ESSENCE
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THE LAST CHRISTMAS

The large cardboard carton marked “Christmas Ornaments” in black grease pencil was conspicuously out of place in the middle of the living room floor. So were the strings of multi-colored lights strewn on the floor around the box. Their festive colors belonged to the room only during the past few weeks, and they were now destined for the insensitive interior of the corrugated container.

The now bare blue spruce stood alone in the corner by the window, dropping its own green-brown carpet over the faded maroon rug. A few lonely strands of silver tinsel remained to remind it of its brief glory. Across the room, standing on a small red utility ladder, Drew was removing the staples from the last string of plastic holly around the archway. He could hear his mother in the next room talking on the phone.

It was the first Sunday of the new year, and Drew was annoyed because the job of putting Christmas away for another year had been left to him. He would much rather be reading his paper-back copy of Faust right now. Last week he had discovered Immanuel Kant in a little book he found in the attic called Kant For Everyman, and, while he didn’t understand such terms as a priori and categorical imperative, he was greatly impressed with the sweeping idealistic concepts of duty and good will. His English teacher, amazed at the seventeen-year-old’s interest in a writer that even college sophomores find hard to swallow, gave him a reading list which ranged from Goethe and Schiller, through Carlyle, to Emerson and Whitman.

“Hey, I thought you were going to help me with this,” he shouted to his mother in the other room. She had said that she’d help him, but he knew that she would be gossiping on the phone for at least another half hour. Yesterday he had told her that Alexander Graham Bell must be her patron saint. He was thinking that he had used too many staples—they left ugly, little round scars—when the doorbell rang.

“Drew, will you see who’s there?” piped the voice from the other room.

Now his annoyance increased, partly from being interrupted, but mostly because he couldn’t imagine who was at the door. “Probably some of those crazy old dames from the Gospel Tabernacle, or whatever the hell it is,” he thought as he carefully made his way through the maze of Christmas clutter on the floor. Opening the door, he expected to be confronted by a pair of prim old women in black, bearing patient-smug smiles and holding up copies of “Awake!” or by some surprise twice-a-year relatives. Instead, he saw a pathetic old man with eyes like a God-incarnate cocker spaniel. These old bums! They all developed that soulful stare of magnificent wisdom through experience that could dissect and analyse your soul in one piercing glance.

These old derelicts always made him nervous. It embarrassed him to stand and listen to their stories and then to create some excuse for not giving them something. What really annoyed him was that afterwards he always felt guilty and couldn’t understand why he had refused them. This one was wearing a wrinkled light-brown suit coat with baggy, mud-streaked grey trousers and a smile that covered his troubles ineffectively. Despite his light skin, Drew could see from his features that he was a negro. He expected him at any minute to break into a chorus of “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen.”

By this time the old man had begun his spiel, but Drew, thinking of what excuse he could offer for refusing him, was only half aware of what he was saying. “... if you could help a poor old man ... walked for five miles ... terribly cold ... anything! Anything at all!”

“We’re—ah—very busy,” Drew stammered uncertainly, not at all sure of what he was saying, but merely saying something because the bum had finished and was staring at him unexpectedly. “We’re taking down the Christmas decorations . . .”

“Oh, that sounds like hell,” he thought to himself. “I might as well just tell him that Christmas is over—he’s just a day too late—come back next year. Happy New Year.” He really wanted to ask the old man in; give him some coffee, maybe something to eat—but he knew that his mother would have a fit.

“Just a cup of coffee,” the old man continued, intensifying the pathos so that now his eyes were those of a suffering cocker spaniel, but still maintaining his dignity with his hands crossed over the crook of his cane in front of him.

“Drew, who’s there?” came the voice from inside the house.

“For Christ’s sake,” he thought bitterly. “What the hell am I supposed to do—holler in to you that it’s just some dirty old bum, and should I kick him down the front steps?” He ignored the voice.

“Drew!”

“What do you want, mother?” he yelled angrily.

“Who’s there?”

“It’s an old man, looking for something to eat.”

“Well, tell him to go away. I don’t want a lot of bums hanging around. You feed one, and they all come around looking for something.”

“Sure,” he thought, “you can say that from there. You don’t have to face him.” He was relieved, though, because the old man had heard her. Now he would know the position that Drew was in.

“I could get a cup of coffee and something to eat for a quarter,” the old man said warily. Then, suddenly, without waiting for Drew’s reaction, he dropped his dignity. He pleaded, “Mister, I’m
Drew reached his hand in his pocket, but his sweaty palm found only his key case. There was no change. He remembered now that he had put the last 35¢—a quarter and two nickels—in a special collection in church that morning—some kind of World-Wide Relief Fund.

"I—I haven't any change," he apologized. "I'm . . . sorry." He shifted his position in the doorway nervously, placing his thumb in his back pocket, his arm crooked awkwardly, his hand dangling from the edge of the pocket. His thumb rubbed his wallet. His last dollar. But his mother would know it because then he would have to ask for some money, and she'd give him royal hell. Besides, giving the old man a whole dollar would be a bit too extravagant.

"I'm sorry," he repeated weakly.

The dignity returned to the old man. The smile was on his face again. He looked like a minister saying the benediction. "That's all right," he said forgivingly: "Sorry that I bothered you." Then he turned, and walked down the porch steps like a kindly old priest.

"Sorry that I bothered you!" The words stung. He forgave him!

"Just like Jesus Christ Himself," thought Drew indignantly. "He forgave me! Goddammit!"

Trembling with anger at his mother, the old man, and himself, Drew closed the door and began to throw the Christmas remnants haphazardly into the carton. He was particularly mad at himself because he had been weak enough to compromise his new-found philosophy already and to put himself in a position where he had to be forgiven by even that poor human creature. In the other room, his mother was still talking on the phone. She was talking to some old biddy about those old bums that come around and they won't do any work but they expect you to feed them and any money you give them they buy booze with anyway and they think the world owes them a living and anyway if you give something to one of them he tells all the others and soon you're pestered with all of them . . .

". . . just a minute, Ethel. Drew! Did you get rid of that bum?"

Everything was packed in the carton now, except for one shattered ornament which would never see another Christmas because he had stepped on it; he had just finished sealing the box with masking tape. "Yes, mother, I got rid of him," he said as he walked into the other room where she was talking. He took his coat from the back of the desk chair, and put it on.

"Did you ever happen to think that . . . " he began, then stopped, trying to control his rising wrath.

". . . just a minute, Ethel. Drew! Did you say something, Drew?"

"No . . . no, I didn't say a damn thing."

"What? What's the matter? Where are you going?"

"Out," he exploded. "Out to the garage. I just packed up Christmas in a big, stinking cardboard box, and I'm putting it away in the garage for another year. Only, it's going to rot out there 'cause next year there won't be a Christmas—or the next—or ever. And after that I'm going to take the tree out in the backyard for the junkman to haul away, and it'll be the last Christmas tree because all the old bums in the world are going to take a leak on all the Christmas trees and it'll kill them. All their needles will fall off. And next year we won't have Christmas to give us a break, and we'll have to live with ourselves all year 'round."

He left her with an incredulous look on her face, and went into the living room. "Why, I don't know what's gotten into him," explained his mother to her friend as he picked up the box marked "Christmas Ornaments" in black grease pencil. As he was going out the front door with the box, he heard, " . . . so long," from the other room, followed by the noise of the receiver being slammed down.

"Drew!" she called from the other room. But he kept going, and slammed the door behind him.

Outside, holding the big ugly carton in outstretched arms, he looked for the old man. The raw January wind scraped his skin, and the hot sweat now felt like a cold, wet sheet around him. The old man was gone.

They had had a white Christmas that year, and the ground was still covered with the defiled residue. "He won't be back," thought Drew as he trudged through the dirtier-than-usual

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OLYMPUS

We have lingered too long in the twilight
That stretches to meet the sea;
Still another world is beckoning.
Come, come away with me.

We will spring from the cold gloomy chasms
Of ice, to the precipice tip
Of the peak towering over the cloudbanks
From which the winter rains drip.

We will bask in the sparkling sunshine
That glitters and gleams on the snow,
Gaze down at the rolling cloudbanks,
And not think of the valleys below.

Robert Arner
TERROR

Eleven of a warm November night. Again
The lane is white with street-lights' stark
Stiff-petaled blossoms, wind sings
Over road, leaves spring
Over wet pavement, hair blows over
Opened mouths, moistened word-worn lips.
The yellow lamp-illuminated leaves drop
Gold to water. Breath still sighs
To flute, and fingers bend to string, stone
Bridges arch to strumming.
While strangers lurch in shadows the white cat
Steps behind curtains; while the night purrs
On the branch, along the river,
The hour curls like a dead leaf, turning
Brown to amber-brown on roads, in
Narrow streets, beside the green-peeled door.
These images are we; the clock's hands are
Our own, in its dead face
Our own tired eyes are sleeping.
Behind the wheel a girl sobs without weeping,
And midnight of a warm November night
Blooms like the street-light's stark stiff-petaled
Blossom.

Marlin Seer
OUT OF THE VARIED SUNSETS

Out of the varied sunsets:  
the half-grays, the vermillions  
toned to shades of russets,  
the bright clouds dimming into darkness,  
the sharpness of the falling rain;  
out of and above all these  
one figure has arisen  
like someone rising from a grave  
into an alien world.

He moves with steps uncertain  
down the deserted street;  
a woman draws the curtain.  
The dead sound of his feet  
striking the midnight cobbles  
slow, and stops. He knocks.  
No answer. On he hobbles.  
The crowing of the cocks  
outside the stagnant city  
surprises him. He turns  
as dawn breaks with a pretty  
chevron, and heaven burns . . .

From Dionysius' holy throne  
the silent virgin turns away  
leaving her sacred gift in vain:  
for still the sun's bright bride descends  
each year, and still each trip predicts  
but one more journey still to come.

Behind the Polydorian mask,  
the face Timanthe's painting lacks  
ilies hidden, buried in the stone . . .

A god may often choose to go  
for other gods, but once for man  
is all; and if he should come back  
it is only to observe,  
for twice to die destroys his worth.  
He gives no gift who gives his life  
in successive sacrifice . . .

He moves on toward the afternoon,  
His shadow moves before him, still  
The times he rests, and wearily  
He mounts the darkening hill.
In the morning, I like to watch the changing patterns of light and shadow play out in the leaves.

September 4
There is only the moon and one star in the sky tonight. They and a few very white, very transparent clouds. A large cloud fish swims toward the moon, its jaws spread wide to capture the shining morsel. But it misses. And the moon becomes its eye instead.

September 5
"The fish with the popping eyes" . . . "An old Japanese custom was to prepare the fish with the popping eyes on certain ceremonial days. However, the only pop-eyed fish I have ever seen, is the one which is swishing around in a bowl on the kitchen table right now. A black molly named "satin."

September 6
Bah, bah black sheep, have you any wool? Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir, three bags full. One for my master, one for my dame, and one for the little boy who lives down the lane. Jo-Jo was the boy who lived down the lane. But Jo-Jo doesn't live on a lane anymore. Neither do I. Sometimes I wonder where we do live. It's on a street, of sorts. I don't mean that we live on the street in actuality. Because in actuality Jo-Jo and I live on the third floor of an old building in a three room apartment. There are two windows. One looks out onto the EL tracks so it's always shut. The other one, the bedroom one, overlooks a relatively empty lot. Besides the tree, the lot has a wide variety of cans and bottle fragments and paper pieces and tow-headed children.

September 7
Sometimes Jo-Jo and I go to a church. We like a church where the sunlight streams through stained glass and the people are old and the pews are worn. We like the humbleness and the humility of kneeling.

September 8
We live on Euphrates Street. It's a very brief street as streets go, because at the end it runs into other streets and the other streets are bigger and have different names. Euphrates Street becomes Isin Boulevard. The two streets intersecting are Gihon Road and Hiddekel Lane.

September 9
My name is Gene. The final "e" is pronounced. Gene. Sometimes, like now, when I sit on this old blue roll-away coach, I feel such restless stirrings. If I were a child, I should go outside and climb the tree. But I am a woman, or a reasonable facsimile of one, and am therefore forbidden. Instead, I would like to go somewhere on the EL. The long, black EL, dirty from its many crawlings along the high tracks. But it moves. It goes somewhere. There are people on the EL. People and adventurous posters. And stations to get off on. And at the stations are transfers and gum machines and revolving doors and steps going up.

September 10
Our three rooms consist of a bathroom, a room which serves as a living room and sleeping room, and a kitchen. The floors are scarred, the keys don't fit the locks, the cups have chipped rims and cracked handles. The kitchen is long, narrow, and sloping. I make beautifully uneven cakes. Everytime the EL rushes by, all of the kitchen shivers and shakes in a calmly violent sort of way. But the funniest thing of all is that someone once papered the living room door in cherubim wall paper.

September 11
I once had my palm read by an old minister. He said I would have two children and that one would be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. Sometimes I wonder if he wasn't mistaken. For I don't want to be a mother, I'd much rather be a vagabond.

September 12
Poor Jo-Jo. It's my fault we are poor. He didn't want to leave his mother and father. Or their garden. But I wanted him to. I tempted him. So here we are. But we have found that marriage is more and less than cleaving one unto the other.

September 13
Today I saw a strange thing. I saw a man with a sword in his hand. I guess he bought it from the pawn shop across the street. Reminiscent of King Arthur days. I suppose he'll hang it on a wall for some sort of decoration. But he looked so strange just walking along the street with that sword in his hand. There was excitement this evening. The pawn shop burst into flames and was nearly demolished. We think the landlord's son did it. It's a very bad boy.
WHAT THE LEAVES SAID
There are those who live a lifetime
Without going to the Glen;
For myself, I've been there often,
And I must go back again.

On that first time, it was autumn,
And at times I saw leaves scoot,
Laughing, down the foaming rapids
Happy children on a chute.

Still a second time in autumn,
Dead brown leaves at anchor lay.
Restless, riding shores of boulders
And in every moss-lined bay.

On that last time it was autumn
And the leaves along the Glen
Rustled drily, as if they knew
That I'd not come back again.

There are those who live a lifetime
Without going to the Glen;
For myself, I've spent my lifetime,
And I can't go back again.

Robert Arner

A FAREWELL
The sea, retreating from the sand,
Carved aimless wavering designs
Of melancholy circling lines,
Like layered ripples on the land.

The night descended, swallowed up
The sea. The evening came to nought,
Escaping while I stood and thought,
And watched Thor quaff the foaming cup.

Once, too, the cup of love was drained,
But, all unlike the ebbing sea,
Diminished past eternity.
Till only broken shell remained.

Robert Arner

*These poems appeared in the Intercollegiate Poetry Congress Anthology.

THE RAIN
The rain is nice,
I think,
To visit me
In my grave.

Bruce DeMarco

RAIN
The rain
The rain...
I want to feel its crystal fingers
Touch
The bones inside me.

I love those droplets
Of gentle rain...
The gentle rain which rids my body's fever
And cleanses sickness from my mind.

Bruce DeMarco

AGO
The tavern, grey and brambled in the snow
Slanted its rusted-tan abandoned
Shutters to the wind.
We and the winter passed there, saw
The broken walls, the broken wall remembering,
Remembering deep in dust and deep in crumbled plaster,
Strangers' curious eyes, boots, gestures, laughter...

But when we came again the field was
Pale and April, jade and May.
And soft it was, our walking green and freely
Among the wakening shrubs, the strawberry leaves, and feeling
The wounded valley healing into spring, the fern-bound
Scars all balm by rain.

Marlin Seer

*This poem was published in the National Collegiate Poetry Anthology.
A DEFENSE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

American literature can claim no new phenomena as a result of its emphasis upon the struggle of the individual against society. Dostoevsky's Myshkin and Raskolnikov, Moravia's Clerici, Tolstoy's Bezuhov, Sartre's Delarue, Lawrence's Morel, Orwell's Smith, Hersey's Jopollo and Avered, and Hemingway's Barnes, Cohen, and Santiago, apart from the fact that they are all characters in literature, have something in common. They all: 1) are intellectually or spiritually superior to the society which surrounds them; 2) wish to become part of that society; or, 3) wish to be separate entirely from that society and its stupid restrictions.

Their differences arise in the final results of their struggles. For Moravia, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Orwell, Sartre, and Lawrence the problem is resolved simply: the protagonist is annexed and becomes a "card-carrying" member of society. The only possible exception to this would be Sartre's Mathieu Delarue and Sartre makes it clear that Delarue, although he professes to be free and independent, is actually subject to social mores, is, in fact, a member of that society he tries to be free of.

The works of Hersey and Hemingway, on the other hand are unique in this group, for in their works the protagonist is left in his original state of disillusionment or destroyed entirely; there is no happy reconciliation between man and milieu. And this characteristic is not peculiar to Hersey and Hemingway among the American authors: Steinbeck, Farrell, Dreiser Dos Passos, O'Hara, Wright, and Lewis, to name only a few, also exhibit this marked tendency toward defeatism.

Moreover, as I have observed, it seems to be a characteristic almost totally exclusive of American letters. I have mentioned representatives of England, France, Russia, and Italy as free from this idiosyncrasy. To these may be added Norway as represented by Ibsen and Hamsun, Sweden as represented by Lagerlof, and Spain as represented by Martinez. For these authors, society and environment do not triumph over the individual as much as they compromise with him. Obviously, one or two authors are not representative of the intellectual doctrine of an entire nation, yet I find it easier to cite examples of writers whose heroes compromise with society in a literature relatively unfamiliar to me than I do to find similar examples in American literature. Society usually dominates completely, and it is this frequency of domination and destruction that leads to the criticism of American literature as defeatist, morally sick, and spiritually lacking.

In defense of Ibsen's position, the one which I placed him in in the preceding paragraph, remember that Oswald, who is destroyed, is not the main character; he is a living stigmata of his father's "loose living." Mrs. Alving, on the other hand, though she is almost equally as tragic as Oswald, is, in fact, the main character in the play "Ghosts," enjoys the unique distinction of personifying society. She, along with Manders, though to a lesser degree, represents the destroyer, shiva, conformity. Thus Ibsen creates one final dramatic and ironic touch when he casts her as the destroyer in the end, a position which she has had since the Captain's death, undecided as to whether or not she should administer the drug that will take Oswald's life.

To return to American literature, I will agree that it is defeatist and sick, as its critics maintain, but I am not condemning it by this admission. On the contrary, this makes its position easily defensible, even to lovers of classical standards of criticism. Art, said Aristotle, is an "imitation of nature," but actually this is a vague definition, since no one really knows what constitutes nature. Rather, art is a representation of what is considered to be nature, and certainly no one can say that Hersey or Hemingway or their contemporaries do not describe the world they see. There can be no question that what they create is art in its highest sense of the word.

There is evidenced an unnatural, I almost say perverse, fixation with normality in American literature. All the characters are striving either to attain it or to be free of it. Oddly, it is never defined. Ironically, the characters are chasing a non-existent dream, an abstraction, a thing which they can never attain. "Normality," says Alberto Moravia, "is a purely external thing entirely made up of abnormalities."

This would explain, in a large measure, the so-called superficiality of American creations, men such as Jake Barnes, Mathew Avered, Lennie and George, and that classic example of emptiness, George Babbitt. It is not possible for men to be more than their ideals, and the "purely external thing" which motivates American protagonists must naturally be reflected in their deeds and thoughts.

Moreover, since normality consists of abnormality, there is room in our literature for writers such as Poe, Miller and his abnormal excesses of sex, and Faulkner and his abnormal characters which are foreign to European letters. Since we are concerned so much with normality and its consequences, abnormality, it follows that we tolerate abnormality far more than European critics do. Only if one accepts the "art-for-art's-sake" approach to criticisms can these aberrations be ignored and the true value of the artist be discerned.

Contemporary American literature, then, can best be described as being intensely concerned with the fate of the non-conformist in an environment that is hostile to non-conformists. As portayers of reality, the creators of this literature are undoubtedly first-rate and certainly deserve the title "artists."
The question then is: What are the responsibilities of an artist? If, as Lessing says, “the state was indebted for its beautiful men to its beautiful statues,” then, conversely, the nation must be indebted to its degenerate art for its degenerate society. But this hypothesis only raises the hopeless question of which created which, for the art developed basically as a criticism of society, which in turn could have conceivably been made worse instead of better by this very criticism (according to Lessing’s theory). If that is so, what value has criticism of anything, since it tends to increase, rather than decrease, the evils it criticizes? More, these social critics would be less than artists if they did not portray that which they saw. Consequently, we may conclude that the literature of America is not degenerate at all; the people about whom it is written are. They need not censor Henry Miller, but themselves, for it is about them that Henry Miller writes.

Beauty, they say, lies in the mind of the beholder. Does this not also hold true for art? There are those people in the world who can see a phallic symbol in a church spire, and for these people, everything written is potential pornography, whether it be the Bible or Lady Chatterley’s Lover. There are those for whom life is acceptable, if not beautiful. At least to these contemporary American literature speaks a beautiful and true language.

Robert Arner

**FRIENDSHIP**

FRIENDSHIP!
Sometimes a cure,
Sometimes a curse;
Sometimes pure,
Sometimes perverse.

Carol Ann Mann

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Sift together verse and thought,
Then cream rhyme and meter.
Blend in but a part of you;
Mix—without a beater!

Add some humor—just a pinch.
Keep your mind preheated.
Fold in words—the right amount.
Wait, observe; reheat it.

Grease the form with punctuation
Decorate to please.
Put in yourself; bake with style.
Make it by degrees.

Serve your product, meant to be—
A flawless piece of poetry!

Rita Anne Moyer

**VOID**

In the dark of night
there is only
emptiness,
when all tragedies
are suddenly
my own.

Sue Fisher

**WHITE COLDNESS!**

Between white walls of snow, a stream
Flows down sun-sparkled slopes.
Frost diamonds strewn by God make rich
Its lonely, silent way.

No footstep breaks the stream’s ice crust
Or mars the wind-swept fields
No shadow can be seen except that left by rocks and trees.

The loneliness I find round me
Consoles my emptiness.
And brings a feeling of friendship
Which I find nowhere else.

Linda Rogers

**NURE AND REMEMBER**

I will seal my sorrow in a flowered spice jar,
and bury it beneath in my garden.
I will scoop the pungent earth with my own young hands,
And bury it there, beneath the budding lilacs.
In twenty years, if I remember,
I will reclaim it
To see how it has grown.

Helena Greenburg
DENOUEMENT

The fading of a flame...
And so does love
End brilliantly and swiftly...
Like a match
That, struck to a light cigarette in spring,
Flares out of nowhere, into nowhere dies...
And also life...
The last lines have been spoken.
Now the coals
Are banked until the second ember glows
For one vermillion second and is gone,
In passing drawing down the smoky gray
Of twilight evening, making way for night.
Silence now, and tears for his applause.
In my father's house are many mansions...
And that spring passed by us easily,
Sped on the odors of lilacs and apple-blossoms
Into the mystic realm of the mind...
One, who while I slept,
Stole unseen to my room
And, passing, placed a kiss
I never had against my lips,
Leaves me with hope.
But in the meantime...
Do I dare believe this whole thing is a dream?
Do I dare believe you won't stir in the cold?

Robert Arner

SKETCHES

Deliquescent fog—
Tears running down
Leaf noses

Among the tombstones
Blue-winged grasshoppers
Laugh.

Tycelia White

yesterday
I walked down the dusty path
to the river's edge
and I sat down in the violet shade
of an old oak tree and
I thought about the coolness of rain when
it streams into my face...
and the soft rush of wind on
a lonely tree and the eternal night...
and soon it was night.
and I made a childish wish upon the first star
but then I remembered this world of
the sophisticated hatreds
and all was lost.

Debby Grobman

INSECURITY

A warm embrace,
A glowing face,
A faithful heart,
Security.

In the midst of the canyons of cement
and steel stalks the beast names FEAR!
The silent faceless conqueror—fear!
And fear is an awesome enemy. It offers
no way to fight; it slithers, creeps,
and crawls into you. It deceives,
diverts, and destroys. But...
A warm embrace,
A glowing face,
A faithful heart,
Security...

But fear is cold; it chills the lips;
And fear is black; it shadows the glow;
And fear is treacherous; it stills the heart.

Bruce DeMarco
In many young mammals, like kittens, some adult mammals, like otters, and various adult birds, like penguins, ... we find something closely akin to our love of play or sport—the enjoyment of bodily performance for its own sake.

SONG I

He turned from her and rushed out, down the lane, 
Through leaves wet with a cold November rain. 
The soggy sky oppressed him as he ran.

The evening came on softly, like a dream 
Of happy nights, before the beacon's gleam 
Lured him to war, her to another man.

That year was brief they spent together when 
They loved; then he had joined the other men 
Who counted boredom worse than death or peace.

He did not die, but love could not endure 
The ravages of time's relentless war. 
And now each night to her seemed a year.

He stood alone, companioned by the pain 
That only love engenders, when a man 
Discovers the deception and the seem 
Behind a lie won't believe again. 
And, listening in the twilight, he can hear 
The ocean's welcome melancholy roar.

SONG IV

"Oh, take these worthless gifts I bring: 
My staff, my cord—oh, take this ring."

"As proof that you are so adored, 
Take, oh take, my staff, my cord!"

But she, disdaining with a laugh, 
Refuses ring and cord and staff,

And I, disconsolate, arouse 
Myself, and leave the harlot's house.
SONG V
And when sleep is beautiful, but time
Despoils the eternities
That pallid, sleeping lovers weave,
Moves softly through dim sleep, to seize
All solace, mar all images,
Supplant the features of Apollo
With wary countenances, hollow
Gray and unavailing faces
Of granite, bearing time's sad traces.

Foreseen in those drear visages
Of old age is the agony
That age shall bring when passions leave
And, in their passing forth, set free
All but the memories and rhyme.

SONG VI
A withered leaf stirs in the wind,
Like some old feeble dying man
Who, living, loved not life enough,
But, failing, can.

I think now how the falling frost
Last year had stung the grass to brown,
And how the leaves of love's lost tree
At last came down.

SONG VII
When death has lost its dark nobility
Of distance, and in its proximity
You only find a dread reality—
Think then of me.

Remember who was with you in that spring,
That happy time, but who could only bring
A heavy heart when your own heart would sing
With wondering;

And how we closed the book, and lost the page;
And how a bird, awaking in a rage
Of song, woke the other in its cage
And our old age.

GRASSBLADE
Proud and vernal, amid the clover
Landing;
And I say, sway over!
That I may not stop your
Standing.

Rory Killeen

IT ALWAYS RAINS IN EASTON
Silence, then gas again,
And now a droplet of rain.
Poles, trees fly; children flash.
The drone now pinkblue neons.
wait
No
Don't go!
Late? No, he's on time;
Left New York six fifty-nine
Bound for Easton, Pa.
Will not wait! Never late.
No delay.

People are taking the bus,
And leaving the driving to them.
They never are going to, always
Going away from. No arrival—
Departure only. They are running
From the Race into another, then

Silence, then gas again,
And now a spatter of rain. . .

Rory Killeen
CROSSROAD

I thought I saw you
Where the crossroads meet.
I dreamed I kissed you.
I alone with you in the dark,
The gas station sign
Making the only light.

Valerie Mattlage

Published in the Inter-Collegiate Poetry Congress Anthology.

I SAW A CLOUD IN THE SKY

I saw a cloud in the sky
And I knew that cloud was me.
All alone in the vast blue,
With no one near enough to touch it,
More a vapor than a cloud
It spread its many arms in the direction of
Every coaxing wind.
An appearance of confusion
Yet a predestined way.

You saw it because it was alone.
And you remember it for being so.

Regina Imber

*I saw a cloud in the sky was published in the National Collegiate Poetry Anthology.

THE HURRICANE AND THE I

Within each tempest
Violence rages,
Pillaging beauty
To blank nothingness.
And
Within each tempest
Lies a hollow of stillness
In which songbirds sing
In silence and tranquility.

Rory Killeen

A SECOND AUTUMN

The dark leaves turn a doleful face,
Hearing things no man may hear,
Crimson in the last embrace
Of the departing year.

Linger yet a while with me;
It will not matter if you’re late.
You only meet eternity,
And he at least will wait

A little while. Why hurry on?
Time enough when you have passed
For me to mourn because you’re gone.
Let this, my last joy, last.

Robert Arner

*This poem was published in the National Collegiate Poetry Anthology.
AN EVENING AT THE DELL

The June evening was warm, and the slight breeze proved to be delightful. The Tuesday evening group gathered for the weekly concert seemed to delight in the way the evening weather was setting the atmosphere for Richard Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier." "Friends" of the Dell were filling up the reserved seats quickly. Very distinguished looking gentlemen and well-poised women in short-sleeved summer dresses made their way to the boxes. The unreserved sections and the little slope near-by were sparsely populated by the public who had clipped their coupons from The Philadelphia Inquirer and had received two free tickets.

My seat was in the second row just beyond the little fence which separates the public from the "friends." The ushers were showing the reserved ticket holders to their seats, as the high heels clicked and the "friends" exchanged greetings which reflected poise and a tolerant view of humanity. Not only couples came down the aisle through the public, but parties of as many as six.

Turning around in the direction of the river, I noticed a party of three making their way to the little gate in the dividing fence. A gentleman with graying hair, dressed in a light blue suit was speaking to a woman of about the same age who smiled and indicated an understanding. A few steps behind followed a girl who was about nineteen years of age. Observing her approach I began to feel she was very attractive. Her white dress was highlighted with a few diamonds and her necklace emphasized the low cut of the neckline. Her hair was dark brown and she had parted it in the center, allowing the one side to fall slightly over the one eye. She had the carriage and poise of her group, and she was a very pretty Miss without a date. When she had reached the gate with her parents I had classified her as Vassar or Smith. As the three entered their box, a "friend" in a near-by section called and waved. The couple waved and nodded quietly; the young lady spoke to her father and began to look at her program.

At 8:00 P.M. the opera began and the waltzes filled Fairmount Park's amphitheater. As before, I relaxed and became a part of the wonderful world of a Tuesday evening. Through most of the first two acts I had forgotten about the pretty debutant, but a change of mood in the music caused me to stare at the beautiful young girl. All of a sudden I was in love with this lovely thing, was telling myself I must meet her.

During the intermission I watched her every movement, and knew she was something different. She was beautiful, intelligent, wealthy and she did not have a date. She combined the wholesomeness of a simple girl and the pose of a "mainliner." An elderly man who hadn't said a word before spoke to me as he looked at his program.

"This is a perfect evening for the opera. I told my wife she should come but she doesn't like riding the trolley."

"Yes sir, it is a beautiful evening for the opera."

After the intermission the arias and waltzes combined to provide the background of my Tuesday evening dream. The last act was brought to a close with the very beautiful trio.

The park echoed with applause while the entire company took its bows, and the stars became prominent as the evening established itself. The crowd began to leave and I had the desire to just get near her and hear her speak or perhaps could catch her name. I watched and as they moved along with the excited crowd, I quietly and carefully moved to a point where I was directly behind her. In fact I was touching her as the people moved slowly and closely toward the exit.

"Will I have another chance?"

"What do you do?"

Do I say "Excuse me," or smile and hope for recognition on her part. Only a few more yards to go and we would be through the exit...

"Mother, I do think they would teach these clods who get in free not to push and shove like animals."

Otto Mills

ECCE HOMO

Who is this stranger who Sleeps in my bed—wears My clothes—dwells in my body?

Siegfried Weing

Otto Mills
POEM

Old age comes in rose’s petals;
What hearts are gone from life
Belong to childish years . . .
Steel springs are coiling, flesh will diminish—
For those who succumb it’s a suitable finish.
Raindrops and puddles—then clover starts blooming,
An old verdant link in nature’s long chain.
If we were to vanish life would start again
With a stick pin, a cigar, and one lonely sin.

C. K. Smith

ALPHAS AND OMEGAS

When time wore feathers of grey and hovered
above waters
And cerulean love was yet to stain the devil
of fear
We searched with hands for thistles of truth
And with ears for the eve of dawn.

Then time nested upon deserted arks
And cinnabar love wove a jacket of bulrushes
to free the Prince
We slumbered open-eyed the dreamless
dreams of life.

Now time falls cold among splintered shells
and ivory love limps aged to eternal occlusions
We live alone
Each with a paramour of faith.

Tycelia White

THE DWELLER

I have spent the night with a songless bird
And a wingless butterfly.
We spoke in muted tones
Of the roundness of rings
And of the melting of icicles.
We ported in earliness
Believing the moon to be the sun.

Tycelia White

THE PANHANDLER

Hey, buddy,
Gotta
Dime,
Match
Answer—
D ya’ gotta
Dream?

Rory Killeen