Child-Artist

Aslant, beside his easel,
his slight, tough fist holding
the long brush, bright with color.
The child looks deep
into the special reality
of his small life. Scribble
and line, fat and lean reds and
blues, a gash of black
like a frightened bird and then
a slender shape of pity.—

"Compulsive, orderly home;
the art worrisome, careful, detailed"—
"many erasures." A "lonely child" . . .

"Like an explosion
in a paint factory" the
yellows and greens, great lines
of purple and orange,
now black and a creamy brown.
The blossoming becomes,
strangely (for us) a face,
a house, and beaming brightly
above—a resplendent Mandala.

Some say primordial, the
"event" of his picture-making,
his symbols, his tensions
flow boldly tracking
Paint, pencil like
a missile guidance system.
With great finesse.

Built into his schemes
the keen observer finds
unmitigated joy, finds
confusion, organization,
jealousy, hostility, hatred
release . . .

A ship is burning. But
there are no passengers,
or they are hidden. A house
collapses. Is everyone killed?
The emotional pattern
is strewn with derelicts
of imagination, whirls of feeling,
stick-men, fantasy—
perhaps unbearable motor pleasure.

this special life,
this bowl of love,
this outpouring—

Paint that sings and
line that is helpless—
Strange, difficult movers
of children in joy, in pain.

Art that ever was,
for love's sake and all . . .

LORETTA WHITEHEAD

December 1966