

**focus**

**spring**

**1969**



# focus

is published twice a year at Barnard College, Columbia University. Manuscripts are welcome, and should be addressed to Focus, Barnard College, 3001 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

The editor is Christopher Delaney, board members are; for prose, Sally Lane and Eleanor Montgomery; for poetry, Margaret Kahn; for art, Claudia Chaneles; for music, Christopher Delaney; for business, Sally Lane. Catherine Stimpson is Focus's faculty advisor.

## contents

Cynthia Logan	2
Karen Robertson	3
Julian Miller	12
Judith Kopecky	14
Donald Ethan Miller	14
David Olan	16
Francine Weber	19
Rick Brightfield	21
Michael DeCosta	23
Sergei Gavronsky	24
Jane DeLynn	29
Julian Miller	34
Lenny Davis	inside back cover

### PHOTOS:

cover	Allan Epstein
1	" "
19	" "
22	" "
inside back cover	Dierdre Dole







Sam's friends had ever touched her before, never. And she'd said, "Please don't touch me" and Sam and Randall had echoed her, falsettoing back and forth across the table, "Don't touch me, don't touch me." And Sam had gone lurching off, saying, "I never felt so drunk in my life. I'm going to puke." She'd left without saying goodbye.

"You're in luck, by the way. I'm leaving for San Francisco today."

"San Francisco?"

"Yeah. I decided I've had enough of this scene for a while."

"What are you going to do? Go to Haight?"

"No. No, I hate hippies. The only reason I'm wearing these sunglasses is because I lost my glasses and I can't see without them. These are prescription sunglasses. I hate looking like a hippie. But they say that Berkeley, it's kind of like this."

"I can't imagine. I can't imagine it here without you."

"I'm going to Long Island at four o'clock. I'm meeting my ride out in Rockaway. Catching the commuter train at 4:40. But I gotta meet Randall. He owes me ten bucks and I need it."

"Let me buy you a drink this time."

"Thanks."

Tell him about Europe. Tell him about being alive, about being able to talk.

People kept drifting over to join them, all saying goodbye.

"Never thought you'd go, Sam."

"You've been talking about it all summer."

"You really leaving?"



Randall didn't come. At four Sam stood up, picked up his pack which was behind the counter.

"I'll walk you down to the subway."

Tell him it was good.

But Randall was there, punching Sam's shoulder.

"Well, pal, there you go. Ten bucks. Sorry I'm so late. But I had to find this chick Lucy, see."

"How is Lucy? What's she doing?"

"She's working down at some shoe store down on Eighth Street. Really freaked out scene. All these rich old bags."

Randall walked along beside Sam. They reached the station.

"Give my regards to Lucy."

"Yeah. Well. See you."

No time. What to say. He brushed her cheek lightly and she clung for a second to his soft corduroy jacket.

"Come and visit me sometime. I'll miss you." And he was gone and she'd said nothing.

There was no reason to go to the West End anymore. She stayed away for a month. She was taken there once for coffee and the musty smell and darkness didn't affect her at all. Then someone told her Sam was back and every night at eleven she would debate it--but she didn't go until Halloween. There was a full moon and resolutions could be broken.

"Hello Sam."

"As you see I didn't go. My ride never showed up."

"Yes. I somehow expected you to come back. It's good to see you."



"It's not good to be here."

"There's been a hole. I haven't been here since you left. Made a resolution."

"Yeah. I noticed I hadn't seen you around. Why are you here now?"

"Halloween. Lonely. So why not be lonely in company?"

"Bored, you mean."

"Perhaps."

"Sam." It was Randall. "You've gotta come hear the new Fahey album. I just got it." Randall grabbed Sam's shoulder. He didn't look at Cress.

"Well I . . . I'm . . ."

"That's okay, I . . ." She started to pull on her coat. Randall ignored her.

"Can Cress come?"

"Yeah. Sure," Randall drawled. He still didn't look at her.

The three of them went to Randall's apartment. The floor was covered with old newspapers, empty beer cans, ashes. She sat, wearing her coat, on the unmade bed and watched Sam and Randall who first played the Fahey album and then started smoking. They passed the joint to her. She almost shrugged and took it. Randall turned on the radio. A girl with a sweet voice was singing an Irish folksong. Sam switched on the television. A movie was on--a French farce. Randall twisted the vertical hold knob and the picture flickered. Sam put on a record--hard rock. And the two boys sat back and giggled and shared the joint. She hunched further back into her coat.

"Groovy man. Listen to that harmony."

"Yeah. Groovy. Groove. Wowie."

"Look Sam. I'll see you. I've got to do some study-



ing. I'll see you." They didn't bother to lock the door after her.

She didn't go to the West End for several weeks. Sam got a job in the bookstore and she could see him once a day when she walked past to buy groceries or on her way to the library. But she couldn't stay away.

He was alone at a table near the back.

"It's amazing to find you alone."

"How have you been?"

"I'm looking for a humiliating, degrading, painful experience. All the old patterns don't hurt anymore. Any suggestions?"

(What an opening line--what a play for attention.)

"Like what?"

"Oh, coming into the West End." (She didn't say sleeping around. She didn't say wanting you.)

"Why? Why this big self-destructive thing? To increase your capacity for pain?"

"No. Just if something hurts, then I'm not dead. Nothing hurts anymore."

"Look, you've got to get out of this. You've got to do it yourself. You've got to change this depressing yourself. You've got to start competing with yourself to be happy. That's all. Why the inferiority complex? Why do you hate yourself so much? You have no reason."

"I went to Europe and I really liked myself. I was alive and I had fights and cried but I was happy. I was alive. And then I came back here. And I can't hold onto it. I just do the same awful things."

"Look, Europe is different. It's not real. You're an outsider there. This is reality. Maybe you should get out



of the city for a while, but Europe. It's not real. It's nice for a while, but it's not real."

"You know, I have an image in my head. You know how something just comes to your mind anytime, when you're walking down the street. Doing nothing. For no reason, you just get this image in your head. Well, it's always a knitting needle stuck right through my heart. You know, I'm too fond of me, too scared of physical pain to ever do anything, but that's the image."

"You've got to do something. Just don't go near acid. Stay away from it. But get involved in something--scien-tology--do anything. Taste a lot of things. Do things. But don't give in."

"People are like cormorants all demanding pity."

"Cormorants?"

"Virginia Woolf said it."

Sam was watching her when Randall came over.

"Thank you for listening. I have to go."

"Look, take it easy. And stay away from acid."

"Yeah. I promise." She smiled.

She decided to be happy and it seemed to work. After one week, in the morning, she gave him a daisy.

"I've been happy for a week and it's all because of you." She ran out of the store. It seemed to work. He watched her one night in the West End.

"I've never seen you look so happy," he said as she chattered.

She swung too high.

Is it worse this time? How can it be worse? This time you hope. Maybe Sam will tell you what to do again. What to say to him? She wondered. Every night I go to sleep crying. I wake up every morning and hope it's gone away but it hasn't. What to say? I was trying to mend the



hole in my life. But it all fell through. It didn't work, competing with myself to be happy. You stopped watching. She went into the bookstore.

"Will you be in the West End tonight?"

"I'm trying to stay away from it. I've stopped drinking."

"I just wanted to talk to you." (He just said something. He's not going there anymore. No more drinking. Look at him. Look out, not in. I can't, I can't.)

"It's been . . ."

"You look awful."

"Does it show?"

"Yeah."

(At least it shows.)

"Well, listen, I'll come in after work."

"Thank you."

What are you going to say to him? Tell me again what you said before. It won't work this time. You stopped watching.

He was sitting with Randall at the table by the door but stood up when she came in.

"Hi." They moved to the bar.

"Randall, how long will you be here?"

"Couple of hours."

"All right. I'll see you. Do you want a drink?"

"No. No, I should study tonight."

"Joe, give me a coke. A drink might calm you down."



"I just wanted to talk to you."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know. Everything fell apart. I was . . . You know how I was so happy, so gay. Well, it all fell apart. It wasn't real."

"You've got to stop criticizing yourself. Just live. Oh hell. There's nothing I hate more than giving advice. Go on. Just . . . I won't interrupt."

"I'm sorry. Last time you helped. I . . . It's . . ." (I don't know how to talk.) ". . . How have you been? Where are you living? . . ."

"I'm trying to drop drinking. Done some reading. I don't know. Solipsism." (Ask him what he means.)

"Look, I don't know what to say to you. Just relax. Take it easy."

"Yeah. I will thanks." She smiled. (Don't smile. Why are you smiling?) "Thanks. Come to dinner sometime."

"You know me. I'm always up for a free meal."

"Friday? I like to cook you know. That's the only thing I really enjoy." (Blackmail. Playing happy again.)

"I don't know. I have a tentative thing with someone. Come to the store tomorrow."

"Sure. Well . . . Don't . . . I have a sitting job at nine."

"Well you know I get out at eight."

"Oh, I thought you were out at seven." (Let it go. Let it go.) "Thanks. I'm sorry . . ."

He went over to Randall.





*rick brightfield*



# MOVIE

bonnieandclyde

in that last instant before death

looked

at each other;

machinegunsspattered them.

bonnie,

golden-haired,

with eyes of love

clyde,

smiling,

hand outstretched

shaking and jittering

like rag dolls

in that last second

staccatoHAM

MERS drumming

upon flesh;

numbness

death.

in slow motion

bonnie,

translucent in white and gold

blossoms with redbursts

clyde,



black-haired and handsome

pivots, his

wire-rim glasses

explode.

bonnieandclyde

looked

at each other;

bullets

tore

them;

love

shuddered out of a hundred dark holes:

they quivered

and were still.

outside

it was warm

I could hardly breathe:

all the people

walked

in slow motion.

Julian Miller



# TO A CRIMINAL OUTLAW

Judith Kopecky

thirty years ago they caught you  
in a telephone booth as planned  
and shot you dead.  
and why?  
Mad Dog Cole they called you  
and you seethed when you heard it.  
your father kicked you in the back  
when you were six,  
so you knifed your friend Larry  
for the 25 grand.  
there must be more to your story  
but who gave a damn.  
Inspector Barrow said, "mad dogs  
have no friends"  
and the movie was over.

---

DAY

(zero.)

...BLACK...

(six, seven.)

light. match. hand of a  
(fifty) woman. a glow of  
cigarettes, silent, smoke propelled  
(one hundred ten.)  
unseen, into the lessening darkness,  
(three eighty-nine.)  
from two mouths, part of bodies  
(eight-two-five)  
which stir, move across (nine-twelve)  
one another, join  
(one-thousand thirty-six)  
in this first feeling, making life.

((it is six hours since  
a hazy African dawn  
sharpened the gnarl of certain trees,  
moved jungle mists, began the birds  
who woke villagers to their work  
and woke the soldiers in their dusty tents.))

the morning comes  
(seventeen hundred.)  
as a softness  
(nineteen ninety-three.)



around the windows,  
gains momentum, stretches  
    (twenty-five-oh-one)  
to delineate a bed, four walls  
exploding with the dawn  
    (three thousand six hundred)  
above a street  
with houses, edifices, roads, a  
    (forty-one twenty-eight) city.  
people. motion. speech. lives. souls.  
    (four nine six six.)  
breakfast, lunch, dinner;  
somehow they get them down,  
despite the newspapers, the teevee,  
the million injustices, wrongnesses,  
thefts of the soul  
which all must witness, suffer,  
take part in.

Donald Ethan Miller

    (five thousand one-thirteen)  
city upon city  
of American children, saluting the flag  
American mothers, sighing beneath the networks' spell  
American men, toiling for unseen masters of Capital.  
making a buck and locking the door,  
voting for freedom by voting for war,  
stroking their own asses for being so free.  
    (a quarter of a world away  
    six thousand Biafrans died today,  
    six thousand will die tomorrow.)





# 3 piano movements

DAVID OLAN

## II.

Handwritten musical score for three piano movements, labeled II. The score is written on four systems of staves, each system consisting of a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings (p, mp, mf, f, pp). There are also some handwritten annotations like '8va' and '(b)'. The piece concludes with a double bar line.



III.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. It consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 120$ . The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first measure has a 3/4 time signature. The music includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. There are also some fingerings and articulation marks.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. It consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The music continues with notes, rests, and dynamic markings including *mf*, *pp*, and *f*. There are also some fingerings and articulation marks.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. It consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The music includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *ff*, *mf*, and *p*. There are also some fingerings and articulation marks.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. It consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The music includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf*, *ff*, and *p*. There are also some fingerings and articulation marks.



Handwritten musical notation for the first system, consisting of two staves. The music is in 4/4 time and includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *f*, and *ff*. It features several triplets and complex rhythmic patterns.

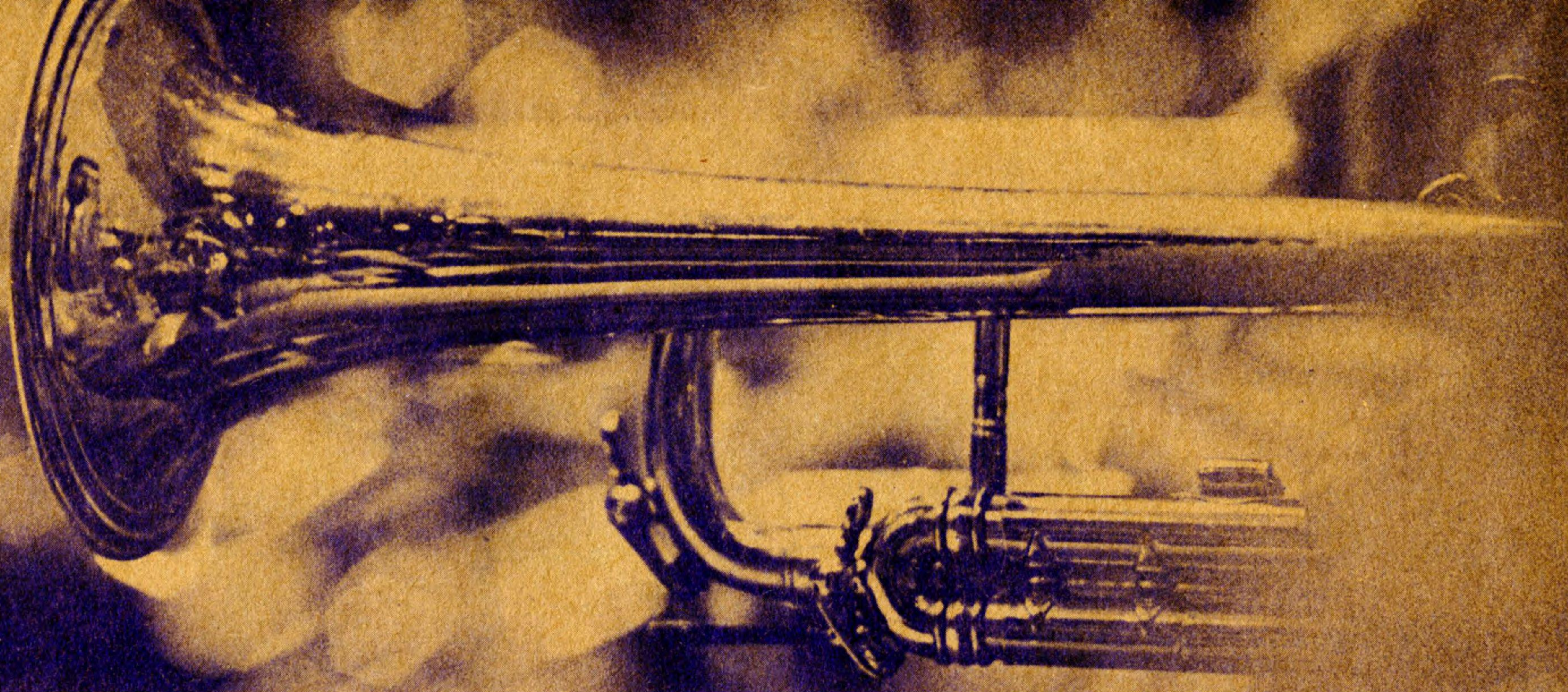
IV.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, consisting of two staves. It begins with a tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = 72$ . The notation includes dynamics like *f* and *mf*, and features several triplets.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, consisting of two staves. The music continues with dynamics such as *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, and includes several triplets.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system, consisting of two staves. It concludes with a fermata over a chord and a star symbol. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and *ppp*. A *Ped* marking is present at the bottom of the second staff.





*Pure Magic Announces  
the Clear Up Kit*

Turn you beautiful  
with the beautiful answer  
brilliant crystals  
of clear difference  
portable peace of mind  
dazzles with its whole whiteness

Take the naked plunge  
up your mind  
a little more  
a little longer  
what goes up  
must come.

A whole bunch of beautiful colors  
for about \$6. Slightly higher in Canada.

Francine M. Weber







# ode for loreli appelby

rick brightfield

Where are you Loreli Appelby?  
I have not forgotten my visions  
Of pneumatic bliss beneath  
The warm fountains of desire

Where are you Loreli Appelby?  
Does your jet black hair still  
Fall to your waist over your  
Ivory shoulders?  
And do your silken thighs  
Still caress the  
Bicycle seat of our desire?

Where are you Loreli Appelby?  
The night wind still carries  
The sound of your name  
From across the tepid swamps  
And many a night I've heard  
Your siren call across the  
Wintery steppes  
And sometimes toward morning  
Two glowing eyes peer out  
Of the deep jungle and I know  
They are yours  
Loreli Appelby

Somewhere in the hills I have  
Heard a raven cry out in anguish  
And I thought of you Loreli Appelby  
And thought of you also  
Tenderly feeling the scar  
Where your touch seared my flesh

Where are you Loreli Appelby?  
The fullness of your breast  
And thigh  
Haunts the night  
And summer lightning  
Laces the distant hills  
Where once we stood hand  
In hand

Where are you Loreli Appelby?  
Where are  
You  
Loreli  
Appelby?





## THE RADICAL CAT

Let him in  
the indignant cat  
Imperturbably staring at  
from the garbage tin

Where he eats  
the impoverished beast  
Something less than a poor man's feast  
and is waxing thin

Such is sin  
that the glutton would dine  
Twice--were you to answer his whine  
with an opened tin

Fresh sardines  
the audacious cat  
Surely he'd be happy with that--  
at least to begin

Let him in  
if you don't, at night  
Militantly to claim his right  
soft, he'll come again



# the revolution is

Michael DeCosta

the revolution is  
love is fantasy is freedom is  
love of itself is love of freedom in fantasy  
fantasy loving freedom for loving freedom fantasy loving  
loving itself love loving freedom loving freedom free fantasy  
free fantasy to love love free fantasy or fantasy free love for  
freedom is love to be free to be free to be free is to be loved  
as well as loving as free fantasy is free freedom is free is  
loved is to free as loving is free to be

so

sigh for love fly to fantasy sigh for freedom  
sigh for fantasy for fantasy flies high is higher can fly higher  
as love flies high as love flies free as high as freedom sighs  
higher is as high as loving is fantasy flying as high as flying  
for freedom is love to fly free is free to sigh high is  
love is love is love is love is love is LOVE fantasy is  
is the revolution



# YOU WHO ARE A PEOPLE AND BADLY LICKED

.....

Listen, you  
who are a people, listen to me,  
even, and especially if, one day, prematurely, I should,  
secretly tortured or accused, be condemned to die for having  
said what I am saying.  
I do not ascribe to chance, the deals, the speculations of men  
in power.  
Nobody is fooled. Money is king in our republic!  
I dare say that this concerns your interests, men  
in the street, pygmy  
of the little people.  
For a number of men in business--and in government; known or  
unknown, but in any case influential; who consequently have  
long hands, publish laws, decide upon alliances, control  
finances, and business being concluded take the lion's share,  
for a number of men who transform their business holdings into  
patriotic plantations, their colonial enterprises into  
ultranational causes, and who shamelessly call upon virile  
youth, traditional courage, abnegation under cover of the flag,  
for a certain number, I say,  
your life is only a pawn on the line or held in reserve on the  
world's board with its Trusts, its Banks, its Soft Jobs,  
its Citadels, its Egoisms,  
And they play you off your Hope, off your aspirations,  
off your Defenders.  
You, an ordinary man, a plebe, out of the lower classes,  
your death is preferable to your invalidity,  
because the invalid Broken Jaw is pensioned off! Bashed up and  
disfigured, Guilt-stricken Society!  
as a worker, you're worthless...  
Damn right! The fact of not being useful anymore, that's  
money sleeping,  
so then it's better to deal with the dead  
who has forever paid up his share of blood

.....

O deluge of blood  
after the rains of  
steel and fire!  
Leftovers trampled  
and sent to the cemetery!



Manure  
for the forests  
with their wooden crosses!  
Rotten seed,  
the day never stops working over you, staying  
until the arch of night  
falls on your sleep full of endless worries.  
And up at the gray dawn!  
Up! in the cutting blast.  
Up! and you'd better work!  
You come from a wretched breed, the saddest.  
a living link in the slave's chain,  
Harnessed! broken by the task!  
Nigger, glass beads are good enough for you.  
And smash the rocks  
and plough the wide field,  
walk straight, run softly  
don't be a wise guy.  
Get to work,  
mining, ploughing,  
under a hail of insults!  
Stiff! Blockhead! Lout! Ass! Idiot! Simpleton!  
Hey you Arab, Rat! Scum! Dirty foreigner!  
Darky! Chink!  
Low-down bastard!  
You're that merchandise with the face of man,  
that sensitive beast of burden.  
Laborer with a bowl of rice, with a piece of bread,  
who's been hooked by the guy who holds all the spades.  
Off to the cold war! To the war of nerves!  
Off to a preventive war! To a lightening war!  
To the crusade!  
Hop to it! To  
the grave...  
You are the round-up,  
the dregs,  
the beaten,  
the whipped,  
smeared like plaster,  
smeared with spit,  
the misplaced person on life's cattle train,  
stinking, covered with louses,  
vermin,  
mouth soft, eyes hollow,  
temples beating the time of a slow death,  
the crucified.  
Martyrized people! Stigmatized people!



tyrannized  
in the trembling dusk of the world,  
slapped by the wind and smashed by the hail  
and the bundles of nerves of the knotted storm,  
indistinguishable from the glacial skeleton of the tree  
on the open calvary,  
Immortalized people!  
Let us be grateful to you.  
And greetings to those who gave up their possessions, their  
well-being, their ease, commodities and privileges, because  
O you people, there were some, and from the middle classes, and  
sons of the well-born, who died for you, knowing what they were  
doing, for you, People, for you  
rabble,  
riff-raff,  
mob,  
inferior class,  
lower-depths,  
foam,  
thief,  
drunkard,  
coward,  
boor,  
churl,  
down and out,  
bum,  
not so hot,  
wretched  
and pitiful.

Now,  
if there are any men of good will here who believe that we are  
exaggerating, that we have been swept up by our emotions or  
our fanaticism, gone beyond the limits of man and citizen in  
following the line of our reasoning, we beseech them to go  
with us beyond the limits of prudence, and without equivocation,  
to follow us on the road of lives tortured, sacrificed, until  
they have no more doubts, until death do us part.  
Let them retrace the steps of the volunteer going to Calvary,  
Let them put their own names on the flesh of that child  
barbarously hung from the fasteners on the window,  
Let them call out "my love" to the naked women disemboweled  
at the entrance of her house,  
Let them see their brothers, their friends among the butchered,  
the horribly mutilated in the croaking land,  
Let them substitute themselves for anyone out of the millions  
of anguished people packed into the infected pits.



I ask them to measure the importance of Life.  
There is a truth to human acts,  
a justice to the means employed,  
a meaning to the hopes of the world,  
a merit to the others who progress beyond themselves.  
Listen, People,  
I'm not talking about words, words and nothing more:  
Let the calamities be added to the cataclysms and your poignant  
    agony to new griefs,  
I have seen you fighting there toe-to-toe.  
Floods, epidemics, famines, fires!  
Verdun...La Marne...Cassino...Stalingrad...  
Behind you are the steps of Golgatha.  
Now Hell has many times, intolerable Hell, decided Heaven  
in your favor.  
That's why I sing to you and my throat is clenched.

.....

Henri Pichette:  
Les Revendications  
1958, Mercure de France

NOTE: Translated by Sergei Gavronsky





Drawing by Debora Sherman



**IS THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM  
AN ASTROLOGICAL, A PSYCHOLOGICAL,  
OR A THEOLOGICAL PHENOMENON?**

Jane DeLynn

Edith Rosenberg was waiting for a sign. All week she had been looking for it, and it had not come. Or rather, there had been signs, but not definite enough to sway her one way or another. For when she was in doubt about what to do, she would ask questions hoping to get an affirmative, doing little tasks such as breathing not more than seven times between here and the corner, so that if she did it successfully the answer would be "yes."

It had started last Easter, the relationship between her and Christ. All the forces of her life had started coming together. Everything told her she would die that Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. In a burst of intuition she realized she was John the Baptist. For had he not died before Christ, to prepare the way and to foreshadow his death? She had three dreams about the end of the world: death by asphyxiation, death by radiation, and death by the Bomb. It was obviously the Apocalypse of the Second Coming.

There had been other, more personal signs that applied specifically to her own death. She had dreamt about heaven, a heaven that had the form of her old neighborhood; but the streets were empty, and everything, street, air, houses, was colored a very luminous pink or green. The pink and green were unearthly colors, pale and translucent, glowing almost white, dazzling the eye to look upon them. Heaven was very quiet; she did not like it. If possible, it was heaven without God.

Other signs occurred also, completely objective signs of the exterior world. She saw the same movie she had seen exactly a year earlier, a boy she had not seen since the last Easter vacation called her up, it snowed at the end of March. She was filled with anxiety but had no coherent theory until she thought, "I am John the Baptist." She knew she was right.



The immediate problem facing her was non-religious: should she go to Boston with her boyfriend? The signs said no. For the last time she had been to Boston it was with her first lover--and now she was going again with a second. What fascination did the City exert over her life? The days of the trip would be Friday to Sunday, the days of Our Lord's Last Journey. Though her boyfriend had never driven a bike, they planned to go motorcycling: what better occasion for an "accidental death"?

But she had given in to Fate. God's will was immutable in any case. And it had been okay. She came back somewhat chastened, and gave up certain habits such as kissing the bathroom mirror when it was shut, then open, then shut again, and striking middle C on the piano last thing before getting into bed.

\* \* \*

Now it was Easter time again. Her boyfriend called Thursday night (Friday morning 2:20 a.m. New York time) one and a half weeks before Easter. He was vacationing in California. They had a fight over the telephone.

The next day the crazy man on the corner stopped her. He was always shouting about God. Usually Edith avoided him, but this time he caught her arm. "Believe in the Lord Jesus," he said. She laughed. He scowled darkly at her. "I'm trying to save your life miss." "That life you can have, I only want this one," she laughed. "Don't you have any fear?" he asked with the intensity of an adolescent first questioning his belief in God. "Not at all." "What religion are you?" "Born Jewish. You?" "Christian Scientist." "If I'd be anything I'd be a Catholic." "That's worse," he said, "than being Jewish." She laughed and went on.

Next week he stopped her again. The intensity of Good Friday seemed to subdue him, and he only thrust a piece of paper into her hands. REPENT AND BE SAVED it said. THE LORD JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS. She crumpled and threw it in the street (where it was immediately squashed by the tire of an automobile).



The Saturday night before Easter she was waiting on a subway platform, going alone to a party. Three boys passed. "Have you lost your master?" they laughed, mockingly. The pattern again became clear to her. Tomorrow was Easter, the Lord should rise. Yesterday He had been crucified. Today was the darkest day for the disciples, Holy Saturday. Did she believe in Him? Would her boyfriend call?

"Have you lost your master?" the boys had shouted as they passed. "No," she'd answered, automatically, from pride. They had laughed again. "As if to say," she thought, "where is he?" Then she began to worry about her answer. Had she been too confident? For when one asserted in confidence that such-and-such would happen, it never did. Thinking some more, she realized her unconscious had gone deeper than that. Her "no" was an ironical sign of affirmation, a sign of Faith. The Lord had said, "I will come again," and He had. She would believe in Him. And the Faith fitted in with her actions of the week. Perhaps her boyfriend was testing her by not writing or phoning; perhaps he would call that very night, after it had officially turned Easter at twelve. He would say, "I love you," as he had so many times before. She was counting on that. She had written him tender letters all week, accusing him of neglect in terms calculated to rouse his desires to incandescence. The boys' question and answer gave shape to this week of waiting, and promised renewal.

Next day she waited for the call, all afternoon and evening, till three o'clock at night, which was twelve o'clock California time. But he did not call. All week she had made everything as propitious as possible; she had kissed all her pictures of him in the usual order, had prayed the same prayers every night, and scarcely moved out of her room all day Sunday.

Although she grew more desperate, she did not give up hope. Last year, it had been the Sunday before Easter, this year the Sunday after. She was after all not exactly sure when he would be returning from vacation. It all made sense--the parts would have to be distorted for the whole to be both serene and balanced. It was like a triptych.

All her friends waited with her. It was a bad week all around. The whole world seemed to be undergoing a huge test, as if everyone had to live for the mailbox and the phone. But as she analyzed them, the signs seemed to turn



against her. The hostess of the party that night was serving only bread and wine. And the wine was terrible, Edith wouldn't drink it, and the bread was gone by the time she arrived. Her hostess's boyfriend had broken up with her last Easter, and at her party she met the first guy she had liked for a whole year. Edith felt the girl was her negative, or she was the negative of this girl; the world was changing from a solar to a lunar cycle.

\* \* \*

So she waited the week after Easter. She prayed each night and kissed the pictures, weighed herself in bare feet three times before she went to bed, took pills in duples to be sure of never having taken precisely thirteen, counted breaths as she walked, and would not check the mail till she had taken her shoes and stockings off and hung up her coat. She wore only her good luck bra and flowered panties.

The period of agony lasted exactly two weeks after her boyfriend's last phone call. She was waiting to call his school to see if he had returned from vacation without calling her. On Wednesday she had a terrible desire to speak to him, but it was the thirteenth night since his last call. She would never have forgiven herself if she had gotten bad news. But on Thursday she would definitely call, making sure to wait past midnight so that a full fourteen days had passed. She would have preferred to wait until Sunday, but she could neither eat nor sleep, and felt like she was getting an ulcer.

He called her that night at 8:30. She had taken a tranquilizer, and, falling asleep, did not recognize his voice. "Eli? hello," she said, a boy she was currently dating. "This is not Eli." "Oh sure it is, don't play any games I'm not in the mood." "This is Jesse." "Who?" She could not recognize his name. "Have you forgotten me already?" Suddenly she recognized his voice and laughed with relief. He sounded . . . involved. "Oh, it's you!" she laughed again.



Their conversation was neither good nor bad. She fell asleep right after, and though she woke up sporadically the whole night she did not bother to get out of bed to kiss the pictures or say her prayers.

#### EPILOGUE

(Excerpts from a questionnaire re religion and morals distributed by the Sociology Department of Edith's college, filled out by her the first Friday after Easter, the night after her boyfriend's call.)

Do you feel that you personally need to believe in some sort of religious faith?

1      yes.

2   x   no.

3      maybe.

In what way has your evaluation of religion changed, if at all, since you entered college?

1   x   I personally value religion more.

2      I personally value religion less.

3      I have not changed my evaluation.

Sin is nothing more than what a culture considers wrong.

Strongly Agree    Agree   ?    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

The whole idea of asking God to change the ordinary course of events is superstitious.

Strongly Agree    Agree ?    Disagree    Strongly Disagree



One can do no more than attempt to imagine Charles' surprise when, after clearing away his supper dish and settling down to a cup of steaming instant Postum and the new book, he found that it contained, among other things, explicit directions as to how to send the wizened Mrs. C. to the aforementioned place. Upon closer scrutiny, it also explained how one could have one's dearest wish granted. Ah, fortune is indeed kind to those with a pure soul. Being a creature of (as he have already noted) extreme simplicity, but also totally without malice, our Charles chose to make his wish and pass up the opportunity to send Mrs. C. prematurely to her just deserts.

The directions were clear and uncomplicated and Charles followed them to a T. He finished the final necromantic expletive and sat down on his bed expectantly. Silence. Nothing happened.

Here we may briefly digress to ask ourselves as well as the reader: Is Charles merely a credulous fool? Are only the schemers, the sophisticated, the erudite, rewarded in this rather evil world? A question, indeed, for deep and serious thought.

The answer perhaps lies in the event that occurred exactly two hours and forty-three minutes after Charles' invocation, at (as we might well have guessed) exactly the stroke of midnight. Charles is still sitting expectantly on his bed, seemingly slightly mesmerized, an inclination attributed more to those of an artless and unassuming nature than to those endowed with more complex characters.

"Azazel and all the hosts of tophet! What in Nifelheim's name!" The demon stopped shouting and looked carefully around him.

"Ah, the one-wish incantation. Correctly done, too. Can't touch you until--uh, can't touch you." He threw back his diabolical head and roared with hellish laughter. Charles noticed suddenly that it was a good deal warmer than the maximum temperature Mrs. Credin's appliances could ever have achieved. And there was a strange smell in the air. Sulphur or brimstone, Charles wasn't exactly sure which.



"Go ahead. I don't have much time y'know." The demon paced back and forth in the limited space given him by the spell, lashing his tail with impatience.

"Uh, well, I really don't . . ."

"What? Speak up! I won't eat you." This time yellow flames seemed to spout from his nostrils.


Charles Selby braced himself and said, rather loudly, "Well, I really don't want all that much. I wish to be loved, have enough to eat and a warm place to sleep, that's all . . ."

With a scream of fiendish glee, the demon raised his hands and Charles disappeared.

"Don't know where he coulda come from, Martha," Clem took out a plaid bandana and wiped the sweat from his face. "I coulda swore there was only four of 'em yestiday. Now look, there's a new one, a reel pretty feller, too. Looks a littl' skeered rite now but he'll get over that soon enough. Hey--and lookit the way that sow's taken a hankerin' for him. We'll be having a lot more of these critters right soon enough, you mark my words. . . . Waal, better git'em fed now. C'mon you porkers, soo-wee, soo-wee, pik, pik, pik . . ."

"Grunt, grunt," said the porker with the bewildered eyes, pushing along with the others to get to the trough.





*You are the curl of incense  
of softly spiraling smoke  
of delicate fragrances  
behind dark cloaks*

*And the wispy dreams of colors  
that brush against my mind  
are your long fingers  
forming a secret sign*

*For you are the stamens of flowers  
and you are the pollen as well  
and your hair is the wind  
and the rain enters in  
and you mingle inside as you swell*

*And your fruit is a flower  
that never has been  
with tendrils of vapors  
and petals within.*

Lenny Davis



