

PHYSICS, DEC. 26, 1981

As Hitler marched, Warsaw radio defiantly played Chopin over and over again Chopin's Polonaise Paderewski playing Chopin Hitler playing war the world listening

And when abruptly the music stopped when Chopin finally was silenced Poland had been devoured

Today we searched the grocery shelves for the last jar of Krakow black-currant jam feeling obscene that we could reduce such suffering to regret that there will be no shipments of our breakfast jam from Poland

Tomorrow over lunch, German bankers will debate losses, of assets perhaps, or lives and Sunday, David Brinkley with new strategies for old politics In Canada next week, how many seekers of asylum as all the while the gassings, the manglings into a new unspeakable Solidarity

And so for Poland we will hang our helpless scarlet ribbons and we will watch the nightly news and somewhere, somehow, the airways still will hold the sound of Paderewski playing Chopin's brilliant Polonaise.

— ELIZABETH HOBBS

ODE FROM THE BOOK OF CRYPTICS

When I am gone, I shall come on the beach wind; Summer hot, in Springtime cool. The down along your arms will rise to greet me with touch light as memory's finger in your mind when I am gone.



— TA HUANG CHI

ELEGY FOR A CLEARCUT FOREST

Five months after your death, I come like the others Among the slash and stumps, across the cratered Three square miles of your graveyard: Nettles and groundsel first out of the jumble, Then fireweed and bracken Have come to light where you, for ninety winters, Had kept your shadows.

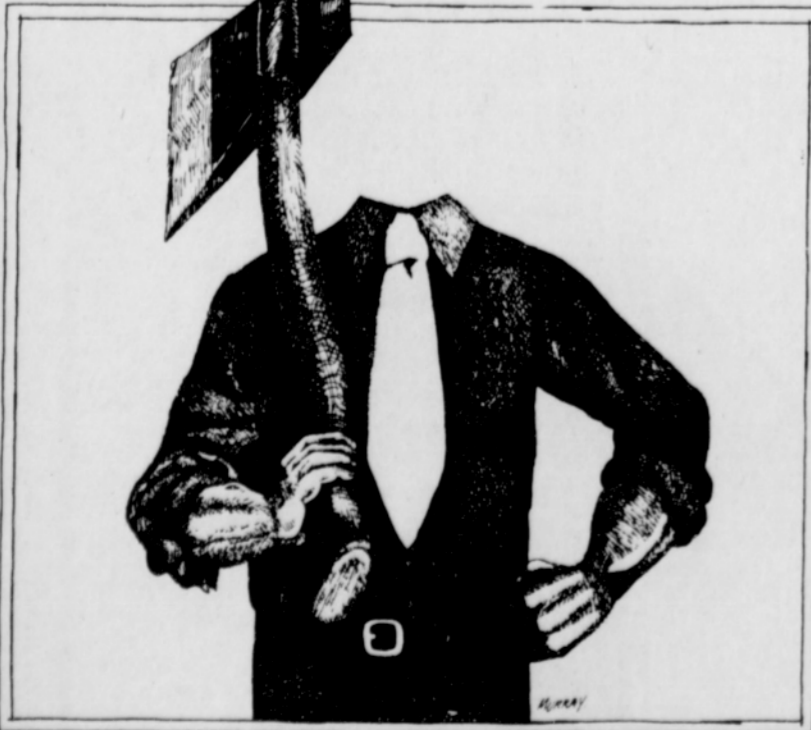
The creek has gone as thin as my wrist, nearly dead To the world at the dead end of summer, Guttering to a pool where the tracks of an earth-mover showed it the way to falter underground, Now pearly everlasting Has grown to honor the deep dead cast of your roots For a bitter season.

Those water- and earth-led roots decay for winter Below my feet, below the fir seedlings Planted in your place (one out of ten alive In the summer drought), Below the small green struggle of the weeds For their own ends, below grasshoppers, The only singers now.

The chains and cables and steel teeth have left Nothing of what you were: I hold my hands over a stump and remember A hundred and fifty feet above me branches No longer holding sway. In the pitched battle You fell and fell again and went on falling And falling and always falling.

Out in the open where nothing was left standing (The immoral equivalent of a forest fire), I sit with my anger. The creek will move again, Come rain and snow, gnawing at raw defiles, Clear-cutting its own gullies. As selective as reapers stalking through wheatfields, Selective loggers go where the roots go.

— DAVID WAGONER



PRICKSONG

I am cursed by a large penis which I planted in a flower pot in my living room. When it grew, like a cactus, it looked thirsty and, being kindly at heart, I allayed its thirst with water. It sprouted wings. Now it flies around the house and sings at me. Once I tried to shoot it down but horrified, it shriveled up into a ball, retracting everything it had ever said to me. What could I do? I didn't have the heart to follow through. Now it tries to get in bed with me. I am afraid. It is so big. It looks so thirsty. It is never satisfied. Last night when I pushed it back, it cried.

— MARILYN COFFEY

PYTHAGOREAN SISTER

There was a day, little sister, in a Sear's Catalogue Easter dress that I walked to the mailbox with hose on. Nylons held up with rubber bands in my flat black patent leather Sunday School shoes. Rubber bands because they said I was too young for these runned stockings And so gave me no garter or girdle. Past the iron wrought gate around the too neat house that never smiled I went hoping and embarrassed to be noticed. You would have had a epithet for that. Weird, you would have said. My head too small for my body you would have pointed out digging into me like a cartoon leopard's claw into snake flesh. I get the point, I would have said and giggled, another ramshackle comradely mood on us now. Uh-uh. My hair's longer than yours, we would have said then, rolling our eyes as if they were thumbs stuck in suspenders and comparing the lengths of the sweaters yours blue and mine red that hung down our backs. No sir. I get the red one. I'm the oldest. And then the chase around in the dark til I fell to swell my lip in the hall's metal wastebasket. Peaked white weakling, I would have called you then drilling home in hostile disguise the truth about your flat chested thinness opposed to my pimply gangly menstrual blood studded secrets. They weren't secrets to you though even though we never talked about them. You knew, you kept a diary and were in love like a woman with your junior high school art teacher. You, little sister, and I who were square roots of our mother. Little did we know the formula then. You who perched in your three-year-old white undershirt and pants atop the park slide framed forever by the handrailing in the photograph and coming from exactly the same triangular black furred home as I each flying out our distinct rays met once before infinity in the shared side of our fairy-tyrant parent generation.

— CAROLYN EDWARDS



A SALUTE TO THE MILLION WHO DID NOT REGISTER

One million young Americans face fines and imprisonment — the penalties exacted for failure to register for the draft.

Your and my tax dollars, no longer available to help feed the hungry, house the homeless, or heal the sick, will be spent instead to prosecute one million young Americans who don't believe the "vital interests" of the Pentagon should override their personal plans for education, career and family.

One million young Americans, your and my sons and grandsons, declined to make the ultimate sacrifice for Exxon and Dupont.

One million young Americans are too many to prosecute; perhaps, they can provide us with a breath of hope for the uncertain future of our shrinking planet.

— MARY JANE BREWSTER

