

THE COMPLETE
ENCYCLOPAEDIA
OF
HUMANITY



“the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you’ll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.”

—The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows

anxiety

anxiety—At the root of it all are four issues concerning existence. 1. The inevitability of death. 2. Limited freedom in a world arbitrarily structured by humanity. 3. The fundamental incomunicability between two minds. And finally, a conclusion stemming from the first three (concerning death, limited freedom, and isolation), 4. Meaninglessness.

balloon—Joyously, Henry hurled the object into the air, ignorant of wary onlookers. Though this celebratory dinner was meant to honor the contributions of professors such as himself, it remained an unspoken truth among the esteemed guests that Henry's intellectual acumen and psychological lucidity had long since his glory days faded. Nevertheless, Henry's invaluable contributions to the university remained ever-relevant to contemporary research, and his mind—what was *left* of his mind—was still worthy of recognition. Henry laughed at the balloon. It was so much rounder and so much kinder than the balloons he had previously been with. He wondered what the balloon

thought of him, if it thought him to be as kind as he thought it. Robert, a once-young apprentice of the once-middle-aged Henry, looked at him, both pity and love trembling in his eyes. Robert respected the man, deeply. He didn't want Henry to be the laughingstock of the dinner. Robert contemplated taking away the balloon, which was now being passed among bewildered dinner participants. But who was he, an ordinary man, to take away from what little safety and joy Henry had in his life? He looked around nervously. His hand trembled as he put down his fork. "Professor Fuller, where is your wife? Did you drive here yourself?" See Fig. 1

beach—Heat. Sweat. Virility. The knowledge of oncoming sunburn without the willpower to hinder it. Matted hair and dust. Rising heat at the soles of your feet, knowing of a nearby cool, refreshing, vast and sweeping body of water. Yet you play on because the pain brings forth comraderie, masculine kinship. The joy in being a spectator. The joy in being part of a team. The joy in not being alone. See Fig. 2

space

balloon

esteemed guest

joy

pity

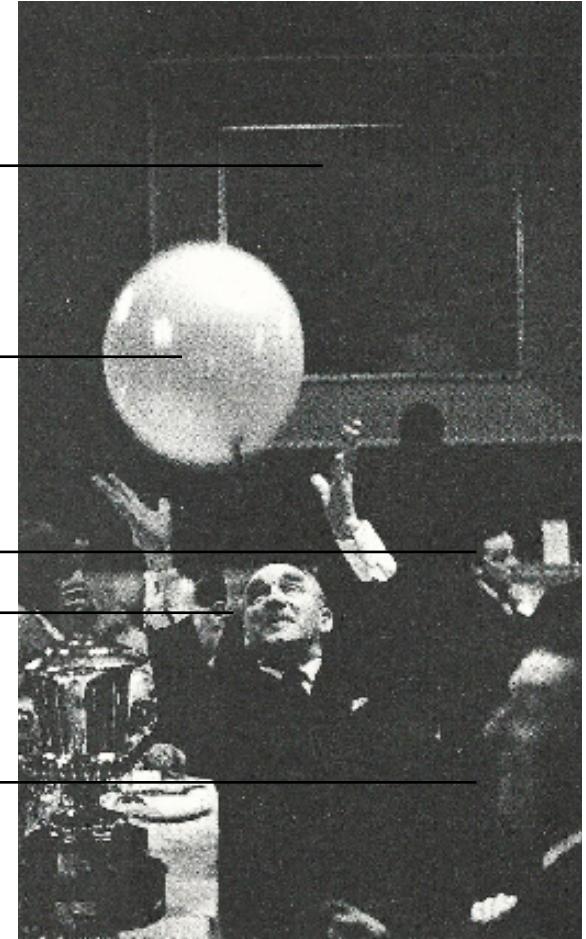


Fig. 1—An old man tossing a balloon into the air.

teammates

sunburn

virility

beach

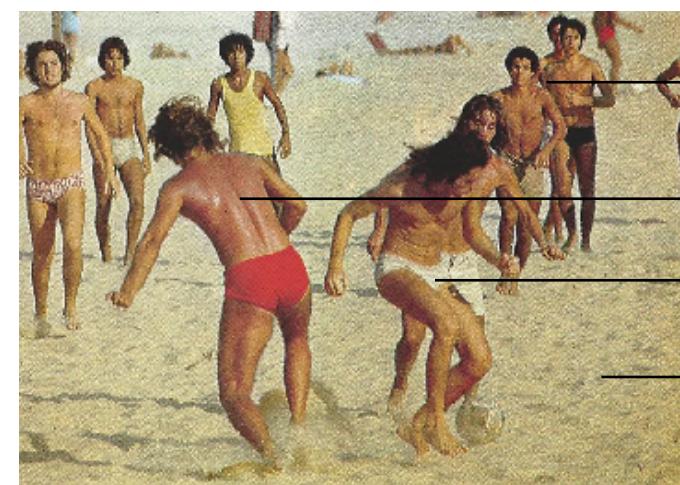


Fig. 2—Young men playing soccer on a beach.

bicycle

bicycle—Exercise invigorates. It gives you time to explore and examine your neighborhood. Though everyone I meet is kind and welcoming, there is a certain sterility unique to suburbia, I think. The similarity of all the houses, differentiated only by their colored windowpanes, feels suffocating. I feel, more than anything, an unspoken demand to adhere to societal expectations, a cultural demand to never deviate from the admittedly kind, friendly, and homogenous norms. At least it's autumn. I take comfort in knowing that nature will always have power over mankind. I enjoy exercising outdoors, and the air is invigorating. It feels hypocritical to ride a bike outside. It feels hypocritical to be wearing shoes, to be building houses, to be anything but naked and free among the shifting, mercurial whims of nature. *See Fig. 4*

braid—She was proud. Her clothes looked clean and sharp, and her hair, pleated down the center of her head, swayed when she walked. She was glad to have it away from her face. Flyaways irritated her chin and cheeks. Now, she

wouldn't have to itch her skin red and raw. Now, she could play without the burden of her long, brown hair. She felt free. She ran into the wind. *See Fig. 3*

house



a breath of fresh
air



bicycle

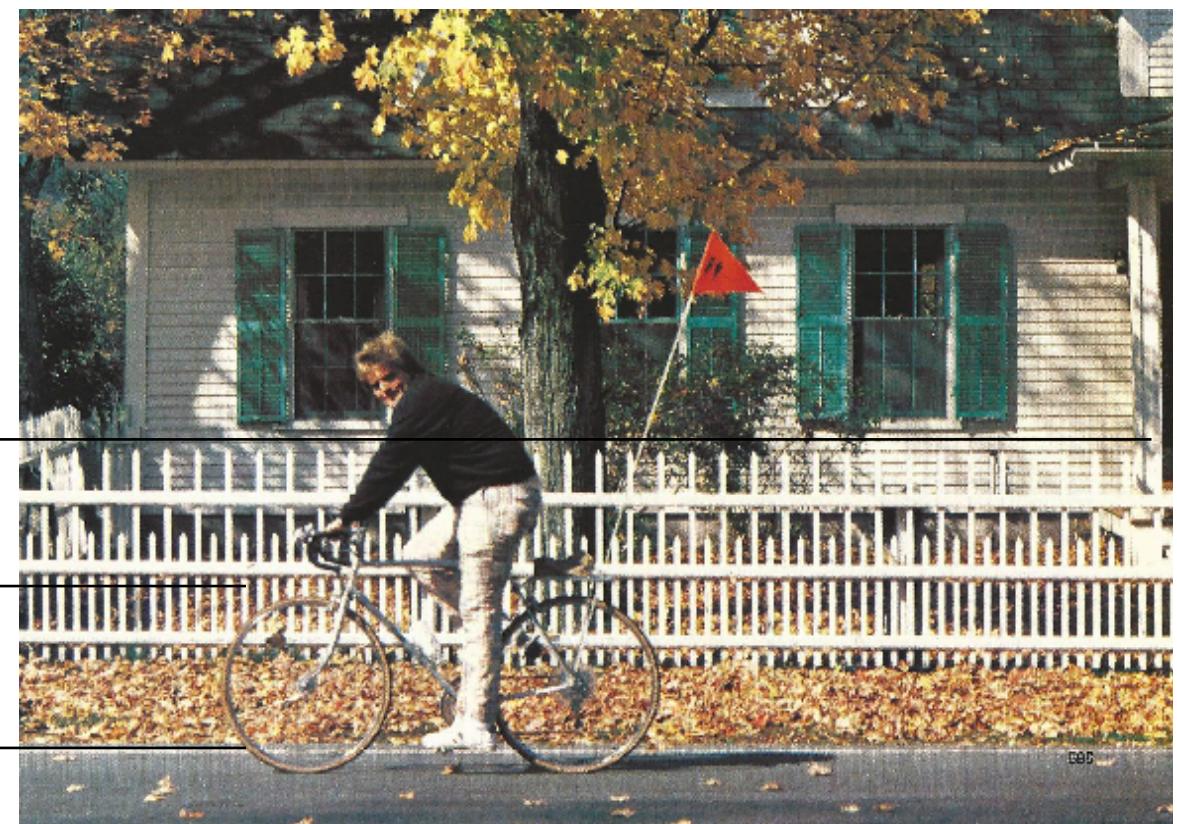
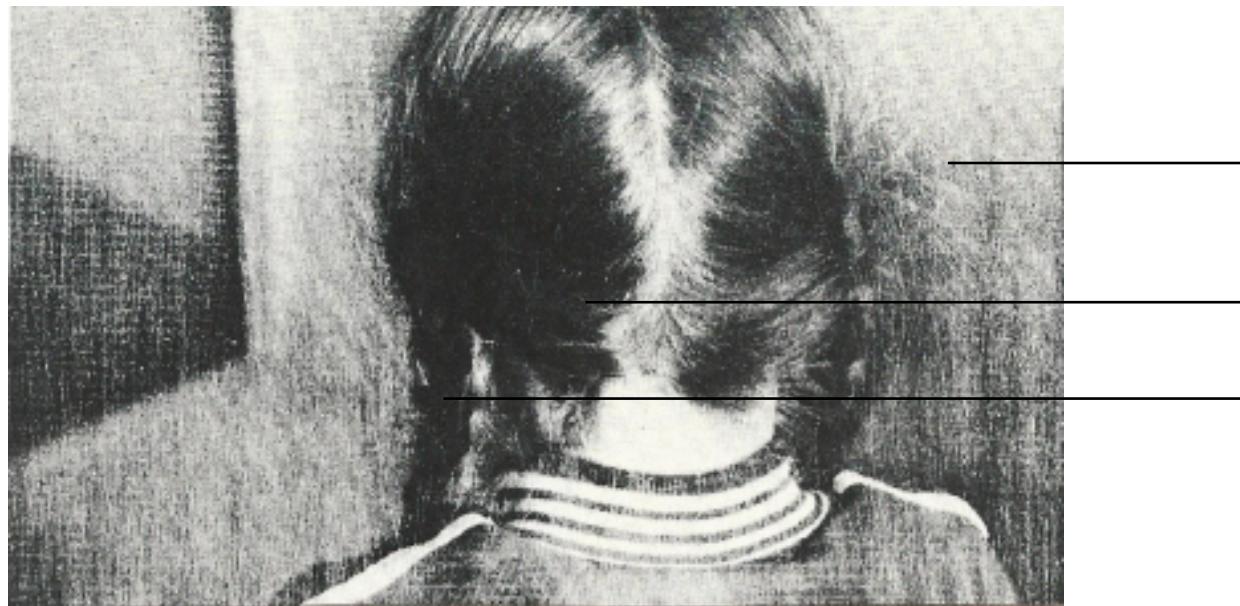


Fig. 4—A woman riding a bicycle.

Fig. 3—A young girl with braids.



wind



shield



braid





Fig. 7—An old woman and a cat. (Not pictured: Harold, that bastard whore)

old woman

cat

affection

breath—The waves, pausing, then drawing out again, sighing, coming and going unconsciously.

cabinet—No one knows that I took the position of family patriarch reluctantly. And I'll never tell anyone. I am far too proud. I have been through far too much. No one knows that I dread living here. I have dreams where she comes back to life and offers me a loving embrace and relieves me of fatherly, grandfatherly duties. She was the only one who had seen me weak, who had seen my emotions falter. She was the only one who had seen me cry. Now I dread living here. I am allergic to her clothing, to the mothballs and dust mites that have collected in her sweaters and socks and shoes. I haven't touched a thing since the day she passed. I can't forget. I treat what's left of her like family heirlooms, priceless and sentimental. I dread going into her room. I am not powerful. I am only powerful when she is my companion.
See Fig. 5

candle—“This candle, lit at Baptism as

breath

a symbol of the faith of Christ, is taken home and preserved as a cherished heirloom. In later years, it will remind the child of his/her Christian faith, its practices and obligations. On the day of First Communion, the communicant will carry this candle and take it home as a cherished possession. It will be a permanent reminder of the day when the holy sacrament was first received. Elegant, charming and practical, our wide assortment of inexpensive First Communion Candles will light up your child's First Holy Communion, help make it a happy and joyful occasion and give your guest a fun keepsake from your once in a lifetime holy celebration.” *See Fig. 6*

cat—She's my best friend, and I love her, utterly unconditionally! Her company is what I look forward to most when I wake in the morning and when I sleep at night. Her fur is as white and soft as the downy fur on a newborn child, and her pink nose is a rose in a sea of snow. She's a much better companion than Harold, that cheating slut.
See Fig. 7

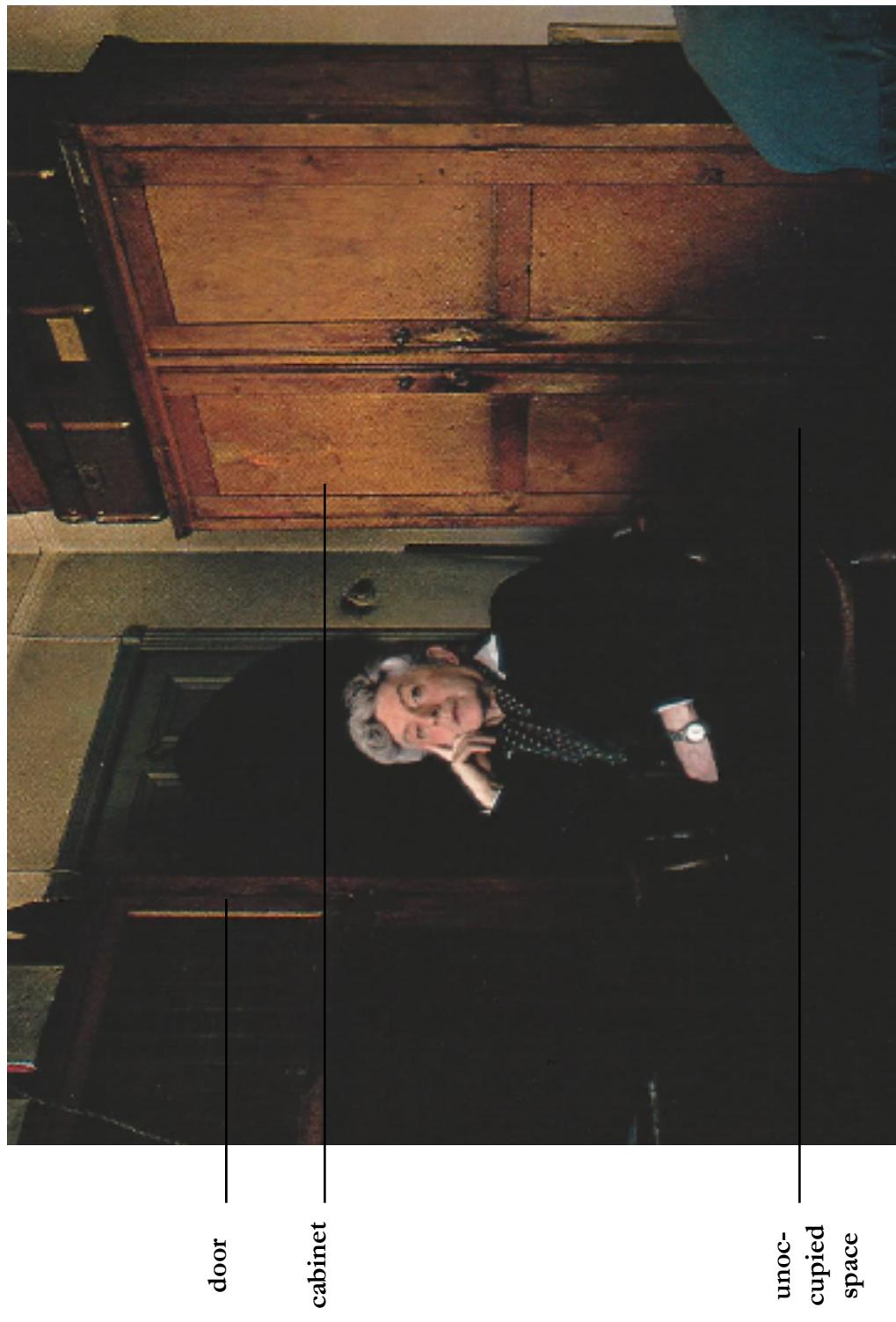


Fig. 5—An old man sitting in a room.



Fig. 6—A Christian ceremony involving candles. Like *key a communion.*

couch

couch—Rhonda would like nothing better than to be back outside in her front yard, cupping a deliciously cold bowl of frozen yogurt in her lanky hands. Her limbs, growing longer by the day, longed to be stretched, ached for the bruises and scrapes that come naturally when loving nature. But she was being forced to sit. Quietly. Inside. And she was upset. Her mother, a beautiful woman when she was being nice to Rhonda, laughed at her. She was growing older. She barely fit on the couch. She couldn't act like a petulant child for much longer. Rhonda thought "petulant" sounded like "pitiful" and she felt it was a good word to describe how she felt. She tried out the word "petulant" in her mouth. Rhonda gave her mother the silent treatment. She was learning a new word and resented her mother for making her learn when she should be outside eating yogurt and climbing. Rhonda loved her mother more than the world, but she hated her mother more than anything right then.

See Fig. 8

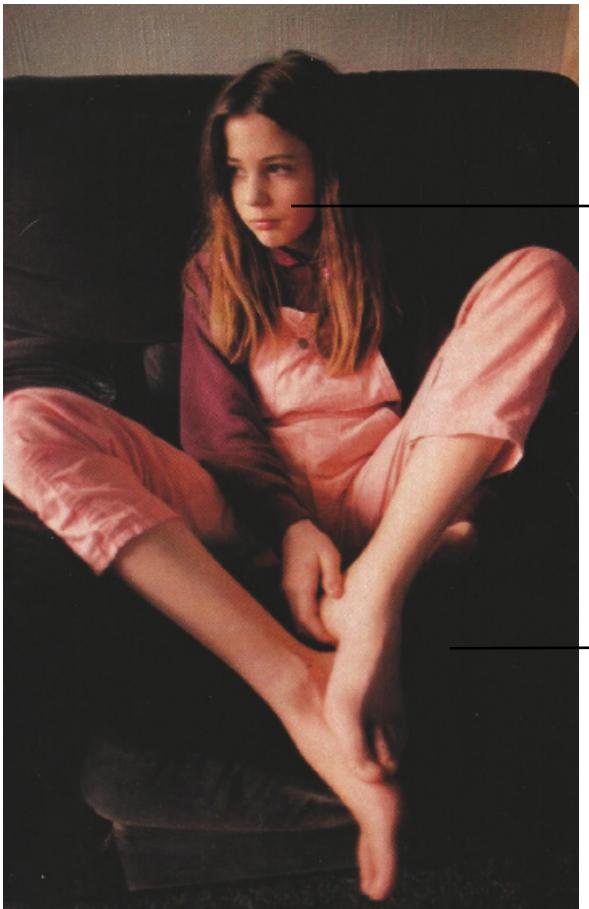


Fig. 8—A seated young girl.

petulance

couch

purity



Fig. 9—A loving herd of dogs.

dog—The light of my life. *See Fig. 9*

metro

metro—Simone was late. Derren couldn't wait to get to work. Clay confronted his claustrophobia by taking the metro for the first time in years, though was on the verge of puking. Selma realized that she had left her wallet at home. Georgia wondered if she had left the stove on, or the windows unlocked, or the children unattended, or the plants unwatered, or the bread on the table. Edith felt perfectly comfortable amongst the crowd. Lucy was trying not to cry, but everyone was staring at her, and they all knew, and they all hated her. Reynold felt ugly. Morgan didn't sleep last night and was afraid of passing out on the metro. Randall just proposed to his girlfriend, and she said no. Susanna folded out her newspaper and hoped no one would talk to her. Samuel was drunk, again. Earl wondered about the lives of everyone passing by him. Elizabeth

cradled her newborn baby and the world shone in technicolor. Justin won-

knew that wool irritated her skin, but she didn't care, because her coat was

spised her. Scott fell asleep. Benjamin pushed up his glasses and looked down at his shoes. Annie felt like she was mingling with the rich and elite. Debra found loose change in her pocket and nearly cried. Douglas didn't feel like there was a point. Evelyn was just proposed to, and she said yes. John craned his neck to get a good look at the walking woman in furs. Louise felt nothing. Charles thought everything and everyone looked fascinating and struck up a conversation with the woman reading a newspaper. Ruth forgot to eat breakfast. Earl had porridge and biscuits in the morning. Kevin was furious at his son. Marylyn tried to avoid staring at the handsome young man carrying a puppy in his lap. Christine tried to avoid staring at the beautiful young woman in blue. Solomon wondered if anyone noticed how profusely he sweat. *See Fig. 10 (above)*



dered if anyone knew that his body was secretly hideous underneath his trench coat. Ronald could feel his bald spot sweating beneath his fedora. Karen

double-breasted and camel-colored, and she felt like a million bucks. Margaret wondered why she even stayed at her job when her boss obviously de-

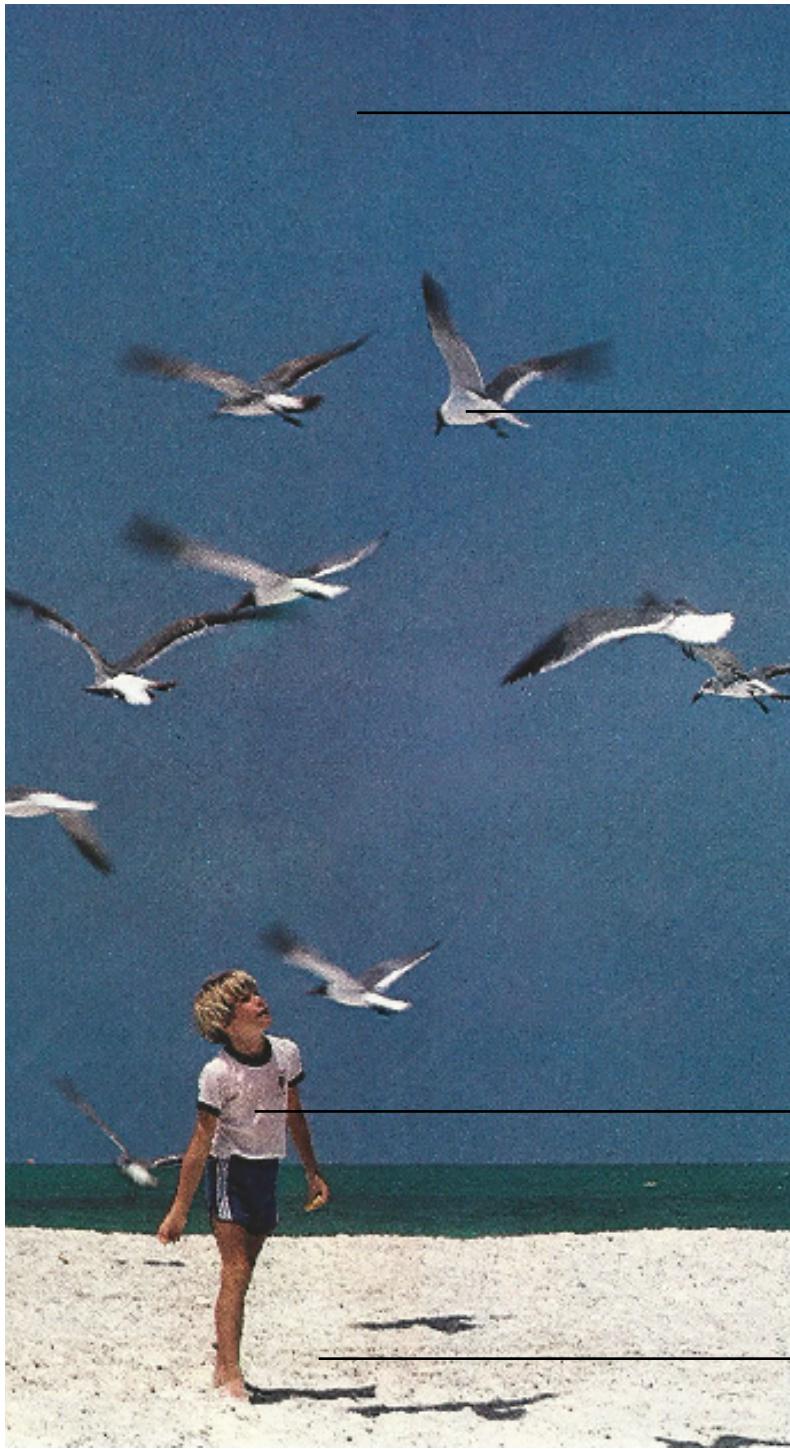


Fig. 1—A young boy playing in the sand, surrounded by birds.

sky

seagull

boy

earth

seagull—Menacingly swirling around the young boy, hair as flaxen as hay and skin as tan as autumn leaves, the bird found an object that it didn't care about, for it provided neither food nor shelter, carefully dropping its latest digested meal upon the unsuspecting boy's head. *See Fig. 11*

snow—A morning of mist and an afternoon of snow, alive and breathing in the face of industrialism, and my feet and nose are cold and wet, and I can see the top of my eyelashes turn-

ing white while the ground around me turns grey, a pallid grey, and I'm overcome with sensation and beauty and dread and bewonderment, and I am at once trying to walk home while trying stop and admire the flurries, though I know tomorrow will bring news reports of accidents and wintry poverty, yet I don't care, for it's not happening to me, and right now I cannot think of anything but how the world is conquering me, how the snow overpowers human construction, how I long to be consumed. *See Fig. 12 (below)*





