Fall 1979

Greeter

Gary Fincke

GREETER

The hello man draws tourists to him. He greets couples
in double time or a small crowd of girls who gape, re-
membering too late the cameras in their rooms. A group
of boys splits as he approaches, and he pivots, addressing
each one, meeting their eyes somehow as they pass. They
are happy; they keep him fit for the summer's challenge.
No stranger in town has passed without welcome. He has
a record to preserve as he strides to meet them. "Hello"
and "hello" and "hello" again, a boy running, unable to
dodge. He is pleased but alert; he remembers his
failure, the man he passed without greeting. When he
fell, he was surprised how hot the sidewalk felt on his
face. There was no point in opening his eyes. The boot
met his head like he knew it would; he was punished. The
cement smoldered and he moaned, the hands working at his
pocket. When an umbrella of faces covered the sun, he
looked for a boot that would fit his head and cried.
"Hello" he whispered to the nearest face. Penitent,
he repeated "hello," seeking forgiveness and grace, the
heat still working at his skull. He would not be
indifferent again; the town would love him, his greeting
welcomed like a natural treasure.