

Fall 1977

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Valparaiso University

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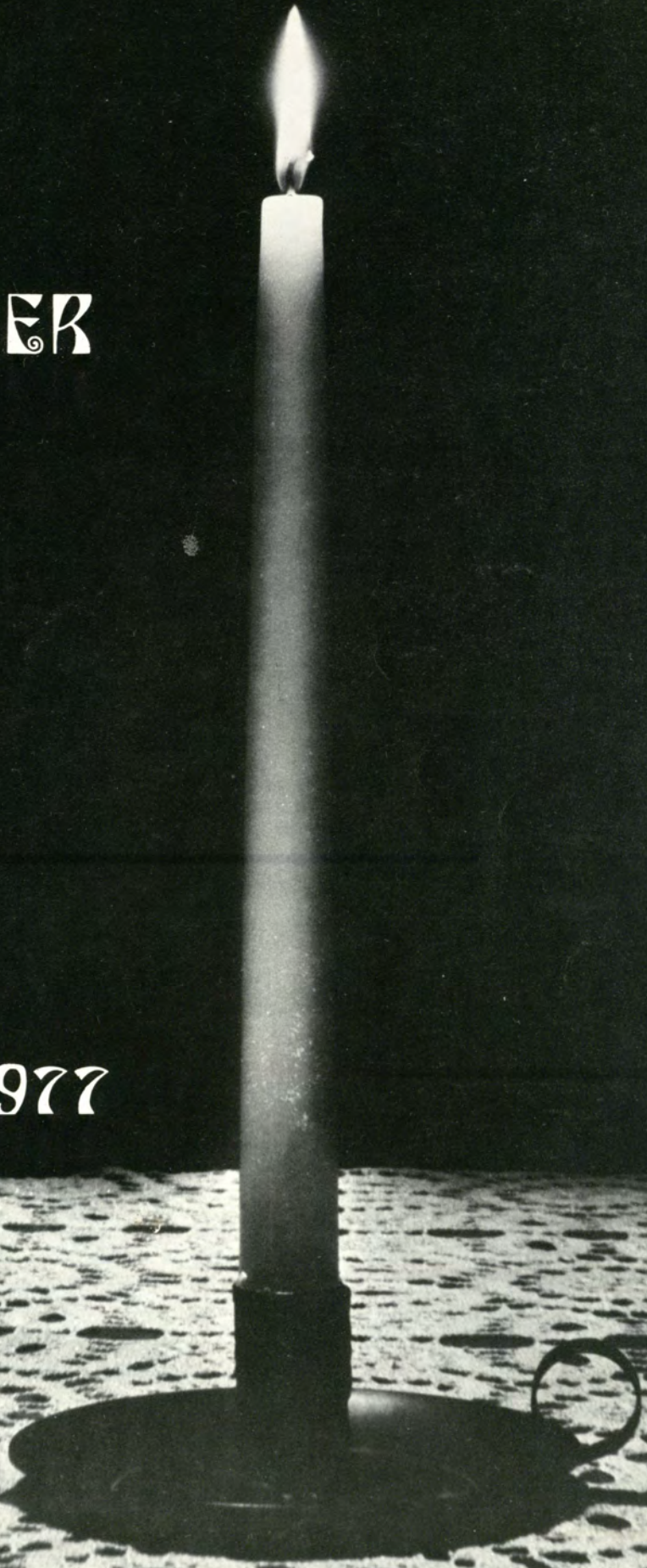
### Recommended Citation

Valparaiso University, "Fall 1977" (1977). *The Lighter, 1962-2003*. Paper 86.  
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THE  
LIGHTER

FALL 1977



THE LIGHTER  
 The literary-variety magazine of Valparaiso University  
 Fall 1977

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*A few words to our readers:*

This issue of *The Lighter* reflects an editorial philosophy which gives prominence to the written word in its poetic and prosaic forms. As a literary/variety magazine, *The Lighter* seeks to provide creative authors an opportunity to share their works with the University community, and also encourages the artist and photographer to embellish and complement the written word. *The Lighter* is the students' publication and, consequently, we present here the creations of students for the enjoyment of students. Material is selected on the basis of creativity, expressiveness, and quality by student critics with editorial approval. The editors welcome original contributions as well as constructive criticism from its readers. Special words of thanks are in order to the staff for their zeal, to our printer, Larry Klemz, for his assistance, and of course, to our contributing authors and artists. My personal gratitude is extended to Mrs. V. J. Berg, who first sparked my interest in literary pursuits. Finally, thanks to THE LIGHTER — *in luce tua videmus luce.*

*John F. Messerschmidt*

**"Bells" by Susan Holman**

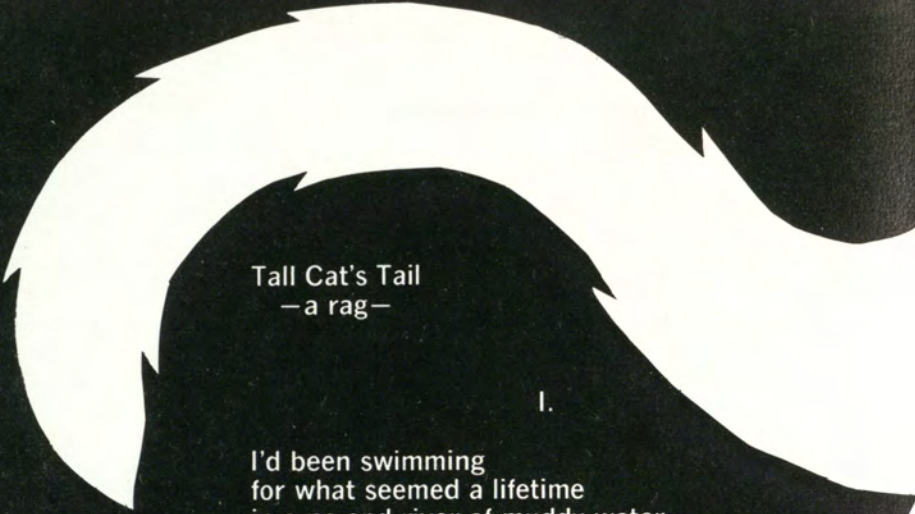
Ring,  
song.  
Sing  
long.

Fling the cord  
that chains this?

Wish you to lose awareness  
of the single-minded clanging  
of its faithful watchman's cry?  
Must I loose my chains before the  
world hears of my bondage? Wait.

Listen to the cradle rocking silently,  
more quietly. And on the hill the sunset  
traps the air within its gravity, and we  
can breathe the evening mists. As cows  
come home, their gentle gait and muted  
low allow the hollow clanging of their  
brass voice to warn others there will  
soon be heavy footprints in the soft clay  
of the soil. A Light! And from the Sound,  
a long and mournful moan that seems more  
eerie than the fog and much more beautiful  
to sailors in the tumbling, rocky storm than  
belles, who too, give rings to men that keep  
them from their slumbers. But a new awakening  
it is, and we see bling who know more light  
and walk more wisdom in their lameness than  
do we in our blind sight. For now the Sun is  
rising. And from slow, arthritic peddlers'  
carts we hear a ring awakening us to know the  
wares there being sold. For bells of Liberty  
are often frail and crack, as in his hero-death  
the Unknown Soldier tolled out from his slavery  
the price of freedom to the world. Now in the  
afternoon of earth, when elixirs from alchemists  
are still not freeing us from death, a slave I'd rather  
be to Truth than any liberated from the heart of life, so mortal  
that a sunset takes its toll so soon they hardly see the morning  
when the full moon wanes and rises in the night. Listen!

to  
the  
bells



Tall Cat's Tail  
— a rag —

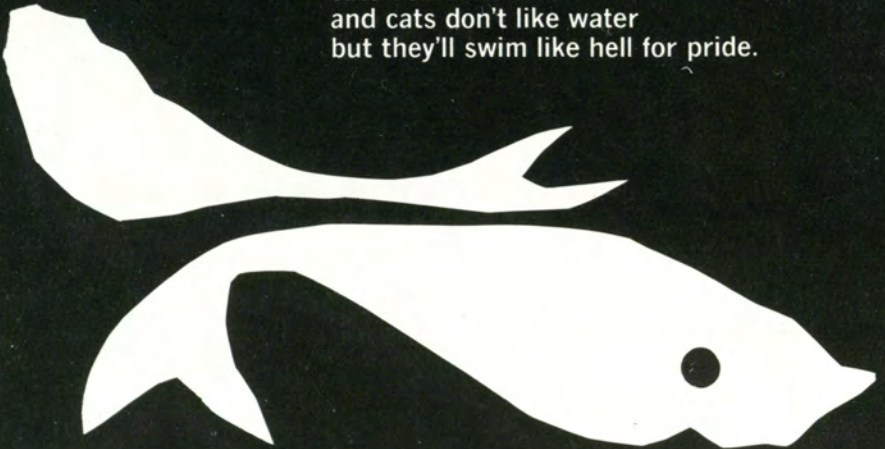
I.

I'd been swimming  
for what seemed a lifetime  
in a no-end river of muddy water—  
the boat over-turned  
halfway from the bank  
upstream, downstream—too dizzy to think,  
but anybody knows  
cats don't like water  
but they'll swim like hell for fame.

Felicity, felicity  
finicky feline  
rammin' around the river bank—  
my ear's been clipped  
and my tail's been dipped  
but I have crossed blue eyes.

II.

There's one good thing  
to being a river cat—  
nobody needs to keep you.  
Your tongue grows rough  
to clean the mud  
you learn to swim  
and bag a fish.  
Now anybody knows  
cats don't like dirt  
and cats don't like water  
but they'll swim like hell for pride.

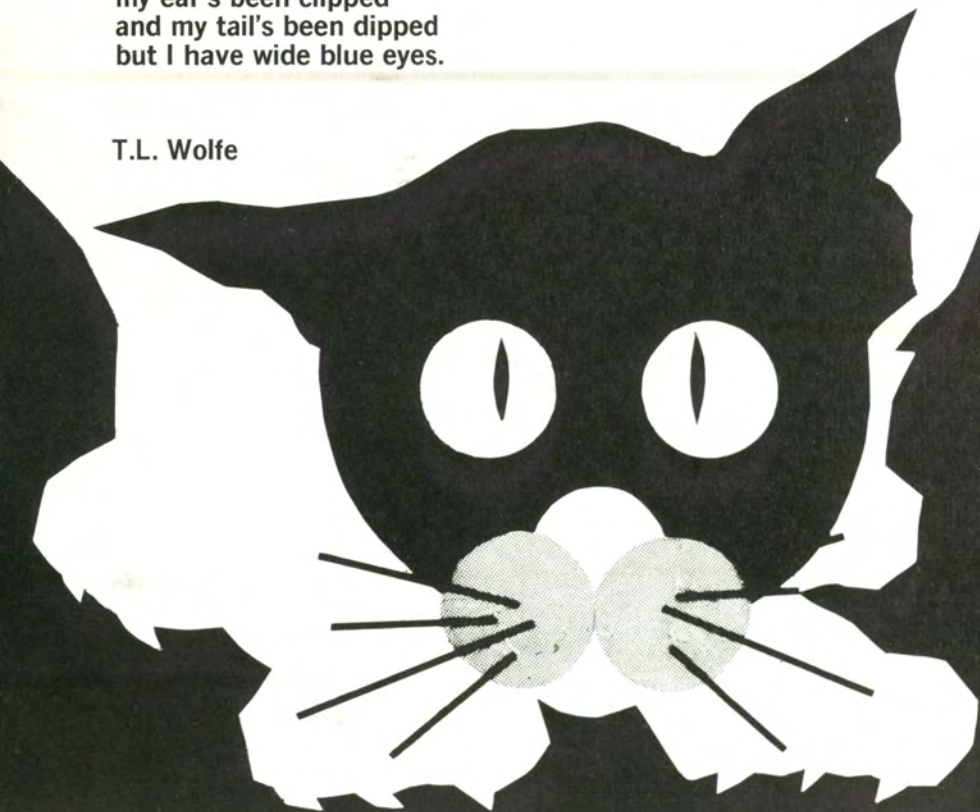


III.

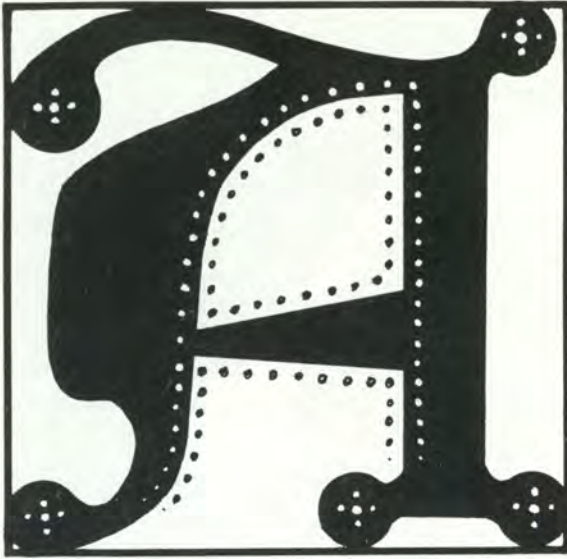
Some of us cats  
think we know it all—  
by the ninth time around, we know we don't.  
There's always something  
brand-new curious  
around all well-traversed river banks—  
and river bottoms  
but something lets the cat out of the bag,  
'cause cats don't like dirt  
and cats don't like water  
but they'll swim like hell for life.

Felicity, felicity  
finicky feline  
living forever on the bank—  
my ear's been clipped  
and my tail's been dipped  
but I have wide blue eyes.

T.L. Wolfe







## From The Sixth Book According To John

And it came to pass, in those days, that many of them were sitting about in a room, carousing and drinking beer and making merry; and many of them began to cry out in a loud voice, laughing and saying, "Give forth with more brew, so that we may become more inebriated and do shameful things that no man would own up to when sober." And their host complied, and also gave them more beer, so that he would not be thought of as a blivit, but rather as one who is a good guy.

And behold, with time their eyes grew glazed, and they knew not where they were; indeed, they knew not *who* they were, so much had they consumed; and lo, they began to play Pink Floyd at very high volume.

Now there was one among them, named Andrysiak, who was thought of by all to be a purveyor of all things unpleasant and foul; for every time he opened up his mouth, there came forth loud braying and foolishness in great amounts. And he spake unto them, saying, "My stomach is full, and I shall drink no more; yea, I will not lift another can to my lips, but will cease to consume this drink, for verily, my stomach churns, and my liver is greatly troubled." And they derided him and laughed much at him, saying that he was an abomination and engaged in perverted activity; but he did not listen, and turned the other way.

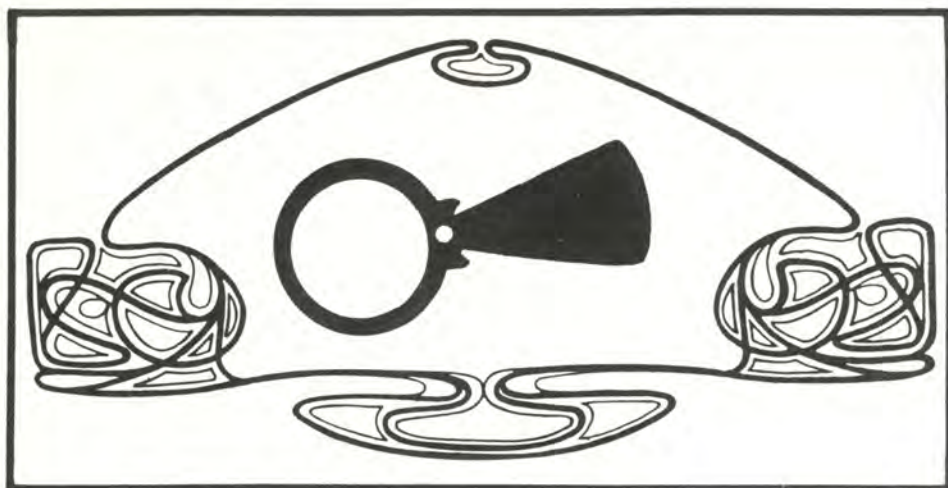
And behold, the music grew louder, and the drunkards made great noise; for they knew not what they were doing, and cared less.

And there came a knock upon the door, and all who heard it shouted, "Enter!" without thinking, for they had drunk much beer, and were not given much to thinking. And behold, he who entered was the RA, and he was smiling not, neither was he happy nor telling jokes; for he was confronted with smiling idiotic faces and the smell of alcohol on many breaths, and beer cans plainly in sight. And when the music had been turned down, and all had turned to look at him, he spake unto them, saying:

"Woe unto you, O men of little minds! You have been foolish and sinned greatly, and been loud beyond the laws of men, and have sunk into the depths of drunkenness; and because of your hardness of heart and unrepentance, I shall pour out all of this brew, and pink you all, every one; and in this way shall your sins be visited upon your heads."

There came then a great silence over the room; and then they began to weep and gnash their teeth, and beg for mercy, and to grovel like dogs before their master.

And lo, Andrysiak arose, and stood before them, and had pity on them; for he had not drunk much beer, and so was clear of mind. And he



drew near the RA and said, "Wilt thou indeed pink the righteous with the wicked? Suppose half of us were not drinking; wouldst thou pink us all and not spare us for the sake of the half that were not drinking? Far be it from thee, righteous Assistant of the wing, to pink the innocent with the guilty!"

And the RA pondered the situation; and he said unto him, "For the sake of half I will not pink you all."

Andrysiak answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the RA, I who am but a student. Suppose five of us were not drinking. Would you then pink us all, and not spare us for the sake of the five?"

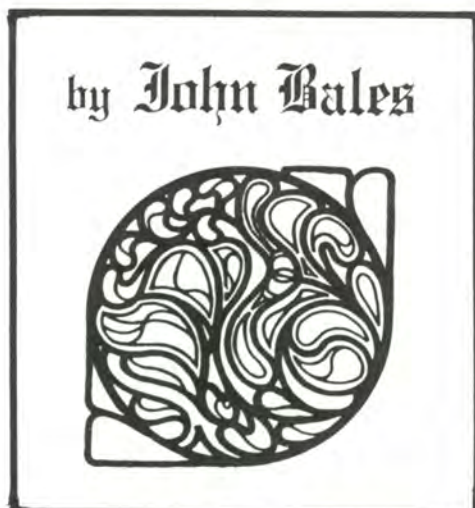
And the RA answered him, "I will not pink you all for the sake of five, if there be five."

And lo, some of those who were not without reason began surreptitiously to conceal those beer cans that were full, seeing what Andrysiak was doing.

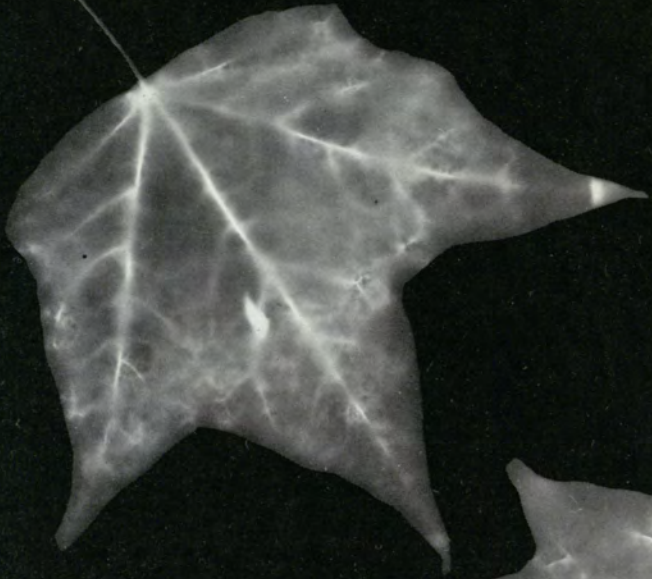
And Andrysiak spoke again, saying, "Suppose two of us were not drinking." And he said, "For the sake of two I will not do it."

And again Andrysiak said, "Oh let not my RA be angry, and I will speak this once: suppose only one of us were not drinking, wouldst thou not spare us for the sake of the one?"

And the RA said, "Oh, for crying out loud," and left the place; and they were amazed, saying to themselves, "Who is this man, that the RAs themselves cannot handle him?"



by John Bales



*Cornflakes*

*It's raining cornflakes brown and red,  
So crisp they crunch beneath my feet.  
Perhaps they're waiting to be fed  
To winter's hungry, milk-white street.*

*They crackle in the frosty air  
And trickle down, one under one,  
While rain strips sugar-frosted's bare  
And Krispie Krunchies are undone.*

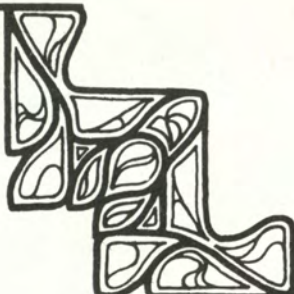
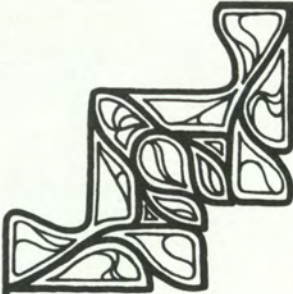
S.H.

re: leaves

*Scratch and slide  
and slip on streets  
Whirl and curl  
with tempests' beats  
Crunch and crinkle  
beneath my feet  
Ride alone  
or sail in fleet.*

J.F. Messerschmidt

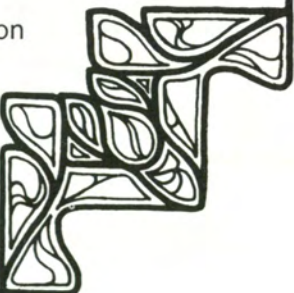



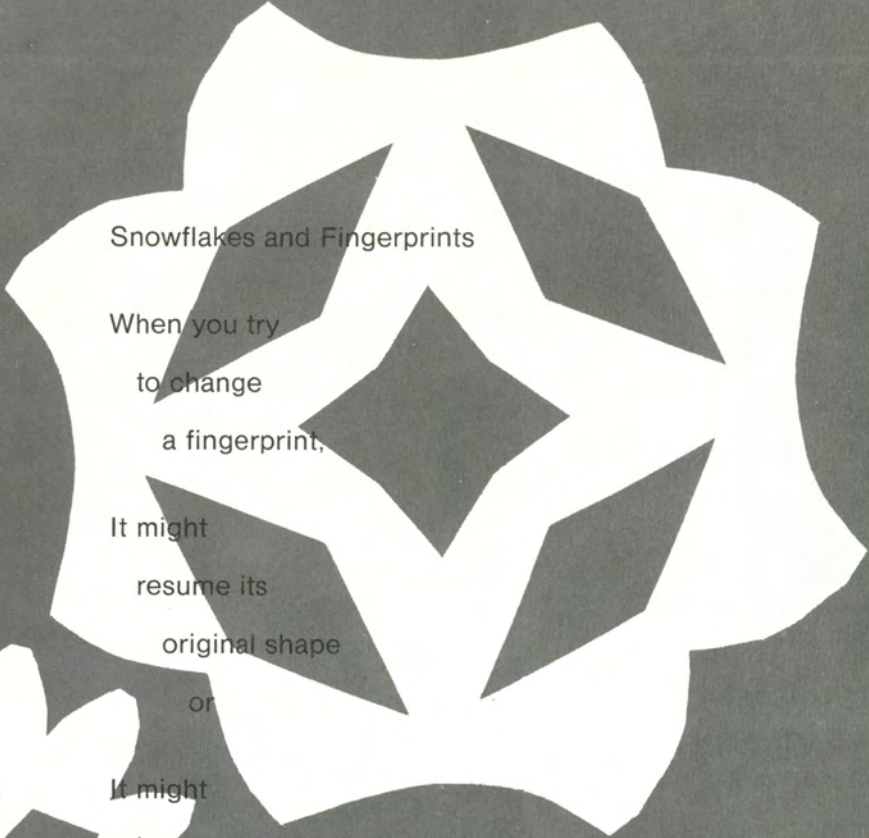


SOUVENIRS

If God  
gives me  
experiences  
to make me  
see things  
I never saw before,  
to see even  
things I  
didn't  
wanna see,  
then  
you  
must  
be  
experience  
with  
a  
capital  
E.

Kim Melton

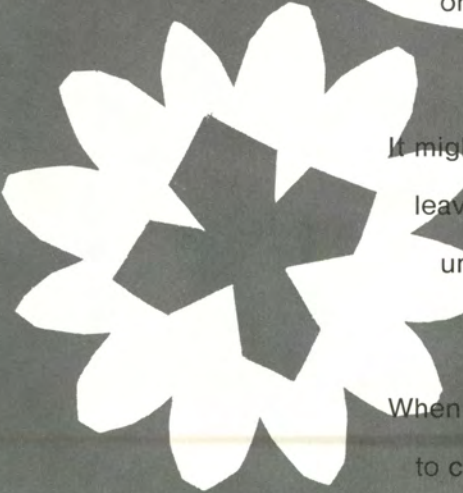




Snowflakes and Fingerprints


When you try  
to change  
a fingerprint,

It might  
resume its  
original shape  
or

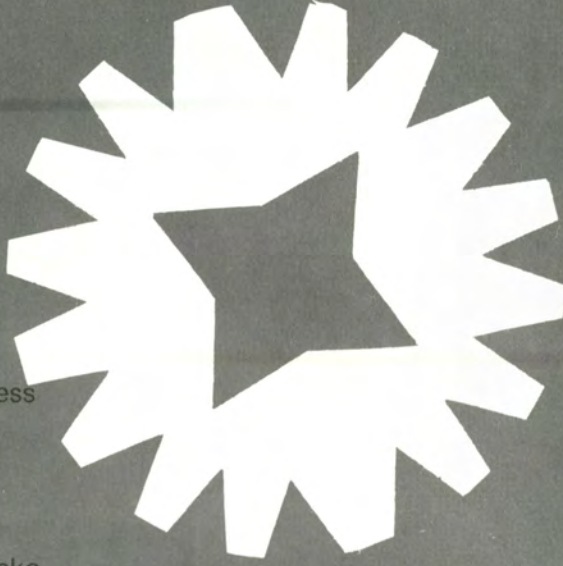


It might  
leave permanent  
unnatural scars  
but

When you try  
to change  
a snowflake,  
it melts.



I  
in my uniqueness  
fear  
I am  
a snowflake.



Terry Clarbour

**GOOD MORNING, CHICAGO**

Good morning, Chicago—thanks for the hospitality—  
You've greeted me with your porno magazines at corner newsstands,  
your gay men (with their lovers on Long Island),  
your glazy-eyed children who fill their lives  
with nothing but emptiness,  
and your dingy "el" stations which digest your people  
and spit them out again.

I've seen your broken screen doors and crumbling stairways,  
your tattered campaign posters which promise your salvation,  
yes, and your cemeteries which tell me where your people are.

I hope you've put your best foot forward,  
'cause it's time to leave you now—

No one waves good-bye.  
Yet your cigarette billboard asks,  
"ARE YOU READY FOR MORE?"

John F. Messerschmidt



## A PLEASANT NIGHT

A pleasant night, as yet, has passed. The light  
Upon my fertile page falls soft and warm.  
I write by candle's flame to make me one  
With those long dead whose art glows yet so bright  
It's sure their poems did their souls inform,  
For men through all of time to look upon.

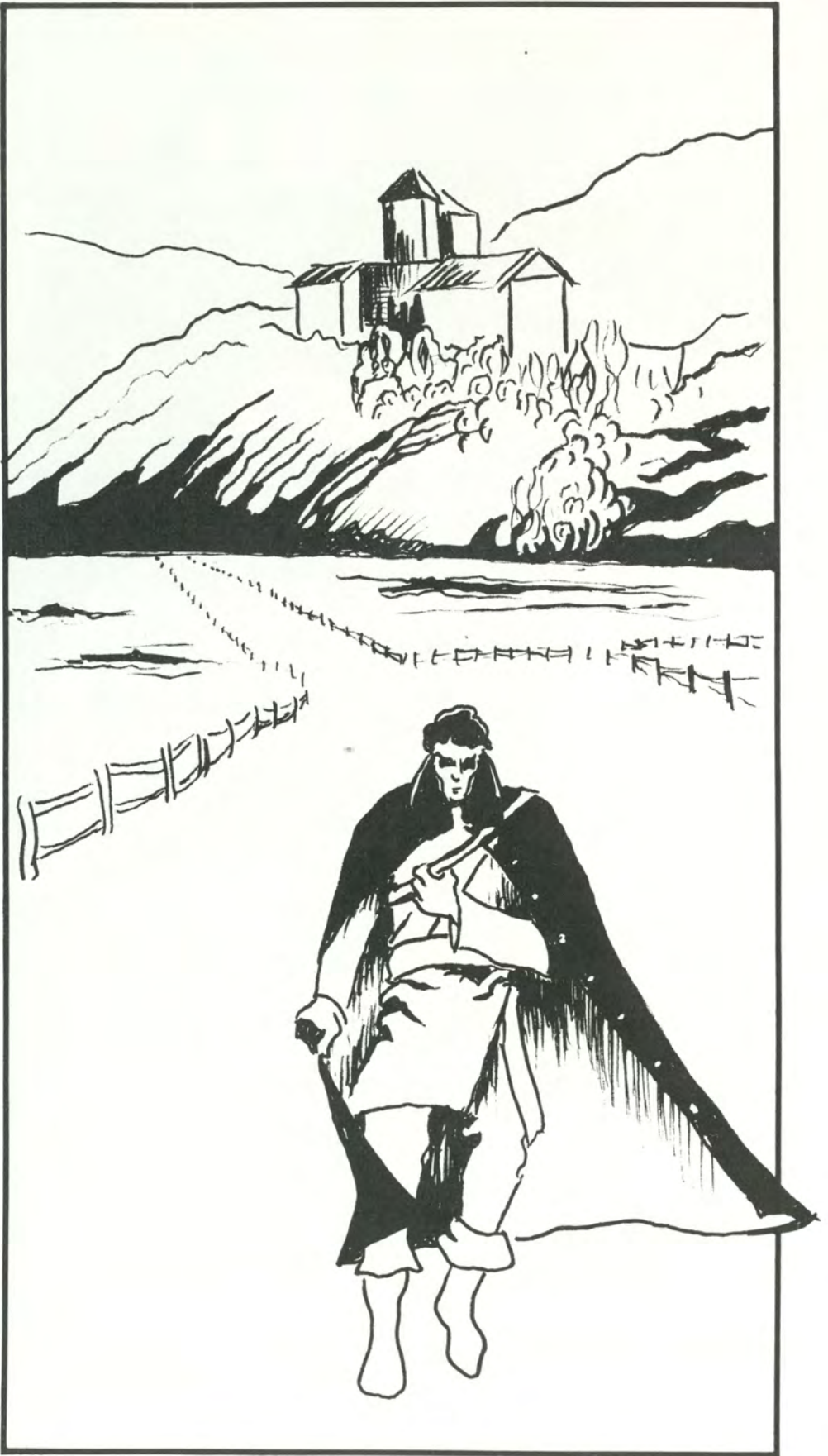
And then, a howling from beyond the wall  
Of creature never seen upon this earth  
Or, if upon this earth, not in our time.  
Empty of feeling, message, not a call  
To brother beasts, but as the cry at birth,  
To say, "I breathe, and I claim life as mine."

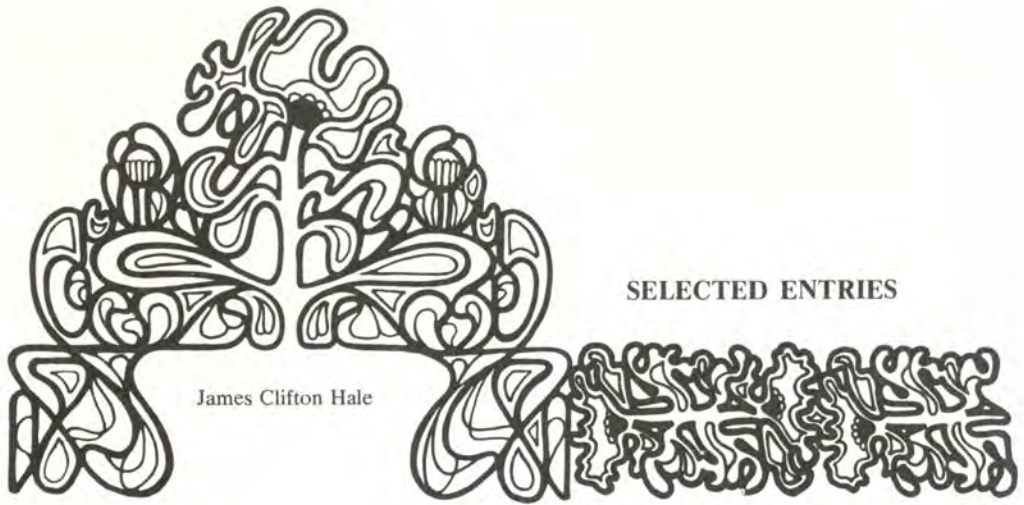
And now, a rumbling just beneath my feet,  
As if, below a shallow shelf of ground,  
Collapsed some huge and vacant cave of ice—  
The walls give way, then floor and ceiling meet  
To make this terrifying, final sound.  
If man survives, what will remain of life?

The question, though it chills my heart, yet seems  
A fitting subject for the written word.  
I take my pen. But now upon the page  
The light falls weak and cold and sputtering dim.  
The sounds this thin-walled, thin-floored room has heard  
Are their own heralds of a coming age.

Carol Breimeier







## SELECTED ENTRIES

James Clifton Hale

(From the journal of a landed English lord. Early 1840's.)  
SEPT. 1

All aspects of life here at the Manor are quite pleasant. The grounds are more than ample (many times has my father proudly stated that they "approach 500 acres"), and the house where our family resides is, at least according to the name given it by our tenantry, a "castle."

I can see at work the tenant farmers, all of whom live in a group of thatched-roofed cottages which lies half a mile or so from the main house. In the distance, their scythes flash against the cobalt sky, and are framed by the window in whose square of afternoon light I now sit. When the wind cooperates, I can smell the perfume of the grain and clover through which they cut their swaths.

I write now not to fill the empty day of a leisurely landed gent, but from desperation. I have little recourse but to seek some bit of accidental wisdom which might fall from my pen.

I have searched this great house from uppermost gable to cellar. This was no mean task, let me assure you, for as tangled with ivy is its exterior, the interior of this house is wound with sinuous and narrow corridors. Further, a dim stairway leads to each of the many gables.

My search, however, has been for naught. My family, my parents and sister, is nowhere to be found. Of course, I went calling their names among the dense oaks, fields, and formal gardens that are my father's acres, and I naturally inquired among the tenants about them, but I received information from neither endeavor.

When I was younger, at harvest time my father would sometimes disappear, "gone to town for a few days," presumably to negotiate the sale of our crop, but never has the entire family quit the Manor for so long. It's been four days.

SEPT. 2

Hoping to find my family there, I rode the several miles to the town today. I rode quite desperately; my worrying has become nearly frenzied.

I entered the town along a dusty road, which was sectioned by ribs of slanted sunlight streaming between the village's antique struc-

tures. My horse's sides were well lathered, for over the entire journey, I had kept him always at a run or better.

I raced into the town square, and immediately leapt from my saddle. I fell as I did so, and swore wildly, drawing the eyes of all in the square. Rising, I began to scramble among the crowd shopping there, accosting each person for information as I passed.

I gripped and shook shoulders. I cursed ignorants for no reason but their lack of news.

The townspeople stood mute before me, in something akin to fear, with wide eyes and gaping mouths. They must have thought me mad, or perhaps disordered in some more loathesome way, for one beshawled beldame made an odd and complicated gesture toward me, then fled.

Making no progress in the square, I next ripped frantically into the various shops around it. I upset shelves, broke bottles.

My hoarsely shouted questions echoed throughout the hamlet in tones which, I'm sure, must have rung with an air of deranged malevolence in the townsmen's ears. You must remember, however, that I was tortured by grief, or, more properly, by a growing suspicion that something had occurred which might engender that emotion. Great fear had invaded my soul, and was rapidly winnowing any reason from my mind.

(Thankfully, though, as I write now I have calmed somewhat, but even yet my faculties of mind and spirit are eroding beneath the wild surf of an ever more debilitating sea of events.)

Despite my raving interrogatives, I gained no information from my trip this morning.

SEPT. 3

Again today, I continued my search. I went below into the cellar, intending to reconnoiter it somewhat more thoroughly than I previously had. I armed myself with a kerosene lantern against the darkness inherent in such a windowless, subterranean enclosure.

The light of my lamp flickered, its undulations reflected most disconcertingly by the damp walls of the cellar. The condensation upon the walls trickled onto the flagstones of the floor, so that areas wholly without puddles were quite scarce, if not non-existent.

As might be expected in such a dank, light-





less place, from the murky wetness of the floor grew disgusting molds and foul gray mushrooms. This being the case, I could not restrain my mind from conjuring horrifying pictures of *things* creeping underfoot in menacing aspects of centipedal terror.

Because even the large lantern I carried could do little to dispel the blackness of our large cellar, an unplumbable depth of utter night stretched away before and behind me. Again, my worry-fevered brain created images. How could foul, avaiian vipers be not awing on the currents of darkness all around?

Despite my fright, I knew that I could not turn back. I needed to be certain that the cellar was not the place of my family's concealment, and I knew that I would descend there again and again, searching until certainty finally came.

At this point I was driven no more by courage or love than by a very strong desire not to return.

During my stumblings in the cellar, I had not thought it possible that my situation could be made even one iota more fearful, but such an abominable thing did occur, for as I sought my kin among the mushrooms and wet walls, I soon perceived the growing of a *chittering*. No other word could describe the sound, because it reverberated in my head like nothing other than the insane noises of an infinity of rodents.

"Surely," I thought, "the plague victims of so long ago heard this sound above that of their labored breathing as they sank into the grasp of Black Death."

The sound increased until I was positively crazed with dread. At last, I screamed, and hurled the lantern at the sound's source, which of course was the darkness behind me. I ran shrieking and mindless off to my left.

(Thankfully, the lamp's flame died before the lamp itself shattered against the stones of the floor, else, all the kerosene within would have burned in an instant, flaming atop the dark waters of the cellar. I shudder now to speculate as to what that much illumination would have revealed.)

Since the cellar is of rather large dimensions, it was many running steps before I caromed in the new blackness into a wetly beslimed wall. I scrabbled, gibbering quite animalistically by this time, against the wall, seeking in its unbroken facade some means of escape, even though I knew that none would be found.

I continued until my hand encountered a raised surface.

In my terror, I mindlessly pummeled the projection with an open hand, as a sickly child

might slap his bedsheets during an epileptic fit. I could sense both the bulging of my eyes and the thrashing of an icy eel deep and low within my abdomen.

Suddenly, I suppose in result of my pounding, a door set flush with the wall sprang open before me on silent hinges. The protrusion upon which I had pounded must have been some sort of spring-loaded catch or lever.

I had not many times before been in the cellar, having since my earliest recollection been rather unnerved by the place. I had, though, ventured often enough below to *know* that no door should have hung ajar in that quarter of the underground chamber. Despite this, which I recognized even as I gibbered, I ducked within, seeking a hiding place, a haven from my chittering tormentors.

After a few moments behind the door, which had, subsequent to my passage through it, closed of its own accord, I came somewhat to my senses. Immediately, my mind reeled in the darkness, and I felt that if one more second should pass without the advent of illumination, I would perish.

I felt in my pockets, and, luckily, discovered that I had matches with me. As I struck one, I became suddenly aware that the chittering had diminished greatly in volume, and realized that it had done so upon my entry through the unexpected door.

It seemed then that the door offered a barrier that the source of the chittering could not easily pass. I was, however, sure that this setback was a merely temporary one, and that the chitterers, the many who blasphemed with their hellish din, would soon plague me once more.

For this reason, I wished nothing so badly as to put an eternity of miles between myself and the hidden door.

Striding as rapidly as possible without extinguishing the matches I lit to show my way, I hurried away from the portal. Even though I felt my eyes drawn to turn back, I refused to look behind me.

As I walked, I surveyed my surroundings by the thin light of my matches. Much to my surprise, though no memory of this occluded place was mine, I felt it strangely familiar.

I traversed what seemed to be a seldom-used corridor. The many-yard expanse before me was shrouded under a pall of dust. The ceiling a few feet above my head was clad in a thick, tangled cloak of cobwebs; among them dry husks of insects hung like black buttons. The passage ended with a ninety-degree turn to the left, but this was yet far away.

Oddly, the air here was not damp. It seemed





in fact the exact opposite—as dry as the air is said to be within the pyramids of Gizeh. The walls about me, rather than being points of condensation, as were those of the cellar without, were absolutely covered with carven letters of seemingly Roman origin.

I studied the inscriptions as I paced the narrow space between the walls upon which they lay. I had hoped to commit some of them to memory for later translation. (I do read Latin.)

Despite my knowledge of the ancient tongue of the Romans, I could make no sense of the inscribed syllables. This inability is not caused by a faulty memory of the carvings (as though I could *forget* them!), for those I saw are burned into my brain, repeating themselves again and again, but in no language I recognize.

In my skull, the inscriptions are the ever-chanted supplications of some forgotten and barbarous cult, intoned in a dead, forgotten tongue. Wild flutes screech in my head, accompanying insane voices. The voices wail crazily, without pause, their mindless invocations echoing impiously among the bloody stars that float behind my eyelids. Eternally: "Ce'haie ep-ngh fl'hurr ghi Fgii'le! Ican-icanirus! Fhtagn! Fhtagn! Fhtagn!"

I formerly had dismissed the notion that our house sat upon Roman foundations. I have no doubt now that it does. I merely wonder if Jupiter or Apollo, or any of the others were included in the heavenly pantheon of the Romans who made the inscriptions I now know so well.

As I finished my travel of the distance to the corridor's bend, the match then lighting my way died. Cursing, I hastily fumbled for another, struck it against the sole of my boot, and rounded the corner.

In the sputtering and sulphurous light the new match gave, I saw that which had been concealed by the corner. My family lay in a pool of congealed blood, the remains of their bodies torn nearly beyond recognition, as if by some rabid animal. A week's decay had transformed my loved ones into a fetid mass of rotten carrion.

I recall screaming, but how I came safely again into the light of the ground floor, I doubt I shall ever know. I am sure, however, that until I was delivered into the day, the chittering followed the entire distance outside the hidden threshold.

SEPT. 7

I have been unable to write for the past days, for the terror that remained with me in that time had left me good for nothing but lying blankly in bed, my eyes astare, and my jaw slack. But, as is obvious, I am today somewhat recovered. Even the horrid chanting in my head has softened.

I wish, however, that I lay yet in my former amnesiac state, for my memories are more than I can bear, especially at night.

SEPT. 16

I own the Manor now, but it means nothing.

The various inquests and will-readings have passed, their outcomes quite predictable. My father's will left all to his descendants, and since wolves do roam in these parts, they were pronounced my family's killers. It was obvious, the magistrate said, that "there was a nest of them down there."

Ha.

SEPT. 17

Since the Manor has become mine, it has been my wont, indeed nearly my only activity, to sit at this desk and stare out the window at the tenants as they labor in the distance. This day, however, though I watched, the tenants did not appear in the fields. Whether or not they were absent because they had finished the harvest, I do not know, for, I'm afraid, though master of the Manor now, I have done little to fulfill the duties of that station.

I ventured down to the tenant's cottages to discover the reason for their absence. They were nowhere to be found.

SEPT. 26

Nine days have passed since I visited the tenants' cottages. Since then, I have neither left this house, nor even this study, for the chittering I first heard among the Roman stones beneath the "castle" has undergone several terrible metamorphoses: I fear now to quit this room.

These changes have come not only in the volume and source of the sound, but in a manner much more dire as well.

The chittering's volume has risen to a point that, I think, will soon burst my eardrums. (The chanting in my skull has also become deafening, nearly as loud as the chittering. "Ce'haie ep-ngh fl'hurr ghi Fhii'le! Ican-icanirus! Fhtagn! Fhtagn! Fhtagn!" How I will praise God when I can hear the infernal noises no more!)

Likewise, the chittering's source has moved upward. It is no longer confined to the dark and dank of the cellar: now it seems that a million hellish rodents roll in wave upon wave of malignant gray against the door of this study.

Despite the horror implicit in the other conversions, it is the tone and timbre of the chittering which have been most terrifyingly altered. I fear the mutation of these qualities of the sound more than any of the others, and, if possible, more than the original appearance of the chittering itself, for the implications of this alteration are more than any even slightly godly man can contemplate without thoughts of damnation.

I think I shall soon go mad, for the chittering is in my voice now.





*It Must Have Been*  
*—a rag—*

T.L. Wolfe

I.

*Nature, mother, tried*  
*but I don't think she succeeded*  
*in the sense of being*  
*the unimpeded*  
*progress of growing*  
*such, like, a malformation;*  
*I mean, one couldn't help seeing*  
*it's all a result*  
*of time, out of whack*  
*throwing*  
*it all back*  
*revealing the primitive's*  
*expression of all the black*  
*rich, dark, bad, bad sublime.*

II.

*Ham*  
*in the oven*  
*smells*  
*oh—so good*  
*the beans in the pot*  
*are calculatin' worth*  
*prizes more than I could give.*

*I see the money running fast*  
*away from my fingers*  
*and the food in the pot*  
*boils over 'til*  
*it's all gone*  
*evaporated*

\* \* \*

*It must have been,*  
*Once upon a time*  
*It must have been*  
*a real, real good life.*  
*Oh, Trixie, tell my soul*  
*that it's all gonna be*  
*alright again.*

*Someday*  
*we're gonna run down that hill*  
*searching for wild flowers*  
*because the berries aren't there*  
*but we won't care*  
*we'll take what we are given*  
*and all the rains*  
*and all the snows*  
*all the times so bad won't hurt*  
*anymore, ever again.*

*Trixie, how long can you hang on?  
There's so much work to do.  
The harvest's begun  
the winter's coming,  
please try to work a little more.*

*The sun is pretty  
pulling all the light it can  
and throwing it back to earth  
Oh, the wind's so cold  
and we feel so old  
please, we don't want you to make fun.*

*It could have been  
something else once upon  
a time, long time  
but oh, I wish  
it never had been at all.*

III.

*Sh-h-h;  
how sad the cemetery sits  
upon the broad hill  
and the stones aligned  
and scattered, both.*

*My, how decorous!  
Black cars in a row  
they'll bury me in real fine style.  
Please, no roses, please—  
I was allergic to them.*

IV.

*Watch the pot—  
there, I think it's done, too.  
How tired everyone is  
but the worst is over,  
I suppose.*

*Tomorrow we must go back,  
labor's labor for the greens  
we'll never get to eat  
but trade in for a certified bill.*

*Baby! Stop her crying!  
we don't shed tears in this house—  
and watch the pot, the other one!  
spare, don't burn a thing.*





\*

When inquisitive and relentless butterfly hunters  
pursue and capture you,  
imprison you in their labelled jars,  
and impale you on tasteless display  
and when they classify,  
characterize,  
and categorize you  
in relationship to their other specimens  
rendering you immobile  
helpless  
and lifeless. . .

Look to Him

who was pinned to two roughly-hewn beams  
and exhibited as a cosmic spectacle,  
enduring the prejudices of an ignorant world,  
And remember that the story did not end there.

For He was the first

to shed his earth-bound cocoon  
so that we may follow His example.

Arise, then, soar high in the freedom  
of your untried resurrection wings.

J.F. Messerschmidt

