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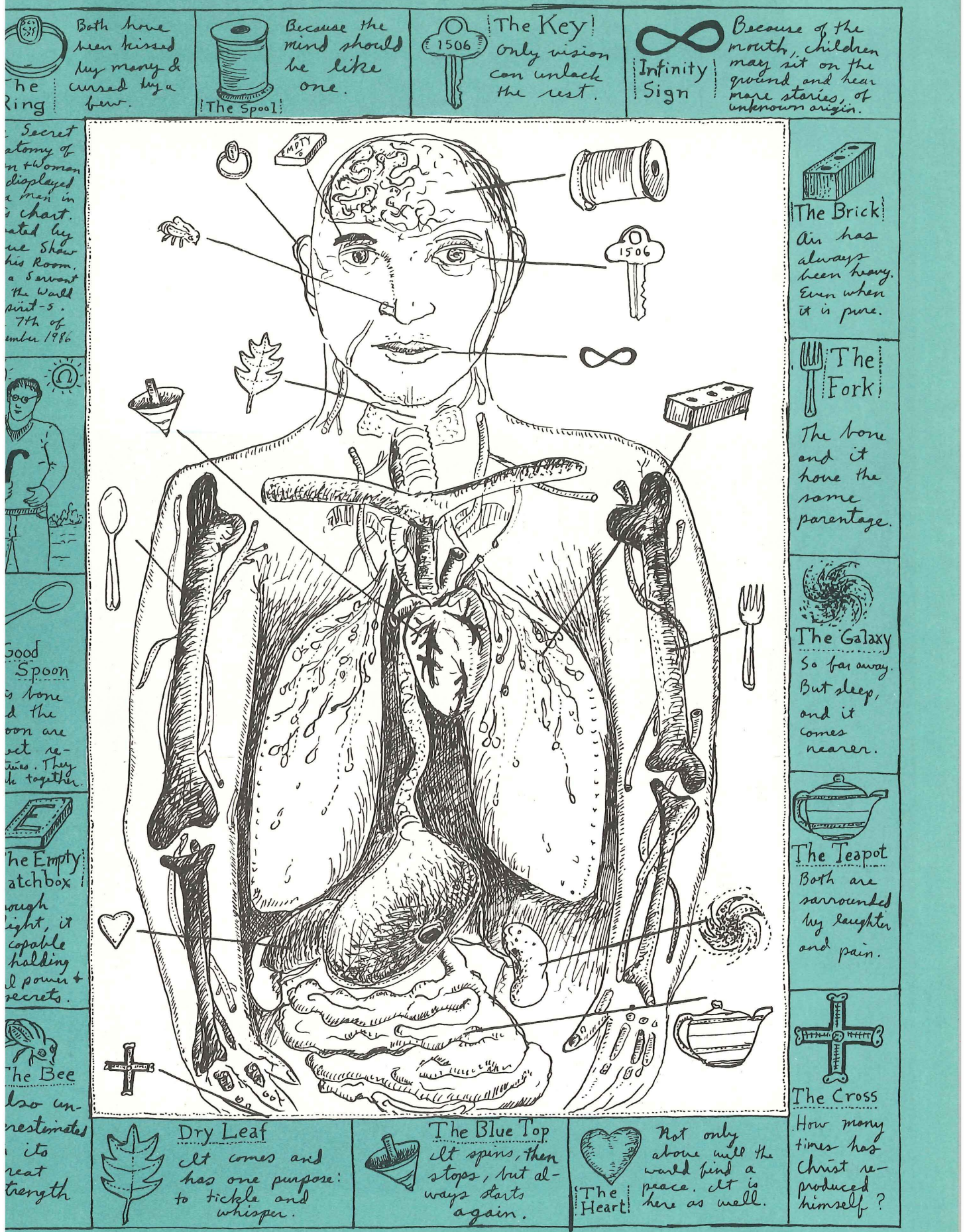
# Dialogue

Staff and writers of Dialogue


The Ring
Both have been kissed by many & cursed by a few.
The Spool
Because the mind should be like one.
The Key
Only vision can unlock the rest.
1506
Infinity Sign
Because of the mouth, children may sit on the ground and hear magic stories, of unknown origin.
The Brick
Air has always been heavy. Even when it is pure.
The Fork
The bone and it have the same parentage.
The Galaxy
So far away. But sleep, and it comes nearer.
The Teapot
Both are surrounded by laughter and pain.
The Cross
How many times has Christ reproduced himself?
The Heart
Not only alone will the world find a peace. It is here as well.
The Blue Top
It spins, then stops, but always starts again.
Dry Leaf
It comes and has one purpose: to tickle and whisper.
EMPTY
1506

# dialogue

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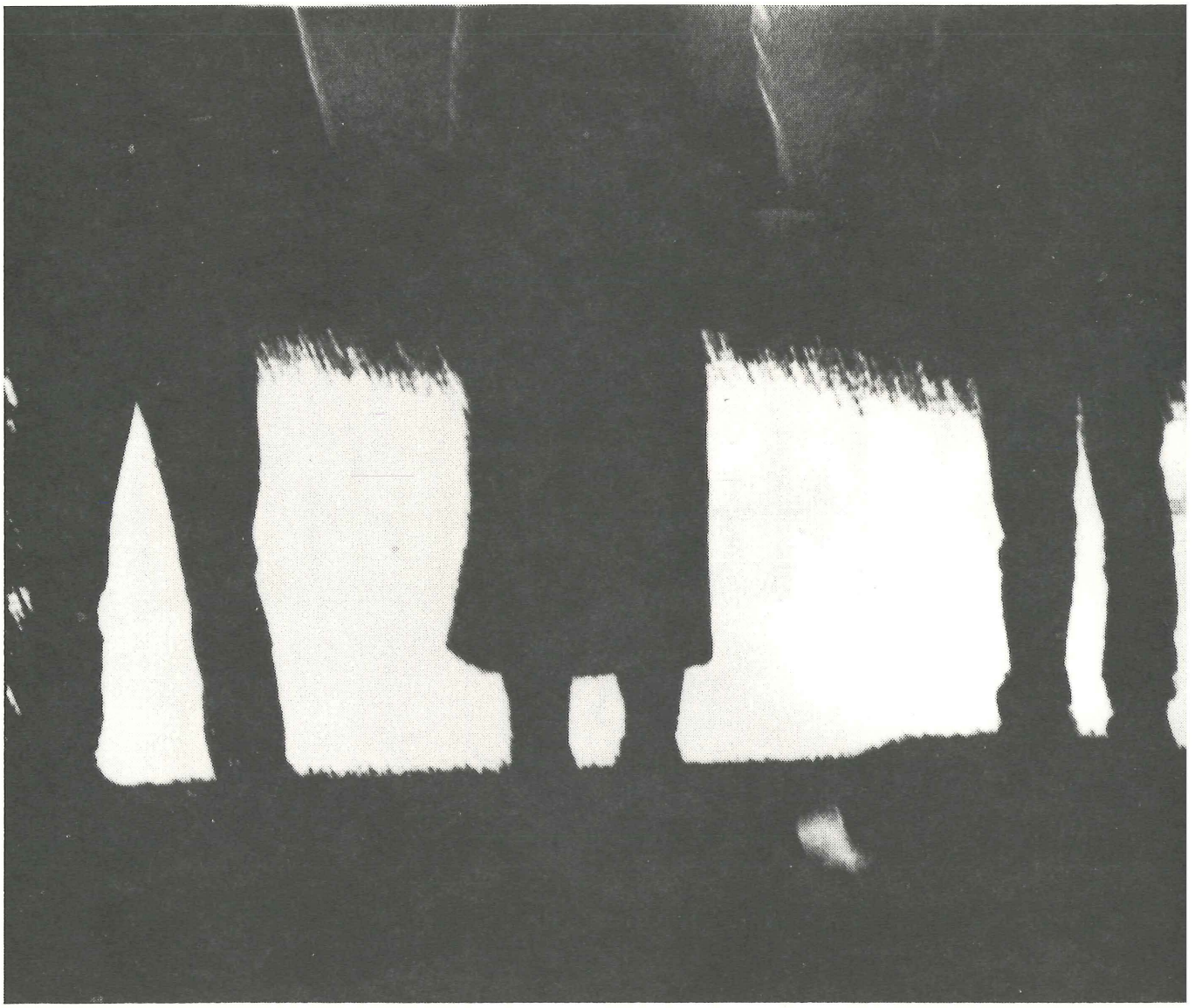


Cheryl VanWyma

# Inside



Cover by Dave Shaw

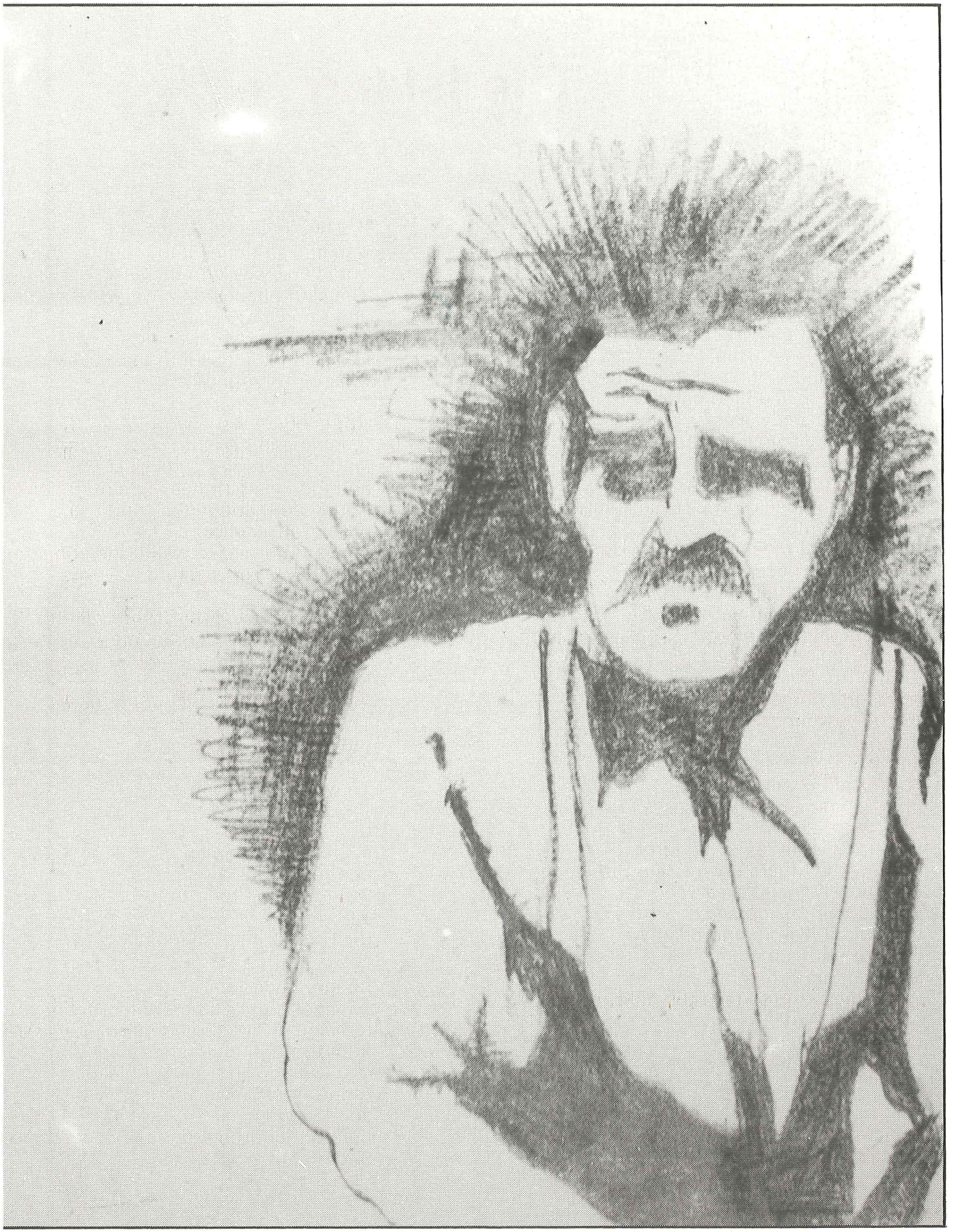
# Editorial

It is very hard to keep endpoints in sight. When I run, often the only way I can ward off discouragement is by looking at the ground in front of my feet, and running a step at a time, letting the miles take care of themselves. So too in my studies, the quickest way to despair is by taking a broad view of my tasks. Better by far to begin one thing than to create ulcers and writer's block by laying out all of my agenda before me.

The problem with such an approach to running or studying is obvious. By always keeping my eyes to the ground, I often run the wrong way. The world is full of paths placed almost parallel to one another which diverge only in the distance—so gradually the plodders like myself can miss important distinctions until too late. I can forget to be generous simply by succumbing to one act of stinginess, and plodding on without reestablishing my bearings. Or I can try to get a good grade on an assignment and suddenly a month later find myself actually believing that grades are the focus of education. One missed deadline leads to many, and on the pattern goes, woven through my instincts.

There is a value to trusting God to take care of our souls, but with so many paths available in the world, and so little easily available information about which paths pass through swamps, God's care cannot be of the sort that allows us to live with our heads down. When Jesus says "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own troubles be sufficient for the day" (Matt. 6:30); his exhortation frees us from worry, not sight. God gives us the strength to look ahead, if we let him, and endpoints have to be actively sought. The challenge we sometimes face more than any other is to avail ourselves of that loaned strength and hold our heads up.

—DL



Ottens

# The Island

### I. Crossing the Straits

I am one of them,
and yet I am not.
They also hurried to the upper deck,
but when the September spray
swept over the bow
they ran for the cabin,
and I was left alone with the pilot
to survey the sculpted paths
of white-ridged waves.
Our goal is six miles distant.
Mackinac,
the great turtle,
basking in the last rays of the summer sun.
Its shell humps
three hundred feet out of grey Huron,
a colossus whose shoulders
rise above his fellows.
For a young America
it was higher ground
for cannons ruling the Straits.
To the Iroquois
it was the home of Manibozo,
the holy ground.
It is neither,
and it is both,
but for me it will be
the shoulders of a colossus.

I am the last to leave the ferry
I follow the others down Main Street,
but my way is not their way.
They come to sightsee,
to gawk at history and beauty
without understanding.
But I am here to know.
While they stop to feed the gulls,
I borrow a skiff
to circle the Island
on the wilderness of waves.

### II. The Walls of Jericho

The line stretches into infinity,
bubbling away into the east.
The skiff pitches on a wave,
and I raise my head.
The plane of water shifts
and the line fades into the waves
far short of infinity.

At the edge of the world
there is another line,
an edge between restless Huron
and the constant hemisphere of heaven
I pursued that line for hours
but never resolved it.
Finally, I turned to watch the crimson s
diffuse into the western waves.

Now a shadow against the twilight,
the Island rises to greet me
like a fortress of the night.
I will not break these gates;
these black walls will not crumble.
Though I circle all day,
the bluffs of Mackinac
will not fall down.
They must be overcome.

Near the harbor,
a squabble of gulls
beg to be fed.
But I have nothing to give.

### III. The Throne of Manibozo

In the morning
I begin my ascent.
I abandon the paths of other men
to clamber over boulders,
fight through clutching briars,
and walk down aisles of hickory.
A curtain of leaves parts
and I stand
before the throne of Manibozo.
Sugarloaf,

oneycomb dais.
ters in limestone,
k of a primeval sea,
vide holds for my eager fingers.
ır the peak,
rconfident
careless,
foot breaks loose,
I swing away from the rock.
e hand holds,
I wait for my heart to catch up.
had fallen,
n if I were caught by angels,
ould mean defeat
the night is coming
I must climb alone.
e sun is sagging into the west
en I finally sit on the rugged shelf
t is the seat of Manibozo.
e I watch my shadow
ch out to the horizon.
before it touches,
shade of the Island
allows it up.

he twilight
awk traces circles above the east bluff.
aring on the thermals,
oversees the communal gulls
t flutter and fight
ng the shore.
e warm evening breeze
ngs me his lonely and defiant cry.

**The Center of the Universe**

he darkest hour
and on top of the Island.
my right hand are the lights of the city,
ny left, the cold waters of Huron.
this I can hold
he circle of my arms.
this is mine
soar like the hawk.

As I stand alone,
arms outstretched,
a high cloud like a chill
sweeps across the stars
and I look heavenward.

Under the brilliance of celestial light,
the Island crumbles
and Huron boils away.
I am alone in the universe.
I look for the things I know
to wrap my arms around them,
but I see only the universe.
Stars and planets spin in their courses,
but I am whirled uncomprehending
into darkness.

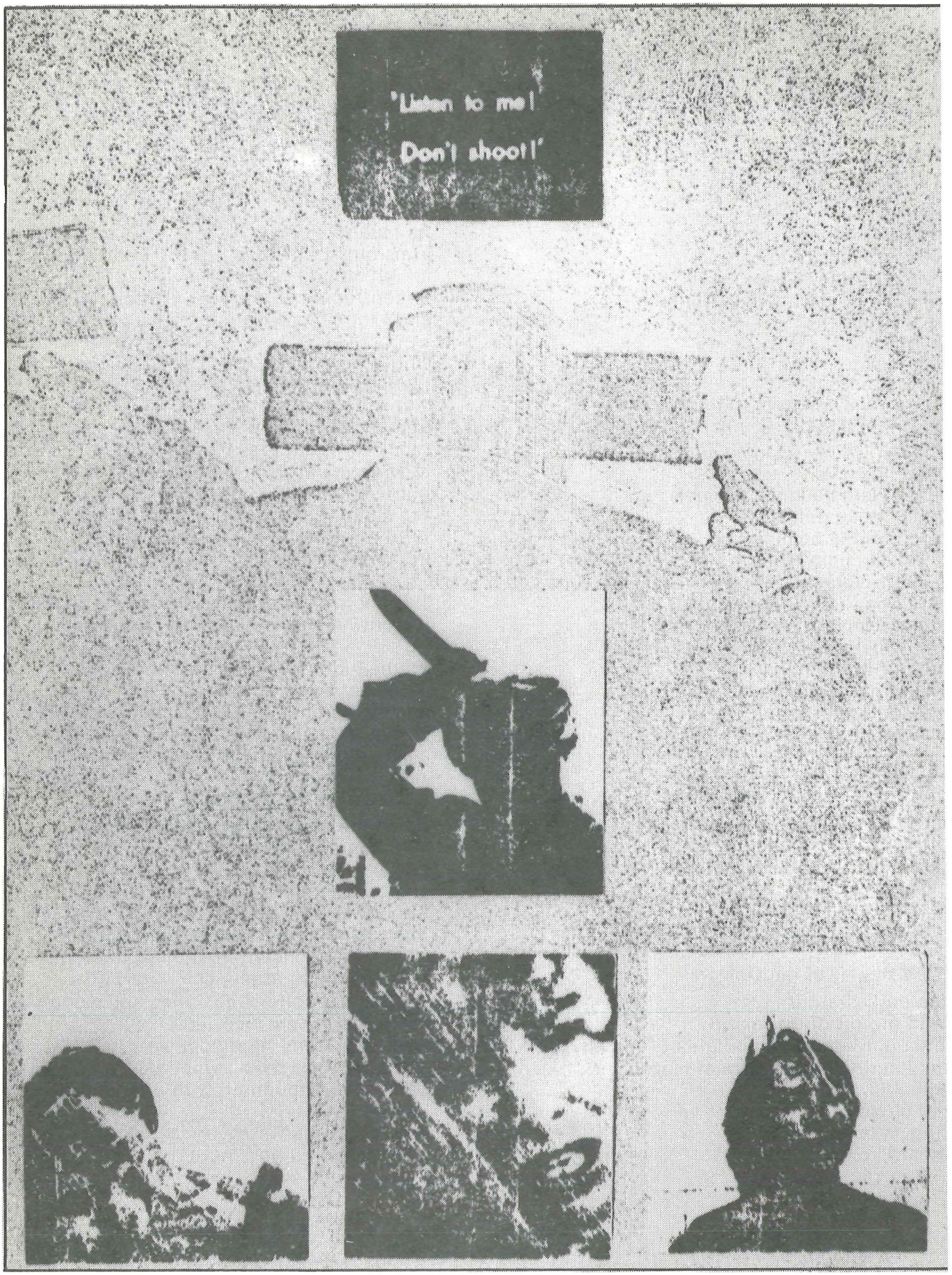
The chorus of the stars is too great for me—
the universe is too large for one man.

As the night leans toward morning,
a breeze rises in the east,
and the moon waxes in the center of heaven.
Out of the shadow of the Island
a single gull climbs to greet the moon.

**V. Dawn on the Straights**

When the sun emerges from Huron
in a cloud of steam,
I awake
and descend into town
through beams of filtered light.
The rose-colored waters of morning
slide softly beneath the hull of the ferry.
I am the only passenger
and the pilot offers me coffee and a doughnut.
He examines my face,
sees something he recognizes,
and asks if we haven't met before.
Sharing my doughnut with an inquiring gull,
I shrug
and return the waves
of people on a passing ferry.

—Tim Jones






John Jening

# Liberation Theology

*The participants in this month's Roundtable liberation theology were Guillermo Cook, mber of this year's CCCS team from Costa a; Gordon Spykman, professor of religion d theology and also a member of this year's CS team; Violetta Lopez-Gonzaga, this ır's multicultural lecturer from the Philip- es; Lester deKoster, former editor of the nner; and Gerardo Vacaguzman, a Calvin dent from Bolivia.*

**ılogue:** What is liberation theology's histori- background, when did it develop, where, in at context and so forth?

**ykman:** I think the roots of liberation theology traceable as far back as you want to go—one ıdred years, two hundred, three hundred, r hundred—because it comes up out of a long dition of Roman Catholic Christendom. But I ss that the first recognizable signs of the on- ning of liberation theology would have to go k to around 1960. One person perhaps more n any other around that time who gave it petus was Pope John XXIII with his new phasis on the Church's concern for the poor l the deprived. Some of that got into the cond Vatican Council, although the agenda of Second Vatican Council was dominated gely by the problematics of the Western ırch. Here and there you detect some of ın's pastoral concern for the poor of the rld. But at least the Second Vatican Council ved to open the door to what happened in the in American world. The bishops who were sent at Rome for that Council began to find h other, began to cement relationships to h other, and out of that came a kind of a trans- ional network of communication in the Latin ıerican world which finally bore its fruit at dellin in 1968. One of the central emphases of dellin has come to be called the preferential ion for the poor, taking up again on John III's Second Vatican Council. There was ong resistance coming up in the 1970s to this erging liberation theology, but what Medellin had emphasized in 1968 was reinforced by the third conference of bishops in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979. Many people consider Gustavo Gutierrez to be the father of liberation theology, although at a recent conference we were told that Ruben Alvez had really written something on liberation theology prior to the work of Gutierrez. In a very sketchy way that draws something of the line of development of liberation theology from roughly 1960 to the present.

**Cook:** I would say that is true. I think that it would be to put it in Western categories to say that there is any particular father to the move- ment. I mean to say that people like Alvez first of all are protestant theologians who were beginning to comment on church and society in Latin America. In Uruguay they were thinking along these lines except that they had given up on the church and were basically very, very radical in their politics and not very concerned about the church. It was to the credit of Roman Catholic liberation theology that it returned to a more church-centered type of thing. They picked up on some of these emphases and Gutierrez wrote a paper first of all about the theology of liberation and expanded that into a book.

**Spykman:** And the second book, published in 1985, I guess, *We Drink From Our Own Well* is suggestive of a central theme, namely, that liberation theology is mostly spirituality.

**Cook:** Actually there are several books on spirituality but they are not translated into English, and that is one of the disadvantages we need to take into consideration. Many times the critiques that are made of liberation theology are made on the basis of that which is translated, often several years later, maybe a decade or more. We tend to think of liberation theology somewhat as a stagnant pool when it is really a stream, or a number of streams, that are flowing and coming from different directions, and which are evolving. The liberation theology that you read about today is quite a bit different from that

of fifteen years ago. And so we have to be very specific as to what we are critiquing.

***Dialogue:*** In what context did liberation theology develop, and what needs does it try to answer?

**Cook:** Well, I would like to say that my reply now would not come in the context of a person who has taken up the study of liberation theology as an academic discipline, but as a pastoral missionary working among the poor. I think when you see it from that perspective it is very, very different than when you see it from the halls of ivy. You begin to see, as some of the evangelical Pentecostals are saying now in Central America that the answers liberation theology gives us may not always be the answers we want, but their questions are right on target. And this is the feeling of most of us—they are asking the right questions, although as evangelicals we do not aways feel comfortable with all the answers.

*Well, they twist the Scriptures to suit themselves.*

But the concerns of liberation theology have grown out of a context of extreme poverty, not just poverty and marginalization, but powerlessness. I think this is the important thing to remember. We talk about poverty and the option for the poor, but poverty is understood in Latin America as powerlessness, where there is no way to pull yourself out. And it is really a hopeless situation. In that context, the Catholic Church, which is very different from the Protestant churches in that it covers every level of human society from the very rich to the very poor, and which for centuries has been allied with the rich, has, since Vatican II, Medellin, and reemphasized by Puebla, begun to try to find the answer to these masses of people it is losing to spiritism, to Protestantism, to secularism, and to Marxism. The thing about liberation theology that a lot of people don't realize is that it is challenged by the success of Marxism in Latin America.

So we begin to develop new forms of church life which are basically grassroot churches. In midst of this, their theology begins to evolve. I an ongoing theology, a process, which varie each situation. Each theologian has differ emphases. As time has gone on, they h evolved, they have in a sense corrected som their past statements, and for my money moving into what I would call a more evangel perspective, less sociologically oriented more into the area of spirituality. But it co from a context of powerlessness, and unless can put ourselves into the shoes or the ski those people, we won't really understand. I h sometimes said that we don't have the righ criticize it from our position of power up h We don't have the right to criticize it until we down there and have identified with the poor; criticism remains a theoretical type of thing.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** So it is really something t comes out of praxis in contrast to other wo views or ideological systems. Liberation theol makes a lot of difference in the way that it cor out of experience, something existential, rat than being an armchair philosophy, an ideol that arises out of philosophizing or intellect gymnastics.

**Spykman:** One of its severest criticisms of tr tional Western theology is that that theology g handed down from the top, whereas this i theology which is handed up from the undersi from down on the street where there is only m and nothing else.

**Cook:** It has impressed me as I have gone ab and met some of these liberation theologians find them actually in hovels and huts with th books piled around in rustic bookcases. Th where they are doing their work; not in our fluence. That lends a great deal of credibility what they are doing, whether or not you ag with the content totally, because they are liv with those people and suffering with them, y see.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** This is one reason why t thinking has largely been identified with Catholics, especially in the context of the Phi pines. The Catholic workers were the ones w were willing to go out of the comforts of th seminaries and their nunneries; it is in the act living with the poor that this world-view h evolved. And as you have said, there is not j one version any more of liberation theolo there are many variants of this thing. The co mon factor would be this praxis aspect, liv with the poor.

**:Koster:** May I ask you a question? If I under-
ınd you correctly you are saying that the text
ich these theologians use to develop their
:ology is the context.

**ook:** It is the Word of God; they're understand-
, of the Word of God in their context. We all do
ıt. No, I don't see that anybody can do
:ology, understand theology, think theology,
:side of a context, unless somehow God
ınages to pull us away from the earth and hang
up in space. We all are in a context.

**:Koster:** I understood you to say that their
ıtext couldn't be understood unless you were
:re. This means that except for yourself and
·haps a few others this is a futile exercise, isn't
We are talking a priori about what we cannot
derstand.

**ook:** Well, in a sense I would say yes. We have
:rpreters but we have to be careful, if we are
ng to be critical or positive toward them, in
ıng to understand the context from which they
speaking. If I want to understand what
ɔmas Aquinas is saying I need to understand
context in order to understand why Thomas
uinas is interpreting Aristotle in his particular
y.

**Koster:** Now you are saying a different thing,
n't you? You are saying that imaginatively we
ı get back into the era of St. Thomas. Now
y can't we imaginatively get into the circum-
nces of liberation theologians?

**ook:** Well, I guess we could, but I think God is
cing in our hands something better than imagi-
ion—we have airplanes now in which we can
down there. We can't go back to the times of
ɔmas Aquinas, but we can go and be down
re, and we won't have to use our imagination;
can actually have the gift of interpersonal
ıtact with persons who are suffering.

**Koster:** But you are saying then that our hold
Thomas is never going to be as vivid, or
uable, or useful as our hold might be on libera-
ı theology as if we lived in a poor village for six
nths.

**ook:** Yes.

**Koster:** I believe these theologians to say that
. They say, "Really you can't understand us." I
ı't know why they write books if we can't
derstand them, but they do say, don't they,
ɔu can't understand us unless you live the way
live." That strikes me as a kind of im-
ɜsibility in terms of Christian theology. If
ology is the science of God, while it is indeed
ıditioned by the context in which we live and the language that we use, et cetera, and the categories in which we may think, it strikes me that we can read Calvin or Aquinas or the others and come to some very valid conclusions about them, although we didn't live in the same age or place.

**Cook:** Yes, I would grant you that, except for the fact that there are always going to be limitations because we always read through our own particular eyeglasses. Our eyeglasses are always going to tint what we read, and we will interpret Thomas Aquinas through the context of our twentieth century experience, and we interpret Gutierrez in the context of our own affluent North American Protestant experience. I think we need to recognize this or else we will not learn.

**DeKoster:** You mean to say that there are three, six, seven scriptures in this room, that are all depending on the perspectives from which they came?

**Cook:** I think that Scripture is the Word of God, but I am fallible just like you; we are all fallible. The Word of God is absolute, but my interpretation of the Word of God is never absolute.

**DeKoster:** We are all dealing with the same body of knowledge, and we all agree on certain basic things.

**Cook:** Absolutely, we agree on a number of basic things common to our Reformation faith.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** I think that your analogy between Thomas Aquinas and liberation theologians not tenable. I think that in this instance we would be helped by some anthropological insight. In anthropology we speak of the "etic view" versus the "emic view." The etic view is largely a view from without, the emic view from within, where you really enter a particular community, and therefore slowly become a participant observer. In other words, an anthropologist works his way from the bottom up in terms of understanding the social structure and capturing the social dynamics of a community. What theologians often overlook, and are not able to capture in their armchair philosophy or polemics, are other social dynamics. I would hate to compare liberation theology with Aquinas, thinking, because the social conditions are significantly different. The process of theological reflection are definitely different. This being so, one cannot effectively criticize liberation theology without looking at the total context from which it evolved.

"Context" here would mean the ecological context from which it evolved, and also the history; not just a system of knowledge, nor a cold set of theological facts. I think that liberation theology has been very appealing to the poor in countries where there is a long history of colonization. There again, I think North Americans, and even to a certain extent Europeans, would find it hard to understand or empathize with the dynamism of this way of thinking because they have not been through this experience of colonization. In the context of the Philippines, more than three hundred years of Hispanic Catholic oppression under the Spanish, Americans, and Japanese have provided the foundation for contemporary social problems. This in turn makes liberation theology a very powerful tool for understanding a particular reality manifested in the 1970s and 80s. So then again particular historical factors, the social structure, the economic system—all of these substructures vitally interact with each other and create overall social structures which somehow are a fitting context for the emergence of this way of interpreting God's Word and trying to contextualize even the basic tenets of Christianity.

*The thing about liberation theology that a lot of people don't realize is that it is challenged by the success of Marxism in Latin America.*

**Spykman:** It is basically a matter of how we evaluate the merits of contextualization. If I want to understand Karl Barth, for example, who belongs to the Western world, I would need to know something about Europe around the turn of the century, the liberalism of the late nineteenth century and what WWI meant for Europe. I must concede that I was in Latin America only five days, so I have had a very passing look. I hope to get a better look when we go down the in January for six weeks. If we took the positi that Lester is attributing to you, Bill, that y can't say anything about anything unless y have been through it, that leads to a kind agnosticism. There is such a thing as vicario learning. We all engage in vicarious learning, a there is such a thing as vicariously entering in the situation of Latin American Christianity.

**DeKoster:** You are a theologian. Let's take couple of doctrines like the Doctrine of God, t Doctrine of the Incarnation. Do you really thi that your Doctrine of God as held here in Gra Rapids, Michigan, and presumably governed the Scriptures is going to be another Doctrine God if you go away for six months or six years South America? Will you no longer be govern by the Scriptures, or will you suddenly read t Scriptures through new lenses that hadn't be known in the Church for nineteen hundr years? It strikes me that we are talking in ve vague abstractions.

**Spykman:** If you read the section on t Doctrine of God in Karl Barth, in Louis Berkh and then in G. C. Berkhouwer, it doesn't co off the same either.

**DeKoster:** No, but the attribution in each case to the same source, by which you can try to jud the difference.

**Spykman:** And I assume liberation theolo would do the same.

**DeKoster:** Well, they twist the Scriptures to s themselves.

**Cook:** I would say, with all respect, that is value judgment that you are making, sir, whi has absolutely no truth in it. It would be a gre help if you could sometime debate these pa cular concerns with some of these people the selves. Just the other day we were with Gusta Gutierrez, and he insisted several times that o cannot have a commitment to the poor, o cannot work for change effectively in socie unless one has had a personal encounter w Jesus Christ, a conversion experience. A lot evangelical Christians in Peru are attracted the preaching of Father Gutierrez. They go large conferences that he and his team hold asked why this was true and I discovered th many of the evangelicals, particularly the Pen costals, have a very weak concept of t Sovereignty of God. Father Gutierrez h basically rediscovered Calvin through Barth, a because of this, his Doctrine of the Sovereign

God is very appealing to those who have a ık doctrine. I asked Father Gutierrez directly is was true and he did not deny it. He said that ıad been greatly influenced by Karl Barth. He ke very eloquently about the Sovereignty of d and the authority of Scripture. He repeated eral times how we go back to the Word of d, and not the context.

**Koster:** But does he practice it in his theology beration?

**ok:** I would say so. I don't think that I could ge this, nor could anyone else, unless we went pend some time with him so that we could see

**Koster:** You wouldn't want to just read the k.

**ok:** No, I would not want to. That's why after ing read the book, I decided to go out and get now these people, and spend some time in r communities. Even though I may not agree ı the elaboration of some of their doctrines, nly because of their Catholic presentation, in ıal practice I see them living out the Chris- faith in ways that are much more convincing ı those I see in conservative evangelical rches in the United States.

**Koster:** Well, he has made you an eloquent ıess.

**ok:** He has not made me; it is living with ple and seeing them. That is the point I am ıg to make, that one comes to understand re people are by being with them and seeing r struggles. I am one of the pastors of a con- gation of sixty very poor people who many es don't know what they are going to have for akfast. The kind of questions they ask about d—the same God that you and I worship and eve in—are different questions than what we talking about here, because they have to do ı everyday subsistance. Their faith in God is h greater than my faith in God because they e to trust Him day by day. They do not doubt ne moment that God exists; that God cares them; that He is going to provide; that ulti- ely their children will see the liberation from poverty and powerlessness, even if they 't; and that God cares for them. So it is a cept of God that is very close to the concept od of the Bible in the Old and New Testa- ıts.

**ez-Gonzaga:** It is Hellenistic influence that des the body from the soul instead of taking a stic view of man which is biblical. It forces us ıgelicals to come down from our very spiritual definition of our faith and look at the reality, to see ourselves as integral beings. There are universal elements of truth, absolute truth, but translated in particular ways in different cultures. In the context of Latin America and the Philippines, God has to be translated in terms of his reality in everyday struggle for survival.

**Spykman:** Pablo Richard, whom we met last week, gave the analogy of the tree. The root from which life is drawn is the living experience of the presence of God in our life. That is the root from which liberation theology draws its life. The trunk he likened to the Christian communities where people experience the presence of God in their lives. The last step is theological reflection, and that is the branches. This once again reflects the relationship between praxis and theory; that theory is really a reflection on praxis and seeks to account for, deepen, enrich, and enlarge one's understanding of practical experience, in this case the living experience.

**Cook:** What Gutierrez is emphasizing in that book, *We Drink From Our Own Well,* is that praxis includes our relationship to God, it is not just "political," it is our involvement, our knowledge, our commitment to God, and the sense of His presence in our lives.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** I think the problem is not so much the theology itself as the way it has been transmitted; we are faced with the truth that the message received may not be the message sent. Because it is so close to Marxist and neo-Marxist ideals, liberation theology easily becomes corrupted.

**Spykman:** They are aware of this, and it happens.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** Not everyone in the Catholic Church is like Gustavo Gutierrez. You do have priests who are themselves in search of meaning, something to live or die for. Weak as they are, confronted with this strong force from the left, a significant number are easily swayed; thus the kind of basic Christian community that emerges now would be far from the original model that Gutierrez had.

**Cook:** I would agree. If you are going to try to make the Gospel apply in the situation, you always run the risk of contaminating it. We contaminate it there, and I think that the only recourse that we have is to be strongly rooted in the Word of God. For us as evangelicals, that has a bit of a different meaning than it does for Catholics.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** I am saying that there has

been a general resistance to the idea, an immediate rejection because of its perceived communist roots. Yet, we evangelicals are the best group to really transform it into more biblical terms. God has provided a guide post to contextualize our faith, especially for people who come from the so-called Third World countries—by that we mean basically those who have gone through colonization and are faced with widespread incidence of poverty, social injustice, and oppressive structures. These are like sign posts that we can use. I think that knowing Christ, being rooted in biblical truths, being totally committed to the historical person by Jesus Christ, as well as to the Bible as the absolute body of truth to guide us in defining our Christianity, we are in the better position to incarnate Christ in our context. But in the context of the Philippines, the Filipino evangelicals are trapped in middle-class conservatism, which is a transplant of the United States' missionaries. Because of this, we are in a sense immobilized; there is an impasse. But I think that we are in fact in a better position than Roman Catholics who are on a very shaky foundation even in looking at the Scriptures, and who are easily swayed by the left. Liberation theology was a response to a challenge posed from the left, and Gustavo Gutierrez successfully brought it back within the context of the Church, but the actors within the Church are weakened in their foundation so that only evangelicals will see that it is really a very Biblical definition of salvation.

**Spykman:** Well, I think we must recognize that in some of these liberation theologies there has been a deliberate choice for Marxist tools of analysis, that's clear. But I think that we must also recognize that we and many other parties in the world have forced that choice upon them by saying that every society in our modern world has only two choices; you either go right or you go left; you either go with capitalism or you go with Marxism. Many third world peoples have experienced nothing but capitalism for hundreds of years, and have come to recognize capitalism as the source of their exploitation; thus if there is only one option to that source of powerlessness and poverty then it has to be on the left. Most North Americans tend to think that our only options are left and right, conservative and liberal, East and West. One doesn't like the way the West has treated him, his only option is to look to the East. We force that same choice upon others. Miguez-Bonino, for example, in one of his books, starts right out by saying the followi number one, I'm a Bible-believing evangeli Christian; number two, I'm a Latin Americ number three, I'm a Marxist. And there others who have opted for that too. T recognize that theology in their situation ne the tools of social analysis. Now if capitalist tc don't do it for them, then the only choice left i try Marxist tools. But tools of analysis are ne neutral; they're always loaded. Capitalist tc for analysis are also philosophically loaded. T poor have opted for their only alternative to exploitation they've experienced for generati at the hands of capitalism.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** But it need not really be j extreme right or left. I'm saying that liberat theology provides us with a medium for analysi yet we need to really rethink it because Marxi has its limitations. Neither am I capitalistic, bu there a middle road which is really Christian? this sense Marxism provides us with t language to analyze the models to a certain poi but at the same time I think that it is possible come up with a way of analyzing society whicl neither pro-right nor pro-left.

**Spykman:** My colleagues at CCCS knc they're having it drummed into their ears t often from me, that I think that a biblically F formed approach creates an authentic third wa And I don't mean by a third way something whi is a blend of the left and right, and I don't mear third way the way Latin Americans understand because they understand it as a superfic reformist approach; but I mean a profounc biblical, genuinely different way to go against t individualism of the West and the collectivism the East, a more pluralistic model of society a real alternative. It remains to be seen where th will go.

**Vacaguzman:** I read a book by Juan Lu Segundo, who talks about Jesus Christ as a co munist, and I agree with him. But communi must not be simply equated with Marxism. T fact that liberation theology talks a bit abc Marxism is not because it wants to h Marxism. The Bible was written first, mu before *Das Kapital.* Marx talks about a lot things that are in the Bible, and the peo opposed to liberation theology often compare with Marxism unfairly. Liberation theology based on the Bible.

**Cook:** I think that it's important to understa where Marxism comes in. I think that we have be careful and define our terms. To say th

us Christ was a communist—what does that
an? The word "communist" has overtones. I
lerstand what you mean by it and what
undo means by it, but that is not what most
ple understand by "communist." What I
ited to say is that Latin American sociologists
theologians are looking for tools with which
nterpret our society. Our capitalist way of
lyzing is functionalist. We evaluate things in
ns of equilibrium. If everything is balanced in
iety and the apple cart is not upset, then
gs are moving well. But a critical sociology
ch borrows from Marx, engages in analysis
ch tries to get down to the roots of problems.
w, older liberation theologians have come
g a pilgrimage. They started out being neo-
onists, then gradually began to pick up
ions from Hegle of course; and Tailhard de
ardin has had a tremendous influence on
n. We never hear evangelicals critizing libera-
theologians because of their process
ology, but they are in a way process
ologians, in that they see history moving
ard an Omega point.
hey've also been influenced a great deal by a
sonalist philosopher of whom a lot of North
ericans are probably not aware, a Frenchman
he name of Emmanuel Mouniere, a staunch
-communist, who spoke about a personalist
istian existentialism. He postulated the need
a social change which is more oriented
ard personal values and needs, without being
vidualistic.

**ok:** It is not a classically Marxist approach. It
ery eclectic. Now we tend to think always in
ns of categories; people are this, people are
t. But the Latin Americans and Third World
kers don't think that way. They are eclectic.
hey carried their various insights to their
cal conclusions they would find clashes; they
uld actually be in conflict, but they don't worry
ut that. They don't think in the same terms.
ey draw from different things, and of course
most notorious source that they've drawn
n—the one that raises flag-waving among
ple—is Marxism, because it's related to
iet communism and to atheism, so we
rapolate. But we have to be careful. In some
es, like one theologian that I know super-
ally, Hugo Assmann, they are very up-front
ut their use of Marxism. In fact, he used to
sider himself a Marxist.

**pez-Gonzaga:** Or in the context of Father Ed
latore who is very clearly. . .

**Cook:** Marxist. But others will be very clear about it and say, "we do not use Marxist analysis in our theology," so one has to be very careful not to discard liberation theology with one breath, to throw out the baby with the bath water. You have to be specific—who are you talking about? What movement? What context? That's basically what I'm trying to say. Because it is a very complex movement, it's not easy to categorize.

**Spykman:** A week or so ago I was in a nearby Reformed community talking about liberation theology with lay people in the church. I was surprised that what I had to say was taken quite positively. There was one person in the crowd who brought with him seventeen years of

*Latin Americans and Third World thinkers are eclectic. If they carried their various insights to their logical conclusions they would find clashes, but they don't worry about that.*

experience in Brazil. He stood up and said something I would not have dared to say. He said, "Maybe liberation theology is God's last best gift to the Western world." Now that is putting it pretty strongly and I wouldn't dare put it that way; but at the same time he raised issues that forced us to rethink our world-view and our theology. I brought this up with Miguez-Bonino in Boston and Gutierrez in Ann Arbor, that I would like to ask them whether they have considered what I find to be a number of very striking points of contact between the Reformation tradition and liberationist thought: notably, for example, their emphasis on a holistic view of life rather than the dichotomy that we've always worked with—sacred and secular, or, anthropologically, body and soul. Protestant missions and the Catholic Church have always said, "I know

bodily you've got it bad; you don't know where your next meal is coming from, but don't be too concerned because your soul is saved and you will go to heaven." We've used an old Hellenistic notion of body and soul in order to impose upon them a quietistic view of life which gives the Marxist the excuse to say, "your religion is the opiate of the people—just keeps them quiet, huh?" The holistic notion of the Gospel, to which we subscribe, is what struck me in Gutierrez' latest book. In other writings he takes us almost back to Luther. Faith for him is no longer intellectual assent to certain propositional truths which the church proclaims to be true; faith is trust, faith is confidence, it is allegiance, it is loyalty—that is what faith is—a hearty confidence, as the Heidelberg catechism puts it.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** I just want to clarify something, because how liberation theology has been interpreted in the Philippines leaves the whole model open to the use of violence. Does Gutierrez or liberation theology in general allow for the use of violence?

**Cook:** That is a question which is debated rather heatedly within liberation theology. I can tell you what I've heard Father Richard say to that question. Liberation means not only to liberate the oppressed, but also to liberate the oppressor, because the oppressor needs liberation also, maybe more than the oppressed. In that context what does liberating the oppressor call for?

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** Extermination? No, but when you have the case of an unrepentant landlord, common justice would indicate that that landlord be excuted.

**Cook:** Well, one time I asked Father Richard about violence, and he said that there are three kinds of violence. There is institutional violence, the violence of institutions that repress people so that there is no means of expression through democratic means. When people try to do so, they are killed. That is violence that we Christians have rarely protested. Then there is the violence of those that finally have had it, so to speak. Those who say, "That's it!" Whether they're justified or not, I can't say. How would I react if I was hungry and I didn't have anything to put on the table? There is a third violence which liberal theologians totally condemn, and that's the senseless violence of terrorism. As Christians we have to somehow learn how to discern between those violences. While condemning all forms of violence, we should understand that some people finally feel desperate and speak

in violence.

**Lopez-Gonzaga:** I would add another kind violence. It is the violence of the doctrinair Both the right and the left are capable of t violence and also capable of being tyrannical

**Spykman:** In all the senses you are defining, th would say "We're not engaging in violence, we only engaging in counter-violence. We're o responding to institutional forms of violence t we've known for generation after generation." whether it's justifiable or not, once again one h to try to understand that they did not provok but are only responding to a violence that h been a way of life.

**Vacaguzman:** I have one thing to say: son times violence is used. I can talk from expe ence. In my country we had a lot of dictators. W still have threats of coups détat all the time. E the only way to change those governments through un-peaceful means. We haven't chang a dictatorship through any peaceful means. T Philippines is unique. In Bolivia it just does work. The miners are the ones that start eve thing. They are the ones that come from t mines and go to the city and they start t violence. It's not because they're violent, it's b cause it is the last resort. It's unfortunate, b that is the only solution. It's the only way th works in my country: to topple a dictator, oppressor. Once they get into power they will r give it up. It's incredible. They will get rid of yo They will kill you. There is no pity, there is respect for human rights.

**Spykman:** You can ask whether there has ev been a legitimate government in any Latin Ame can country. There are few exceptions, but i not very often where a steeled regime has volu tarily surrendered its power, or even drawn oth people in to participate in it.

**Cook:** What has helped me in all this is to thi of this whole problem of liberation in the conte of power and powerlessness again. In my way thinking the powerful include Soviet Russia, t United States, Western Europe, South Afric and Japan—the industrialized powerful nation The vast majority of people in the world are po and powerless, ground under two great systen One shows itself to be more magnanimous in c tain contexts—capitalism. Yet both a ultimately terribly unjust, and there are t powerless people who in one way or anoth want their freedom. Does the Bible have an thing to say about that? I think it does. We wou

adily grant that it has something to say about edom when people are crying to free themves from the Marxist Communist totalianism. Why can't we grant it when people nt to free themselves from a Fascist? But we em to have our blind spots and we can't see it m that side.

**pez-Gonzaga:** And both these systems uld not want a third way. That's what is happning. The February revolution in the Philipnes defied the norm that change cannot come out without armed struggle. In fact, soon after e toppling of the Marcos regime, the key aders of the Communist party were really dessed. They were for overthrow of the governnt by force, but then this third force, the llow Force, came with its Christian perspece of peace and national reconciliation that is olical and effects change without violence. w both the right and left are contesting this rd way. I think that you do have that tyranny of e left and the right.

**ykman:** One of my friends in the Philippines d, "As far as I can see, the US media has ssed the boat, because the real power behind e revolution was the power of prayer." That is e third force. It is either rightest or leftist.

**pez-Gonzaga:** It's really a praying peoples' wer. I would look at it as God's intervention in r history. The people who confronted the nored tanks were religious people. They are e best people to bring into reality the sound olical message of liberation theology which is e total salvation of man.

**acaguzman:** Yes, there is a power of God to ange things. The Philippines is still going ough a crisis, but there is a change. Marcos is ne, but it is not a complete change.

**pez-Gonzaga:** You don't effect change overght, but there is that commitment. Certainly e problem of hunger has been dealt with in egros because the governor happens to be a atholic charismatic who takes his faith riously. What has happened in the Philippines uld happen elsewhere if the evangelicals would ke seriously the situation and act as the salt of ciety. I am sad to see that North Americans nservatism, the so-called "evangelical posin of missions" teaches the separation of urch and State and therefore says, "Our ssion is to proclaim the good news, make ciples, and not to be socially or politically olved. Jerry Falwell's influence is very strong. The people are saying, "I don't have the gift for social action," and "I am not willing to pray for political things," because of this strong American fundamentalist influence.

**Cook:** There is a great need to develop an alternative. There is a vacuum, a great vacuum. Although I may sound as if I am defending the right of Latin Americans to develop their own theology even if they make mistakes, they need to receive criticisms from us, but from an appreciative perspective—saying, "okay, I'm trying to understand you. I'm in dialogue with you." They will respect you to the degree that they sense you are respecting them. If not, there is not very much room for dialogue.

**Spykman:** When I sit back and try to understand from the inside out what a liberation theologian would say, with their distinction between practice and theory, I say I have all kinds of theoretical problems with the way they work out their theology. The way they see the relationship of creation to fall to redemption tends to fall into process theology. Sometimes I wonder if they don't make history and reality a second source of revelation. But at least they are asking the right questions, questions that arise out of their praxis, that arise out of a daily experience, down-to-earth questions of poverty and powerlessness. The way they can work that out theoretically may vary but I find it very difficult to quarrel with them in terms of the basic impulses and the kind of issues that they are trying to address.

**Cook:** I think you've hit the nail right on the head.

**DeKoster:** Well I've been listening with great profit. But I think we are on different planets and it's just as well we stay that way.

**Spykman:** But there are of course trans-cultural verities, but these verities take on concrete shape in different cultures. Just being in this project I've looked at the New Testament differently than I did a year ago. I hear the notes of poverty coming through. I hear that the Bible is written from the bottom up, that its concerns are with the poor and oppressed. In the whole New Testament I know of no single reference to the rich which is not negative. All the references to the poor are written in terms of compassion and concern. We need to try to listen to the Bible with ears that have been attuned to people in a different life situation. It's the same message, but it has different overtones and undertones.

From behind my head
into the corner of my eye
this evening's majesty first came through.
Turning to see,
the pink and azure
blue and gauze white
were lit and brilliant, immersing me
in this ending progression of another day.
This act was unsigned—
as well as profitless and unappreciated.

While in the house of minds
and adolescent neurosis,
bright young men
confront a black circle
centered on white shiny cardboard
inside a cold chrome frame
and contemplate its depth.

These "imitations of nature"
in the shadowed galleries
presumably draw more awe
the closer the artist
captures the original—

. . .the Original
in the artist's mind
being only an accident,
of course.

I vaguely point to the looming sky
in an attempt
to show what I've seen—
but stop,
knowing that
hearing it called "pretty"
would make it only
another poster sunset.

—Amy Walthall

## Acer Maria

around her
ws crouch like huge birds.
e trembles
cause she is alone.
e blushes
the chill of Fall.

ıe by one,
e gives them to the wind
d to the ground
ɔod-red. Eloi, Eloi
e cries
d naked, raises limbs to the sky.
ırren she dies.

ıt the blanket of death
on is her drink;
ɘ frigid soil becomes food.
ıe is mother, reborn
the coming of the sun,
d she lifts children to the light
her joy.

Mike Rubingh

## Bride

Here you are helpless,
stained glass, like that Mary.
Sun comes through your body
in many colors.

In pale-blue eyes, an innocence,
sadness before the altar;
how can you ever explain to her
the necessary sacrifice?

Only once came the word
in perfect peace, in painless love:
this, the lesson these chaste walls give
to every bride.

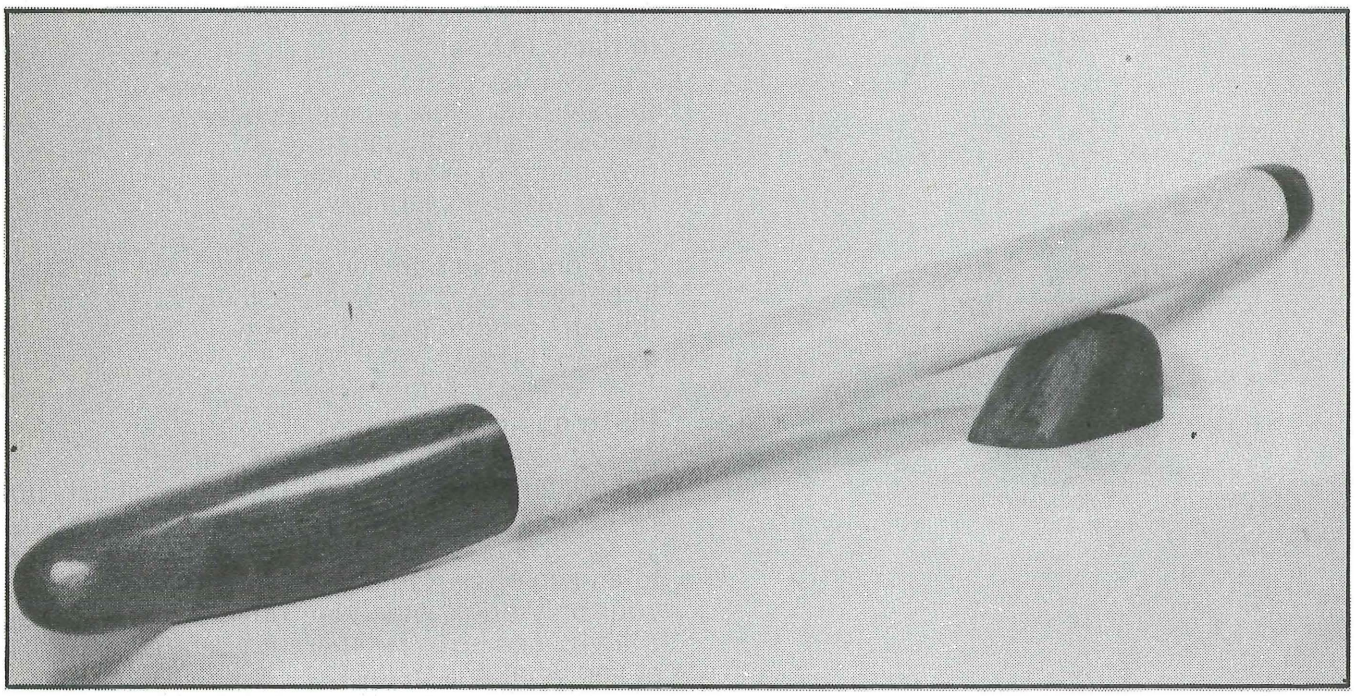
Blush and modestly turn
away perhaps; you will suffer someday
the pen and sword. Though now you piously pray,
you will be raped and burn

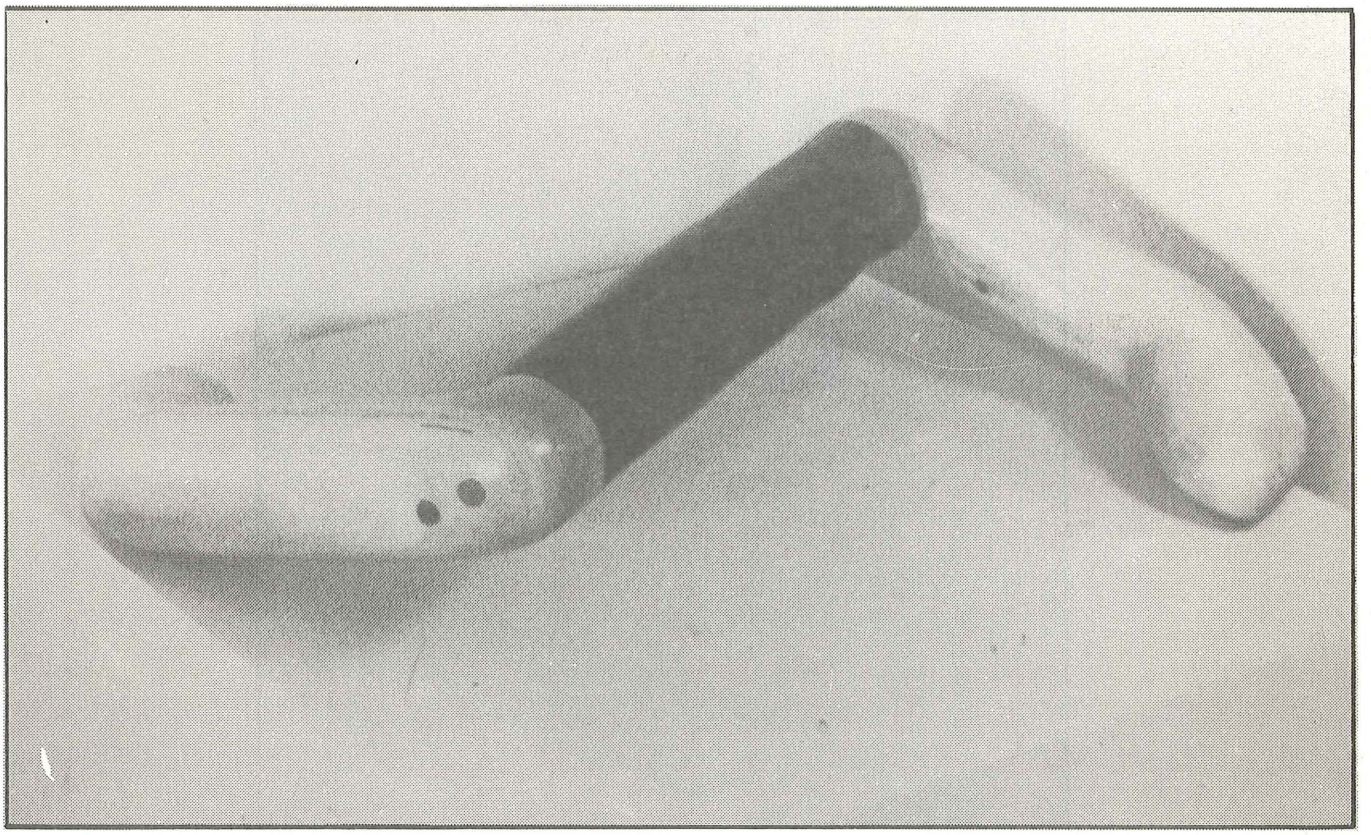
to an ash-strewn foundation. Blood
your only drink, dust your only food. Only then
will you see how transparent you are, learn
at last what it is to love.

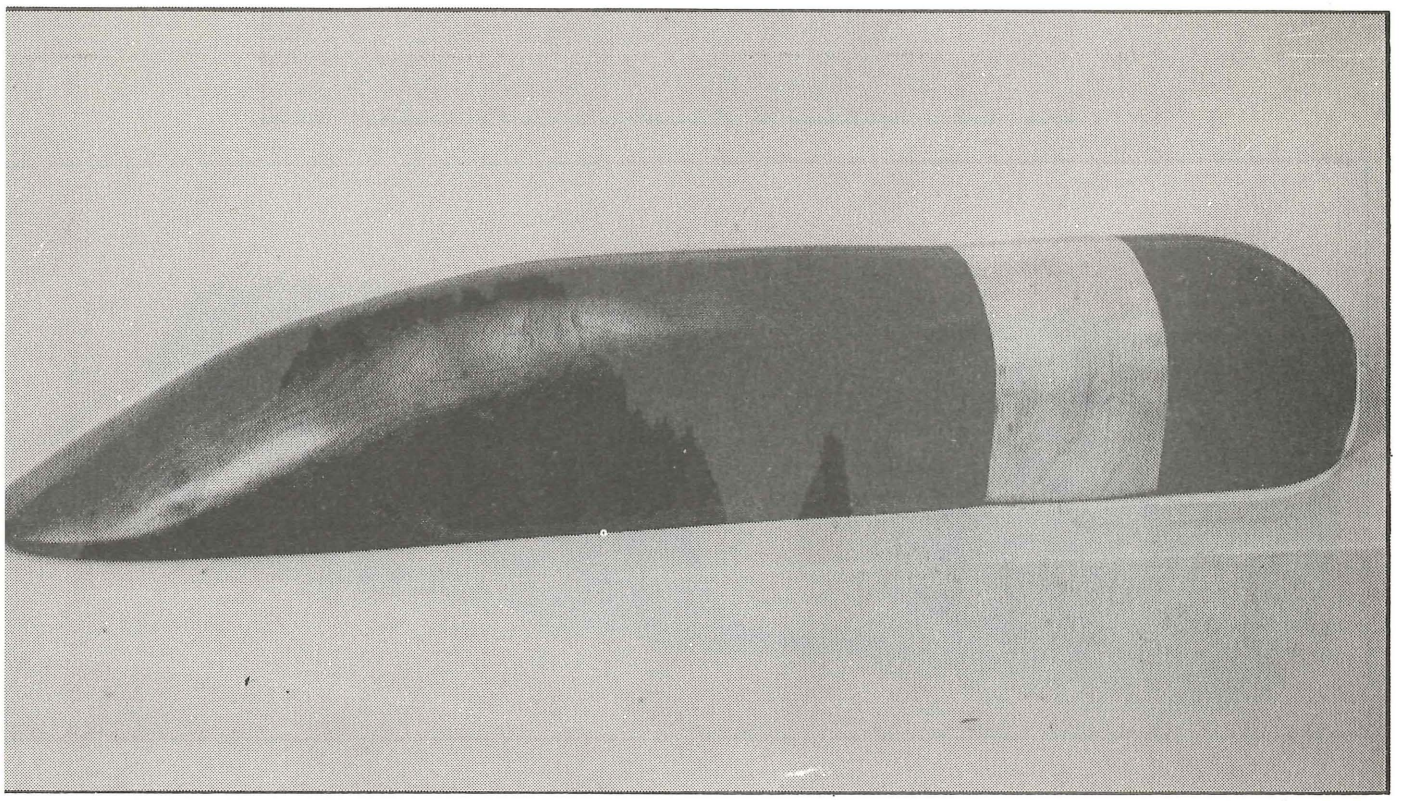
—Mike Rubingh

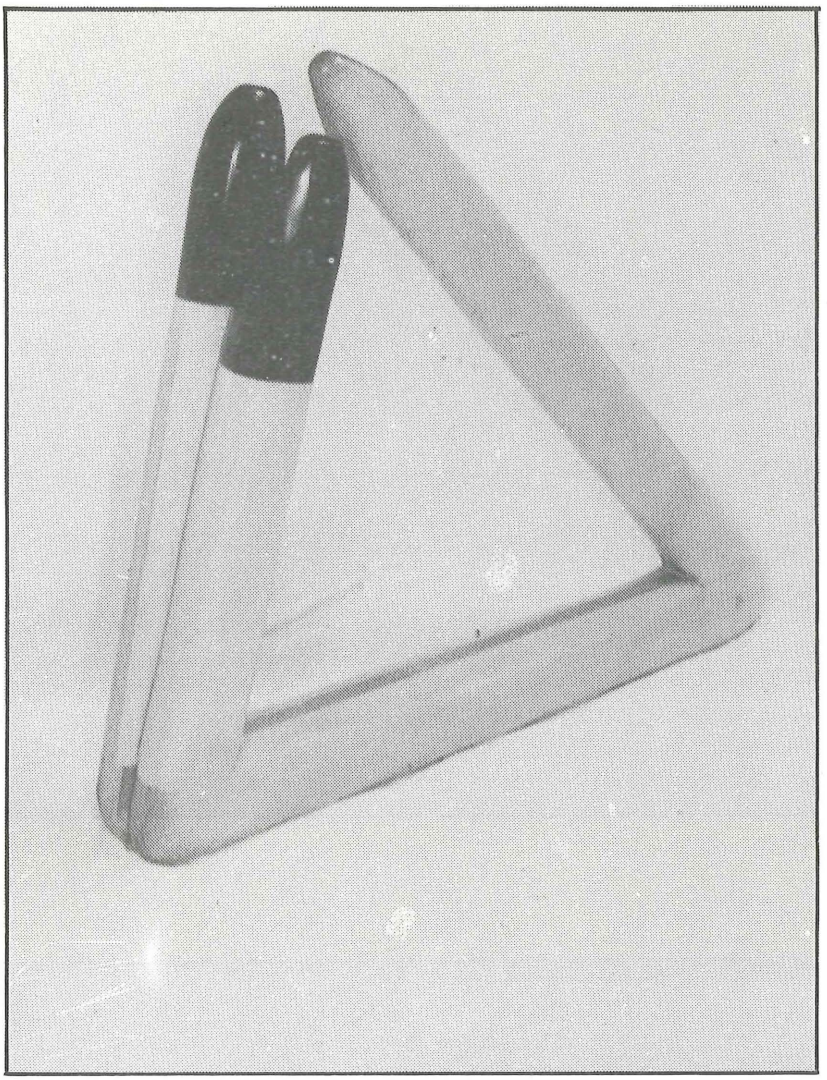
# Portfolio

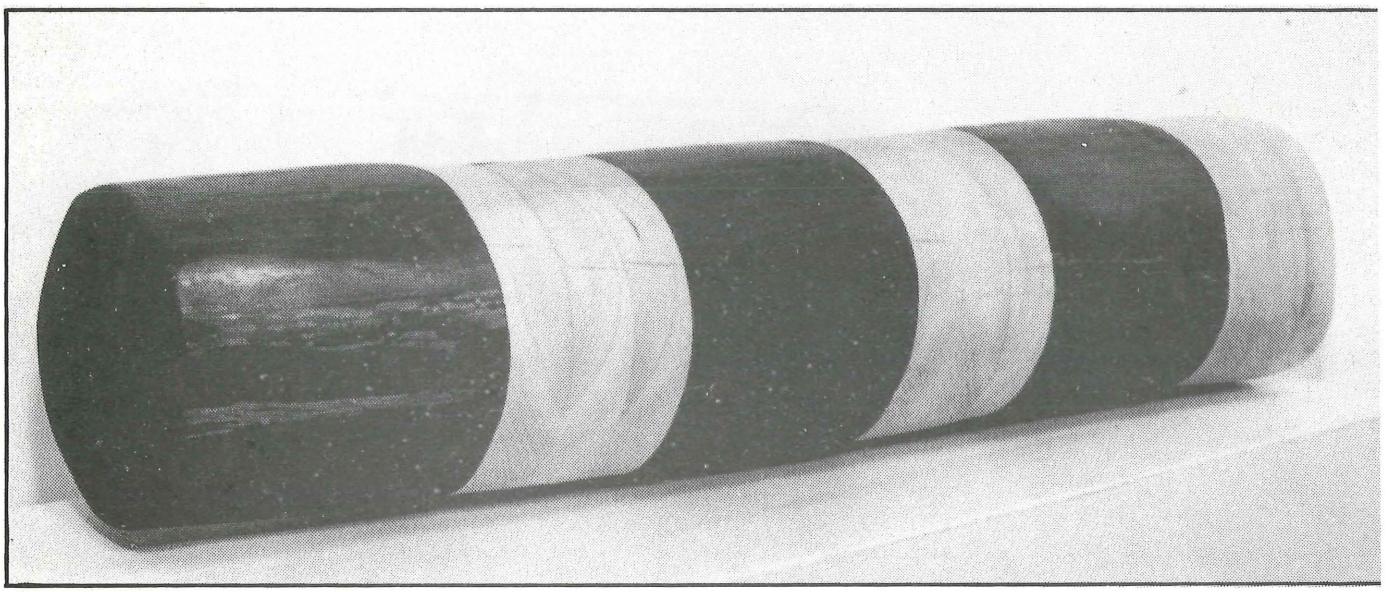
## Greg Stepanek











*Greg Stepanek's large pine-and-waln sculptures can be seen in the art departme halls as part of his B.F.A. work.*

# )h, Happy Days: A History of the Fifties by Rock

*\ colleague was teaching his Interim course the history of the 60s, and had assigned his dents to interview survivors. I was duly called on to give testimony. I'm afraid I disappointed interviewer. Encouraged to recite a litany of rors, I talked about the fun of growing up in late 50's and early 60's.*

*Look," I said into his appalled disbelief, "we d rock and roll. Understand, that's happy sic?"*

*Picture yourself driving that beater ıvertible to Ottawa Beach with the radio . . . But that story really begins in the 50s, en I only dreamed of my '50 Ford Convert. We come to history with our different percep-ıs, seeing what was by what we are. We who d through history see it through the ıeficent haze of nostalgia. This is something ogether different. The difference between tory and life. Ask your history prof about it. anwhile this, with belated thanks to my un-ned interviewer who still doesn't believe col-e students could have had fun in the 60's.*

**John H. Timmerman**

Tucked away in nearly anyone's attic, or set, or perhaps a shoebox in a dusty corner of basement, lies a package of once treasured, arly forgotten letters, notes, and inscriptions it contain a bit of a person's past. These items y be memorabilia: mementos picked up on a )—the bit of quartz from New Mexico, the itchbook engraved with the name of the fancy taurant in New York, a napkin from a New ar's Eve party, sometimes odds and ends that de memory altogether. Nearly anyone has se; perhaps everyone, whether it is the ten-ar-old girl with treasured trinkets of a slumber rty or a grandmother with a lock of her grand-ughter's hair sealed in a yellowed envelope. We never escape the mesh of the past which s made us. Sometimes with tears, sometimes h laughter; these bits and pieces spring forth snare us once again in the bittersweet emories of what we were, what we wanted to , what we have become. And if we were to ar-nge those items tucked away in dusty corners virtue of retrospect, reordering our past by the present, perhaps we would will different things there. That is part of the pleasure: the surprise of what we once valued.

For all these plastic models of cars in that one box, each laboriously crafted with consummate care and cursory skill, the '56 Pontiac convertible with fender skirts, headers, running boards, painted in Testor's Candy Apple Red, tucked into place by copies of "Hot Rod" magazines that cradle the loose plastic like a shrine, I would rather find, for example, the stilleto throwing knife which I once carried in my belt, or the malevolent Marksman single-shot pellet gun, shaped like a .45, with a modified, heavy-duty spring. I would want to see if just once I could get that knife in the oak tree in my backyard, or if just once I could pop one of the squirrels that raid my bird-feeders. I never mastered the throwing knife, whacking it time after time against the Tree of Heaven along the fence line; the Marksman I mastered too well, using it to shoot out the garage windows of a singularly crotchedy neighbor one night. But instead; this box full of plastic models, a '56 Chevy, a black Buick sedan with carefully painted flames spouting behind the wheel wells. And, yes, the obligatory Corvette. How often hadn't we heard, or told, the story of the nearly-new Corvette, fuel-injected, with chrome headers, that could be got cheap save for the fact that a man died in it.

"Heard he laid there ten days, two weeks," Lenny said while we sat in the crotch of the cherry tree.

'Ten days. Two weeks. What difference does it make?" said Rick from a branch higher up. He spat a pit with Marksman accuracy. It landed in Lenny's greasy hair and lay there. "It'd stink."

"Stink!" Lenny said. "I'd get some air freshener doodads. You know, them kind that you hang on a chain on the radio dial."

"On the rear view mirror. Beside, you don't get rid of that stink."

"Them things got naked women on them."

"Corvettes? You bet they do."

"Naw. Air fresheners."

"Say. Where can you get 'em?"

"Auto Parts over on Division Avenue."

"Let's go see."

"Yeah. We can find some cigarette butts up by Division and Burton. Some of 'em hardly

smoked."

"Holy cow, Smith! How can you stick those things in your mouth."

"Cheaper 'n buying 'em."

"How long you been smoking ciggies?"

"Two years. Bought my first pack at Hondorp's two summers ago. Anyone can buy 'em at Hondorps."

"Oughtta go see them air fresheners. Naked women."

"Awrhh!"

"Be easier if we had a Corvette to go in."

"Then you'd have naked women in the back seat."

"Corvettes ain't got a back seat, stupid."

"That's right."

"What you figure it sells for?"

"Air fresheners?"

"No, the Corvette."

"Seven hunert, I heard."

Lenny whistled, picked a cherry and sucked it. "Lot of money," he observed.

"Ain't nothing when the car costs. . .what? Three-four thousand new, maybe," Rick said. "Say, you ever hear of that red Vette?"

"Candy Apple?"

"Yeah. Sixteen coats of lacquer. Hand-rubbed. Guy rolled the thing. Didn't damage the car much—that fiberglass, you know, don't dent—but the guy was pinned on the steering wheel. Went right on through him. Blood all over."

"Never get that out. Can't get blood out."

"Shoot! Put in new seats from Auto Parts for a hunert fifty. Rolled and pleated leather."

"Air fresheners are probably a buck. Seen c once with a naked woman on 'em. The wh thing. Stark naked."

"Let's go look."

"Okay."

No one moved. It was summertime. W should anyone move when one had a warm s a cherry tree to sit in, good friends to talk dreams to be dreamed? What more could a b want? It was summertime. This was the fifti One moved only to turn the G.E. portable rac the one in the rounded red plastic case whi propped in a tree limb, looked like a large sp of red cherries. One moved the dial, cut acr top forty songs on any of a half dozen statio The Platters with "The Great Pretender" WLAV:

*Oh, oh, I'm the Great Pretender*
*Pretending I'm in love. . . .*

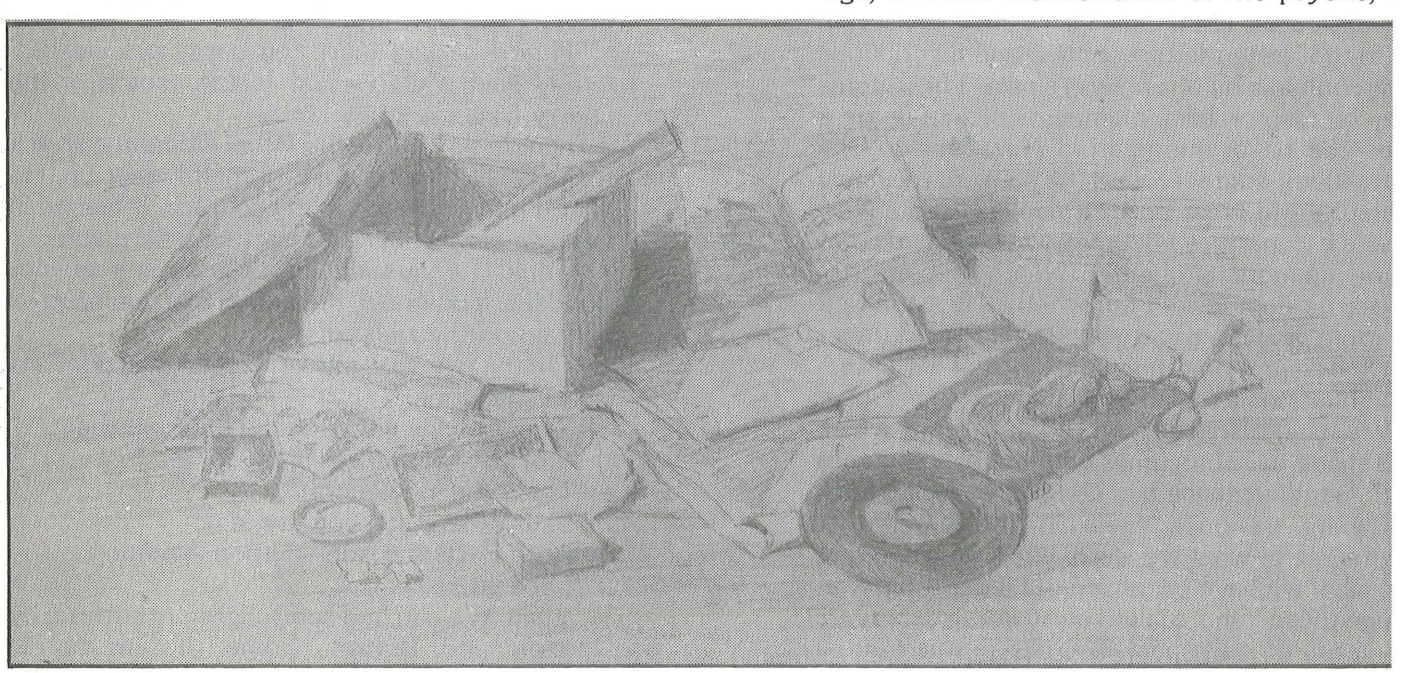
Fats Domino on WJEF:

*You made me cry*
*When you said goodbye,*
*Ain't that a shame,*
*You're the one to blame.*

On WCUZ, the "Cousin Cuz Country Mu Station," a Hank Williams ballad died out to rising strains of another Fats song:

*I found my thrill*
*On Blueberry Hill,*
*I found my thrill*
*When I found you.*

The music of the fifties seems unique to t age, a whole manifestation of the psyche, t



it, the feeling and wheeling and dealing of that ade. It was a decade when people let it all g down, roll out, and run loose. And what- "it" was, this kind of national psyche, it er ran more loose than when it rocked and d. It was a time when the Korean War wound n and Elvis wound up, his shaking body itch- as he said, like a leaf on a fuzzy tree, his legs e into an insane world of motion all their own, Ed Sullivan had his cameras zoom in on the er torso so that none of *his* Sunday night ience got excited by the rocking and reeling g on down below. But rocking and rolling in the music itself, and Ed couldn't shut that n no matter how he tried. It was there: in the nging guitar, the whack of the drums, the o that turned on and took over.

think it's true that few people, including ietimes the artists themselves, more urately called then "recording artists," under- d what rock was in the fifties. Much of the ude could be summarized by *American idstand* in which a panel of four nervous iagers, of the type who posed for Clearasil mercials, would evaluate a new song. The ord was played while the audience danced, a discussion of the song's merits followed. discussion seldom rose above this level: "It's a great beat. . .I'll give it an 80." "You can, I 't know, really, like, dance to it. I'll give it an And that's all one really expected. The re- nse was spontaneous, short-circuiting onality: something was felt, and what was felt acted upon. You heard the great beat, you danced. When Duane Eddy revved up his "twangy guitar" with his Rebel Rousers, the radio dial went up with them and the whole room rocked and rolled. What meaning was there? What meaning could there be in songs with titles like "Doncha just know it," or "I got a girl named Rama Lama Ding Dong," or "Sh-Boom," or "Be-Bop-A-Lula," or "La Dee Dah." All of which were enunciated in such a way you couldn't possibly understand them anyway. Many of the records celebrated a woman: but what women! Here are some of their names: "Long Tall Sally," and "Lucille," by Little Richard; "Bonie Maronie" and "Short Fat Fanny," by Larry Williams; "Susie Q," by Dale Hawkins; "Skinnie Minnie," by Bill Haley; "Fannie Mae," by Buster Brown; "Maybellene," by Chuck Berry.

And Buddy Holly had a woman too. Her name was Peggy Sue and she was Holly's first really smash hit, rocketing to the top of the charts and hanging up there for weeks pumped by the skyrocket engines of his voice. Folks on *American Bandstand* were giving it 100's. It was rock at its purest.

* * * * *

Lenny Smith's last name had been Smidt, but in the pro-American feeling after World War II, the family disguised it to Smith. Lenny was the archetype of the fifties young hood, the kind mothers cautioned their daughters about, the kind the daughters met at the soda shop. Only two summers prior, Lenny had worn his hair in a Butch, nearly bald all over the head save for a flap of hair that rose two or three inches straight up

*It was summertime. Why should anyone move when one had a warm sun, a cherry tree to sit in, good friends to talk to, dreams to be dreamed? What more could a boy want? It was summertime.*

from his forehead, sticking up like a picket fence, shiny and hard with Butch Wax that sold in little pink bottles for 95¢. The change was to Vitalis, from the Latin, the source of life itself. Vitalis poured on the hair like hot grease, slicking the long hair back in an elaborate ducktail to which Lenny devoted loving attention and regular back-hand swoops of the comb. What's more, Lenny had acquired *the* outfit: black engineer boots with steel taps that shuffled and clacked along the sidewalk like a wounded locomotive, worn and tired jeans that were the envy of the neighborhood and the bane of his mother when they were peeled off just prior to the once-a-week, Saturday night bath. Sunday was wool suit and white shirt time, shorts after church if it were summer, but on Monday the jeans were back—winter, spring, summer, fall. A white T-shirt topped the jeans, and always, always whether it was 30° or 90°, the black leather jacket, the more zippers the better, but always with a rabbit's foot on the front zipper.

On Saturday mornings Lenny came alive. The rest of the week was just a dead tube leading to Saturday. He stopped first at Hondorp's meat market to see if he could slip a pack of cigarettes behind Hondorp's back. If not, he reluctantly paid the 30¢. Even though he was underage he had, as he admitted, been buying cigarettes, Lucky Strikes or Camels being his preferred brands, for two years. Then he hitched a ride downtown, trying to make it to Grinnell's Music Store by 10 a.m. when the doors opened. Grinnel's was one of a dying breed. They had record booths in the back of the store where one could try out a record before buying it. Saturday after Saturday Lenny would casually pick up a Buddy Holly album, shut the door of the booth, turn the volume up, and let "Rave On" skyrocket through his head. Rave on, Hallelujah, Rave on. The gospel of rock according to Buddy Holly.

At noon Lenny would head for Kresges, buy a submarine sandwich for 29¢, and go across the street to the Savoy Theater where three horror movies were playing back to back for 25¢. Even during the horror movies the sound of Buddy Holly echoed in Lenny's head; during the horror scenes he snapped his fingers and swayed slightly on the worn velvet seat.

A year later, Buddy Holly died in a plane crash. Riding with him were the Big Bopper of "Chantilly Lace" fame and Ritchie Valens who gave us the lyric sorrow of "Donna." Lenny put his leather jacket in the attic and never wore it again. He later gave up smoking, graduated from college with a 3.8 grade point average, and made a killing in life insurance.

* * * * *

The real legend of the fifties, all that r symbolized and its stars aspired for, was inc nated in Elvis, born of dirt-poor farmers i house so small the whole place would fit into living room of his twenty-three room mansion Graceland. Even after they moved from Tup to Memphis in 1939, Vernon Presley seld made more than forty dollars a week; even by early fifties his salary averaged under fifty a we In '53 Elvis graduated from high school major in Shop, History, and English. In that year t were evicted from their house for non-payme Elvis bummed around for a while in dollar-hour jobs, occasionally playing his guitar a imitating the Ink Spots for a few bucks a nig Before long he began hanging around S Studios, decked out in a pink pants, pink sh and white bucks. Finally he cut "Blue Moor Kentucky," a song with just enough twang in i get Elvis into the Grand Ole Opry, and fr there it was all uphill. The legendary Colo Tom Parker got ahold of him and tied Elvis i RCA. The first five cuts on RCA were remake

*Lenny had acquired the ou fit: black engineer boots. . worn and tired jeans th were the envy of the neigh hood.*

songs done on the Sun Label, but in Janua 1956, Elvis hit stride with a new song and a r technique, the echo chamber, and that was big start with "Heartbreak Hotel." Elvis follov that in May with "I Want You, I Need You, I L You," then perhaps his most famous hit, "Hou Dog." And his immortal line from television, lips curled into the sardonic, sensual grin, h bent forward, legs stretched like two pist ready to go: "As a famous philosopher once s to me. . . ." a long pause, then a jerk of pomaded hair, and the stricken howl:

*You ain't nuttin budda hound dogger*
*jes a crackin al the time,*
*you ain't nuttin budda corner rabbit,*
*you ain no fren of mine.*

Behind Elvis, who always led the charts, th were dozens, hundreds, of anomalous overni

, singers and songs that sparkled in the spot- for a few weeks then drifted into history er to be heard from again. In 1954 a group ıed the Chords did a hit called "Sh-Boom" ch clawed its way to the top of the Top Forty o in three weeks. And then the group drifted anonymity. Also in 1954 a singer named Joan ber sang a number called "Let Me Go, er," on TV; the song became an overnight hit Joan Weber never issued another record. l then there was Fabian, the only man who, as critic said, could swagger with his adenoids, man who made singing through his nose an John Crosby of the *Herald Tribune* said of Fabe: "Reeling like a top, snapping his fingers jerking his eyeballs, with hair like something lusa had sent back, and a voice that was rmously improved by total unintelligibility." , Fabian had two genuine hits, "Turn Me se," and "Tiger," and that was enough to ıit him to the charmed circle of the beach y films.

erhaps one of the most solid major recorders ıe fifties, who has also been most quickly for- en, is Ricky Nelson. True, he did resurface in early seventies with the Stone Canyon Band, ıame listed as Rick Nelson rather than Ricky. Rick Nelson he was in fact an artist, but as ky of the fifties he was the bright-eyed, duck- d boy next door.

is a fact that when he started his career he w only three chords on the guitar (even ıgh the liner notes on his first album heralded "fine western style guitar"). He had shrewd moters, a first-class backup band, and a face adolescent could love and any parent could t. But he could rock, and his songs were ıtessentially teenage. Skillfully timed for ase so they peaked over the summer months, could not avoid Ricky Nelson. During the ımertime his voice echoed from every beach ıket, convertible, supermarket, back yard.

hen, too, Ricky was a television star before a ker. Your mother may have left the room n Jerry Lee Lewis began playing the piano ı his foot, but Ricky? Well, he had a mother a father and an older brother who played eball and nobody walked out on that, nor on ie and Harriet.

Ricky barely knew how to play the guitar but did know how to wriggle his hips and sneer, l teenagers loved it. They listened to "I'm lkin' " while gorging themselves on Chef Boy Dee Pizza Pies, and the record sold a million ıies. His second hit on the Imperial Label, "Be- o Baby," sold two million. "Stood Up" fol- ed and sizzled right along with the pizzas. But his real smash in the summer of 1958 was "Poor Little Fool." There's something about a summer- time hit that evokes a whole mood, a whole life style. Beside that, Chevrolet introduced their Impala convertible that summer, one of the classics. It was a summer to remember.

That summer Ricky also made a movie, *Rio Bravo,* and another young star with a face that looked a thousand years old, Johnny Cash, was commissioned to write the song for the film. It was never used in the film, but "Restless Kid" became one more smash for Nelson.

And so the fifties began to slip into the sixties, undiscernible the slow passage of time. The ducktails gave way to shorter hair which was

*Ricky barely knew how to play the guitar but he did know how to wriggle his hips and sneer, and teenagers loved it.*

washed, free of Butch Wax and Vitalis. Side- burns were being cut. The fun of the fifties grew raunchy in the sixties. Somehow the young hood in the black leather jacket was supplanted by the sun-burned surfer who glistened in salty light during the day, but by night became a sexual force unleashed. Kids still went steady, still hung around drug stores reading comics, although they ogled *Playboy* on the next shelf, there behind the brown cardboard cover screen so only the title showed. But with the external settl- ing into discreetness, there was a kind of inner angst, a kind of "what are we, where are we going" indirection. Roy Orbison captured the mood, in a voice like an ancient syren, calling men and women alike to a lonely shore, as in his most popular hit, "Only the Lonely." Donne said that no man is an island, entire unto himself, but Orbison lamented in "The Crowd" the suffocating presence of others from which we have to break away. This was a new mood; there was change in the air-waves. While the fifties celebrated tears on my pillow, and of course they had heartaches by the number, that was always a bit of gentle fun. No one really meant it. It took Roy Orbison to do a song committed wholly, entirely, and with a spiritual fervor mustered by every quivering muscle in his larynx, to crying itself.

And another change was underway. Until the early sixties, country-western music was always the ill-bred ugly sister of rock and pop, the girl

you hid in the closet when friends came over. Yet, out of an equally ill-bred band of devotees, country was breeding some changes of its own; cowboy songs became western and thereby mythic, applicable to every man. Bluegrass went funky, borrowing a beat from rock, and became country. There had been little money showered on the C&W boys. While Elvis dressed in a ten-thousand-dollar gold lame suit and bought a Rolls Royce for each day of the week, Hank Williams never earned much more than two hundred thousand a year even in his glory years, which were brief before his death in 1953. Williams is the sad-happy chapter in C&W, sad because of the bitter, painful life he led, his body stooped by a spinal ailment, drugs to alleviate the pain in his back, chronic alcoholism for which he was fired from the Grand Ole Opry in 1952, a melancholy, dreary disposition, a heart attack at age twenty-nine. Surely this accounts for the bitterness in his music, the painful sincerity of his songs. Even the titles are revealing: "Six More Miles to the Graveyeard," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "I Laid My Mother Away," "Cold, Cold Heart." In fact, it's hard to find one happy piece.

This is grim stuff compared to Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," or Larry Williams' "Short Fat Fanny" on the rock scene. Yet, country and rock were beginning to coalesce. The fire and ice became lukewarm water from whose polyprogenitive slag pools wormed amoeba-like a new kind of music, variously called "rockabilly," or "country rock," and finally just "country and western."

The real synthesis between country and rock occurred in the ballad. Drawn out of a long history of cowboy music, the ballad fused the two inseparably. Marty Robbins did "The Hanging Tree," "Cool Water," and Ricky Nelson did "Restless Kid." "Davy Crockett," which was officially listed as a ballad, sold 7,000,000 records on twenty different labels.

The final great change at the decade divide was the changing racial scene. Even Franklin Park felt it.

* * * * *

*Hey! Bustah's here!*
*Whooee! Bustah!*
*Hey, Bustah. You do a cannaball?*
*Yeah, do cannaball, Bustah.*
*Whooee!*

Buster has arrived at the Franklin Park Pool, striding from the yellow mouth of the changing room in serene, black majesty toward the water. Sunbathers, shivering against their towels on the concrete, cool water still purling against their dark skin, move hurriedly out of the way. They rise to their knees when Buster passes. A small train gathers around him as he proceeds as moved as a god to the water's edge. Little b clap each other's skinny backs, strut, flex t muscles.

Buster is not chocolate, not tan, not moc Buster is as black as the maw of deepest r night. His massive body moves in ripples of fa that he seems a mountain of ebony gel stacked on pillars as thick as the Pantheon. mountainous shoulders rise above the childr huge, sloping weights. Sweat starts on his br runnels down the black cheeks, etching t that glisten in the sun.

Franklin Park Pool is divided into two wing eight foot depth—diving boards at the enc each wing—and a central portion with steps le ing down into the four-feet water. The poc seamed and old, rust flecking through the ann coat of silver paint on the hand-railings, bulge black tar in the cracks of the concrete. Bus moves to the steps, a gaggle of children awkward young geese following.

Naw, Bustah. Don go no shalla watah.
Do a cannaball, Bustah.
Yeah, Bustah, they plead, do a canna ball.

Buster steps with weary majesty into the s

*The fun of the fifties gre raunchy in the sixties.*

lows. Water falls away from his tremend weight. He hunkers down in the water like a g black island, only the brush cut pinnacle of boulder-size head above the water. His lips slices of large fruit, his coal eyes opaque fires turns to the children, a scowl of hardened practiced anger nailing them to the steps. "G get used to the watah," he rumbles. They sit wait, kick feet at the edge of the pool.

Then the mountain moves, ponderou gaining the steps.

Hey. Bustah do cannaball now, they whis

There is no form nor comeliness in the h man as he walks ponderously toward the bo Children fall back, form a hushed ring around eight foot wing. The life guard, a young w woman tanned to a stunning brown, watc through sun glasses with a bemused smile. tips the white sun hat back on her head so the blond hair falls out. She has white cream her nose and twirls a silver whistle on a cl from one hand dangling insouciantly along the raised life guard's chair. She wears an a

ɜ stretch nylon swimsuit the accentuates the
tle rise of her breasts, the slim curve of her
ɜ. She crosses her legs and leans back.
ıuster ascends the board, stands at the stair
and watches the water subside into a mirror
ɔothness. He wants it like glass. If it shimmers
will turn back. It is a windless day; the pool
es back at the sun unperturbed as all space.
ɜ is the way Buster wants it. He steps out on
board and it groans and sways under his
ght. He reaches the end, then gently, rhythmi-
ɹ, begins bobbing. He stops, half turns as if to
ɔack. The children groan.
w, nah, Bustah! Do cannaball.
leas, Bustah.
pauses as if undecided, again studies the
ɐr, begins bouncing, the board bucking like a
, up-down, higher. His huge knees flex; then
denly the mountain catapaults into air. He
ches huge arms to his knees, arches pon-
ɔusly like a landslide of black flesh, a battle-
ı airborne, and smashes the shining mirror.
ter careens in a frightened tidal wave; spray
ɹets twenty feet in the air. The crash of his
ıge smashes the sky. The whoops of the
dren rise.
/hooee! Bustah! They cheer and laugh and
ɜ each other, snapping towels at high-
ɔping rear ends while the life guard blasts her
ɐr trumpet at the gates of heaven.
he monolith of black flesh surfaces, angles up
steps, and paces unblinking into the dark
v of the changing room.
ranklin Park was the focus of all change, for
ɔroad expanse held corners enough for all
ɐs to find themselves and activities enough for
races to mingle. Bounded by the main
ɹoughfare, Franklin Street, on the north, a
ıll college on the north side of the street, the
ɹ sprawled for nearly a hundred acres to the
th. Adjacent to Franklin Street were a dozen
ıis courts, well kept green asphalt, and a
er pumping station. A steep hill, a joy for
lding in winter, particularly the careening
poff between two trees which was fast and
ɹ as ice, fell away to three superb ball
nonds, the farthest one iced down as an ice-
ting rink in winter. Plentiful trees ringed the
ɛlines where young lovers could disappear
ing any season. Past the diamonds were the
ɯming pool, community house, playground,
basketball courts. The side streets were filled
ı old, two-story clapboard houses, most of
n with front porches where old folks would sit
rock on hot summer days.
)ccasionally one of the old folks would whistle
ɔungster from the park to run an errand to the
ɔery store. They would tip the errand boy a dime—"for an ice cream cone," they said. Old Mrs. Nellie Verseput was a huge, rotund woman with strangely thin legs swathed in brown stockings rolled to the knees. She was bothered by a skin irritation that left dry, scaly red skin under the stockings, and was too bent from arthritis to scratch them herself. Sometimes she would scratch frantically with a cane she kept by her chair. When it reached that state she would pay Dickie Potter twenty cents to scratch her legs for twenty minutes, a penny a minute, up and down. "Oh, that feels good, Dickie," she would murmur.

Franklin Park changed overnight: that was the night the first group of three blacks from Worden Street walked onto the basketball court and began shooting baskets. This was not a momentous event to anyone then. The neighborhood, composed largely of Dutch immigrants, had seen waves of Polish, then Cuban, then early-fifties Dutch, sweep in before. New faces meant little—whether European, Carribean, or black. They wanted to play basketball, and they were good. Soon they were regulars. By the end of the summer the park was 50 percent black. A little over a decade later it was renamed Martin Luther King Park, and the only white faces belonged to policemen, life guards, and an occasional passer-by who paused by the baseball diamonds, the swimming pool, or the basketball courts with the thunk and swoosh of chain link nets to remember how it once was.

*On hot July evenings the basketball court throbbed to the rhythm of pounding feet. . .*

The overnight change was evident first of all on the basketball courts. The game itself changed. Even Buster made it to the courts now and then to let young bodies bounce off his flesh as he bulled his way like a red-eyed elephant to the hoop. Then Buster took up very heavyweight prize-fighting. Still he came occasionally to the courts, to lounge by the chain link fence around the pool and watch the children. He had lost over a hundred pounds for the ring. "I puts it on one week, take it off the nex," he said.

On hot July evenings the basketball court throbbed to the rhythm of pounding feet until well after the sun set. At 10 p.m. the games went

on. How did the game change? Instead of surely executed layups and back-door plays, the game because a blazing swirl of motion punctuated by high swishers from the far corner or a dazzling, floating backside layup. It became a game of finesse and flash, of music and moves. Master of the court was Beryl the Bird, self-proclaimed King of Moves.

"C'mon, Beryl. Hit me!"

And the ball swooped in a lightning shot past dazed eyes and empty hands.

Beryl was undersized, with kinky red hair that he shaved nearly bald; but his hands were oversize, great, spreading tentacles that fondled the ball like a lover. This was a ballet of basketball, a symphony of black grace on the burning tar courts. Beryl the Bird was deaf, as immune to human voices as the pigeons that danced a hard two step on the burning red tile roof of the community building. From thirty feet away he read the motions of the lanky center cutting, with a weave and fake, toward the hoop. "C'mon, Beryl. Hit me!" And he did; and the chain net thrashed with the sweet resonance of a hard dunk.

"Where'd ball come from?"

"Who did tha ball?"

"That's in yo face, mama. Beryl done that."

"In ma face! Say wha? Beryl din throw no ball. He put jet engines onna ball. Say he did!"

And Beryl grinning at the words he couldn't hear, the smiles and scowls around him, moves in a world of soundless grace. Nor does he hear the incessant throbbing of the radio pounding at the edge of the court, all day, into the night. He saw the young children dancing on the dirt where the bones of the earth broke through the dusty July soil, slapping feet raising little spirals of dust. Beryl knew; he knew the beat as he ducked and weaved and canned a shot from the top of the key.

"Say, Beryl! Sit down, man. Gimme a break, Beryl!"

And the music pounded at the sun and the stars. The Peppermint Twist gave way to Motown Sound, but in between the blue soul of Ray Charles.

* * * * *

The pop field up to about 1954 was marked by its whiteness. There were exceptions: Nat Cole, The Ink Spots, but pop music was white music. Not so with rock, infused and transfixed as it was by black artists who were in the forefront of the movement. Frank Sinatra was replaced by Little Richard, his hair teased like a Lucille Ball in black, a razor-thin mustache, his eyes circled with eyelid makeup and false eyelashes. Perry Como gave way to Chuck Berry, a performer as smo as the silks he wore and who cornered a shar the market with hits like "Roll Over Beethov and "Rock and Roll Music." But above them stood Ray Charles, who started in rock added something, gave rock its soul. He was father of soul, the voice behind Motown, voice that rose dark and dusky from fields cotton, that ambled skillfully over the pai chords of his music invoking in the bluesy c and echo of his style the ring-shout of sl music. It wasn't long before Ray's star was ov come by the meteoric blaze of Motown; fur loud, hip-swinging music. It dared to be black new, bold way. This was black with a raised and slogans. This was anger and rage that bo into the ghetto riots of a dozen American cit

The sixties was an age of social consciousn Maybe it was the dream of the Camelot no could find, the homage to the Great Soc which surely existed somewhere, if only in promises of politicians, but which no one v walked the streets of the city seemed to be a to find. Maybe it was the growing horro Vietnam. While the Beatles contentedly waile Wanna Hold Your Hand," or echoed their bl memory of Liverpool in "A Hard Day's Nig young American artists were developing a d social consciousness, *and* bitterness. The a sixties saw the advent of Barry McGuire's " of Destruction." Now a popular figure in Je music, McGuire took the P.F. Sloan song gave it the conviction of his acid growl. G were the snapping fingers, the twisting hips their place was anger. The song was banned fr many radio stations and from ABC Televisi But the music in this song was unique too; celerating into a strong marching beat it wa call to action of a different sort. Instead of sock hop, a march on the state house; instea a beach party, a demonstration. There w other songs of this order—Janis Ian's "Socie Child," reissued periodically to prove that apa isn't altogether dead; Glenn Campbell's "Univ sal Soldier," written by the Queen of Prot Buffy St. Marie.

But perhaps the most vigorous protest was a woman who also had the most skillful voice, accomplished musician at home with Bach or l native Brazilian beats, Joan Baez. In his tribute Joan Baez, Langston Hughes, black poet a writer of fiction who led the movement knowr the Harlem Renaissance in the twenties, wro "Joan Baez herself becomes the work of art. I there is nothing about her singing that is art When something is artsy, it is held in the ha and looked at with conceit. But when someth is art, it is the hand."

oan Baez first made her mark in Newport in ). A small, slight woman, she sat on the grass floated her voice into the night air. The next ıt she was asked to step on stage under the tlights. She sang two songs, and after that no again asked, Joan who? She began with bal-ı, Indian, American, Brazilian, all with equal ve and inspiration. Then one morning, ıtember 15, 1963, four little girls in Birming-ı went to Sunday School on a Sunday ning. They never came home. They left their od on the walls of the church, torn to shreds the dynamite blast. And Joan Baez, sweet ger of others, gave us them to remember in mingham Sunday."

Much of the anxiety of the age was also ısed in a new poetry. The beat poetry on the ten page, the songs of Paul Simon on the air-es. The lyrics of Simon were full of rich gery, puzzling and complex, curiously set to y smooth music arranged by Art Garfunkel. ousands of people still carry the lyrics of unds of Silence" in the backs of their minds:

*Hello darkness, my old friend,*
*'ve come to talk with you again,*
*Because a vision softly creeping*
*.eft its seeds while I was sleeping,*
*And the vision that was planted in my brain*
*Still remains, within the sounds of silence*

*n restless dreams I walked alone*
*Narrow streets of cobblestone,*
*Neath the halo of a streetlamp,*
*turned my collar to the cold and damp....*

was fitting: the rock of the fifties ended in try, like a butterfly having to shake and rattle get free of its cocoon.

* * * * *

is a dangerous thing to visit old neighborhoods years later, to walk through memories on the unforgiving streets of reality. The houses along Franklin Park are now decayed houses, the porches where old people we knew and waved to and ran errands for now littered with old machinery and cardboard boxes. Almost any night the sirens wail, the police cars converge, the ambulances roar off. People ride along Franklin Street, pause at the red light to lean over and lock the doors, and, catching your eye as you stand and survey the empty tennis courts, wonder tragically at your presence. How do you tell them this is still home?

But it isn't. Others inhabit the houses now. It belongs to them.

Even the house on Neland Avenue where the cherry tree once spread out over the back yard. The tree is gone; the yard scruffed by a large dog on the end of a chain. The paint peels on the house as it always did, only now it isn't repainted, one side a summer, as it once was.

No, it belongs to others now. But not all of it.

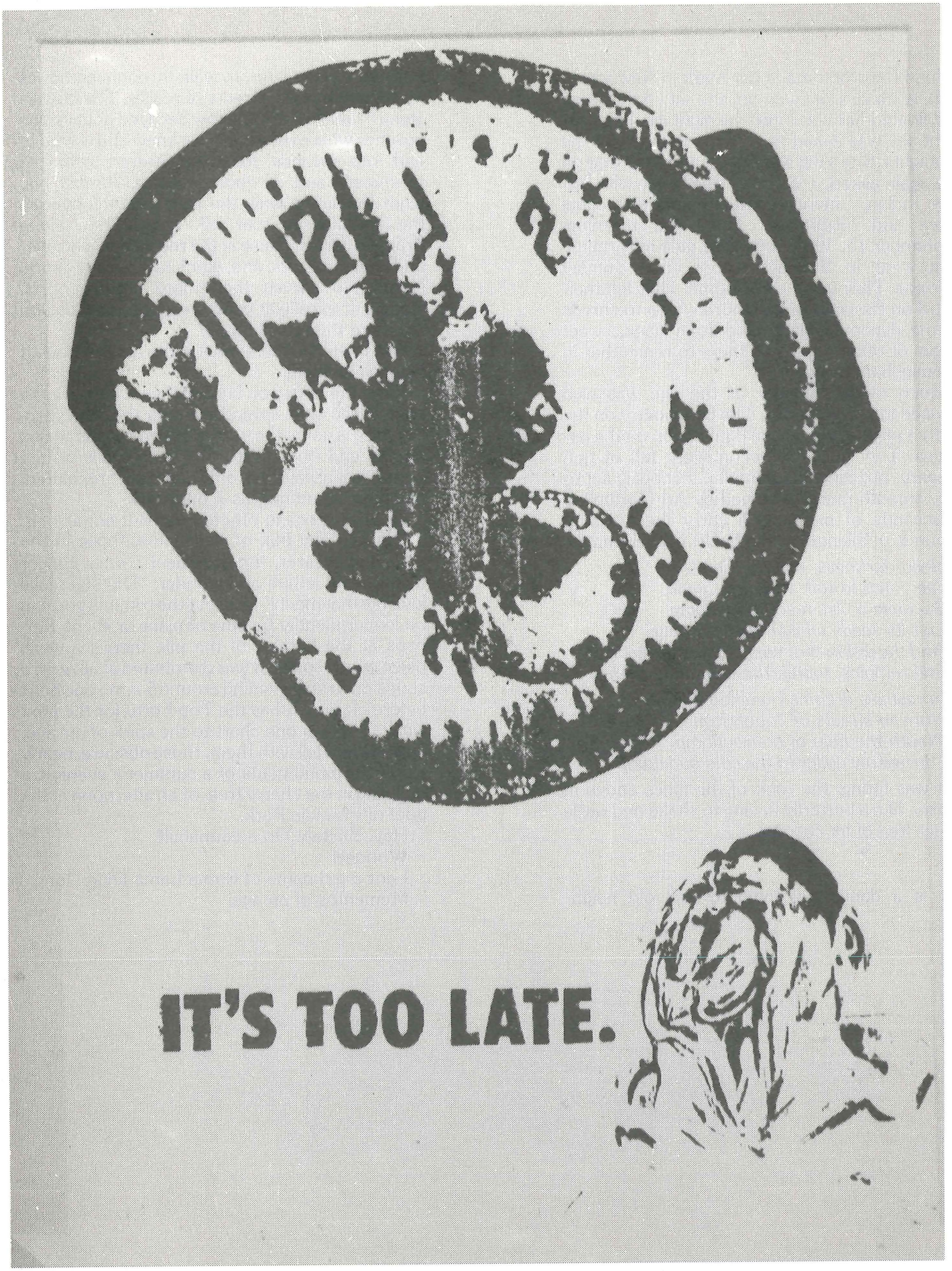
Dip into any box of mementos, those in the attic, the dresser, the basement corner. Finger through old letters and wonder: "Did she really love me that much!" Sort out the trinkets you can no longer identify by time or place or event. Perhaps at the bottom of the pile there's a worn piece of newsprint. It was distributed at all record shops on Friday evening around 5 p.m., one hour before closing. It has the Top Forty for the next week. There is one chart to the spirit of the age; we rose and fell with them, those obscure, nearly forgotten monuments of a summer's evening, a morning in the cherry tree, or an afternoon at the pool of Franklin Park.

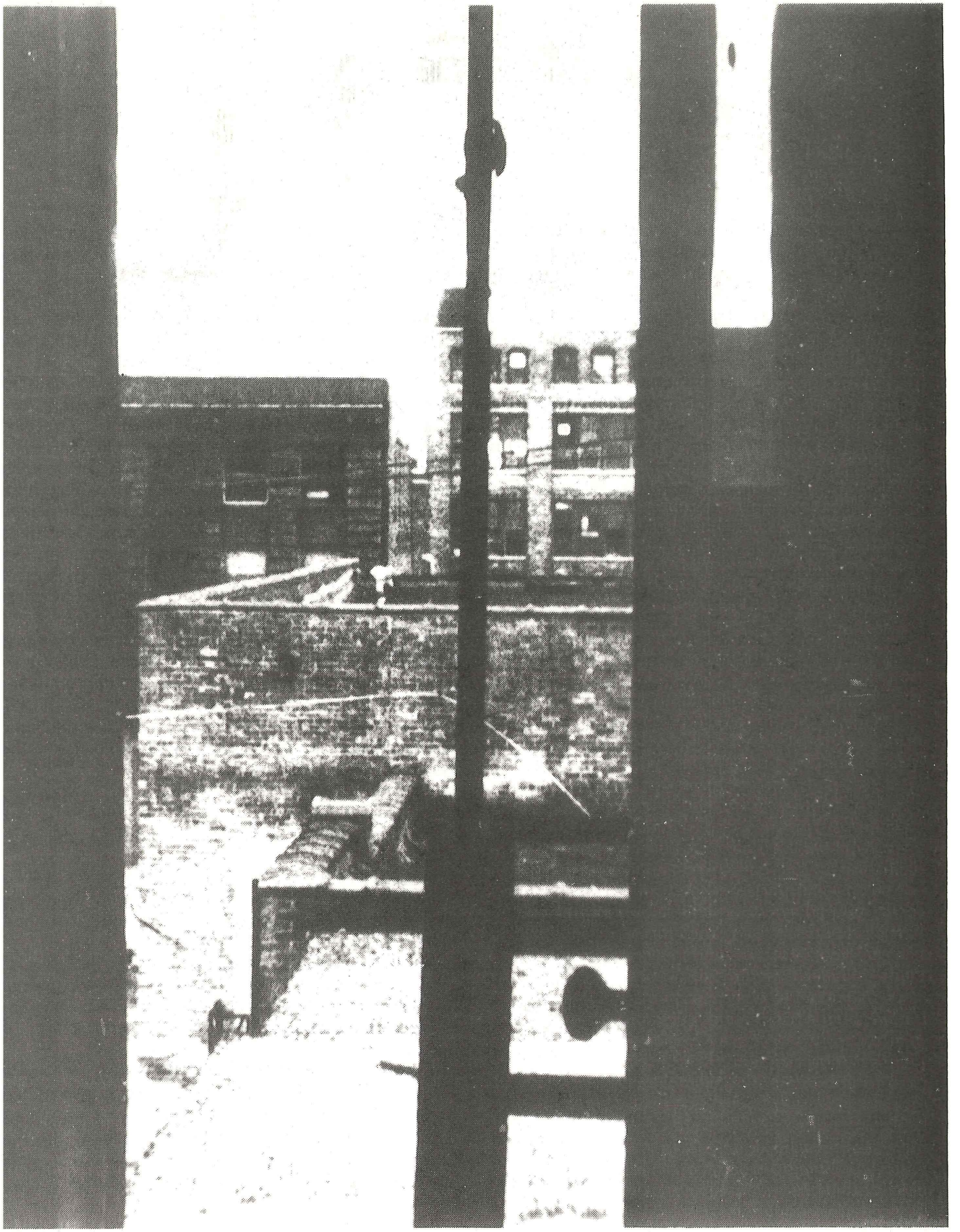
Hey, Bustah! Do a cannaball!

Whooee!

I got a girl name of Rama Lama Ding Dong.

Mementos of an age.


IT'S TOO LATE.



# Meditation

Some miles from here there is a wood and a lake, the priory of an Abbey, where solace has proven to me the weight of silence more than once. I spent a day of this past reading recess there with a friend. After singing an early Mass, we, who had ostensibly come to devote the silence to our studies, decided to take a walk. The Abbey, the site of an old farm, is situated in one corner of the whole priory, accessible by a paved country road. A sandy gravel road leads from the heart of the common buildings, past a large woodshed, past a path to the hermitage, to a small farmhouse and trailheads leading to the lake and various parts of the forest. We took this road, the wood on our left, one row of trees and a field of tall grasses on our right.

We walked on the worn places to be as quiet as we could, commenting with gestures about deer tracks and how fresh they were. As we approached a crest in the path where deer pass, we heard a rustling. It came from the left. We stopped, looked, and immediately: 'kik,kik,kik-kik-kik,kik,kik,-kik,kik.' We looked at each other, eyebrows bent in agreement that neither of us knew what it was. It was an irritated, perturbed kind of noise; whatever had made it knew exactly where we were, so we didn't bother to crouch. The morning sky lay behind the thin stretch of forest, so all we could see were the thin silhouettes of trees and an occasional leaf. We stood listening, waiting, looking toward the sound—and there! There was a flurry of crow-like wings, splayed at the ends, and an awkward flight to the side of a tree. The bird was about the size of a crow, but its perch at the trunk told us it was a woodpecker, and its gawky image, that it was a *pileated* woodpecker. Its wings were tucked and folded at the sides, with the tips protruding at the lower back, and its tailfeathers bent inward to the tree. It had a rather thin neck and a surprisingly large head with a tuft sticking up and slightly back, and a long sturdy beak. We stood amazed. It knocked, klucked again, and flew away.

The pileated woodpecker is not common in these parts, preferring the more dense woodlands of the east and north. Yet the significance of this sighting for me was not only that it is uncommon, but that I had been looking for this bird for over a year. I've heard its heavy knocking in two places in Pennsylvania, and in upstate New York I've seen its markings –trees riddled with large oval and oblong holes. It is not a colorful bird, but with a red crest and white under the wings it is a flashy spectacle when it flies. So I was told. Having come so close without spotting one, frustration led to a kind of sparetime obsession. Where the presence of the woodpecker was at all feasible or rumored, I would go solely to find that one bird.

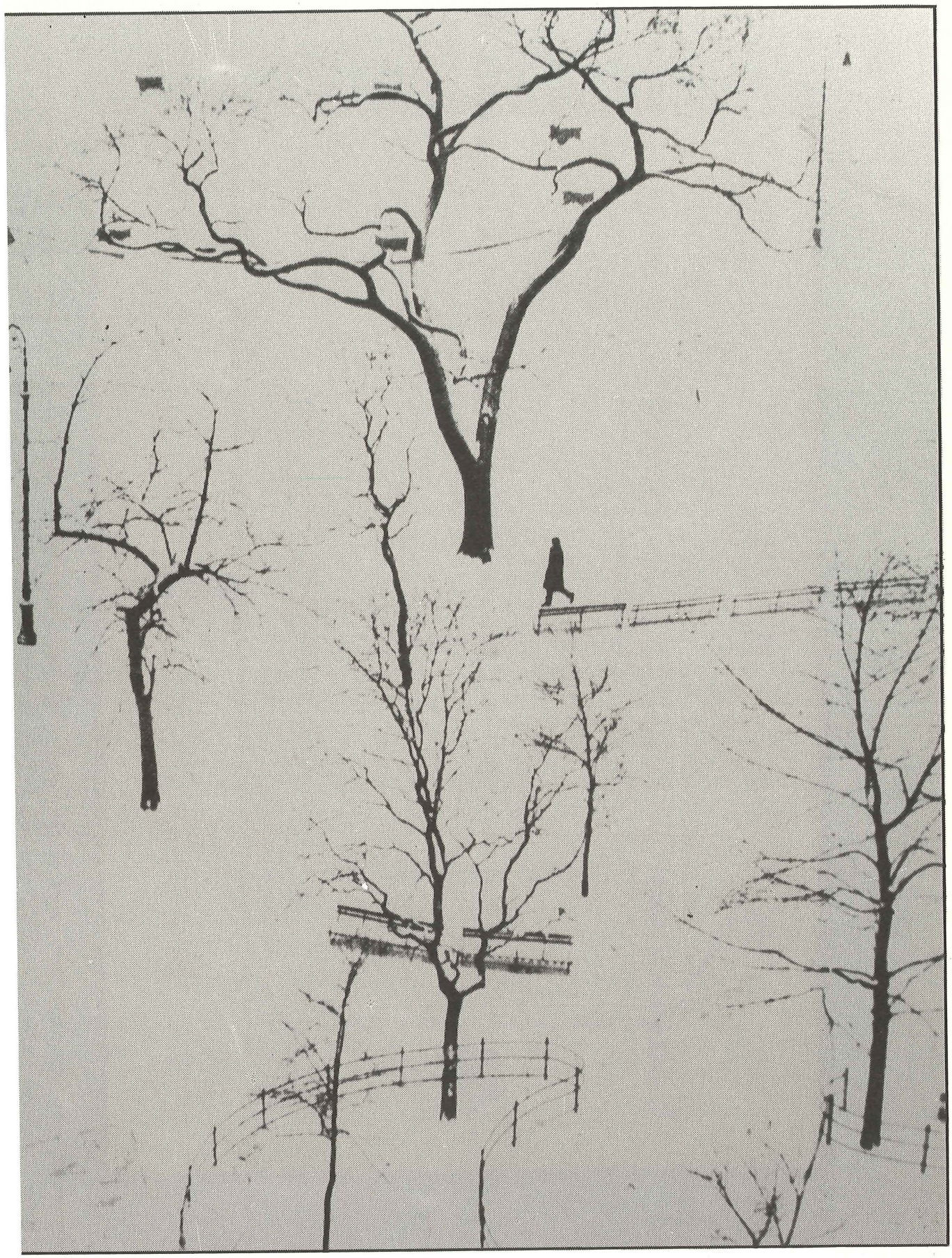
Eventually I wove a number of images, anticipating the vision of the real thing, this awkward, unsociable, and glorious bird. I knew that I would see it some day, but when I did, it was thoroughly unexpected. And despite all the fantasies I had nurtured, when I actually saw the thing, it was shockingly and thoroughly bird-like. It was after all, a *bird* that I was hoping to see, wasn't it?

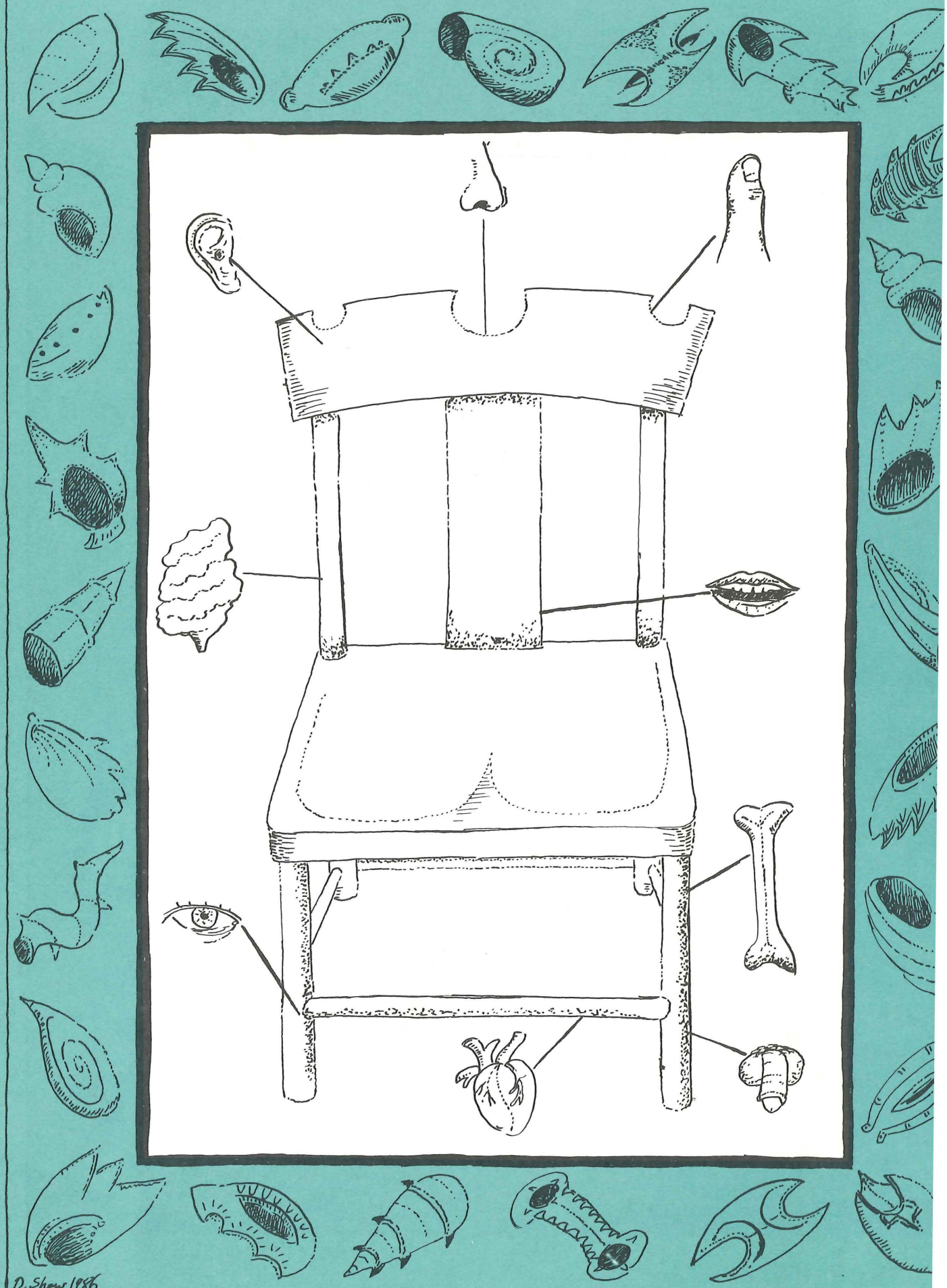
The event has come and gone, and, as with all memories, some elements will fade and others will be brightened. In a few years, if I am honest, I will not be able to profess a clear memory of the event from start to finish. Only disjointed, discolored images will come to mind. Yet most significantly, I will know that I had seen the bird, the very one I had most hoped and waited to see.

During the Advent Season, not only do we celebrate the Nativity, we celebrate its anticipation as well. The better part of four weeks is devoted to the memory of a single moment of birth, wherein lies the crucial mystery of our faith. We, living after the moment, can recreate, even re-enact, the moment in our imaginations and in our corporate celebrations. Is it not possible that in spite of our carefully woven mythic images of the Nativity, we might be shocked at Christ's sheer infancy?

The shepherds had no Advent Season, no rehearsal for the event, though they no doubt bore some opinion about a Mesiah. If we can trust Luke's story, it is probable that they believed what the angel had told them, but it is certain that they had something to talk about. And if we can lucidate the account, it's not hard to imagine the group later that night back with their flocks and companions. The talk goes on into the morning hours, and already in the east the sky has begun to pale. They are tired, and there is a long pause in the conversation. One sits straight up on his bedroll, stares into the embers of a drowsy fire, and says, "Good God in heaven, it was just a baby!. . .How it bawled at us!"

—D.A.M. Shelow




D. Shaw 1986