

Discontent

1
It is the sixteenth day
toward evening
away from hot water and wallpaper
the telephone and news.

My beard has enveloped my face
like moss on a stump.

If something of the woods
has grown in me,
my hair is but the blossom
of the secret root.

I think this
I go on.

2
I have things to do.
I walk out of the circle
of trees and skirt the shore.
A lone duck browses
the surface of the lake
like a woman picking lint
from her coat.

I think of women
polishing themselves
in the private pockets
of their lives.

I think of the empty seat
in the stadium
the mail warm against the door
under which the cat has crawled.

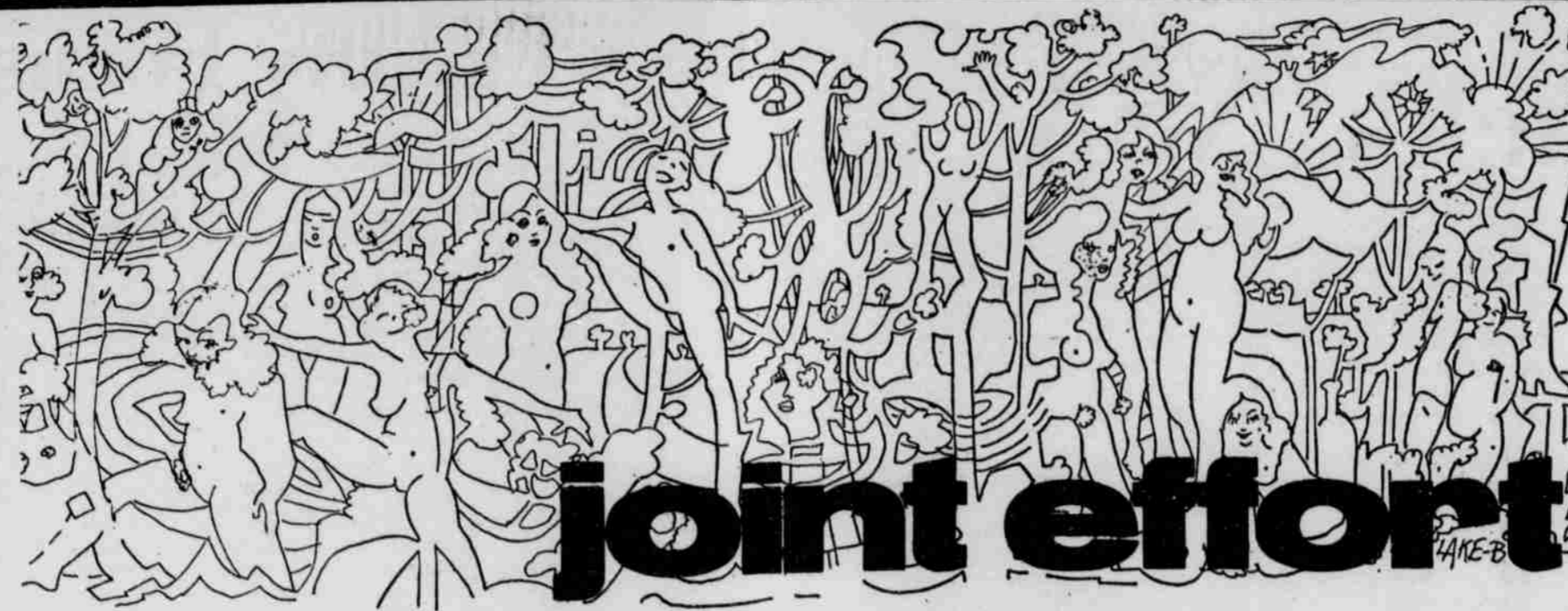
3
And then I want
to go back
to the belligerent city
the fast flesh of women
and the limited view
from my window
water made bitter
by men's success,
my smooth face in the glare
of streetlamps
and the fires of celebrations.

—by Greg Kuzma

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— edited by —
Dan Ladely
Greg Kuzma
Ed Icenogle



The morning singer

The single sun comes
My way again. Each day (from China) he comes
To sit atop my cottonwood and I watch him,
At first —
Then,
We go about our business
(The blue black starling and me)
While the sun
Showers some

?
All over us.
The crazy sun.
He rings high,
High above the wood
And makes puddles of shine
At

my

feet.

The split

His nights soon paralleled
His days. There was no sound
Nor space of light around him
Left ignored. Half-toned time
Was gathered and was stored
Upon the shelf — his wealth of
Quiet epigram, allusion and short rhyme,
Slated for revenge upon the night.
No pause, no sound, no ringing in
His ancient ear — no whispered word
That once was native will.

Toward the morning

*It is a late-stained night of sirens,
hostile cars on liquid pavement,
silver shadows rimmed on mud
and simple, evil, dark perfection.
The World is with the World tonight
and men are guiltless beasts
holding spirits in their palms,
touching shadows with their shadows
in the foot-deep mud.
Hastened elements make their play
and die swift atomic deaths
in tiny, sheltered, cosmic spaces.
Now, strange brightness brings the dark.
It is a late-stained night of sirens.
Morning is hours and eons away.*

—by Bill Smitherman

I've been walking for so very long--by Jim Plum

I've been walking for so very long. Not the self-confident
strutting of a Christ, thorns biting his head, a cross
digging a furrow in his back. Oh, to be able to walk
so sweetly, the very people you are going to save collecting
rheum and spittle, waiting to lay an oyster in your face
as you pass. No, mine is the sluggish, palsied walk of
a creature with no hope of a resurrection. I carry a
load that would make Jesus Christ fall to the ground
and beg mercy from above. I have sinned; I don't know
how or why, but I have sinned.

It's very difficult to obtain my bearings. Sometimes,
I look around and everything looks so frighteningly familiar
I'm sure you've had the feeling yourself. In this life or
another, you've stumbled over that very rock and landed
in the same brick road. Once, I looked down and thought
I saw my own footprints, though one can never be sure.
This would mean I am walking in a circle and my end
is my beginning. You can bet I don't think about that
more than I have to.

But, all in all, it's been a fairly enjoyable experience,
everything taken in perspective. There's a pond every few
miles and I can relax, have a drink, even though the
pond is brackish and strange insects skate back and forth
over the top of the water. Often times, I daydream as
I walk. One dream in particular keeps coming back, day
after day. I'm walking (I even walk in my fantasies)
and I see a flea, a single flea, flying in a drunken circle.
Looking toward the sky there are more and more fleas

until the sun is entirely blotted out by their tiny bodies.
But, in the end, they're only fleas. Often, stars take the
place of the fleas. I look at a star, then glance to left
and right and there are more and more of them until
the sky is like a glowing ball. I jump for the stars
like a man possessed. However, they remain just out of
reach. But in the end, they're only stars.

In the final analysis, though, this has been a pretty
rotten experience, this walk. A low trick by a cheap come-
dian. They tell me that the writer, Dostoevsky, was once
under the power of an unscrupulous publisher, who paid
little and demanded much. Dostoevsky had to crank out
a novel every two months, or everything he wrote for
the next nine years belonged to the publisher. What a
delectable position that man was in. A god-like power
over creation. Well, they tell me that Dostoevsky fulfilled
his contract and went on to write some of the most
monumental literature ever written, but only after escaping
the clutches of that rascal.

That is neither here nor there; I'm wasting my time
and yours, and I must be to my affairs. Oh yes! One
other thing escaped my notice, and I think you should
hear it. It echoes in my mind like a hammer on an
anvil. It may be important or it may not; my guilt is
nothing more than that uncharted area between what I
am and what I want to be. And, I think, that is why
I am walking.

—art by Linda Lake—B



—by Dan Ladely