

Dear Reader,

You'll like the first longish poem in this issue ("Journey...") unless you don't like haiku — or unless you like them. Everyone else should be fine. (Like haiku like who? Or like haikum like whom? A haikum is a grammatically pedantic haiku.)

Enough haikum hokum! We have serious things to discuss, like Xmas, a holiday full of unanswered questions; for example, who made Mary and how did myrrh-y become merry (which, frankly, incenses me) and Satan become Santa (Tanas, anyone?) and Ishtar become Easter and what-we-are get replaced by an old white-bearded giant in the sky and time (our bead-strung handicraft) become solid irreversible stone, and how did death (our little joke on each other) become final and compulsory and bodies become the only game in town— and who asked anyone to die for my sins? And who put the Bob in Bobshbobshbob...?

Also, if Xmas=Christmas, than X=Christ, in which case, could we say that we go to the doctor for Christrays, pay alimony to our Christs (or "exes"), give alms to the Christigent, sit in coffee shops discussing Christistentialism, seek treasure where Christ marks the spot, illiterately sign "Christ" on the dotted line, purchase the generic Brand Christ, mock Generation Christ, make rubber from raw late-Christ, are demanding, Christacting employers, scratch our Christema, enjoy active sChrist lives, or compensate by viewing Christ-rated movies, eat our bacon and Christ, Christ-tend our lives by our Christcellent habits, Christist for decades, inhaling and Christ-haling, Christceed our life Christpectancy, nonetheless, Christspire at last, and yet, Christtraordinarily (Christult!) are not Christtinguished, but Christstatic?

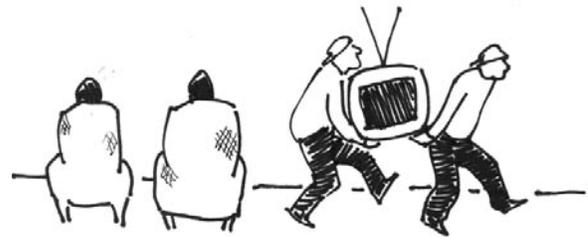
Probably this is not what is meant by those who say that Christ should fill up our lives. They don't even want Him to occupy our cursing. (You should hear our cur sing!) There are only 5 or 6 puns in the remainder of this issue. I've tried to compensate, above.

Cursing has become difficult because so few words are forbidden us, though one could still get into trouble expressing rage by substituting the "n" word for "Christ!" It could become the core of a new religion. After all, what one generation hangs on high, the next generation worships. We all want something or someone to look up to. The trouble is, in the Space Age we wonder, which way is up?

## Journey From Supper to the Next Day

Cow,  
did the grass taste as good  
as you do?

Preferring privacy,  
we watch the show with only  
3,000,000 viewers.



We'd look odd,  
sitting here staring, if someone  
removed the TV.

Dropped a peanut...  
the floor vent! O well,  
everything is somewhere.

I switch it off,  
we go to bed, missing  
so many good shows.

Sex feels good,  
but imagine being a tree  
breaking out in oranges.

Summer night—  
water sound...we just had  
that toilet fixed!

Stupid toilet won't stop flushing.  
We'd better build an ark.

Morning— rain?  
Or am I inside the heart  
of a small bird?

Maple so red  
I can hear it through the blinds.

*[continued]*

She's still asleep.  
Breathing?...yes. (I saw this  
movie once...)

Hard rain blames us—  
our pear tree shouldn't have kept  
its leaves so long.

The clean clothes,  
the dirty clothes,  
my body.

Why be embarrassed?  
You may die on the toilet.



“THREE SLAIN” says the news.  
I don't know what the tea kettle  
is saying.

Autumn. Jogging  
on a treadmill in a gym—  
somewhere, autumn.

Noticing one day that I don't much like  
my favorite dish...

### Exercise to Diet For

Weight-Watchers bans what Atkins will allow.  
A thousand gurus clamor to tell “How...”.  
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou  
Give me both diet and exercise enow.

To dress a turkey is to stuff something  
into it. Tonight, love, I will undress you  
in order to dress you.

### Candle Power

In candlelight you're young again—  
You're underage! How dare I stain  
So low-lit a  
Lolita!

Beneath a naked bulb  
that shorts on and off, they lie,  
shorts on and off.

Mothers are admirable, but a spinster  
is fecund to none.

The acorn is an ambitious spider,  
weaving one web in the sky to snare the sun,  
a second in the ground to catch the earth.

“I am not God” is a redundant way to say  
“I am not,” which is a perverse way to say,  
“I am,” which is an emphatic way to say  
“I,” which goes (on and on and on)  
without saying.

### Hang Time

One dream of flying (I've had it often)  
tries to fool me— uses all the tricks,  
has me, mid-dream, assuring myself it isn't  
a dream, has me flying just a little—  
I'm running, and I discover I can  
prolong my stride slightly, WILL myself  
a quarter-second of hang-time, then  
more, then more, until I'm moon-walking,  
20-foot strides, then, grasping the principle,  
as easy as urging a bowling ball,  
I will myself a longer glide— there's no  
limit. It's so real that, forgetting the dream,  
next day I encounter it as a memory—  
I remember that I know how to fly.  
It's so vivid that right there, where I stand,  
I try a little jump. There's no hang-time.  
I am a leaden lump. Or no good  
at dreaming in broad waking daylight.

### Panda Merry Christmas To All

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the zoo  
Not a creature was stirring except Ling Ling, who  
Was the last female panda on earth — and this night  
Was about to give birth! O it HAD to go right!  
All the scientists gathered with care round her pen  
In hopes of a new chance for pandas and men...  
“Here she comes! Here's the head!” cried a watcher with joy  
Like a child's at the sight of his first Christmas toy,  
And then— sweet reprieve from Darwinian Laws—  
“Here's the shoulders! And look now! Here comes panda claws!”



“Googoogah...”— talc talk.



### Only One

If in all the world there remained only one dog, even a mangy one, not only children would pay to stroke it once, pay double for a face lick; afterwards, driving home, one would read to the others from a brochure how there were once hundreds of millions of dogs, all sizes and shapes, nearly all eager to love and be loved, a hundred million tails wig-wagging, “Let’s play!”— and how thousands were abandoned, killed, daily, in “shelters”... That CAN’T be true, or if it is, were these people made of stone? Or was love so abundant that they could squander it?

If in all the world there remained only one tree, even a scraggly parking lot tree, we, in our oxygen masks, wheeling our air tanks, would line up to be amazed at its abundance, so many spring buds and summer leaves, such an intricate mosaic of bark and zig-zag of winter twigs— and a docent would explain (leading our group past what was once a parking lot island) that long ago there were millions of trees— people had them in their front yards!— but they were destroyed to make room for parking lots, highways and townhouses, and we would say, “She must be exaggerating...” (we would gasp at our air tubes, then say...) “or could they have destroyed things as marvelous as this?” (Gasp) “It must be different when there are many” (gasp), “but I can’t imagine it.”

If in all the world there remained only one flower, one ant, one child, one smile...

If in all the world there remained only one lawyer, one politician, one journalist, one psychiatrist, then we would say, “There used to be thousands, millions of these! How did people put up with them?” And we would be consoled just a little for the disappearance of trees, dogs, cats, birds.

If in all the world there remained only one poet, perhaps only a mediocre one, he or she would say to us, “All these things you have

*[continued]*

in abundance, grass blades, stars, bricks, each other— if you cannot see each as the only one in all the world ever, then you cannot see them at all,” and he or she would try to make us see. Or perhaps he or she would say, “Ah, the gorgeous lost trees! Ah, the noble dogs of yore! Alas! Alas!...” and, truly, this would be the last poet, though no one would notice.

### September 30: Lament for a Short Month

Tomorrow remember  
with sorrow September.  
If this were October,  
It wouldn’t be ober.

### Alas for a Lhasa Lass

There was once a bold girl from Tibet  
Who took her tame wolf to the vet;  
His shriek irked the beast  
AND its mistress— at least,  
I’ve been told that she left in a pet.

### Last Advice to a Thai Girl

Yes, my dear girl, to ride on a tiger’ll  
Give proof that you’re far from a shy girl,  
That you’re perky and bold...  
All your friends, growing old,  
Will remember you saying “Goodbye,” girl.

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Having nothing to say, I write anyway,  
trusting that the thoughts will catch up later,  
finding their own ways to my words,  
like migrating birds or the dog left behind  
in Iowa who comes scratching at the door  
in Oregon one midnight.



Visiting a house: bright colors, rich textures,  
complex knickknacks— each house unique;  
I feel like a child peeping into an Easter Egg.

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Our myth-making hearts can repeal physics:  
Some things grow larger with increased distance,  
and, like the rooms in my childhood house,  
shrink when approached.

## How Sunday Dinners Were Done

The idea was to get identical triangles of melting butter adhering to the same corner of each crisp, tawny cubbyhole of the waffle's grid, then pour on warm maple syrup, gold on gold on gold.



It had to look a certain way, the syrup not fully absorbed, but brimming the hundred square dimples, spilling over to pool on the plate, dark, gleaming, speckled with islands of butter, flotsam and jetsam of butter everywhere. Then one could make the waffle disappear, sop by soggy-crispy sop.

The idea was to swipe a finger across the front of the closed waffle iron so fast and so deftly that one caught the raw dripping overflow on one's finger, then one's tongue, without getting burned.

The idea was to eat a whole lot of waffles early Sunday evening while Amos 'n Andy and Nick Carter and Jack Benny visited via the kitchen radio (whose curves we didn't know were Art Deco), with the Sunday Funnies already good memories, no longer spread out on the living room floor and fought over, just layers of color in the gray newsprint stack on the old white-painted wooden chair. (We sat on new metal-tubed, vinyl-seated chairs.)

*[continued]*

Books on nutrition don't say how to pile up two or three waffles, loaded with syrup and butter, looking like the superstructure of an ocean liner, how it feels to explore, squeeze, destroy their tiers (releasing warm sticky sap) with knife and fork, how much to spear on a single forkful, how crisp, how mushy, how to scrape up the buttery syrup left on the plate, hold the tacky sweetness of a fork tine to the tongue, how you can see (edgewise, as mysterious as a clam) the batter in the waffle iron rise, bubble, darken.

I don't eat crap like that now. It's not good for you, as nearly everyone knows; Jack Benny is dead, Amos 'n Andy were two white actors. Pass the salad.



## Moon Meditations— No Pie in the Sky!

The horizon's half dollar, worth but a dime high in the sky.

Orange moon pie on the horizon, a gum drop in the sky.

A rock in the sky, and yet so full of "and yet..."

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