

Workshop inspires poem

Kavanagh's visit brought warmth, learning

By JUDITH NEFSKY
Two weeks ago, I volunteered to cover a workshop to be held by James Kavanagh at York on the weekend. It

promised to be an interesting venture — Kavanagh is an ex-priest, psychologist, encounter group leader, author of several books, and poet.

And he disliked Jonathan Livingston Seagull; we had something in common.
A flier printed by EGO (from York's

Centre for Continuing Education) stated that the subject of the workshop would be freedom from moral absolutes, the idealistic self, social oppression and sexual obsession, and freedom for friendship and love, sensuality, and creation. My curiosity was aroused.

Friday night at OISE auditorium I heard Kavanagh read some of his poetry and talk a bit in his casual manner about what seemed to be a rather hedonistic philosophy of life.

In a poem about the "easy God" of his childhood he said, "I do not weep for my sins / I have learned to love them". And he encouraged us to do the same.

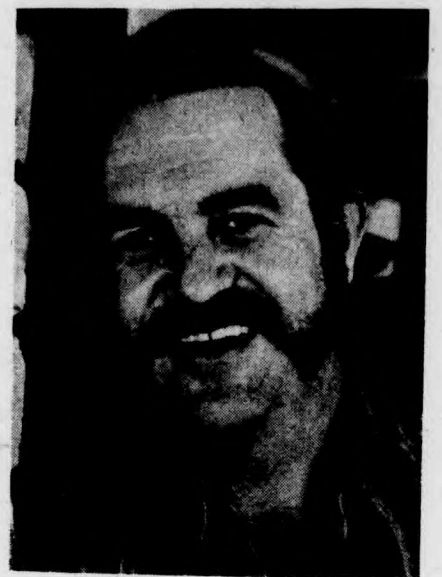
He talked about loneliness, which he described as a sort of smokescreen that prevented feelings of fear and anger from surfacing. These painful feelings, as all feelings, must be accepted without self-judgment. Pain, he said, was a condition of growth, and should not be pushed away.

It was with both anticipation and apprehension that I went to the workshop in the Ross building on Saturday morning. Realizing now that it wasn't going to be a cool intellectual discussion of freedom, I had visions of a high-pressured encounter group session.

It wasn't that either. It was a very touching experience with a group of people who within a short period of time became very close and very caring.

They had no objections to my participating in the group for the purpose of writing an article about the session. As time went on, though, I became more and more doubtful as to how I would write about this very deep sharing and learning experience.

By the time the group started reluctantly to dissolve on Sunday night, I had no idea how I was to go about it and it was suggested I forget the whole idea. Instead, I wrote a poem about the weekend with the group, which was the only way I could deal with the complex of feelings and thoughts swirling in my head.



(to my favourite permission-giver)
I've gained a wind of dimensions
in learning to tremble,
to feel the salve of tears,
to know softness
and taste the pulse of blood.

We were all glass in his magic hand,
Shattered against our walls,
Into a universe of shimmering comets.

Then body: just blood and body and breath.

Night's dark knives crept in;
Kisses on condition —
Early lovers, we're late children
Lost children looking for a sandbox.
A stranger's hand can be so nice
So unstrange — no reason for ice
In his seasonless touch,
No tomorrows to unplan:
Just now. Spread your loves on the table

And laugh.
And cry.
The chair that should have rocked
away my fear
Rocked in my reality.

Let us bathe in our common pool of tears
And learn to love the stars from here.

Feeling the wind in my veins
I'd like to take you all up
In my big balloon.
We'll laugh across the sky,
Being to be;
And we'll fly on your energy:
The love of a gentle man
For the radiants of loneliness.

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