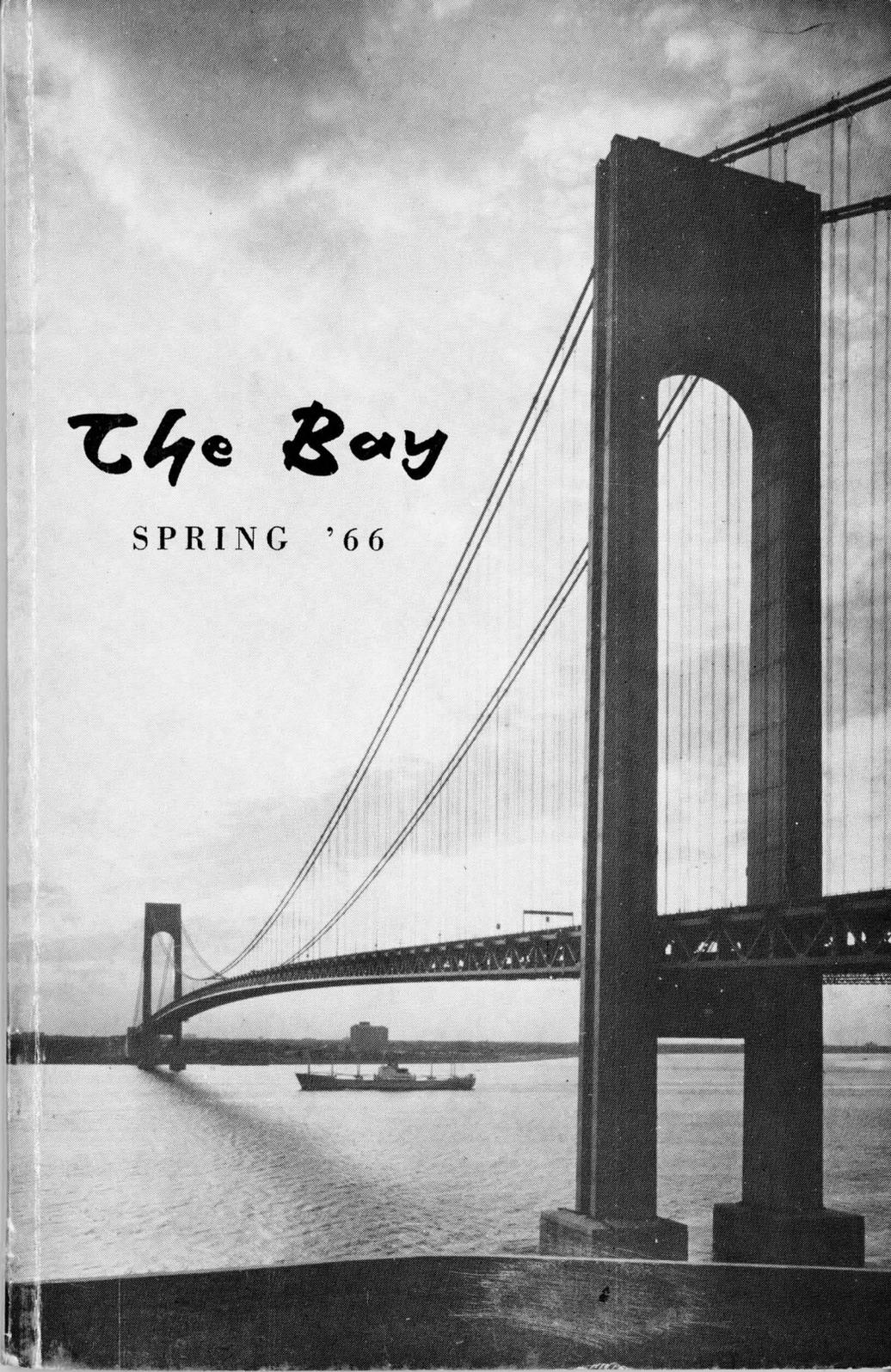


# The Bay

SPRING '66



IN THIS ISSUE  
WORKS  
BY

Ellen-Marie Bissert

Vincent Curcio

Judy Duncan

Jane Freedman

Susan Leonard

Charles Rubenstein

# The Bay

WRITINGS BY STUDENTS AT  
STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## STAFF

Editor-in-Chief:

CONSTANCE DeMARTINO

Prose Editor:

JANE FREEDMAN

Poetry Editor:

JUDY DUNCAN

Art Editor:

CHARLES RUBINSTEIN

Faculty Advisor:

ARMAND SCHWERNER

# The Bay

---

## CONTENTS

- 3 JANE FREEDMAN: *Anything Nice Happen*
- 5 ELLEN-MARIE BISSERT: *My Journey to a Religious Poem*
- 23 JUDY DUNCAN: *Solitude*
- 25 SUSAN LEONARD: *Floating on C*
- 26 SUSAN LEONARD: *Island Hopping*
- 28 VINCENT CURCIO: *I was a Northern Agitator*
- 43 JANE FREEDMAN: *To an Alley Cat Lost*
- 45 JANE FREEMAN: *Only a Little Left to Go*
- 47 JUDY DUNCAN: *Just Being At*
- 49 JANE FREEDMAN: *Story*
- 51 JUDY DUNCAN: *There you can go in*

Drawings by CHARLES RUBENSTEIN

Cover photo courtesy: TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE & TUNNEL AUTHORITY

## ANYTHING NICE HAPPEN?

*Jane Freedman*

I sat at the kitchen table yesterday;  
the winter sun grabbed at me from  
behind the curtained  
window pane; its long  
arm reached at me from  
across the table and I wanted to  
be embraced in its  
entirety.

Burnt, homemade popcorn  
stared at me with lethargic  
kernels

So

I ate them.

A bowl of last year's artificial flowers, dust  
covering their ears,  
webbing their senses,  
vied for my lover's affections. His  
kisses warmed my  
cheeks  
but the waxy blossoms couldn't cry.  
(They might have keened, but I didn't hear  
them.)

Then it was some books, pencils,  
six cakes of Woodbury soap, a glass

of Chocolate milk and  
 me.  
 my Grand amour had  
 discarded me for the  
 moon and some petty constellations  
 but  
 the chocolate milk pledged its  
 troth, when I  
 held the yellow-striped straw  
 between my teeth and  
 bubbles  
 tickled my parched lips.  
 I  
 was  
 loved  
 and the birds came to our wedding, singing.

## MY JOURNEY TO A RELIGIOUS POEM

*Ellen Marie Bissert*

My parents poetically are Emily Dickinson and Rainer Maria Rilke who intensified my affinity for solitude and prepared me for an empathy with Oriental concepts of self-realization. Although these mentors of my sixteenth year were replaced by Simone de Beauvoir and Ayn Rand, I remain my parents' child. I find it necessary to be alone: essential to seek the reality of my being, for in the words of Stephen Spender:

Every poet begins again from the beginning that is himself, and outside experience meets in the center that is his unique sensibility.

And I was self-estranged. Six weeks of my '65 summer vacation and still I suffered from an accute educational hangover: I knew dropfuls of American History, how to read the Periodic Table, some French verbs, a few Papal Encyclicals, Periods in English Literature; but myself—I did not know. Yet I hoped Martin Buber's words:

. . . the depths of man's being are revealed only to the man who has become solitary . . .

were true.

Thus I spent one month of my summer in an arbitrary aloneness, followed by two weeks slowly relaxing this control. My discipline required no conversing, speaking as little as possible and avoiding a manner that would seem unnatural. The last was essential: I did not want anyone aware of what I was doing, for it would cease to be a discipline, cease to be a natural condition. And loneliness is man's natural state. Although he begins life in the womb, he is born to be a man alone, living among other men.

Consequently I was not scrupulous about keeping silent but about remaining conscious of myself as a being alone. However, since I was unable to retain a constant awareness of my state, I allotted between one to five hours to meditation daily; beyond this I was incapable and felt the time excessive. For the most part, I succeeded in keeping my discipline, but I did succumb both from lack of will and cleverness to the banal claws of trivial conversation.

This was the atmosphere of my August 31, the last week of my discipline and the beginning of my quest to express what I now consider inexpressible. I had become eighteen three days before and that day received the birthday present of a day alone. My activities were typical: time was spent meditating, writing, listening to Rubinstein's recording of *The Chopin Scherzos* and reading *The Great Religions by which Men Live* by Ross and Hills. In the Buddhism section, I encountered a quotation of Gautama:

Birth is suffering . . .

and I wrote that 'I must kill my artificial self, for I no longer wish to surrender my reality to the world I despise.'

The end clause echoes my first exposure to a rational ethic—Ayn Rand—with an undertone of Martin Buber: I sought to practice realization: to no longer protect but realize myself. Like many before it, the entry expressed a growing disenchantment with Catholicism, for its thought-binding, its self-estranging selflessness, its hierarchical discrimination against women grated

me. And finally the entry reflected the words of Buddha I had read a few days ago:

Believe nothing on the sole authority of your masters or priests. After examination, believe what you yourself have tested and found to be reasonable, and conform your conduct thereto.

For the next five days—a steady diet of prose, all starch except for a collection of essays, *To the Young Writer*, edited by A. L. Badler—a piece of meat for an anemic poetaster. I enjoyed these essays although they pricked my conscience—no verse in two weeks. However, since I had read six books that week, I had a false sense of accomplishment. This caused me to rationalize, 'I am getting somewhere in my journey of the mind.'

September 5 and I did no reading beyond the Magazine Entertainment and Book Review Section of the *Sunday Times*. Instead, I listened to poetry recordings: Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins in the morning, later Robert Frost, a three-hour program at two about Dylan Thomas on WNYC and T. S. Eliot until 9 o'clock.<sup>1</sup> The hour between five and six o'clock was spent meditating between bites of dinner.

That night I penned 'I feel the seeds sprouting in my barren brain.' I was elated that something 'welling like a new spring' was coming to my creative drought. After my euphoria had calmed, that night I also felt I had experienced Atman and Brahman—'The peace of nature resting, stopping to look, I meet myself with the universe.'

The next morning, I awoke depressed, hating myself for playing believer, hating to accept 'because I am unable to do otherwise. Thus after the trauma and the truth, You usher in the lie. Teach me to pray and not to think again. Truth is alone in the Eden of belief tempting me to know. . . The above shows Eliot's influence on my feeble brain and pen.'

These lines are rather senseless. I wrote them in anger, and my emotions rarely make sense. However, these lines are the basis for over thirty attempts at a veritable poetic expression of

1. Since age sixteen, I have become acutely aware of my culturally deficient background and have strenuously attempted to correct this inherent lack. Thus I am in Dylan Thomas' words a "culture-vulture."

religious conflict. Actually, I was not only under the influence of T. S. Eliot but Anne Sexton. I felt empathy with her poem, "The Year of the Insane," which appeared in the June issue of *Harper's*, for it expressed a traumatic religious experience similar to my own.

That spring, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, ironically introduced to me by the January 15, 1965 issue of *Commonweal*, had led me into conflict with orthodox Catholic concepts. In addition to advocating feminine priesthood, my thinking developed along misogynist lines. This was due in part to de Beauvoir and in part to my antagonism to a marriage course which I considered half-blinded in pious dim-wit. Still desiring to remain a Catholic, I had trouble keeping my mind thinking the way it should. Anne Sexton's lines

I am in my own mind.  
I am locked in the wrong house.

expressed my predicament.

In September, my readings were starting to swell my head with doubt. Wallace Stevens' *The Necessary Angel* was beating my head with its wings:

. . . a poet respects no knowledge except his own and, again, that poet does not yield to the priest.

I longed to be in Nietzsche's words a "free spirit par excellence," to be able:

. . . to bid farewell to every belief, to every wish for certainty . . . to dance even on the verge of abysses.

for to quote Virginia Woolf:

Poetry requires intellectual freedom.

I then encountered T. S. Eliot's statement that most religious poetry is bad because it is insincere. I reread "Ash Wednesday" and "The Year of the Insane" and wanted to do something similar. Yet I did nothing.

On September 11, I started to worry. I was letting phrases slip. After waiting for anything, the lines I heard would go un-

recorded and thus were lost. My defense was that 'a small phrase or two is often too agonizing and fruitless an experience. . . . I dislike writing poetry because you must read and reread your hackneyed trash, and it is often self-defeating.' I also feared that I was again self-estranged, that again I had lost contact with myself, and again I could not write. But I could not face this. The experience is too painful, too distinctly hell to be embarked on unless in desperation.

Besides I was becoming engrossed in comparing Plato, Rand and Catholicism. Yet I was not sure whether it was true interest, or whether it was an unconscious deception to escape myself, to escape reading poetry. But poetry I don't especially like. It is perverse — those rattling phrases, the elusive pulsing of a half-worded rhythm. Such foul waters from the well of madness. The incantatory fever blisters the brain to beat song. Poetry — diseased bread for my being.

However, on September 19, I began my verse piece, or rather it began me. I didn't think too much of it. Like other scribbles it lay in the drawer. On September 25, I started trying to fill in some holes and formed some new ones. I continued this writing and rewriting for the next four Sundays: making an Eliot-Sexton style recording of my thoughts.

A revised recording on fragmentary bolts:<sup>2</sup>

#### GUIDE I: SYMBOLS

Fillers of Muse-holes are underlined.

x's mark the spots where there were words, but I couldn't read them. New words, if any, appear on top. They will not be underlined.

X's signify deletion to the point of obscurity.

\*'s are used for special occasions.

#### GUIDE II: NUMBERS

These are used to indicate the following:

1. general pilfering of Christian idioms.
2. specific pilfering — quotations.
3. diffuse pilfering — allusions and Christian symbolism.

2. None of these bolts is the first, but they are the earliest beginnings I have. These were kept not because of their merit but because they were part of something else.

4. miscellaneous pilfering — assorted images, voices, vocabulary, and strays.

N.B. Although I often use T. S. Eliot's voice and imagery, I do not make special note of this because I am not sure what is Eliot and what is not.

Small alphabet letters are used in conjunction with the numbers to enumerate the use of the above tendencies.

P.S. #1

The soul-murmur inked September 25 was written while my room stood silently in the night. Within the same conditions, I also wrote the undated revision. Judging from the preceding scribble written on the same day, I was probably listening to Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto #2*, second movement. Lines taken from a notebook dated October 8, I wrote in the side courtyard of Boro Hall.

STAGE I

Fearing *death* as much as *life*

I dwell in twilight *and run* in dawn

Between the Light and enigmatic\* night

Between *the Church* and *tightrope search*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

*My head splits in the pull.*<sup>4a</sup>

Teach me to pray

And not to think again

[from the entry of  
September 25]

*Let my days be spent in Thy peace*

*Let me be numbered among Thy flock*

*For I am the black sheep*

*That needs the flock and hates the fold.*<sup>1a</sup>

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Cleanse my heart

And I will cleanse\*\* my thoughts.<sup>1b</sup>

\* originally traumatic

\*\* originally wash

4a. Dickinson's voice

1a. Christian idiom

1b. Christian idiom

Teach me to die  
And not to live again.

[a transplanted  
revision from an  
undated entry]

You are death;  
You are the Light

[appears in both  
entries]

Burning my eyes  
Eating my brain  
As I lift my heart to the Lord<sup>1c</sup>  
And yield to the Light —  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

/ the beaten blind nothingness<sup>4b</sup> [September 25]

Come bless this sacrifice

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

prepared for the glory of Thy Light.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Lord be with me<sup>1d</sup>

[undated entry]

And I shall believe  
Never search  
Never think  
Never . . .

[both entries]

Never can I love / \* *the*  
heavenly belief, the hell  
of dumbing Light *in days*\*\*  
*of blinded* bright believing.

[\* in the undated entry:  
revision of Sept. 25]

\*\* originally "days blinded by"

1c. Christian idiom

4b. had read some Jean-Paul Sartre

1d. Christian idiom

I kneel before Thy altar  
hoping to climb the stone<sup>3a</sup>  
hoping with bread and wine<sup>3b</sup> to surrender  
the festering brain to ashes.

[lines taken from a  
notebook dated  
October 8]

Eli, Eli lama sabacthani?<sup>\*2a</sup>

[undated]

The moment bells bread to Body.  
wine to Blood. *Alleluia, Alleluia.*\*\*  
*Host God, God, Host where are You?*  
Thomas,<sup>3c</sup> am I, jabbing my tongue in Your rib,  
Mouthing You as Judas<sup>3d</sup> in the / Eden of belief.<sup>3e</sup> [Sept. 6]

O lead me not into temptation  
but deliver me from<sup>2b</sup> / the crucifying night; [undated]

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Tie me to the whipping post of  
Bless me Father<sup>2c</sup> for  
My presinned soul and helled and helling body  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.<sup>2d</sup>

I have thought  
And will not think again.

[undated]

Truth consumes time  
And I'm late.  
I've searched all night for stars  
And I'm tired.  
I'm missing the bus.

\* originally in English

\*\* Biblical quotation

3a. Christian symbol which refers to an altar stone

3b. an allusion which refers to the Eucharist

2a. quotation

3c. symbol of doubt

3d. symbol of betrayal

3e. allusion

2b. quotation

2c. quotation

2d. quotation

Hail Mary, the Lord is with Thee<sup>4b,2e</sup>  
And not with me

[October 8]

He has thrown me  
From my eagled nest<sup>4c</sup>  
And barks me with the dogs  
But I won't bark.  
I've thrown myself to the wayside<sup>3d+1e</sup>  
And fallen in the abyss<sup>—3e,1f</sup>  
The word became flesh<sup>2f</sup>  
Thought became convinced  
That darkness can make its moon  
Out of stringing stars  
OutXXXXXXXXXXXX

Maybe,

*I can crawl back on the stone  
and be a neo-Cain<sup>4d,3f</sup> and wear the demonic sign.*

Maybe,

*the rejuvenated, must-believing Lazarus<sup>4e,3g</sup>  
is more my style.*

[Approximate  
form at the end  
of October]

The germ for all this print came from a rhythm half-worded, at times syllabic, at times blank. I conjecture this was an outgrowth of my budding interest in art music and, especially at this stage, my repeated use of T. S. Eliot recordings. Actually, I was a frustrated *Cantos* reader. I had tried to read it the previous year, but my educational background was and still is not up to it. Consequently I lingered among Sara Teasdale, Elinor Wylie, and some Oriental poetry, then some Dylan Thomas, to William Carlos Williams with some W. B. Yeats, only to arrive at Ezra Pound

4b+2e. quotation (really taken from "The Year of the Insane")

4c. a phrase written in July in a Chemistry class. The idea probably originates from Elinor Wylie's poem "The Eagle and the Mole"

3d+1e. Christian idiom—type of symbol

3e+1f. Christian idiom—type of symbol

2f. quotation

4d+3f. allusion really from Howard Nemerov's play, *Cain*

4e+3g. allusion really from W. B. Yeats' *Calvary*, also a play

via Jean Starr Untermeyer's *Private Collection* in June. By September, I had reached T. S. Eliot.

However, my pilfering tendencies originated not only from Eliot but from the impression I received from A. Alvarez in *Stewards of Excellence* that pilfering was exonerable. Later, I was advised to cut out the very phrases I had sought to fit in. My lesson was learnt: I took Mr. Eliot and voice back to the library and brought Dylan Thomas and Gerard Manley Hopkins home: and attempted to learn craft the easy way — osmosis.

Under their influence, I adopted a more succinct style. Yet I was uneasy; previous attempts at compression were incomprehensible. But I rewrote until I could do no more. Although it was in no way finished, the following was submitted for criticism to the members of *The Bay*:

## STAGE II

[September 11] My umbilical noose / brings me  
 To the universal cage  
 Where I come to dangle in the cutting hope  
 Of fall beyond hell.  
 The stripped Christ plastered above  
 Eats my brain with His / dumbing light; [undated]  
 So I can / climb the stone; [Oct. 8]  
 And he can lift the hammer  
 In the hallowed moment belling  
 Bread to Body, wine to Blood,  
 I cannot beat my breast.  
 My neck is breaking  
 Trying to strangle straight.  
 O host God, host me to belief.

[October 8] Thomas, am I, jabbing my tongue in Your rib,  
 Mousing You as Judas in the Gethsemane of belief.  
 O lead me into the life stripping washing box  
 Before I break my neck  
 Before I vomit the breaded wine, wine bred  
 thoughts  
 Scour my blistering brain to the breaking bone  
 Before my Cainlike\* vomit crust appears  
 Before I need the Lazarus\* fate to believe.  
 \*re-echoing allusions

N.B.—written while listening to Grieg's *Piano Concerto*, third movement, second third, and to Rachmanioff's *Symphony* #2, second movement.

I didn't realize how bad it was until one of my instructors started reading it. I was hoping I would die or vanish before he would finish; but no. Completion — a pause. Rapidly I concluded: so bad, he couldn't articulate. I started pulling the platitude, "there are differe—;" "Nice," he said. It was over. But his enigmatic syllable knotted my brain.

Furthermore, the piece did not receive the criticism I sought. I felt the beginning was lacking and the thought sketchy, thus causing the intensity I sought to be lost. Yet I did not know specifically what was wrong. I remembered what Rilke had written in *Letters to a Young Poet*:

. . . in the deepest and most important things, we are unutterably alone, and for one person to be able to advise or even help another, a lot must happen, a lot must go well, a whole constellation of things must come right in order once to succeed.

The next day, Friday, I concluded that the piece was not only meaningless but apathetic. Depressed, I spent the weekend in introspective scrutiny, scribbling a minimum of a thousand words to Dmitri Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto* #2, second movement, expressing my inability to write.

The following day, October 24, I realized this was due to the paltry amount of my outside reading. Because I was taking eighteen and a half credits, school consumed almost all my time. Yet 'what will I become after this educational ordeal — a sterile informed mass? Am I sculpting my mind or is it being poured in a mold? I fear I am losing myself in the self-estranging educational gauntlet. This factual gorge for the prescribed vomit — the absurd stuffing between my existence and death.'

That afternoon I encountered Wallace Stevens' words:

After one has abandoned a belief in God, poetry is the essence which takes place as life's redemption.

October 25, I read my piece and 'raged in disgust.' I had failed to express the silent, screaming insanity of trying to think and believe at the same time. I tacked on the following phrase that afternoon:

Dropping from the maternity blanket  
My face smashed ice  
And life sprang.

## P.S. #2

I wrote these lines in May '65 to express the experience of my first writers' conference at Wagner College in July '64. The sentiment was belated because, at the time, I could understand little of what was being said. This was my first trot out of the cultural morgue of my high school hothouse, and thus my vocabulary was inadequate. I had no idea what "avant-garde" was, who "the great-unwashed" were, what or who was "the underground." Yet in May the experience clicked — I knew.

Later, I was told this was not metaphorically consistent. Instead of removing the phrase, I reworked the piece with a renewed absorption in alliteration, assonance, and consonance, with an obsession for compression and consistency. I wanted every image, very word to relate and interrelate: to form a circle enclosing other circles whose radii were joined. These ideas sprang from a few seeds of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Edgar Bowers, nurtured together with a budding interest in Bach.

To facilitate reading both silent and oral, I also experimented with the line arrangement. At first, my concern was only with the sound; then I gradually realized the words could be arranged to elucidate their relation to the whole and each other. I am not sure where this conception came from, for I was not reading e.e. cummings. Perhaps I remembered William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*. Perhaps Schuller's *Studies on the themes by Paul Klee* suggested the idea of a verbal-visual relationship.

## GUIDE III

The next two stages are presented in Dickinson style with parentheses indicating alternate choices and matters of confusion. There are no dates although each stage appearing summarizes the changes of about five transient revisions occurring during the time span of about a month. I considered my method analogous to that of an artist making a collage: I was layering ideas to add depth and force.

## STAGE III

Dropping from the maternity blanket  
my face smashed ice  
[May '65]

and life sprang.

Yet, my umbilical noose / drags me  
Sept. 11

with / to dangle  
my cutting hope stage II  
of fall below hell.  
(helling ice)

Plastered above

/ [reworded lines from  
the stripped Christ eats my brain stage II]  
for the stone climb to lifted hammer.

(does)

Or is my splatter (now) (drip to sand)  
dripping to the hugging cross sand.

The belling moment

bodies bread  
bloods wine

but I cannot break to beating.

(incensed brain)  
my head crackles (vised by vicing strangle)  
while my soul begs the dead bread body (wining blood)  
(stamp)

to snake my springing to stupor.

Thomas, am I, jabbing my tongue in Your rib,  
Judas, mouthing You in the Gethsemane of belief.

[stage I October 8]

In the scrape wash

roll life to beating blanket  
before my neck breaks to an ice smash drown  
before my Cain brand soul (knows)  
fall to the fate of Lazarus  
(for the catus snivel.)

N.B.—written while listening to Bach's *Double Violin Concerto* and Schuller's *Studies on the themes by Paul Klee*.

In this stage, my compression and consistency resulted in incomprehensibility; I felt irretrievably enmeshed in my own verbal tangle. Yet it was two weeks before I could see any way out. So I waited.

Meanwhile I read *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet, who revived my flagging interest in rationality; for at the end of October, after I had seen Ayn Rand, my interest nose-dived. At that lecture, I realized Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden as priests, the lecture as another swaddled sermon, and because I was famished, I could not wait for the consecration. I walked out — rationality should be the basis for all art — absurd. However, Ernest Dimnet's more flexible approach reconciled me: I liked his ideas on the necessity of solitude, the necessity of solitude for thought.

I was thus prepared for Walter Kaufman's *The Faith of a Heretic*, which led me to the conclusion: rationality is better than belief. Again I was in the ecstatic anguish of playing with my own damnation, an excitement I had not experienced since May, the month when to my delighted horror I found *The Second Sex* was on the *Index*. Yet it was after *The Faith of a Heretic* that I considered myself an unbeliever, one with no hope of reconciliation: if there was a hell, I would go.

## STAGE IV

Dropping from the maternity blanket [as in stage III]  
my face smashed ice

and life sprang.

Yet, my umbilical noose /  
drags me (to the universal cage)  
(where I) dangle in falling hope.  
(to)

Plastered above, [as in stage III]

/ the stripped Christ eats my brain

so I can climb the stone  
and He can lift the hammer

(walls)  
or am I splattered on the (bars)

The hallowed moment

bells | bread to Body [words from  
wine to Blood stage II]

but I cannot bend to beating.  
my neck is breaking,

(springing)  
(incensed)  
trying to strangle the crackling brain  
trying to hold the soul begging the dead bread (Body)

Yet, /

Thomas, am I, jabbing my tongue in Your rib

Judas, mouthing You in the (Garden) (of belief /  
(Gethsemane)

[September 6] (Eden)

[essentially from  
October 8  
(stage I)]

O lead me / to the life strip wash

before I fall to / an ice smash drown  
[stage III]

Roll my springing into (the) / beating blanket

Before I need the Lazarus fate to believe. [stage II]

(fate of Lazarus)  
(Before the crackling brain)

N.B.—written while listening to Prokofieff's *Piano Concerto #2*,  
first movement

After this stage which appeared in the beginning of December, two ideas knocked me. The first was the logical extension of my disbelief: if I reject religion on a rational basis, how can I explain my commitment to art, also semi- or non-rational? The second was my encounter with the idea, in Picasso's words, that "Art is a lie." To add to my confused state — depression.

[based on the entry of  
December 25, 1965]

Today, I actually begin my soul-strip of the masochistic, self-expressive driveller trying to write a religious poem. I begin, yet aware of my obvious failure to do so, for the harder I try the more I am aware of the impossibility of doing anything, especially writing. Yet I feel compelled to do so, not by any great force but by depression successively more bottomless, more barrenly a desert, more impossible to crawl out of. And yet it is impossible for me to learn — I don't believe anyone, in anyone. Still I play believer hoping to find something — what I don't know — only to fall with the facade I pull down. And the essential artifice glares, but I won't see it. I can only hate it. To paraphrase James Balwin, I can't bear to realize the ruin of which I am a part, of which mankind is a part.

Everyone is a phoney to some degree — some more than others — for no one can succeed completely in ingesting life's artifice. Life constantly pours its ambiguous, cryptic substance down your gullet; vomit and you'll starve. This substance man digests not only becomes part of him, but he becomes part of it. He bends with life's texture as a burrowing worm that ingests his environment and enriches the earth with his castings. What is assimilated? What is excreted? How can anxious man maintain homeostasis between his inner and outer worlds?

Man has arranged words so that truth appears the real, the practical, the mystical, the beautiful . . . Yet are words true? Can truth be found in words, with words? Does man make truth, or is there truth and then man? Probably any philosophy student could rattle answers to these freshman green questions. Yet they would be empty answers — answers taught and learned, instead of found and known.

If I could pray, I would conjure up a warm grave in sand — sand empty, barren and burning like myself. If I were benevolent,

I would order the annihilation of man. Why should he have to make meaning where there can be none? Why should he have to try when he can never succeed?

There seems to be a particular nobility in trying although failure is inevitable; yet man's goodness seems wasted, excessively thwarted in a meaningless strife.

My disillusionment stems from an encounter with a quotation from Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*:

I consider that music is by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature. . . . If it appears to express something this is only an illusion and not a reality—an additional attribute . . . an aspect which, unconsciously or by force of habit, we have come to confuse with its essential being.

When I read this, I could not believe it. My life until this time had not revealed the validity of this statement; yet every successive moment has not ceased to horrify me with its poignant truth.

I had assumed art to be the reality and life the illusion. But Stravinsky's statement reversed my weave, entangling me. Squirming, I now worm frightened of the reality I cannot face. I had sought a reality connotating meaning; thus I was unprepared for the reality I found.





Manhattan suddenly looms ahead, welcoming the ailing ferry laden with tired townsmen. The vessel tips precariously, denting the sodden dock still further, and rights itself to a groaning halt. We have left behind us the hilly structure of a smaller island and the contrast in its smooth, symmetrical bridge, behind which there is no tell-tale sunset of a brighter day.

## ISLAND HOPPING

*Susan Leonard*

*More often than not, I feel depressed at the desolate view from the Staten Island ferry, particularly during a rain storm.*

Wind-slashed pellets of earth-bound water veil the moody horizon, making a minute contribution to the Atlantic. The latter's murky peaks rise as if to protest and are beaten down repeatedly. At the far edge of darkness, hesitant lights flicker, indicating bleak factories, dock-bound ships and drenched maples, open arms shedding quietly, stretching wearily, for half an hour.

"Marine and Aviation" plunder along at ten minute intervals, each to the farther shore, the usually stolid tugs chugging meekly behind. Even the gulls have lost their steadfast tenacity, keeping noticeably out of sight. On the deck of the Mary Murray, red paint peels easily; forgotten papers are whipped unmercifully, as the downpour continues without a hint of subsiding.

"Liberty" undaunted, lights the way as she does every night, but tonight her heavy folds provide a haven for the checked streams, in an unwelcome torrent. Beneath her the rusting buoys bob feverishly, as though with one huge surge of relentless waves, they might be lost forever.

*The following narrative was related by a volunteer worker at Prince Edward County, Virginia. Only the names are, at his request, fictitious.*

## I WAS A NORTHERN AGITATOR *as told to Vincent Curcio*

There I was. I had just completed my final exam. It was all over. I was sitting on the library steps with the library steps crowd, talking about summer plans. All term long we had talked about how we couldn't wait to get out and get into summer. It had finally arrived and it was depressing. After all, what did summer represent: the beach, wild weekends, the bar, summer job (any job) because I needed the money, parties, concerts, bull-sessions, chicks? I enjoyed all these things, although they could sometimes become monotonous; but they just didn't seem as important as they once did. I wanted something new, not merely a "new kick," but simply a worthwhile experience. And there it was, my greatest opportunity, lying right in front of me, waiting.

Earlier in the term George Scote had mentioned that he was planning on going to Virginia to teach remedial reading. On the last day of final exams I met George. "Hey John, how would you like to teach in Prince Edward, Virginia, this summer?" At that time, asking me how would I like to teach in Virginia was like asking me how would I like to teach in Asia, since I had never traveled farther than Hoboken. So I answered him with a loud, "What!" George explained that he had decided on not going to Virginia because of a job he had lined up in a lower east side social agency. "It's too late to apply, but you could go down there as George Scote." "What?" I asked. "Dig! I received a letter from this chick, Pat Knight, and she told me that I've been accepted. It's too much John. All you have to do is call yourself George and you've got the job." "Wait a second. Didn't you have to qualify for that job. Like I don't have any teaching experience." "John, it doesn't matter. They're looking for volunteers; they can't be choosy. When you get down there, they'll teach you the reading method and that's it." "Wait a second. What did you tell them on your application? Do they know that you're six-three? And did you tell them that you were twenty-three?" "All I told them was that I'm over twenty-one and that I'm in the city college. I also mentioned that I've worked with kids." "What if I run into an acquaintance of yours." "The only person you may run into is the cat who gave me the application, and he's cool." "Why not?" I asked myself. "I'm five-eight, but they don't know that I'm supposed to be six-three. I'm nineteen, but I could pass for, say, twenty-two, I guess." "Are you sure that's all they know about you?" "That's it John. It's too much. All you have to do is call yourself George."

The George Scote problem seemed resolved; but the idea of working in the South posed another problem. Working with kids interested me, but my interest could not overpower my reluctance to do any kind of social work in the South. For such work in the South meant either working for the white community or for the Negro community. Although this program was being offered to all the children of Prince Edward, I was very doubtful that the white people would allow their children to share a classroom with Negro children. I was convinced that the work would be considered Civil Rights work. And the thought of me being a Civil

Rights worker was pretty scary. "I'll have to think about it. When do they expect George to show up? "You have about two weeks. You'll have to be there for registration on the 13th of June."

The newspapers and television had developed in me a stereotypical view of the South. There was only one label for it, Mississippi. But The Virginia Council On Human Rights, the organization recruiting volunteers for the project, was continually challenging my stereotype with disturbing facts concerning race relations in Prince Edward. The council told of the "politer face" of racism. It insisted that Prince Edward County had a tradition of non-violence, a reputation for settling, segregating, affairs in a placid way. I simply couldn't believe it. "Why aren't the white people like those of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi?" Prince Edward is fifty miles above the North Carolina border. North Carolina is a place where the Ku Klux Klan flourishes. Was the council trying to tell me that the county's white people were not sympathizers of the KKK, and that the statetroopers and sheriff were not Ku Klux Klaners? I wanted to be assured before making my move. I wanted to be convinced that I could come back in one piece. So I read those unbelievable facts, over and over.

### THE PRINCE EDWARD STORY

Prince Edward County is located in south-central Virginia; an area of the state known both as "southside" and the beginning of the "blackbelt." It is a rural country and its principal industry is agriculture. Dairying and livestock are becoming more important.

Other than farming and dairying, there are few non-professional promising areas of employment. There are two lumber companies, which employ around 300 people; the other nine industries in the County employ from one to thirty people each. The two segregated colleges and the usual mercantile trades offer "white collar opportunities" — 6% of these jobs are held by Negroes.

The County is experiencing an out-migration: in 1950 there were 15,400 persons; in 1963 the population was 13,700. According to the last census (1963), per capita income was \$1,364, and median family income was \$3,043. A breakdown of selected occupational groups indicated that only two categories had incomes of more than \$3,043, with a range from \$3,400 to \$5,550. The

other six categories selected ranged from \$1,050 to \$2,175. Over 79% of the County's Negro families earn less than \$3,000 per year, as compared to 32% of white families. 40% of the population consists of Negroes.

For a number of years, Prince Edward has suffered grave racial difficulties. Part of its tragic history is the well-known school issue. From June 1959 until September 1964, all public schools were closed in an effort to avoid the cancer of integration. During this period essentially all meaningful communication between the races was ended: the white citizens opened a private, segregated school and Negroes were left without schools for four years. Negro children were not the only ones "shut out," however, since a tuition of \$250 per year deprived a great number of whites of an education.

A university research team stationed in the County discovered that some teen-age Negroes had forgotten how to tell time and that others had forgotten how to read.

### RESPONSE — 1959-65

The Virginia Teachers Association conducted large-scale remedial classes during the summers of 1961 and 1962. While the public schools were closed, the Association and Kittrell College placed some 300 students in schools outside the county and outside the state of Virginia. Over 200 other Negro children entered schools outside the County through the efforts of their families.

In the spring of 1962, representatives of the U. S. Justice Department met with Governor Harrison of Virginia to request the initiation of an integrated school system. There was no official order to reopen the schools, since the Prince Edward Case was still in the courts. Governor Harrison appointed a Committee which was known as the Prince Edward County Free School Association. In August of 1962, the Free Schools opened, providing non-grade instruction for some 1,770 students — over 90% of these students were Negroes. The Government appropriated funds for food, testing materials and library books. But without private contributions from within the state and throughout the nation, the Free Schools would have dissolved. In August of 1964, the Free Schools closed because of a court decision to reopen the public

schools. One month later the public schools reopened as ordered; no more than ten white students registered.

In adjoining counties as well as Prince Edward, The Virginia Students' Civil Rights Committee, The Virginia Council On Human Relations, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference conducted projects during those years of strengthened segregation. The NAACP demonstrated, parents and children marched in protest, the student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee sent workers to Prince Edward to train demonstrators on the non-violent tactics of protest — i.e. passive self-defense. But in spite of this activity there were no outbreaks of "Southern-style" violence — gas, clubs, dogs, guns, burnings, bombings, and the KKK. Doubtless all these efforts produced resentment. But why didn't this resentment produce the seemingly typical white Southerner's response, physical attack?

#### VIRGINIA ISN'T MISSISSIPPI, GEORGE

It was June 9th. Still not fully convinced, I had to make my decision. The big moment came when I considered the kind of work that I would be doing. I told myself, "All they want you to do is teach kids how to read, not organize a Negro Community." It sounded safe enough. "Those white folks wouldn't think of me as a nigger-lover . . . I'm going."

But it wasn't that simple. After disposing of the threat to my self-preservation, the formerly solved George Scote problem became unsolved. "Everyone will be calling me George. This whole thing is crazy." The thought of being called by an alias was disturbing; and to be found out meant an embarrassing situation which I simply could not endure. I thought of phoning Pat Knight. "Hello, Miss Knight. George Scote has decided . . . So I was thinking that I could . . . But wait, don't do anything foolish. What if she tells you that she's awfully sorry she's not allowed to accept volunteers over the phone, four days before the program begins and five weeks after all applications were due. Although there's always the remote possibility that she'll gladly accept you over the phone — even though the program begins in four days and so what if the applications were due five weeks ago . . . The

phone call is crazy; I can't chance it. But everyone will be calling me George . . . So what! I'm going."

At 1:30 a.m., on June 13th, I stepped on the bus going to Richmond, Virginia, telling myself that now I would be responding to the name, George Scote. Being anxiously wide-awake, I gazed out of the window and asked every lamp post why the white people of Virginia weren't like those of Mississippi. It didn't seem real. Every twenty minutes I'd ask myself if that Council On Human Relations was putting me on. Right in the middle of this profundity, I was interrupted by the stop in Washington. Then I realized that I had been repeating those same questions for over four hours.

While walking around the Washington Terminal I became more and more aware of Negroes. It wasn't so much that I was color-conscious, but that the Negroes were hanging around in clusters — or was it the whites, or both? The tragic-comedy became more intense when I saw that the whites would only sit on a bench occupied by whites, and that the Negroes would only sit on a bench occupied by Negroes. "They've got to be kidding," I told myself. I was only two hundred and fifty miles from an integrated New York subway, and only half way to Prince Edward. At 5:30 the bus pulled out of the terminal. As we moved through downtown Washington, I thought of how those people, both white and black, seemed to be acting out their daily routines. I remember saying: "Chuck the Civil Rights Bill." Then I dozed off.

At around 7:30, I arrived at Richmond, where I had to wait for a connection to Farmville, Prince Edward's County Seat. Walking out of the Greyhound Restaurant after breakfast, I turned and saw "those people" again. Right next door to the restaurant, there was this hole-in-the-wall which looked like a diner, filled with only Negroes. The Greyhound Restaurant was filled with whites, with a few well-dressed Negroes.

At 9:30 a.m. I was on my way to Farmville. The meeting place for volunteers was the basement of a Baptist Church, the project's headquarters. I got off the bus and started walking to the church. While walking I prepared my introduction: "Hi, I'm George Scote. Hi, I'm George Scote. Hi, I'm George Scote." When I got there I walked over to the registration desk. Two women were at the desk, both looked up as I approached. Then it hap-

pened: "Hi, I'm George Scote." I find it difficult to communicate my experience of this premeditated lie; and more difficult still to communicate the experience of acting out the lie. The tension and anxiety which existed before my introduction could be considered mild as compared to the incredible intensity reached the moment after my introduction.

After registration I was introduced to some of the other volunteers, most of whom were college seniors, and some graduates. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that a number of them was white Southerners — relieved to know that not all white Southern students were like those who tried to murder James Meredith. An hour went by and the name, George Scote, was driving me out of my mind. "What part of New York do you come from, George?" "George, this is Dave." "Glad to meet ya, George." "George Scote, meet Bill Mitchell." The name was ringing in my ears.

After getting acquainted, we were assigned to our houses. These were summer rented homes located in Farmville's Negro neighborhoods, in each of which four to nine volunteers were assigned. There were nine volunteers at my house, only one a Negro. There were an English Professor from West Virginia, two seniors and one graduate from Virginia, a graduate from North Carolina, a senior from Alabama, a junior from Wisconsin, a graduate from Chicago, and myself. When I found out that Gene was from Birmingham, Alabama, I began bombarding him with questions concerning his home town's history of burnings and bombings. Gene was bugged over the fact that people blamed all the whites of Birmingham for the insanity, as he called it, of a few. He told me that he did not know the lunatics personally, but that he did hear stories of secret "white citizens" meetings. When I asked him about the Negro church bombing that killed three children, he said that, "It was not a community effort. The only thing that would make a whole community bomb a church or lynch a Negro would be a rape, or a Deacon raid . . . Some of the whites were disgusted over the bombing, most just kept silent, and a few lunatics had orgasms."

At seven o'clock the volunteers and staff members met for dinner. "Pass the bread, George," Gene said. As I was passing the bread a young good-looking woman sitting across the table

asked, "Are you George Scote?" "Yes I am." "George, I'm Pat Knight."

John: Oh! Hello Pat.

Pat: How was your trip?

John: Uncomfortable.

Pat: I didn't think you'd show.

John: Why not?

Pat: Well, I haven't heard from you in six weeks — since you sent in your application.

John: I didn't even think of it, Pat. I was too caught up with finals.

Pat: How did they turn out?

John: Alright.

Pat: So tell me about your work in Harlem, George?

As soon as I heard, "your work," my heart started pumping — "This can't be fa'real." Pat was waiting for an answer and George hadn't supplied me with the answer — "I mentioned that I've worked with kids . . . All you have to do is call yourself George."—So I stalled by shoving food into my mouth. A few seconds later I smiled and said, "Well, what would you like to know, Pat?"

Pat: (smiling) You didn't work for HARYOU-ACT, did you?

John: (Is she just making conversation, or did George mention specifics) No I didn't. But I did work for a project which was affiliated with HARYOU.

Pat: How old were the kids?

John: Well (stalling), most were of high school age, and most of them were drop-outs.

Pat: Was the program successful?

John: Relatively successful.

Pat: What made you decide on coming to Prince Edward?

(At that point I loosened a bit; realizing that I could now depart from the lie.)

John: Teaching interests me. And I wanted to see what it would really be like down here. I almost decided on not coming down because the violence of the South sounded too scary.

Pat: (smiling) I don't think that you'll find much of it here, George.

John: So I've heard. But I still find it hard to believe.

Later that evening we began orientation. Reverend Francis Griffin, director of the project, began with the Prince Edward Story. He then explained the attitude of most of the white people in the County. As President of the NAACP for fifteen years, he had worked with the various Civil Rights organizations in an effort to register voters, start direct action protests to end segregation, improve educational standards, and develop community organization. At one point in his talk he paused and then told us that volunteers had made the difference between slight and moderate progress. Referring to the Mississippi Workers, he said, "If it wasn't for those so-called homosexual-communist agitators, Mississippi would still be waiting for assistance . . . But those kids had to come face-to-face with clubs, guns, bombs, and the vicious tactics of the KKK; you don't. You're going to face a different style of racism; very similar to the Northern style." He then talked at length about the history of race relations in Prince Edward. At the end of his talk, he said, "Segregation exists as much here as it does anywhere in the deep South, but with one basic difference: No one is going to throw a bomb through your window for teaching my kids how to read, or my father how to vote."

The rest of the evening was devoted to the school issue and the reading program. The reading method that we were going to use had been used only once before, with moderate success. In theory, the method showed that students would gain an average of three grades on their reading levels, if allowed 150 hours of instruction. All of the volunteers were to do the recruiting, which would last for a week.

The next day one of the staff workers, a white Southerner who had been in the County for two years trying to reopen and integrate the schools, told us of her experiences with the School Board. Dr. T. J. Moore, Board representative for the Hampden district, was up for reappointment. She was determined to prevent his reappointment, and asked us to help her. The only way to appeal an appointment to the Board was to show by petition that over 300 people who lived in the district were against it. It seemed like a hopeless effort since all petitions in the past had been flatly ignored. But once we had heard more about Dr. Moore we decided to gather signatures. Dr. Moore believed that Negroes were inherently inferior. There was supposedly a certain chemical in the

Negro's blood which affected his brain tissue. We all agreed that hoping for the slightest chance of influencing the School and Electoral Boards was worth the effort. Early the next morning fifteen of us went into the Hampden District, and collected well over 300 signatures. The whole County was aware of Dr. Moore's beliefs, and the Negro people of the Hampden District were eager to sign the paper which could possibly rid them of their representative. The petition was presented to the School and Electoral Boards on the 28th of June. Dr. Moore is still School Board Representative for the Hampden District.

Orientation lasted for four days; then we started recruiting. While recruiting we elicited a variety of responses from the people. Some of the adult Negroes were overjoyed to find out about the program, most just seemed comforted by the fact that an effort was being made, and some seemed not to care at all. Most of the Negro kids that I met were shy but, to my surprise, willing to go to school. When we came across a white family, we received deep looks of resentment. As soon as they were informed that the program was being offered to both white and Negro children, they would withdraw. Most of these white people did not shut their doors in our faces. In fact, they insisted on talking to us. When they found out that the program was on an integrated basis, they usually asked whom I worked for and where I came from. I gave them the wrong answer every time. I worked for the Anti-Poverty Program; they didn't like the Government. I came from New York; they didn't like Northerners. My co-worker, a white Southerner, told me that they found me particularly repulsive because of my dark thick hair and mustache. My co-worker had her own problems with the whites. Being a Southerner, she was viewed as an out-and-out traitor. Aside from that, since my colleague was a "she," she was automatically a lover of black boys. Five hundred kids were recruited, one of them a thirteen year old white girl. Her family had been living in Prince Edward for two years. They had previously lived in Long Island City.

While we were out recruiting Reverend Griffin and the staff were trying to solve two major problems. The first was the lack of teaching centers. The School Board had denied a request for the use of the schools, all of which were vacant. The second problem was transportation. The School Board had denied a request for

the rental of their buses. Social clubs, community centers and church basements were used as teaching centers. Most of these were Negro owned. Transportation funds being limited, the project could only rent eight buses, from a private company.

The program began with testing of aptitude and ability. I had a class of sixteen, between the ages of eleven and sixteen. My kids were so "tight" that for the first week I spent half my time trying to loosen them up by telling jokes and playing ball with them. They then became easier to teach and began to have fun with the work. As time went on I became aware of the different levels they were on. The fast learners would get bored and frustrated when I paused to allow the slower learners to catch up. The slower learners would get bored and frustrated when I quickened the pace for the faster learners. The method called for a student to move at his own pace; therefore sub-groups had to be formed. The instructor would work with each group separately. After two weeks of teaching we started having "gripe-meetings." At these meetings I found that most of the volunteers were having similar experiences. In spite of the boredom, frustration, and discipline problems, we observed that most of the students were eager to learn. After going through these experiences I developed a sympathy for teachers, especially for my sixth grade teacher.

### BITS AND PIECES

I was in the launderette waiting for my clothes. I caught a white woman staring at me. She came over to me and said, "I think y'all er doin a good job. Helpin those kids is a good idea. But believe me, they (pointing to a Negro girl) need me just as much as I need them. But you are doin a good job." I thanked her and she smiled, then walked away.

One day John Steck, editor of the *Farmville Herald*, walked into one of the centers and started taking pictures. When he noticed the white student, he asked her for her name and address. Then he told her to stand in front of the other students. He took a few pictures and left. Steck has been one of Reverend Griffin's major opponents over the years. The next day I saw one picture in the *Herald*, one with the white student among the black.

Mark was a volunteer from Riverdale, New York.

Mark: Pat tells me that you're going to CCNY, George. (Well who on earth could have told Pat something like that; perhaps it was the same idiot who told her about his work in Harlem). Do you know Judy Clemens?

John: Clemens (pausing, letting Mark know that I was trying to remember the names of all my acquaintances at CCNY) junior or senior? Mark: Junior, I think.

Mark: (smiling) Not too. How about Richard Worton?

John: (to Hell with Richard Worton) Is he a senior?

Mr. and Mrs. Richardson were helping us recruit. One day Donna and I got lost while looking for their home. We drove up to a grocery store and met the owner, a white woman. "Hello." "Hi, could you tell us where the Richardsons live?" "You mean James Richards. He lives bout half mile down 167." "I'm sure the name is Richardson. They live on one of these back roads." She paused and stared at us, then she asked, "They colored folks?" "Yes." Then quickly she said, "Ask the folks down the road." We were pulling out of the driveway when I spotted a little white girl staring at us. As we passed her I yelled, "Hi y'all!" she laughed, waved her hand and yelled, "Hi, Hi!" John: I wonder if she's the daughter of that disaster we were talking to. Donna: I hope not.

One day I saw Bob, the English professor, speed by in his sports car. When I met him later I asked him if he realized how fast he had been going. "This may sound like it's out of a T.V. serial, George, but I was being tailed and was trying to get away." I told him that he was getting paranoid. Then he said that the guy pulled up along side and yelled, "Hey Nigger!" Bob was a white Southerner.

Reeves was a volunteer from Norfolk, Virginia. "Hey Reeves! What do your folks think about your working in Prince Edward?" "Oh, they think it's the greatest thing I've ever done; they think I'm working with poor whites."

An Episcopalian from Richmond, Rev. Pope Gregory, came to Prince Edward to find out if the Farmville Episcopal Church was integrated. He met with the minister of the church and was told that, "Negros are welcomed to attend." The minister also said he had never seen a Negro in his church and that the congregation "would not react favorably if one did attend." Rev. Gregory

told the minister that there were Negroes of the Episcopalian Faith in Farmville and that they planned to attend services at the Farmville church — he was referring to the volunteers. The minister said, “In order to avoid a lot of resentment, the congregation should be notified beforehand.” “Alright Reverend, whatever you think is best.” The following Sunday Rev. Gregory attended services and heard the minister tell his congregation, “Negroes are going to attend services next Sunday . . . And I can well understand your not attending, considering these unusual circumstances. And it cannot be held against you.” The following Sunday Rev. Gregory, Kathy, and Hamp showed up for services. No one was in the church. Services had been called off for the day. Rev. Gregory met with the minister once again. “It has been decided that services be discontinued until things quiet down . . . The congregation will not allow Colored in their church.”

Steve was a volunteer from the University of Richmond. One day he decided to visit his fiancée, who lived in Richmond. When he got there she told him that her parents and a few family friends had found out what kind of work he was doing. Steve hadn't told anyone in Richmond that he was working in Prince Edward. Then he remembered talking to a local businessman in Farmville about friends and relatives in Richmond.

One day Mark, David, and I were given the privilege of driving to Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to pick up an air conditioner and some furniture. Rocky Mount is around 110 miles from Farmville, and some 60 miles away from the the Virginia-Carolina border. Although I knew that North Carolina wasn't such a cool place for Northerners and government workers to drive through, I figured, “What the hay, we're not going to try to integrate candy stores.” While staring out of the window I saw this large sign which read, “You are now entering the town of Oxford.” “Oxford!” I remembered Dylan's, “Oxford Town, Oxford Town, guns and clubs follow'd im down, all because his face was brown, never goin back to Oxford Town.” “Is this it?” I asked myself. “This is it, and I'm in it,” I told myself. Mark handed me a book of Ginsberg's poems: “Here George, you look bored.” “Me and my, my gal son, we got met with a tear gas bomb, don't even know why we come, wanna go back where we come from.” We finally got through Oxford. When we reached Rocky

Mount we stopped for a snack and were bombarded with weird looks — similar to the looks the stranger gets in a T.V. western. On our way back we drove through Oxford again. When we stopped for gas I saw this large sign, “Cigarettes, \$1.97 a Carton.” I couldn't pass it up so I jumped out of the car and walked over to the store. There was a large white man behind the counter wearing a cowboy hat. I strolled over to the counter; he looked at me for a few seconds and then said, “Hi Neighbor!” If I would have met this character in New York I would have laughed, for days. But I wasn't in New York; I was in “Oxford Town, Oxford Town.” And it was his Town, and he was white, and I was scared. So I said very seriously, “How'er you?” “Oh, alright son, alright. What can I do for ya?” I'd like a carton of Luckies, *Sir.* I knew that he would eat it all up; the word Man doesn't make it with white Southerners. I handed him the money and he handed me the cigarettes and said, “Thank you. Now come again, ya hea.” (you're crazy) “Right sir, bye now.” “Take care of yawself.” When I got back to the car I laughed through the story with Mark and Dave. “We'all betta leave'all,” Dave said. While we were driving through Oxford I thought about that character and what Dylan said about the people of Oxford. The funniest part of my story is found in Dylan's last verse: “Oxford Town in the afternoon, two men died 'neath the Mississippi moon, somebody better n'vestigate soon.” The song I was singing is about a town some 620 miles from the town I was in. And I'm told that North Carolina isn't Mississippi.

Preston was 11 years old. He lived in Dr. Moore's district about 12 miles from Farmville. “Heh Pres, wanna come to town after class.” He hadn't been to town for 3 months. “Yeh George!” he shouted. As soon as we got to town Pres started reacting to everything going on around him. We were walking by the Safeway supermarket. Preston stopped and started staring. He watched people approach the door and smiled as the door flew open — it was controlled by Electric-Eye. He watched the act being performed over and over — all the while smiling in amazement. I didn't say a word while he watched; he was having too much fun. And I was having fun watching him. Then he looked up at me with his great smile. “Wanna try it Pres?” He nodded and shouted, “Yeh George!” Preston led the way. The door opened; Preston

turned to me and laughed. "How about the out-door," I asked. We approached the out-door; it flew open and Pres cracked-up again. "Now do it alone, Pres." He did it alone; in and out, in and out, in and out. People watched: some smiling at him and some totally convinced that there was something wrong.

Chuck was a volunteer from North Carolina. Chuck: What kind of nonsense will you have to put up with when you get back to New York, George. John: I won't be criticized as long as I tell them that I didn't go out with Negro girls. What will happen when *you* get home? Chuck: I'm not going home.

During the recruiting period, Donna and I decided to take a few of the local kids for some ice cream. We took them to a drive-in ice cream stand. While I was getting the ice cream, Donna overheard a young girl. "Look at those white folks with those little niggers." We were leaning against the car eating the ice cream when a car cruised by. A large Negro man was at the wheel, and two kids were sitting in the back. I caught him staring at us. When our eyes met, he slowly nodded his head. He didn't smile. With a dead serious look on his face, he slowly nodded his head, then drove away.

## TO AN ALLEY CAT LOST

*Jane Freedman*

The skeletons in my backyard are  
being readied for winter  
X-rays.  
Their sun-burst clothing has  
been tossed to the ground and  
Cat is gone.  
I would watch him  
enviously  
prostrate himself on a mound of  
crunchy leaves and kick the sun in  
the nucleus.  
Footsteps  
in newly fallen snow  
reminded me that  
security  
had been there before.  
Furry white paws  
and  
midnight seduction cries  
vanished

with a rainy puddle and muddy  
 Tracks in the side alley.  
 Cat had been there.  
 And gone.

ONLY A LITTLE LEFT TO FEEL  
*Jane Freedman*

When I get into bed now I  
 dream of huge expansions of  
 noth

ing,

not of you.

I make believe I'm  
 a little girl in the 5  
 th grade and my  
 teacher

pulls down the black shades over the green shades  
 over the parchment yellow shades with  
 the running stitches across the hemline  
 and a pullchain  
 so that not a (bow) peep of light can  
 even wink at me.

I WANT TO BE ALONE.

I saw that in a movie, but  
 not the one in school because they only  
 told about pioneers and making ice-cream  
 at home in a barrel.



JUST BEING AT  
*Judy L. Duncan*

you're  
not  
right  
i don't know  
no  
i know  
i'm  
not—at times  
i'm like a  
timepiece where  
there is  
no  
time  
i'm  
not  
what time  
is it?  
i can  
not  
answer

STORY  
*Jane Freedman*

Maud Lyn and Tim Pano sat on the bench prepared for “Children-in-Waiting” at the Green Apple Supermarket. Their mommies said to sit there and be patient because they didn’t want to pay for any more smashed beet jars! Tim fooled with the nickel his Mom had given him and Maud started to unwind her sweater from a loose thread end. His (Tim’s) nickel finally dropped to the floor (as he had hoped) and they both jumped off the bench and searched for the shiny coin. Suddenly, their yes met—the beauty of her countenance paralyzed his body and his virile form sent shivers up her spine. He could out-wrestle her, throw a better curved ball and ride his tricycle ten times faster than she could, but he had no desire to do any such thing. For the first time he was aware of SEX(S\*E\*X)—she was a female and he was a boy! If he acted like a gentleman, spent his nickel on a 12-inch piece of black licorice for her and carried her workbook home from playschool, she would yield to his masculine charms. He terrified at the potent effect of her presence—he had never felt like this before! His pals would call him a “sissy,” but he didn’t care. She had to surrender or he would never eat banana-pecan ice cream again.

Seemingly pensive Maud was also wrestling with her subconscious. His strong, bubbling vitality overwhelmed her, even thru his dirty green ski jacket and she sensed that that purple ring circling his eye was for service beyond the call of duty. Maybe she could invite him to her house for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. She'd perfume her body with Mommy's new perfume from that glass atomizer bottle and sweeten her lips with some orange marmalade. If he battled with his Mom when she shut off "Soupy Sales" or was fighting a restless, wandering spirit, she would soothe him with some sound, mature advice and a new Captain Jet Space ring. As she educated him to Life's meaning and purpose, thru her indulgence and lovingkindness, she, too, would grow as an individual. She would be much better prepared for the trials and tribulations of kindergarten life, a trying time for the best of us!

Both sat there overcome by the intensity of their passions. They knew something had to neutralize the feverish situation. From behind the cashier's counter appeared an auburn-haired creature carrying two armfuls of cans and bottles, who refereed the predicament by calling, "C'mon, Tim, we're going home now." His eyes bulged and his pulse quickened. He sensed that Maud was not a Mushroom Street girl and angered at this authoritarian monster who governed his life. "C'mon Tim, not all day." He stood up courageously, head high, body stiff, walked three paces, turned, smiled bravely and said, "Maybe we'll be in the same kindergarten class." Tears were forming, so Tim turned and walked thru the automatically controlled doors, out of Green Apple and out of Maud's life.

## THERE YOU CAN GO IN *Judy L. Duncan*

when i  
was  
a  
little  
girl  
i did not know  
about  
all of  
this