

What? Still Here?

It is, indeed, one thing
to ask *Why me?* & *Why*
have I survived?—bearing
upon the arm, at lapse
of thirty years, the camp's
tattoo, the unsolved numeral.

Another, quite, to find
oneself "alive" & "safe"
in the stupid Seventies, be-
wildered—& having waited
daily for the death felt
lurking past a grassy knoll.

—John Ditsky

The Bench of Desolation

A half-devoured crust of burger bun,
A trampled Pepsi can, at end of day
Lie near a bench where two old women sun
Themselves whose faces are completely worn away
From never being looked at. No one wants
To talk to pretty girls when thin and grey
Once-fondled ringlets hang like tarnished hopes,
And laughter's turned to dust, wit's fountains dry
That captured all the beaux on garden party lawns
In Borden's day. Their gimpy legs (the slopes
Of love too steep to climb for wrinkled Jills
Who've broke their crowns—yet wore how many hills
Out in their prime) the same old feeling haunts
. . . The wish to live a bit before they die.

—George Whipple