with lots of fine gardens . . . someday . . .  
you just wait and see.

Narrator: The rooster crows, the bacon fries, the children dress for school. The men leave for work taking the place of the hundred and one Al Jolsons emerging from the black hole of space. The cattle are fed and the hens are purged of their eggs. The fields are plowed and weeded and worked from dawn to early dusk as white faced, black palled men replace the other one hundred and one Al Jolsons emerging from the black hole of space.

(a man with rolled shirt sleeves and stethoscope from stage right)

Doctor: Relax, just hold your breath and push. That's fine. (under breath) Call the county ambulance.

Old Man II: My boy died in the war . . . looked like his ma though.

Preacher: And the streets will be paved with gold.

Unison: Glory! Glory!

Old Man II: I used to work for the railroad. J used to feed the cinders and lean out the cab to watch the black-gray puffs disappear into the sky. Now if you wanna hear quiet just put your ear to the tracks. Its so still you can't hear yourself. All I hear is the ticken of my C & O pocketwatch. That is, on the days I remember to wind it.

Woman I: Time. There ain't no such word. People say they don't have nothing but; but I don't Reckon I'll ever have enough.

(man in pinstriped suit walks to center stage)

Politician: If **I** an elected I **promise** . . .

Young boy: Did you see the television in the window of the hardware store?

Politician: And furthermore . . . if/ am elected . . .

Narrator: How can I prove to you I'll never let you down? J may have made you sorry but please believe me now. How can I prove to you I'll never make you bow?

Politician: Vote for me and there will be good things ahead. If heaven abandons you look to me instead.

Young boy: Whittle me somethin granpa.

Woman II: I hate dusk. I hate it when my shadow follows my heels.

Old Woman II: A robin flew into my window today. He kept coming back and pressing against the pane as if he couldn't see why he couldn't be on the other side. Some say a bird ain't got much smarts but it don't take brains to know where you want to go. I've pecked on lots of windows.

Woman I: He's all the time kidding. He says he wanted a black casket to match his lungs. Everyone says he's a regular comedian.

Young girl: Mommy why are you crying?

Man I: Actually I prefer a good Conway Twitty. If you ask me, the rest sound like they're in a bucket. And that rock and roll - it's of the devil I tell you. Could you picture me lookin for a plug for my baajo? I'd probably spit on it and electrocute myself!

Unison: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Woman II: I've milked many a cow. Stupid, stupid animals. They'll take on a whole hoard of flies with their tail. I remember kicking the snow off my blankets to get up to feed the chickens. They're even stupider. They'll follow the cow and pick the corn out of it's dung. Stupid, stupid animals.

Man II: I hear he got himself shot up in a bar in Cincinnati.

Man I: Did I tell you my boy went to college? I got a letter from him just a few months ago.

Doctor: I'm sorry ... but there is nothing more I can do.

**Narrator:** Morning has broken  
Autumn has fallen  
Bluebird has spoken  
December dawns

**My** steps are slower  
**My** eyes are dimmer  
**My** bones are thinner  
I look over my shoulder but I still can't see where  
I have gone.

Old Woman I: River.

Young girl: Highway

Old Man: Checkers

Young boy: T.V.

Old Woman II: God

Young girl: Who?

Old Man II: Trees

Young boy: Plastic

Woman I: Horse

Young girl: Automobile

Man I: Farm

Young boy: City

Woman II: Calico

Young girl: Acetate

Man II: Pride

Young boy: Mommy are we really poor?

Narrator: Why won't anyone listen to me? From the moment I could speak I was ordered to listen. It's like pouring water back in to the well. They think me a sideshow of barefootedness and ignorance. If I am poor I compensate with pride. All I really have has been stripped from me. You may have poured concrete on my land but I sill) have my hunting dogs.

Only one thing remains, and always will; they are the eternal voices. These voices live in a graveyard of rusty cars and echo in the hollow. They shout across the picket fence and whsiper from behind the Mailpouch billboards. From rusty washing machines and plastic funeral wreaths I hear the words "Hello, this the hill speaking." Once I skimmed this dusty land filling in the black scars with my tears. I stilJ hear the voices. They may seem long dead but does that make any of them less alive?

Bobby Miller

**Missing You**

Like so many leaves, whose ragged  
Edges fade into fertile earth,  
Memories of you rustle, soft and sad  
Images - half forgotten joy and mirth.

William W. Cook

### Memorial Smile

Trapped in the glass-covered lens  
Of a cold camera,  
I smile at you, dust spotting  
My hair.  
I'm lost forever within a  
Square white box,  
Wearing a coat of gleaming sheen.  
I have no mind, no soul,  
No thoughts of reaching you.  
My smile is frozen, a permanent  
Memorium dedicated to the  
Mechanisms turning within you.  
That is all that you have  
Of me.

Keneta K. Kinney

## Red Geraniums

The old woman moved painfully toward the window, a watering can grasped in one knobby hand. She watered the foil-wrapped pot of geraniums, spilling a little on the table top, and pinched off one red blossom which had begun to wither. She squinted down at the street below. People hurried by—a young woman with a baby carriage; a middle-aged man, his arms filled with packages; and a little boy sucking a stick of candy—no one she recognized. She knew so few people in the neighborhood these days. Not even her own neighbors really. She had met the young couple from the back apartment when they had asked to use her phone, but that had been over a month ago. They probably wouldn't be here long. It wasn't much of a neighborhood for young people. Of course there was that nice girl from the church who had brought the flowers. But she wasn't sure if she lived around here.

She set the can on the table and moved slowly toward the kitchen. She ought put out some tea things. The last time that little girl from the church had come—what was her name, Amanda Ross, that was it—she hadn't a thing in the house. That had been a Tuesday, too. Yes, she'd better set out a few things just in case.

Gingerly she removed two flowered china cups and saucers from the cupboard, along with a matching china plate. From the bottom drawer she took two silver spoons. She reached in the bread box, took out a package of vanilla wafers, and spread several across the plate. They weren't as fresh as they ought to be, but they'd be all right with the tea. She set it all out on a tray and after admiring it for a moment, covered it with a clean dish towel and returned to the living room.

The platform rocker crunched comfortably as she settled herself and began to rock. There was someone on the stairs. She heard them close the door and start up. Must be the boy from the back. Yes, the clock on the table read 3: 15. He would just have gotten off work at the plant. He was on "days" this week. The footsteps stopped at her door and the bell rang.

"Just a minute," she called. He must need to use her phone again. She thought they probably couldn't afford one of their own just yet.

She felt her way down the dim hall and opened the door a crack, the chain still on. The girl stood beneath the harsh glare of the one bulb which lit the corridor, her purse gripped tightly in her hand.

"It's me, Mrs. Thompson," the girl said quietly, "Amanda Ross, from the church. I brought you some flowers last time."

"Certainly. I remember you. Come in, come in." The old woman closed the door behind her and replaced the chain.

"Come in and sit down. Careful now, this hallway's a little dark. The bulb's burned out and I'm afraid to climb on the chair to replace it." She laughed, "I don't want to break anything at my age." She led the girl to the living room and seated her in the armchair across from her rocker.

"I could put a new one in for you if you'll just show me where you keep the bulbs," the girl offered.

"No, that's all right. Thank-you anyway. I can get the boy in the back to put one in for me one day. He's always coming over to use my phone... I was beginning to think you weren't coming back to see me. It's been several months now, hasn't it?"



The girl shifted in her seat. "Well, you know I'm on the visiting committee at the church and we try to visit our shut-ins once a month, but things have been a little hectic lately... I see your geranium's thriving."

"Yes," she answered. "I put it near the window so it can catch the afternoon sun. They need a good bit of light, you know."

"Yes, I imagine that they do. I'm afraid I'm not very good with plants. They all just seem to die on me." The girl laughed nervously. "Do you have many of them?"

"No, not now. I used to, though. They require an awfully lot of care, I'm afraid. But the geranium you brought seems to be doing just fine. It certainly brightens things up."

She saw the girl's eyes move around the room searchingly. Her gaze lingered on the pictures lined across the top of the television set. Children of yesterday stared out into the room, smiling yellowed smiles beside the more recent glossy grins of tow-headed imps. Amid these was a Gibson girl bride and her groom posed and smiling demurely. The girl rose and walked closer to the T.V.

"This is a lively wedding picture. May I look at it in the light?" The woman nodded in assent. "Is it your wedding picture?"

"Yes, it is. Dad and I were married in 1902. That makes me a pretty old woman."

"Your wedding gown was beautiful!" The girl moved back to her seat, placing her purse on the floor beside her. "I'm getting married in May and I haven't found anything as pretty as this. It's so delicate. It looks as if it's made all of lace."

"It was, just about. It was like wearing cobwebs except my mother had starched it so stiff I was almost afraid to move. Of course, everybody starched things back then. No, it's not likely you'll find anything like that today. It's a shame, too. That style gown would favor you." She smiled, "I had a spring wedding, too. There's something about that time of year that just makes a wedding."

"Oh, yes!" the girl agreed fervently. "Everything is so fresh and green. I'm going to have lots and lots of fresh flowers—a whole church full. And my bridesmaids are going to be all in pastels with wreaths of flowers in their hair. My mother says it sounds too busy, but I want it to look just like a spring garden."

"A new season for a new life," the old woman nodded appreciatively. "No matter what anyone says, it is the most important day in a girl's life. It should be just the way you want it. Don't you let anyone change your mind."

The girl leaned forward, pushing her long dark hair back from her face.

"That's what I think! I want a spring wedding with lots of flowers and a dress that looks like cobwebs. I want everyone to say that mine was the most beautiful wedding they ever saw."

The old woman smiled again, "I felt the same way when I was married. Mine was going to be the best wedding in the world. It came pretty close, too, I think. Of course, things are different after the wedding. You have to work hard to make a good marriage. Dad passed away while he was still a young man so I didn't have him long, but it was good for awhile. He left me with five children to raise on my own. I always said if I had it to do over again I'd stay single and raise cats," she laughed. "And I don't even like cats. But I'm not so sure I would. Children are a part of a woman's life. My wedding and the birth of my children were the most important days of my life. Women today don't seem to take their children too seriously from the number I see wandering the streets alone."

She looked over at the young woman quietly gazing down at the photograph in her hands. Maybe she was boring her. Young people probably didn't want to hear about an old woman's life. Especially when they had something as important on their minds as a wedding. But there was still the tea.

"Would you like some tea and cookies? I have some in the kitchen..."

"No, no," the girl started, "Don't go to any trouble. I really should be going. I've bothered you long enough as it is... There will probably be someone else to visit you next month. Since I'm getting married, I'll be going to my fiance's church." The girl rose and replaced the photograph on the T.V. "That really was a lovely wedding dress. I hope I can find something like it... Don't bother to go to the door. I can let myself out." The girl walked quickly behind her.

The old woman could hear the door at the bottom of the stairs open and close. She walked into the kitchen and uncovered the tea tray. Carefully she returned the cookies to their package in the bread box. She rinsed the plate and dried it with the towel and then put it and the other pieces of china back into the cupboard. The spoons she returned to their bottom drawer. She hung the dish towel on the rack by the sink and walked back to the living room. Across the room, the geranium leaned toward the light. She crossed to it and turned the pot.

Jane E. Johnson

Christmas Eve

I. Christmas Eve

Old men defecate  
and sin  
in the not-quite  
antiseptic restrooms of  
down-town porno shops  
They do not hear, perhaps  
the wind nor  
sense the blinking revolt of  
Christmas lights,  
but only the effulgence of  
blue, fluorescent bulbs  
-with nowhere a star in sight.

II. 16 Ounces of Christmas Cheer

Women of Saint John's  
put up the tree  
(cedar from Penny Thrift),  
totting along presents  
from their auxiliary.

**They sang** Christmas carols  
maybe much too loud,  
passing out tiny cakes  
before Sarah humbly prayed  
and Melanie growled

segments from *Christmas Ideals*  
of all the season's joys  
though Ben-quite sedated-  
slept through all that  
hop and-love-and-joy.

While, for some reason,  
Sarah, lonely, tried hard  
to remember joys of Christmases past,  
but is now to be content with only  
a box of Chocolates

With a frilly ribbon, tied  
bound like  
that hundred miles of tinsel  
on that nursing home tree?

If for temptation,  
those chocolates lay-  
not under wrap, but with.in  
easy grasp of those old, bird-like  
hands-gray and rheumatic.

But, then, what good are  
chocolates for hope fossilized?  
And tinsel just too bright,  
and cakes just too small,  
and nowhere a star in sight?

Howard Martin O'Cull

Rodney Backus, dead  
who used to comb,  
piles of knots from his  
ignorant Afghan  
and wait one, two, three hours cruising the Greyhound  
ugly  
lonesome queer  
knifed close to heart  
left blameless uttering "I'm stabbed" falling  
face forward

Virginia Bicknell

## Infinitives

### I

For our sacred rites, my body  
has been shaved smooth. I touch  
the places exposed. Blind as the looming sky  
beyond the window, you lie with closed eyes  
in perfect composure. The sky, trembling  
with gentle, tremendous lights, gives distant  
soundless warning.

Our performance is deadening  
and effortless. Warmed oil.  
Satin surfaces. A crawling  
last thirst.

Drink, I say, but instead  
from your gaping mouth  
extract your soul, wound  
in threads around a spool,  
to play string games  
on my fingers. Our bodies are hung  
with the intricate, colorful fetishes  
meshed in previous ceremonies.

Afterwards, we brandish sharp instruments  
in the dark, trying to cut ourselves free.  
As each thread frays, its fibers  
form new designs, more detailed  
and binding, until we are cocoons  
or mummies, and can't tell which.

The scene unfolds as a nightmare  
fall-out shelter. Explosions threaten  
the world out there, but it is not required  
that I, inside, should feel. The spaces  
between ruined bricks will howl  
**with** winds unconcerned about places  
to go. And so will I run, hair streaming  
eucalyptus and bells of India, seeking ancient hills  
and visions, escaped and bodiless...

## II.

It is irretrievable. I languish  
in our basement room, to which  
we once assigned the duty  
of casual comfort. A key on the piano  
is gone, the ivory chipped away, left with only  
the sound of two dull sticks  
pressed together.

I have arranged dried flowers  
in a basket, placed where the sheets  
of music should be. The flowers  
should speak of some meaning, situate  
themselves in abstracts.

Some are colored as fire is often  
described, others are brilliant orange sparks;  
some look like wheat, and foxtail grass,  
and figures of greenish-gray fog  
gathering out in the low fields.

Paling light from the window-  
cool evening air hangs over the yard  
and melts into the trees, a watercolor  
of olive green and reddish-brown shades.  
I see him walk, long-bodied and pure-eyed, conjured  
easily, and whitely remote. I always seem to remember  
his hair more auburn than it is.

Reverent flames, we filter through the trees  
to a place where old white stones cite deaths  
forgotten otherwise. I am solemn for the loss,  
for the kindness of the stones, and because  
we tremble from our nearness. We attempt  
to materialize, and submerge from the lapse of faith.

I touch my hand to the cool glass pane,  
wistful, and turn. The still, blackened fireplace  
is hushed as the rain-soaked hollow  
of a huge old tree, eaten out by insects  
or by a lost flame panicked in the woods.

I reach for the piano keys. The sound  
is unsettling, spiritual, aimless,  
from a varnished wood structure that could yet be  
just another piece of furniture, or still  
a part of the trees, absorbing seasonal air.

### III.

To be an essential self, to require  
manifestation. To flash, a shooting white torch  
up and out into blue sky  
like the white silk of a parachute  
released. To blend with the brownnesses  
of the old or muted things  
cherished. To dwell in a magazine room,  
picture windows draped with greenery  
camouflaging the small inner life,  
pretty cages of parakeets, lovebirds, a canary,  
and aquariums of fish that swim  
in ravellings of their tropic colors  
then poke the gravel bottom among  
minute frogs and albino catfish-  
the mint green walls, white wicker  
accessories. To become inseparable  
from sensations and the brutal display  
of our objective correlatives, and to force  
an identity out of love. To project it  
red from fury. To reflect its light  
from the sky, like the sea, and to shatter it  
prismatically. To envision it rising white  
out of guilt. To disassemble easily as spring,  
to form an attachment so callous as winter.  
To sometimes remember glimmerings  
of passions, those sudden illuminations,  
births, the crashing shock of sea waves-

But in the basement nights our unbearable limbs  
lay limply, entangled, heavy,  
in dankness, as the antiquated wiring overhead  
shorts out and spits weak fire.

Cynthia Wolfe



### Poet

Alone and unappreciated you die.  
Guilty, they bury you in a volume destined for obscurity.  
But one day somebody's James Dean resurrects you,  
And bearded beaded angels proclaim your purity  
In every dark corner of every dark bar in heaven.  
And while others drink of thinner ink  
And eat of bread Jess leaven  
The progressive schools enshrine you.  
But your success from a streetcorner birth angers critics  
Who, with well worn shovels, succeed in burying you again.  
Slowly the tears recede from those mourning your death  
For the first and last time  
After they are told that tomorrow brings  
Other dusty volumes to open.  
Another skeleton, whose bones will be whitewashed  
And rearranged into new wondrous forms  
They will mimic contortedly in their small group,  
Alone and unappreciated.

Glenn Lowe

