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OSBORN, MICHAEL D. The Song of the Man Whose Touch. (1975)
Directed by: Dr. Robert Watson. Pp. 79.

The poems in The Song of the Man Whose Touch represent a kind of spiritual autobiography of the years 1970 to 1973. They represent a gradual awakening of a poetic consciousness, along with the increasing arrogance it takes to define oneself as poet. This arrogance, in imagining that the events of any individual's life could possibly have enough significance or meaning to be used in a poetic way, will not, I devoutly hope, interfere in the appreciation of the poems as works of art, since I cannot conceive of any other foundation on which to build a poetry that requires as much fidelity as possible to what really happened.

This is a roundabout way of saying, I suppose, that my poetry is in very large measure concerned with the nature of reality/fate/God/whatever and how that affects man, or at least this man. I have not yet come to any conclusions on the subject. My thesis is merely an attempt to define the problem, or, even less, to become aware that there is a problem.

This problem is of a continuing nature and resists the artificial limitations imposed by individual poems, or individual books. This is the reason for my fondness, contrary to many established dictums of poetic procedure, for long poems, longer poem cycles, and longer still books, and the only reasons that my thesis begins and ends where it does are that 1) before 1970 I produced no poetry worthy of reprinting, and 2) in 1973 I received my B.A. degree, which provided me with a convenient cut-off point (involving a complete change of environment and life-expectations). And, now that I've provided enough ammunition for

every critic from here to Australia to take pot-shots at my poetic method, I will subside into an uneasy silence, leavened by, I hope, occasional glimpses of mercy.

Michael S. Jordan

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

December
1973

Approved by


R. L. Nelson
Chairman

THE SONG OF THE MAN WHOSE

"

TOUCH

by

Michael D. Osborn

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1975

Approved by

Robert W. Osborn
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Adviser

Robert W. Xson

Committee Members

Arthur W. Dixon
H. J. Kerby-Smith

Oct 24, 1975

Date of Acceptance by Committee

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My thanks to Robert Watson, whose help has been invaluable, to all of my manuscript readers who put up with my constant revisions while suggesting others, and to my artist and friend Adele Catherwood who drew (superbly, I might add) the logos for Sections I, II, and III, and the illustration for the title page of the poem cycle Waiting for the Call that Never Comes.

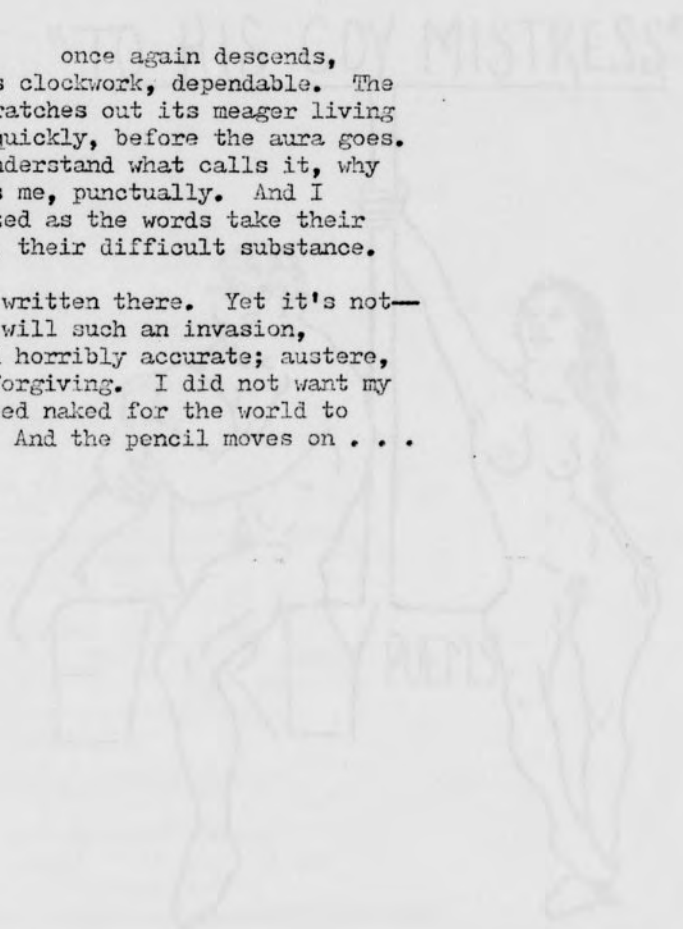
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AND THE POWER

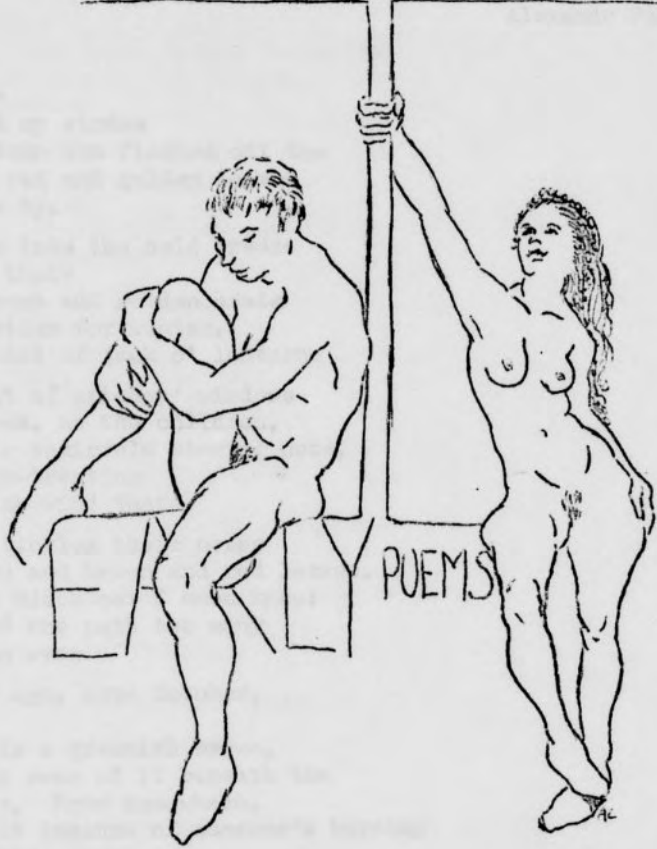
once again descends,
regular as clockwork, dependable. The
pencil scratches out its meager living
quickly, quickly, before the aura goes.
I don't understand what calls it, why
it chooses me, punctually. And I
stand amazed as the words take their
slow form, their difficult substance.

That's me written there. Yet it's not—
I did not will such an invasion,
brutal and horribly accurate; austere,
stern, unforgiving. I did not want my
soul exposed naked for the world to
laugh at. And the pencil moves on . . .



"TO HIS COY MISTRESS"

I sat upon
 A chair with a cushion
 As the sun shone
 Upon my face
 And my hair
 Was blown by
 The wind
 I was
 Thinking
 Of you
 And how
 You were
 So
 Beautiful
 And
 How
 I
 Loved
 You
 And
 How
 I
 Miss
 You
 Now
 I
 Sit
 Here
 Alone
 And
 Think
 Of
 You
 And
 How
 I
 Wish
 You
 Were
 Here
 With
 Me
 And
 How
 I
 Wish
 I
 Could
 Hold
 You
 In
 My
 Arms
 And
 Kiss
 You
 And
 How
 I
 Wish
 I
 Could
 Hold
 You
 In
 My
 Arms
 And
 Kiss
 You
 And
 How
 I
 Wish
 I
 Could
 Hold
 You
 In
 My
 Arms
 And
 Kiss
 You



PUEMS

WHEN YOU SMILED

"Не досталась никому,
Только гробу одному . . ."

Alexandr Pushkin

I sit here
Gazing out my window
As the autumn sun flashes off the
Brown and red and golden leaves
That slide by.

Trees lean into the cold breeze
Giving up their
Red and brown and golden coats
In preparation for winter.
I am reminded of jack o' lanterns

Leering out of witches' windows
On Halloween, as the children,
Like little squirrels storing nuts,
Go trick-or-treating
In the brisk wind that

Sometimes tickles their noses
With golden and brown and red leaves.
I recall a black cat I once knew;
She crossed one path too many
And was run over

Four years ago, come October.

The grass is a greenish brown,
What can be seen of it beneath the
Dead leaves. From somewhere,
The aromatic incense of someone's burning
Fills the air.

And that year
At our school's yearly autumn ball
We were "Lost In Space."
I remember particularly
The glowing little green man

With the awful smile,
Which you covered with your own
And made beautiful,
And we stood there,
Not quite knowing what to say or do;

Then the band started

And we went over to get some punch.
 A week later, we watched together
The Diary of Anne Frank, trying to ignore
 The eventual Auschwitz,

Three years ago, come October.

A swarm of birds wheels over,
 A brown cloud with no rain in it,
 Except for the brown bodies themselves.
 And with hunting season nearing,
 Some will fall--

Remember the homecoming game
 We attended,
 How cold it was,
 How I finally mustered courage enough
 To put my arm around you,

For what good it did . . .
 We won the game, 9 to 6,
 But I don't remember
 Who we played. And after the
 Traditional Homecoming Dance,

We went to your house
 For popcorn and Cokes, partying
 Till one in the morning,
 Even though you had to work at eight--
 And at your door, you smiled,

And I got lost in your eyes and your arms.
 The next weekend
 My father went deer-hunting,
 Brought home a doe
 To bleed dry on the garage floor,

Two years ago, come October.

The first frost came today,
 Freezing red and white and yellow flowers
 Brown. Girls' coats
 Are getting thicker and heavier;
 Winter in the air.

I ponder over our last days
 And their mystery, though all
 Who play at love
 Say goodbye sooner or later--
 Hoping it will be later . . .

As we parted, not really knowing why,
 I left some of me--you, too, I suspect--
 A sacrifice to the God of Possibilities.
 I've been away; it's all
 Grown rather dim.

Except your smile. And while you smile,
 I forget the autumn here, the winter coming,
 And the cold that freezes all, that comes for the
 Flowers and the leaves and the birds
 And for you will come too early . . .

One year ago, come October.

You always did want to be in the paper:

"A nineteen-year-old coed
 Was found dead in her room
 At a campus women's residence hall
 Early today. The girl was pronounced

Dead on arrival at Memorial Hospital.
 A fire department resuscitator team
 Was called to her room at 7:30 a.m.
 The team sought to revive her,
 But firemen said that she was apparently

Dead when they arrived.
 She had a medical history of a
 Heart ailment, according to university officials."
 There's nothing like
 Death in the proper perspective.

I sit here
 Gazing out my window
 As the autumn sun flashes off the
 Brown and red and golden leaves
 That slide by.

To Norene
 October 6, 1970

EYE

Opened the door
 And set the brown
 Wrapped package down
 On my desk I peeled back
 The paper
 And looked at it curiously
 It just lay there

 was a many-
 faceted shiny steel ball
 much like the kind
 nothing revolving on the ceiling
 in movies
 of speakeasies or
 ultra-modern discotheques

I held it in my hand
 Turning it slowly
 Trying not to leave
 Fingerprints I stared
 Into each face
 Concentrating
 My head felt sweaty

 nothing an old woman had
 owned it said that
 still each facet had a different
 picture in it but they
 nothing only reflected
 like mirrors
 unless one concentrated

My face framed a thousand times
 Stared back at me
 I concentrated more
 Focusing
 My
 Mind

n n n said each facet
 o o o told a story about
 t t t the person who owned it
 h h h what his life was
 i i i what it would be
 n n n tales
 g g g thousands
 ! ! !

As hard as I could
 I threw it against the wall
 Where it bounced off
 Rolled slowed
 Stopped
 And lay there
 Mocking me

at least two months too late
 nothing.
 a place where the soil's been dug up
 patches of snow scattered
 was shining
 a wreath on the ground
 with fake pine branches
 no headlines
 no nothing
 just the wreath just the
 Christmas! I walk along the small streets,
 The snow in small drifts crunching under feet.
 I peer in windows as I pass that show
 The red, yellow, blue, and so on, lights--out
 On the deep green pine trees with each color--of sorts
 Of their bright beauty. Reflected in a wreath...
 (I stand on the inside front of a small glass hatch)
 Taped with string, I can see some plaster gear
 In a yard behind and left of us; the sun,
 I could bright but reminding me of an
 Electric sawflake or a hostile over-
 sized golf a patch of red some gardeners planted
 Just recently; and now, I turn, walk on--
 The night is darkest just before the

stand there
 well. So this is
 what it all comes to.
 looked.
 went
 'til the wreath

'TIS THE SEASON . . .

cold
 at least two months too late
 nothing,
 a place where the sod's been dug up
 patches of snow scattered
 sun shining
 a wreath on the ground
 with fake pine branches
 no headstone
 no nothing
 just the wreath just the

Christmas! I walk along the sunlit streets,
 The snow in small drifts crunching under foot.
 I peer in windows as I pass that cheat
 The red, yellow, blue, and so on, lights--put
 On the deep green pine trees with such care--of much
 Of their bright beauty. Reflected in a wreath
 (Taped on the inside front of a small glass hutch)
 Bound with string, I can see some plaster geese
 In a pond behind and left of me; the sun,
 A cold bright dot reminding me of an
 Electric snowflake or a hostile one-
 Eyed god; a patch of sod some gardener planted
 Just recently; some snow . . . I turn, walk on--
 The night is darkest just before the

stood there
 said So this is
 what it all came to.
 looked,
 went

'tis the season

IMITATION OF AN ELEGY BY NIKOLAI YAZYKOV

A cotton wind blows her hair
 (flower stuck behind one ear)
 like a wind-blown apple tree in full bloom—

Her grass green eyes 'blink;
 her pug nose wrinkles in fun
 (and to hold her colored glasses up);
 her mouth as she speaks becomes a crimson orchid
 deep and soft

I see

Her hand flies up,
 a bird,
 choosing a blossom from the apple tree.

And the wind slides down her arm's
 milky way, caresses her elbow, slyly wrinkled,
 and under,
 pushing her iris-print blouse
 against her soft breast

like an apple

I see

Her mocassins beaded with bouquets
 and suns pad across the warm lawn
 feeling the life in their soles.

Spring legs, long and lean,
 not yet tan; her knee
 smiles, frowns,
 the wind lifts up and
 on her thigh
 a tag of apple-blossom lace peeps
 out of a rose-hued miniskirt,
 and beckons, soft,

my lonely eyes

A WEEKEND IN DETROIT ON MY BIRTHDAY

I feel good

like grapes
or St. Bernards
or grass
or children
playing tag.

Voices bubble
in my summer window
like creeks of sound
or soft breezes
pushing at my curtain
that's drawn back
to let in the sun.

I feel good

digging my toes
in the green, warm carpet
as I struggle with the
playful bedclothes
that won't let me up.

Brown burlap walls
(with black and white
horses dancing on them)
sit benignly relaxed,
quiet, surrounding me
in close comfort.

The birds sing an almost summer song--

The church bells over the hill toll the hour--

I feel--

SELECTED
SONNETS

I

The Sunbather

Outside my window, in the sun which smiles
 On her like roses these warm, wonderful
 Near-summer days, there lies a girl in aisles
 Of towels and blankets: radios, books half-full
 Of inked-in sentences in red and green
 And yellow. She, atop her towel, drinks
 The sun: a lovely blotter, long and lean
 And brown as oak. I stare at her and blink
 Away a useless longing, much too hot
 For me. And so she reads her books and marks
 The unimportant sentences, a lot
 Of rubbish: social science, field and park
 Administration, group ecology . . .
 I wonder if she'd ever study me.

IV

My music stops suddenly; the tune has died
 of some unknown and fatal illness pecu-
 liar to ethereal sounds. Uh, one! Uh, two!
 Come on now, don't leave me here undone, untied,
 unstrung; the silence is ghastly. Suicide
 has been committed for less. Aha! And do
 I hear the first faint strains returning? You
 were gone too long! No . . . the silence—you lied
 to me! That's not fair! It's too quiet in here—
 My mind is too much with me. Shadows crawl
 out of the walls and menace me. I fear
 I shall go quite mad, i'truth. Silence, all
 who ever called you golden be damned to hear
 you forever! Oh, it had a dying fall . . .

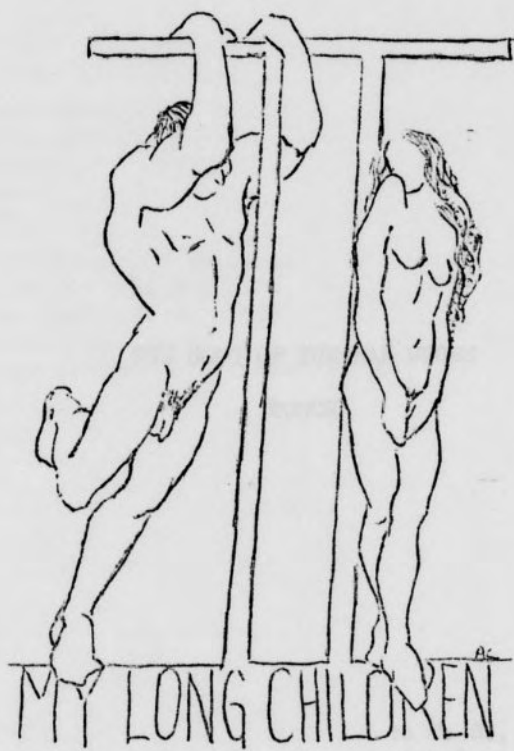
SILENTIUM!

by Feodor Tyutchev
(translated from the Russian)

Be silent, hide yourself, and conceal
Your feelings and your dreams.
In the depths of your soul
Let them rise and set
Silently, like stars in the night.
Admiring, contemplate them and be silent.

How will the heart express itself?
How will another understand you?
Can he grasp what you live by?
The spoken thought is a lie;
Exposed, you roil your well-springs--
Drink of them and be silent.

Only know how to live within yourself:
There is a whole world in your soul
Of enchanted, mysterious thoughts;
The outside din deafens them;
The light of day disperses them;
Attend to their song and be silent.



It dwells on me.

Just as I have it up

and pruned,

and greeny,

It leaves,

I want to sing your praises,

to tell of delight and

the pain that came with it

and stayed long

delight and pain

THE SONG OF THE MAN WHOSE

TOUCH

to C. H.,
with love,
and similar

"FINDINGS"

Written out on the wall, brick by brick,
 the words will say--
 the scattered lines; Fear
 the day of the travel . . .

It deserts me. *Alas,*
 Just as I have it up
 and primed,
 and ready,
 it leaves.

I want to sing your praises,
 to tell of delight and
 the pain that came with it
 and stayed long after
 delight had gone--but it deserts me.

And each day think, faster,
 wanting the way like a story
 in red and white,
 repeating the words like a story
 that twist like steel, faster, up
 "We don't love you. We don't
 love you. We don't love you don't"

Passionless,
 in dead aspects of
 carnal delight--
 each, a spirit who
 moves too much to
 save, to even lift
 one tiny eye--
 lift

Shape the matter, even, straight,
 good that the white guides the red as
 precisely

"SILENTIUM"

Written red on the wall, brick by brick,
 THE TRUTH WILL OUT—
 its mortared lines; hear
 the slap of the trowel . . .

The words blur and dissolve,
 wetting the side of my nose;
 but the feeling slips away
 like a handful of
 sand—

Ghosts of eyes dancing,
 inscrutable, in each new brick;
 in their compassion,
 mocking their lack of more
 than just compassion.

And each new brick, faster,
 repeating the eyes like mirrors
 in red and white,
 repeating in barberpole voice-lines
 that twist like steel, faster, say
 "We don't love you. We don't
 love you. We don't love; we don't"

Passionless,
 in dead moments of
 carnelian alabaster—
 numb, a sphinx who
 knows too much to
 move, to even lift
 one tiny eye-
 lid

Shape the mortar, even, straight,
 proud that the white guides the red so
 precisely

In blue silence,
music, deep,
as if nothing mattered:

Dreamwords in each sequence
melting one into the other,
flowing up the
dark walls of silence:

"Love is lonely
Love is true
Love is simple
Love is blue

Shades of Mauriat
drifting
across blue windows
and blue walls
in blue rooms,
then silence.

Toccata

I'm sitting here
peeling potatoes for hash and
I've got the meat ground up,
all ready, and I

cried over the onions, like
most people do. Ooops,
my water-pipe needs refilling.
Can't have hash without hash—
Ground up hash is good for the body and
hash is good for the soul
and anyone that can't dig it
can dig himself a hole—

I sing terrible. Peel your potatoes
and get on with it.
Cut them and slice them up
piece by white piece by
white and bloody piece—

I cut my thumb.
Look at the blood washing
in and out and in and
out. Make the hash better
with a little catsup in it. And
what did I do with the onions?

The Circus

Stretched, flat, i
 feel wind ripple the sheets,
 as if someone were moving
 closer next to me.
 And as i turn my face to the wind—

The Circus

Yessir, yessirr, step right up. See some of the most surprising men you've ever laid eyes on. Their ways will astound you, puzzle you, amaze you. Step right up, only 50¢; the tour starts in one minute. (This is a recording.) Yessir, yessirr . . .

Come inside with me, friends, come inside. I want to thank you all for waiting; I think you'll find our little show here well worth your time. If you'll stand toward the center, there, I believe you'll all have the best view. Thank you. Several people have asked me if these exhibits are supposed to mean anything; my answer is no. All we want is your money. Heh, heh . . . yes, well.

Our first exhibit is on your right: a man, but no ordinary man. The large supply of bricks and mortar toward the back is not just for show. Our friend here uses them to build a wall that surrounds him and is impossible to climb, then tries to climb out. He never succeeds, so we occasionally have to knock it down to feed him (also to prove there really is somebody in there). You all are lucky: we just knocked the wall down last week and he's only gotten about half rebuilt, so you can still see the top of his head. In a couple days you won't be able to see anything but the wall.

Next comes The Cook. While we're on the road, he fixes all our meals, besides sitting here during the day in his exhibit. Food's not bad, either. He's also an amateur butcher, so we get a lot of fresh meat. The last group through got to see him slaughter a calf; that's where the blood on the floor and the marks on the walls come from. We'd

give him a little more practice, except that we don't eat that much. There are some fresh steaks for sale, however, in a booth on your way out of the tent in case some of you don't want to stop at the store on the way home. Heh, heh . . . yes, well. The Cook isn't one of our most original exhibits, but if he doesn't get to sit there, he throws knives and pots and things and is generally unpleasant; so we let him have his way.

Moving on, the next one, in front of you there, is the actor of the bunch. Matter of fact, we call him the Showman. He's always posing, lecturing, waving his arms in the air, and generally making a fool of himself. The only time he shuts up is when I bring groups like you in; then he crawls off somewhere and sulks because I'm getting all the attention. What's the giggling going on back--? Ohh. Showman, stop sticking your tongue out at me! How childish! Folks, come on, folks-- let's go on to the next exhibit.

On your left (Showman, I'll settle with you later!) is the fourth member of our little menagerie, the Toymaker. He fashions little figurines with some special process we don't know anything about, then breathes life into them. They do what he wants them to for a few days, but then they start acting independent and he throws the box they're in to the floor and stomps all over it. Really kind of gruesome. If you look closely, you can see some figurines he's just made, in the box there; see, there's an arm wiggling.

The fifth exhibit, farthest to your left, calls himself for some reason that none of the rest of us can figure out the Five Different Kinds of an Idiot. That is, we've figured out the "idiot" part, we just don't know about the "five." I'd keep back from him, though not

because he's dangerous or anything. No, he gives away everything he owns to the people who pass in front of his booth. He's got a color TV there someplace that he's been trying to get rid of for a couple days; I'd take it, but he won't give it to me. Anyway, we tell people to stay back because he says he doesn't expect anything in return, but when he doesn't get it, he cries. Takes him days to dry out. Ruins the whole show.

And now we come to what we regard as our most original exhibit. We've even given him the place of honor in the center of the arena, as you can see. We call him The Man Whose Touch Turns Everything To—well, you can smell what it turns to. That's another reason we keep him in the center, away from everybody else. We put air-tight glass around him and have the area thoroughly air-conditioned, but you can still get a good strong whiff. We have quite a problem feeding him. It's lucky he doesn't have the Midas Touch instead, or he would starve; but I'd hate to have to eat what he turns food into. Heh, heh . . . yes, well.

I guess that's about it, folks. Hope you enjoyed it. Got your 50¢ worth. If not, well, you pays your money, you takes your chances. Goodbye, folks. See you again maybe. 'Bye . . .

Step to step slowly move

We all
the dream notions
schizophrenic:

We all smile

Ashes to ashes,

that gentle upturning
at--

dust to dust;
flake and crumble,
at the ends of lips
tissue and remnant.

that is not as much as
Nothing to do
as much as
but think of you . . .

Love to

"The heart,"

And you sit
watching the game
and I sit next to you
playing the game
and nothing resolves
either of us between us--

The Bridge Game

"One heart."

I am disturbed by
your eyes. It is said,
eyes are an extension
of the soul,
what one feels
shows there. I see
me in your looks
and I see nothing.

"Who dealt this mess? Pass."

You, chair next to mine,
curl softly,
a bored eye on your book;
my partner, your new friend,
slices you with a remark
that cuts double because he made it;
and watching you bleed,
I am moved to a feeling of helplessness.

"Two diamonds."

The red knave,
lance blunted,
armor rusting,
a singleton queen,
vulnerable;
I shift, lean back,
try to recount my cards—
"Come on, bid already!"

"Oh—'scuse me. Pass."

I'm on your side; heh,
I'm at your side.
How can I comfort
and not . . .
I catch your eye
with a smile;
you smile back, not understanding,
turn away.

"Two hearts."

And you sit
watching the game
and I sit next to you
playing the game
and nothing reaches
either of us between us—

My partner looks at me strangely
and says,

"Double."

But mostly I remember the joys:

the quiet conversations
always interrupted
as neither how long we'd talked,

the intimate revelations
grown in wonder
with no particular point,

the bearded looks
passed between friends like treasure,

the jewelled looks
and crannies of our minds,

the "accidental" meetings,

the hurried greetings . . .

I asked: "Как сердцу высказать себя?
Кругому как понять тебя?"

How then
pain, pleasure, sorrows and delight
into our white envelopes.

But I sing of joy—

the joys in giving:
each new pound of flesh spent
freely and without regret;

the joys in waiting:
the breathless expectation and the
sudden-crowning gratification.

the joys in small things:
the look in an eye, the touch of a hand
to a shoulder, the soft brushing of words
said to each other with each other,
the tender, silent dream . . .

Fugue

But mostly I remember the joy:

the quiet conversations
 always interrupted
 no matter how long we'd talked,
the intimate revelations
 grown in wonder
 with no particular point,
the bewildered looks
 passed between friends like treasure,
the bejewelled nooks
 and crannies of our minds,
the "accidental" meetings,
the tortured greetings . . .

I sing of
the phenomenon of the human spirit
that fuses colors of
pain, pleasure, depression and delight
into one white cataclysm.

And I sing of joy--

the joys in giving:
 each new pound of flesh spent
 freely and without regret;
the joys in waiting:
 the breathless expectation and the
 stomach-wrenching uncertainties.
the joys in small things:
 the look in an eye, the touch of a hand
 to a shoulder, the soft brushing of words
 said to each other with each other,
 the tender, silent dreams . . .

It deserts me.
Just as i have it up
and primed
and ready,
it leaves.



FOR
THE
CALL
THAT



IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE CALL

A pain-down against the night
 reaches down to last day,
 as I in repetitive delight
 motion my, open door
 the last day
 light day, the



daily night-
 stillness: the
 heart as I
 my sometimes love,
 Fall for again, far off, now
 go a stone of up and motion
 your like someone
 I think or try to
 who at motion
 or something
 so much more. I
 the with a love

FOR
 THE
 CALL
 THAT



NEVER COMES

Little day,

the

the

in small under motion to last day

Draw the hands near the motion

Something you almost spring

and her eyes behind the motion

in the motion

I have against the motion motion,

some my eyes,

Feel the wind that has up motion in it,

break off, motion,

turn, sometime across the motion

some bright motion

and motion down,

and every passing love,

every day.

ON PERCEPTION

Prelude

A pale form against the night
 reaches down to kiss me,
 as i in passionate delight
 stretch up, eyes closed, to meet her—
 and feel only air.
 Open eyed, see
 only night-dark sky above,
 star-speckled: small lights surrounded by
 absence and loss
 and sometimes love.
 Find her again, far off, moon-blown, tossed
 on a storm of her own creation;
 waves like mountains push me away.
 I stand, or try to,
 wave at some subconscious cue
 an incomprehensible spell
 to hold her. I even tell
 the wind i love her, as i awake . . .

21st

Gentle lap,
 lap,
 lap,
 as sunlit water washes the last snow
 from the banks near the footbridge.
 January, yet almost spring—
 And her eyes behind the water,
 in the water;
 i lean against the bridge railing,
 close my eyes,
 feel the wind that has no winter in it,
 break off, smiling,
 turn, continue across the water,
 seeing bright clothes
 and melting snow,
 and every passing face,
 every wave.

22nd

Her cat insists on
 attacking my finger
 and his eyes get bigger
 when i move.
 Hers are red—
 she says she ought to take her contacts out,
 "or maybe it was skiing;
 I might have sunburnt them.
 Kitty! Get out of my sandwich!
 Did I tell you I
 went to Washington?"
 "I'm glad; i didn't know
 anyone going," political activism
 being quite beyond me—
 Silence, then she:
 "Let's watch TV, okay? Paul Lynde's on."

And feel a thousand questions,
 most of all, what is it that keeps me here;
 see her soft, dreamed on profile;
 she hardens a little as she
 becomes a woman—

"Should i leave?"
 She smiles. "Oh, no. I'm not doing anything."
 "You persuaded me."

The cat between us drops down off the couch,
 stretches, curls,
 and sleeps on the floor.
 Between commercials, i
 "i've always known what i wanted to do,
 like, i've always wanted to write,
 just never how to go about it."
 "You are very lucky. All I've known is
 what I didn't want." And later, once more,
 ". . . n' i've always known
 i wanted to marry." Horror that it's
 come to this. She smiles another smile,
 this time sadly,
 and says nothing.

30th: Poets' Corner

Smoke rises through the nets
 hung from the ceiling
 and hovers near a crack;
 the old house takes quietly
 and adds one more mellow
 moment to its grand collection—

She brought the beer
 and sat to talk with us,
 though mostly with him;
 the beer was golden,
 then brown,
 then golden, as she came and went,
 and semi-sober love
 almost poured forth; the foam
 was thick and rich,
 as my friend confided
 that he put his hand
 through a glass fire-extinguisher cover
 for her and me;
 and i felt no pain but his
 and hers was forgotten
 in the foam
 till she brought the next round.

Nets to fish
 the frozen sidewalk puddles
 (January is a month of changes)
 huddled in footprint shapes.
 Someone speaks of the essence of poetry,
 someone of the meaning of poetry,
 as the smoke—

Breaths like wisps haunt my nose,
 as i sense the quickening spirit and walk faster,
 the cold air soaking through my coat;
 i don't feel it,
 wrapped in her warm thoughts—
 so wrapped that i miss her street,
 and each returning block
 builds me higher, until
 a precipice lurks behind her door.

CATHARSTIS

That's twice, now.
 A gentle sadness stays;
 comforts the gentle hurt.
 The gentle hurt
 like the soft spot
 on a baby's head,
 like a tooth gone from
 its expected place,
 like an old scar.

I saw you today.
 Without thinking of the
 implications, you
 called to me. And i,
 without thinking, ran
 away. And later,
 thinking, i looked for you,
 but you, thinking,
 had gone.

I am puzzled by actions--
 the ones that have the greatest
 significance to the actor,
 yet mean less than nothing to
 the acted upon: motiveless--
 senseless--absurd:

I saw someone sitting on
 a wall, dangling his feet
 over the side. As i passed,
 he laughed at me, so i
 ran over to the wall and
 pushed him off.

The same night, i was
 walking along slowly, dreaming,
 when round the corner ahead
 came a boy and girl and i
 ran up to them, screaming
 "LUCKY!" "Lucky!" "luck-

Floating, dipping a God-like
 finger in every pie I can
 find; innocent, malevolent, immaterial--
 one-one-one--Clik.
 Run that one by again,

Fred. We missed the print-out.

The plane in Spain falls mainly
in the reign of King Francisco
Franco, the First, 1939-1972--

What? I don't understand.
It's not making sense . . .
All we're getting is garbage.

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither.
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.

Kick it once. See if that
jostles something. Are you sure
you have the plug in right?

DEVOTIONS

I never dreamed living alone
 could be this hard. My finger
 reaches for the dial as the phone
 nestles on my shoulder,
 and i slowly trace out
 a familiar number--then, ashamed,
 hang up before the phone
 can ring.

I recognize the bitterness,
 i recognize the old frustration;
 lapping up the last libation
 from the dregs of tenderness--

Every day i see the beauty
 of the fall leaves and the girls
 they fall on. And every day
 there are some i talk to, fewer
 i talk with. And, then, every day,
 i come home alone,
 somehow cheated, something missing,
 somehow angry.

Oh, the subtle roundnesses of breasts,
 delights that draw the eye, the mind . . .
 temptations only i could find
 unyielding, or unanswered tests.

And every weekend, like a fool,
 i make a pilgrimage to a
 certain window of a certain home,
 stare sadly up . . .
 Then walk away,
 hiding my shamed face by
 staring at the ground
 and pulling up the collar of my jacket.

MOOG SHAFT

(A Concerto For Moog and Voices)

Dedicated to Clotho, Atropos,
and Lachesis, whom i have to
thank for all this-----

uh, One, uh, Two, uh
One, Two, Three, Four

"Sorry. Wrong end."

Tum te tum skreeeeoooooff, tic.

"Sir, were you here last night, by any chance?"

"No."

"That's funny. You look very familiar. -- Your seat . . ."

Tum.

No, no chance, tonight of all nights--and here. My luck
couldn't be that good/bad/indifferent--at the game was
improbable enough--

(A song.)

Oh, does she have a good voice! (And i thought
i could catch up on
Gogol tonight)

Tee, tum-----

i see--
i don't believe--
i see--i don't

And for those among you who are 1) chess freaks,
2) music buffs, and 3) connoisseurs of obscure
references that become unbearably painful,
today was:

A long day's journey into knight.

(Actually wasn't a knight's move in the
strictest sense, but as they say,
it's close enough)

. . . .

(This is twice, now)

Asgard was destroyed today, and from
all hints, Odin perished with it. (Thor, #196)

and all was
still---till---ill---ll---l-

Oh,

lover

It hurts--it hurts to
see you there. Must forget--
must not look. The stage, what's

"Be kind to your web-footed
friends--"

I must look.
What do i so love thee, that-- i must--
It's all come back, all of it.

"You may think that this is
the end.

"Well, it is

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

Oh, I must see you,

WAITING FOR THE CALL THAT NEVER COMES

It starts as an icing
of my stomach,
followed by memories,
like when, late one winter night,
E. showed me the computer program
that wrote poetry
to the tune of typed-in word.
But it starts
as this icing
and ends with me and the phone,
waiting,
waiting,
suddenly almost to my ear, slammed down,
cursed.
Between all that:

November countryside
from the bus window, snow curling
its way across the grass and highway;
as we pull onto the interstate,
a certain high-rise dorm rears
against the clouds and snow,
and as i turn in my seat to follow it,
diminishing, i see
a painted lady in the seat behind,
an almost perfect mannekin,
except she moves--

My roommate's endeavors
at amateur photography,
with our room as studio;
his model arrives,
shakes the snow out of her hair
and scarf,
smiles to me with ice-blue eyes
at his introduction--

The snow came down in big flakes, lit by the lights
on the sidewalk, whirled once, again; its slow dance,
its soft dance brushed the window; i, night-eyed
and wondering, knelt by the sill, head in hands,
amazed, in each snowflake seeing you and
you and you and, on the window, you melting into tears--

When last i saw you,
no,

when last i saw you—
 yellow coat against a grey bridge,
 snowflakes melting in your eyelashes—
 you seemed very glad to see me,
 as i hurried by,
 diving into the security of a waiting building . . .

And you know about the phone already.

There, as it lifts the flange
 and looks so sadly, only
 the wire.
 Mathematics is hard,
 and your walking in the next row
 helps out. It scratches

its head and flashes
 looking pictures on the wall
 already and those Vanitas—
 of the justice, who,
 instead of headless, goes
 (indistinctly)
 down, being only evicted.

and you entered alley walking,
 was not and and wants her,
 faster than—

Stop, stop, stop.
 It is very
 funny and tries to
 logically rationalize and figure out
 the situation.
 Stop, stop, . . .

Walking through
 was my fallen half,
 down his nose
 at a gray sleeve,
 another out a string of little words,
 says, "You want her?"
 and his face is lost
 in vision of blessing now,
 of words, timely love
 and more.

It looks so nice
 at all the heavy breathing,
 aspirations;
 waders (authentic
 slipping) at the
 edge of the smoking platform

JUST ONE MORE WAY TO SAY NO

"Euclid alone looked on beauty bare . . ."

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Tired, as it lifts its finger
and feels so sadly, sadly
its nose.
Mathematics is hard,
and then balling in the next room
helps not. It scratches

its head and flashes
jester pictures on the wall
of Woody and Queen Vanessa—
of its jester, who,
instead of headless, goes
(relatively)
free, being only evicted.

Mud and festered alley waking,
sore and sad and wants her,
tastes her—

Shtup, shtup, shtup.
It in envy
frowns and tries to
logically mathematize and figure why
the ϕ -function.
Shtup, shtup . . .

Shuffling Mercaptor
sees our fallen buffoon,
wipes his nose
on a grimy sleeve,
smooths out a stray mystic symbol,
says, "You want her?"
And his fee is lost
in visions of blessing sweet,
of sweet, timely love
and ripe.

It looks askance
at all the heavy breathing,
aspirations;
wonders (mathematics
slipping) at the
image of two smacking protoplasmal

lumps.

Nude Mercaptor and the pentagram,
 his flopping breasts painted,
 mumble-dancing;
 the star-crossed fool, prone,
 spreadeagled in candlelight:
 she rises, wavers in the dancing,
 ghostly, wavers in her dancing,
 more solid, as he rises,
 unbelieving. She calls him and
 holds him,
 as they first touch--

A moan ecstatic, or
 was it two? it hears
 and sighs and
 math of $1 + 1$ is
 all it hears and knows.

As the jester wakes,
 and wants her,
 is alone,
 tastes her,
 is alone;
 and Mercaptor laughing

AND FARTHER OUT

I

The Night Before Christmas

And as from his pulpit
our prophet speaks, i sit struck
by a vision, a reminder of longing.

She stares at her feet,
her in-turned auburn tresses resting
on the shoulders of her gold choir robe,
her electric candle dangling in one hand,
her mouth turned down.

"--And to reinfuse ourselves into this season of joy,
we must remember that it is Christ
Who is born this day,
and Who must be reborn in each of our hearts--"
Two years ago, You showed me her of the raven locks
who sits now across the aisle, ignoring me.
One year ago, You took away one
who haunts me still, dead, yet living . . .
This year, You give a vision,
only a resemblance, a reminder

"--Amen." Our shepherd concludes,
the choir rises, the organist
sounds the strains of halleluiah.
(She is a bit deaf, and the choir
must strain to be heard.)
My vision keeps losing her place,
peering vainly down at her book and
trying not to come in on the wrong halleluiah.

There aren't enough tenors.
Handel would have cried.
And it is midnight;
and it is Christmas.

As i go out,
i notice a little boy, asleep,
his parents struggling to put on his coat
without waking him.

II

The Night Before My Vision

Her brother says
on his way out
"Party's downstairs.

Go on in." grabs his coat,
slams the tinsel-decorated door.
Leaves me swim, afloat

in old memories, the maelstrom's roar
already audible below. .
Smile, you idiot, what's one memory more . . .

The stairs, each step, "Hi, Oz!" Hello.
"Ozzie!"

"Well, long time no . . ."

And, of course, at the bottom she turns her eyes to me

this gentle witch
raven locks, sapphire eyes,
the memory of a magic gesture,
once: we held up hands, palms facing,
fingertip to fingertip
(Barbarella, Barberella, Barberella:
she didn't recognize the name)—
she was wearing gloves

and smiles and says, "Merry Christmas, Oz!
Have some eggnog." And unabashed glee

at her attention, though the cause
of glee is removed, as she turns,
smiles as bright to someone else, the laws

of her hospitality implacable, yearn
how i will. A sea of familiar faces,
all witnesses, as i squirm

and try to find a place
behind something, to sip my eggnog
and brood and maybe not disgrace

myself further. One sip, the sea becomes a Bog,
a Fen, a foul miasmal Swamp--
my teeth are tingling--a Foggy,

Barren Landscape--that lamp
is tilting--the eggnog is spiked.

"Oz!" Even sitting down, my stomach cramps
 in sudden panic, like
 the too long interval before seasickness hits,
 then releases, nausea rising, dikes
 of resistance finally split,
 broken - - - my surprise
 covers her voice, its
 enchantment continuing, her eyes
 gently not noticing my discomfort,
 as it passes. Old ties

the midnight Christmas service two years ago---
 two girls she brought with us--
 We sit in front, making faces at our minister.
 Oh, to be alone with her!
 (does she know that?) but this is fun.
 Me with not one,
 not two,
 but three whole girls

replace the pain of newer ones. To court
 disaster by daring to court at all--
 "My teeth are tingling." "Oh? Same sort

of thing always happens to me. Too much alcohol.
 It's how I tell it's time to stop."
 Sea-witch eyes, balls

of gentle phosphorescence, beckon. I flop
 and flounder, unused to such
 reciprocation, talk

of recent sinus headaches, make much
 of antihistamines and their mixture
 with drink, ignoring the questioning touch

of her eyes, which fade, not seeing how liquor
 and pills fit what she feels,
 thinking i tell her no, quicker

than i can tack round to tell her yes, reel
 her in with winsome words,
 her glow my own-- "Well, . . .

uh, Oz, . . . got to see if anybody needs . . . you know." Cured
 of my gabbiness, if nothing else.
 Desperate fisherman, lured

to his own net and tangled. Constantly sells
 himself short, he does--
 i hear bells

upstairs. Pretty doorbell---better n' the buzz
 we have. Footsteps,

light: high heels. Wish it was
 Morene coming down, awkward, stepping on her formal, lips
 pursed, me too naive to even dream
 of helping. She would flip
 if she could see the people here; seems
 like she new all of them—
 Mermaid, the first i went steaming
 after, nets spread, atremble
 with anticipation.
 The first i damn
 near caught. No elucidation
 for such mysteries.
 Should move, mingle, shun
 thoughts like these.
 Fill my cup again,
 watch the tentative pleas
 for contact between separated friends,
 like Pat describing her trip to Costa Rica,
 how it has been
 fascinating; the people are freaky
 and very nice. Some of them are hostile
 (like the first ones she stayed with, bleak,
 cramped people), but one learns to smile
 and move—in this case, to her English professor's home,
 a spacious villa several miles
 from the university. (Foam
 would wash across the beach
 in back of the villa. The stones
 in the garden, just out of reach
 of the water, would glisten and
 sometimes driftwood sailed in, bleached
 by the tropic sun, to find berth in the sand.)
 Her professor was a petite Spanish doña (lady);
 she wanted company because her husband
 had just died. But his ghost kept returning—

. . . in windows as i pass that cheat
 the red, blue, yellow, white and green lights--put
 with such care on the deeper green of the pines--
 of much of their bright beauty. The turf shows brown
 under the wave-like mounds of snow. And lines
 of cardboard reindeer with Rudolph and Santa crown
 a few of the dead lawns; lights are strung around
 the eaves: electric houses. In one bare,
 streaked window hangs a plastic wreath, bound
 with string, and i can see a girl in there;

a little girl, waving--

--maybe

because he was lonely or bored,
 or was keeping tabs on his home. Pat was afraid he
 would disapprove of a foreigner. Instead he ignored
 her, except for one searching look
 (his approval?) the first time she saw him, walking toward
 the stairs up to his wife's room. And i, in my nook,
 almost safe from the ghost she has raised,
 (who, when she died, took
 too much with her) hear praise
 of the story, prolonged,
 then silence. Nancy has taken our trays
 upstairs; our enchantress gone,
 our life-preservers are mysteriously deflated,
 going down after one last phizzing song--
 we, like Pat's ghost, subtly berated--
 even damned--through visiting our previous lives,
 seeing the dry-land strait
 just before the Egyptians went under, knives,
 spears, chariots, all;
 foam flying, dull mourning roar from a thousand wives'
 throats crashing down, sweeping tall,
 green Christmas trees, tinsel-laden still,
 through the doors and out the hall - - -
 The Christmas tree in the corner, smug, filled
 with wisdom, winks at me as i leave,
 bides its time, the sea receding slow; the dregs mill
 about the doors and stairs, maybe heave
 sighs of relief as they, too, go.
 At my car, i look back: my witch stands puzzled, grieved
 at the sudden dissolution of her party, not knowing
 the cause; she saw that our affairs
 are based on memory, but not, as i should have, that memory flows.

III

Dad--me, Santa Claus? I don't--
Me?

My Old High School

| | |
|---|--|
| For love nor money, i be Kris Kringle, toys and joys, the proverbial goodwill spirit and i bring diversion; the gift forgetfulness give i. | Ho, ho, ho I don't recognize him-- |
| Though there is enough of that already today, so i bring money (by special dispensation) to those too old to forget, those blind paid to lead the one-eyed to blindness. Seeing is painful and only | Lookit, there's-- It's Santa Claus! |
| those new born can bear it all. Why be i Christmas? I am the devil, forced to play God, depravity, forced into innocense, poet, forced to be symbol | Jug jug jug jug jug jug So rudely forc'd. |

Father's Elementary

They can see me better than i--
show me sweet sight,
small faces;
sit on my lap and tell me stories,
even bare, innocent wants.

To give such easy gifts--
do you pray me for what
you really want:
can you shape what you really need?
Can i crush you to

the pillow that plays my stomach
(held up with pins) and bless you with my tears?
But Santa is not supposed to cry,
and the teacher is there watching, so
in place of me, i give you candy

IV

Hope we have least of;
 my latest hope:
 a vision, a symbol,
 only insubstantial and
 far away.

("O heart! O heart! if she'd but turn her head,"
 but she can't, being far away—
 and, i think, uninclined.)

We all sing Christ born,
 i feel nothing;
 heresy, heresy,
 one should "put Him before all else,
 and His service be our comfort";

i want to serve, but His service
 gives as little back as she does.
 I am not content!
 (which is a "most lame and impotent conclusion,"
 but the only one i have)

Our Christian Heritage

And i must refuse most of Christmas dinner:
 three cavities filled two days ago.

During the drilling, i tried to
 console myself
 with pictures of heretics burned at the stake
 or men coughing blood, lungs clotted with mustard gas.
 I tried the sweet, final smell of gas ovens,
 or napalm that burns
 even under water—
 but i screamed twice anyway.

Now when i touch anything hot or cold
 (like turkey or wine) to the fillings,
 they forcibly remind me i shouldn't.
 There is a nasty pun on letting this cup
 pass from me, but i restrain myself.

V

И скучно и грустно и некому руку подать 'bored & sad & no one to give her hand' and sheets in mountains, white to white, illumed by the far off light of the rising sun--ha!--illumed by the far off orange light of the electric blanket baleful eye accusing the books two days toilet upstairs flushes God, they're up early maybe if i got the costs all together in one book and balanced it and the wages against the income 'cept there hasn't been much of that--oh, it's too early a.m. for that--Christmas lights on the tree still, will i have to take it down by myself besides these books back to school in two days want to go back (Orange haired angel in an orange choir robe, so far away, her eyes on me smiling sometimes) would you quit staring at me you stupid light! you're keeping me awake don't want to be awake sleep maybe dream but i don't have time to run a balance that would take two weeks at least--and the income tax, Oh God, he's forgotten the income tax for this quarter! one more thing and probably a penalty on that IRS is watching you these sheets are getting hot turn down the blanket a little dummy you shouldn't be awake now you didn't get to sleep till one last night (last night?) 'n it's only five now, i think, hard to read a watch by an electric blanket light sleep relax reading too much Jarrell lately influencing my dreams course Pushkin has a lot to do with that one about the coffin and Snow White inside from one side she was just skeleton and the other a little girl strange how that all fits with Norene so well Christmas always seems to bring her up somehow why was i so sure she suicided? didn't am neurotic i guess i

wish i could sleep so it wouldn't be so early and maybe the sun would come up (but it always comes up so late at Christmas) that clock sure makes a lot of noise, like the second hand is in mortal agony Crying In The Mud why can't i go to sleep must be the histyantimines make me so sleepy then when i try i can't-- got to see Jim before i leave maybe he'll be able to look in after i leave he hasn't got much time though who else could? six months and no bookkeeper and grampa wants me to do it all in two days i don't know bad enough C. won't even talk, but him on my back too i don't know it always works like that same with her as with Norene now if she just doesn't kick off too she like Song, though--said she liked first version better than second no poetic sensibility! Craig liked it didn't understand until i explained it say! he could be bookkeeper he's a business major 'n everything i'll ask him should've thought of him before but grampa'll want me to do it or mom trusts outsiders about as far as he can throw 'm specially on books that clock is really beginning to bug me the scrape and the blanket light i don't see how people can sleep with that flashing in their eyes at least the sun's coming up tones it down a little i can smell breakfast i'm so hungry but if i get up i'll have to work that much longer need the money but not that bad no, maybe i can go see Jim or Craig--but that'll seem like i'm copping out must learn to say no can't say no without hurting no nono no No NO! no nonono i wonder if breakfast's on the table yet

VI

I walk across the gravel playground
 between the school and the football field;
 the monkey bars, deserted, like dark plumbing,
 frame the deserted basketball court behind;
 a few strings hang, cobwebbed
 from the rusting basket rims.
 The wind's as cold as ever
 and the school's large top green
 bottom black windows gleam darkly,
 reflecting the moon and stars--

VII

Return

The napkin has
Mary and Joseph,
the shepherds, the Wise Men,
clustered around the manger,
instead of the usual
"Fly the friendly . . ."

An auburn-haired stewardess
asks if i want coffee. "No, thank you;
do you have any milk?"
As she gets it, i rummage
in my flight bag--
an old bookstore sack--
for an antihistamine,
trying to ignore her hair color.
She returns,
i swallow, wince
as the cold touches my fillings,
then relax as the drug takes hold:
a thrill rises,
my eyes get heavy.

I look out the window:
the sun shines back
off an occasional cloud,
off the vague edges of the patchwork fields.
For better or worse,
my vision becometh reality,
for what good it'll do--

As i stand, waiting in the aisle for the doors to open,
a woman near the front gently wakes her small son,
saying that he must put on his coat;
that it's time.

CATHARSIS II

(Upon reading L. N. Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata")

Oh, do not complain of woman's evil so,
 you philosophers! I have known her--
 a friend in many ways closer than i've ever had.
 I bared my soul to her,
 stripped away each of the barriers
 that protect me from other human beings,
 stood naked in her sight;
 and she did not attack.
 Gentle in her power,
 she swaddled me as she would a baby,
 laid me down, gently covered me,
 left.

Life is colder than even the cold night
 where each warmth is a treasure
 to be cherished and preserved.
 I had not known so small a flame
 could burn so bright, driving the cold and darkness,
 that it not press so close.
 Plato ("Distractions!"), Paul ("Devils!"), Calvin ("Whores!"),
 and especially you, Lev Nikolaevich,
 my mentor, my guide, my curse,
 do not rob me of my last remaining warmth.
 Do not ask me to go through the shadows alone.

To you, then, my light,
 my love:
 forgive me for not realizing sooner
 that i have something precious,
 something that, now you've gone,
 will not be taken from me,
 something i didn't know i had till now:
 your gentleness, your understanding,
 which lights my dark night,
 shining like the sun. Sometimes, my revelations
 come slowly, but they do come.

AS YOUR EYES

(An Epilog)

As your eyes soft on mine--
 can you see the fire in my soul,
 one you've lit
 one you feed, music starting
 slowly, slowly, soft--

i burn

Candle behind weeps a hot tear
 for sheer joy; scene in tears
 and flame wavers;
brillante--
 timeless this--

Thanks be

I read you and to you--
 most important, to you--
 of earthen vessels and fire in them;
 i shyly behind the air-gentle words
 and your eyes glow on--

Bless me, Father, for i am blessed

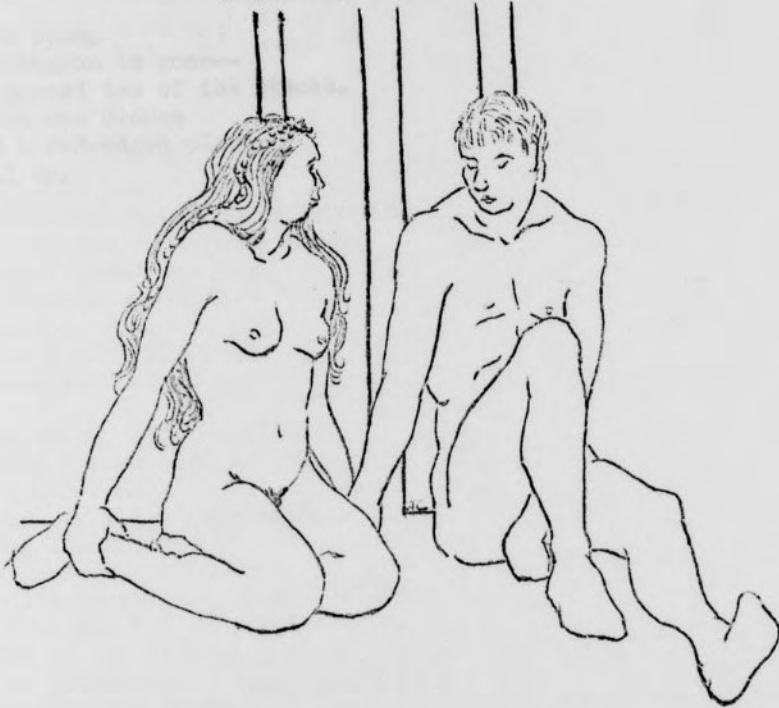
Music fills me, i will burst,
 airy, light, fire-filled,
 fire-filled;
 inspiration, sound,
 your look my latest breath--

Thanks be

That such low
 could stretch so high--
 what do you call a jug with fire inside?
 Can you see . . . ?
 (i know a secret) but most of all

i burn

REMINDEES



GARY, INDIANA

The blood red moon
 centers in five fire-spouting
 smokestacks, a pentagram.
 I say, world, be gone,
 and close my eyes
 and feel the power rushing
 to my over-tired brain—
 something snaps.

My eyes open;
 the pentagram is gone—
 we've passed two of the stacks.
 The moon has hidden
 behind a red-edged cloud;
 we roll on.

FELLOW TRAVELLER

He is the fellow traveller whose
 eyes are caught in the dying embers,
 his hands making what they know of
 the mystic signs,
 conjuring with the smoke.
 He sees her in the smoke,
 her shape soft, untouchable—
 An owl calls,
 the wind shifts, the image vanishes,
 and he looks up at me,
 eyes full of pain.

He comes to me
 in the night,
 because I call him,
 and talks of her,
 her and an old thief named Mercaptor
 who taught him the mystic signs,
 and when I press his hand
 to my breasts or loins,
 he smiles,
 looks sadly in my eyes
 and tries to comfort me.

See the stars, cold and silent
 above the surrounding trees,
 the smaller brush,
 the grass waving in the wind.
 The wind feels cold
 across my bare shoulders
 and as I turn to pull up the blanket,
 see him in his bed across the fire,
 his eyes in the fire,
 tossing, frowning,
 between clenched teeth,
 "damn Mercaptor . . . damn . . ."

I am up before him sometimes
 and gather wood
 and sometimes bring down a rabbit
 with my arrows.
 He is always awake when I return,
 takes the rabbit, cleans it,
 as I look away—
 and we breakfast,
 gather up our bedrolls,

and sometimes he looks
at me
before he kicks out the fire
and we go.

MISS SCHEE,

through the door
since the empty walls in silver,
fast lines and lighter gravel
leading to,
at the window holds me
illuminated against the light inside,
and I move a number in the
list of lost,
the way, begin
pulling levers that line the railroad below.

have been slowly driven passing
well in, over the shadows,
was the compact of the Tower in its last days, does he
number at the old, square, brick building,
what it does,
or if he knows,
why it isn't gone already--
I want to drive away,

to leave this noisy town,
the transport of
a new-generation railroad,
to leave the knowledge of
an enclosed job, soon to be
replaced by twelve small lights and switches
on a giant board,
to leave the tragic mistakes
I can still make--

The eastbound number 10,
the morning for the second Tower
the morning away going over the old concrete,
out of line because the curves on the new rail
didn't get the ties laid in straight.
I saw the conductor by--
he doesn't wave back--
say into the phone mounted just a little too far west--
"O.K., west, A.Y."
Dispatcher: "Overright."
"Over 1000 east by at 4:11 a.m. Over north 1."
"Overright."

and I think too
to keep awake,
grabbing for the entrance in my brush-box
or the tea time of stomach,

DEAR SUZIE,

Silence; the moon
fires the empty rails in silver,
dark ties and lighter gravel
holding it,

as the window holds me
silhouetted against the light inside,
and i shove a number in the
lit up box,
turn away, begin
pulling levers that line the switches below.

Does some sleepy driver passing
look in, see the shadows,
see the occupant of the Tower in its last days; does he
wonder at the old, square, brick building,
what it does;
or if he knows,
why it isn't gone already--
i want to drive away,

to leave this musty toom,
this remnant of
a non-modernized railroad,
to leave the knowledge of
an outmoded job, soon to be
replaced by twelve small lights and switches
on a giant board,
to leave the tragic mistakes
i can still make---

The eastbound thunders in,
whistles mourning for the doomed Tower;
its boxcars sway going over the old crossovers,
out of line because the workmen on the new rail
didn't get the ties back in straight.
I wave the conductor by--
he doesn't wave back--
say into the phone mounted just a little too far away:
"O.S. east, A.Y."
Dispatcher: "N'awright."
"Extra 3620 east by at 4:04 a.m. Down south 1."
"N'awright."

And i drink tea
to keep awake,
grabbing for the antacids in my lunch-box
as the tea hits my stomach,

and return to your letter;
i feel the words
piling up inside.
The antacid doesn't help.

Slam the levers back into the old machine;
rasp the number out of the box
in the window;
snap the light off;
a whistle sounds in the distance—
watch the moon gleam silver
off the rail.

ON THE ROAD

Shattered, lying strewn,
 small bloody pieces--
 some fur puffs in the wind.
 In the day
 the sun slides around my visor,
 stabs the eyes,
 leaving purple and green
 and red images to hide the simple brown fur,
 as i swerve,
 refusing to desecrate further
 the headless corpses.

And in the night,
 the memory of soft brown eyes returns:
 begging, too soon for fear,
 the the thud,
 the crunch,
 the silence, and i flee,
 not looking, seeing only the
 shattered, lying strewn
 small bloody pieces--

THE LAST NIGHT OF SUMMER

8:42 p. m. and
 before me sits an
 upside-down bowl shape of fried rice,
 the little beef and egg bits
 adding color.
 Behind it, the waitress and
 the window and me, dirty,
 too tired and even
 awed by the mound of rice
 to pick up my fork;
 and behind the window
 a dark street, a closed western clothing store,
 some bars—
 there are always the bars—
 The jukebox begins a c & w rendition
 of "I Been Workin' on the Railroad"
 and i laugh,
 still trying to pick up my fork.

A flamed sunset, painted red
 and blue, in tones of
 far away loveliness:
 i remember her latest letter
 and i dare to think she might love me;
 the road stretches ahead,
 a lighter blue against
 the dark of the hills.
 And the sudden jab in the ribs
 as the driver, my friend,
 crows, "Gotcha!"

I suppress an urge to flip rice
 at the waitress.
 Only \$1.50
 and it's more than i can eat.
 A flock of girls rustles in,
 chatters, finally settles in two booths
 near the back. I watch them in the window,
 wishing i had more than just
 letters.

Morning; i stare at the fading stars
 through the car window,
 trying to figure out if that bright spot
 is really Venus--
 A 40° draft blows across my feet;

my friend must be having
 hot flashes. Pulling my feet up
 into my coat doesn't help.
 I look at him; he ignores me--
 i look back at the stars.

The waitress' father is a drunk,
 her mother long gone
 or dead. She is pretty, red-haired,
 but she has hard lines in her back,
 and wrinkles of worry around her eyes,
 and says that sometimes it's hard to go on.
 Her listener, the cashier, tsks sympathetically,
 says he can't figure out what to do.
 My urge to flip rice becomes stronger.

An old-time steam engine roars by,
 pulling the Advanced Northwest Forwarder toward Portland
 and i manage to screw up three different pictures
 of it. My friend wants copies--
 one more friend wanting pictures

My eyes close around a sense
 of loss,
 and, too full, i push back
 the plate of rice--half-eaten,
 the bowl caved in and fallen--
 pay my bill,
 and walk the block to my hotel.
 I see my friend in the hotel bar;
 i wave going by.

CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE A TIME OF LOVE & UNDERSTANDING

It started with the wobbling
and the shaking and
the strange & spastic seizures,
the thunk as his head hit the car door
on the way down
onto the white and drifted asphalt;
he lay there rocking;
jerking,
rocking

The Christmas
card from C. in the chair as i, talking,
look at the hand-made card once and
think oh, i didn't mean for them
to send me one back--
and look again, see the different
address,
and shockt, with tremb and
numbling fingers, break the seal--

When she was
home from the
hospital Her head rolled and
barely could she hold it up;
we plugged in the Christmas lights around the mirror,
but still her ancient hands could not
get a glass to her mouth,
and her eyes wouldn't focus
or even stay open
and grampa cried, feeding her.

Just a
rabbit Pounding apart a premature coffin
too small, too dirty,
too old--as the rotten boards give way
to the slightest touch of the hammer;
trying to forget him who had,
still living, been relegated to this
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ X $1\frac{1}{2}$ X $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. box next to the garage,
because he peed on the kitchen floor once too often.

He stared at my foot
until someone else put his coat around him
(he, by this time having
calmed somewhat, was sitting up),
then he charmed me
by looking up;
sincere and naked
his blue eyes--

A secret smile in her sapphire eyes
as we emerged downstairs;
her joy became ours, slowly,

The annual
Christmas
party

all males solemnly vowing to wear
black armbands to the wedding, and
as we left, she asked to read my poem
of her and her last party—
i touched her shoulder
as i walked out

The night
before
Christmas

the door, i recall
each song and its (for once) excellence,
the choir together,
enough tenors, though weak,
the organist not too loud;
his sermon asking us
to imagine ourselves Wise Men—
i laugh at his impudence, and try.

We hid him from the wind
with blankets and an old rug,
waiting for the
overdue ambulance;
the two store managers in
shirtsleeves, asked if
they wanted coats or into a warm car,
replied no, this being only temporary.

RUGS

I remember an old,
 ragged
 bearskin rug
 that i loved to play on when small;
 it had only black patches
 where its fur used to be,
 its white skin showing through;
 but it was soft
 and warm
 and even the beady eye
 (the other only empty,
 surrounded by stuffing)
 and the long teeth didn't frighten . . .

Then, today, the squirrel,
 that two days ago had
 run past me
 on some errand of his own,
 stopping only to stare at me,
 his black tail waving--
 there in the street

LAST DAYS

The songs of birds
and warm wind over the flowers,
waving white and yellow and sometimes
blue--

(sitting in an elevator between floors
Mike playing with the lights
on off on off
the lighted buttons of the floors glowing happily

(her eyes on me
as i eat,
smiling over chicken to her
curled on the couch,
such days

(a flash of white,
as Nanc turns toward him
smiling wider and wider,
as to the soft drone
of the old words
he draws her to him--
and after the ceremony,
she winces as i, in my clumsy happiness
for both
(to the rhythm of a
jukebox transfigured by her smile),
step on her toe again

(E. at the stove,
master chef,
spilling spices in confusion of delight
on the stove
on the rug
sometimes, luckily, on the chicken
then, suddenly, back at the Scrabble (Скрабл) board
trying to think of
a five-letter word ending in -яТЬ)

flowers grown over
the graves of memories,
and the blossoms gaily
in the wind saying

you'll never go

you'll never go--

(house in moving confusion

boxes scattered, half-full,
 litter:
 papers, scrap;
 talk in trivialities,
 late and minor events,
 goodbye, no,
 goodbye, no,
 goodbye

(and again her eyes,
 wistful,
 smiling over the counter and
 careful not to say too much

(pomp & ceremony in the sun,
 seas of blue
 topped by faces, bright, none recognized,
 unintelligible words
 as numerous as the faces—
 then pandemonium, as countless token diplomas are laid
 in countless eager hands, and the seas break
 for the stadium doors)

leave the strongest urge
 to pick one,
 hold it as it too dies,
 scattering white petals like unmelting snow.

(and again her eyes

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

P. 3: The Pushkin epigraph, literally translated:

She did not remain for anyone,
Only a coffin . . ."

This was taken from Pushkin's version of Snow White, in which, after Snow White has eaten the poisoned apple, she is entombed in a glass coffin atop one of the highest (and most difficult to ascend) mountains in Russia. One of the seven knights (not dwarves in this version) that have attended her speaks the above lines as he leaves the grave.

P. 5: The quotation from the newspaper is an edited transcript (yes, Richard, I know that's unkind) of the article appearing in the Wyoming State Tribune of October 6, 1970.

P. 6: The old woman in the poem is the first of what probably is going to be many incarnations of Mercaptor (see "Just One More Way to Say No" etc.).

P. 8: The center of "'tis the season" is a sonnet because it was the most contrasting form I could think of to the loose, almost stream-of-consciousness form of the first and third parts. The one-eyed god in the sonnet refers to an early poem (since suppressed in the interests of good literature) which revolved very morbidly about the sun being some sort of hostile god. The speaker was in love with a spirit which could not stand daylight and she had to leave him every morning when the sun rose. One begins to see why it was suppressed.

P. 9: Here, technically, I should reproduce the original Yazykov poem of which mine is an imitation. However, because I don't have a Russian typewriter and because most people can't read Russian anyway, I hereby exercise my prerogative as poet and tell the scholastics to go hang. Suffice it to say that the two poems' themes and a lot of the imagery are the same. An interesting sidelight: I wrote "Imitation" before I'd ever seen Yazykov's poem. The original was entitled "Spring". But three years ago when I came across his poem, I realized he had said what I wanted to say much better than I had in "Spring"; so I took a few pointers from him and, in gratitude, retitled my poem.

P. 10: Being on vacation at a cousin's house and not having to get up early, since I normally had an 8 AM class five days a week, was the Ultimate Luxury, at least until I tried to get someone to feed me breakfast at that hour . . .

P. 11: If anyone can come up with a term describing the study of the interrelationship of human and animal environments and human and animal groups and their effect on each other, besides "group ecology", I shall be most grateful.

The last sentence of sonnet IV refers to, of course, Twelfth Night, I, i, 1.

P. 12: I first discovered "Silentium!" about the same time I was writing the first version of The Song of the Man Whose Touch (the poem, not the book). Its attitude was so antithetical to my own, at the time, that I had to use its title as the title to one of my Song sections. Consequently, I also had to translate the poem in order for a reader

unacquainted with Russian (no Ezra Pound, I) to figure out what I was talking about. This translation--as any translation must--involved some very tough decisions, such as whether to keep the very strict rhythm and rhyme scheme that Tyutchev uses (a tetrameter line, rhymed AABB, etc.), or keep as close as I could to the sense, tone and meaning of the poem. Since the strict rhythm and rhyme scheme has been translated before and since my gifts lean more the other way, I opted finally for sense combined with more internal harmonics--assonance, alliteration, etc.--which, to me, sound more natural than rhyme to the English ear, as against the Russian ear which is more accustomed to its rhyme-rich language. Whether or not the translation is any good (and I think it is!), it does serve the main purpose of letting the reader know what I was reacting against.

P. 14: I worked very hard on the structure of Song, and I want the world to know that the key to it lies in examination of "The Circus", which gives an idea of the characters and physical descriptions of the poem's speakers. There. I've gone and explicated a whole poem for you. I can hear every poet ever born, especially the Modern ones, turning over in their graves. (Poetry is the only medieval craft-guild left; such secrets are jealously guarded.)

P. 15: A clue to the varying use of "I" and "i", for which I've been roundly scolded: when "I" is used, a persona is speaking; when "i" speaks, the identification between speaker and poet is much closer, though not absolute. This pattern recurs from here on throughout the book (though not earlier, for technical, psychological and poetic reasons I don't want to get into).

P. 17: Mauriat = Paul Mauriat

P. 18: This section used to be part of another poem, called "Treatise on the Decline and Fall of the Forthcoming Revolution", involving a revolutionary who decides, because his girlfriend dies as a result of a psychosis brought on by drugs and his neglect of her while performing his revolutionary duties, that he isn't really very revolutionary after all, since he wasn't able to sufficiently dedicate himself to a cause that would allow him to chalk up her suicide to "counter-revolutionary tendencies" (she was not a member of the "movement"). I still rather like the idea, but the execution, with the exception of the part I've recycled, was dismal at best, and there wasn't any way I could see to save it.

P. 25: These lines are from "Silentium!". See lines 6-7 of the translation, p. 12.

P. 28: I had one hell of a time coming up with a title for the poem cycle Waiting for the Call that Never Comes. The original title was Ouroboros (referring to, besides the worm with its tail in its mouth, E. R. Eddison's use of the symbol and his associations of it with Venus in his fiction; fiction which I will here freely plug as among the best this century has produced); along with title was an epigraph from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ll. 1-7, "The Prologe of the Mannes Tale of Lave", which I have since dropped because it gives too much of the game away. I retitled the poem cycle Waiting when I dropped the poem "Waiting" (which is now back in again; I'll explain that in the note to p. 37), since I didn't want to lose such a great title. I still

think it's a good title, so I kept it when I reinserted "Waiting". The setting of the poem cycle is rather important and is not very clear in the poems themselves (although if one knows when Thor #196 was published and recognizes the significance of 1972 in "Catharsis", then one can date the poems fairly accurately; but that is a lot of work), so I will be explicit: the poems, with the exception of "On Perception" which is dated in January, 1973, are set in the fall and winter of 1971-72. The events of "Just One More Way to Say No" do not occur in 1971-72, especially the Woody Allen film, but the mood is of that time, so it stands where it is. As to why "On Perception" is dated as it is, and placed where it is, I will leave that for the reader to figure out.

P. 29: The title "On Perception" refers to a remark made by a poetry teacher of mine (Douglas Lawder) that perception consists of four basic modes: apprehension, the experience itself, reflection, and dream. Each of the four sections demonstrates one particular mode (I hope).

The form of "Prelude" is a special one: the dream song, developed by John Berryman.

P. 31: We were having poetry classes in members' homes, instead of the more formal (more bleaugh) atmosphere of a classroom. I asked the girl whose house it was how she liked her house being in a poem; she said it certainly was different.

P. 33: Lines 8-10 are a direct steal from King Lear, IV, vi, 172-4.

P. 35: The title, pronounced "Гѳг Znĭ-et", is a pun (yeah, I know if it's that obscure, one shouldn't bother) on the Russian "Бог знает"

(Bog znī-et), meaning "God knows". The scene of the poem is a concert given by seven people from the Julliard School of Music, four of them playing Moog synthesizers, the other three singing or conducting or helping out generally. Clotho, Atropos and Lachesis, besides being the three Fates, are titles for a series of compositions on Emerson, Lake and Palmer's first album, the songs featuring the Moog prominently. "Be kind to your web-footed friends" (p. 36) refers to the Sousa march "Stars and Stripes Forever" which the Julliard group did as an encore; had the entire audience on its feet clapping along (in 1971, in the middle of the Vietnam War protests, no less; the group was good).

P. 37: We come now to the prodigal poem of the cycle, "Waiting for the Call that Never Comes". The original version of the poem was a long narrative in verse similar to that in "When You Smiled". For all its length, it was a flabby, weak-kneed poem, based on the fact that nothing was happening (there is an irony in using narrative structure for that kind of poem, but it is one that is impossible, for me anyway, to manage). However, the poem was necessary to the flow and psychology of the cycle, so in it stayed. Then, about a year after I'd finished the cycle (I thought; see comment on dating, top of p. 72), I wrote "Just One More Way to Say No", which accomplished the same tasks as "Waiting", but was in addition a very good poem (if I do say so myself!). "Waiting" was bade a fond bye-bye. Afterwards, though, I reconsidered; I really didn't want to lose the events in "Waiting", since they dovetailed so nicely into a mood (whether the surrounding narrative did or not). So I cut the narrative drastically to let the events speak more for themselves, and placed the poem--still too weak to really stand on its own--where

the "Toccata" section of Song (p. 18) is now. Another year or two passed; I decided that Song was a mishmash and had lost sight of its original theme and purpose under the weight of a thousand hasty revisions. So I tried once again, and "Toccata" bloomed back into "Waiting for the Call" again. This was fine with me, since the settings of Song (spring, though you'd never know it from internal evidence) and the "Waiting" fragment (very late autumn) did not jibe. But one gets the idea; enough of this textual foolery!

P. 39: Where the Edna St. Vincent Millay quote comes from I have no idea (tsk, tsk). Doug Lawder (the poetry teacher I mentioned earlier; he seems to crop up a lot) mentioned the quote to me after reading "Just"; I thought it was great: it fit so well and was at the same time such a great put-down--- Woody and Queen Vanessa appear in Woody Allen's rendition of Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* *but were afraid to ask. The ϕ -function is a mathematical function in number theory of no particular interest to anyone. And shtup? Well, if you don't know the meaning of shtup, get Harlan Ellison's mini-dictionary of Yiddish in his story "I'm Looking for Kadak" collected in Jack Dann's sf anthology Wandering Stars; or ask a Jewish friend.

P. 42: The verse form of "The Night Before My Vision" is Dante's favorite, terza rima. I mention such a seemingly obvious fact because a whole group of my fellow poets (to whom I was reading this) missed it completely until we were well into discussion of it. And a form that is that much of a pain in the butt at least deserves notice! The reason terza rima was used was to get in a back-handed reference to Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", but, somehow, the reference

became the structure of the poem, instead; so any resemblance between my poem section and "Prufrock" is purely serendipitous.

Specific references: Barbarella refers to Roger Vadim's movie of the same title, and specifically to the method of lovemaking employed in the 25th century (or whenever B. lived): touching the fingertips together, palms facing, while taking a "turn-on" or empathy pill. The sonnet fragment on p. 44 is a paraphrase of the second stanza of "'Tis the Season . . .". (p. 8).

P. 46: "Jug jug jug . . ." is from Eliot's The Waste Land, ll. 204-5.

P. 47: "O heart! . . ." is from Yeats' poem "The Folly of Being Comforted", l. 13. The "most lame and impotent conclusion" comes from Othello, II, i, 161.

P. 48: The Russian quotation is from an untitled poem by Mikhail Lermontov and is translated immediately after the quote. The Pushkin and Jarrell works later referred to are both about Snow White (see note on "When You Smiled", p. 68).

P. 52: All of the philosophers named in line 19, plus several others whose work I'm not as familiar with (like St. Augustine), held to a philosophy of strict asceticism and the carnality--thus inferiority--of women. This view is stated in its most clear and extreme form in "The Kreutzer Sonata" by Tolstoy, which I here recommend, not because I agree with it, but because I disagree with it so perfectly.

P. 53: Brillante, Italian for brilliant, is supposed to suggest a musical marking.

P. 55: "Gary, Indiana" was conceived on a bus passing through Gary at four in the morning. The season was spring, and if the moon was already colored red from the smog inversions, I shuddered to think of the approaching summer.

P. 56: The events in "Fellow Traveller" comprise a sequel (more or less) to the fantasies in "Just One More Way to Say No". The poem began with a phrase which wouldn't leave me alone: the title, "Fellow Traveller". I didn't want to use it in its usual sense of "Communist" or "red" so I tried to dream up a setting as far from today's politics and connotations as possible to recover the original meaning of the phrase. It wasn't until later that a friend reminded me that the reason "fellow traveller" was associated with communism and the Soviet Union was because the infamous name Sputnik means fellow traveller, from the root "путъ" (poots, with a very short s sound) meaning 'journey' + "с" (s) meaning 'with' (usually, as in this case, either a prefix or preposition) + "ник" (nĕk), which is an affectionate diminutive suffix meaning 'a person who'. All together it comes out "спутник" or 'sputnik'. Russians also use the term 'sputnik' to refer to the moon, which fits in nicely with the Artemis imagery in the poem.

P. 58: As the title implies, this started out as a letter, which wasn't very good (I sent it anyway), so I tried to reexpress myself less clumsily than I already had. I tried a poem; didn't like it; tried a short story; didn't like it; went back to poetic form and "Dear Suzie," emerged. The fact that this was my first railroad poem may have had something to do with the difficulty; the setting is in Tower A, a small two-story interlocking tower (a place where an operator—me—controls the remote

control switches that regulate movement to and from the various yard tracks onto the main lines) located on the west end of Cheyenne, Wyo. The spring term before I worked this particular job, I had taken my first Yeats course and I had his Tower constantly in mind while writing about my own.

P. 60: On my way to work at Tower A one night, a stray dog suddenly appeared in front of my Volkswagen. I didn't stop because I was late for work and when I looked back, there wasn't anything there. But I still didn't stop.

P. 61: The scene for this poem is a Chinese restaurant in downtown Rawlins, Wyo., where I (my friend not wanting to leave the hotel bar) have gone for dinner. We have been single-tracking (construction crews work on one track while the other carries trains; we are at both ends of the construction, like flagmen, to make sure no trains collide with each other) since about 5 AM, and at the moment of the poem I am so tired that I'm feeling no pain. My friend was, when I left, also feeling no pain, but not because he was tired.

An incident that happened about a month later reinforces the ironic tone of the poem: the girl (not woman, girl) mentioned in the second stanza wrote and told me she now had a boyfriend who did not appreciate her receiving my letters or, worse, her writing back, so maybe we'd better break it off (the girl is the same one as in "Dear Suzie,"; we had been corresponding about a year). She later married the guy, so I guess it worked out okay for her. There is an unclear reference in the sixth stanza (p. 62) of the poem about a friend who wants pictures. Originally,

there was a poem in Sec. III explaining that, but it was for the most part written just to explain it—dullsville—so I cut it. The title was good: "Random Thoughts on Existentialism and the Decline of the Absolute Value", but the rest of the poem didn't live up to the title. Sigh. Anyway, I had taken pictures of C. (the lady/antagonist/friend/whatnot in My Long Children; I dislike even using her initial because I have invaded her privacy enough by writing about her, but it helps the reader keep emotions straight, so that it doesn't seem like I'm being mushy for no reason) and was waiting for them to be developed. I photographed her just before school let out in the spring, so I couldn't give them back to her until fall (the distance between Michigan and Wyoming being considerable), when I had to return to school. That brings up the second reason "Random" was thrown out: too much going over old ground.

P. 63: The setting in "Christmas"—in the unindented stanzas, anyway—is K-Mart parking lot in Cheyenne where I had gone to exchange a duplicate record I'd gotten as a present. (No, Virginia, I didn't exchange the record in the parking lot; the poem happened in the parking lot. Gimme a break!) I saw the man go down, hurried over to see if I could help, and when I saw his condition, went inside to get assistance. And was ignored. I went back out and stood there, trying to figure out what to do, when the couple whose car he'd fallen against came out of the store and saw him and me. The man put his coat around the epileptic (snap diagnosis, that) and went back inside to see if he could get help. He did. The two store managers brought out the blankets and rugs mentioned in the last stanza, and, like I said, stayed till the ambulance

arrived.

P. 65: I had to walk by there every day on the way to and from class; no one cleaned the body up until one day about three weeks later it snowed and the street cleaners scraped it up with a snowplow.

P. 66: "Last Days" establishes the genre of my thesis, since it is the last poem and it has a marriage in it. The thesis can therefore be considered a comedy. Q.E.D. (?) In case you have trouble finding the marriage, it's in the third indented stanza on p. 66. My junior year roommate--already mentioned in "Waiting"--met Nanc in January, married her in April, and moved out, surprising him and me, since he vowed he was going to remain single forever when I left in December for Christmas break. I didn't mind his meeting Nancy (not the same Nancy as in And Farther Out, part II), and I certainly didn't mind him getting married to her, but I did mind him moving out, since his replacement as roommate and I did not get along at all, though the replacement was never aware of the fact: one does not fight with someone when one is moving out in a month anyway.

The "her" of the poem is again C.