

[Vol. 50]

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Towers

Letter from the Editors

We are proud to publish the fiftieth issue of *Towers*, the student literary magazine of Northern Illinois University. Ever since the first issue came out in January 1939, *Towers* has given college writers and artists the chance to see their works in print. Named for the spires of Altgeld Hall, the magazine has changed as the teacher's college developed into a university. Though its size, design, and contents have varied over the years, *Towers* is committed to promoting excellence in creative writing by students.

We are grateful to Dr. E. Nelson James, who has advised the staff of the magazine for thirty years, for his unfailing patience and good humor. Professor Ben Mahmoud has done a fine job as our art advisor. We thank Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society, for supporting *Towers* and providing the writing prizes. Above all, we thank the students of Northern Illinois University, who have appropriated funds for printing *Towers* through the Student Association since 1967.

Throughout its history, the magazine has been blessed with talented student contributors, editors, and staff, who have worked to make it successful. We hope that the Northern Illinois University community will continue to enjoy reading *Towers* for the next fifty issues.

Cordially,

Susan Gilbert
Melodie Provencher
Gloria Wardin
Editors, *Towers*

Towers L

Lucien Stryk Award for Poetry
Professor Spencer On His Bike
by Monica Heilbronn

Judges
Gerald Berkowitz and Edward Herbert
NIU Department of English

J. Hal Connor Award for Fiction
A Pair of Sunglasses
by Gay Davidson

Judges
Franklin Court and Sean Shesgreen
NIU Department of English

E. Ruth Taylor Award for Critical Writing
No Award

Judge
John V. Knapp
NIU Department of English

Towers is recognized and funded by the
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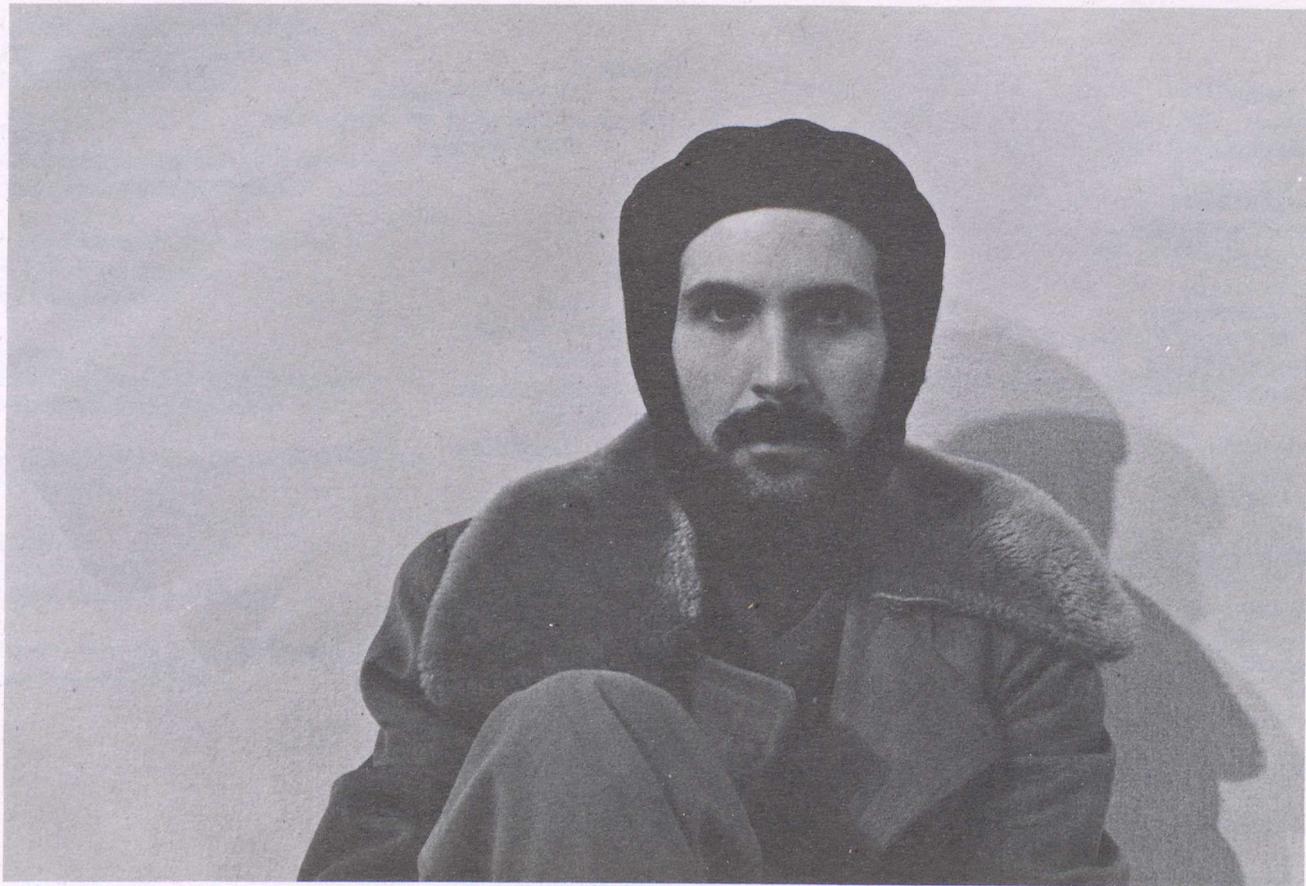
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The Hunt

The sun is far and deep;
and twilight lingers. The cats
are coming down to prey
on feathers left behind,
a bloodied knife forgotten.
The wind releases the cats'
attention to the air.
In twilight skies a harsh voice
is heard; a dog resounds.
A report. A screen door fills
the growing twilight still.

Larry Smith

A Pair of Sunglasses

She took the job at Penwrite because of the skinny elm that stood in the center of the Student Commons and because, being newly married, she needed the money. She could not believe she had gotten it at all, and now that she had, like a dog that chases cars and finally catches one, she didn't know what to do with it. Her hands looked stumpy and awfully white, growing paler, almost transparent, near the tips where she had been pressing hard on the desk. They were going to give her the works, she knew. It was ritual, like the initials and badly-spelled obscenities cut into the tree. She was ready for them in the sense that she knew her stuff; unprepared in that she could never get used to first times at anything.

The huge clock on the wall buzzed and clicked. Its hands leapt suddenly from quarter to, to 8:00, and she saw Them dancing across the football field—the stragglers and inevitable goofoffs bringing up the rear. Her heart thumped in her chest like an animal in a hollow trunk. The last one strode across the spill of rough green light, his long shadow cutting a swath behind him. He wore a baseball cap turned backwards so it looked as if his head was askew, and mirrored sunglasses she couldn't see into. "Penwrite High School—Trojans" stuck out in red and black lettering from the shoulders of his open jacket.

"Charming," she thought grimly, "very cute."

She got through the first half of the alphabet with relative ease.

"Rizi, Ricardo," she said carefully, still staring at her now-bluing nails.

"Here."

"Rodriquez, Linda."

"Here."

"Santayana, George."

"Who please?"

She didn't look up, but she thought she saw a shaft of light glance off the mirrored sunglasses. So it had begun already.

The late bell buzzed suddenly. The tiny diamond on her left hand leapt and winked. It seemed alive and malevolent.

She waited until the bell died out, keeping the desk like a shield between herself and Them.

"George Santayana," she said, no louder than the first time.

"George he don't hear too good," blurted one of the bigger girls in the front row. "He caught romantic fever and it had gotten in his ears."

"Here will be sufficient. Life stories later."

"Here." George answered as if he'd been poked.

"Smith, uh William."

"Here."

"Here."

"Yo."

She glanced up, trying to catch the movement of all their mouths at once. There was a fire. Her ring caught fire. The sun had gained the windowsill, cleared it, and caused a crossed shadow on the floor in front of the desk. She felt moth-like.

Apologies began dropping like ripe apples. For the teacher. The first was from a tall girl, very black. She said, "I didn' know you was sig . . . uh . . . callin' Willy. Mine's Carol. Carol Smith." She fell back into her seat.

The second was a shorter boy with a face as smooth as glass, dark as the back of a mirror. He was the type that would help clean erasers after school unasked if he thought he could get extra credit. She had read about him. His eyes flickered briefly at the boy in the baseball cap. "His name b . . . is Smith William. My name is Smith Walker."

"Who is William Smith?" she asked impatiently, staring at him. "You're-all-very-quick-" she thought to herself, "but-you-would-have-had-to-have-been-up-yesterday-morning-to-pull-that-old-human-wave-trick-on-me."

The boy smiled and briefly doffed his cap. His hair looked like a sculpted shrub. She carefully penciled in the "absent" box, thinking "out on first."

She finished the "W's," finding no fault with "T" through "W"'s responses, but staying wary, wary. They were quiet now. Too quiet. She backed toward the blackboard, one hand extended behind her, until she felt the ledge. She wondered what she should do next. "Don't turn your back on them" was Rulo Uno in every book she'd ever read. She counted ten slowly, staring straight ahead but seeing nothing, then turned quickly to the blackboard. It loomed like a desert—vast and dark. The chalk split and cracked and made a noise like ungreased brakes as she wrote her name and

Western wind, when wilt thou blow?

The small rain down can rain.

Christ; that my love were in my arms

And I in my bed again!

"What is this poem about?" she asked quietly, moving toward Them, but gazing at the floor.

Twelve voices said different things at once.

"One at a time, please. Have some consideration for your neighbor. Mr. Bazoni?"

"Is it about the West? Going West and all that? I mean, like it says, Western wind?"

"Who ever taught you to answer a question with a question?"

"You just did," someone mumbled.

She felt her face ignite her hair. A tiny girl with a long skirt,

obviously someone else's, stood up briskly and said politely: "The poetry is about a girl with real little hands, please." She sat straight down.

"Wanting to sleep late of a Saturday!" offered a blonde in a most seriously tight sweater. Even the bra beneath was too small. She could not contain herself.

There was laughter like dry leaves catching fire. She wanted to smother it, to put it to shame, to ashes.

Fourth Hour began and ended with the gravel-voiced bell. She couldn't get used to time's being split up this way. It should flow. From across the room she watched Them scatter over the schoolgrounds for lunch like pinballs being shot out by the flippers. She prayed they wouldn't go to the Commons. The tree was hers. They didn't appreciate it; she understood it. Why *he* couldn't see the natural sequence of things she'd never fathom. Not if it took a millennium. Of course, he felt they had that long. He saw time as an infinite string of boxcars. He lived his life that way and now he was going to live hers that way. She had seen the caboose many times. She sneered; he wouldn't even want to see. So much like these . . .

She watched a lean couple stroll by, arms encircling each others' waists. The girl was pretty, she supposed, by magazine standards. But she had no history on her, no sense of a past. It was as if she had just hatched. The boy was a little better; he looked older, but had he ever contemplated his own extinction?

She lit a cigarette before she remembered where she was. The Commons was crowded. The students' shrieks and giggles echoed, making it seem as if the group was twice the size it really was. "Who the hell is in charge here?" she wondered silently. She noticed that one of the Smiths had lounged in. It was getting near the hour to return. He elaborately

opened a book and read it in an exaggeratedly studious manner. She was sure he knew she was there, although with those glasses it was hard to tell how much he knew of where he was. Was he everywhere?

"Christ-that-my-love-were-in-my-arms" chased round and round her head. It was annoying, a little fly buzzing in her room at night. She slept alone because she was waiting for the right time. It had dignity, and if he or They couldn't accept that, they had T.V. and the New Morality to thank. As she marched to the classroom, she wished she could wash into the white walls. She purposely broke her stride as she realized that her feet were keeping time to "Western Wind."

She took the roll rapidly, wondering at the end who, if anyone, had answered. She couldn't bear to look. "Christ, he is everywhere," she thought. The crossed shadow in front of her desk had lengthened and now stretched up the back wall. The students seemed to reek of sunshine. She didn't want her mind to go where they had been. She held tight to the volume of poems in her hand. The spring sunlight made it so light outside that when she looked at last toward the students she saw only outlines. Their faces were all uniformly dark. It seemed too hot. She felt dizzy. The room began to crawl slowly, running like old glass or rain or heat mirage rising from a blacktop.

She took a deep breath. "What is this poem about?" she asked, but her voice went up like smoke. She tried again. She had been saying this all day, why couldn't it come out right?

"What is this poem about!" she demanded. "Anyone!"

The room remained silent for the space of a breath; then a kind of murmuring, like a soft breeze, ignited scattered sparks of laughter. She trusted her feet to take her into the cave. She looked sternly at them, feeling like Alice grown too

big, to enforce her command. She would not look out there. She could not look out there. She was afraid to see what she thought she perceived—a shaft of light. A pair of mirrored glasses.

She felt Them now, silent, studying her. Snatching a name, she blurted, almost pleading, "Mr. Smith, what is your interpretation of this poem?"

The spinning slowed a little as somebody stood up. Bright light surrounded his head. A male voice began:

"My interperation of this poem is this." There was a small pause, during which everyone seemed to hold their breath. "The anony . . . mous . . . anonymous nar-rate-ur, employing imagine . . . im . . . ag . . . ery assosh . . . assoshiated with natural fin . . . fin-ony-men rain . . . wind . . .

"That's fine," she called from the front of the room, "uh, someone else?"

"It's a love poem," said a female voice softly from the front row, "about being lonely."

"etc . . . sets a mood of longing . . . renewal of life after an event left purr . . .

"You will please sit down!" She backed toward the wall until she felt the ledge of the blackboard. She clung to it and turned to stare up at the poem. "Christ," she thought. Her legs were rubber. There was nothing written on the board. It looked vast, towering over her solicitously, wrapping her up. She was swimming in space.

". . . posely am-am . . . big . . . ooh . . . us." The voice stopped. The situation had assumed the movement of a dance, perhaps the dance of the black widow before she consumes her mate.

"It is all about DEATH," she shouted. She gestured wildly, sweeping her arm with the movement of a shell-shocked gunner. "You and you and you . . . you are all dying right

at this moment. Dying and r-r-rotting and . . . and fading away. You think it's about love you don't even know love you can't even think love. The metaphysicals used to say the sexual climax was the same as dying. This poem is about sex . . . and . . . and . . . DEATH!"

It seemed as if years passed before she could squeeze her eyes open. Somebody had turned on the lights and the room was still. Chairs were strewn about the narrow room. An ocean of youth in bright colors surged past the windows as the last bell squalled. Their high bright shoes seemed to spark against the pulsing green. Shrill voices and staccato cadences, like mourning doves and sparrows all together rose to her head with the sound a jug makes filling. "Christ that my love were in my arms," she thought without thinking.

Gay Davidson



Lovers

Each to each an instrument
of the other's voice.

Cedar slabs in the hands
of the aged violin maker,

smiling among wood curls
delicate as harmonics.

Each to each a musician,
releasing

the warbler in the wood.

Professor Spencer On His Bike

Could cover miles in a sentence,
turn a corner on a twopence,
try new terrain,
scatter pebbles, burn the rain
with words.

A student found a poet
to teach her how to ride it.
The wheels' rhyme and pedals' rhythm
spoke with the professor's precision:
"risk and fall."

So veering round the bend,
she sensed the end of gliding high,
and scraped the concrete with her thigh.
She lay tangled in the dust
as any new rider on any old bike

Must.

Monica Heilbronn

The Dump

old soured friendship
hangs limbo.
over, over, over,
dropped.
heaped on top of others,
rusted and wrecked friendships.
another twisted mass of metal.
all over my face, hands, body
are scars
from the accident of our meeting,
knowing each other too well
crashing head on.
another twisted mass of metal.
grey-winged bird
on shattered window
nests.
mourning the loss
not the death.



Sam Saperstein

Trout Fishing: The Central Metaphor of *Trout Fishing in America*

Trout Fishing in America, as Richard Brautigan himself has said, is "a vision of America."¹ If this is true, then *Trout Fishing in America* may be considered also to be Brautigan's formula for escaping from the ideal America to the real America. Some critics have pointed out that the work is firmly rooted in the American tradition of Twain and Hemingway, of works whose theme is that man's only salvation lies in escaping from the complexities of city life into the tranquility of the country. However, while Huck Finn could "light out for the Territory" and Nick Adams could find peace in the Michigan woods, Brautigan's narrator discovers that escape to the wilderness is no longer so simple. Instead of natural forests, he finds campgrounds so overcrowded that only the death of one of the campers makes the campsite available. The problem, of course, is that in an urbanized America the wilderness has become so diminished that the small traces of it which remain are overrun by crowds of people trying to escape from the city, if only for a while. Nevertheless, if literal, physical escape from the wilderness has become impossible in contemporary America, the imaginative escape is still possible. Hence, Brautigan explores the gap between ideal and real America as he continually contrasts temporal and geographic America with a timeless America that is "often only a place in the mind."²

The form of the novel allows Brautigan great range in exploring his main theme of ideal America versus real America. Trout Fishing as a symbol is metamorphic but at the same time constant in representing an ideal—the continuing historical appeal that America has for the human imagination as a place where all good things are possible. As Kenneth Seib says: "*Trout Fishing in America* suggests the myth of America itself, a land of vast open spaces, of unlimited resources and opportunities, and of streams into which one only

has to toss a bent pin in order to pull out fish of astonishing sizes."³ Essentially, Trout Fishing in America is a yardstick by which Brautigan measures contemporary America; and the kinds of measurements vary amazingly.

In the opening chapters, Brautigan introduces his theme and his perspective on his materials, as well as expressing his major assumption that a mythical Golden Age, from which we have fallen, once existed in America. Brautigan draws a "contrast in the opening chapter, "The Cover for Trout Fishing in America," between the statue of Benjamin Franklin, significantly located in Washington Square, and the poor who gather for free sandwiches every afternoon. The statue, holding out a seemingly generous fourfold "WELCOME" to the poor, parodies the Statue of Liberty and its command to "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses." We immediately learn from this that America promises much but delivers little. The worthless spinachleaf sandwich given to the narrator's friend seems to echo the philanthropic tradition associated with Franklin. Kafka's knowledge of Franklin's autobiography casts a perspective on the foregoing scene that holds for the entire novel. The weird sandwich and the strange little scene prepare us for later bizarre, grotesque and incongruous items and incidents—trout steel, a wooden staircase that appears to be a waterfall—all detailing the metamorphosis of *Trout Fishing in America* into Trout Fishing in America Shorty.

When Trout Fishing fondly recalls in the second chapter "people with three cornered hats fishing in the dawn" (5), he obviously alludes to America's Founding Fathers and to the link of ideals, values and beliefs associated with them or projected upon them. Here Brautigan does as many American writers have done; he views the mystical past with the inward eye of the imagination, assuming that an age of innocence,

hopefulness and harmony existed during the nation's beginning and everything since went downhill. Instead of fishing for a new promise for men, later Americans fish for natural resources to exploit—"Maybe trout steel" (4). Franklin becomes Carnegie; the way to wealth becomes the truth of wealth. The narrator returns to the statue of Franklin, who represents the Colonial giant and archetypal American, many times as if he is seeking to recover somehow the lost paradise through some communion with the statue. Indeed, it may be said that the vast number of statues, monuments, gravestones, and inscriptions dwelt upon suggest that Brautigan's passion is to coerce these relics of Trout Fishing in America back to life. However, Franklin remains mute, and the narrator encounters only winos, the defeated, the hopeless, the criminal, and of course, Shorty. At one point, the narrator even says that Shorty should be buried next to the Franklin statue and a monument erected to him which is an explicit juxtaposition of ideal America and real America which measures the distance between them.

As Brautigan uses trout fishing to trace the downward historical journey through the contrasts and ironies of the various episodes, he reinforces his theme by carefully placing most episodes in specific time contexts: times of day, seasons of the year, ages of the narrator and characters. As times, seasons, and ages are linked into the framework of Brautigan's record of America, he as well as Alonso Hagen keeps a diary of Trout Fishing in America.

To illustrate, most of the moments of profound disillusionment in the novel occur on spring mornings during the narrator's childhood. The innocence and expectancy of childhood, the renewal and hope of spring, and the possibilities and creativity of morning deepens the felt sense of loss. On one morning in spring, for example, the narrator discovers

that an apparent waterfall is in reality a flight of wooden stairs, and his response conveys his pain: "I stood there for a long time, looking up and looking down, following the stairs with my eyes, having trouble believing" (8). On another April morning the narrator and his friends are inspired to take chalk and write "Trout Fishing in America" on the backs of the first graders. When the principal checks to see what they are doing, the joy of spring becomes the melancholy of autumn: "But after a few more days trout fishing in America disappeared altogether as it was destined to from its very beginning, and a kind of autumn fell over the first grade" (62). The narrator's comment here clearly refers to more than what happened to the first grade; the episode is a parable of America. Yet again, it is "one spring day" (133) when as "just a kid" (129), the narrator happens across "The Trout Fishing Diary of Alonso Hagen," which was a tedious and depressing chronicle of frustration and failure: "I have never even gotten my hands on a trout" (137).

Furthermore, a great deal of the novel is composed of the narrator's search for trout over a long summer. Brautigan stresses the summer's heat with its overtones of desert and hell. Every stream has some flaw: Grider Creek is inaccessible (21); Tom Martin Creek "turned out to be a real son-of-a-bitch" (28); Graveyard Creek suggests its own limitations (31); Hayman Creek seems cursed (40); Salt Creek has cyanide capsules along its banks (83). Even the good fishing in Lake Josephus goes bad when the baby gets sick (126). Much like the streams, the people encountered prove equally obstinate: the shepherd who resembles a "young, skinny Adolf Hitler" (52); "the original silent old farmer" (88); the bitter surgeon fuming about "bad debts" (114). When the store clerk calls the narrator a "Commie bastard," he ruefully comments: "I didn't learn anything about fishing in that store" (96). He,

in fact, does not learn from any of these people. Finally, on a hot July day, the narrator learns of the death of a fellow angler, Hemingway, and sees Trout Fishing in America for the last time. Directly after that, the narrator ends his journey—“I’ve come home from Trout Fishing in America” (149).

With the waning of the year comes the autumn, the season belonging to Trout Fishing in America Shorty: “He was the turning of the earth; the bad wind that blows off sugar” (69). The autumn that “fell over the first grade” in the spring is made flesh in the pathetic, middle-aged wino and cripple, Shorty, with his garish “chrome-plated steel wheelchair.” Although Shorty personifies contemporary American reality, he continually appeals to children as if wishfully longing to recover vicariously a second chance. However, the children wisely avoid him: “After a while the children would run and hide when they saw Trout Fishing in America Shorty coming” (70). Then, in “The Last Mention of Trout Fishing in America Shorty,” the narrator’s baby daughter decides between real America and ideal America:

“Come here, kid,” he said. “Come over and see old Trout Fishing in America Shorty.”

Just then the Benjamin Franklin statue turned green like a traffic light, and the baby noticed the sandbox at the other end of the park.

The sandbox suddenly looked better to her than Trout Fishing in America Shorty. She didn’t care about his sausages any more either.

She decided to take advantage of the green light, and she crossed over to the sandbox (157-58).

The child instinctively chooses Franklin’s green light over Shorty’s brown sausage, not that the choice is so hopeful as it appears. After all, she is a child and a child will eventually experience the same disillusionment as her father; she

is lured only by a sandbox—a miniature wasteland.

This same novel that begins in February also ends in a winter’s atmosphere of depression, gloom, and death. But what does Brautigan do when it is a “funky winter day in rainy San Francisco” (175) after abandoning his quest for Trout Fishing in America? How can he bridge the widening river between real and ideal America? He responds the only way possible—through a transformative and inventive act of the imagination, which is an act of redemption and transcendence. The narrator’s vision of da Vinci “inventing a new spinning lure for trout fishing in America” (175), thereby regenerating and revitalizing America, is a vivid expression of Brautigan’s “vision of America.”

The central metaphor of the novel, trout fishing, implies through its associations and abundance, the richness, the good life that is every American’s supposed birthright, and the achievement of which is every American’s dream. But Brautigan’s view is from underneath; it is that of a person who spends his days at San Francisco’s Walden Pond for Winos and finds consolation in fantasy, art, and the pleasure of mere circulating. He has discovered what Alonso Hagen found almost seventy years before. *Trout Fishing in America* is a fraud; at best it is a chronicle of loss, frustration, and despair. All in all Brautigan points out that through imagination one still can achieve an escape to the wilderness and a salvation from the anxieties of the city—even a mechanized, urban America from which literal escape and salvation have become increasingly harder to attain.

Mae Thomas

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- 1 Richard Brautigan, "The Lost Chapters of *Trout Fishing in America*," *Esquire*, 74 (October, 1970), 153.
 - 2 Richard Brautigan. *Trout Fishing in America* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), p. 116. All subsequent references are to this edition.
 - 3 Kenneth Seib, "Trout Fishing in America: Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn," *Critique*, 13, 2 (1971), 64.

The Mother

Green thorny sticks
Stiff, straight,
A mound of dirt and clay
Wrapping fresh-cut stems,
Rootless.

Pale yellow buds
Expanding slowly,
Uncovered, shaking in icy rain;
Then winter and silence.
Enduring to warm light,
Cycling bursts of life
Captured, dormant, released once more.

She would plant seeds,
Reap fruits, pleasures,
Take notice of beauty,
But leave us to face the cold,
Expecting survival.

Dorothy Kampf



Right On, Ms. Ozick!

In the December 1977 issue of *Ms.* magazine, under the subheading "Does Genius Have a Gender?", is an article by Cynthia Ozick, in which she points out the fallacy now being perpetrated upon women by themselves, due to a misguided sense of feminism. She agrees with the fact that as women, we all share experiences known only to the female sex, such as motherhood, domestic duties, etc.; but as women writers, we do not necessarily share an experience, nor an inspiration known only to "Women Writers." And if we continue along the misguided path towards a raised consciousness and sense of identity by voluntarily separating ourselves from other writers, meaning men, with the rationale that this is just a temporary maneuver to allow us to become united in our strength, with the eventual goal of rejoining the world "with power and dignity in our hands" (p. 79), we will have failed before we have even begun.

To prove her contention, Ms. Ozick states that since "in intellectual life, a new generation comes of age every four or five years, for those who were not present at the inception of this strategy, it will not seem a strategy at all; it will be only the reality" (p. 79). Thus we will have voluntarily submitted ourselves, through a mistaken sense of feminism, to the same "Great Multiple Lie" that feminism in actuality was born to destroy. This "Great Multiple Lie" that has been perpetrated on women in the past, is the many-faceted assumptions that led to the conclusion that women write best about themselves and their concerns, and that only other women could possibly understand, or even be interested in what they have to say. This is a lie because, as Ozick states, while in reality, women are bound to each other through biology, and thus experiences common to all, in the context of writing, the imagination is set free to "be"

whatever it wants to become, be it a "male, or a female, or a stone, or a raindrop, or a block of wood, or a Tibetan, or the leg of a mosquito" (p. 56).

In the world of the imagination there are no artificial boundaries, and it is for this reason that Ms. Ozick deplors the current inception of such "new" trends as "women's photography"; she wonders if all of the arts will soon begin to manifest "separate" facets for, of, and by women. If so, she states, this is simply a giant step backwards into another, more rigid time, when "woman writer" meant a writer that was a female, but "writer" connotated a much richer, deeper oriented author—meaning, of course, only the male half of the writing population.

What Ms. Ozick is attempting to ward off in her article is something that has concerned me for sometime also, and the fact that this article can be found in a *Ms.* magazine is, to say the least, encouraging. After its first year or so of publication, I began to feel as if *Ms.* was beginning to insult my intelligence, with its constant emphasis on "sisterhood"—a relationship I began to feel stifled in. I began to feel like a member of a racial minority group found watching a football game rather than attending a minority rights rally, or

someone caught eating at McDonald's rather than her proper ethnic restaurant. I do not read exclusively "women's literature," nor do I rush to attend "women's films"; and I do not expect to be made to feel guilty because my conception of myself sees a person first, and a woman second, rather than vice versa. In this I agree with Ms. Ozick, and the fact that one of the more influential proponents of this female-oriented chauvinism has printed her article is encouraging.

Perhaps it will happen in my lifetime, that society will cease to define its contributing members as either "male" or "female"—perhaps not. But if it does, it will be due to men and women like Ms. Ozick, who believe in the essential liberty and dignity of our "personhood," regardless of sex. And as a female writer, I agree with her contention that "for writers there are (emphasis hers) no 'new truths.' There is only one very old truth . . . that the imagination is free" and that "what we ought to do, as writers, is seize freedom now, immediately, by recognizing that we already have it." Right on, Ms. Ozick!

Fiona McColl

As Does the Rain

Falling

just a moment ago,
a fine mist
draping the countryside,
still existing in air,
moisture extending from the sky.

Wind blowing softly
warm and chilly;
wispy branches sway
to music of guitar strings.

My weary body is finally resting,
good feelings mixed with pain;
the music carries on
as does the rain.

Dorothy Kampf



East's West

Remembering my father's seventieth birthday

1. *The Coming*

Stacked back to East Moline
on Friday, March the twelfth,
We circled in airy paths
like drunken white-tailed kites
While below and to the east
a twister ripped off roofs
and lives
Five miles from O'Hare;
we taxied in among the dead.

2. *The Sign*

Early Sunday you woke us
To see a different kind of star
Fading with new morning light.
Your eyes, focused for natural sights,
Saw the comet before our younger eyes;
Trying to find the brocade of diamonds
set in motion in a velvet night,
Its sparkling studded tail
Streaming jeweled out behind,
I followed your hand beyond the pane,
Above Lake Michigan's rolling plains
of blue, my hand on yours to guide me.

3. *The Birth*

In your formal way informal
you are like a prince at peace
echoing the wise (not smart
who think, but do not know);
a man of custom and respect,
you prince a vanishing race.

Once born, a birth becomes antique,
but you are young, become again
and again, like spring's lilies
whose white bells
cast a fragrance forever
born again
far beyond the
bloom.

Richard Holinger



Barnaby and the Cosmos

He who never combed the stars
sifting spangled constellations
to guide his graceless steps aright,
nor clutched rattle-beads
against the rose fading light,
meandered to the forgotten mere
—the pond scarcely breathed
and, for once, mere quiet cottoned
those ripe cauliflower ears—
stopped on his mile-trekking heels
thick with manure of a life's
dark dealings, decomposed dreams,
salvaged half-truths,
the silage of gossip-gulping gamesters,
and, hooting the blue blood owl above,
saw the puzzled higher spheres
strangely for himself in order,
laughed, and stumbled on.

Gregory M. Sadlek

The All-Nighter

Punch-drunk and trigger-happy,
fingers linger in the coliseum
where the alphabet is up in arms,
anarchic in its tiers,
while from above, the numbers
keep curses under caps:
the rule of thumbs is down.

A deadline draws near,
yet they forge on:
"X" contradicts "Y."
"I," drowns in liquid paper,
overthrown
by the guiltless "One."

"Tradition" wins
its laurel wreath
in quotes—a height
to which the footnote
aims its brand.

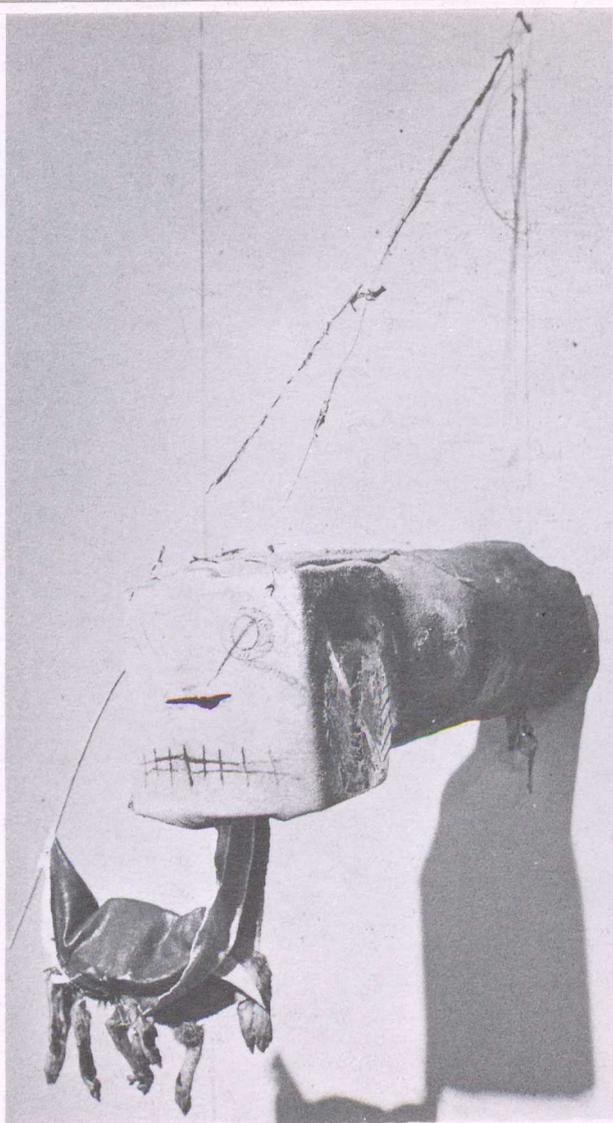
Pages wring out
through the night:
the turnover
of new leaves.

But the fingers fail,
stretched too far
like truth into silence.
They tap, tap the table
like canes for cracks
up blind alleys.

The title page
ratchets round
the black platen
as dawn bends
to jackhammers.

Mark Guerin

Neraldo de la Paz



Freak

He lived with his parents and older brother in an expensive, run-down beach house. Dozens of these buildings lined the beach, each an exact duplicate of the other, each shielded by a white picket fence. Kevin's house differed only slightly; it stood cock-eyed on its lot, as if its builder had momentarily lost his sense of continuity and balance.

I was nine then and Kevin was ten. We played together every Wednesday while our moms gossiped, traded recipes, and sipped tea. From the beginning, he was the leader when we played. It's true I was considerably taller and heavier than he was, but his frailty was overpowering. It was too difficult to raise my fists or my voice against him—the very idea contemptible, base. I let him talk for hours about how shells are formed or why some people are near-sighted. Even while he practiced classical guitar, I listened patiently, feigning interest.

Leaning over the guitar he would ask, "Remember I told you about the strings that time?" And I would always manage to look puzzled. "You should learn this. Now listen. The strings are tuned like this: E, A, D, G, B, E." As he said each letter, he would strike the appropriate string. "The E's are an octave apart. Their names are the same, but they're not the same thing. Their frequencies are different. Hey, look at this music," he would say, pointing to the dots and grids in his book. "This is an A and this is a C, so it sounds like this . . ." He would go on and on until his mom sent us outside.

We played alone, sculpting sandcastles, gathering shells, skipping pebbles across the pulsing shallows. Around us, other children gathered to laugh and yell as they chased each other into the bay water. But not one came to join us. Kevin seemed oblivious to them all, as if they were caught in another dimension. For me, it seemed an invisible bubble engulfed us both, keeping the other children out, keeping me prisoner inside.

Kevin's brother, Rob, had reached the serious age of fourteen. He was tall, agile, terribly strong, and in a rough way, handsome. When he was around, which wasn't often, he would teach me to wrestle. Kevin watched from the sidelines, rooting for one, then the other, and adjusting his glasses at the end of each round. With a set of combat-green soldiers, tanks, and army jeeps, Rob taught us war maneuvers. We staged battles on the small dunes, digging trenches and dodging "bombs." On these days I would go home smelling of sweat and sand, anxious to return again.

Some months after I met him, Kevin grew bored with sandcastles and seashells and announced that he was going to be like Rob. And I, his best friend, would have to help him with his search for adventure and knowledge. Before I could go home every Wednesday, something important had to happen, something profound had to be said, or some dilemma had to be solved.

One of the first things we discovered was that if you got down on your hands and knees and crawled up to Mr. Henderson's dog, it wouldn't bite. And if you crawled up to that mutt and panted very dog-like, it wouldn't even growl.

We also discovered that Mrs. Salzer really *could* talk. Each afternoon she would take a slow walk back and forth across the stretch of sidewalk on the bay side of her house. Kevin walked with her, back and forth, prying words from the quiet smile

on her lips. He deduced that Mrs. Salzer had been born old and had no past to talk about.

During these walks I grew tense and irritated and bored. I watched them pace as I sat in the sand crushing tiny shells between my fingers.

A few dilemmas were solved too. We figured that Vietnam was just one great misunderstanding and soon everyone would get up out of their foxholes and shake hands. Also, we knew that Robert Kennedy would win the primary and the election in November. I wasn't very interested in just how we knew these things; I left that to Kevin. The only thing I really understood was Mr. Henderson's dog.

Kevin was almost eleven when the search began to fail. Mr. Henderson's dog bit him, as I guessed it would someday, and Mrs. Salzer began to chatter about children, grandchildren, a recent "stroke," and about how it was when *she* was almost eleven. The war persisted like a nightmare, and Robert Kennedy was shot one night on television while Kevin watched. But worst of all, the spring and the summer had yielded nothing. He still wasn't like Rob.

There was one day that was particularly crushing. It was in late summer just after school began. Fewer people came to stroll the beach. Fewer children came to race through the shallows. Many of the beach houses stood empty. But Kevin didn't seem to notice any of this.

As we walked toward our next adventure, we picked up shells, carved our names in the wet sand, and tried to catch the tiny sand crabs that burrowed into the sandy mud faster than we could run. Kevin explained the tides for what might have been the millionth time.

"It all depends on where the sun and the moon are in their orbits because they control the gravity and that's what makes the tides. Mostly it's the moon, though. If the moon faces

one side of the earth—pretend this shell is the earth and the stone is the moon—its gravitational pull is bigger . . .”

I let his words lose me and concentrated on spotted crabs as they came to shore with each wave. We stopped to lie at a place where the sand rose in a small, sloping hill. From the other side came the noise of children playing. Kevin stopped talking and listened.

“Do you ever play with other kids?” he asked.

“Sometimes.”

“With a whole bunch of kids?”

I nodded. At home I always played baseball on a side street with neighborhood kids. We had teams and a championship game on Friday after school. I suddenly realized that I was missing another game and, for a moment, I hated lying there, forced by a strange boy to feel bored and stupid.

“I tried to play with some kids once,” he said.

“So?”

“They ran away. Then I went home.”

Kevin sat up and began to stir the sand with his fingers. He pushed his glasses higher on his nose, wrinkled his forehead, and looked over at me. It was the first time I’d seen him look uncertain.

“OK. Let’s go,” he said.

We stood up and shook the sand from our shirts. I started to move back along the beach in the direction we had come, hoping that when we reached the house, Rob would be there to wrestle. It was a few seconds before I realized that Kevin wasn’t right behind me. When I turned, he was standing on top of the hill, looking down the other side. My stomach tightened as I ran to join him.

There were two rows of kids, each row facing the other. Everyone was shielded behind an open umbrella or turned-over chair. Some held dented garbage can lids. Obviously, this was some sort of game. But at that moment the

game was at a standstill. There was shouting, yelling, crying.

Kevin insisted that there was nothing wrong, merely a disagreement on rules. We would join them, and as soon as everything was agreed upon, we would have fun, too. He led the way down the slope while I followed reluctantly behind.

We stood for a moment near the formation and watched. After studying them, Kevin adjusted his glasses and gestured for me to stay put. He walked up to the largest boy, the obvious leader, and started to talk slowly, as if he were talking to me about the tides. The boy wore a huge grin. I couldn’t help grinning too, though I was beginning to feel uneasy. Suddenly the boy laughed, pointing to Kevin. Kevin smiled and asked, “Did I say something funny?”

The whole group rolled in laughter and someone shouted, “Aw, go away, kid. Go find your Mamma!”

For the moment, it seemed the funniest thing I’d ever heard. I figured it would be OK now, since he’d been the cause of all the fun. I moved to join him.

“I’m as old as *you* are!” The laughter died. “I’m almost eleven.”

The only sound I heard for a while was the breaking of the waves. I looked calmly down at my feet, surveyed the sand, and wondered what to do. He shouldn’t have reminded them, I thought. Now we wouldn’t get to play.

“Kid, you’d better beat it. You’re not funny anymore.” The boy stepped closer to Kevin.

“But I just wanted to play. We’ve never played this game before. Me and my fri--”

“I mean it. Get lost. We don’t like little smarty-pantsed eight-year-olds running around here bothering us. And we’re not playing.”

I looked up and moved closer. The children had surrounded Kevin, and I could no longer see him. They knew how old

Kevin was; they all went to the same school. I knew what was about to happen.

"Hey, stop pushing me!"

I still couldn't see what was happening. I didn't want them to hurt him too badly. I wanted it over with, quickly. And I wanted to see.

The group closed in. Kevin was still protesting, but he was frightened now. They began to taunt him, shouting and laughing. Near the center of the circle, someone was pushing him. With each shove, the group convulsed and I moved closer.

He started to moan. I backed away, untangled myself from the mass, and crouched at the edge of the slope. It was good, I thought, that I couldn't see, though I really wanted to. Perhaps they would hurry.

Soon I couldn't wait any longer. I ran yelling, "Leave him alone, damn it! Leave him alone!" I forced my way to the center; the children dispersed. Kevin had blood on his lip. I pulled him to his feet and soon we were on the other side of the hill again.

He sat in the sand, his face buried in his hands. I was several yards away, looking out over the bay. He was breathing fast, and I was afraid he was badly hurt. But I was too shaken to find out.

"Kevin?"

He flopped on his back and looked up at the clouds. "I'm OK. Just a bloody nose." His shirt was covered with sand, and blood was drying on his nose and upper lip. "I didn't do anything. I just wanted to play."

"Yeh, I know."

"Why did that guy push me?"

"I don't know," I said. "They're just mean. Some kids are mean."

"But they couldn't all be like that—you're not like that. We're friends."

My stomach tightened as I looked away. He didn't know, and I wasn't going to tell him. Maybe he wouldn't think to ask why I hadn't come to help sooner.

"I am almost eleven, you know."

His eyes were watery; he'd been crying. I noticed his glasses were gone, then spotted them half buried in the sand not far away. I took my time getting them, stopping once to look across the bay and again to gaze up at the clouds in the sky.

"At least they're not broken," I said, examining the lenses and handing them to Kevin. "Only a little scratched."

"Safety lenses," he said.

"What?"

"Safety lenses. They make the glass with a special . . . oh, never mind." He tried to wipe the sand from his chin.

"Why do they hate me so much?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"Stop that! You *must* know *something*." He was crying again.

"If you were them, why would you hate me?"

"You're different."

He stopped crying and looked at me strangely.

"Well, I don't know!" I tried to sound confused. "You're just different. You're smart . . . you play that guitar and . . . well, you're so small and know everything."

"You're different, too. Everyone's different," he said.

"I'm different in a normal way."

"I don't understand."

"I'm not . . . I'm not a freak," I said, turning away.

We sat there for a long time. He looked at me through his scratched lenses. His face was calm, and I knew he wasn't going to cry again.

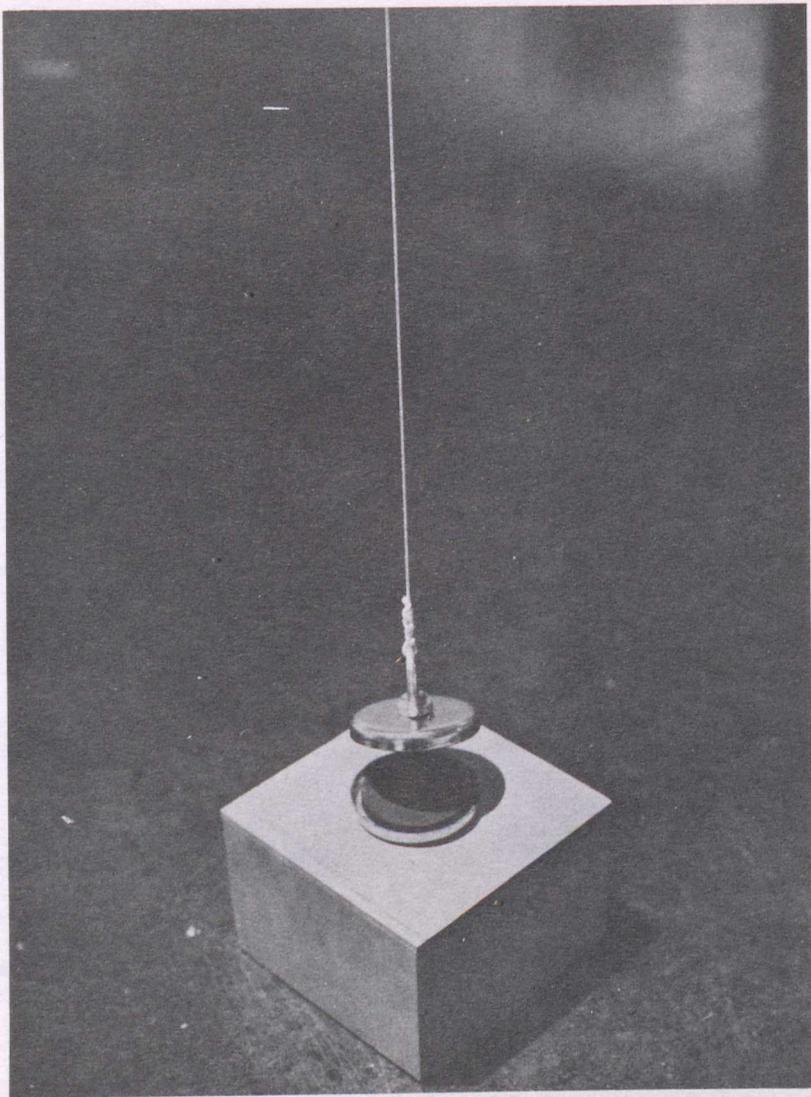
"I still don't know *why*," he said, "but I think I know *how*

they could hate me." He paused a second to look at me.
"Why don't you hate me?"

My eyes searched out the line where bay and sky met, but the air was thick and the line was blurred. I could not answer Kevin's question or even look at him, so I looked at everything else: the hill, the clouds, the water, the empty stretch of beach. I watched the tide line, where tiny crabs were still burying themselves in the sand.

Melodie Provencher

C. W. Scott



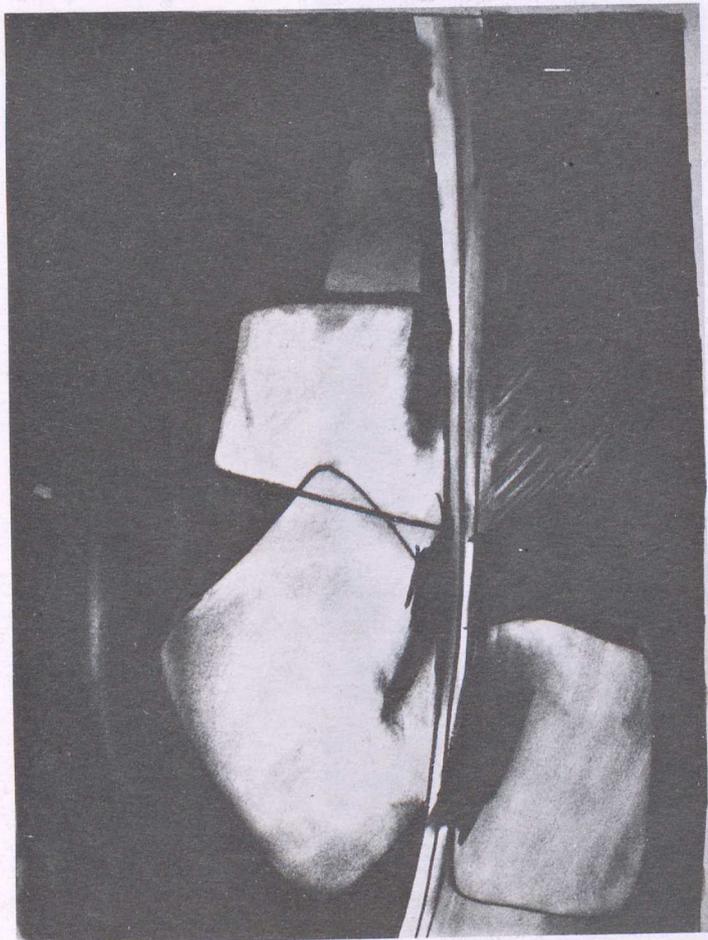
Untitled

Sprint. Reach.
Up with the legs,
carried off clinging to a string
of dark, clacking freight.

There's weed in the railbed,
sun in the sky.
Dust in everything.
Poles flash by.

Sprint. Leap.
Up chain link, spider-style, and
drop. Hymns mean
doughnuts. Socks mean
steal, and

Don't go and confuse this with freedom.
Your vanishing points move with you.



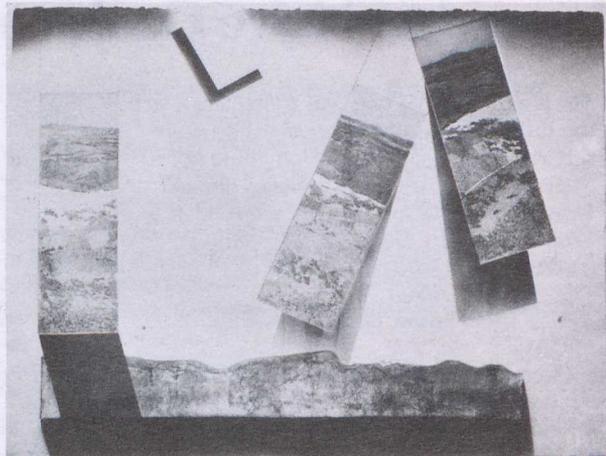
The Cellist

nods his head
to the beats of a cello's voice;
his fingers ringing,
dancing on strings.

curves his spine
to the glide in a bow's waltz;
his closed eyes humming,
recalling the rhyme.

lifts his foot
to the break in pirouette;
as the voice thickens,
he dreams of waking.

Patricia K. Perdue



Immodest Naive Genius or Be It Ever So Humble

*"But if all the while one was trying to extract
the full deliciousness of another and quite
separate existence, one which could not easily
(if at all) be spoken of—how was one to manage?
How was one to explain? Would it be absurd?
Would it merely mean that he would get into
some obscure kind of trouble?"*

Conrad Aiken

"Silent Snow, Secret Snow"

He reduced speed on his two-wheeled intergalactic cruiser with butterfly handlebars from interstellar to sub-orbital and gracefully soared up the cracked cement driveway and into the cinder-block space-port. He shut down the power drive, which got its source from thought waves, and disembarked. He walked around the side of the house, around to the front, entered by the front door because he knew mother would be in the kitchen where the back door led. He walked quickly through the living room, observing the gold sofa with the little burn hole from a dropped roach, the dark wood knick-knack shelf which displayed mother's most valuable curios and souvenirs from vacations, the gold recliner, which along with the toilet served as unofficial throne for father—that entity of father, the console stereo which sounded like shit despite its appearance, the panelled walls, the white ceiling with tape marks from hanging holiday decorations, parents being big on holidays—especially jewish holidays, the hanging lamp, the pole lamp with little plastic prisms that didn't give forth much color, the gold carpet his feet were compelled to touch (he didn't like to touch the carpet; mother was wired to the whole house and everything in it—if you touched anything she could detect you), the lack of plants, animals, and people in the living room,

and a velvet oil painting in an elaborately carved oak frame of an old jewish sage with full white beard, robed in biblical religious garb, sounding the mighty shofar.

He heard mother in the kitchen fixing dinner. It was Friday night—she would be making roast, mashed potatoes, kishke, with all the trimmings, chicken soup with matzah balls and kreplach, chopped liver for an appetizer, and mandal bread for dessert. She kept a kosher home. This way parents would surely go to heaven. They made children keep kosher so children could go to heaven too. Rabbi would be coming home with father for dinner. They invited rabbi to dinner almost every shabbos (rabbi was a widower) so that they and the home would be blessed. Children had to show how religious they were by wearing skullcaps and reciting the kiddush over the wine. Which was for sacramental purposes only. This reflected well on parents. He hated Friday nights.

He had to pass a doorway that led from the living room to the kitchen. He reached down and activated the invisibility screen on his belt. Silently slipping by the aperture he breathlessly glided down the hall passing the open bathroom doorway, ignoring the sticky, thick powdery air that formed a mist in the tiled, pink porcelain room. He didn't like the

bathroom. He felt vulnerable, vaguely nauseated. Father was innovative. Father demonstrated that the bathroom could also be a torture chamber or dungeon. Father had made him eat dinner in there for saying bad things at the table. Father washed Jay's mouth out with soap for saying dirty words. If he said especially dirty words, father would wash his hands on the soap before washing Jay's mouth out. One time Jay ran out of the bathroom and threw up on parents' bed. He got beaten for that. Father believed that children should be well groomed. Father bathed children in water a little too hot, and combed their hair. That cruel, vicious, merciless comb. The bathroom had no lock on the inside. It had a lock that children couldn't reach on the outside.

His hand was on the door to his room—his room! Shelter, safety, peace, privacy. He was in his room, swiftly shutting the door, locking it, drawing the shade, and lowering the blinds mother had opened, turning on the blacklight, turning off all others, starting the music, the music, oh the music. He turned up the volume. He was safe now. His territory. Small, but his! Impenetrable. He lay down on his bed and looked at his favorite poster of a dark magical castle on an inaccessible mountain peak rising out of the dense mysterious forest. A crescent moon hung in the inky sky impaling an eastern turret. He watched the banners flap in the wind that the storm he knew was coming brewed up. He walked under the shadow of the trees, the hard cold ground shocking against bare feet, parasitic stones imbedding in his fleshy leather. He was back on his bed. He smoked a joint. Being the son of god on earth was hard work. He was entitled to a rest. That unreachable rest.

He heard sisters come home from school as his will held the planets in their orbits and the cosmos in its forward rotation, no matter how hard the Evil Maldo tried to destroy him.

The Evil Maldo—arch rival, equal in power, but far far older. The Evil Maldo was a great overlord commanding servants and spies so that the web of Maldo was intricately laced and spherically woven around the universe. The gossamer strands like the scathing strings of a white bone axe or the sirenian threads of an Eolian lyre intertwined with the very life-breath of a decaying stage as the ignorant actors disappear through trapdoors and change roles quickly behind jeweled curtains like kingly robes and carry out the drama:

“To be or not to be?” . . .
And a zillion other questions . . .
And a zillion other quests . . .
And a million-billion answers . . .
And a million-billion goals . . .
And a million-billion-zillion stars in the sky . . .
Et cetera . . .
And so on.

Being the son of god on earth, he was entitled to get a bit grandiose.

How many times that day had he avoided the Evil Maldo and his spinning feelers only to become entangled in other nerves of the all-encompassing brain who ruled from his throne on a dark planet thousands of light-years from earth? Yet he had, as always, escaped—barely—to live out another day another second another lifetime or two. How long would his sword remain sharp, his lance keen enough to repel the advances of the Evil Maldo? Only he stood in the way of the Evil Maldo claiming all existence as his tribute.

He stood with a scythe of “silver and sea-jade” as a sea-wall upon a sea-mount. The galloping sea-horse gracefully ridden by the shimmering sea-maid with sea-green eyes sailed past dancing sea-holly as the sea-king's slimy sea-serpent and baying sea-wolves sought to overtake her. As stout as

an anchor he snote the wicked sea-king's host into sea-wrack.

SEA QUAKE!!!

Violent storm, thunder and lightning, deafening and blinding, shock waves rolling, drowning, sea-borne gloamings and roamings in sea-girt foam of sea-lavender as sea-eagles mate with sea-ravens screeching! . . .

"What is it!?" he responded to the knock on the door.

"We're eatin'!" oldest bitch little sister said.

He set the controls on automatic so that the heavens would not run amok in his absence. He shut off the music, oh that music!, and went out to dinner.

"Oh, finally decided to join the human race, huh!?" said mother sarcastically, eliciting a braying laugh from father like a jackass in heat and a smile from rabbi who believed that when in Rome don't claim to be a messiah.

Jay sat down shouting his silence till it drowned out all other sounds.

Father: "Would you like to start kiddush, rabbi?"

Rabbi did the kiddush. Father did the kiddush but, as always, went out of his way in jackassishness to make little sisters giggle with restrained embarrassment. They did and as father drank his shot glass of wine and belched sighs of feigned satisfaction said in that voice of his,

"Girls! You know better than that!"

Being the oldest child, Jay next said the blessing over the fruit of the vine, but mechanically, which was appropriate since he sometimes was a robot.

Brother did kiddush. He scoffed at Brother who was a jock whom he envied. Brother had friends. Brother had girlfriends. Brother went out and did things. Brother didn't have to worry about holding the universe together. Sisters did kiddush. Oldest bitch little sister alone, little sister and littlest sister together with help from rabbi, father, mother (who

never did kiddush), and oldest bitch little sister. Brother was helping himself to the mashed potatoes which mother had brought to the table in a fancy china bowl. Usually she served potatoes in the pot they were cooked in.

The kiddush over, hamotzi was said as rabbi ritually broke bread. When rabbi broke bread a thought occurred to Jay: "Even rabbi, I suppose, breaks wind." Jay laughed inside and watched himself eat even as he lay upon his bed in the safety of his room listening to that oh so wonderful music. Who said you can't be in two places at the same time?

As mother brought food to the off-white-cloaked table, everyone, in order, set about the chaotic task of eating. Father asked sisters about school, asked Brother about sports, asked mother about housewifery. Mother replied, "I polished the silver." Jay wondered if she meant the silver shackles around her neck and ankles and wrists that were obviously the cause of the back pains mother complained about as she slumped around the house stopping occasionally to rub her varicose legs. Mother's breasts were veiny too. Father asked rabbi about religious matters, like the Men's Club Bowling Nite. Father asked Jay how school was. Jay responded, "Stupid!" He left it up to father as to what or whom he was referring. Jay was terrified of school. Everyone was an agent of the Evil Maldo there. School took a lot of energy and ingenuity to get through. The rest of his resources went to damming the tide of the Evil Maldo. After school he would fly to his sanctuary, his intergalactic cruiser with orange banana seat travelling at incomprehensible velocities down the avenues and corridors of space and time. He would park it in the space-port and retire to his quarters til the next morning when the never-ending-never-changing parade charade of life pressed him into superficial conventionalities. Why couldn't they just let him attend to the universe in peace?

Father demanded, "What do you mean by that!?"

"Nothing, man! What do you want from me?"

"Dear," said mother to father, "we've got to do something about that attitude of his."

"Why don't you take your fuckin' attitude and stick it up your ass!" Jay exploded at mother.

"All right! That does it!" yelled father. "Get in your room and don't come out!"

Jay trembled as he relocked the door of his room and turned on the music. The music. He lay down on his bed and used his psychic electricity to set up a force field. He shut off the automatic controls and took charge of the universe once more. He felt the presence of the Evil Maldo mocking him, tempting him, chiding him, deriding him, twisting his brain. Jay resisted. He saw the grinning, leering face of the Evil Maldo, hovering in clouds of fog crowned with a halo of fire. He saw, smelt, heard, tasted, and felt the pressure increase and beat upon him, lifting and tossing him in his bed, drawing tears from his despair-inflicted, despair-inflicting eyes.

Loudspeaker blasts of crushing decibels, shouts and anguished screams, monster amplifier headphones of cackling laughter, gun shots through taut, harkening ear-drums, drumming, pounding, noise, sounds, voice . . .

"Jay, open up, please open the door. I just want to talk to you," pleaded mother.

Jay focused his entire psychic radiation into a slashing beam. The beam smote mother in the heart; she stumbled back at the onslaught. Father, sensing the intensity of the attack, came to her aid.

"OPEN THIS DOOR ON THE COUNT OF THREE OR I'LL BREAK IT DOWN!"

Jay quickly drew up the blind, punched out the screen of the open window and jumped out into the backyard. He raced around the house to the space-port, boarded his intergalactic cruiser feeling the strength return to him as he firmly and confidently grasped the dirty white handlebar grips. He launched his vehicle out into the night and sailed past the opening back door from which father commanded and mother cried.

Jay increased speed down the driveway; out into the street, he soared madly past rows of flashing houses, cursing everything and everyone to eternal suffering, turned once more to look back at parents, Brother, sisters, rabbi in the driveway.

Turned to meet the oncoming eyes of the Evil Maldo, smiled, said good-bye, and kissed the front end of a Mack truck.

Stephen Dunn

Andy Clifton



Monday A.M.

the clock face smiles
viciously,
6:48—
time for coffee steam
and burnt toast.

tee-shirt and jeans
are crushed in a breathless
heap.
i rise to revive them.

the eggs, the buttered toast,
the coffee, stare up at me.
the dishes moan and
scheme to crush the counter
in a dynamic decay of color—
beige on white, slop of yellow,
one pea smashed beneath the waterglass.

the clock face smiles
viciously,
7:16—
i wonder if the sun could rise.

Melodie Provencher

Tommy Scribner plays the ordinary saw

A touch of vaudeville,
Tommy Scribner's
bad hand
warps the blade
the other drawing
horse hair
bow
across the steel
and then,
a note
you'd recognize
and more
out in the square
at noon,
the Stetson set
to catch a
toss
of cigarette
or coin.
Once,
it was the
violin
he played
before the
sawmill
took his
fingers
in a
blur.

David Williams

