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## The Lantern Vol. 47, No. 1, December 1980

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*Ursinus College*

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the  
*Lantern*

December 1980



*Mary Jo Quinn*

**Vol. XLVII, No. 1**  
**December 1980**

A collection of Poetry, Prose, Photography and Artwork composed for the Fall Term, 1980, by the students of Ursinus College.

The Lantern, the literary magazine of Ursinus College, symbolizes the light shed by creative work. It is named after the top structure on Pfahler Hall, which has the architectural design not of a tower or spire, but of a lantern.

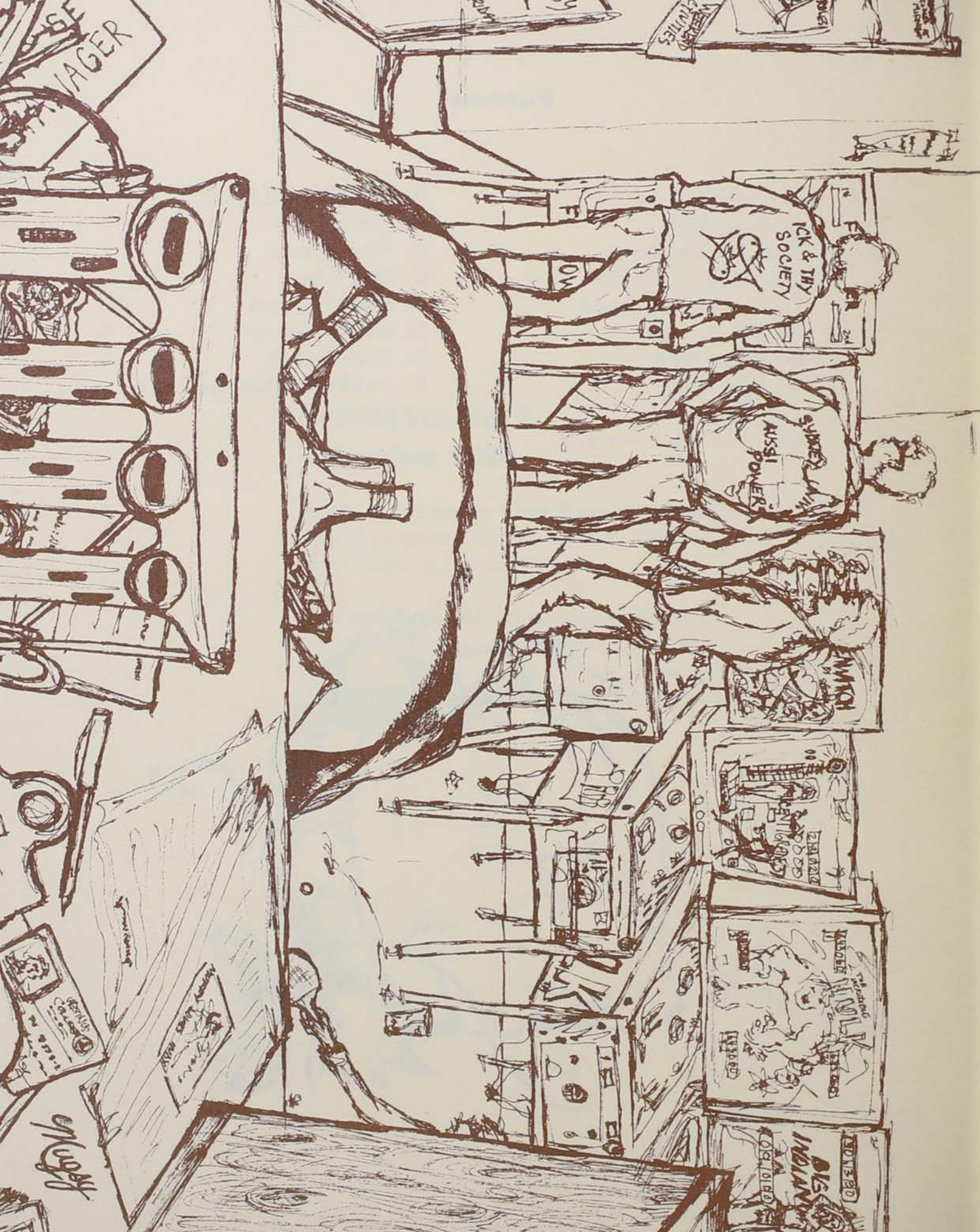
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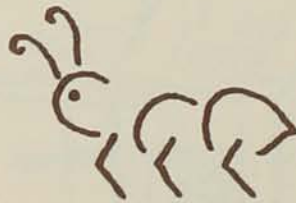
## Renewal

I'd like to rip through the canvas  
on which my world is painted.  
Break the visions that appear,  
the scenes with failure tainted.

Then to that fresh clean  
piece of stuff, to wield again  
the artist's brush.  
This time drawing structures  
clean of line.

Using paints that echo life,  
tracing patterns seen outside of time.  
Crystal colors shining  
through the spectrums of the mind.

Diane Newell



*Natasha*

SR



She threw down her diamond  
Hoping to break his heart  
    But they continued to play  
Both being aware  
No matter what the outcome  
    They must be able to deal.

The price seemed fatally expensive  
But they wanted to take that chance  
    Hoping for that last ace  
    That trump that would save them  
But to no avail.

Frustrated and losing,  
She clubbed him  
    Thinking she had destroyed his hand  
    Smiled smugly.

But he  
Not ready to be beaten  
Played as brilliantly as a king  
Thinking while smirking  
    "A spade's a spade".

She felt  
"If only I could play my cards right  
Maybe, just maybe I could win"  
But the game was over  
Their love reshuffled. . .

Ante up.

Xenia Constantine Politis

## Ragnarok

The all-expansive sky is always blank.  
Across the world the wind drags slow and grey.  
The sea is bleak, depressed and ever dank,  
And all of life is paced as slow decay.  
The men on Earth are cautious and alert,  
The gods above suspiciously await  
The destined day that Time must once exert;  
Both gods and men beware their certain fate.  
The world looks quiet, calm and still,  
But overcast the quietude there looms  
An omnipresent, apprehensive chill  
Of dreaded, oppressive, impending doom.  
Vitality from all the future took;  
Creation waits for Ragnarok.

The day will come when stillness will shatter,  
When rage across the blackened sky will flash;  
The ocean will surge and heave and batter,  
And wind against furious wind will crash.  
Then giants will butcher all life and all good:  
They'll bludgeon children like melons and hack  
Apart widows into hot rills of blood  
'Til nothing once alive remains intact.  
Then up to Asgard giants next will storm  
To rack and plunder heaven's sacred halls,  
To slice the weak gods into mangled forms,  
Or crush them like grapes under fallen walls.  
On Earth and Asgard chaos then will reign;  
Infinity will be its end domain.

This scourge of death is guaranteed by fate;  
Its rupture threatens every day and year.  
The men and gods have only but to wait,  
Have but to endure its deadening fear.  
For giants, the bringers of death, delay;  
They might save doom for ages more in game;  
They toy with gods like wolves with wounded prey,  
They cripple men with desperate cowards' shame.  
Living is fearing the nearing hunt  
And helplessly fleeing a startling sound.  
Living and living more tightens life to taut --  
Life tightens, tightens -- death snaps it down.  
When life is but fear of the bloody sheath,  
Then death is a soothing, welcomed relief.

Yet giant doomsters are themselves but weak,  
They too are held bound by ultimate fate.  
They're not masters; they're agents of the bleak  
And grim scheme in which they participate.  
For Time is the thing compelling the kill;  
It is the ruthless master, fater, force.  
Time is the one inevitable will,  
The one eternal, omnipotent source.  
All life is subject to this formless field,  
This vast omniscience so cold and so dry;  
It nurtures never long a living yield,  
It reaps the roots the seeds are living by.  
Men and gods and giants are merely specks,  
Are merely Time's infinites'mal subjects.

Despite the crawl of death's approaching sting  
The father-god, the god of love and thought,  
Will not accept the fact that fate has brought,  
Will not accept the death that Time will bring.  
The only end of Asgard's cheerless king,  
The only goal that Woden's ever sought --  
Delay the day when all the world is caught  
In fateful Ragnarok's constricting cling:  
"Against the giants we must always fight,  
For fate and death and Time we must deny;  
We must defeat our own internal fright  
And stand against the grim advancing blight.  
Rally to live! Do not with fate comply!  
We must stop death, and never let life die."

Steve Martino



Sunset Over Cayman

## Cinquains

The girl  
Was a dervish  
A gyre of colored flash  
But when the wind ceased to whirl, so  
Did she.

I paint  
Pink on clear space,  
Turquoise on blank expanse.  
With each stroke, am I hidden or  
Exposed?

Sonic

## Euphoria

Clouds of sheer ecstasy  
swirl Aimlessly about my  
Now whirling, spinning head.  
Thoughts of studyiNg fade  
awAy as I silently revel  
in my smoky Bliss and  
invite hazy Images to join the already  
scrambled chaoS of my brain.

Anonymous

## **To the Nahua of the Valley of Mexico**

They reflect in flames in my imaginings,  
Those hues they poured with pow'r of spirit  
"In black and red" across their tablets:  
The magic of the Nahua poets,  
Evoking feathers, flame, and starlight  
In the texts which they have left us,  
In the words of Aztec chattels  
Whom Cortes' priests examined  
After cross and musket mated  
Brought the vale of Anahuac  
Under the word of God and King.  
(Aztecs had done the same before them,  
Sons-of-dogs, outnumbered, fleeing,  
Given an island in Lake Texcoco  
On which they built Tenochtitlan;  
Their Hummingbird god ate the hearts from The Nahua.)  
The Nahua stretched their hands to the stars;  
Their Pyramids show the strength of their reach.  
Now their hands are dust 'neath the sun.  
Now their hearts are cold in the ground  
Where they ruled, wrote poems, built temples, revered the Sun.  
Greatness was the right of the Nahua name  
But the new gods came.

Chris Kile

## Inamorata

We met in Paris  
At first I didn't notice  
I didn't care  
Then slowly ever so slowly  
I came to realize just who you were

We spent rainy afternoons sipping tea  
You didn't realize what was happening  
How much I began to Love you

The days passed by and I was unsuspecting  
Then one day you told of your love for me  
The Sun shone brightly on us then

The days continue on  
Many are cold  
Many are rainy  
But I remain secure

Your love remains my eternal solace  
Stay by my side  
Ride my rainbow with me now  
And I will promise warmth, color and inestimable love

(Anonymous)



Paris - Ave Bosquet

## **Unspoken Passion**

A cold night outside  
A nice warm bed in winter  
Your head rests softly upon my chest  
Rising gently with my every breath  
Every so gently I stroke your soft hair  
Every so softly I whisper my love  
But you don't hear (or perhaps you do)  
Draping my arms over your silken shoulders  
Now it is my turn to sleep  
Love secure  
Love content  
Together again  
The candle flickers and then expires

(Anonymous)

Clouds of circus cotton candy pink rolled past me  
while I felt the warm current of earth move  
motionlessly beneath my toes.

Like striving young actors, the clouds were quickly  
forgotten against the strong stage presence of the sun.  
I stood envying the determination of that fierce fireball  
as it clutched for just one moment more of stardom.  
But the act was coming to a close and the curtain of  
midnight silk was soon to be lowered.

I turned again to watch just once more, as the sun  
melted into the bursting surf,  
its heat dripping, slowly cooling, like a burning taper.  
Succumbing to the rising light of darkness, it whispered  
silently, good night,  
and fell off the edge of the universe, another victim,  
just like ships in Columbus' time.

Lori Reinhart



## the first mate finds a captain (almost)

i knew you were out there somewhere  
yet in all my haphazard searching  
i never realized i was looking in the wrong place  
damn  
i knew it was supposed to be incredible  
and not easily attained  
something truly appreciated by only a few  
ranked up there with  
the jersey shore  
werewolves  
and tonic water  
then sometimes  
all the days spent looking for one thing  
result in finding another  
damn  
even more incredible  
and even less attainable  
especially for me

J. Hayes



## **Dance of Defiance**

I will not dance your dance anymore  
I will not place my foot  
In the step of your choice.  
I will rattle the cage; frantic music  
Of anger.  
I will tear the name off of the sign --  
The one that you've designated as mine.  
Flexing my muscles  
My costume falls away in shreds  
I'll make myself so large  
That the shoddy entrapment  
(You built it yourself you say?)  
Will burst  
In shards  
And bits  
So guard  
Your eyes  
And when I am free  
In my gracious manner  
Of being so decidedly free  
I will set out the patterns, smuggled  
From the floor of the dancing school,  
Grab your wrists  
And I will take you out  
For a mad whirl across the boards  
Are you ready?

Ace

## **Concert**

Low moans  
As we rocket  
Through the midnight abyss  
Quick blips  
Lightning flashing  
From time to time  
As the rhythm  
Accelerates  
Our forms throbbing  
Simultaneously  
Finally  
Rocking slowing  
Lasting illumination  
A hand to help  
To hold  
As cautiously we step  
From subway  
To platform.

Jennie Reichert

## Blame

I see the dejection in your eyes (like i have known),  
As you stand and talk with her.  
You keep a straight face, never wince,  
As she pulls your heart out and throws it  
Across the grass for all the world to see.  
You look for the blood,  
But her hands are as clean as the day you met her.  
I see the dejection in your eyes (like i have known),  
When there is no one to blame.

J.C.



## **i've seen that movie too**

i've been thinking of  
making a movie about  
the two of us.

The main characters  
needn't audition,  
i have dubbed you and i  
the stars.

For who knows better  
than we,  
the roles we have  
been playing.

i will be the director,  
this time,  
you have had the  
real-life manuscript.

But, i will study your lines  
and you mine.  
We never really took the time  
to be each other's understudy.

Perhaps if we had,  
the plot wouldn't be  
as confusing as  
it is now.

Oh, and i will need a stuntwoman  
to fill in during our arguments.  
i need rerun them only once  
in my mind.

The intermission's subliminal projection  
won't be  
"popcom" but,  
"love me."

Here's your script,  
i already know my lines  
by heart.

Lights, camera, action. . .

Xenia Constantine Politis

## Greystone

Yellow snapdragons fill the field  
and thorny roses climb walls  
every summer in endless profusion.  
They are to be counted on.  
The sun smiles down,  
shining silver streaks  
across the ocean's waves.

Colored specks of glass,  
rounded out by pounding surf  
announce themselves as precious jewels,  
to store away for rainy days.  
Endless summers taken for granted  
in lazy wanderings of curiosity.

Finding crabs among the rocks  
we cage them up in pens of sand,  
letting them go when we  
become tired of the sport.  
Periwinkles, colored white or purple,  
creeping in salty pools,  
crushed for pollack fishing,  
but mostly just admired.  
Clams, dug by the buckets  
ending up in mother's chowders.

Drizzled sand through expert hands  
decorates our castle towers.  
Hopscotch squares  
are etched on hard wet sand.  
Black inner tubes scrounged from  
the corner gas station  
and carefully patched  
bob us around like lobster buoys.  
Teeth chattering, lips blue  
we warm ourselves on the rocks.

Years and miles have passed for me.  
Farms replace the sea.  
The taste of salt upon my lips  
is now a cherished memory.

Diane Newell

## **The Philosophers Of The Tower**

In a far, forgotten corner of Lakali stood a dreary tower inhabited by six philosophers. Their wisdom was known far and wide. That is, they hoped it was. They answered the questions of the general populace in the morning from nine until eleven, and then again in the afternoon from two until four.

It was half-past three of a particularly dismal fall afternoon. Since no one had shown up with any questions all day, they were busy with their assorted tasks. John was in the garret, counting the carrots and contemplating the Divine. Yosef was translating the Talmud into six different languages. Unfortunately, his papers were mixed up with John's and he was really translating the Book of Luke. Friedrich was sitting at the other end of the table, muttering to himself and scrawling madly all over a piece of paper that Yosef had dropped. He was trying to prove to John that only two, not four angels could dance on the head of a pin. Abul was looking under the water-clock for his Koran that had been personally autographed by the Prophet himself. Demtri was in the kitchen, stirring up his speciality, the black soup of Sparta. Everyone was dreading dinner. Upstairs the sixth philosopher was deep in meditation. He had been up there so long that the rest of them had forgotten his name. The cat, oblivious to all the activity around her, sat waiting for the cuckoo to come out of the clock again.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door, Everyone jumped. Abul cracked his head on the water-clock. Before anyone could say anything, the door was flung open and a magnificent prince strode in.

"I seek. . ." began the prince.

"Rrrrrrrroooooooooowowowowowowowwwwwww!!!!!!!" screamed the cat. The prince had accidently trodden on her tail. She leaped for the mantel, and sat between the flickering orange and purple striped hour candles.

Attracted by the racket, Demtri came in from the kitchen, holding a long wooden spoon from which greasy threads of the black soup clung. John, rather blurry-eyed from his abrupt return from the Divine, was right behind him. He held two carrots.

"Don't bump the hourglass!" Demtri warned the prince.

"Ahem," said the prince, steadying himself and narrowly missing the large ornate hourglass beside the door. "I have been seeking the Tower of the Six Philosophers that stands at the edge of the Dolorous Waste for a week and a day, to ask of them a question dear to my heart and to that of my people. I believe I have found it?"

The five nodded. "Demandez. . . ah, wrong language," said Yosef, shuffling through his papers. "Ah, hummmmmmmmmmmmm. Ask!"

"Having passed my three and twentieth year, my father, the king, has advised me to marry. A princess of the neighboring realm has been suggested. Is it meet that I should bind myself in holy matrimony, and thus bind the ties between our realms and provide heirs for the succession?"

"Twenty-three!" Yosef gasped. "It is written: 'It is not good for man to live alone.' Go with all deliberate speed!"

The prince bowed and turned to go.

"Bah!" said Demtri, waving his wooden spoon. The prince halted. "What is a woman, but a whining, conniving shrew? A scold, a nag, frivolous to a fault! Concerned with nothing, but clothes and gossip. A man would be well rid of such an evil."

"You've been reading Socrates again," said Yosef, sternly.

The prince was beginning to look a mite puzzled.



John was thoughtfully nibbling one of the carrots. "Be fruitful and multiply," was all he said.

"Of course," said Abul, absently. He was carefully moving the crocks on the mantel, still searching for his Koran. "The Prophet permitted a man to take four wives, if he could love and support them all equally."

The prince was visibly stunned. "I came asking of one only. What should I do with four?"

"Two!" said Friedrich, adding a last flourish and pushing his glasses up his nose. "I tell you, John, only two, not four angels can possibly dance on a pin-head!"

"Four," said John. "Your calculations are incorrect."

"Hmf!" said Friedrich. "See for yourself!"

"Four," said John.

"Two," said Friedrich.

"Who cares?" asked Yosef.

A loud argument broke out. "Please, please," broke in the prince. "I beg of you. Leave this for another time."

"Quiet!" shrieked a thin, reedy voice. Friedrich, Yosef, and John jumped. The sixth philosopher appeared on the stairs. The poor man hadn't been out of the lotus position in twenty years, and his limbs were weak. "What is this racket?"

"I desired the answer. . . ." began the prince.

"The answer is to fulfill one's destiny and to attain karma," said the sixth philosopher. "Which I almost had until my meditations were disrupted. I shall try again. And don't try sneaking me your share of Demtri's black soup," he added, giving the others a stern look. "Answer his question and be done with it." He climbed back up the stairs.

"Oh, is he still here?" said Yosef. "I thought I told you to get married."

"Women," muttered Demtri. "You will rue it all your life."

"There has been talk of an overpopulation problem," John conceded. He took another bite of carrot.

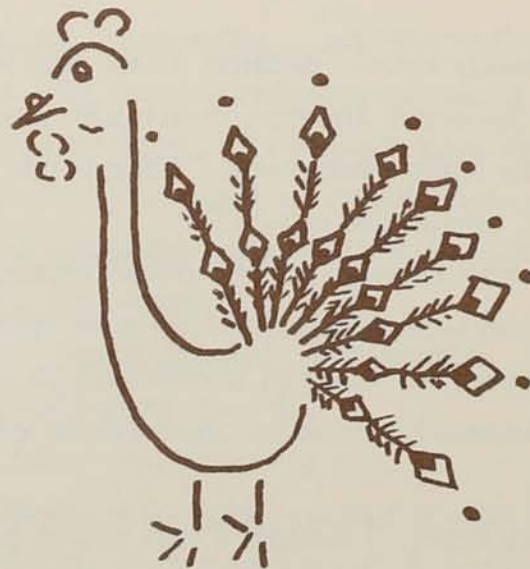
"Really?" said Friedrich. "It's always seemed so empty here."

"Where is my Koran?" wailed Abul.

At that moment the cuckoo leaped out of the clock and cuckooed four times before the cat had a chance to jump. The water-clock bubbled and another stripe appeared. As the last grain of sand trickled out of the hourglass, John deftly flipped it over. Beside the cat the striped candles burned away the last vestiges of an orange stripe. Far down the hall a grandfather clock chimed. It was four o'clock.

The prince looked around him and laughed scornfully. "Behold, I have asked your help in a matter of grave importance to myself, trusting in the tales I have heard of your wisdom. Yet I find more agreement between the very clocks of this room than between yourselves." With that said he jammed on his hat and left in disgust.

Dorene M. Pasekoff '84



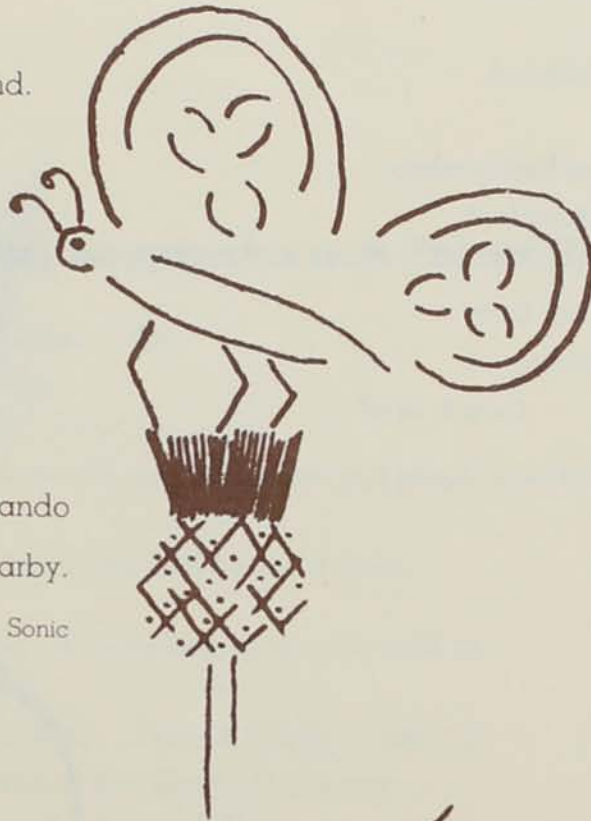
Wilbur

R

## Span

A long reach into space  
Looming over the sea-bound.  
The cables rise  
Like vertical music  
With tones ascending  
And then descending --  
A balanced mode.  
Over spaces and lines  
There slides a metallic glissando  
While the shipyards hum nearby.

Sonic



Tiara

2

## Commando

They do their best, they do what they can  
they get them ready for Viet Nam  
from Old Hanoi to East Berlin  
Commando-involved again  
First Rule is: The Laws of Germany  
Second Rule is: Be nice to Mommy  
Third Rule is: Don't talk to Commies  
Fourth Rule is: Eat kosher salamis

Rob Oscovitch

## Cheshire

I saw  
a little kitty-cat  
strolling  
down the hall a while  
her stocking feet  
a-pitty-pat  
and on her face  
a Cheshire smile.

Carol A. Hykel



## **Summertime, Kryptonite and Falstaf(f).**

Kicking the errant leaves in time  
to the voice inside me,  
I pushed up the hill called Sub--urbia  
feeling the weight of equally spaced houses and manicured lawns  
upon my back.  
I'm still a kid and They keep calling me a man.

The slope was strewn with my inheritance; to look at  
but not to touch;  
(until, unless. . . maybe If. . . I could just for once. . . )  
without a commitment to the Cause of society  
from whence all Good(s) come(s). But  
I'm still a kid and They keep calling for a man.

So I stopped to puff and wheeze and sat upon a Rock  
conveniently placed for me to sit and think.  
And the more I thunk, the less/on (It) I did perceive,  
and traded in my favorite sneaks for a car and kids, you see  
I'm still a kid, but I let them call me a man.

Robert Pfeiffer

## Experience

The eternal swings  
of heights and depths,  
extremes of detachment  
and absorption.

Crowded spaces and  
terrifying aloneness.  
The struggle of accomplishment,  
bringing forth both  
greatness and nothingness.

The whole range  
of human emotions.  
The walls we have to hurdle.

Striving,  
we each move forward  
only to slide back,  
recreating that  
which we have done before.

Each time  
the limits are different  
and we must find  
new ways to overcome them.

Lessons,  
learned and relearned,  
absorbed and expressed.

Life's journey is  
experience upon experience.  
Forced limits  
to be overcome.  
And in the doing  
man takes part  
in God's creation.

Diane Newell

## Fluid Time

At the crossroads of my life  
are many roles for me to play.  
Possibilities of adventurous days.

My way unfolds in uncertain stances.  
With a need to take risks  
like a gambler at the wheel  
I take my chances.

I cannot travel a time line  
or know what lies at the end of each road.  
I must rely on an inner sense to lead me on.  
If by choice I take a wrong turn  
that opportunity will not wait. It's gone.

For every moment that passes in turn  
holds uniquely built bridges;  
personalities holding fluid time.

Diane Newell



## **"The Plight of Fred in Bed"**

Once there was a little froggy, Fred  
whose tale I'll tell you of 't has never been said.  
He lived with loving parents near some woods,  
and they warned him of those trees as much as they could.  
The woods were dark, mysterious, and deep  
and no one wandered near, not even the sheep.  
One day the little frog was attending school  
and some bigger frogs decided to be cruel.  
They came up to the little frog and caught  
him and they told him that he would be shot  
if he did not accept their little dare,  
which, by the way, stood up the end of Fred's hair!  
This feat was difficult for Fred to take.  
He had to wander in the woods, and fake  
was something Fred knew he could not pass  
upon these bullies who had muscles of mass.  
He had to show them that he did their dare  
by bringing them something back which was in there.  
So Fred set out the next day on the hike.  
The day was Saturday and he didn't like  
to spend the day against his parent's wishing,  
for he had told them he was going fishing.  
He knew that if they found out where he was,  
they'd be angered, and he knows what that does  
to all the trust that he has put in them –  
to end their thought of him as their gem.  
But Fred was more concerned upon that time  
about the gigantic hill he had to climb  
to start his voyage into the scary depths.



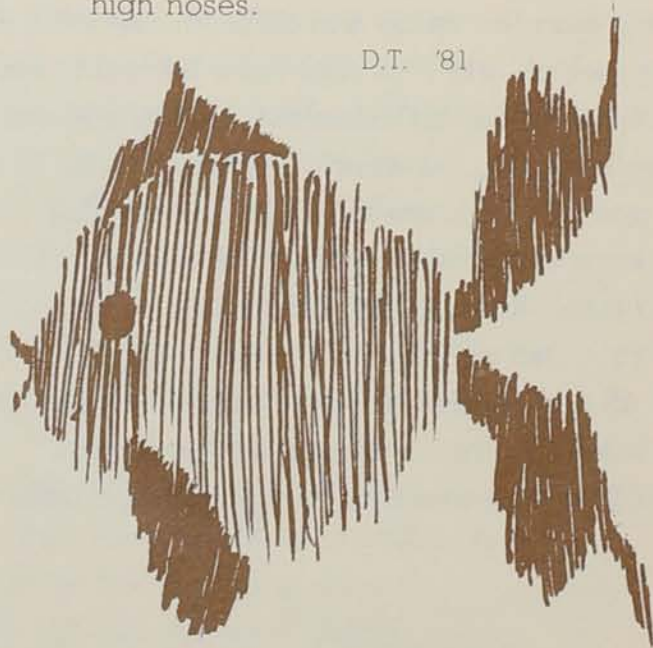
He wanted to backtrack all his earlier steps.  
Now this little Fred began to wonder;  
he knew he couldn't afford to make a blunder  
upon the choice of what he would bring back;  
the evidence must fit inside a sack.  
He began to search there, all around  
and suddenly he saw on the ground  
something to make even those bullies talk,  
for it was a beautiful, big, colorful rock.  
He started the journey back, but all at once  
he realized he had proven himself a dunce.  
He had a problem now as big as a sin,  
for he had not kept track of where he had been.  
All of a sudden he saw how very dark  
it had become, and he couldn't find a mark  
to show him the easiest way he had come.  
Now he noticed a lot of shadows, and some  
had shapes like which this Fred had never seen!  
These monsters came and showed their teeth, how mean  
they looked, and Fred now knew he had to run  
because the ghouls came out, and he knew he shouldn't  
have gone into the woods because he was told not  
to, and now he knew he would get caught.  
He knew that if he could do it all over again  
he'd surely listen to his parents and not his friends.  
He sat down and began to cry like a pup,  
but all of a sudden he found himself waking up.  
He knew he'd had a dream, but nevermore  
would he do something wrong like much before.

Barb Mathers

## A way with men

It's those classy girls  
I remember with all their  
gold and flesh finery  
and volumes of magazine  
smiles –  
ooh I chased  
them in barefeet but one  
by one they giggled  
me back to reality.  
I dreamed of the shining  
sympathy they never had  
and the price of their  
thoughts.  
I held them in my passion  
but watched them walk  
in the procession of  
high noses.

D.T. '81



Timothy

## **Courage to Love – (To A.)**

It wasn't so hard, so bad after all.  
I discovered my foe – weakness and strength  
I struck him so strong, I thought I would fall  
He bared his self; I beat it at length.  
But his wounds were mine, his narrow blurred eyes  
stared into cold night, uncaring, unloved.  
I must for the heart, but conscience decries.  
He hasn't a heart. I braced and I shoved  
the fiend off the edge; the weight off my back.  
My muddled mind cleared, and now I must right  
where he and I wronged, find where we'd lost track.  
So long in darkness, plain sun is blind light.  
Old friends, my defenses – gone with my doubts.  
Oh how a heart, free to love, laughs and shouts.



## Winter Sleep

Under blankets piled high  
warm and cozy against the cold, wintry weather,  
I heave a sigh,  
It's time to get up.

Just five minutes more I tell myself  
the second hand ticks swiftly by,  
slowly, surely, sleep steals over,  
as the morning sun sinks in the sky.

Carol A. Hykel



## Bernie

I think, therefore I am, said a famous philosopher, Camus or maybe Plato. I'm not always what I thought I was and I don't think I'm what I am now. I don't remember, so I try not to think of what I am now. "Excuse me friend, have you got an extra cigarette? Perhaps you have a light. Thanks anyway, pal."

Where was I. Where am I now? Coffee, I want a cup of coffee. It's in there. "Good-day, madame. How much is coffee? Thirty-eight cents? Is that with tax? No I don't have any money."

Cash a check, I'll cash a check. What bank was I in? They say I drag my feet, but I didn't realize. How clumsy of me. I am, therefore I still think. . . I think I am going somewhere. What's the rush, no great work of art ever resulted from rushing. Michaelangelo spent four years on his back in the Sistine Chapel. Did James Joyce or T. S. Eliot hurry? The Wasteland and Finnigan's Wake were the products of time. Good old Leo Bloom. . . art comes of age like he did. . . I taught a course in that once.

I want cigarettes or food, smoke or water. "Good-morning Olga, what have you got to eat? How about a cup of coffee?" She asks if I cashed a check. My tongue freezes. It's a lumpy ice cube too big to swallow. Shame stings my face and there is no answer. I should have answered but I have no answers. I had \$200 yesterday, but I bought a coat. Now I have nothing to show for it – and I need a shave.

"He was at Joseph's yesterday, Olga. Bought himself a fancy coat."

Give me some hot water, anything, my tongue is cold. Numb with shame, I exit. All the world's a stage and now the actor makes his exit. See you later, Olga. See you later, fools. You're not as foolish as I once was. I had believed that I believed because it was true. Then it came to be true just because I believed. Now I know better. There are some truths. . . est modus in rebus, what Jesus said when he walked on water. No. . . that was trust, when was the golden rule? We had tried walking on the Delaware, it sounded so easy in Sunday school. I'd like to swim again, but I'm afraid I'll forget. I might drown. . .

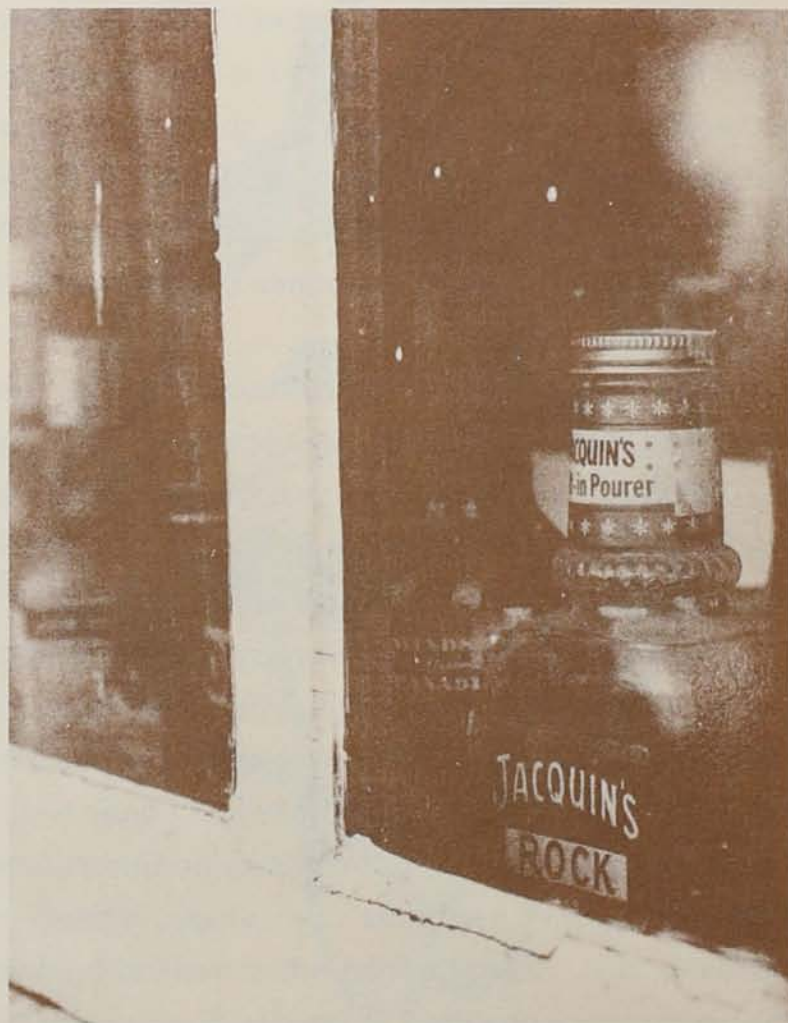
## Bernie (cont'd.)

I was not always this way – sometimes I lose track of things. I must think this out, be rational, use the knowledge before and behind me. It eludes me though. . . I, a learned man and still it escapes me. Maddening, all that studying to become a child again. Flowing and drifting, in and out of the hospitals many times. . . I drifted down the Delaware on my back. . . I've been better and I've been worse – in and out of the river, hospitals. It's just as well. . .

Where's that bank? I need a shave first so I can eat in peace. They always stare at me when I don't shave. There's one. Can't he see that I need a shave? The money, the check, I exit shamefaced.

They gave me the Rorschach test once, I forget what it looked like. I've taken many tests in many places. My theory is that life is a constant test, whether you're in front of the desk or behind it. Some girl is staring at me and she's barely dressed. Twenty dollars, can't she remember either? She needs to go to the bank too. I politely tell her to go cash a check.

There's the bank, please



## **Bernie (cont'd.)**

be the right bank. It is, it is and the test is over. My checkbook is with me because it's always in my back pocket. I'm very careful of things like that. They greet me like a friend and I am. "I'd like one hundred dollars. Thank you very much."

I must visit Olga's for coffee and I'm starving. "Excuse me buddy, do you have an extra cigarette?" Never mind, I see one over there. "Would you have a light by any chance?" . . . He scorches me with his look, but I have matches now. "Thanks, pal."

My head swims again. Like swimming in muddy water, my mind's as murky as the river I used to swim in. Watching those rapids. . . every year someone drowns. I fought the current too. . . to be swimming upstream again. It was foaming, rough, but the rocks were slimy and I'd go there now but I'm dizzy – I can't help it.

There it is, I've been waiting and wandering. "Miss? Miss, I'll have a cup of coffee."

That waitress doesn't trust me, but I take out my billfold and she approves.

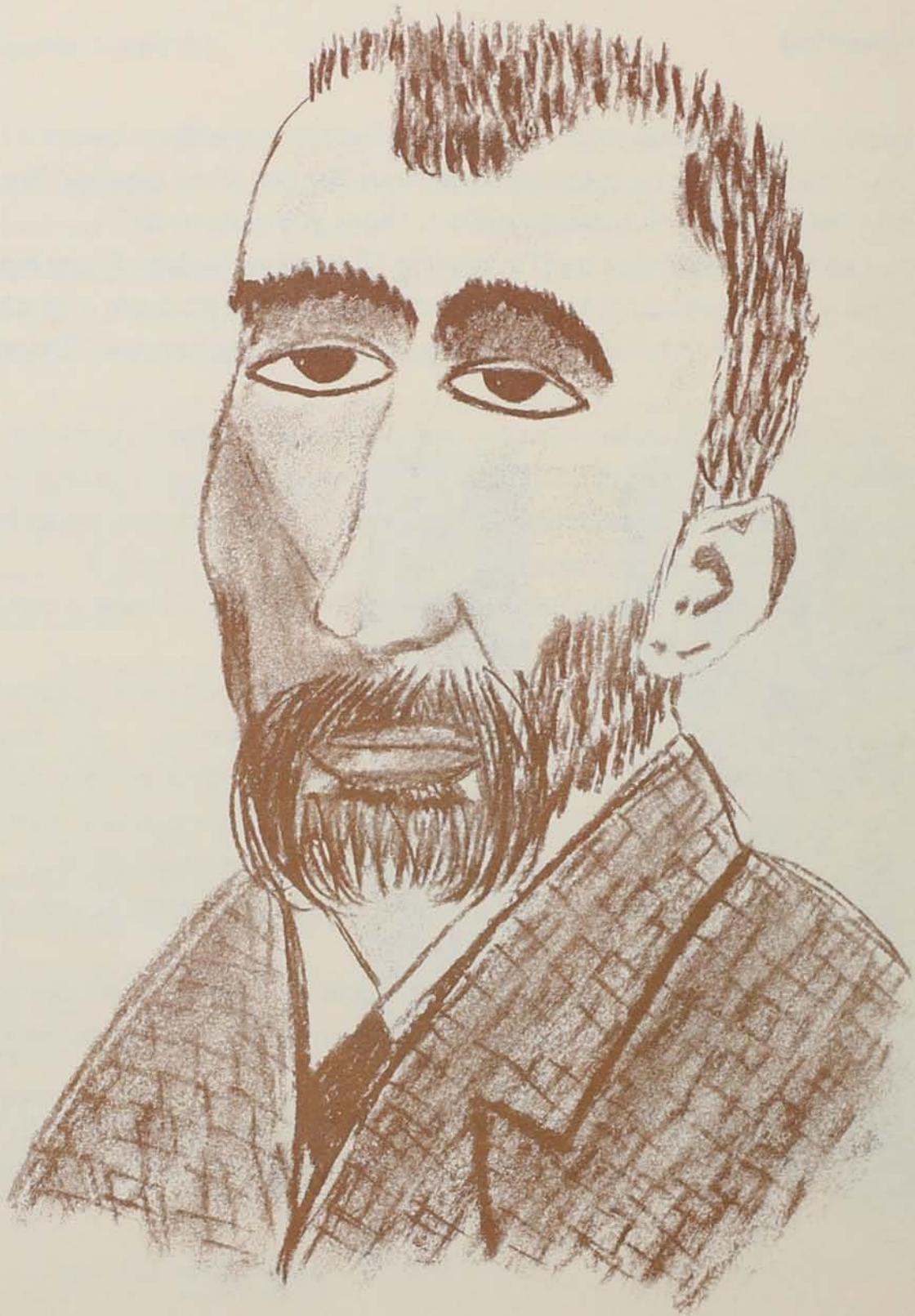
"I'll have two eggs. . . over medium; home fries, crisp. . . bacon. . . well-done; toast and coffee please." Someone forgot their cigarette in that ashtray. They didn't finish it. Guess no one will mind if I smoke it. I forgot when I last ate or drank. It's that dam medicine, makes me feel heavy and forget. I haven't been taking it though. . .

"Will you look at that? He looks like a hermit! I'll bet he hasn't eaten in ages, the way he stuffs it in his cheek like a squirrel."

"That's what happens when you study too much. He blew his brain like you blow a fuse. College is a bunch of horseshit. I never went and there's nothing wrong with me. . ."

And so on, and so on, these people aren't worth listening to. None of them. It's hot in here, I could go for a swim. Where can I go though; the river's a long way off.

Jennifer Bassett



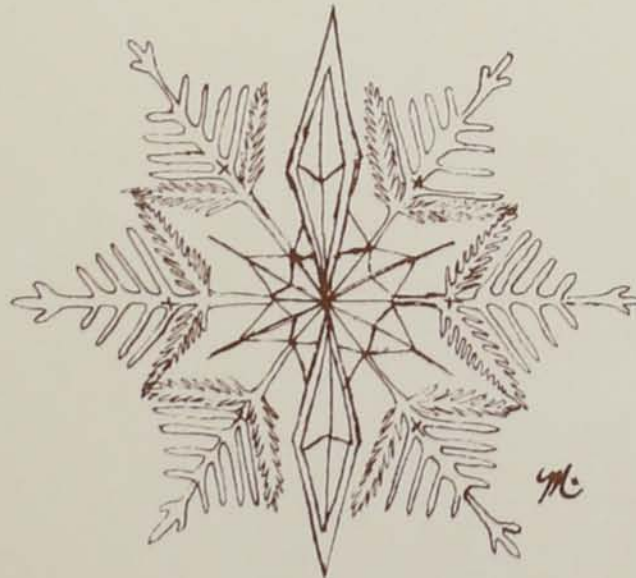


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Snowflake - Mugsy