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dialogue

dialogue

Vol. 19 no 5 1987

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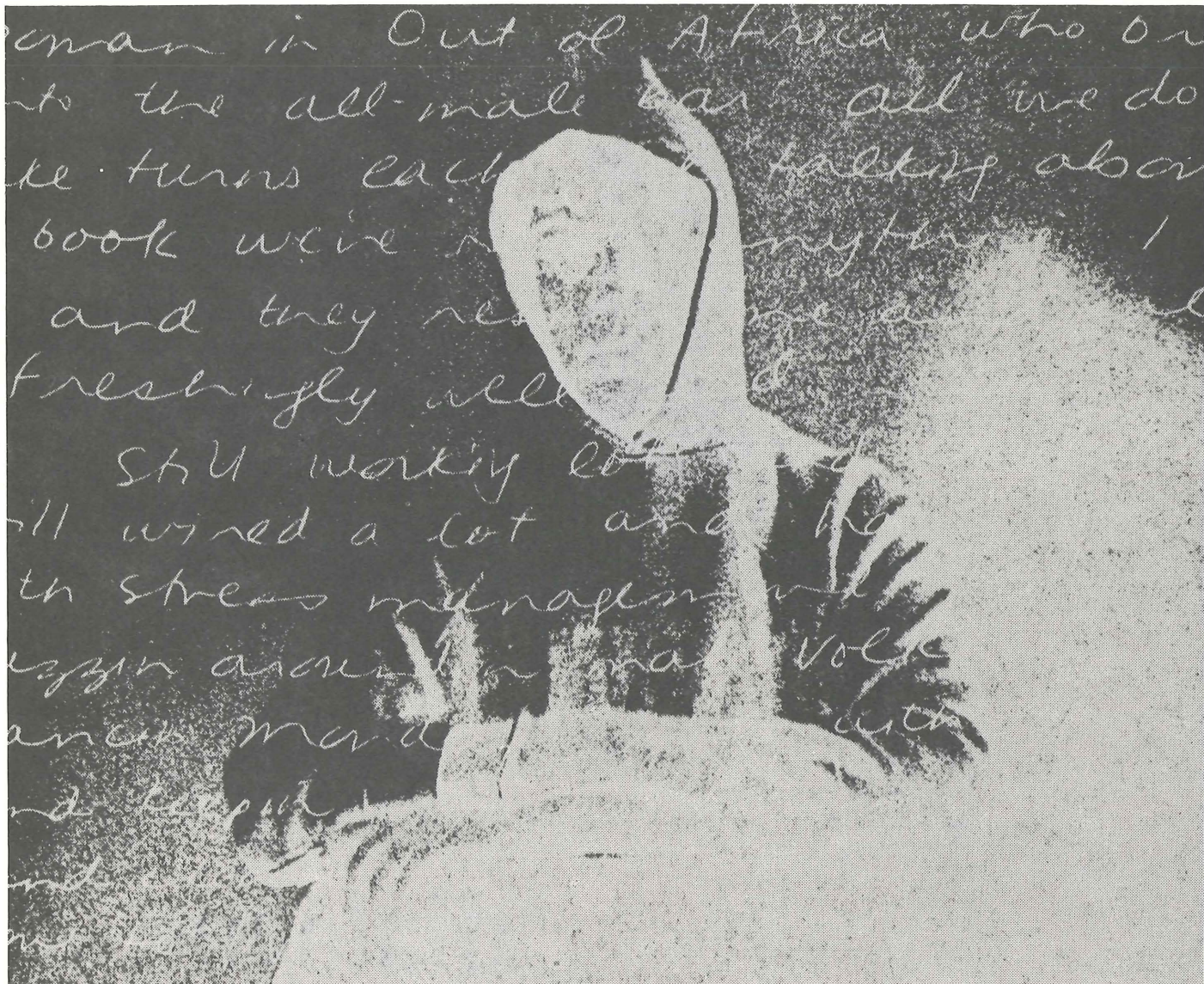
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Dialogue is a journal of Calvin College art and commentary published monthly by the Calvin College Communications Board. Add correspondence to *Dialogue*, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Copyright © 1987 by Calvin College Communications Board.



Jenny

Contents

Editorials	4	David LaGrand
	6	David LaGrand
Feature	18	Response and Responsibility Pamela VanHalsema
Stories	22	The Final J. M. Ruiter
	31	The Alma Schindler-Mahler- Gropius-Werfel Memoirs Mike Rubingh
Poetry	8	Poems from the Godless Land M. Inoue
	16	Grandmother-Woman Kramer
	17	10:00 Kramer
	17	Summer Job—Lunch Hour Kramer
	30	Verity Rose Cunningham
Portfolio	12	Tommy Allen
Art	1	Jenny Flim
	2	Jenny Flim
	5	Marlene Schaly
	7	Jenny Flim
	10	John Jeninga
	24	Jenny Flim
	29	Marlene Schaly
	36	Jenny Flim
Words and Works	25	Mike Rubingh
Meditation	34	David Diephouse

Editorial

As you read this editorial, one of Calvin's more important committees is being destroyed. Unlike most of its siblings, the Film Arts Committee has an active as well as a purely administrative function, and this active nature is threatened with termination. As well as deciding which films may or may not be shown on Calvin's campus and coordinating the various groups which show films on campus—dorms, homecoming committees, and others—the Film Arts Committee shows a number of films itself.

Although Calvin and the CRC have a relatively young and rather tentative positive stance toward film as a legitimate art form, we do at present consider film to be as much a potential medium for creativity as literature. As a result of this approval, the Film Arts Committee has come into being, to guard against abuses of this art form on Calvin, but also to expose the Calvin student body and members of the GR community to a number of good films.

But the Film Arts Committee has a problem. For the past few years it has been becoming more expensive to show film. Whether because of the popularity of VCRs, the proliferation of movie theatres in Grand Rapids, or a lack of interest in older films, attendance has drastically fallen at showings. At the same time, the price of admission has held at \$1.50, while rental costs have increased. The net result is that the Film Arts Committee does not make a profit, and in fact has been subsidized with college funds. Last year the subsidy totalled \$6,000. This year after \$4,000 worth of support the college has put its administrative foot down.

Since the financial basis of this committee has changed, it is reasonable to attempt a reassessment of the committee's shape. But current proposals for change appear to be taking the shape of suggestions that all further films this semester be cut, and only 15 films be shown next year rather than 40. Is there any reason that the FAC operation should depend on its financial independence? Certainly not. No matter what comparison is drawn with other programs, the Film Arts Committee clearly performs functions worth \$6,000.

Carolyn Balk Olson, past FAC chairman, once stated that the guiding plan for film showings was to make available to students enough films in a broad enough range to provide a good introductory exposure to film. If these films are a resource, and an important potential part of a Calvin student's education, then we can hardly require profit from their viewing. Do we expect the library to declare a profit each year to pay for its staff wages and overdue fines? If, on the other hand, we view the film art guild's education function to fall in a grouping with the activities of such student organizations as *Chimes* and *Dialogue* then the question of profit is even more out of place. Neither *Chimes* nor *Dialogue* are expected to generate income, and the size of their subsidies, \$45,000 and \$25,000 respectively, dwarfs the amount of money that Film Arts would need to keep operating at the present level.

Even if Calvin does want the committee to make economic sense, it is rather simple-minded to slash its program. Calvin pays thousands of dollars each year sending one musical group or another jaunting around the continent during spring break. This would, on the surface, appear a rather frivolous waste of money, but it is always explained that these trips pay for themselves in public relation terms. I presume this means that appearances by the Calvin Orchestra in Los Angeles either stimulate alumni gifts or recruit more students to fill our classrooms. Both functions are probably performed equally well by the schedule of films on campus. Many people from the community attend Calvin's films, and certainly a good number are either Calvin alumni or prospective Calvin students. For both groups, films present a real attraction and a reason to appreciate Calvin's existence.

In short, for both financial and non-financial grounds, limiting the activities of the Film Arts Committee is a false economy.

—DL



—Marlene Schaly

Editorial

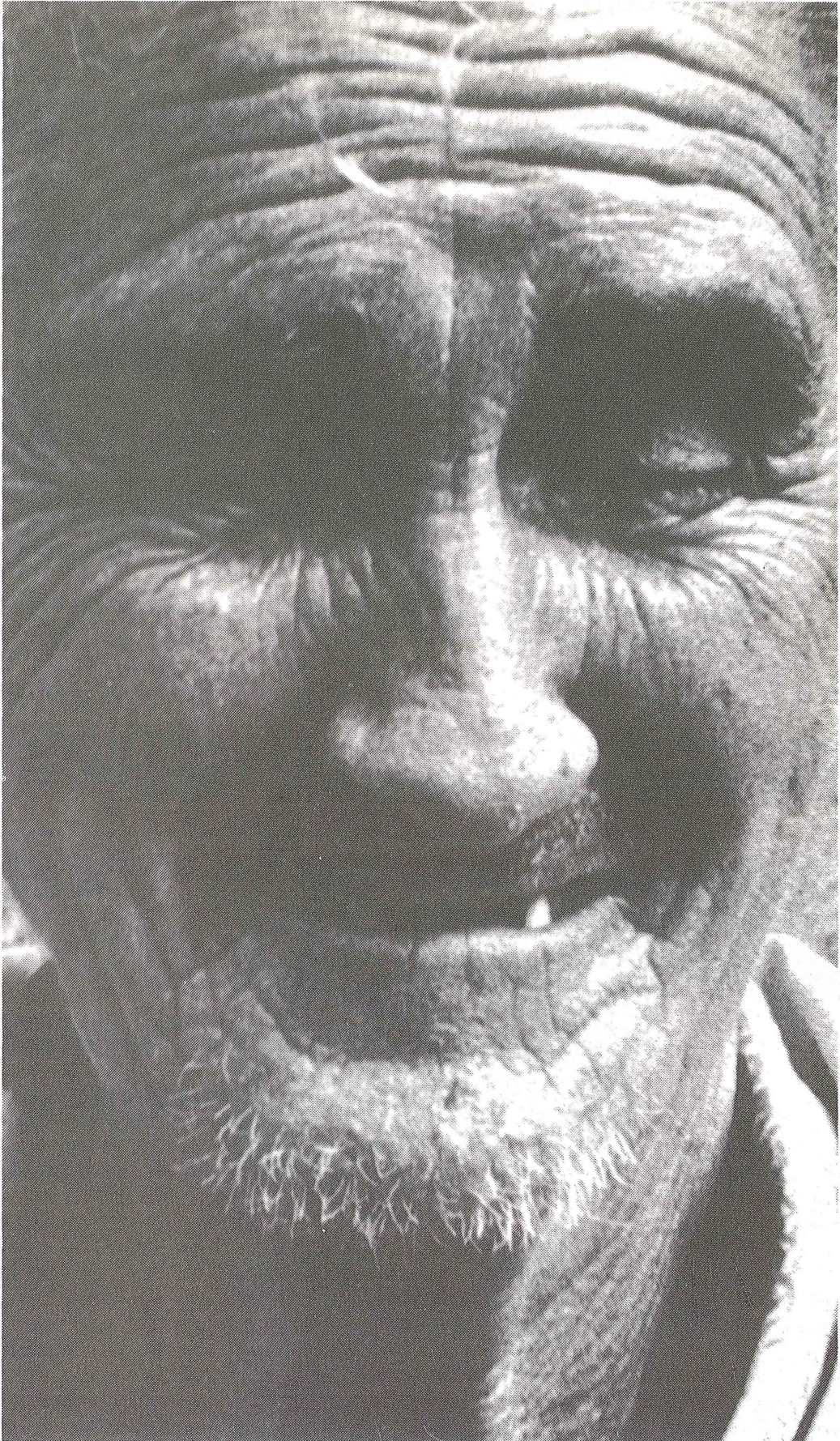
Personification is an easy habit to fall into, and an easy mistake to make. Pantheism, the most developed sort of personification, sees personality in all of nature—in rocks, trees, wind, and water. Even Christians who know that such games are silly give their cars names, curse toe-stubbing bricks as if they were sentient, and treat their pets as intelligent children. Mock pantheism seems harmless, and serious pantheism is not something that a great number of us struggle with. But we have all at one time or another committed a much more serious mistake: personification. Most of us commit it every day, and usually in such a way as to constitute a sin.

God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, “go forth in gladness, to love and serve the Lord,” to love those that hate us and to continually strive for reconciliation with those at odds with us. These are all very difficult commands. We enjoy being angry, and we can even learn to love hate. Loving those that hate us is a good deal harder, and never as much fun. And so our willful and sinful minds actively seek out ways to avoid God’s commandments. The easiest way to do so in the case of injunctions to love people around us is by means of displacement. We substitute parts of people for the people.

The subtlest way to give vent to our hatred starts with a characteristic or an action. Something which rankles about a person quickly takes the place of that person, so that rather than hating a roommate or a student, we hate their voice, or their facial expressions, or their speech patterns. The displacement involved does two things—lowers the hated person to the level of a collection of qualities, and at the same time fleshes out those qualities that they can bear the weight of our malice. In fact, we can become so good at these techniques of displacement that we hide our hatred from ourselves while we enjoy it. If pressed, we can claim that we do not hate, we are merely angry over this or that matter, are irritated by this or that habit of a person, or are themselves only trying to seek justice in our pursuit of such and such a question.

But the person remains. Those who we torture with such indirect and quickly justified malice are hurt all the same. No person is one property or another, nor even a collection of a myriad of properties. We can hate evil, and hate the evil done by others, but the person involved in such attacks must always be the focus of our undivided love, and know it. Only then can we hope to build a community in Christ, and act while respecting the identity God provides for our neighbors.

—DL



—Jenny Flim

Poems from the Godless Land

Selected and Translated by M. Inoue

Here are some of the Japanese poems that deal with the religious or spiritual aspect of Japan. Names are given in the Japanese order: that is, the family name precedes the personal name.

THE SHROUD

Noguchi Yonejiro (1875-1947)

"It's a bit too early, I dare say, that you bring me a shroud."

I said to Death. He gave me a strange smile.

"Why, it's only a fitting sir," replied Death to me.

"It's too loose here; and it's too tight there.

In the first place, I don't like the color.

After all, the fashion isn't so unimportant, you know."

Death gave a loud derisive laugh,

And said: "That's a laugh, sir.

This is nothing but the dress of your life

Just turned inside out."

Tanikawa is the leading poet of today's Japan. He has gone beyond the traditional function of a poet, making commercial films, working on TV and movies, and so forth. He is also known as a translator of the PEANUTS Comics.



Tanikawa Shuntaro (1931- HOMEWORK

Eyes tightly shut
I could see him.

Eyes slightly opened
He's disappeared.

Eyes widely open
Can I ever see God?

This is my homework.

THIRST

I'm not only thirsty for water;
I'm thirsty for ideology.

I'm not only thirsty for ideology
I'm thirsty for love.

Akiko was a poetess, famous for her collection of the *tanka* poems, one of which is shown here.

Yasano Akiko (1878-1942)

Never have you touched
The soft smooth skin
The hot throbbing blood
Are you not lonely,
Preacher of the Way?



Bocho was a minister in some rural districts. He later deserted the Christian faith under the influence of Leo Tolstoy.

**A POEM DEDICATED TO CHRIST
Yamamura Bocho (1884-1924)**

Christ,
It is nothing new at all, but
Today another young woman came to me.
And asked me:
How like that sinful woman in the Bible
she could with her tears Thy dusty feet wash,
And, with that black flowing hair of hers, wipe them.

Not knowing what to say
I answered:
If one man suffered, that is enough;
That is enough to save all the rest.
Encouraged by my words
The woman went home with light steps.
She was with child;
She said she was single.

Tell me, Christ,
Did I answer right?
This really scares me!

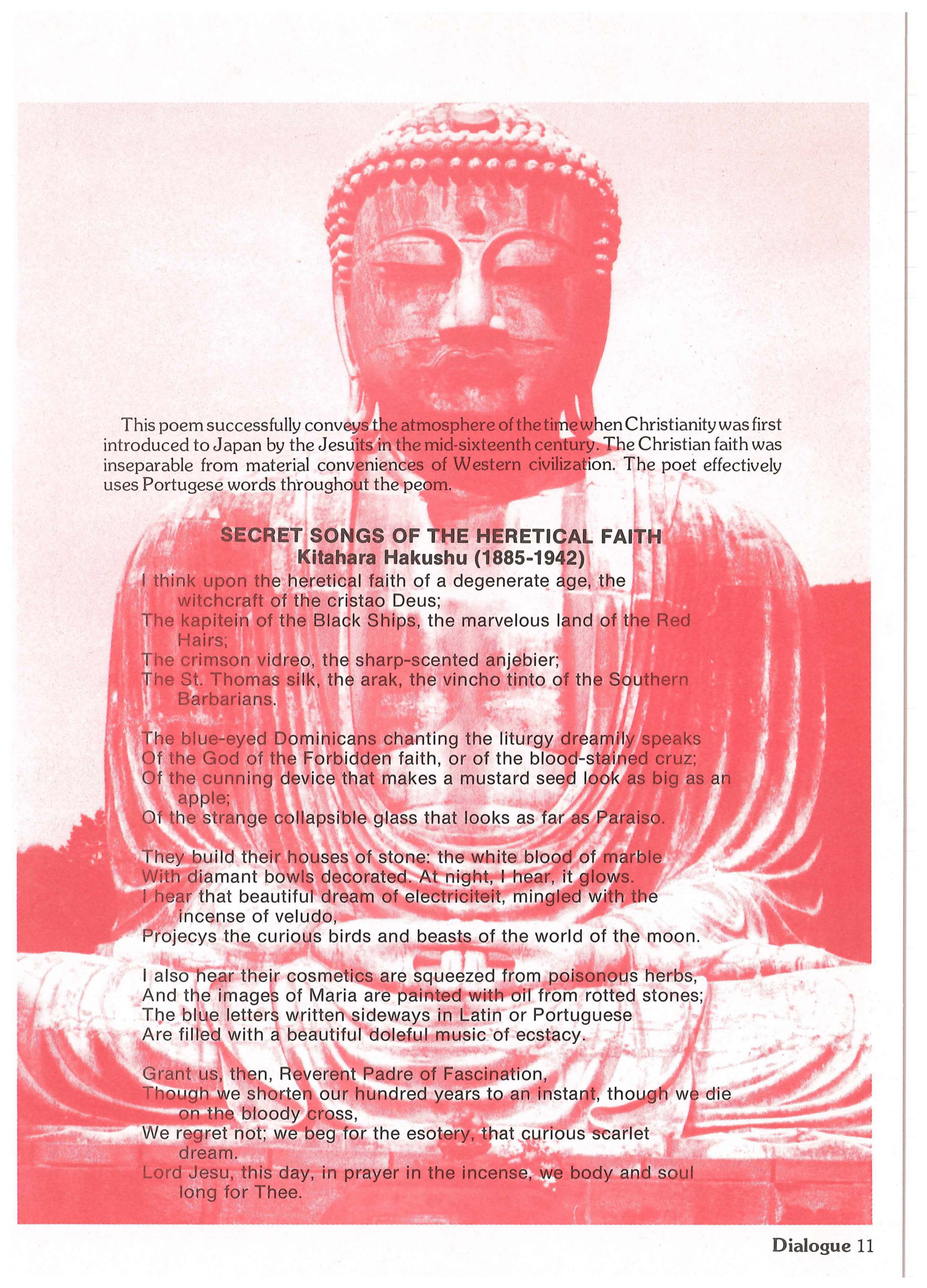
**DEATHBED
Nakahara Chuya (1907-1938)**

The autumn sky is dull-colored;
A glint in the eyes of a black horse.
The water dries up; the lily falls down.
Hollow is the heart.

Godless, helless,
By the window a woman has died.
Blind was the white sky;
Cold was the white wind.

By the window she had washed her hair;
Gentle were her arms.
The morning sunbeam had trickled;
The sound of the water had dripped.

Out on the streets there was noise;
Children's voices were tangling.
But, tell me, what will become of this soul?
Will it spread thin into the sky?



This poem successfully conveys the atmosphere of the time when Christianity was first introduced to Japan by the Jesuits in the mid-sixteenth century. The Christian faith was inseparable from material conveniences of Western civilization. The poet effectively uses Portuguese words throughout the poem.

SECRET SONGS OF THE HERETICAL FAITH
Kitahara Hakushu (1885-1942)

I think upon the heretical faith of a degenerate age, the
witchcraft of the cristao Deus;
The kapitein of the Black Ships, the marvelous land of the Red
Hairs;
The crimson vidro, the sharp-scented anjebier;
The St. Thomas silk, the arak, the vincho tinto of the Southern
Barbarians.

The blue-eyed Dominicans chanting the liturgy dreamily speaks
Of the God of the Forbidden faith, or of the blood-stained cruz;
Of the cunning device that makes a mustard seed look as big as an
apple;
Of the strange collapsible glass that looks as far as Paraiso.

They build their houses of stone: the white blood of marble
With diamant bowls decorated. At night, I hear, it glows.
I hear that beautiful dream of electriciteit, mingled with the
incense of veludo,
Projecys the curious birds and beasts of the world of the moon.

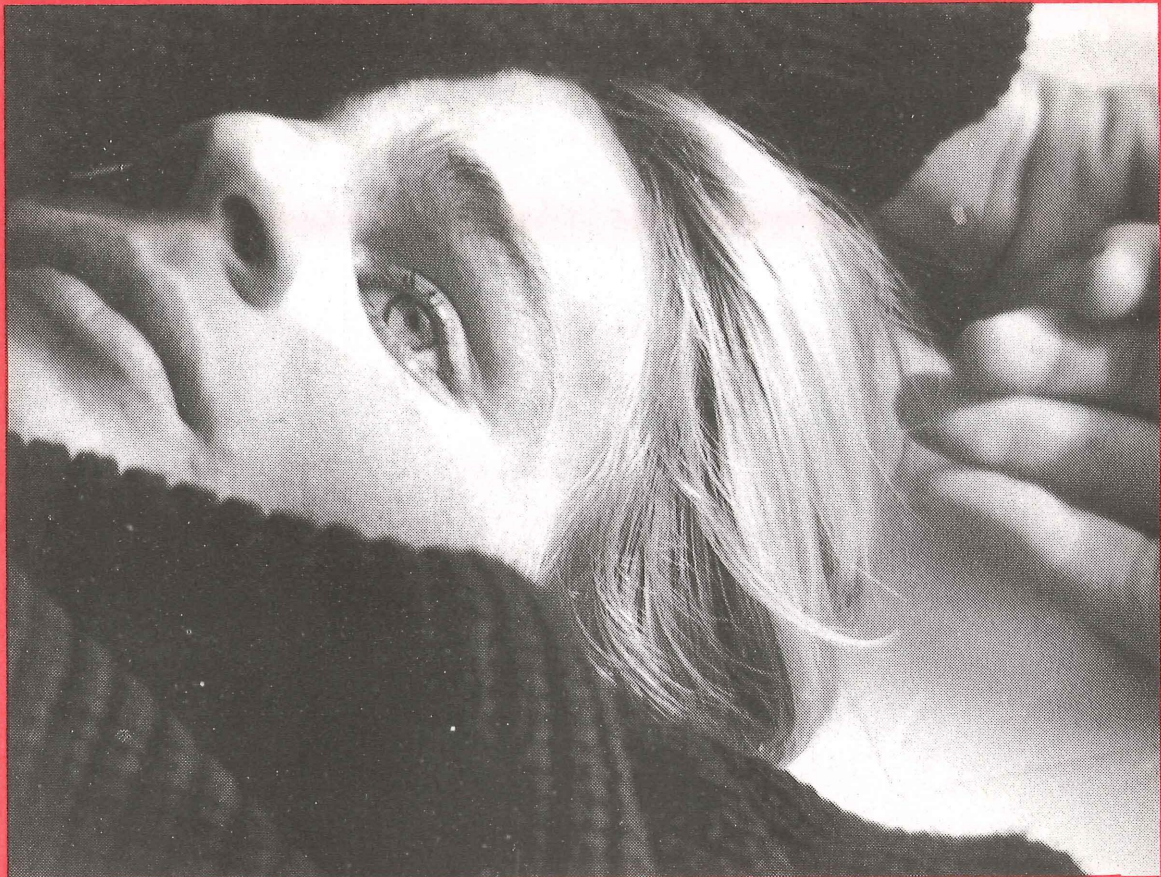
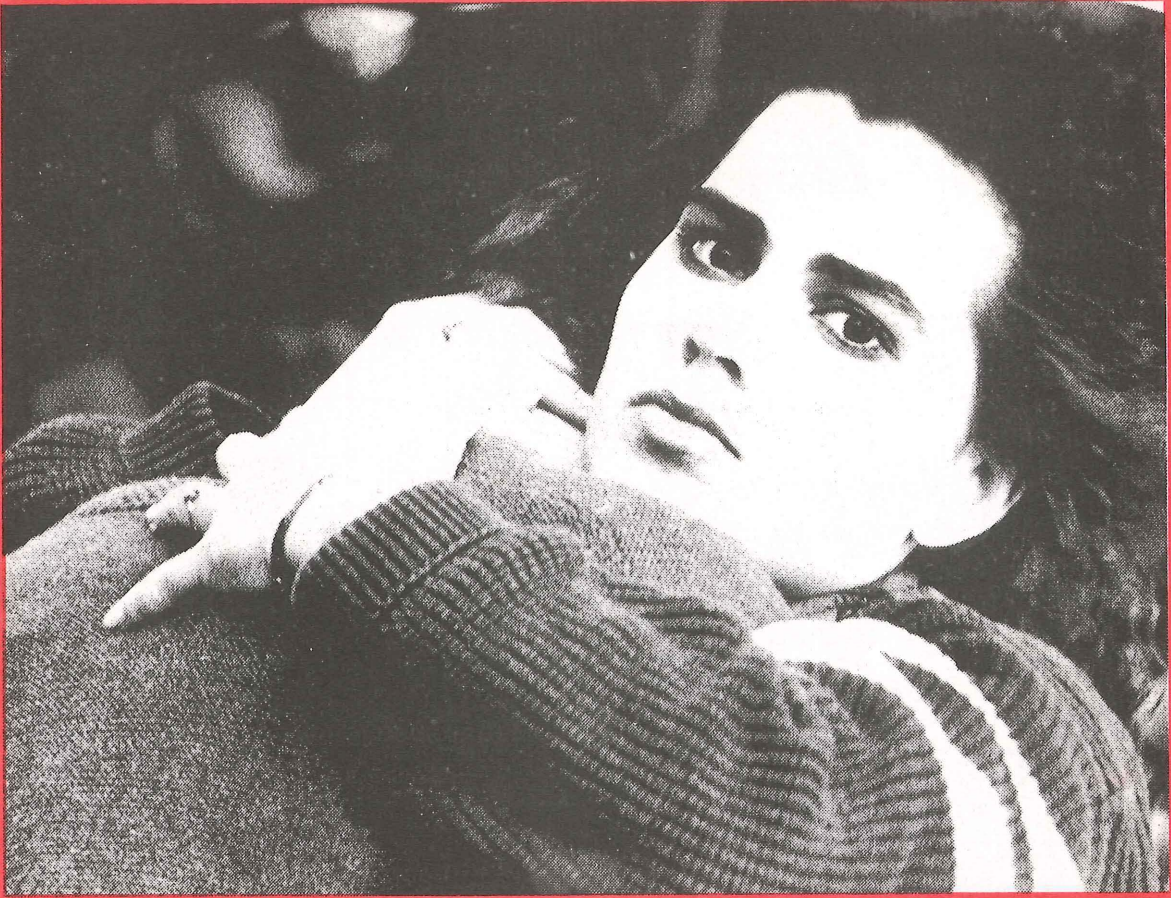
I also hear their cosmetics are squeezed from poisonous herbs,
And the images of Maria are painted with oil from rotted stones;
The blue letters written sideways in Latin or Portuguese
Are filled with a beautiful doleful music of ecstasy.

Grant us, then, Reverent Padre of Fascination,
Though we shorten our hundred years to an instant, though we die
on the bloody cross,
We regret not; we beg for the esotery, that curious scarlet
dream.
Lord Jesu, this day, in prayer in the incense, we body and soul
long for Thee.

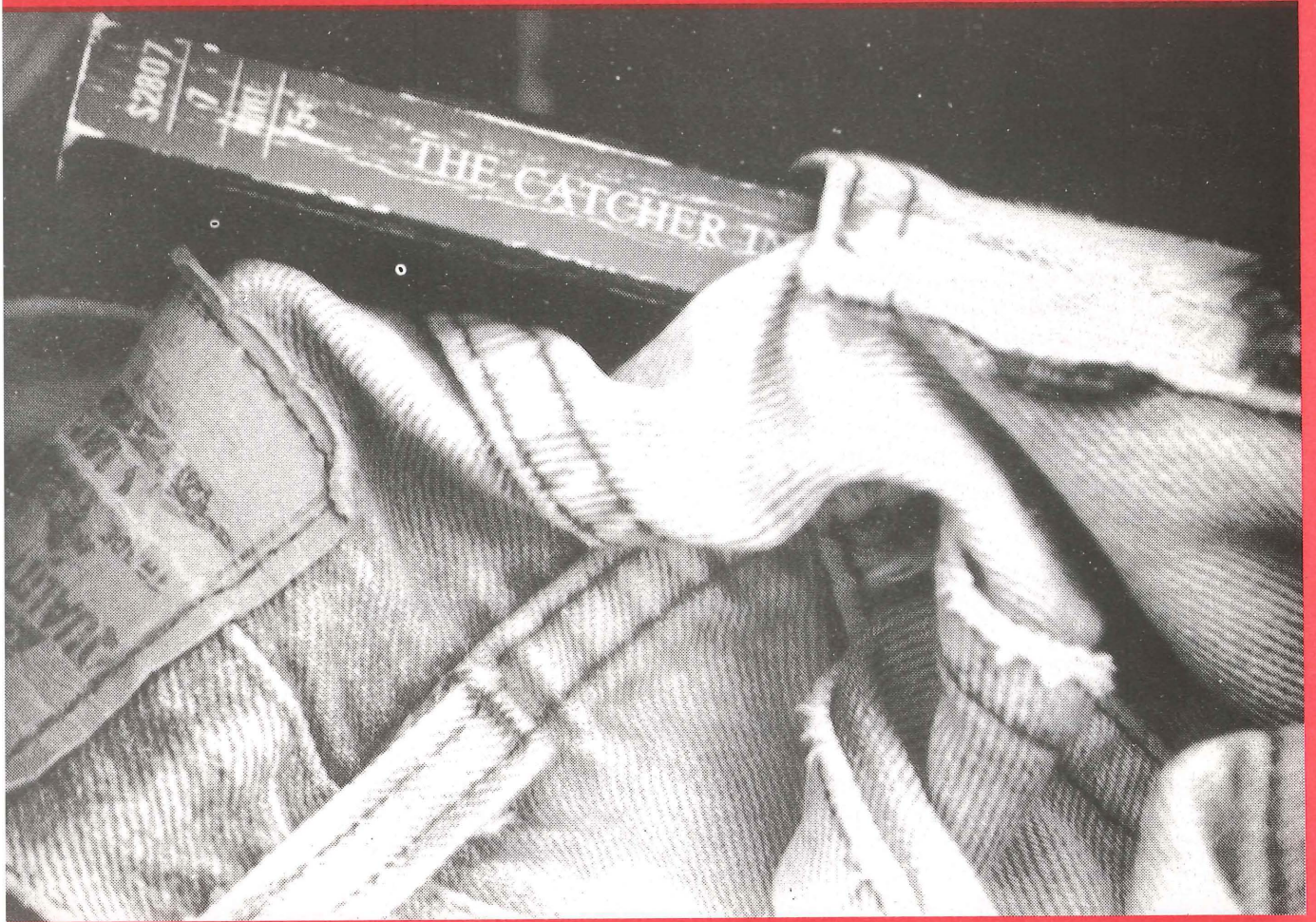
Portfolío

Tommy
ALLEN









GRANDMOTHER-WOMAN

I've never met you grandmother-woman.
This is the first time we speak.
I saw your picture today among the sepia and yellowed fresian letters
in my mother's trunk.
What would you think of me?

You occasionally thought of my mother, number six.
I think I love her more than you did.
She got your burden when you left, you know.
De-motion.

Because you died she was buried.
Encarcerated by obligation to your mule-headed, old-world husband,
The Baby Seed.
I'm glad you made your escape,
—should have taken him with you.
American orphans at least go to school.

Did you look from the steam-stove or her wise eyes?
They must have asked the huge questions they now answer
But with less line in the brow and dark lashes where she did the dream.
I never stood behind you as you bent to scrub clothes
but we were all there.

Married sisters took pity on the girl with no childhood.
Patsy, the cracked doll on my dresser came after you.
Mother didn't crack it, the babies did, your numbers seven and eight.
One generation and they'd already forgotten the price of this gift.

They don't even remember you.
(They remember mother.) But mother does, and I.
I've listened to her memories.
A 40 year sentence and she speaks of you like she waves the flag;
A proud obligation.

How dare you die when she was a child?
Eighth grade. Education with the wisdom of 1000 piles of burning books.
You took the diplomas but not her mind.
That's mine now,
and will never be packed away in cedar with wedding gifts
or in pine like you.

—Kramer

10:00

00 is tea time.
y the windmill cookies and listen to mother
d the Baptist Bible College Station on the kitchen radio.
hree year absence and today I see my father from the same angle.
e doorway, the telephone still behind
big blue work shirt
ned "John."
p on his knee
maybe a niece or two now, where I used to sit.

her 29th year of marriage
tween sips, mother says:
ou can't bank on anything not changing."
o hands to steady my tea,
ave seen with a stranger's eyes.
ddy took the last cookie
d rose to pour more tea.

—Kramer

SUMMER JOB—LUNCH HOUR

Cool, the Brutha's corner sto'. I jus' goin asx fo' Petzi-cola.
No jive, I'm in.
I am so progressive in my lifestyle.
I mingle my flaxen tresses with afro-oil.

Did I lock my car?
What a cute baby. Look up, three Daddies.
All wide, six-foot and somber.
Smile at the baby and swish down aisle-one.

Exhale.—A blond female in a nailapron is unusual,
even in a good Dutch neighborhood.
Excuse, me. I had a black boyfriend once
but don't stand so close, you'll hear my heart pounding.

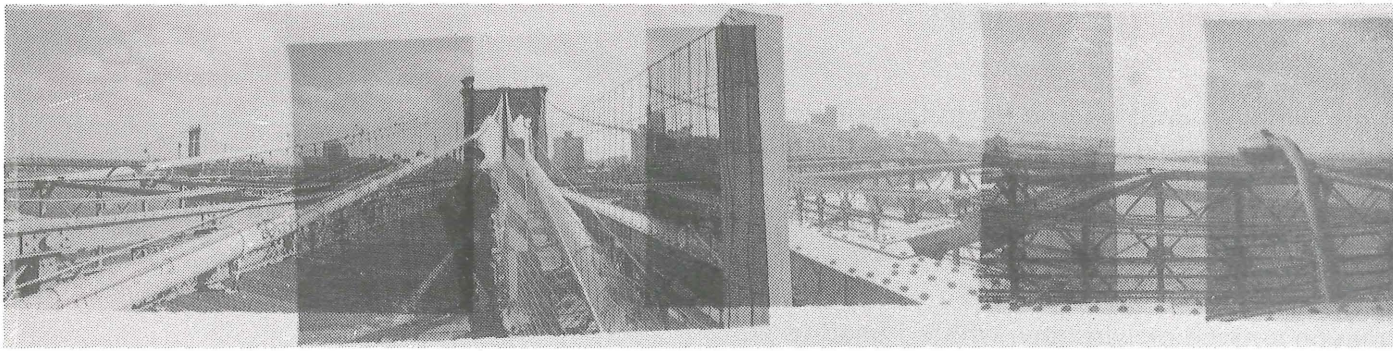
Aisle-three is whistling at me.
Smile, little blush, OK, I'm used to this.
But let's not start a riot over my beauty, boys.
Compose yourselves.

"Thanks," (Generous Tip: one coy smile)
"Do you have a can-opener I can use?" (I'll bet he'd love to get me in the
backseat of his '79 Cadillac.)
"Fzzst-pop-tink."

Brush my hair back and do a graceful Petzi-tip
(middle of my back and blond as the noon, carpenter's-sun)
Just for aisle-three. I hear:
"Hope you die when you drink it."
(Gulp-stuck in my throat)

Back down aisle-one. Don't smile.
Three of 'em. Wide, six-foot and laughing
Baby's laughing too.
Damn, I can't get my door unlocked.

—Kramer
Dialogue 17



Response and Responsibility

by Pamela VanHalsema,
accompanying photographs by
John Jeninga

It was not a pilgrimage to discover truth or the meaning of life. In such an environment of clashing beauty and ugliness, harmony and discord, in a city that never turns out its lights to go to sleep—where everyone is alone but no one is alone—such introspection, in my opinion, is impossible. But our experience in New York was extremely enlightening. We learned by seeing. So much surrounds you that is blatant, unwavering, and cynical, whether you are walking down bombed-out Avenue B or contemplating the third floor of the Whitney Museum, or packing into the R train uptown from Canal; everything is sensual. The images, the smells, the noises. The education in New York was in the experience of seeing and responding, and this was a fully appropriate context for an art class. After all, art is a form of communication, a response.

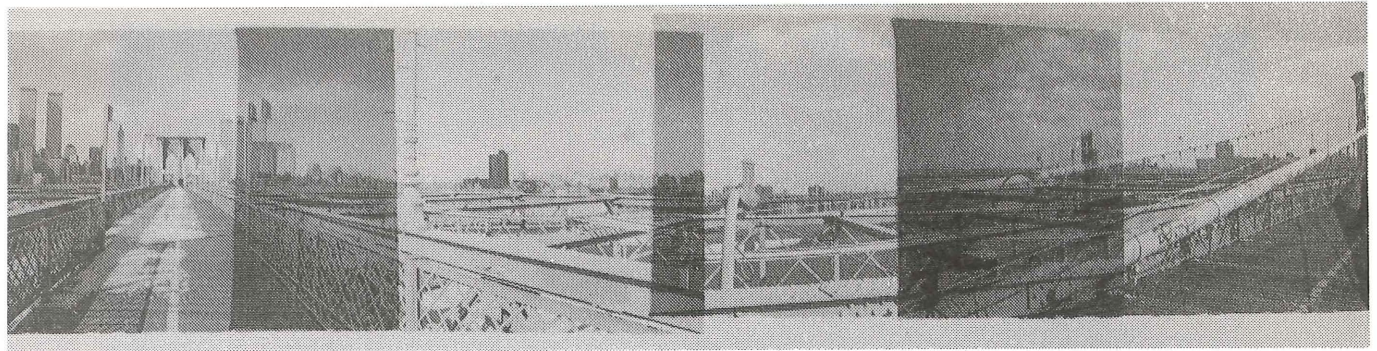
But is art a response? What is art? Can anyone define art in this pluralistic, post-modern age? Definitions set limits, and contemporary art seems to leap every boundary. Does the artist need to create an enduring form, an influential image, in order to succeed as a *fine artist*? Does anything matter?

An outsider goes to Soho, visits galleries, and is aghast to see that art=Big Business. An out-of-towner goes to the East Village and finds that his sacred image of The Fine Arts has been raped by dealers who claim to handle fine art but who actually only want to cash in on boutique-style trendiness that might win you a

ticket to Andy Warhol's next party (although Andy has now fallen from the Big Daddy Chair in New York—RIP). The sanctum sanctorium art-on-a-pedestal masterpieces are not found in these marketplaces, but are treasured at the MET or the MOMA. The artists represented in these institutions no longer have to struggle for recognition. They have been noticed and exist by their name, their image, their statement. But what does it take to be noticed, purchased and defined in this way?

After visiting hundreds of commercial galleries one begins to understand. These galleries—filled with the art of struggling unknowns, work by the creators on the cutting edge, and by those who have “made it” (including some who are “losing it”), present both bad and good, and by seeing both one learns what is worthy of being “noticed,” and why. Strong forms, images, and concepts stand out immediately before the weak. In the plastic arts, the strength of the message, be it a message of joy or pessimism, or a response to a controversial issue, is rooted in the visual. It is up to the viewer to discern what is happening visually, and this discernment sharpens with experience. Discernment and criticism are the viewer's responsibility. A lazy viewer will look but will not see. The active audience grows from seeing both the bad and the brilliant, because it trains his or her eye to respond artistically.

One might become mechanical, cold and bitter about art, or lose faith in its expressive



er by reading this viewpoint. I am not
ying the spiritual power of some art which
oles it to engulf the audience in the sensual,
end one into another world of color, texture
feeling. We all were enthralled by the spec-
ular, wet, pure impasto in the Vincent
Gogh show at the Metropolitan Museum in
York, and that experience was entirely in-
tial aesthetically and spirtually for all of us.
re is a time for allowing art to move you,
lf you, direct you, but if you do not proceed

with caution, art, especially in the volatile at-
mosphere of New York's art market, will
swallow you alive. Responsible creating goes
hand in hand with responsible viewing, and
after viewing both the historic and the con-
temporary, inspirations overflow to respond
critically and create responsibly.

*Pamela VanHalsema and John Jennings
were students at the Interim class "Artists
Living and Working in New York City," taught
by Professor George Loio.*







—John Jeninga
Dialogue 21

The Final

J. M. Ruiter

Every day at precisely seven-thirty, Harold J. Marcus would walk into the 'Dunk n' Dine' coffee shop for breakfast. He would come in the shop, and if it were a cold day, he would pause to remove the hat from his grayed mantle of hair and hang up his thick, battered tan wool great-coat.

The coat was an interesting one, for it was of the strangest design. There was nothing precisely you could find wrong with it, it just looked. . . foreign. Even now you could see where there had been some patches on the sleeves, perhaps military insignia torn off and forgotten long ago.

No, not forgotten, I'll never forget what that man did.

He arthritically walked to the counter and ordered his cup of decaffeinated coffee and his breakfast. Most days he would have the number seven, a plate with two fried eggs, toast, a strip or two of bacon (he would ask if he could have sausage instead) and a small glass of orange juice.

He always sat in the first booth, looking out the window, watching the people go by, as if he were waiting for someone. Recently, he had started bringing a newspaper to read while he waited. *No sense wasting time. . .*

Today he unfolded his newspaper and took a small notebook out of his shirt pocket. He put the newspaper flat on the table and began to read, occasionally jotting something down in the notebook.

If there happened to be a new waitress, the more experienced waitresses would whisper things about him once he sat down, but he didn't mind; he had heard a lot of things said about his life and, for the most part, they didn't bother him anymore. Today, when he returned to hand up his coat, he distinctly heard one of the

waitresses say "Look, there he is." It was very hard for him, looking like he did and having better hearing than they could ever imagine.

Every day he silently wished for his physical condition to catch up with his outward appearance.

The waitresses knew, on days he had his newspaper, not to give his order to the cook right away, for if they did, and his breakfast was done before he was finished with the paper, the plate would sit opposite him and cool until he was ready to eat.

One of the waitresses, it was Jean today, would walk by him occasionally, to see how close to finishing he was. When he was on the last page, Jean brought his breakfast to him. She asked him loudly, "How ya doin' Harry?"

He looked up, smiled broadly, folded the newspaper compactly, nodded, and watched, faking his deafness the whole time as she placed his plate of breakfast in front of him.

She went back to her gossip and he started eating. He expertly lanced the first fried egg and the thick warm yellow liquid oozed out, covering the white. He tore a corner off of the piece of toast and dunked it in the yolk, held it up and paused, looking out the window for a moment.

He saw a blue Plymouth sedan with *blackwall* tires and plain chrome hubcaps drive up and pull into the alley next to the laundromat across the street. A quiet "oh no" escaped from his lips. He knew there were probably two more cars of the same type, one further up the street and one further down.

The piece of toast fell onto the bulge in the egg and another gout of yellow liquid was discharged from the egg and oozed out. The piece of toast stayed there, forgotten, as one of the two silhouettes from the car disengaged itself

and came out of the alley, into the light. The late-
ortiesh-looking man was wearing a light brown
renchcoat that flapped open as he ran across
he street, revealing a dark blue business suit,
slightly bulging at the waist. Dark sunglasses
covered his eyes.

Harry just sat there, watching the man cross
he street and enter the coffee shop.

The man stood next to Harry's booth and
waited for him to look up. Finally he did, and the
younger man pointed to the seat opposite
Harry and put a questioning look on his face.
You mind if I sit down?

Harry gestured, *Go right ahead.*

The government agent took off his
sunglasses. "You're not an easy man to find. . .
Marc."

Harry looked up at the mention of that name,
hat name that brought back too many
memories. *No one's called me that since. . .
since Amy.* He felt a wave of sadness rising in
him, but quickly turned it into anger.

The agent saw that there was something dif-
erent about the man now, his face was more
ard and unrelenting than he thought anyone
ould look.

Harry clenched his left hand and pointed
irectly to the agent's nose. "Don't ever call me
hat again."

The agent held up both hands defensively,
Hey, whatever you say."

Harry calmed visibly. He went back to his
reakfast, gingerly picking up the fragment of
oast from the sea of yellow. "Why are you
ere?"

"Your file."

Harry was puzzled, "What?"

"The hosital where you first showed up was
learing out some files and they found yours.
One of the nurses remembered you. She
remembered that you were somewhat *dif-*
erent."

Harry's eyes were glazed. "That was. . .al-
nost forty years ago."

"Yes, it was."

"So, why are you here?"

"We found the story, Harry." He looked up
rom his breakfast. "Do you know what hap-
ened to Amy?"

The knife and fork bounced noisily off of the
plate and onto the table. There was a long
moment of silence as Harry dug through the
protective layers of other memories, trying to
reach the very back of his mind, that cold, dark,
cobwebbed place.

He walked down a long vaulted hallway—a
sixty-year-long hallway—with bland filing

cabinets all along the walls. Occasionally an
image would pop out of a drawer and insist to be
remembered, but Marc kept walking, not
letting them affect him. At the end of the hall, he
found himself in front of a door he knew he
didn't want to open. He said, quietly, "I don't
have the key."

It was a simple statement, one that had a
meaning, but the government agent was
puzzled. "What?"

"I can't tell you."

A small crack formed, right in the middle of
the heavy oaken door.

"Come on Harry, it was forty years ago. It
doesn't *mean* anything anymore."

The crack expanded itself, covering half of
the door. Marc picked up a sledgehammer and
began beating on the door. Savagely caroming
off the oaken surface, the hammer made a few
more cracks, but Marc tired before it did any
good. He slumped to the floor, too tired. . .too
tired.

Dead tired.

"Harry?"

He snapped out of it. His head fell, but was
supported by his hands, "I'm so tired." He
rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands.
"Just leave me alone. Just go away." The tears
coursed down the furrows beneath his eyes and
into his hands. "Can't you see? I'm waiting for
her, she'll be here any minute. She would never
lie to me. Just go away. . . Just go. . .away. . .
Just. . .go."

"Harry. . ." the agent pulled out a picture of a
dead body, horribly mangled. "Is this her?" He
held the picture up for him to take it.

Harry pushed the picture away. "Why are
you doing this?"

"Harry, this is very important. We think
you're the last one—the Finalist Harry. The
Finalist."

There was a long moment of silence as the
door cracked even more.

"Harry, we think we can get you home."

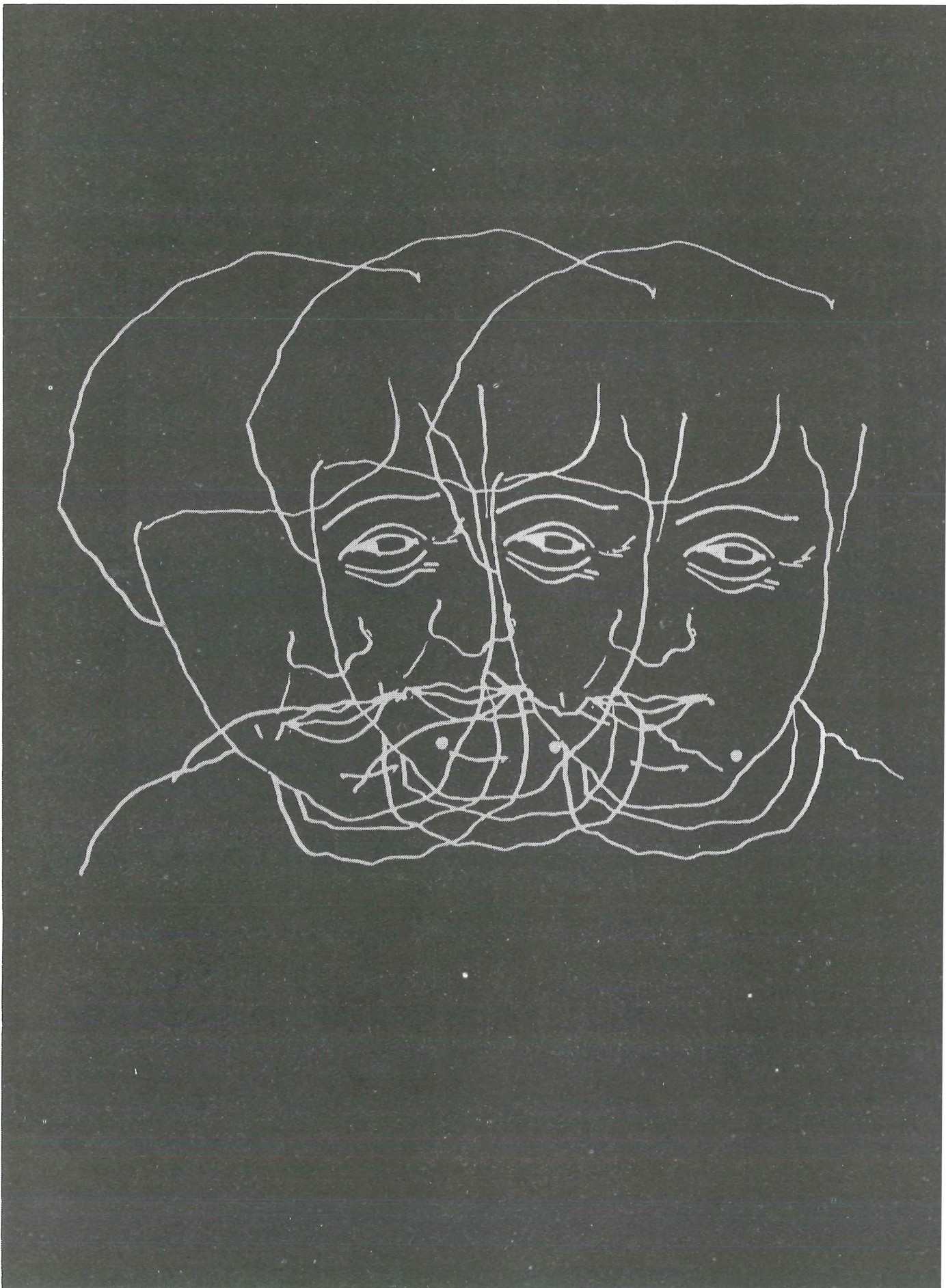
Marc got up off the floor and stood directly in
front of the door. "You really don't understand,
do you?" He finally grasped the doorknob and
twisted it.

"Yes, Harry, I think I do."

"No you don't."

The lock clicked and the battered door,
unused for so long, creaked open. Marc walked
in. In the cloud-filled distance he saw her. She
held her arms out, beckoning him. He turned
and shut the door.

The agent suddenly found that he was sitting
alone.



Words & Works

Mike Rubingh

Ironically, the best of my four poems here is also the most derivative. I borrowed the structure of “the friendly (the frigid)” directly from e.e. cumming’s poem “the greedy the people.” This illustrates my most useful principle of writing: the poetry of others is often the best inspiration a poet can find. Indeed, it almost seems a deterministic cause-effect reaction sometimes. Reading a poem in class or at Writers’ Guild, I occasionally get the urge to write my own poem rather than talk about the poem before me. I am surprised that this impulse rarely hits others. At least 80 percent of the students in some of my classes are English majors, and I regularly daydream “I wonder what they’re thinking? I wonder if they write anything besides class papers? Where does all the writing go?” A friend and I joke that FAC is an acronym for Forswear All Creativity or something worse. We get vehement. Art should be active—a way to struggle with the problems in the world and problems of our own—not passive, not a pacifier, a drug used to escape from reality. Reading poems ought to lead to the writing of poems, however bad; if not, the reader passively imbibes a poem, a pleasure a few steps above getting drunk on weekends. Reading poetry, and I must admit, occasionally dissecting it, cutting it apart mercilessly to get at the tricks of the poet’s trade, is necessary to write good poetry. Traditional forms and subjects are the best tools a poet has; though it appears blunt and rusty, tradition carves and polishes the rough diamond of individual talent.

“The friendly (the frigid)” is a poem anyone can understand; any complexities it may have are syntactic and not semantic. I wrote it for two friends after talking to them about problems they saw at Calvin. I wanted to catch the feelings we agreed upon. It’s a poem close to home, and I think it hits home; several people have complimented it already. Perhaps it hits too close to home.

Student writing tends toward two extremes: either abstract, intellectual, and pseudo-artistic writing or emotional, polemical, and messy opinion writing. *Chimes* stirs up campus weekly with the latter, while *Dialogue* is more often criticized for the former. This polarity any writer feels, and it leads him or her to frustration. Many have criticized *Dialogue* over the

the friendly (the frigid)
as warm (as cold) seems
they smile and they chat
and they memorize names
though the sun to the rigid
says melt.

the weary, the wary
(as busy can be)
they work and they breathe
and they live for a me
though the cold cemetery
says give.

the painless, the perfect
[as sheltered as this]
they chase and they flirt
and they strive to impress
though the one who they worship
says hurt.

the solid, the stolid
(as doGma holds God)
they quibble and fight
and spill their own blood
though it soaked in the bread
says unite.

the nevers, the narrow
(as straight is the path)
they stamp and they nay
in venting their wrath
though the way that was sorrow
says (en)joy!

—m. j. rubingh

years for its “intellectual” poetry. “What does it mean?” they insistently question as if a poet could rattle off a dictionary definition for them. I myself have been called by girls who interrogated me over the phone in a Gestapo-like fashion: “What does this poem mean? Isn’t this word. . .rape. . .kind of vulgar? Please tell us [or else]!” After quoting Macleish’s “a poem should not mean, but be” and pleading ignorance under a temporary case of Plato’s divine madness, I had to write them a page of explanation using the Bible and Donne’s famous Holy Sonnet ending “Nor chaste, unless thou ravishest me” in defense of my Christian intention! These four poems are easier to understand than older poems of mine, and I hope they will be given fair treatment in light of that. It is too easy to go from criticizing a writer for being incomprehensible and irrelevant to criticizing him for being too relevant, for muckraking and disturbing a stable community. Such a no-win situation cripples artists and may lie behind the lack of writers I complained about earlier.

“Jonathan Livingston (Fishhawk)” is an enjoyment poem: one I enjoyed writing and hope others enjoy reading. Art can be playful, poetry can be play—even when the subject matter is serious. Richard Bach’s book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* is philosophically Ayn-Randian-Buddhist trash, and I wanted to improve on it by being realistic, aware of sin in creation. Although e.e. cummings is hardly my favorite poet, the form is cummingsesque. His poetry fits into a category I designate “possibility” poetry: poetry that by its shortness or every wretchedness makes me think “I could do that!” which gives me reason to prove myself. Although they may seem idealists from the outside, poets in their own realm are pragmatists at heart, using and abusing other’s poetry for fun and profit. T.S. Eliot said good poets “steal,”; I’d claim even stealing from someone you don’t particularly care for is profitable, speaking metaphorically, of course.

“Sigmund Freud’s Secret” was first written as a joke. It started out as a single word, a word that I first planned to make into a Freudian slip but then left alone. Psychoanalytic critics, enjoy yourselves. The difficult part of writing this poem was deciding on the title. The speaker was originally a woman, and I called the poem “Feminist Lecturer” until someone at Writers’ Guild pointed out that the speech was not one a normal feminist would give. I knew that, of course, but just didn’t see it! An essential part of polishing a poem—the final stage before rewriting—is getting others to read and comment on the poem, particularly

about parts they disliked or didn’t understand. In reading my own work—whether poem or essay—I will pass over flaws without a second thought; coming from my own mind, it reads naturally to me. Rarely does a first-draft click for other readers the first time, however.

“Four Years Old” still bothers me. It may be too short. The deliberately ambiguous ending makes the reader ask the difficult question “is one’s Christianity at heart a personal relationship with God, or is it void at the center equated with Christmas presents coming from parents and college only pretending to be Christ?” Last year in a similar “Words & Works” I said Christians too often are guilty of writing “pietry” instead of poetry—“stock formulas of piety and cheap grace.” This year, the more astute reader may have noticed that three of my four present poems concern Christianity in some sense. In an earlier issue of *Dialogue* the editor printed “Acer Maria” and “Bride,” two religious poems of mine focusing on the sacrament of communion. Obviously, I’ve changed my position on Christian poetry since last year. I still consider the production of “good poetry” a priority before explicitly Christian poetry; a Christian who produces good art produces Christian art. Even behind good “heathen” poems is a spiritual impulse. Yet, often the great cultural and symbolic heritage of Christianity provides the Christian with his best subject matter and his best poems. From Herbert to Hopkins, there seem to exist an inexhaustible well of Christian symbols available to poets who probe the collective unconscious. Unfortunately, with the arrival of the twentieth century, mankind consigned Christianity to backwardness and irrationality; it became stale and trite—a wasteland, not a well—even in a majority of Christians’ experience. Christians today need to create new myths in the manner of the great mythmakers of that time: Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, William Butler Yeats. Christian poets today must cloak their faith in myth for effectiveness. The New Testament command to be “humble” applies to poetry as well. Christian poetry has more powerful results when it comes, like the angels to Abraham disguised.

SIGMUND FREUD'S SECRET

Nothing his suitcoat he began
on the most advanced apes fight
for territory and a mate.
His observation applies to man

well. To name historical examples, the joust
a competition where knights made ready
to defend with lance the honor of their lady,
object of their exalted lust.

More sophisticated times, the gun,
previously in the sport of the duel
was used. The winner proved how cool
he held his finger on the trigger, despite his passion.

rumbling cities as a general rule
of the groups of rebels known as gangs
and the knife-wars in which the violence begins
in many cases because of a girl.

Even in the blasted aftermath
of WWII; missiles stand erect
and sheathed; certainly we must respect
this conclusion: men contend for mother earth.

Considering the aforementioned data in all honesty,
we must be prepared to boldly advance
the theory of male dominance
based on one enormous fallacy.

—Mike Rubingh

I WENT HOME. . .

I went home to walk barefoot
in my father's field.
It was steamy and everything was living and
moving and touching me.

I picked a daisy and a weed.
Chewed on the weed stem, sweet stem
and the daisy became rubbery and limp as I walked.

I stepped in the mud and it didn't squish
between my toes.
It just jiggled.

It was hot and
light and vibrant.
A good place to quit breathing.
Let some life inside me.

JONATHAN LIVINGSTON

(Fishhawk) dared the disposition
of his fellows
oppose
peace!

he'd squak, while flying high
in wide (Y-inscribed)
circles.

Then hawk-talk
grew murderous;
"He's subverting us!" they screamed.

. . . Jonathan dreamed
of a community—free
from hatred. . .

as they sped
down on him,
surrounded,
and taloned him to a tree.

—Mike Rubingh

FOUR YEARS OLD

Sneaking downstairs Christmas Eve to watch the snow
and catch a peek of Santa Claus, I saw,
while hiding behind the bannister, dad and mom
carrying presents in their arms,
which they carefully wrapped and placed under the tree.
(That fir tree had needles that pricked me
because we hung ornaments on it too).

I never doubt Santa's faithfulness
anymore; I go to a Christian college now,
and every December I come home for Christmas.

—Mike Rubingh



—Marlene Schaly

Verity

"And he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they
may offer unto their King an offering in righteousness."

Excalibur sharpens with truth;
Whetted, pierces clean the well-done core,
(Said to be the seat of passion)
Leaving dripping trail of blood, pure:
Sanguine gash, slashed
Parallel edges may heal, thinly scarring.

Blue-red shaft will cauterize.
Salt rubbed deep will cleanse.
Alcohol will burn impurities.
Sensitivity burned shall be not lost, but
Refined.

Straight-edged gash - not jagged, torn by kind.
Hands bringing healing smiles and honest eyes that lie-
Will heal in fire, raised high to light eternal.

Scintillating, beams pierce murkiness
and
Tears of joy wet faces that behold.

Rose A. Cunningham

The Alma Schindler- Mahler-Gropius-Werfel Memoirs

I was a fearful child. I liked to throw small dachshunds into the bratwurst barrel to see if the cook noticed. I'd read Schopenhauer by four, I'd read Nietzsche by candlelight under my pillow (in a quite Faustian state of mind) by five. Mother lamented my burning ambition which consumed all her pillowcases. I at the time thought I was ugly; Schopenhauer told me all women were ugly. Nietzsche, for that matter, told me women were a riddle to which only one answer existed: pregnancy. I was disillusioned early. But for some reason artists kept falling head over heels in love with me. I was a riddle they could get no answer from.

My earliest recollection is myself a late infant of 2 years old. Franz Liszt saw me in my crib and couldn't resist; he began playing *Hungarian Rhapsodies* on my back. After that incident we were never very intimate except one night a year or two later when I gave him his famous haircut, and he in turn played his *Piano Concerto No. 1* on my left earlobe. A fifty year age difference kept us apart, however; he felt like he'd be robbing the cradle, so to speak, even though I was actually walking by that time. Poor Franz! His age did not stop young girls from chasing him. They spotted him by his tell-tale hair, often trying to pull it out by the handful as souvenirs. Considering this, I suspect that in later life he was regularly sticking horsehair from various string instrument bows to his head with sealing wax. Often after a particularly strenuous performance in which his excessive conducting motions had lost him a few more hairs, he would in what was considered a great honor, accept a bow from one of the violinists. Yes, horses hated him; girls loved him. I remember going to the phone book unsuccessfully once: Franz was, of course, unlisted. One day when he was again complaining about his female retinue, I got fed up and told him "get a crew cut and go to Bermuda and you could retire in peace."

When I first saw Mahler he was lashing a

soprano with some artificial shrubbery being used in the production of Weber's *Freischütz* he was directing. Angry at Mahler's dynamics which were drowning her out, she had begun to spit in the orchestra pit, calling Mahler a tyrannical enchilada—which perplexed most of the cast, who were, at their worst, used to being pelted with sauerkraut and warm beer.

A few minutes later, he was an entirely different person, subdued, nervous. This typically Austrian schizophrenic dichotomy captivated me; I asked him to dinner immediately.

"I'm filled with Angst" he said, to which I replied, "In that case perhaps tomorrow would be all right?"

We had dinner on the morrow, and Gustav kept up a delightful conversation about the virtues of castrati, which I thought was something on the menu, and after dessert he told lots of dead baby and Jewish jokes.

A few minutes later he was an entirely different person.

Solemnly he admitted, "I'm a wandering Jew, myself."

Thrilled by this revelation, I poured my water on his prominent forehead and carried him bodily out into the sunlight, where his spirits were much revived.

He fell in love with me, naturally, and despite his bad habit of cleaning the wax out of his ears with his baton between symphonic movements, I consented to marriage.

Married life between a Nietzsche-Spencerian and a Jew was not easy. Fortunately, we both enjoyed the same pastimes: little 30 mile jaunts through the mountains, skinny-dipping in Alpine lakes, French-kissing to the muted call of the tawny whippoorwill in twilight beneath the Oberammergau, Hobbits. Gustav, however, was increasingly caught up in his work; he even has a little Hauschen that I was not allowed to visit where he put his endless stream of little notes down on paper. Freud stopped in for tea one day and confided "Mahler's long symphonies are probably compensations for an inferiority complex." I feared he was turning manic-depressive. Spying a vocal fragment from his current work I saw the phrase "Dunkel is das Leben, ist der Tod" (Dark is life, is death), I made him get his glasses checked. I also urged him to join a men's group or lead a boy's club or even take up racquetball, but he persisted in being anti-social.

Finally, I took up with Sigmund Freud.

While and likely because I knew him, Freud was inspired to his concept of the mother-fixation. He used to sit on my lap and tell me all his neuroses. In the end, I would have to be firm with him, or he'd go on for hours. "Siggie, go get me a ciggie."

Freud would jump up and carry out my every beck and call. One day I carelessly threw a banana peel on the floor, and when he jumped up to fetch me an eskimo pie, he stepped on the banana peel, committing the first official Freudian slip.

Freud was nervous, unlike his modern protege; he was the one who deserved to be on the couch. All Vienna, in fact, was nervous, dreadfully nervous. May I recommend to you Frederic Morton's *A Nervous Splendor*, —a fine book with one glaring fault: it talks about all the men I knew, but doesn't even mention me, the power behind all their glory! Sigmund, Siegmund, Sigfried, eat your hearts out; we know who controls the world behind the curtain.

One night I had a dream which Freud interpreted for me. In the dream I was walking along the Ringstrasse one warm summer night when all of a sudden I came upon two stray dogs—a bulldog and a collie—sharing a large bone. When the dogs saw me they began barking and fighting over the bone. Then Gutav, my Gustav, came over and dragged one of the dogs—the bulldog—away to a veterinarian who put the animal under music therapy. The other dog dragged most of the bone away, barking triumphantly.

Sigmund made a dome by touching the fingertips of his two hands together and answered "that's easy. Dreams are wish fulfillment. You wish to meet artists and gain their undivided love and your dream tells in what way. Being strays, these dogs symbolize bachelors. Barking is a musical archetype. The bulldog is clearly Anton Bruckner. The collie is Johannes Brahms, fur: beard. The bone is Beethoven. They are sharing Beethoven until you arrive when they begin to fight to outdo each other and to impress you. Mahler takes bulldog-Bruckner to the vet, Wagner, who soothes him with idyllic music. And Brahms gets the bone of Neo-Classicism."

"Why Sigmund, how brilliant, thank you!" I answered in gratitude before I began seeing Bruckner and Brahms simultaneously. Freud was angry with me, but he got it out by printing calumny about a former acquaintance named Oedipus, Fritz Oedipus.

Not that it was easy insinuating myself into the unnaturally organized lives of these two bachelors. Bruckner had two recreations: counting statues in the Vienna Woods and counting steeples on Vienna churches. A typical conversation went like this.

Bruckner: One, Two, Three. . .

Alma: That's not a statue, it's a chipmunk on its hind legs!

B: But that's a perfect replica of his greatness Emperor Maximillian XXVII of Mexico!

A: No, it's a chipmunk. Watch. (and I'd throw a nut other than this 300 lb. one beside me) See? He moved.

B: Ave Maria!

A: What?

B: The statue, it moved!

(I had enough trouble prying him away from his miraculous event. We went on to a spot in the park where Brahms was standing next to a statue of Brahms, evidently thinking he was enough disguised to jealously spy on me)

B: Two statues of Brahms!

A: No, one of them is the real Brahms, dummy. Brahms live. Watch. (I picked up one of those semi-life-size chessmen that Europeans actually play with in public parks and plunked Brahms on his broad forehead.)

Brahms. Gott in Himmell!

A: See!

Bruckner: That statue. . . it spoke! Te Deum!

Brahms: Bruckner, you underweight Brunnhilde impersonating miserable excuse for a symphonist, I saw you throw that bishop!

Bruckner: Johannes, pal, is it really you?

Brahms: No, I'm Dorothy and this is Toto (and he took out of his trench coat the skull of Beethoven—unmistakable to Bruckner).

Bruckner: Ludwig!

(And with that Bruckner rushed at Brahms trying to get the skull. They fought like cats and dogs, rolling on the ground like little boys. "This, then, is the conflict." A couple of bluejays flew out of Brahms' beard when his opponent got a firm grasp. "Is this the resolution?" No, Brahms hit Bruckner a crescendo of blows to his third chin for a finale. And they both finally went off amicably to have a guzzling contest at a nearby biergarten for a coda.

Yes, I've saved the best for last, the conclusion, the climax, the grand finale, the Liebestod. Before one man only in my life was I totally humble, speechless, and that was Richard Wagner. We were vacationing near the Venusberg, and Richard was researching Tannhauser, perhaps hoping for a glimpse of the goddess herself, when we first met. I can't say he was disappointed. Wagner was a vegetarian at this time; he subsisted on nuts and berries and an occasional snail that he hid under his tongue and swallowed when no one was looking. Wagner had an impressive vocabulary of erudite terms which he used liberally or conservatively depending on his political tendency of the moment: Gesamtkunstwerk, Gotterdammerung, Operleitmotiven, Weltanschauung, supralapsarianism, eschatological, Dooyeweerdian, Teutonic-aryan supremacy, etc. Wagner had a scraggly beard that reminded me of a Pomeranian. I kidded him once about how unfavorably his beard compared to Brahms', and he erupted. "This is what I think of Brahms," throwing a large stuffed owl that had been sitting on the mantel into a line of peanut-butter sandwiches he was using to wallpaper the room. One day when he was in the middle of Der Ring—Ringmaster, so to speak—he asked me whether I thought he had given Siegfried too much power compared to the other characters. I noted his magic protection, horn, sword, helm of giant strength and answered "Yes, Siegfried is overloaded. Perhaps you should give Wotan torpedoes." I advised him about the Ring cycle in other ways, but he didn't take my advice. "Das Rheingold," I said, "sounds too much like a yuppie beer to drink after skiing some oversized hill in Michigan." I suggested that song of the Rhine maidens might be incorporated into the perfect TV beer commercial: "show a few mermaids skiing down the Jungfrau crooning:

Walla-la leia Walla-la-leia
Walla-la Walrus Walla-la Walrus
Rheingold! Rheingold!
It doesn't get any better than this.

I thought "Die Gotterdammerung" would sound like two dozen frogs hopping and popping in a microwave oven to Americans. But eventually the entire cycle was performed in Vienna, and those of us who could afford to lose an entire week from our lives were indescribably moved when in the final scene the majestic home of the gods, Velveeta, was seen burning in the distance.

Some have unjustly criticized us Germans as being preoccupied with death and love. This is a misconception, no doubt communist inspired. Russian novelists—inferior slavs, slobs that they are—are stuck on love *and* death. Germans are into purity of love-death, the union, with no "and" to water it down. Tristan & Isolde, Crown Prince Rudolph & Mary Vetsera, Werther & Lotte. Liebestod—what worlds are contained within that word. And as we travel along this crimson-rimmed planet we realize with the greatest of musicians and artists that life is an emotion hard-pressed to find its own wellsprings, a laugh and a tear, the heaviest of sorrows and the most uninhibited humorless humor. To your bath, Alma.

On Doing What Comes Naturally

(Interim Chapel Series, Jan. 20, 1987)

Is. 44:1-5, 21-23

Rev. 4:1-11

The vision St. John describes in Revelation 4 conforms to a pattern found time and again throughout the Bible. It is the familiar pattern of revelation and response: God manifests himself to his creatures, and they fall down before him in praise and adoration.

That, basically, is what worship is all about. "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name," Psalm 29 exhorts us; "worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." Worship is the first fruit of an encounter with the God who speaks in Isaiah 44: the God who created all things, who chooses his servants from among the peoples, who sustains the universe and sweeps away the offenses of his chosen ones—the same God who in the fullness of time became flesh and dwelt redemptively among us, and who will come again in the fullness of time to make all things new. Surely the fitting and proper response to such a God is to bless him for who he is, to give thanks for what he has done. As the Methodist theologian Don E. Saliers writes, in a recent book on worship and spirituality: "If someone gives another person a totally unexpected gift—fitted well to that person's delight and life—the primordial response is an unconditioned gesture of gratitude." Such gratitude and thanksgiving—such "eucharist," to use a good liturgical term—is not only a natural response to who God is; it is also an essential expression of who we are. Saliers goes on to say: "A life devoid of gratitude becomes incapable of receiving gifts and eventually of giving gifts." Because everything we are and have is ultimately a gift from God, to stifle the impulse of gratitude is to stifle our very humanity itself.

Alexander Schmemmann, the great Eastern Orthodox theologian of worship, puts it this way: "[T]he unique position of man in the universe is that he alone is to *bless* God for the food and the life he receives from Him. So the only *natural* . . . reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world, is to bless God in return, to thank Him, to see the world as God sees it. . . ."

For Christians, then, worship should be quite literally the most natural thing in the world. Yet there is a sense in which talking about worship represents something of a contradiction in terms—as if talking about food, for example, constituted a meal. Worship is not primarily an intellectual or emotional experience; it is more than just the sense of awe and gratitude from which it naturally springs. Worship is first of all *doing* what comes naturally. The discipline of worship demands an "ordered way of acting and living," to use Richard Foster's words, that enables us to "experience reality, to touch life. . . to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community."

The obvious question, of course, is what such an "ordered way of acting" might involve. At least a partial answer can be found, I think, in the several injunctions that climax the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 44. Verse 22, for example, sounds a familiar prophetic appeal, the call to *repent*: "Return to me," says God, "for I have redeemed you." Verse 23 follows with a cosmic call to *rejoice*: "Sing for joy, O heavens," "shout aloud, O earth beneath," "burst into song, you mountains." Both praise and penitence, it seems to me, are natural and essential acts of worship. Both need to be cultivated as fitting responses to the One who has made us and called us to be his own.

But there is another call to be found here as well, and it is one I believe deserves closer attention. This is the call to *remember*. In verse 21 God declares, "Remember these things, O Jacob," and he promises, "O Israel, I will not forget you." Remembrance, I would suggest lies at the very heart of biblical notions about worship. Not only does it appear frequently throughout the Bible (and nowhere more frequently than in the Psalms, the indispensable prayer book of the worshiping community), but it also connotes a great deal more than what we usually understand by the term. When the Bible enjoins us to remember, this does not imply primarily an exercise in mental recall—of the sort, for example, that one might attempt in desperation on the eve of a too-long-ignored blue-book. Remember in the biblical sense involves making what is remembered present and effectual. Hence it is always a consequential act: to remember something is to identify covenantally with it. When we remember the mighty acts of God, we are not simply celebrating them as historical events; we are also claiming their redemptive benefits for

ourselves, both now and in the future. So to remember is not only to recall but also to anticipate. We remember Christ's death "until he comes." The cross and the empty tomb are not just accomplished facts; they are a living reality and a future hope as well.

Now this sort of remembering is clearly no passive affair. In the Bible, remembrance is constantly being *enacted*. There are altars being built, feasts being celebrated, the mighty acts of God being rehearsed in the midst of people. Israel's deliverance from slavery is solemnly re-enacted around the lamb and bitter herbs of the Passover table; so too Christ's victory over death around the broken bread and shared cup of the communion table.

It is this sense of enacted remembrance that should speak plainly to us in our reading of Scripture. And if it does, then I think we will want to insist on the value of worship done for its own sake, not just for what may result from it by way of instruction in doctrine, or challenge to personal commitment, or guidance in living the Christian life. Moreover, once we come to see worship as a form of enactment, a drama in which we are not the audience but the players, then it seems to me that the stage directions will take on new importance. *How* we play our parts will not be a matter of indifference. We will be bound to recognize that worship "in spirit and in truth" is anything but disembodied, that in fact it requires the engagement of all our faculties, the physical and aesthetic no less than the intellectual and emotional. So we will want to pay careful attention to the way we use our bodies in worship. As heirs of the Incarnation, we will want to ask what postures and gestures are most appropriate to what is being enacted. Nor are we likely to remain indifferent to questions of proper stage setting. We might very well find ourselves analyzing our places of worship to discover what they have to tell us, for better or worse, about our sense of what should go on when we gather before the Lord.

Having come this far, we will undoubtedly find that we have grown more sensitive to the role of symbols and other "hidden languages" of worship as vehicles for perceiving and communicating God's active presence among us. We may come to realize that even the hours and seasons of our lives can help us celebrate the great redemptive acts that define us. And so, for example, we may be drawn to a fuller observance of the church year, whose annual cycle of celebrations, from Advent and Epiphany to Lent and Easter and Pentecost, testifies to the continuing reality of our Lord's incarnation and ministry on earth, his suffering for our sin, his triumph over the grave, and his reign in glory in the life of his church. We may very well also be drawn to a more active sacramental life, in which physical elements mediate to us our participation in the spiritual, so that as we enjoy the simple things of this good earth—bread and wine, let us say—we are enabled to see that, as Schmemmann puts it, "all that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God."

This image of communion suggests one last brief reflection, namely that worship is an action not of isolated individuals but of the church as a whole. It is worth noting that Richard Foster includes worship among the "corporate disciplines"—and I think quite properly so. Of course worship need not be limited to "worship services"; nor, for that matter, is worship the only thing that should happen when Christians gather. Still, the thankful celebration of God's mighty acts stands as a truly essential activity of the gathered church, just as evangelism and the struggle for shalom are essential activities of the church dispersed. That in fact is the vital rhythm of our Christian experience: gathering to celebrate the Kingdom, going out to work for its realization in the world.

To gather in corporate worship is to share in that mysterious process by which, like the dry bones of Ezekiel's valley, we are knit together and infused with the Spirit's breath to become the living body of Christ in our world and in our time. It is through corporate enactment that we respond most fully to the redemptive acts that define us. And it is among the gathered people of God that we should begin to see most vividly the signs of the Kingdom that will some day come in all its fullness.

We do not need to make apologies for doing what comes naturally. As members of Christ's body, let us take our places in the great circle of the worship dance, a dance that joins us not only with those in this place and around the world but also with the countless saints who have gone before us and all those yet to come—and with them the angels and all the hosts of heaven, all of us joining in an unending chorus of thanksgiving as we make our way to the great banquet of the Lamb, where all will be well and we will know even as we are known.

—David Diephouse



how am i doing?

fine

i lied
i feel
i am
tired
i hate
hurting

i guess
what hurts the most
is that
you
don't
seem
to
give a