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### Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1990 (Spring)

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# ପଦ୍ମାବତୀ

ପଦ୍ମାବତୀ 1990



INSTRESS has been published by the students of College Misericordia since December of 1966. The title, coined by Gerard Manley Hopkins, signifies the moment the reader achieves complete understanding of the written word. The author, through INSTRESS, conveys to and shares with the reader, an emotionally moving experience.

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|                                       |                 |       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Photo                                 | Karen Springer  | Cover |
| Starry Night                          | John Woods      | 3     |
| Scratchboard Art III                  | Justine Pilecki | 3     |
| Artwork                               | Rigoberto Perez | 4     |
| The Escape of Maverick                | Nicholas Andrea | 4     |
| The Broken Window                     | Peggy Charnick  | 5     |
| Photo                                 | Chris Michael   | 6     |
| The Color of Death                    | Kevin Curcio    | 6     |
| Through Her Eyes                      | Nancy Steffan   | 7     |
| Snow                                  | Nancy Comstock  | 7     |
| First Rays, Last Rays                 | Dee Springer    | 7     |
| Black Rose                            | Paula Carey     | 7     |
| Artwork                               | Rigoberto Perez | 8     |
| Existential Air                       | Justine Pilecki | 8-9   |
| Architectural Rendering Art III       | Justine Pilecki | 10    |
| The Wrath of Kubla Khan               | John Woods      | 11    |
| The Dead Poet                         | John Woods      | 11    |
| Arabian Horse                         | Stevan Davies   | 12    |
| Aristotelian Logic                    | Jim Calderone   | 12    |
| Spring 1990                           | Jim Calderone   | 13    |
| Sunlight                              | Stevan Davies   | 13    |
| Artwork                               | Rigoberto Perez | 14    |
| Memories of Mom                       | Dee Springer    | 15    |
| Photo                                 | Chris Michael   | 15    |
| To the Old Cat                        | Nancy Comstock  | 16    |
| Where Is the Man                      | Dee Springer    | 17    |
| Visions                               | Nancy Comstock  | 17    |
| We Interrupt This Program             | Kevin Curcio    | 17    |
| Subterrenean Homesick Blues Revisited | John Woods      | 18    |
| Shell                                 | Justine Pilecki | 19    |
| Is This Goodbye                       | Anya Musto      | 19    |

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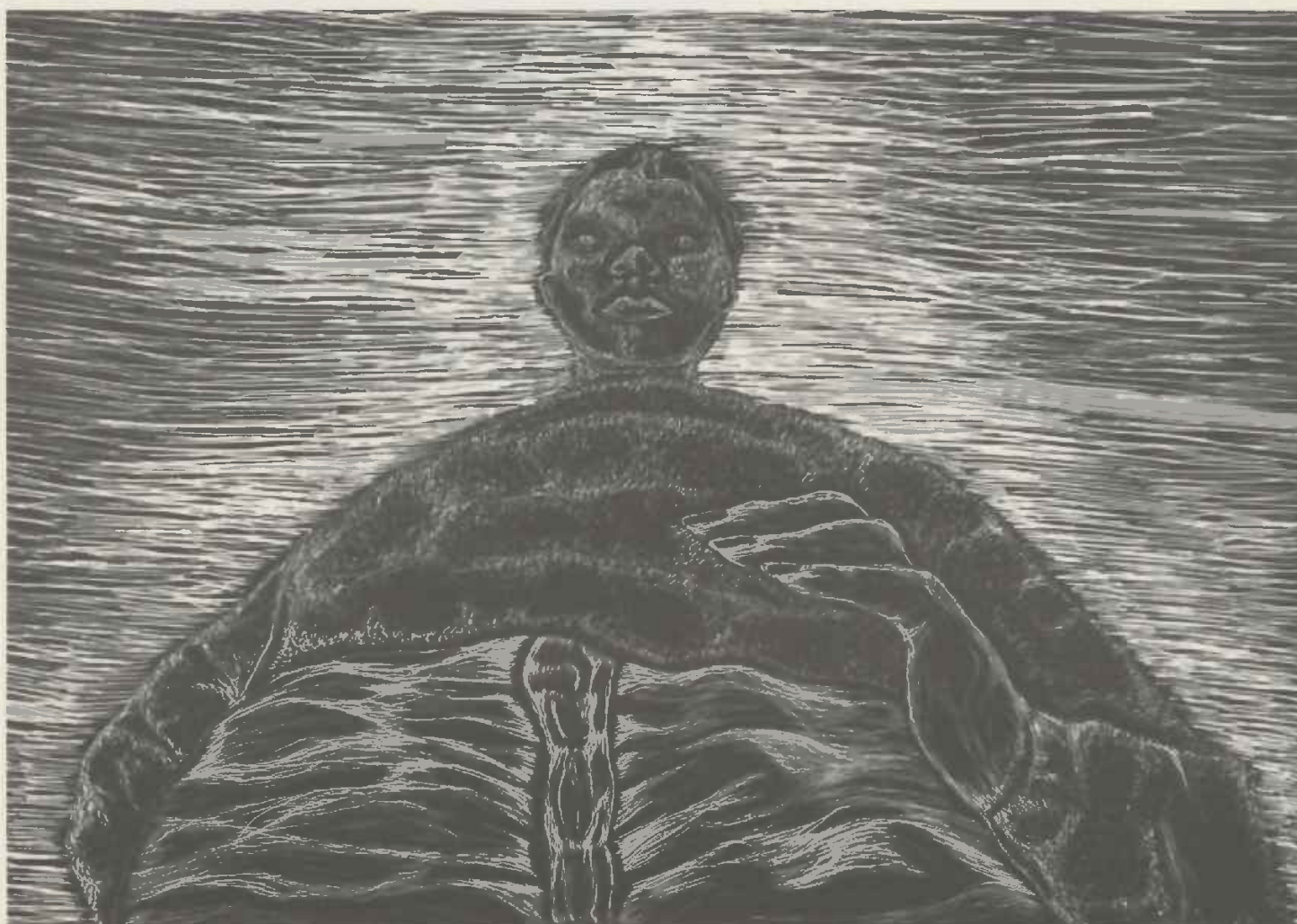
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COLLEGE MISERICORDIA: Founded and Sponsored by the Religious Sisters of Mercy

"Starry Night"

One night I chanced to warm my face  
Against his swirling flames  
Exploding out of madness.  
He whispered in fire tongues  
Through the ears of sleepy currents  
Of darkness.  
Silence followed,  
And I hung on its heels.  
In time, I stood gaping at his doorstep  
While he yawned at me, unmoved.  
On bended knee I questioned his design.  
He scratched his chest and stretched as he asked mine,  
I shook my fist and shouted forth my line,  
"To seize the day!" cried I, and he, "it's mine."

John Woods



JUSTINE PILECKI



1990: The Escape of Maverick

Trapped in the room as  
Pencil snaps  
Time stands firm as  
Chair creaks  
Still of the night as  
Bolts groan  
Metal meets flesh as  
Chalk scrapes  
Stuck in the chair as  
Exhaust spurts  
Bursts free as  
Engine screams

Nicholas R. Andrea

## The Broken Window

I have done my job well. I knew it this morning when I turned to wave goodbye, and there were no little girls at the window to frantically blow kisses, or wave back to me. It has been a ritual of ours to part at the nursery school door with hugs and kisses and promises of return. Our goodbyes are complete only when I reach the sidewalk outside, and turn for that final wave, our mutual benediction. The solemn twin faces always appeared at the window, the huge blue eyes betraying the feelings of fear, excitement, anxiety and pride. But not this morning. New friends, new adventures, and the certain knowledge that I always return, rendered our final wave unnecessary. As I turned away from the empty window, I was overwhelmed by a bittersweet sorrow. I knew I had taught my children to trust and take chances. I had given them a sense of security, and had nurtured them toward independence. I had done my job well, yet in the process, I had lost something precious.

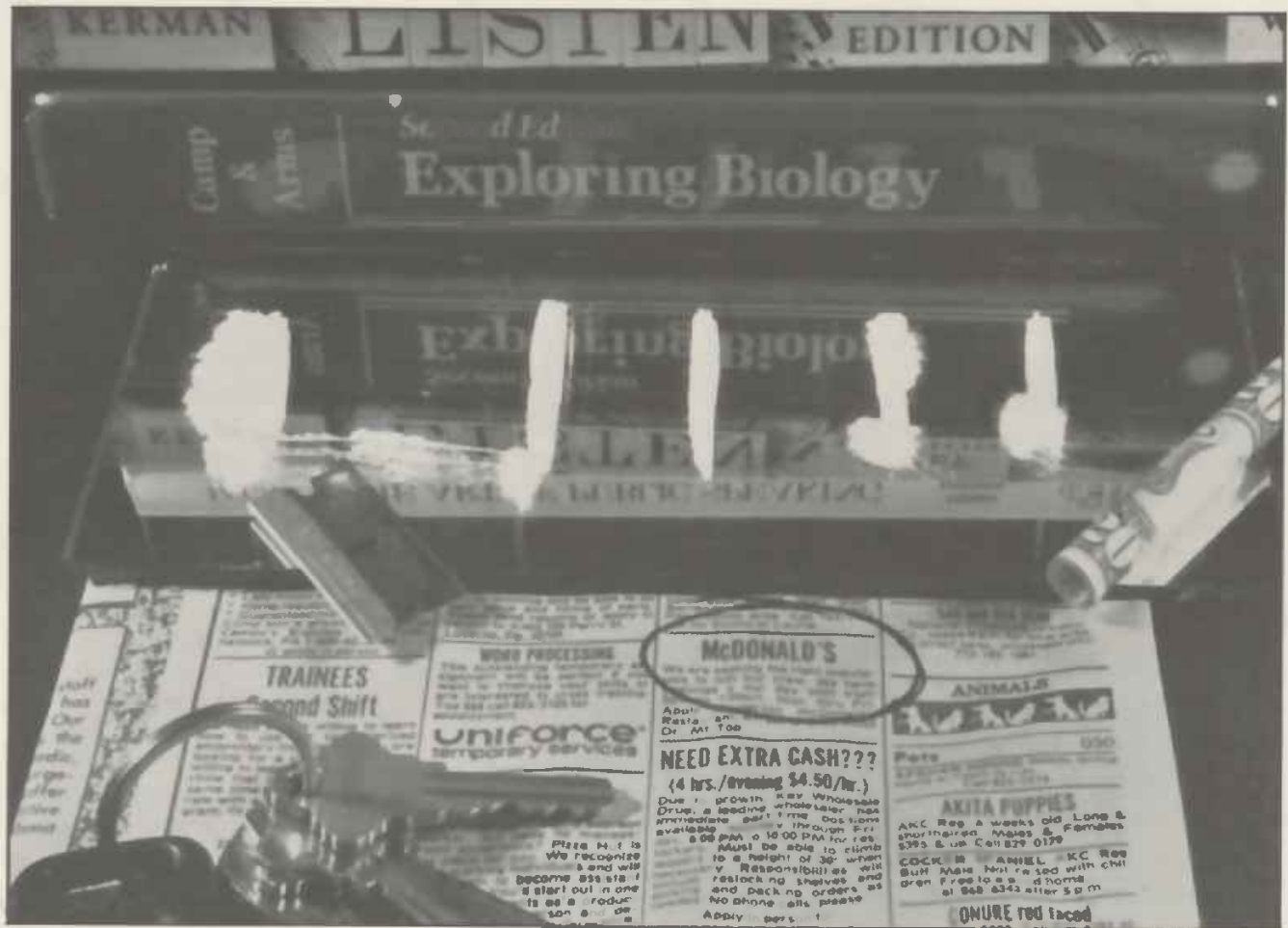
In a sudden rush of memories, I recalled tiny newborns, too small to survive without the tubes and wires that covered their pitifully small bodies. I remembered minuscule hands, exquisitely formed, and barely large enough to cover the first knuckle of my index finger. I remembered my terror at the thought that they would die before I could tell them I loved them, and my terror when I knew they would survive, and that somehow, I would have to care for them. I remembered the time when my life revolved around a grueling schedule of feedings, baths, laundry, dishes, and naps. I remembered their first teeth, and their first steps, and their first words: all great milestones on the road to their independence.

It is seldom that great changes in life are marked by warnings, fanfare, or thunderbolts. Rather it is a tone of voice, or a look or gesture, that signals that everything has changed, and that nothing can be as it was before. So it was with our goodbye wave.

This morning I knew that an invisible bond had been broken. My children had taken a step away from me. It was the first of many such steps that will lead inevitably, and properly, away from my world, and into a world that is theirs alone. I cannot follow them into their future.

There will be other milestones in their lives as we change and grow and learn together. But none will be so touching, or so tender, as this morning, when I turned to wave, and no one waved back.

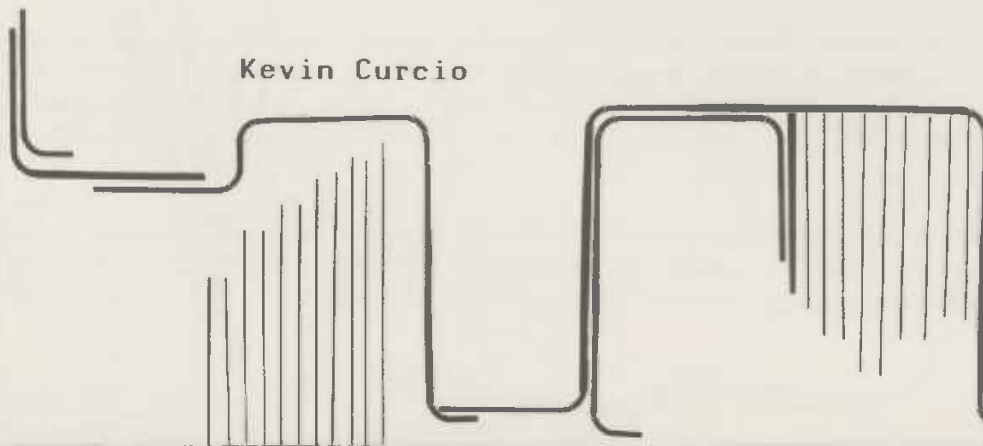
Peggy Charnick



### The Color of Death

Red running from an entire nation.  
 Red running off the heart of the attendant at the gas station.  
 Red all over the little boy, who chased into the street after his toy.  
 Red on the finger that slipped into the blade.  
 Red burying the sky as it begins to fade.

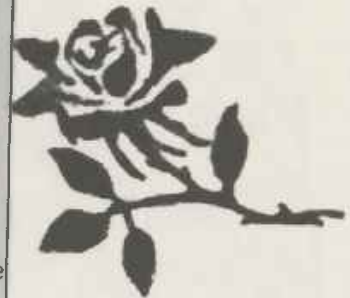
Kevin Curcio



"Through her eyes"

A tear trickling down her  
Cracked,  
Chapped face was evaporated immediately by the  
Harsh winds,  
As her tired, weary feet carried her away from  
Her home,  
Past the housing projects where she lived,  
Shuffling her feet in oversized clumsy boots she  
Glanced in trashcans  
And eagerly eyed the gutters.  
She was carrying a young child.  
Her empty eyes filled with tears  
When I approached to say, hello.  
She briskly walked away with what appeared to be the  
Limp,  
Emaciated carcass of a young child,  
Draped over her shoulder.

Nancy Steffan



Snow

Suburban snowflakes  
Drift into tenement fires,  
Die for the sizzle

Nancy Comstock

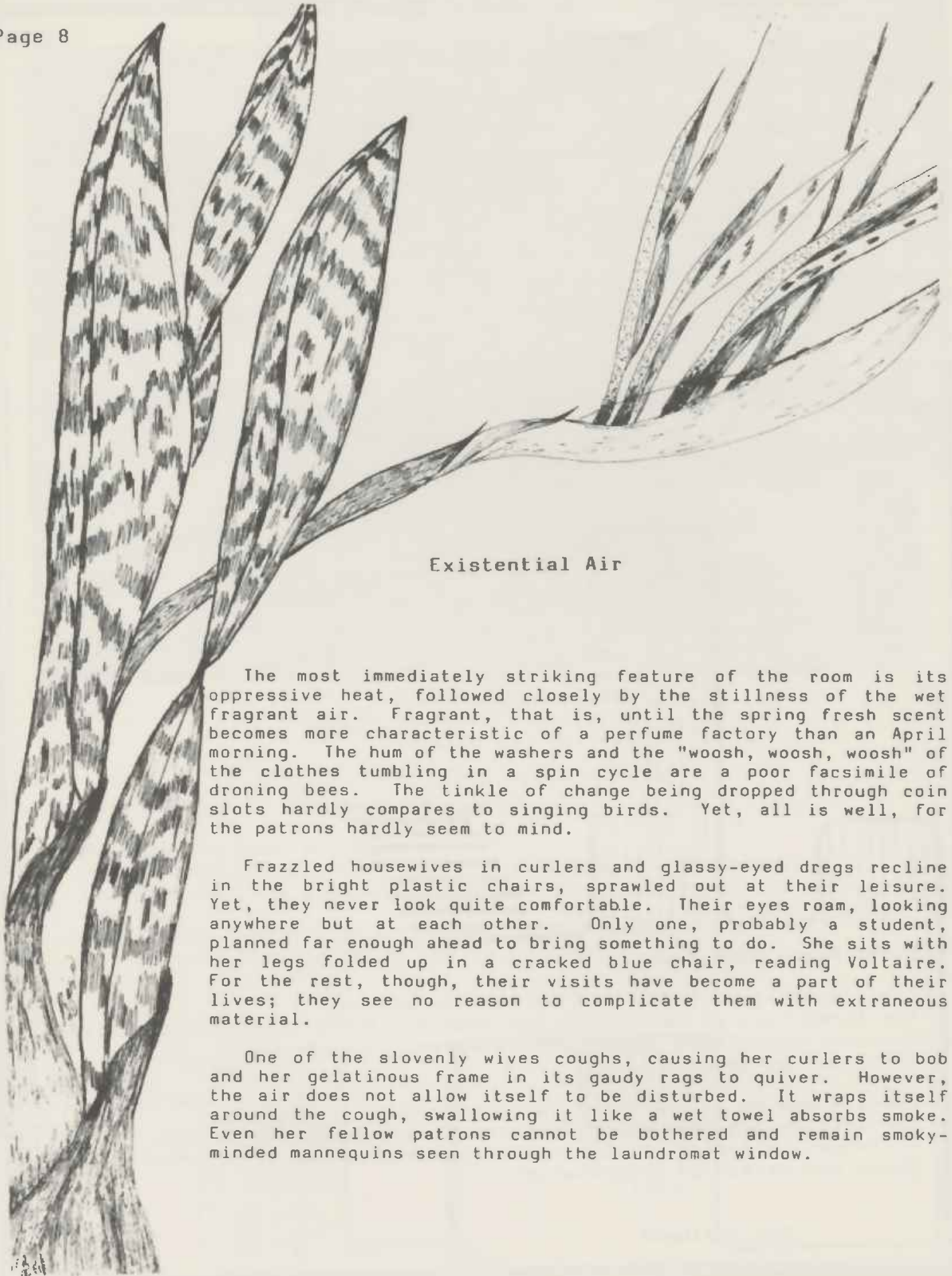
First Rays, Last Rays

Early morning as I look out my bedroom window.  
The first rays of the winter sun bounce off the newly covered hills.  
Everything perfect: clean, white, pure, untouched.  
There are no imperfections.

Evening now as I look out my bedroom window.  
The setting sun releases a last ray to dance upon the hills.  
No longer untouched, footprints appear and vanish in the distance.  
There now exists an imperfection.

Dee Springer





### Existential Air

The most immediately striking feature of the room is its oppressive heat, followed closely by the stillness of the wet fragrant air. Fragrant, that is, until the spring fresh scent becomes more characteristic of a perfume factory than an April morning. The hum of the washers and the "woosh, woosh, woosh" of the clothes tumbling in a spin cycle are a poor facsimile of droning bees. The tinkle of change being dropped through coin slots hardly compares to singing birds. Yet, all is well, for the patrons hardly seem to mind.

Frazzled housewives in curlers and glassy-eyed dregs recline in the bright plastic chairs, sprawled out at their leisure. Yet, they never look quite comfortable. Their eyes roam, looking anywhere but at each other. Only one, probably a student, planned far enough ahead to bring something to do. She sits with her legs folded up in a cracked blue chair, reading Voltaire. For the rest, though, their visits have become a part of their lives; they see no reason to complicate them with extraneous material.

One of the slovenly wives coughs, causing her curlers to bob and her gelatinous frame in its gaudy rags to quiver. However, the air does not allow itself to be disturbed. It wraps itself around the cough, swallowing it like a wet towel absorbs smoke. Even her fellow patrons cannot be bothered and remain smoky-minded mannequins seen through the laundromat window.

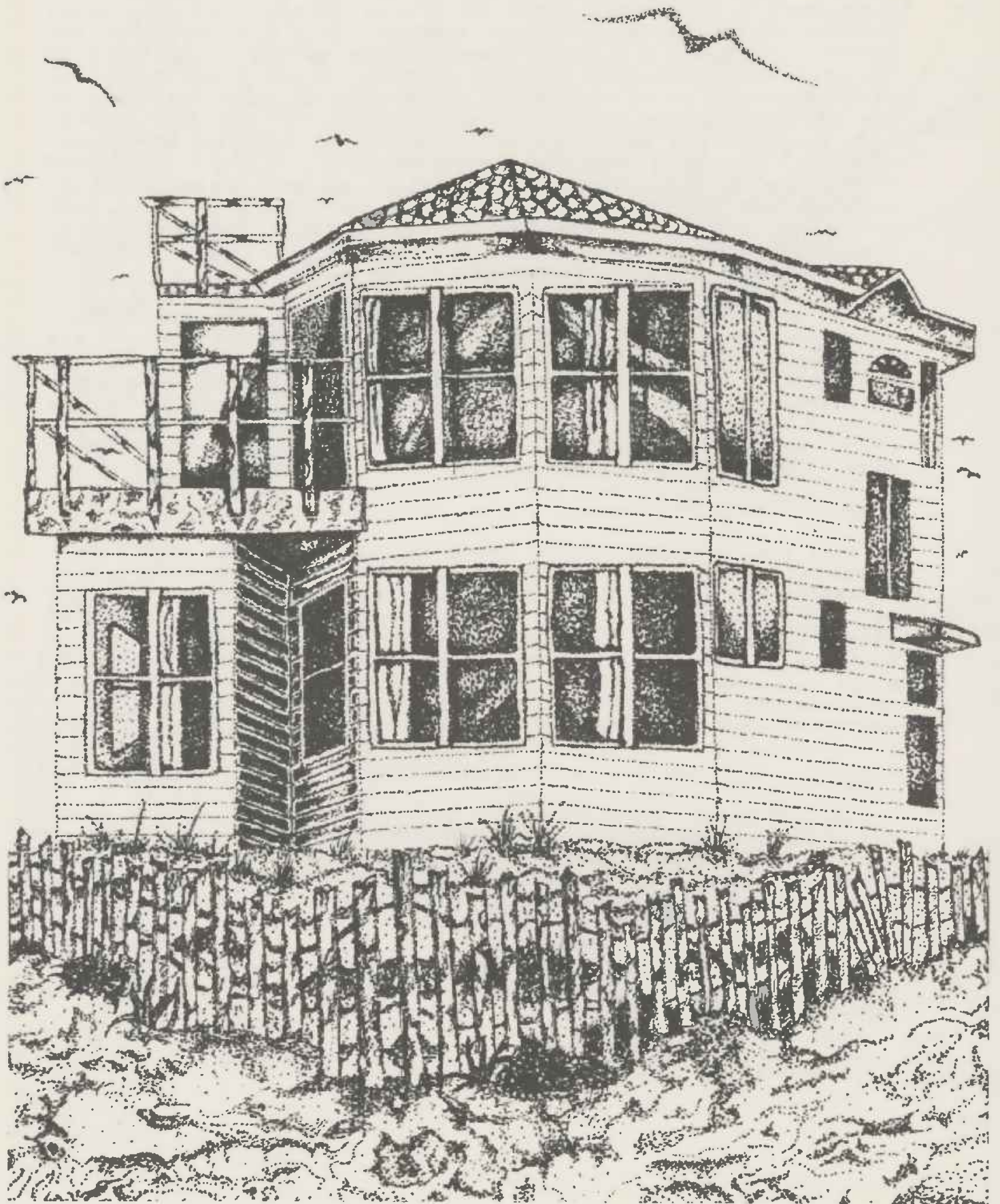
Suddenly, the bell above the door jingles. It is almost a happy sound, triumphant in its conquering of the repressing atmosphere. Each head turns in accord like wilted sunflowers jadedly searching for a sun. However, it is only a man who enters. He casts a hurried glance at the sweaty stone faces of his would-be worshippers who are already turning from their god. His footsteps, as he strides to the pay phone, are swallowed by the air which once again has supreme control of its kingdom. Even the coin the man drops into the phone is hushed into semi-silence. Hunching over the mouthpiece in the graffiti-scarred corner, he mumbles incoherently, intent on keeping his secret. He need not have bothered whispering. The machines paid more attention to him than his fellow "human beings". Soon, he too becomes an accepted part of the scene. His torn jeans and black leather jacket seem to balance the picture.

The student hears her cycle end and closes her book with a lingering gesture. She is hesitant to leave "the best of all possible worlds" and return to the reality of fabric softener and gym shorts. In one fluid motion, she untangles herself and bends backward over her chair to stretch. Grabbing the edge of the vending machine, she hauls herself to her feet and pauses to check her reflection in the glass. She sighs as she crosses the room. No one looks good with a pack of crackers floating in their face. The others remain oblivious as her head and torso disappear into the washer. It is hard to tell when she emerges

because she is hidden behind the primitive door. Stumbling past a row of washers, she comes to an open dryer and shovels the things inside. She feeds the huge green monster with coins and he starts to roar. She stands for a moment, watching her garments take their torturous ride and then suddenly remembers Voltaire is waiting. Returning to her seat, she sweeps the room with her eyes to take in the life forms occupying the other chairs. She notices the confectionary machine and wonders if anyone has ever touched it - the poor machine. The thought makes her chuckle and all eyes immediately snap toward her. Soon, however, the patrons return to their customary positions.

The machines keep humming. The fluorescent light keeps buzzing as it pours its stark illumination on the scene below. The student keeps reading and the patrons continue to gaze thoughtlessly. Only the displaced man is moving now, replacing the receiver in its holder. He looks once more at this congregation. Scornfully, he turns away and leaves, bracing his arm before he pummels through the door. Yet, little does he know that a slight breeze that wisped through the door actually survived for several seconds in his wake, before it too was captured by the oppressive air.

Justine Pilecki



**"The Wrath of Kubla Khan"**

All roads lead away from Rome,  
To Xanadu they wind.  
I have travelled through this pleasure dome,  
In truth I would not find.  
Everywhere deserters  
In the deserts and the dens.  
Dull eyes and gray hair float in grease,  
Thrice around the pens.  
In a brainstorm once  
A vision melted  
Matter into mind.  
Transformed into brainhurricane  
All visions intertwined.  
This song must I shout into all ends of the earth,  
As I here commit myself to the asylum of rebirth.

John Woods

**"The Dead Poet"**

In deep nature can be found  
That grimy creature all around,  
Here quenching thirst or hunger there,  
Still weaving dreamscapes everywhere.  
  
On rays of sun he scales the wind,  
And backslides home with his knees skinned,  
But never will that force be found  
Entrenched in hollow plots of ground.

John Woods



*Paul*

Arabian Horse : Faculty Workshop : 2/28/90 : SD

Aristotelian Logic

Resolve, then "rock"  
Purpose, then "season"  
Passion, then "rose"  
Birth, then "breath"  
Loneliness, then "hell"  
Despair, then "ice"  
Hope, then "carol"  
Awe, then "mountain"  
Imagination, then "eagle"  
Love, then "cross"  
Eternity, then "ocean"  
Transcendence, then "wind"  
Wisdom, then "fire"  
Communion, then "poet".

Jim Calderone

Spring, 1990

To start here...  
Ant not "return to go,"

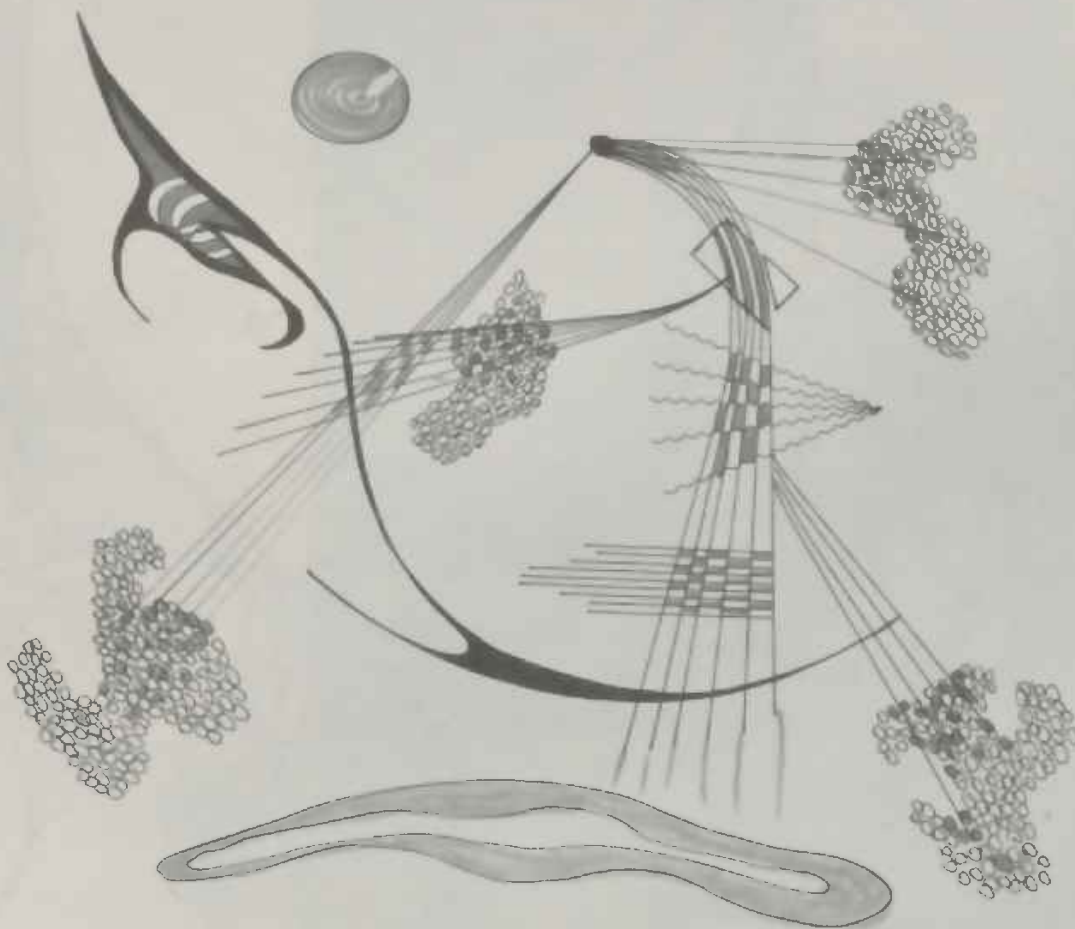
To stop the game --  
and really take a chance,

Flawed, funny,

I'll muddy my feet  
to reach  
the sacred tree:

"Home free, all!"

Jim Calderone



Sunlight SDW 12/190



Does she know who I am?  
I remember her at other times.  
I see the kitchen full of jam.  
I remember baskets of lemons and limes.

As I look upon that placid face,  
the crippled hands,  
I think of all the love for us all.  
I see only her stature, once so tall.

Dee Springer





### To the Old Cat

That old cat. She was something, yes she was. Near twenty years old, I guess, older than my oldest boy.

One time, oh years ago, it was in the evening, and I set there in the rocker with my boots kicked off. She must of come in through the hole in the screen door, came right out here and dropped a live rat on my bare foot. Did I jump! Yes sir, must of drug it all the way down from the barn, just to give it to me. Good hunter. And what a character.

That reminds me of another time, when I took the black pup up on the hill to hunt, before the boy was old enough. Well, we hiked a good ways that day, but I only got in one shot and missed. Come sundown, the pup followed me back down the hill, both our tails drooping. When we come into the dooryard, the wife was on the porch, and she says, "Well, at least one of you is a hunter," and I turn around and there's that cat following, with a little mite of a rabbit in her mouth. Yes sir, she was something.

Winters, she liked to be inside. Kept my feet warm many a night. And if I came home, you know, after I'd had a few, she knew how to stay out of the way, I can tell you, not like a woman. Cat, she just ducked under the woodstove there, and stayed put. That's where she went when she took sick.

She really was a character. Independent! The barn cats stayed clear of her, I can tell you. But yet, about every summer, she brought a kitten down here and tried to mother it. Brought it mice and such, and washed it. She never had any of her own, I guess because of being stepped on by a cow when she was a kitten. That's why I brought her down, though I never thought she'd live. That's how she got to be the house cat.

Here's to that old yellow cat! I've had my ups and downs, but not her, she was steady, never fickle. Not like a woman. She never left me, no sir.

Til now.

Nancy Comstock

Where is the man who ...

said, "Come sit upon my knee."  
gave me horsey-rides upon his back.  
would pull my ponytail and say "Why me? I wouldn't do that!"  
helped build snowmen, igloos, and animals of ice.  
would give me a lucky rabbit's foot from an unlucky rabbit.  
loved to plan trips on the spur of the moment.  
gave me baseball tips and explained football.  
said, "Here's your own fishing pole. Now you bait the hook."  
helped me when math became a problem.  
let me help whether he needed a "little helper" or not.  
tolerated me through driving lessons.  
ate whatever I cooked no matter how it looked.  
stuck by me through thick and thin...

Dee Springer

Visions

I know this road,  
but not its nuances.  
The haze obscures blue curves and  
profound valleys alike.  
I am misguided  
by intuition.  
In variegated dreams  
Among veiled company,  
It looks like the road to  
Heaven.  
Visions sometimes do.

Nancy Comstock

"We Interupt This Program...."

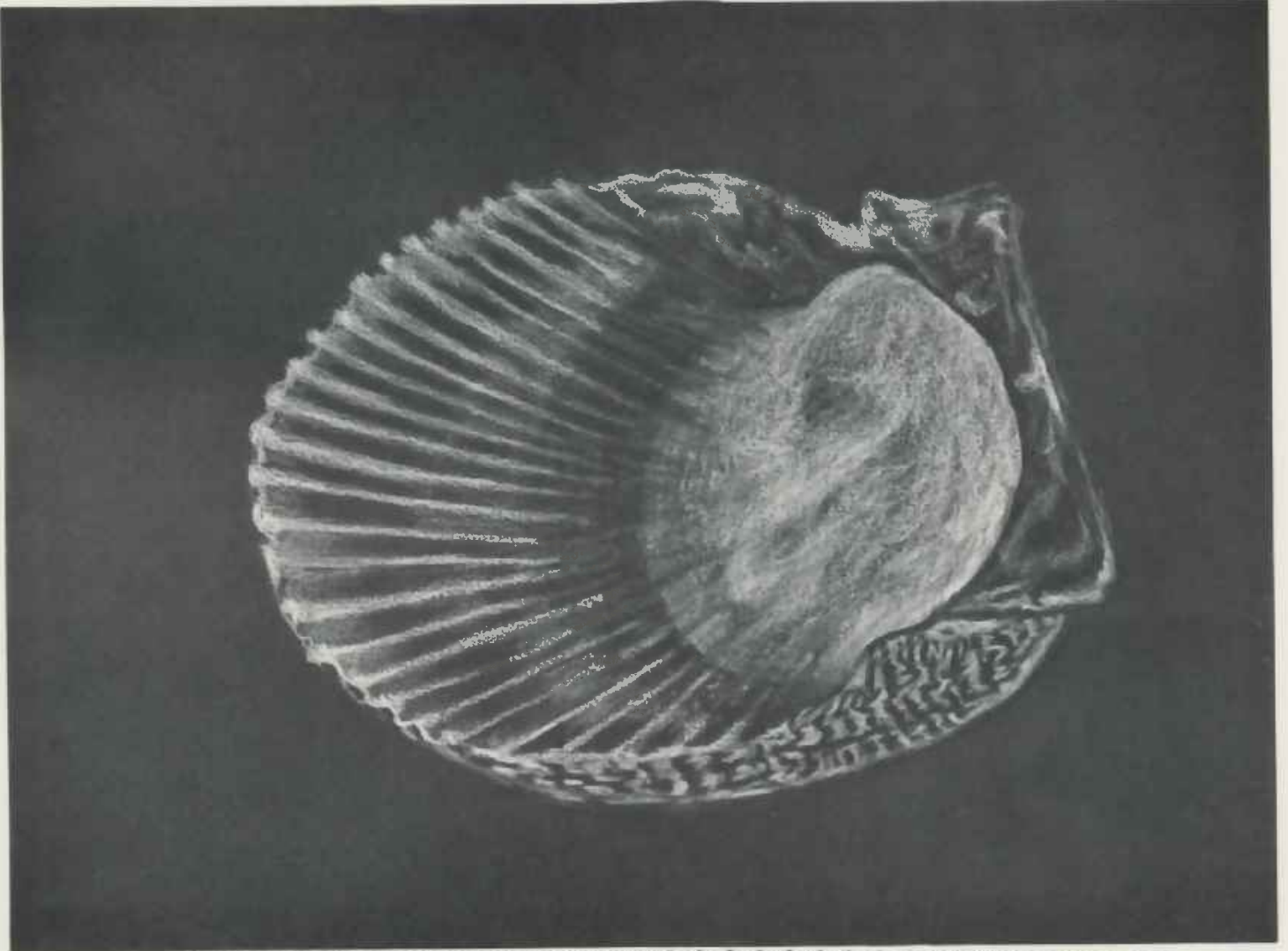
Death, destruction, an earthquake. Industrial explosion, a  
hurricane,  
hurry; cameras, mike, we must savor the pain.  
We'll show it at 5, 6, 7 and 11,  
We'll even show it in between.  
Bloody pictures to be displayed by a plastic old man and a  
beauty queen.  
Where's the mother of the dead little boy, Make sure her  
tears show.  
The man shot dead, a close-up, the bullet hole in his head.  
Change the same incident 100 different ways,  
this is big, we can drag it out for 100 days.  
Nestled in my studio chair  
I grow obese on your despair.  
I pray for death,  
I pray for destruction,  
I pray for pain.  
I pray for you!

Kevin Curcio

"Subterranean Homesick Blues Revisited"

Everybody's riotin'  
Dietin'  
Bustin' in  
Bustin' out  
Everybody's shoutin'  
Spoutin'  
Climbin' walls  
Walkin' malls  
Everything's turnin'  
Burnin'  
Flippin' in  
Flippin' out  
Everything's rippin'  
Tippin'  
Roarin'  
Skippin'  
Nobody's rememberin'

John Woods



is this goodbye?

the drowning feeling i get at waking-up time tells me this is  
goodbye  
after waiting for you to want me all this time  
i've lost any sense of self  
like an addiction to cheap wine  
you filled my soul  
and left me wanting more and wanting more  
jesse james  
you an outlaw  
me as honest and sensible as a woman could ever be  
meaning i love you all along and never saying it  
broken promises to myself not to call you again  
always returning to the source of my pain  
a river running uphill  
no beginning only an end  
containing this grief requires more strength than i have ever  
known  
i will miss the smell of your hair

Anya Musto



ゆきみぎけ

とおちやくのはる。

よそします

Japanese Haiku

Yoso shimasu  
toochaku no haru--  
yukimizake.

Anticipating  
the arrival of Spring--  
drinking wine while enjoying the snow.

*Joseph Pallante*

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