



PROJECT MUSE®

Equation of Time

Kiffin Rockwell

Appalachian Heritage, Volume 6, Number 2, Spring 1978, pp. 20-21 (Article)

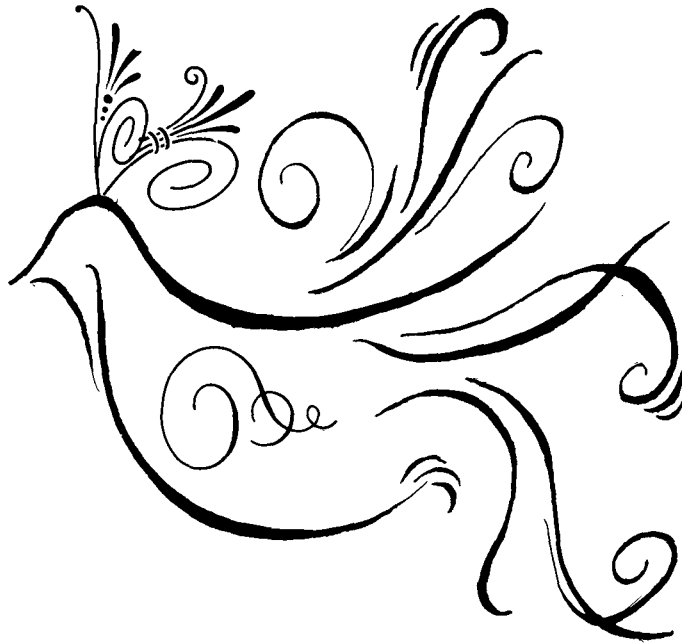
Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aph.1978.0038>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/441478/summary>



EQUATION OF TIME

by Kiffin Rockwell

When the magic carpet stops, and starts to fall,
when doves before sunrise coo like distant owls,
things clear up, time becomes tangible
concentrates, is heard and felt.

Time's not touched. It's repetition of pulse,
breath after breath, and the memory
of breath before, heart beat more or less,
irreversible periodicity:

No sense for time, unless feeling of balance
in ear's deaf coil registers a sequence,
runs, like a finger over a scar, to recall
in the instant now, fear and harmony.

* * *

Stranger, these words are not for you.
This is a note for a man named Alexander,
a scholar without pretense, a witty man
readier to smile than to spring the jest,
a modest, moderate enthusiast;
facing the ultimate. A friend.

(Before invasion)

Edged beside a flow of blinded lorries
whose drivers, lightened of shell, rolled north
and would not lift a man could they have seen him,
all night I walked from Oxford toward Banbury;
across an English field in a May dawn
came downhill to St. Mary's Farm. my billet;
slept, unmissed, unbothered, until noon.

(Between victory)

June, cold in storm, was heated with alarm.
Cramped boredom, a queasy strait, a scramble up sand.
Then, when a second weather had blown and gone,
over a Norman field I heard a skylark.

Before my time in France another soldier
not far away, facing my enemy's father,
heard and wrote such a songster in a poem,
soaring and dipping above his ravaged meadow.
And I too, in my time. Such luck is seldom.

* * *

And what I wrote of facing, is now not so.
Unless he be frozen in the least lovely frame.
(Liklier far he'd go where mind was aimed.)

For soul, whatever it is, is closer to real
than fear, pain, or joys that loom and go.
Time fixed is eternity, the cadence held.
Man is the fact. Some few worth their while.