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Dialogue

Staff and writers of Dialogue

할렐루야

dialogue

MAY 1974

ZEN AND NOW / FAIRY ENLIGHTENING
READING / COME ON NIN / NELSON AS IN LORD
OR OZZIE

comment

Confessions of a Lame Duck

Have you had the experience that you no sooner learned a new word than it started jumping out at you from everywhere like an ex-girlfriend at your wedding? For instance, you wondered what "kleptomaniac" meant; in five years maybe you saw the word twice, yet you let it pass each time because you were too proud to ask your little sister who always got A's in English. Then one fine sabbath the dominee was preaching on the eighth commandment when the word *kleptomaniac* hit you smack in the face like a slop of celery. A revelation! You walked home after men's society, positive that the world was full of kleptomaniacs. And sure enough, while you were reading the Sunday paper (in your bedroom, since Grandma was over for dinner), *kleptomaniac* leaped right up from the crime page, and in a short time your little sister (the anglomaniac) came up and called you a kleptomaniac for not leaving the bride section for her, and then while it was yet dawning upon you that the universe had all along been lying in wait, conspiring to bring about your education, you found yourself using the word in a bluebook, sharp little wit that you were.

The word *dialogue* can grow on you that way, especially if you manage to work on a magazine such as this whose very title, "Dialogue," demands a definition. As soon as it slips into your working vocabulary, the little munchkin seems to start cropping up in serious discussions of all sorts—in Speech 100, in CLAE, in *Chimes*, even in the usual coffee shop blather. While it is still an adolescent in your vocabulary, you pride yourself in having made a discovery and begin looking out for ways to inject the concept into the magazine and thus into the college. You cook up editorials like this one which deal directly with the word, pointing it out, defining it, making its case. You think of ways to simulate actual dialogue on the printed page with interviews, symposiums, letters, or debates.

But when you finally get wise, you realize that dialogue isn't your discovery at all; it isn't for you to inject into the college, since the need and the desire for dialogue are already present, built right into the college. It is your task to build structures, to dig channels, to find as many ways as possible for *Dialogue* to make voice answer unto voice.

I hope that during the past year we have found new and perhaps more subtle ways of making dialogue occur. We have tried several means. The color and spaciousness of the layout are meant to imply a certain judgment about the atmosphere within which dialogue can best take place. In certain articles, notably the "Griz-boom" article by Joel Carpenter, we tried to let whole communities talk back and forth. Naturally, such dialogue must occur slowly and sporadically, but the enthusiastic reply from GRSBM in a later issue indicated that there is a need for it. Within the Calvin community, when we felt that conversation about a given issue was somehow distorted, we made our comment by printing an article which carried out the discussion on a completely different plane. Ben VanderKooi's article on puns in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was printed with such a purpose.

We tried to reflect the diversity of interests in the college by balancing very dissimilar articles against each other and balancing creative art against scholarly writing; through diversity we were also able to dissociate ourselves editori-

ally from points of view that were not necessarily ours and in that way to define our own position.

This issue contains one other form of honest-to-goodness dialogue in the articles by Daniel Meeter and Phil Sytsma. Coming from two totally different angles, the two articles arrive at remarkably complementary conclusions. Separately, each is informative and original, but together, unconsciously, they form an exciting synthesis of ideas. I, for one, would have been highly pleased if that type of synthesis had occurred more often this year.

I hope the reader has known how to look for subtle and subtler connections between things in *Dialogue,* as well as to see the plain ones; equally, I hope he has known how to criticize us for connections that we missed. But part of our job, in truth, is to create the readers who read us. By dropping hints and by a thousand other little indications, we ought to be able to say, "This is the person we wish you to become if you wish to read us as we want to be read." Do you want that again? "This is the person we wish you to become if you wish to read us as we want to be read."

If you have heard voices in *Dialogue* this year, that is good. And if you have heard quieter voices beyond the voices, that is better yet, because that was our purpose. We want to be read with care and reflection—and to be worthy of such attention from the reader. That is a difficult goal to achieve, and it does not take much frankness to admit that we have not achieved it yet. We are proud of some progress we have made, but we leave what remains to be improved as a challenge to the new staff and the new year.

RVM

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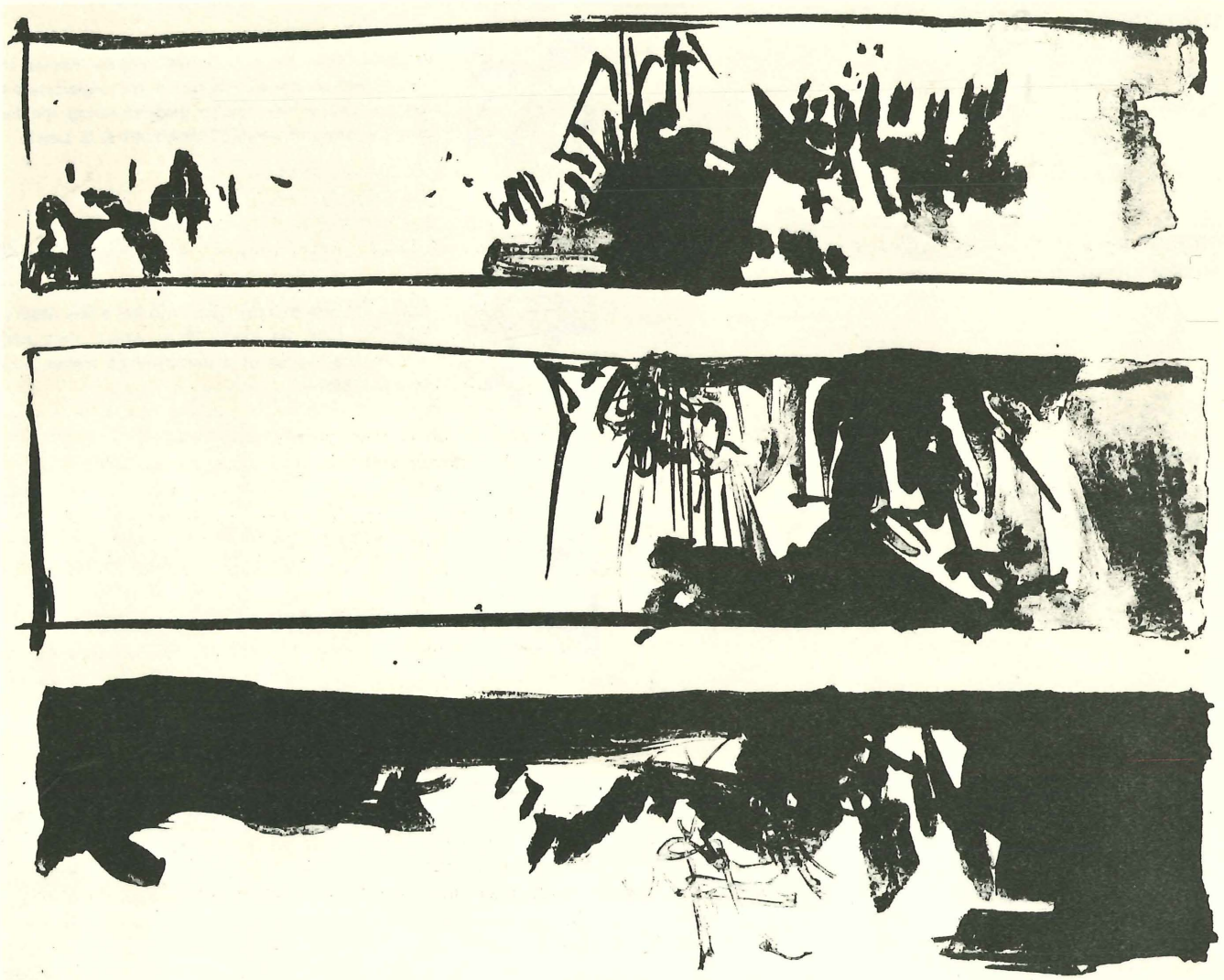


Sumi **John Bakker**

SATORI

Does Japanese art seem odd or un-American? Learn Zen, then read Wordsworth...

by Philip Sytsma

The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. The graceful lines of the temple are mirrored in the dark green water of the pond over which the temple was built. The temple's roofs and the dark green pines behind it are covered with a thin layer of snow. In the foreground a dark rock and its reflection in the pond loom ominously. There is an air of solemnity and quiet but also of mystery in the setting.

The Japanese consider the contemplation of a scene like this on a cold winter day one of the most valuable experiences possible. The appreciation of nature reaches into almost every part of their culture. In the spring, when the delicate blossoms of the cherry trees begin to bloom, almost the entire population takes off for the parks and city avenues lined with cherry blossom trees to drink, write poetry, or just walk along and be with family and friends in the presence of the blossoms. Even the smallest yards in Japan contain gardens with a few selected rocks and plants, carefully arranged. No Japanese house is complete without its *tokonoma,* a little corner in one room where a flower arrangement, a polished stone, or a hanging scroll is displayed with reverence. The appreciation of nature is part of the everyday experience of the Japanese and is an almost unconscious part of their perception of life.

The Japanese reverence toward nature has deep roots in the almost two thousand year-old influence of Shinto, the national religion, which is devoted to the worship of ancestors and of nature. Specific rocks, trees, and even islands are traditionally held to be divine and are cordoned off by sacred ropes. Japanese aesthetics, originating in this Shinto tradition, are also characterized by Shinto's sensitivity to and appreciation of the rocks, trees, streams, mountains, lakes, islands, insects, rain, flowers, moon, and mists which nature presents in its diversity. Much of Japanese art, in a sense, is a response to the feelings which rocks, trees, the autumn moon, and mist-shrouded mountains evoke in the contemplator of nature.

An even more powerful influence upon Japanese aesthetics, however, has been that of Zen Buddhism, imported to Japan by monks returning from their studies in China. The monk Eisa introduced one sect in 1191 and his disciple Dogen another in 1227. While the history of Buddhism is too complex to be reviewed extensively within a short compass, certain developments which brought about Zen should be noted. China has long been noted for its practical, down-to-earth mentality. Historically, the two most influential forces in Chinese thought have been Confucianism, which emphasizes social obligations and a morally responsible life, and Taoism, which puts emphasis on the independence of the individual and his identification with the great pattern of nature. In traditional Chinese art and literature, Taoism often developed as an expressionistic protest against

the rigid formalism of the dominant Confucianism. Buddhism originated in India and was later brought to China by missionaries. The form of Buddhism coming from India was somewhat too esoteric for the Chinese with its confusing metaphysical ideas and gamut of deities to be worshipped. Taoism's emphasis on the great ordered pattern of nature and on individualism thus began to shape a new form of Buddhism, that of Zen. Zen subsequently became the most influential form of Buddhism in China and was eventually brought to Japan.

Zen Buddhism does not easily lend itself to description. It is basically, as Daisetz Suzuki, a Zen master, says, "discipline in enlightenment." This enlightenment, or *satori,* is experienced suddenly after much disciplined meditation and is a revelation into the nature of reality. Suzuki says, "Zen is not necessarily against words, but it is well aware of the fact that they are liable to detach themselves from realities and turn into conceptions. And this conceptualization is what Zen is against . . . Zen insists on handling the thing itself and not an empty abstraction."[1]

The Taoist roots of Zen are clearly seen in the " . . . intangibility, indefinability, non-thing-ness, non-abstractness, non-morality and non-rationality of Zen."[2] Zen is intuitive, and the attainment of satori can never be conceptual. Satori is what one experiences, not what one understands through intellectual effort. To attain satori one's mind must, therefore, be void of all conceptions and abstractions. This is not to quit thinking, but to quit thinking on a superficial, abstract level. Disciples of Zen practice *zazen,* a prolonged, concentrated, disciplined program of meditation.

To help give a better understanding of what Zen meditation can do, I would like to quote the following excerpt from the report of a contemporary American psychotherapist, Jack Huber, who had an intense Zen experience:

> I began my meditation. I listened to MI-TO-TSU-U-U-U took a breath, and began to wonder what the function of counting was. I returned to listening and then began to think about why I was here. Back to counting and listening. And then more thoughts. What were other people doing? Were they having as difficult a time of it? Had I tipped the taxi driver sufficiently? Did the *Roshi* really know what he was doing? Could I stand going through this? My god, it was boring. My thumbs relaxed. I was falling off to sleep. MI-IT-TSU-U-U. Should that sound have been longer? No, that was a normal breath. Was I breathing the right way? Would the train continue to pass all day with its whistle and forceful shaking of the house? Did I only imagine the house shook? Back to counting and listening. MU-TO-TSU-U. MI-IT-TSU-U-U. I could not possibly keep my mind on it.

The following experience occurred four days later:

> For some time there was little variation in my previous high degree of centering my mind. The new exercise involved no great variation, although there was the longer intense sound and muscular tension, the sharp ending, and total listening.
>
> Gradually I must have become completely focused on the exercise. I do not think that anything else went through my mind.
>
> And then—it was late in the morning—a white, clear screen came before my eyes. In front of the screen passed or, rather, floated simple images—faces, objects. I have no clear recollection of the images. A rush of feeling came over me.
>
> I burst into tears; the tears became quiet sobbing.
>
> I do not remember at what point I had stopped the exercise.

This is how Huber describes life after the experience:

> I began to feel I had never really tasted things before. I ate less, drank less, and enjoyed both experiences more. Even being with people became a new kind of experience to me. I had always been gregarious—and often undiscriminating. Now I chose *whom* I wanted to be with and now I was *with* them. I was seeing and choosing what I wanted to do—speak with someone, drink coffee, read a book.
>
> I saw what I was doing as if I had never seen it before. And the pleasures I found in it all were something I could not have imagined.[3]

Something of the power of Zen can be seen in the effect it had on this American after practicing meditation for only a few days. His experience was not an actual satori, but at the least it had an unforgettable therapeutic effect upon him. It is not difficult to understand how Zen could have had such a pervasive influence upon Japanese culture.

Besides zazen, there is another technique used in Zen to guide one's search for enlightenment. This technique involves the use of apparently nonsensical or irrational statements on the part of the Zen master to shock his disciples into an awareness of the truth. Hakuin, one such master, was known to hold up one hand and ask what sound it gave. Another master showed his staff to the monks and

The winos are winking at me

The winos are winking at me
as if to say
join us
join the fellowship of those
who have been too wise
and are now mocked in wine

I've seen them tumble out
of buildings in Salvation Army overcoats
like happy devils
escaping a narrow heaven
of harps and wings and hymnsings
and bewildered as Adam
when they hit the cement

blinking or winking
at me at me

Thomas Konyndyk

leclared, "You do not call it a staff. What would you call t?" Someone comes out of the audience, takes the staff rom him, breaks it in two, and throws it down. Another naster, holding up his staff, said, "If you have one, I give rou mine; if you have none, I will take it away from you." At times Zen masters have been known to slap or kick their lisciples in response to their questions.

All of these examples have in common an emphasis upon the non-conceptual and non-logical nature of the Zen intuitive insight into the nature of reality. When a disciple asks a question which is too conceptual or implies a logical and intellectual answer, the master might strike him, not to punish him but to possibly shock him into an awareness that the truth concerning the ultimate reality of things will never be grasped in intellectual concepts but only in the concrete facts and things of everyday life itself. A sharp pain, a wooden staff, or an upraised hand could be the vehicle which suddenly throws open the mind to the concrete reality of existence. As Suzuki describes it,

> . . . all that we can do in Zen in the way of instruction is to indicate, or to suggest, or to show the way so that one's attention may be directed towards the goal . . . When a man's mind is matured for *satori* it tumbles over one everywhere. An inarticulate sound, an unintelligent remark, a blooming flower, or a trivial incident such as stumbling, is the condition or occasion that will open his mind to *satori*.[4]

Satori is a new way of experiencing reality, a sudden awareness of the significance of the concrete things in our experience and the realization that we are one with these things.

It is the Zen emphasis on the concrete elements in one's experience, especially those of nature, which has so profoundly influenced Japanese aesthetic sensitivity. An old gnarled pine tree, bent by the winds blowing along a rocky coastline, contains all of the mystery and beauty of the entire universe. A Zen saying goes,

> Mountains and rivers, the whole earth,—
> all manifest forth the essence of being.

And another,

> To have the sun and moon in one's sleeve;
> To hold the universe in the palm of one's hand.

Zen has given Japanese art a special appreciation for the apparently insignificant or simple aspects of experience. The art form which probably best characterizes this appreciation for simplicity is *Haiku*, a uniquely Japanese style of poetry. As R. H. Blyth writes in his extensive study on Haiku, "The essential simplicity of Haiku and Zen must never be forgotten. The sun shines, snow falls, mountains rise and valleys sink, night deepens and pales into day, but it is only very seldom that we attend to such things."[5]

Perhaps the best known Haiku is one written by Basho, the wandering poet who lived in the 17th century.

> The old pond, ah!
> A frog jumps in:
> The water's sound.

Tree **Mary Susan Monsma**

The close relationship between Zen and Haiku is shown in the way in which this Haiku was composed. While Basho was studying Zen under his master Buccho, Buccho once asked him during a visit, "How are you getting on these days?"

Basho replied, "After the recent rain the moss has grown greener than ever."

Buccho then asked a second question to test the depth of Basho's understanding of Zen. "What Buddhism is there even before the moss has grown greener?"

Basho's answer was, "A frog jumps into the water, and hear the sound!" Later he lengthened this answer into a Haiku with the added first line, "The old pond." Haiku is thus much more than an expression of tranquil or sentimental feelings. More deeply, it expresses a particular attitude toward the things that make up our experience, an attitude which accepts the "isness" of things and finds their meaning precisely in their "isness" or concreteness. Haiku presents no ideas but rather attempts to convey vivid images through the use of words. Not all Haiku deal with nature. These two examples show an interest in the simple daily activities of life:

Lighting one candle
With another candle;
An evening of spring.

When it darkens
They climb up to the temple on the peak
To light the lantern.

Haiku's simplicity and unpretentiousness sharply contrast with traditional Western poetry. Blyth comments on the contrast between Basho's Haiku and the poetry of Milton:

In the sixth month,
Mount Arashi
Lays clouds on its summit.

There is something at once simple and sublime about this verse. The simplicity is self-evident. Basho's verse lacks both the feeling of movement and the artificiality of Milton's

Mountains, on whose barren breast
the laboring clouds do often rest.

Basho's verse has attained a vastness and aloofness that belongs to the subject. The simplicity is that of nature.[6]

Suzuki makes a similar contrast between Basho and Tennyson. Basho's Haiku reads,

When I look carefully
I see the *nazuna* blooming
By the hedge!

The nazuna is a rather small, insignificant flower. Tennyson's poem goes as follows:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;–
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower–but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Suzuki makes two points of contrast. First, Basho leaves the flower as it is. Tennyson, rather, plucks the flower out and holds it up for an analysis. The fact that the flower will now soon die is of no consequence. What is important is what the flower will reveal of ultimate meaning. Basho realizes that the flower as it is, without analysis, is the revelation of the true nature of reality. Secondly, Suzuki says that while Tennyson is inquisitive and seeks a revelation from the flower–a revelation which the flower can not apparently give to him–Basho is, in contrast, acceptive, not inquisitive. The word *kana* in the original Japanese implies an attitude of respectful surprise toward the nazuna, an unexpected appreciation on the part of the viewer Basho.

During the routine of my daily cleaning job at an elementary school, I recently looked up and noticed a drawing of several children playing happily in the snow, while through the windows of the house behind them glowed a cozy warmth. Written above on the drawing was the following Haiku:

I could eat it!
This snow that falls
So softly, so softly.

To connect a Japanese Haiku with such a sentimental and romanticized domestic scene was an interesting and harmless juxtaposition but also a somewhat inappropriate one which abused the peculiar nature of Haiku.

This Haiku about snow falling was intended to convey anything but a warm, sentimental, childhood scene. The force of the Haiku comes from the contrast between the "I could eat it!" and the "softly falling snow," and also from the unity which is still preserved between the "I" and the snow in the act of eating it. The "I" is both a spectator of and an inescapable participant in the pattern of nature which completely manifests itself in falling snow. Haiku finds its roots in the Taoist characteristics of Zen which are in sharp contrast to the happy, warm, "Christmassy" feelings which much of Western poetry expresses and which were undoubtedly read into the Haiku on snow by the unenlightened (in both a cultural and Zen sense) although well-intentioned person who related the poem with the scene.

Sonnet # 2

When the sun breathed
warm dust through
the barn window
and three cats open-mouthed
waited on their haunches
and Grandpa leaning his head on
the brown belly of the last cow
pulled the soft flesh down down
the rhythm of the milking
broke
and Grandpa
turning out of time
squeezed a jet of milk into
the mouth of each sleek cat.

Melody Takken

Part of the problem in appreciating Haiku lies in the difference between the Japanese and English languages. The subtle flavor which the sounds of the Japanese words themselves add to a Haiku can never be reproduced in English. Many Haiku have as their subject an insect called a *semi.* My memories, as well as those of friends who testify accordingly, are filled with the peculiar sound which the semi makes every summer in Japan. Long rasping choruses from the trees swell and then die down and then gradually build up to a peak again. It is easy to associate memories and feelings with a Haiku such as,

> Of an early death,
> Showing no signs,
> The cicada's voice.

but only after suddenly realizing that a "cicada" is actually the well-known and friendly semi of Japan. For a Westerner to read this Haiku and understand the sensory images the poet is trying to evoke seems to me to be utterly impossible. Who, after all, even knows what a "cicada" is?

Japanese is ambiguous, containing no plurals or subjects. This ambiguity is what adds so much to the simplicity and charm of a Haiku. The reader himself becomes the subject of, and adds the details to, the image which the Haiku offers him. Concerning the importance of understanding the cultural background of Haiku, Suzuki writes,

> Haiku is the poetic form most natural and most appropriate and most vital for the Japanese genius in giving vent to his or her artistic impulses; and for this reason, perhaps, it takes a Japanese mind to appreciate fully the value of a haiku; foreign critics, whose way of feeling is not in accord with the Japanese way because they were not born in this climate and brought up with its cultural tradition, may fail to enter into the spirit of a haiku. To understand the spirit of Zen along with haiku, a thorough acquaintance with Japanese psychology and surroundings is essential.[7]

Haiku demands an intuitive understanding just as Zen teaches that the true meaning of life can be found only through intuitive insight. As Basho simply but eloquently put it,

> How admirable,
> He who thinks not, 'Life is fleeting,'
> When he sees the lightning!

Sharing many of the qualities of Haiku is the Japanese tea ceremony. Suzuki says, "The art of tea is the aestheticism of primitive simplicity."[8] The tea ceremony traditionally takes place in a crude, rustic, one-room hut constructed of wood and thatch. The hut's decoration consists of a scroll or flower arrangement in the tokonoma, with a cushion or two for the participants. The tea utensils are similarly crude and unostentatious, often rough and cracked, but prized for their irregularities. A feeling of seclusion, of withdrawal, marks the tea house, which is usually situated in a garden.

The tea ceremony, or "art of tea," developed from Zen ritual, the bareness of the setting and the careful ritual of the ceremony growing directly out of the principles of Zen. Two Japanese words describing the art of tea, *sabi* and *wabi,* are closely related to Zen. Sabi means "to rust" and refers to the elegance and charm which can be created in an object only by the passing of time. Wabi refers to the "poverty" of the tea ceremony's setting and the making much, in a spiritual way, out of very little. Okakura Kakuzo, writing in 1900, says, "The whole ideal of Teaism is a result of this Zen conception of greatness in the smallest incidents of life."[9] Old, rustic things acquire a new place of honor in the art of tea and a warm, quiet feeling of friendship is created between the participants. *Cha no yu,* the art of tea, is for Blyth, "The harmony of the guests, and of them with the sound of trickling water, the pine trees, the simmering of the kettle, the sight of simplicity and orderliness, the touch of the bowl and the bitter flavor of the tea."[10] The best description is probably the simplest one, in the form, of course, of a Haiku. This one is by Ryota:

> They spoke no word,
> The visitor, the host,
> And the white chrysanthemum.

Haiku and the art of tea are inseparable. Basho wrote the following Haiku referring to the small, rustic tea-house:

Autumn is near;
I feel drawn towards
The four-and-a-half-mat room.

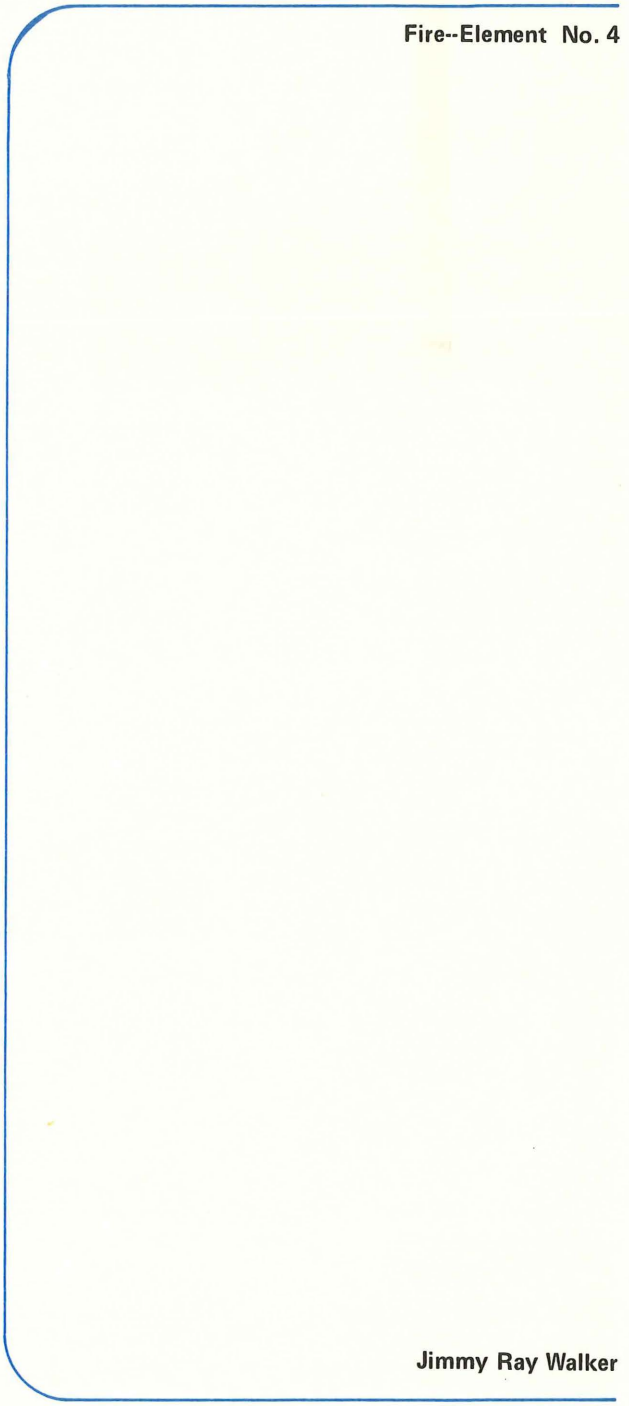
An integral part of the tea ceremony is its setting. The setting involves more than the hut, however, and crucial for the meditative, detached atmosphere of the ceremony is the garden which surrounds the hut. The tea garden, although a late development in the history of Japanese gardens, shares with them deep roots in Zen. The first gardens in Japan were closely connected with Shinto and were considered sacred. With the introduction of Buddhism, however, the gardens gradually began to be used to express Buddhist concepts. Gardens were patterned after mandalas, the complex, religiously symbolic pictures of Buddhist deities and ideas. Just as mandalas are meant to be meditated over to help attain enlightenment in esoteric Buddhism, the gardens were meant to be walked through in order to learn Buddhist lessons and concepts symbolized in the structure and pattern of the garden. A stream running in a certain direction symbolized one idea, and a shrine containing a statue of a deity at a certain position in the garden symbolized another.

The symbolic meanings of the gardens lost their importance, however, as time went on. More and more, according to Japanese scholars Teijo Ito and Takeji Iwamiya, the attitude grew that gardens were " . . . meant to be walked in, meant to be enjoyed, in which religious inspiration played no part, and where aesthetic enjoyment was the complete aim."[11] Not surprisingly, Zen monks, with their feelings of oneness with nature, often became gardeners. Zen, as we have seen, put no stock in the deities or mandalas of esoteric Buddhism. Instead, it valued the concrete things in nature like stones, trees, streams, and sand for what they were in themselves, devoid of any symbolic significances.

A Japanese garden attempts to simplify the perplexing richness of nature and in that way "naturalize nature." Each tree, each rock is selected with care and placed so as to emphasize its own distinct nature. No two trees are alike in nature, and there is no perfect tree. Thus, a tree is selected for the garden which clearly expresses its own individuality, its own uniqueness. The arrangement in the garden is the one which nature itself creates. "To insist upon a harmony other than the underlying one naturally revealed in nature is, precisely, unnatural,"[12] say Ito and Iwamiya.

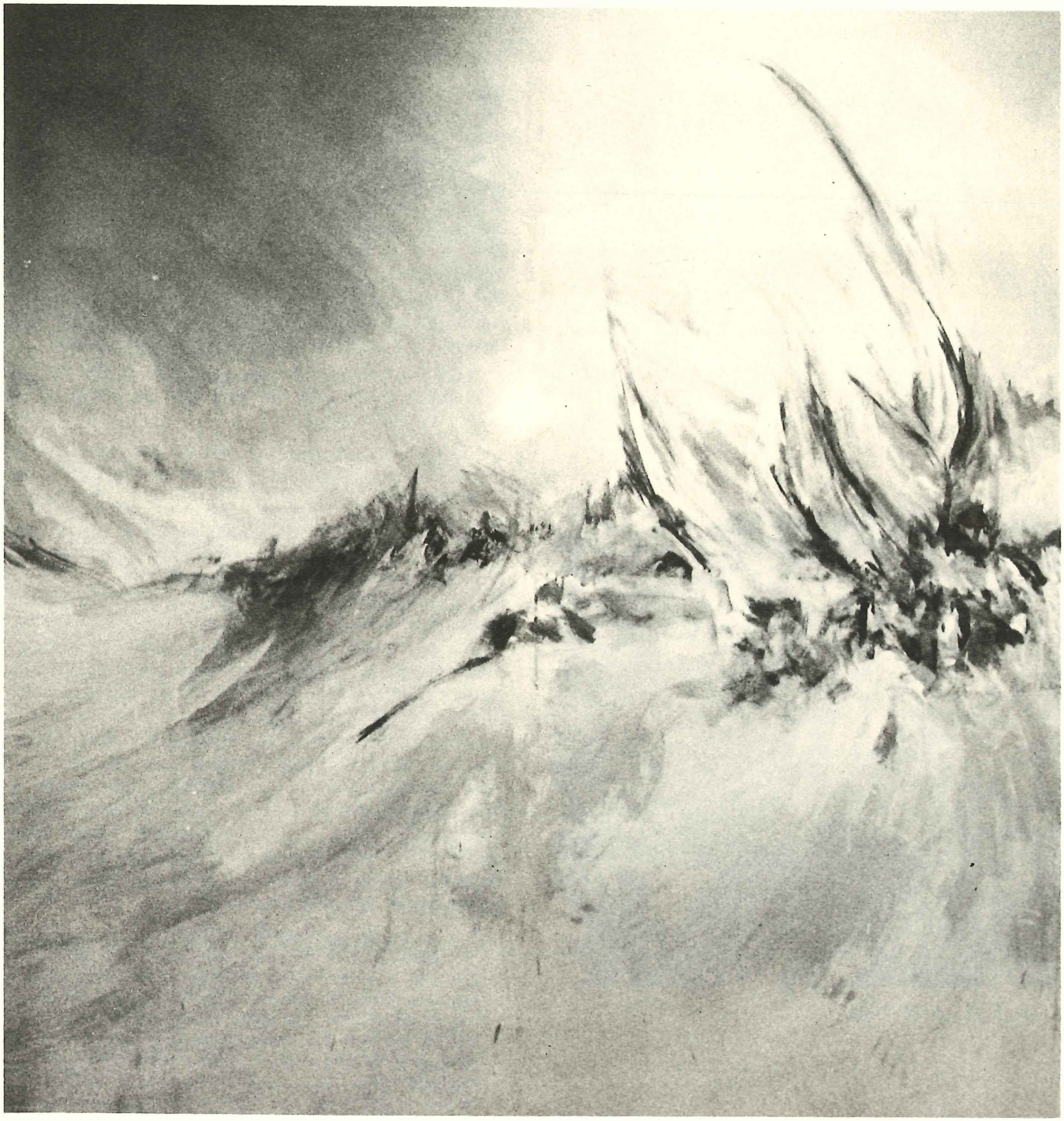
The experience of satori in Zen is the sudden insight into the "isness" of reality. But reality is manifested in nature, with which we are one. Thus the garden, by revealing the unique individuality of the elements of nature, is one more way which can lead to a realization of the "isness" of things and the "isness" of ourselves.

The Zen ideal of simplicity and control to heighten effect finds its fullest development in the dry garden. The dry garden is stripped to the barest elements of nature: rock, sand, and moss. The rock garden of Ryoanji in Kyoto is a sea of raked sand dotted about with a few islands of rock. A little moss grows at the edge of the rock islands to lessen the sharp contrast between the dark rock and bright sand. The impression one receives is of emptiness, vast



Fire--Element No. 4

Jimmy Ray Walker



stretching emptiness. The presence of a few rocks serves to create the impression of a universe, of eternity, in what would otherwise be a dull courtyard covered with sand. Ito and Iwamiya: "One makes an effect by reducing; less always means more; a whisper captures attention when a shout cannot."[13]

The emptiness of the rock garden is a clear indication of the sort of emptiness satori requires in the mind of the follower of Zen. Only the concrete is real; the mind must be empty of abstractions and conceptualizations.

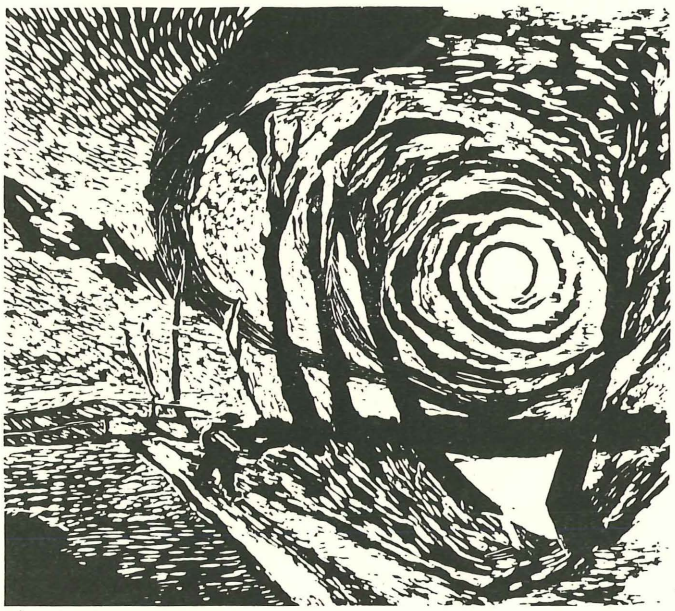
The powerful influence of Zen, which, as we have seen, is the search for satori, or enlightenment, is common to most Japanese arts—Japanese painting, haiku, the tea ceremony, gardening. One final evidence of this relationship between Zen and the aesthetic contemplation of nature comes from a certain type of Japanese bamboo flute music. This music, in the words of the player, is expressive, for example, of "a soft wind blowing through a snow covered forest," and another piece, of "the feelings of one becoming the wind and playing with the white clouds floating in the sky." The player is, quoting from the record jacket,

> Watazumido-Shuso, the head of a sect which he himself established, not fully satisfied with the existing three Zen sects of Buddhism.
>
> Through the Japanese flute, Watazumido-Shuso has attained musical and spiritual heights unachieved by anyone else.

Shuso's flute music is completely non-focal, yet it commands attention from the very first notes. The music has a hypnotic quality and is smooth and flowing, much like a river or falling leaves. According to Shuso's testimony, he has achieved satori through this music.

The search for satori through the aesthetic contemplation of nature by playing the flute, writing Haiku, drinking tea in a drab thatched-roof hut, or contemplating the beauty of nature directly in a garden is always characterized by a certain sense of mystery, of a haunting feeling of anticipation, the object of which is unclear. The Japanese have a word describing this sense of mystery, *yugen.* Yugen, as Noma Seiroku describes it, "... has overtones of indistinct, distant, subtle, and of profound or hidden meaning."[14] This profound and hidden meaning is undoubtedly what Zen claims to uncover in satori. Shōtetsu, a 15th century monk, described it this way:

> Yugen can be apprehended by the mind, but it cannot be expressed in words. Its quality may be suggested by the sight of a thin cloud veiling the moon or by autumn mist swathing the scarlet leaves on a mountainside. If one is asked where in these sights lies the *yugen,* one cannot say, and it is not surprising that a man who fails to understand this truth is likely to prefer the sight of a perfectly clear, cloudless sky. It is quite impossible to explain wherein lies the interest or the remarkable nature of *yugen.*[15]



The Old Man and the Wind

Lynda VanKooten

Yugen, in Shotetsu's description, seems to bear a close resemblance to satori with its intuitive, non-rational nature. Might not satori be an insight into, or a discovery of, the meaning behind yugen, the haunting feeling of mystery which aesthetic contemplation of nature can give? There is no way to know, of course, unless one has actually experienced satori.

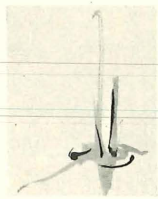
The strange fact remains, though, that yugen itself, the sense of yearning, of longing, of reaching beyond oneself, of trying to transcend oneself in order to understand the mystery of reality, is in itself a pleasurable experience. The joy which such an experience creates is vividly described by Kakuzo in his book, *The Book of Tea:*

> At the magic touch of the beautiful the secret chords of our being are awakened, we vibrate and thrill in response to its call . . . We listen to the unspoken, we gaze upon the unseen . . . Memories long forgotten all come back to us with a new significance. Hopes stifled by fear, yearnings that we dare not recognize, stand forth in new glory.[16]

Why should "yearnings that we dare not recognize" be a source of such "glory" and intense emotion? The quality of this experience is obviously more than aesthetic appreciation. Rather, aesthetic beauty has led to an even deeper feeling, one which seems to touch us at our deepest level of experience, one which "awakens the secret chords of our being."

The experience which Kakuzo describes is strikingly similar to one which C. S. Lewis writes about in his book, *Surprised By Joy*. The experience is one of intense desire or longing which came particularly when he was alone with nature or reading "marvelous literature." The object of his desire was " . . . that unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of a bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, . . . the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves."[17] Lewis called this desire *sehnsucht.* "This desire," he says, "even when there is no hope of possible satisfaction, continues to be prized, and even to be preferred to anything else in the world, by those who have once felt it."[18] "It was sharp, sweet, wild, and holy, all in one . . ."[19] The source of this desire, Lewis says, is the God who has created us in His image. We are always incomplete without Him and our greatest joy comes in those moments when we become aware of this sense of longing, of sehnsucht.

It is my conviction that the Zen experience of satori is the sudden intuitive awareness that ultimate truth is not conceptual but intuitive. This awareness leads to a heightened perception of the things in experience, especially of those in nature. That is why Zen and aesthetic contemplation of nature, whether through poetry, music, painting, or whatever, have such a close relationship. The basic motivation in the Zen search for satori is, I feel, the religious nature of sehnsucht, or yugen, words which attempt to describe that desire and yearning of the creature for the Creator, the experience of which, for some, is worth a lifetime devoted to disciplined meditation in a Zen monastary, or to the creation and appreciation of the many forms of Japanese art which have their deepest roots in Zen Buddhism. □



[1] Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (London, 1959), p. 5.
[2] R.H. Blyth, *Haiku,* Vol. I (Tokyo, 1949), p. iv.
[3] Gardner Murphy and Lois B. Murphy, *Asian Psychology* (New York, 1968), pp. 203, 212, 216.
[4] Daisetz T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London, 1948), p. 92.
[5] Blyth, p. x.
[6] Blyth, p. 120.
[7] Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture,* p. 247.
[8] Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture,* p. 271.
[9] Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea* (Tokyo, 1900), p. 52.
[10] Blyth, p. 153.
[11] Teijo Ito and Takeji Iwamiya *The Japanese Garden: An Approach to Nature* (London, 1972), p. 165.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 141.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 184.
[14] Noma Seiroku, *The Arts of Japan* (Tokyo, 1966), p. 192.
[15] Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits* (Tokyo, 1971), p. 14.
[16] Kakuzo, p. 78.
[17] C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (Grand Rapids, 1965), p. 9.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 7.
[19] C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (London, 1953), p. 92.

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In Whose Image?

Lynne Muller

Joy and Desire,

by Daniel Meeter

Share with me my fantasy, my wish. Imagine two houses, one in the depressed heart of the city, and one hidden in the mountains a morning's ride away. The house in the city is actually all the adjacent buildings on an old, small city block made into one unit. The buildings have been renewed, repainted, and made rather cozy. There is a small gym on the busiest street corner, and next to that stands an intimate little theatre. The doors to the house are open to anyone who would enter for an evening, night, or month; there is no one to say, "I'm sorry, but you may not come in here." Yet the house is a safe place, for a deep magic protects it, a magic as natural as the vibrant spark in the deep roots of the maple ruling the inner courtyard that is secluded from the streets by the old brick of the encircling buildings. From the courtyard runs a passageway to the street, a tunnel through the house; about midway along the passage-way is the door to the house's quiet tavern. This house is a Christian house, the draught served here is a friendly welcome, a draught of the fresh air of fellowship within the gloomy city. The low conversation near the fireplace is usually not recitation of memory verses; it might be talk about the old fisherman who had just died, or the new mayor just elected, but it is Redeemed talk. In the gym, folks are dancing together for life; upstairs in the corner building two people are setting a psalm to music which they will perform next week. In a third floor room a boy is going through "cold turkey," surrounded by caring hands and eyes.

In a week or so, this boy might go to the other house in the mountains to help shingle the roof of the new pantry. The house there is a full half-mile long, and it closely hugs the concave slope of a small, bowl-shaped valley. The house has parlors, hallways, long porches, and meeting-halls with celestories; there are board-walks running through the woods, and even two streams flowing right under the house on their way to the barn pond in the dell. In the middle of

Fantasy and Belief

Fantasy can be good for you...

the great building stands the master's quarters, flanked by the great dining-hall and the hearth-hall—three peaked roofs peering out over the valley which is now all frozen in the cold. The library is near the music room with its big quadrophonic sound system. Near the east end of the house is a suite dug into the side of a knoll like a hobbit's hole; it is reserved for absolute quiet. In the music room fat fiddlers play Haydn for the pleasure his music still gives; in the parlor the book of Isaiah is being read aloud. In his quarters the master discusses with a weekend guest a paper he has just drafted. Some children are studying French, some are listening to stories from Jules, the old New Orleans longshoreman. The master's wife nods as a guest says after a month's stay, "Time doesn't seem to pass here. It just is. A remarkable place altogether."[1]

Does my fantasy perhaps remind you of Rivendell in Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings?* Indeed, Rivendell did partly inspire my desire for just such a place. At one time the fantasy seemed realizable, the establishment of a Christian house patterned after the Last Homely Home East Of The Sea. But last summer I sadly but hopefully knew that the granting of this wish for me might have to be delayed till after the second coming of Christ.

Now instead of this kind of personal and rather elaborate fantasy share with me a more common experience. Imagine sitting alone by the Sem Pond on a drizzly night, when the light rain makes the pond sing and it's been kind of a sad day but you've survived. Can you sense an "inexpressible longing?" This less concretized feeling might be just as much a real desire as the "Rivendell-fantasy" mentioned above. There might very possibly be an inexpressible longing for "you're-not-quite-sure-what." C.S. Lewis speaks of this desire in his semi-autobiographical *Surprised By Joy:* ". . . an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy . . ." (pp. 17-18).

Joy and desire are two keywords that unlock the Christian fantasy of Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Lewis has written many books and a good many of them are fiction. *Perelandra* especially evidences an almost mystical kind of desire and joy. Though Tolkien published much less material than his close friend Lewis, his *magnum opus, The Lord Of The Rings,* is monumental in itself and represents a brand of literature which is really distinct from Lewis'. Tolkien writes what he calls a "fairy-story," a form of literature as old as the Anglo-Saxon epic "Beowulf." Yet despite the difference in their approaches to literature, Tolkien and Lewis stress a similar theme. In the preface to *The Lord of The Rings,* Tolkien hints at the importance of "joy and desire" in his fairy-story. More than that, he indicates to the reader the motives behind it:

> The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them.
>
> As for any inner meaning or "message" it has in the intention of the author none. It is rather allegorical or topical.
>
> But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations. . . . I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers.[2]

By most counts, Tolkien realized his intent; *The Lord Of The Rings* is a successful long story that has at least delighted its many readers. More than that, in its characterizations and battles, from its physical environment to its language, it is as internally consistent, as true to itself as the very world in which we dwell. The secondary world created by Tolkien is so true to itself that we might walk the Great East Road in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and feel right at

Ode to the Hudsonville Water Tower

No one knew about
the old man in the
water tower
but I knew he
crouched in the belly
of the thing and
scratched at the tin.

(The red graffiti wound
and wound like veins
around the tower.
It trembled when the trains
went by old
fat old steeple
without a bell.)

I kept him alive.
I brought him food at night
and left it on his balcony.
Later after I had waited
long in the shadows
he'd scuttle out and claw
the gifts into his room.

The night before
they tore the tower down
I watched his door
(Tonight I'll take you home
old man and keep you warm.)
and I watched when he came out
and stood
staring at Hudsonville.

Then he simply spread
his arms and fell
into the wind.
It stretched him far and thin
just skin
pulled like taffy into holes.

Melody Takken

home. The story is never allegory, never a morality fable, never a lesson; it has its own history to which it is so convincingly true that the parallels between Tolkien's secondary creation and Yahweh's primary creation are not at all obscure.

Middle Earth, for instance, the setting of *The Lord Of The Rings*, is as personal and menacing as our own. Death is cruel, mountains have malice, winters chill as deep as the soul, and the small seem like mere pawns of the great and powerful. Further, the intersection of the realms of the mortal and the immortal in Tolkien's secondary world is just as dangerous as in our primary world.[3] *Our* dealing with God means life or death even on the physical level, and demons and their associates are once again beginning to be acknowledged throughout much of the world. There is a similar kind of intersection in Tolkien's world. Lothlorien, the forest home of the immortal elves, is beauty, comfort, joy, and desire to the humble traveler, but for the haughty and selfish in whom the forest arouses lust, Lothlorien becomes peril and death. It is a realm to be taken on its own terms. Though men become the rulers of Middle Earth, they are forced to live in harmony with and respect for the non-human realms of Middle Earth in order to survive.

In the context of all of Middle Earth, including the story of the Ring, the terms to be obeyed are consistent. Even though it is an imaginary world, Middle Earth cannot break its own structural laws. In fact the reader is prepared by the limits, rules, and unshakeable character of the primary creation to be right at home in—if not comfortable with—the consistency of Tolkien's secondary world.

But is Tolkien's world perhaps too simplistic? Are the problems too easily answered? *The Lord Of The Rings* has been called a fantasy for those who don't bother to face real problems in a world that is very complex, where problems of good and evil often remain insoluble. Perhaps *The Lord Of The Rings* is just a nice story for nice little people. *Newsweek* magazine, in its "Transition" paragraph reporting Tolkien's death in September, quoted Edmund Wilson in calling *The Lord Of The Rings* "a children's book which somehow got out of hand." It is true that children are typically supposed to believe in things like Santa Claus or Bible Stories; their experience is not yet broad enough for them to judge between fairy stories, misconceptions, and the cold hard facts of the real world. But even though Tolkien creates an astonishingly convincing secondary world, mere believability is not his concern. What makes Tolkien's fairy-story more than a fabrication to help children pass their time is, in Tolkien's own formulation, the awakening of desire.[4]

The important question is not "is it true"; instead, it is the rhetorical "if it were true." The first question ends all inquiry, the second is a sign of desire and of a joy that accompanies the mystical longing of desire. It has been the experience of many of the readers of *The Lord Of The Rings* that this joy and desire becomes a very strong emotional feeling. Though Tolkien claims these feelings are an integral part of what happens with a fairy-story, they are not limited to the fairy-story. The second book in Lewis' space trilogy *Perelandra,* though by all means fantasy, is not

James Hartgerink

a fairy-story as Tolkien would describe it in his essay "On Fairy Stories." Yet the planet Perelandra awakens desire and longing in much the same way Lothlorien does.

The other two books in the trilogy are *Out Of The Silent Planet* and *That Hideous Strength.* In these books C.S. Lewis displays an astonishing consistency in an altogether different way than Tolkien. Lewis' science fantasy novels are well known by non-Christians and are among the classics of science fiction. Lewis' creative imagination has made these books absolutely original in the possibilities they present. Yet, one can never escape the fact that Lewis' Christian beliefs are the undeniable springboard for his fantasy. The books were written in the 1940's; if not for the scientific discoveries made since then about Mars and Venus, one would almost think that Lewis had had a vision of what life was really like on other planets. His fantasy is so consistent and congruent with the world we know and the theology we have that even though the books have been outdated by NASA, they remain exciting fantasy and excellent science fiction. Most exciting is, of course, their integral Christianity. Lewis' accounts of the eldila, Maleldil, Thulcandra, and the war between Maleldil and the "bent" eldila, the hnau of Malucandra, the crisis in Perelandra, and the victory over NICE in Edgeston are all consistent with the Bible, if not with post-war scientific data.

As with Tolkien, Lewis was not concerned with possibility; he was writing fantasy. The nature and success of his fantasy, considering all of its ingredients and implications, demands a closer look at mythology, fairy-story, theology, and fantasy in general.

In better moments of reflection, Christians realize that their faith is not the same thing as their theology; though the Word of God never passes away, there have been and certainly will be times when all of theology has no importance or relevance. The theology of Christians is an accounting in human terms of the way God deals with man and his world. Theology is never the "truth"; it is an attempt to explain the truth. Myths are the same thing—that is, an attempt to explain the truths of man's relation to the divine. Myths, though, are theologies that have become out of date. Fantasy, however, is by all means not myth, for myth has an express purpose of explanation. Fantasy, on the other hand, like much of literature, meets a more simple need: the need to tell. The fantasy of C.S. Lewis is not primarily meant to account for God and the world around us, but it can never escape from consciously dealing with God and the world, with the problems they pose. The fantasy of Lewis is a story, not a lesson, yet it cannot help but enlighten its readers as it eagerly grapples with the problems offered by our world.

Lewis looks at Earth's history from a non-temporal viewpoint. At certain points in his stories, he considers the nature of temptation. In other places, he remarkably fits angels and demons into physics. He teaches about ethereal joy and holy desire and also about redemption. Lewis' fantasy theologizes by inference. But theologizing is not all that it does. It is an inferential confession, which is at least what theology should also be and myth has been. When the sub-creations of Lewis and Tolkien are looked at as confessions, their value and desirability become evident.

Joy and desire are integral parts of fantasy and fairy-story and are keys to their understanding as explained by both Lewis and Tolkien. But what makes joy possible? How can desire continue? It has been said that what Christians most long for is the unhindered and unqualified experience of the presence of God, and second-most they long for untainted communion with the rest of creation. We know from scripture that because of our sorry state in the present world, these desires can only ever be met by the work of sacrificial redemption. Accordingly, redemption is the third key to understanding and appreciating Lewis and Tolkien.

In the essay mentioned earlier, "On Fairy Stories," Tolkien coins a word to describe the good ending, the happy turn of events that might be brought about by redemption. He calls it the "eucatastrophe." The eucatastrophe is not simply "they lived happily ever after." The eucatastrophe implies a significant turn of events, a movement from the unhappy situation of despair to joy.

What characterizes Tolkien's eucatastrophe is sacrifice and victory. In the great War of the Ring, the One Ring is destroyed; Middle Earth is "redeemed." A lasting victory over sorrow is attained. As with the real victories that we know of in this primary creation of God, there is always loss and pain before victory can be attained. As Christ suffered on the cross, so too many innocent folk died in the hopeless battles of the War of the Ring. As beautiful Lothlorien faded to just a memory with the destruction of the One Ring, so too Notre Dame de Chartres must crumble to dust and rubble in the final Day of the Lord.

The redemption story of scripture that parallels Tolkien's world is actually part of the setting of Lewis' work. Christ is not a part of Middle Earth, though he is represented by other forces and wills. On the other hand, Christ is very much a part of Lewis' space and time fiction, and he is also crucial in the Narnia series. Redemption doesn't appear as pivotal for the understanding of Lewis' stories, perhaps because it is the same redemption we know. But because the Bible's history of salvation is outside the secondary creation of Tolkien, the eucatastrophe of the redemption of Middle Earth is a more concealed concept. When uncovered, it reveals mainly the meaning of the story of Frodo and the Ring. It must be stressed again that this redemption in Middle Earth is not an allegorical commentary, but it is feigned history with applicability to the thought and experience of Tolkien's readers.[5]

We live in a world of pain; we suffer hardship—our close friends die, hate and bitterness run amuck in the lives of all peoples. For us, then, Frodo and Sam, the two central hobbit characters, create a strong image as they plod through the hell of Mordor. It is a depressing scene indeed into which the reader is taken.

Yet we look with faith, even if it be unconscious faith, to the time when all sorrow will be forgotten. We know that all wretchedness will end, for the victory will be complete. There will be no compromise, no detente, no watchful peace. The One Ring has not simply been cast into the sea. It has been destroyed. It has been destroyed for all time in its birthplace, at the very source of its power. Much

as been sacrificed, forsaken, or lost to gain the victory. But though the memory of the sorrow might be lasting, the pain of the sorrow is forever forgotten. The eucatastrophe does not deny failure and pain, but it does deny the existence of universal final defeat. Sam's words will ring true in the primary creation we know. "Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?"[9]

The eucatastrophe of Tolkien is not allegorical; it is instead a quality that the fairy-story shares with the real world. This is what gives *The Lord Of The Rings* its consistency, its emotive appeal to its many admirers, and this is perhaps why many people, such as Edmund Wilson, could not appreciate the work. They missed the point. The victory of Christ over sin is akin to the defeat of Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor. The rejoicing of His saints is like the renewal of children's voices in Minas Tirith, and the new creation might very well be like the fabulous 1420 brew of ale in the Shire. For his part, Lewis intends that the rejoicing at the climax of *Perelandra* be exactly that, the rejoicing of the saints. The hope of eternal life and universal redemption replaces sorrow with joy and gives it to those who are discontented with the present, those who are longing for the "who-can-imagine-what" result of the eucatastrophe.

For the dreams we have now might be answered in the new creation; we might really dwell in the fjords of Norway and greet with the voices of horns the morning sun. The glimpses of unreachable beauty or oneness with the earth that have often been brushed off as worthless romanticism might be within our grasp in a world redeemed for all time. The evenings of friendship in front of a fire might so increase both in enjoyment and abundance that even time would lose meaning. Perhaps the fulfillment of all these dreams in God's new order would still be nothing compared to the unimaginable joys that God has prepared.

What Lewis would show us by opening up the possibilities of this very world in his fantasy, what Tolkien would show us by having us respond to his own sub-created world, is that Christian joy is not something to be encountered only in prayer meetings. They would show us that wistful yearning or a little bit of starry-eyed romanticismor quiet dissatisfaction with the present is not a sign of "little faith" or some other weakness. What is revealed most by all the writing of Tolkien and Lewis is the magic, trueness, and beauty of the great fairy-story, which makes an imagined fairy-story, like *The Lord Of The Rings,* possible. Tolkien says in his essay, in defense of fantasy,

> Story, fantasy, still go on, and should go on. The Evangelium has not abrogated legend, it has hallowed them, especially the "happy ending." The Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may now percieve that all his bents and failures have a purpose, which can be redeemed. So great is the bounty with which he has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation. All tales may come true; and yet at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we give them as Man, finally redeemed, will be as like and unlike the fallen that we know.
>
> (On Fairy Stories, pp. 72-3)

FOOTNOTES

[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship Of The Ring,* Part I of *The Lord Of The Rings* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1965) p. 305.

[2] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship Of The Ring,* pp. ix-xi.

[3] This dangerous intersection serves as the context for some of the novels of Charles Williams, a close friend and kindred spirit with both Tolkien and Lewis. Williams' writings display a unique and profoundly Christian imagination.

[4] See J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," *The Tolkien Reader* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1966) p. 40.

[5] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship Of The Ring,* p. ix-xi.

[6] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King,* Part III of *The Lord Of The Rings* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1965) p. 283.

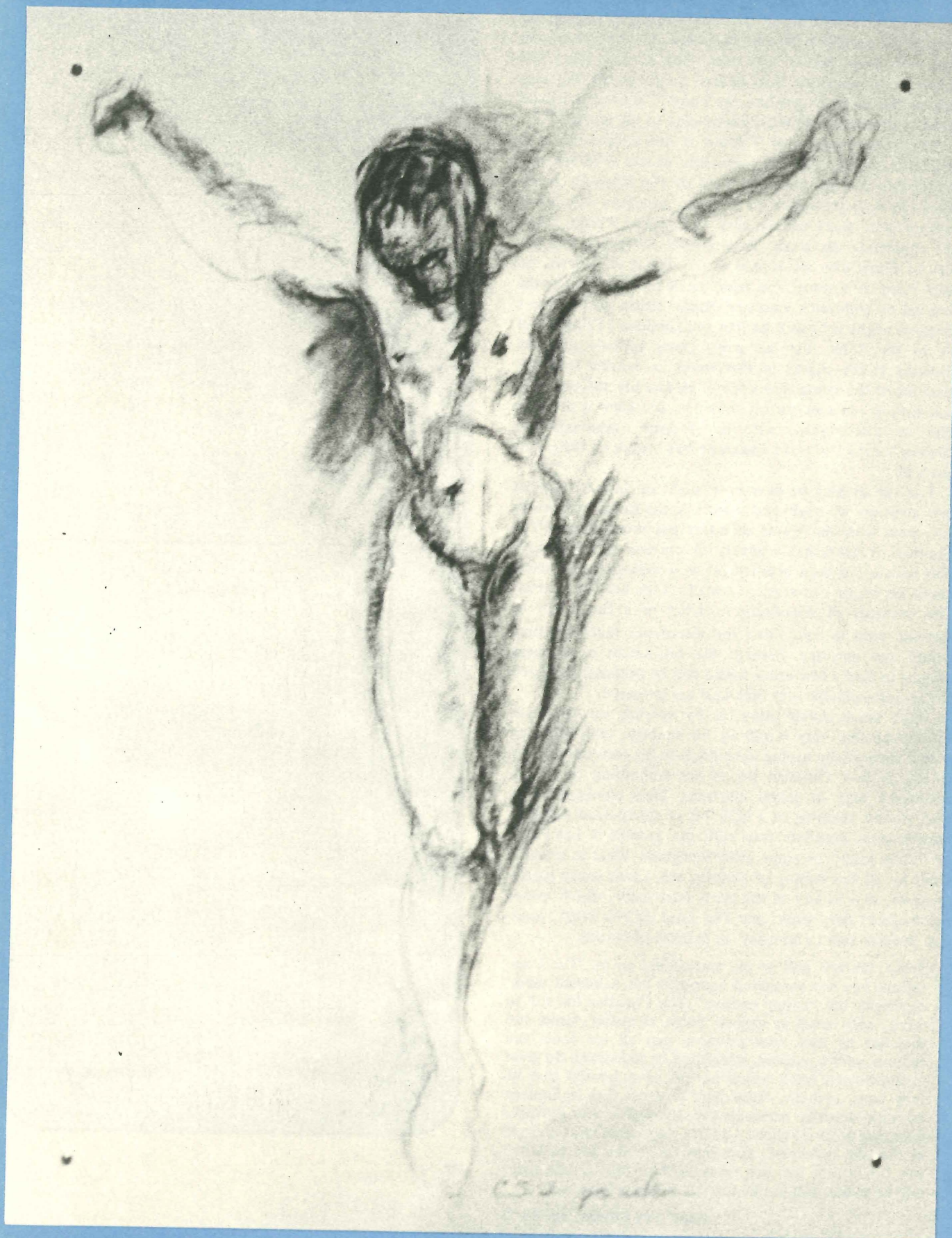
Green Life

In conversation
my friend
stood before me
extending
his hands towards me
as if holding
something
large and round between them.

"Look," he said
"I have a balloon.
What color is it?"

I smiled
and said
"It is blue."
"There is no balloon,"
he said.

Bill Sheldon



Crucifixion Study No. 2

Philip Wilson

Easter

Nation after nation came
One by one, walking up the path,
Past the mailbox and
The picket fence, past the petunia bed,
Past the sign "Beware of Dog,"
Past the bulldog sleeping
With a smile on his face.
Each one came in turn
And stood on the welcome mat
Made of stripped up whitewall tires

And pounded in a nail, one at a time.
One through the foot, one through
The hand. A big shot from New York
Came and smacked one through
The kidney. The kids came up
With sticky hands and took
Their licks. Bam. "I think Junior's
Got good hands
Don't you, Marge."
Marge was busy pounding.
She bent the nail.
The policeman came up.

"Just one, lady. Get along."
He went away, up and down the long line
That stretched for centuries.
"Don't push. You there, come with me."
Etcetera.
Until only the sweeper was left.
Until what had been
A spread-eagled body
Lying whiter than a wedding invitation
Looked more like some kind of
Crazy iron armadillo
There were so many nails.

Dark came and the winds came
Trampling out of the east
Like bulls. The moon looked
The other way, but then it grew,
Like an idea, huge and red
And wavy with heat.
Everything panicked. Trees shrieked
And withered in the moon's heat.
Birds rose like helium balloons.

Telephone poles popped like corks.
The night was brighter than
A hamburg stand.
The night was hotter than
A hamburg stand.

Then there was a popping sound
And nails were popping off
The crazy iron armadillo
Like buttons. All the nails.
Until the spread-eagled body
Once again lay white,
Rising like bread,
And the world and all the nations
Fell away.

Randall VanderMey

[August, 1973]

One of the dubious advantages of corresponding regularly with good friends is the advice they proffer with each mail delivery. Maybe I provoke them, but somehow all of my friends feel free (air mail, must be answered promptly) to offer suggestions for drastically changing my character and life-style, to relay recipes and minute descriptions of food, and to recommend suitable reading material. My problem, simply stated, is that I feel compelled to read everything suggested but do not have the time. (Since I categorically refuse to try the recipes or to modify my way of living by mail, I compensate by voracious reading and carefully prepared epistulary responses to each recommendation.)

All of the above serves only to explain why, late this month, I raced to the Bookie and bought *A Spy in the House of Love* by Anaïs (I did not even know how to pronounce her name) Nin upon the suggestion of a friend who has an excellent track record—meaning that I usually can figure out why he suggests the books he does.

I decide not to read it right away because I am rereading all of Madeleine L'Engle's books, and I already know that I like them.

By Anais Nin:

A Spy in the House of Love. Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1959. 140 pp. $2.00.

Seduction of the Minotaur, afterword by Wayne Mc Evilly. Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1961. 152 pp. $2.25.

The Four-Chambered Heart. Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1959. 187 pp. $2.25.

[September, 1973]

First of all, I must confess to many disappointments in the phantastic, magical qualities of the books I read. Everything appears so ugly, in such dire need of social restructuring, and finally pointless. Few books measure up to the fairy tales first read to me or to my father's bedtime recitals of the limitless, glorious adventures of Mary Makebelieve. The magical, phantastic quest for beauty has been relegated to comic books; a fact which forced me time and time again to my *Yellow Book of Fairy Tales.*

I drummed up my courage and started reading *Spy:* "The lie detector was asleep when he heard the telephone ringing" (p. 5). So Anaïs Nin introduces the mythical character upon whom Sabina's lies, dreams, and illusions will focus. The conflict arises as Sabina moves through her life, adopting new roles for each person she encounters, seeking an identity with which she is secure. The lie detector stands as the measuring stick for truth and the opposition to her inconstancy. There is an airiness and a transparency reminiscent of my favorite fairy tales in Nin's descriptions: "A light like a small diamond facet appeared in her eyes, fixed in a narrower precision on her intent. At other times her pupils were dilated and did not seem to focus on the present, but now their diamond precision was at work on this laborious weaving of life-giving lies, and it gave them a clarity which was even more transparent than the truth" (p. 23). The crystal palaces bedecked with jewels and flowers have become the dwelling place, the landscape of Sabina's soul. The transition from frog to prince occurs in the inner journey of Sabina's soul. Oddly the clarity of the novel increases with the proliferating instances of Sabina's deception. The constant interplay of Sabina and the lie detector, deception and truth, and illusion and reality provide the motion of the novel. Nin's quest for psychological reality pervades a hovel of which the sole landscape is one woman's soul.

Anais Nin: A Reader's Diary

by Martha Lipscomb

[December, 1973]

Enthusiasm and blind adoration make me nervous, but, when I notice them cropping up in myself, sheer terror ensues. After my ecstatic delight with *Spy* I decided that a modicum of restraint was in order. Pacing myself carefully, I zipped through the four published volumes of Nin's diary. I could not stop. There is an honesty present in them, a self-awareness, and a trust of other human beings which is admirable—verging on astounding, because there seems little basis for trust and much occasion for hostility. Vulnerability is her watchword, and as testimony she has published her diaries for the world to see and assess.

[January, 1974]

I caught myself writing letters recommending anything Anaïs Nin has written. If the lucky recipients of such excellent advice fail to comply, I send them the appropriate book. Soon after catching myself advising, I try the mirror trick (a constant Nin device for a character's self-revelation —also a favorite of Snow White's horrid step-mother), and I recognized an evangelist exhorting and cajoling even slight acquaintances to read Nin's books. When anyone was the least bit hesitant I added, "even if you don't like her immediately, give her a try later." I became personally affronted when Nin was attacked. Nin lovers are instant friends.

Occasionally the zeal fades enough for me to realize that her prose is awkward, distant, at times clumsy and obscure. There are enough passives in one volume of the diary to last a lifetime. (But I always defend her out of the other side of my mouth, for she is traversing new territories, exposing her most secret dreams, for which we have but a limited psychological vocabulary, jargon hitherto intelligible only to the initiates.)

[February, 1974]

I just finished *Seduction of the Minotaur.* My notion is that the novel is most interesting in the rendition of colors. Nin's colors have dimensions other than mere visual harmonies; they have associations, atmospheres, and psychological connections. For example Fred, the hitchhiker from the University of Chicago who ends up in Mexico, causes Lillian to react as follows: "[she] called him 'Christmas,' because at everything he saw which delighted him—a coppery sunrise or a flamingo bird, a Mexican girl in her white starched dress or a bouganvillaea bush in full bloom—he would exclaim: 'It's like Christmas!' " Fred immediately connects his delight at the colors and sights with the emotions of Christmas. Because of the careful threads which Nin has woven, the texture of metaphor and simile is natural; in effect, the literary devices have been naturalized by their context and by the careful study of their antecedents.

More relief. Not only do I have doubts concerning Nin's style, I am beginning to wonder whether indeed she can move outward through her inner journey. Or will she continue to loll in the exploration of her own psyche? An inner journey can serve as an excellent excuse for continued devotion to one's ego.

Rumor has it that she is coming to Calvin College in April—a chance to exorcise the doubts with my own eyes and ears, the ultimate birthday present.

[April 10, 1974]

Anaïs Nin arrived today, and my brain is still too jumbled with experiences to analyze critically. But the pervasive influence is her kindness, personal and attentive. I expected wit, name-dropping, and some brittleness. Instead her graciousness took control of all of us. When her answers to questions were inadequate or misleading, she continued to explain, tried new tacks. The most instructive aspect of

her behavior was her kindness to those who had read none of her books. A final impression of seventy years creatively spent.

[April 11, 1974]

In Kalamazoo to meet a godchild, renew a friendship, Nin speaks of her feeling of personal responsibility for each human being she meets. But last night she spoke of psychoanalysis as her philosophy of life. Somehow the statements do not mesh; where does she gain strength for such responsibility?

[April 17, 1974]

Sometimes after a perfect yellow day comes a rather empty time. I read Nin's *The Four-Chambered Heart,* a recitation of the trials of Djuna. Rango, a lover of sorts, manipulates and deceives Djuna; Rango's wife strips her of clothes, of a lover, and twists Djuna's kindness while professing to be sustained by it. Parasites, both Rango and his wife; yet the host is not eaten up by hostility. Rango's manipulations become enticing. His abuse is the impetus for Djuna's adventure. *Heart* is elegantly executed, rather filigreed, chock full of psychological clues to the identity of the criminal manipulator.

Now I need some time to stand back, to read other novels, to return to highly polished surfaces (thank you, Jane Austen). After such a comfortable stay in the world of phantasies and dreams, I need perspective.

[April 19, 1974]

I think I am addicted to Nin and conspired against. I meant to rest from the exhausting interior world, to balance for a while, but the United States Post Office and Anaïs were allied against me: my copy of the fifth volume of the diary was in the mailbox. I have to read it because Anaïs recommended it. I am compelled . . . □

A Covenant of Years

What wisdom has she gained
in trying to become part of the furniture?
Perhaps that it's impossible
Although it may be ideal.

She has absorbed or ignored
the cacaphony and clutter
of one small place, this bar
Achieved a reconciliation
a covenant of years.

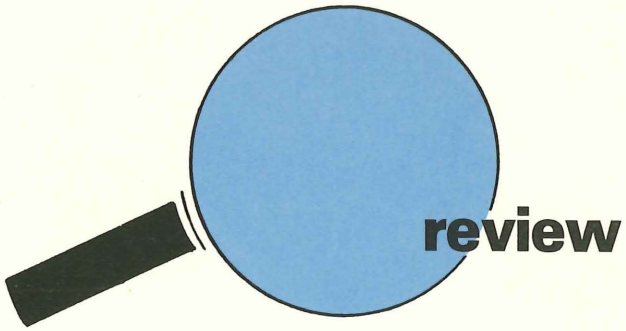
She has seen the eerie symphony of faces
and attached herself
to the music of the heartland
and its anthems of feelings more real
in lands to the south
She was attached
to an artist type
it seems with a torn overcoat
turtle neck and a beard
We see his face rarely these days if never

Perhaps he now wears flannel
and a clean face and drives a truck
Only she knows him by what his eyes once had
and plays each lilting country ballad
three for a quarter for him
She waits like a familar chair
to surround him
if only half way
in her blunt arms and songs
then watches him out the door
get free

Thomas Konyndyk

Girl in a White Sweater

Jane Ritzema



Catching Line Drives in the Dark

The Last Carousel, Nelson Algren. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973. $7.95, 435 pp.

In recent years there has been an upheaval of sorts in the world of fiction. It is becoming more and more apparent that the short story writers in America are cranking out far better material than the novelists. Granted, there is a bit of overlapping by the authors. Cheever and Malamud and Updike have all produced novels of great worth, but it is their books of short stories that have surfaced of late as the best in American fiction. There are other writers whose work in the short story has caused sensation, celebration, and revolution, most notably Charles Bukowski. There is also Nelson Algren.

Who? Nelson Algren. Nelson as in Lord or Ozzie and Algren as in a large group of smiling faces. Mr. Algren, if he is remembered at all, is remembered for his novel concerning drug addiction, *The Man With The Golden Arm,* and that's about it. There are reasons for this lack of readership and for the abundance of critical rejection.

First, Mr. Algren has never felt quite at home with establishment writers. His style doesn't jibe with theirs. Nor does his subject matter. In fact, his entire approach to being a writer has been different from most. Second, he has consistently written stories from the male view. The machismo mentality. Thus, he has been slighted by the women writers and critics influenced by the feminist movement. And, of the above writers, he is nearest to Bukowski, which would immediately leave him unread by untold millions who are content to snuggle into bed with a copy of *I'm Okay, You're Okay, Jonathan Livingston Bird%&*$,* Rod McKuen, and other such nonsense.

Most of this is unjust. Algren's short story titles are better (more original) than entire books by the most popular (bestselling) writers around. For instance, great joy may be found just reading down the contents page of *The Last Carousel:* "Dark Came Early In That Country" "Could World War I Have Been A Mistake" "Otto Preminger's Strange Suspenders" "I Never Hollered Cheezit the Cops" and on and on.

His subject matter? Well, yes, it *is* male oriented. In fact, it smells of locker rooms and reeks of bicep bulge. Here we must tangent briefly. Simply this. Perhaps the criticism of Algren for repeatedly indulging in typical male fantasy is just. He could very well be the all-time chauvinist. Yet this sexual coin has a flipside. The argument may hinge not on the overblown male /female struggle but on the good versus bad writer. Algren to me appears to be just a smart writer, the smartest of writers, because he realizes his limitations. He writes what he knows best. The obvious first rule for a writer—yet the one rule most writers first forget to follow.

Here is a man already middle-aged in the sixties, aware perhaps of the feminists, but just as aware that he does not want to change anything about his subjects to suit them. It wouldn't work for him, and the stories themselves are the evidence for this. His stories on baseball (there are three or four of them in this collection) are superb. "Ballet for Opening Day: The Swede Was A Hard Guy" is the best thing one is likely to find on the 1919 World Series fix involving the Chicago White Sox, now remembered as the Black Sox for their selling of the series.

Algren is equally adept at descriptions of the boxing world, in this case the world of small tanktown boxers earning maybe a hundred bucks for getting their ears and eyes bashed around a ring for twenty years. He moves from the sports arena to whorehouses to Saigon to little excursions into the worlds of fantasy with an easy downshift or a nifty double clutch to accelerate his pace.

Three quick things, the first two of which are similar. Algren, for all his hardness and hard subjects, is sensitive.

Nearly compassionate. And the compassion is graced with an amazingly absurd sense of humor. The belly-laugh type, where you find yourself actually hearing the sound of your own laugh while sitting on the couch reading the book. These two go hand in hand. The humor allows for the compassion, gives it a solidity of its own, a handhold on the human condition, a signpost to the mysterious ability of humans to tolerate even the worst of suffering with the greatest of dignity.

Finally, Algren is essentially dark. He pushes and mulls around dark ideas, flirts with the darker elements of human society, lets his imagination twist and mutilate history all to the reader's delight and benefit. He catches with ease those as yet unearthed (unearthed because we are afraid to discover ourselves) fears, frustrations, and frailties that people are continually but subtly showering upon one another's heads (but never their own) and rifles them back from the dark outfield straight to our glove-warmed hands.

And now we must hold them and look at them and face up to them. It will do all of us a great deal of good. We should read and thank Mr. Algren for his sure eye and his own type of golden arm that has given us these dark but needed perceptions of the kind of people we are and the type of world we must live in.

–David C. denBoer

St. Paul the Hermit **Philip Wilson**