

Spring 1969

Zephyrus

Western Kentucky University

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Zephyrus, Spring 1969

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William Martin – And the Jungle Looked Down On It All
Mary Quinn – Untitled
David Rowans – the reason henri bollinger got all dressed up
today
Ed Sikorski – The Little Boy With Sad Eyes
George Solley – The Blind Prophet
Jackie Tutino – The Bum
Donald Whitaker – Epitaph

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ZEPHYRUS

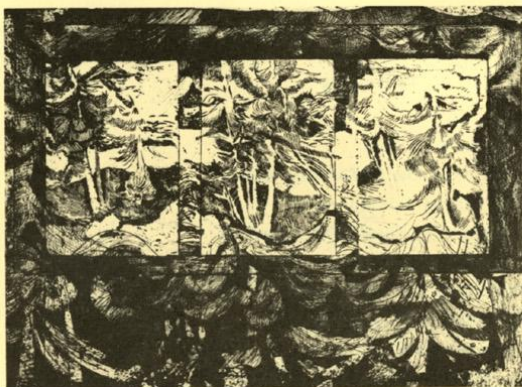
SPRING 1969



THE BUM

The rheumy-eyed bum
Lurching down the leaf-strewn street.
Baseball cap on thinning hair,
Haberdashery by Good Will Industries,
Vest buttoned tight against the cold,
Too tall pants legs rumpling,
Scuffed shoes seemingly shaped
Like someone else's feet.
Sallow skin with bags upon bags
Cascading down his cheeks.
Strawberry nose, slack mouth, few teeth,
And in his trembling hand he holds a pretty leaf.

Jackie Tutino



AND THE JUNGLE LOOKED DOWN ON IT ALL . . .

by
William Martin

The world is green and dank here in the jungle. Layers of mist hang suspended in the oppressing heat and the riot of insane vegetation running rampant is wet, constantly dripping. Nature's sweet perfume mingles with the stench of a thousand years decadence rising from the floor and a faint breath of air stirs this blanket of stagnant odor. The silence of the forest is broken by the myriad forms of life, animal and insect, that populate this mystery. The faint, hushed rustle of foliage brushing foliage gives a sinister atmosphere to the serenity. The jungle is alive, yet not with a life of its own. Colorful birds flit from tree to tree, their flight graceful, their cries musical. Snakes, their molten flesh blending with the floor of the jungle, lend their barely perceptible presence. Scurrying animals dart about, fleeing from some unseen, unheard alien life. And beneath this canopy of interwoven

vines and leaves the world of the jungle is alive. The walls of green seem to close; draw nearer in this perpetual dusk. And the jungle looks down on it all.

Carefully, inch by inch, Allen moved forward. Inch by filthy inch he crept; half buried in slime, reeking of stale sweat, smelling of fresh fear, he crept closer to the slight rise in the floor of the swamp. A host of insects, attracted to this strange form of life, feasted. Their progress from his nostrils to his ears and finally to his eyes had to be ignored lest an incautious movement alert the unknown; that menace always lurking in the minds of men at war. His green clad form, caked with the filth and debris of the jungle floor, blended to his background as he slowly parted the interwoven network of thorn branches in front of him. Tears, decades, eons passed as he waited,

ever wary. Then the sign, the telltale movement of alien life.

Ling Ti stopped and then eased back on his haunches. With true Oriental patience he watched his men build their simple camp. The small, green clad men worked with a minimum of movement, for the day had been long. They used the bountiful jungle, reaping the harvest of its opulence. Taking bamboo and vines, they assembled hasty shelters for the precious equipment they had carried so far. Covered with the filth of the jungle and the dirt of their journey, faces brown and streaked from the sweat of their labors, they soon finished the camp. Only minutes later it was hidden from all but the most careful search. From the habit of years at war they first checked the camp, then melted into a hidden, protective circle in the tangle of brush around the small clearing. Quickly the small, hard balls of rice were eaten and they huddled down into the oozing, rotten mass of vegetation that is the floor of a rain forest. There would be little sleep, but rest, precious little as there was, must be had. The march had been long and hard, but the cause was great and the end was near.

The branches were eased back to their resting places and the matted swamp grass lay crushed as Allen crept back through the swamp; back from his place of vantage. Quickly formulating a plan he slipped back to his waiting men. As he neared them they rose from the ground and clustered about him. In quick, concise details he told of his plan and issued his orders. Each man's reaction to impending death is different, yet with almost religious intensity each looked to his weapon and readied himself for this game called war.

At a silent signal they rose as one and melted into different parts of the jungle.

Broken rays from the dying sun filtered down through the dense ceiling of leaves and vines. The scattered beams of golden light danced across the faint clearing beside which Ling Ti sat. With a look of near rapture on his face he marveled at the striking contrast of nature. Flowers, drawing their substance from this vile earth, yet blossoming into brilliant, beautiful creations, unequaled by man. The colorful plumage of the birds clashed with the rancid, putrid floor of the jungle, yet each was a form of nature's beauty. And with his eyes absorbed in the delicate patterns of light dancing through the mist, he missed the ominous hush of sound, the fleeting, telltale movement that in the jungle is the harbinger of death.

A mere wave of the hand and then nothing. Just that quick flitting motion seen only because it was watched for at that exact instant. All was ready. Men in mud-caked green hiding in the thick fringe of jungle, readied their instruments of death against men in mud caked green lying in the protective fringe of underbrush. A prophetic hush fell over the land and in that silence was hope.

The silence was shattered; shattered by a thousand fragments of steel ripping into the bodies of men. Shattered by waves of steel, sheets of fire and the shuddering blast of sound raking through the jungle. A hundred birds, shocked from their perches, fled from this insult. Their shrill, raucous cries protesting this indignity. Leaves, shorn from the trees by the holocaust, fluttered peacefully down only to

THE ESCAPE

by

Bob Cox

Jerry gave himself a final boost and climbed up the small clearing near the top of the hill. He sat down beside a bush, panting as quietly as he could under the circumstances. Glancing at his watch, which was barely discernible in the cool moonlight, he noted that it was nearly ten o'clock. He knew he would have to hurry to keep the rendezvous.

Raising his head slightly, he peered down the hillside where he knew there must be a flurry of activity. He listened intently, but heard nothing. "Good," he thought, "I must have put some more distance between us." Abruptly, he caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of his eye. It was a pinpoint of light far in the distance which he knew was a searchlight. He watched as its beam moved slowly up a hillside adjacent to the one where he was sitting. The light passed over the area thoroughly, then blinked off. Jerry smiled . . . something he very seldom did these days. "Why, they weren't even close. Stupid Earthlings," he thought contemptuously. Of course, their first mistake had been in not believing his story. It was understandable, he now knew. Their minds were simply not ready for such radical ideas.

He considered the first time he had told the story. Even his Earthling mate refused to believe him. Personally, he saw nothing so fantastic about his being an emissary from another planet. Later, he had told the proper authorities the same story. As an agent from Ranger IV, he had landed secretly on Earth fourteen years before to study, incognito, the planet and its peculiar institutions. The team which had brought him devised a plan which allowed him to blend in perfectly with the population. After carefully studying a particular Earthling, the technicians altered his matter to emulate the one whose identity he would assume. It was simply a matter of abducting the one called Jerry, probing his mind and transferring significant memories into his own brain. Even his wife had not detected the difference in the fourteen years, but he had always been clever. Especially when pitted against inferiors.

The masquerade had predictably enough worked perfectly and had enabled him to amass a tremendous amount of data on his subjects. Faithfully, once a week, he had transcribed and sent the information back to Ranger IV. In another Earth year he would have completed his mission, and could have made plans to return. It would have been another smooth disappearance and no one would have known what events had transpired.

Six months ago, however, the unexpected had happened. It was an event of a probability so small that it did not warrant working through the central banks. He reminded himself that in future planetary studies, they would have to take in account an extra digit of probability.

Normally, an auto accident would have been inconsequential. In the first place, he could react to nearly any situation quickly because his reflexes were so good. Therefore, he knew he must be much harder than his look-alike inferiors. Some idiot had swerved into his lane and there had been no escape. His car had smashed into an embankment, throwing him free.

The car's fuel had exploded. He could never understand why stupid Earthlings used flammable fuel. Inside the crude transport lay his transmitting equipment. He had quickly regained consciousness and rushed to the burning hulk. Some blundering official, in what he obviously thought was an altruistic move, restrained him. He couldn't very well have told the man that he was all but impervious to radiant energy of that sort. He could only watch anxiously as fire equipment extinguished the blaze. Finally, he rushed to the car and pulled open the burned out door. There it was, lying seemingly intact on the floor! Quickly examining it, he was about to sigh in relief when he pulled out the Heath slide. The Decrautizer was burned to a crisp!

The discovery had been such a shock that he had allowed them to load him in an ambulance and take him to a hospital where he lay for a week. "Curses!" he had thought, "any other part I could have replaced quickly. The device shouldn't have been damaged anyway." The stay at the hospital however, gave him time to adjust to the situation and form a plan. The medical report showed cerebral biochemical malfunctions, a concussion and three broken ribs. By the time he was released he felt fine.

Jerry butted out a cigarette which had burned his fingers and continued his thoughts. "Actually, I had no choice," he assured himself. "I had to send those last sixty-four messages. They were the most critical of them all. Theft was not possible, nor was bribery". In the end he had decided to go to the government and tell them the truth. It was the only possibility of getting the elements he had to have to repair his unit.

He had expected shock when they heard his story and also their appreciating his genius in staying hidden among them all these years. But disbelief? He had not counted on it. They had the audacity to submit him for psychological testing. Even when he had shown them his device, the dumb creatures had only nodded and continued their silly questioning.

The resultant progression of events had been almost beyond his belief. And the more he insisted that he was from another planet and another star system, the less they believed him. His elaborate explanations were followed only by careful soft voices and pointless tests.

But the last two months had been the worst. Imprisoned in a building with humans who were not only stupid but completely out of their minds! An insane asylum! By the Creator he could not believe it. Why it was enough to drive one mad.

The Earthlings thought he was clever, of this he was sure. Now they would see just how bungling they were. His last reception had informed him of a landing near this location at specific time. It was

interesting that while the Earthlings were the ones who had received the message, they played it back to him, still in disbelief. They found the message slightly amusing.

Jerry wet his lips and took a last look down the hillside. They were still hunting over a mile away. He knew now he would have plenty of time. The ship was due to land in six minutes. He stood, scratched his chin and set out for the landing point which had been precisely indicated. Another half mile at most. Halfway there he broke into a trot and finally into a run. The large, desolate clearing loomed just ahead. He didn't stop until he stood in the indicated position. His dial watch showed he had over a minute to spare. As he searched the moonlit sky, his heart pounded.

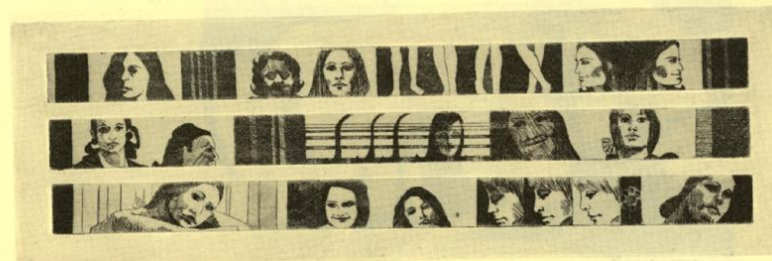
Suddenly, he thought he heard something. A moment of uncertainty followed and then he knew it was the ship. He could hear its rumble as it approached, slowly dropping down from the north. Finally, he could make out its flat green shape against the sky. It grew larger until it hung only four feet above him. He watched breathlessly as the bottom hatch swung open and a ladder dropped down to him. The terrific wind buffeted it around and he could hardly stand up, but he didn't really care.

At last, the ladder was within reach. Jerry grabbed the bottom rung and scrambled up toward the big green hatch. Up he climbed until his hand grabbed the inside railing of the ship. A final boost . . . at last he was safe!

He looked around at his comrades who smiled and helped him into a soft bunk. They obviously understood what he had been through. Now he could relax. A large man, with a reassuring smile, approached Jerry. With a pat on the shoulder, the man drew out a spray hypo. "This will help quiet your nerves Jerry," he said in a brotherly way. "After all, you've had quite an ordeal."

Jerry lay back and allowed the big man to administer the dose. Then he closed his eyes and began to dream pleasant things as he drifted off.

The doctor watched Jerry's face for a moment, then walked toward the forward compartment. He stepped inside and dropped into the seat next to the pilot. The two men exchanged nods and sighs of relief. They traveled in silence for awhile, until the pilot said, "Just one thing, Doc. How could you be sure you could get a psychotic like that to climb aboard this army copter when the whole countryside couldn't catch him?"



With myopic Sunday eyes
We pass the church
Where God sits smiling on the steps

He knows, He knows

The night before
I tasted the Rose of Sharon
And feasted at the cathedral of your thighs

Jud Cross

THE BLIND PROPHET

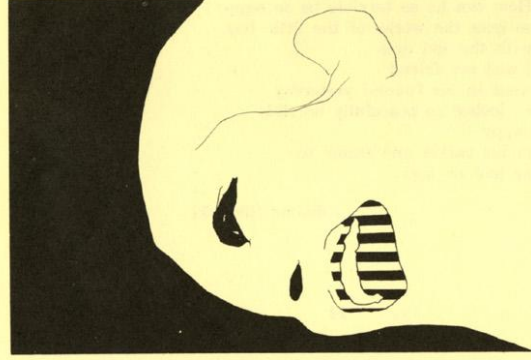
She lies there, afterward,
With the sensation of a thousand
Pine needles pricking their way
Around, into and under her skin
Until, deep inside, she feels the
Glorious, agonizing glow
Of consummation.

For a long time she floats,
Dimly aware of his presence
Beside her and his fingers,
Caressing the length of
Her body. She floats, soars,
And glides at the same time—
And this time he is with her.

Yes, she thinks and hopes.
This time he is with her on her
Journey through euphoria; this time
He too feels the delicious ache,
The sense of everlasting peace,
The oneness with all things—Om.
This time he understands.

But this time too he fumbles
For his matches, smokes a
cigarette, and goes to sleep.

George Solley



THE LITTLE BOY WITH SAD EYES

The little boy with sad eyes
dusty dirty looking to sell
tiny toy trinkets
on street corner in
city of oblivion
he cries all day long
as he watches
people walk by looking
at his pitiful offering to enterprise
either to sneer or turn their heads
at his poverty
and sometimes when someone person
stops to buy from him
his sad face deathwhite
emancipated with strange eyes
lights with angel dance smile
of Jesus
like forgiveness for his little world
and this little smile
although he not knowing it
scares people
and they don't even know why
they themselves
turn away afraid to look at his eyes
piercing them with their happiness
and some people who stop to think
think
How can he so terrible be so happy?
so goes the works of the little boy
with the sad eyes
I and my friend
went to his funeral yesterday
he looked so peacefully horribly
happy
in his casket and funny too
he had no legs

Edmund Sikorski

the reason henri bollinger got all dressed up today

i went to a funeral today
not because i knew who died
but i wanted to write a poem
and a corpse is usually very inspiring

but they wouldn't let me see him

the coffin was closed
and as i walked past the casket
i jerked the top off and slammed it back
before anyone could see
and i walked on out laughing
because i was the only one who knew
that the only thing in the bronze box
was a mirror

and i know because
i went to a funeral today
not because i knew who died
but i wanted to write a poem

David L. Rowans



THE SECOND MILLENIUM

What are you doing?
Waiting.
For what?
Why the millenium, of course.
But that's been over for years--
You're still waiting?

Well, they must have made a small mistake!
A matter of one zero maybe.
No wonder, too, with no computer
For all that heavy math.
This second millenium is an error.
You see we should have been gone by now,
And the world is just a little tired
And fretful from the strain.

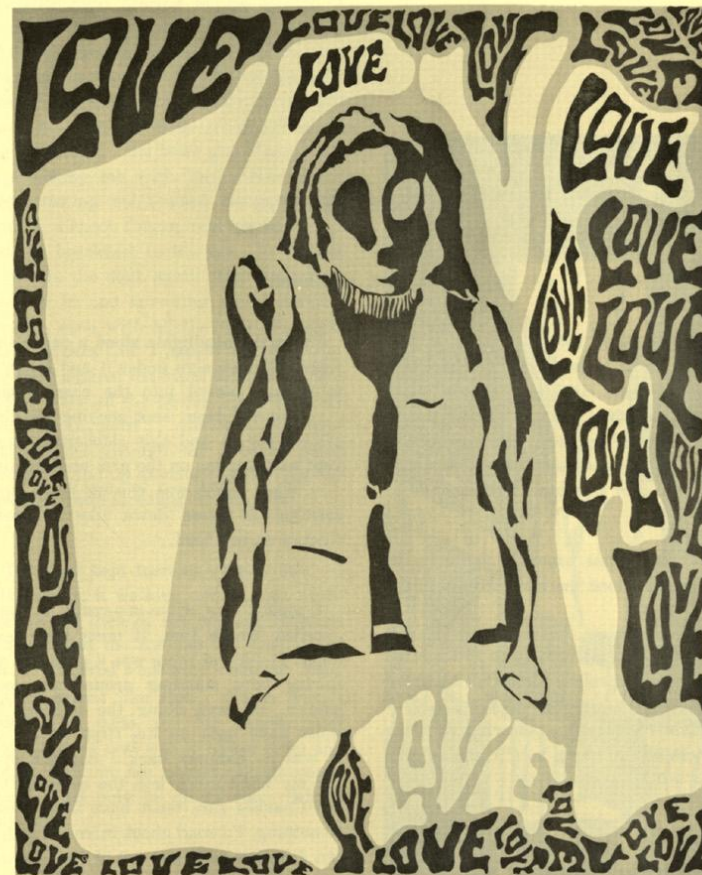
The little wheels spin and spin
And the big wheel turns round and round,
Byzantium to Constantinople,
Constantinople to Istanbul.
The children of the second millenium know
This too shall pass,
And always in the same direction.

Why did they play such a cruel joke
On the dark and simple minds of men,
Who nursed the thousand with the promise
And fed the vigil with their seed.

Mary Ann Hill

A wall of separation built by stumbling blocks.
A wave of frustration gushed from those eyes.
Embittered.
Youth soured when the love-flower was plucked.
The familiar smile rotted from decaying indifference.
Silence is now an echoing refrain of the
 all-but-forgotten-remembrances.
Lost in this wasteland,
 grappling for a landmark
 to point clear
 her next move.

Mary Quinn



SIGNIFYING NOTHING

by

William R. Greenwell

The road kept rolling up out of the darkness like a huge treadmill with white and yellow lines cutting it in half. Now and then another pair of lights flashed around a curve or over a hill and a black shiny insect lunged down on me, past and swallowed into the night's gullet.

The dark pines crowded right up to the road and stood there silently gawking.

Occasionally, a furry ball with two sparks set in it rolled across the highway and once a cat came up on the treadmill raised on its front legs staring into the darkness and a thump later I passed over it and left it, still staring.

This song was on the radio — Simon and Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence" and "Hello Darkness, my old friend," kept crawling around in the chambers of my mind and I could see the snake of words weaving in and out through the convolutions of my brain.

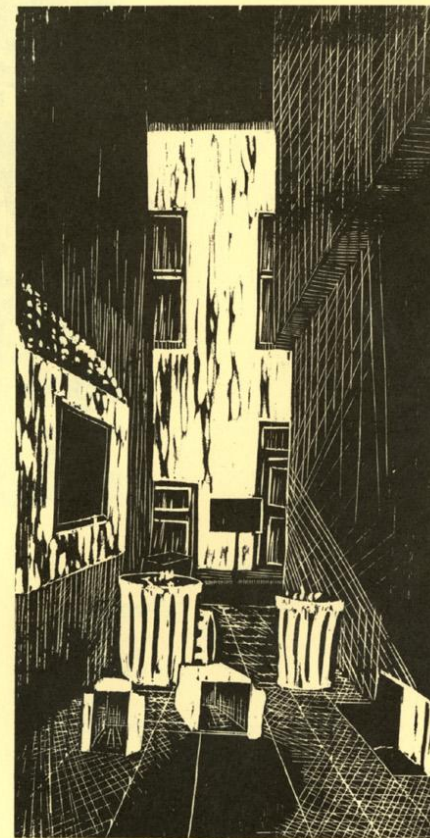
Up in the headlights stood a curve sign with a 25 mph sign under it and I slowed to 25 and moved into the passing lane . . . and the doors kept sucking together sealing me in and this slobbering queer kept touching me on the arm and giggling . . . The night was closing down now, seeming to press down like so many fingers on my head.

I passed this drive-in—really a shack—called Wolf's Den. It must have been about 11:30 and there was a group of admiring boys standing around the local soldier. He was doing the talking. He must have been on his first leave . . . it was so damned dark I couldn't even see my hand much less the compass but the Charlies sure must have been seeing something. I'd read about infra-red scopes but I hadn't seen any yet. I just pointed the thing toward the noise and clenched my fist around the trigger. I splashed into this mudhole and suddenly daylight flared . . . somebody thumped me on the head and then all this light flooded in . . .

When they started to play Dixie I came into Sweet Springs, pop. 300. There was a traffic light glaring in the middle of town and a cop slept in his car in front of the gas station across the intersection. Waiting for the light I watched the dead eyes of the store fronts and saw this old black cat with a broken tail checking out the gutters . . . the little smart-assed cop kept poking me with that stubby black jack pushing me toward the cell. Two drunks, a check forger, real bigtime . . . I fed my breakfast to the rat . . . I went back into the dark again. The pines keep pushing in and crowding me. I couldn't breathe, even with all the windows open. No more cars now. I passed a house nudging back against the pines but it was dead and so were all the people. They wouldn't stand up anymore . . . that man who kept pushing me through the sucking doors couldn't stand up anymore either. Big red nose and little streaked brown eyes . . .

The road kept turning up and this old fella was on it walking and he kept pushing me and then he reached out his arms and accepted the car and his eyes stared out. I wondered what they looked at. They always stared like that. There wasn't much of a mess and his handkerchief cleaned it off real well. I folded it up and put it back in his pocket. He thumped like the cat only he didn't stare before, only after.

The road turned on. The pines started to back away and before long the sun started leaking through the hollows on the left. It would be daylight soon.



MARGARET

Margaret, small, pale, sick, and sad
put on her spring pastels
Her soul scorched beneath the worry of their
weight.

Abstraction, a fleeting instance, I saw,
perhaps alone, a color rise into her cheeks
as his arm accidently brushed
her breast.

And he, carrying his parcels
once more across the street

Never saw her mouth slightly open and the
slight tremble of her
right hand.

Judy Klein



EPITAPH

My time is limited.
Could possibly
be stated in minutes.
But the computation would take some
And I can't waste them trivially.

Donald Whitaker

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