

THE IDOL SPRING 1976



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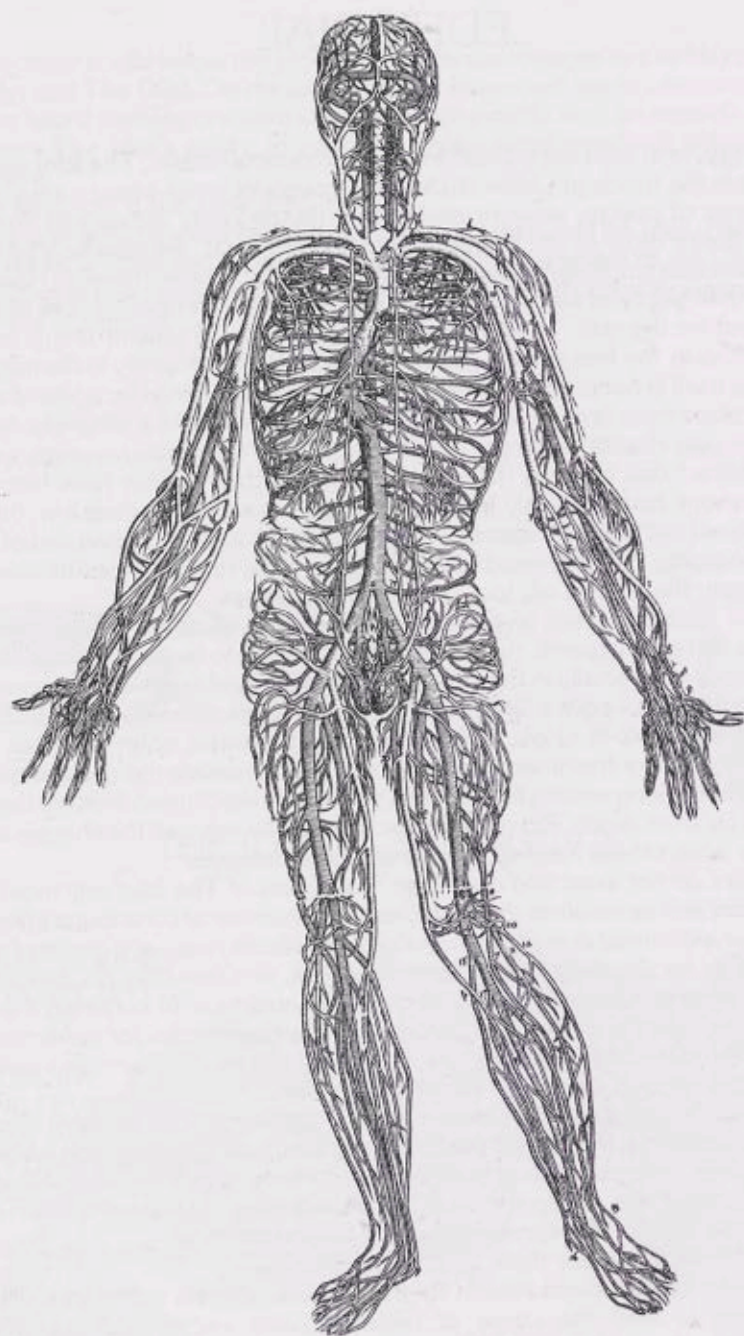
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EDITORIAL

Not surprisingly, or at least not without a certain amount of reason, **The Idol** seems to occupy a rather hazy place in the minds of Union students. A couple of times a year a small magazine, filled with peculiar pieces of poetry, artwork and prose, mysteriously appears at strategic locations around campus. Since most of the copies eventually disappear, we assume that they are indeed taken back to the various student abodes and digested, like ant poison, therein. (How many students actually do more than glance at some of the artwork and take in the opening lines of a poem or two is another matter, but we digress). The practice of writing editorials (ahem) seems to have died out, perhaps significantly, in the late sixties, which adds a further anonymity to the magazine's origins.

The magazine itself is not our only source of occupation. Readings by poets of varying degrees of obscurity take place from time to time, though the combination of a generally disinterested student body and our own chaotic attempts at publicity usually guarantees a pretty small audience—which does not detract one bit from the fact that some of the readings have been fantastic. The student-run workshops have certainly had their high points as well as their low, but perhaps they wouldn't have petered out toward the end of the year as much as they did had we bothered to advertise our habit of engaging in stark-naked body massages while reciting beautiful poems of exquisite eroticism. We supply the peanut oil, too. But again we digress.

The charge of elitism is often leveled against **The Idol**, sometimes fairly, sometimes not. It seems to us that a literary magazine run by students is bound to be perceived as elitist by the very nature of its existence—especially in this heyday of television and rampant functional illiteracy, and particularly at an educational edifice like Union which continues to relegate its handful of artists and writers to a small and dimly-lit closet in the cellar. (On a positive note, however, the impending reinstatement of mandatory freshman composition should improve the general quality of writing around campus, and the long waiting lists for the creative writing courses indicate that the interest in writing at Union is far from dead). But perhaps the best way to stave off the charges of elitism on our own part is to see what others have said in similar circumstances:

*The editors do not want two and three man issues of **The Idol** any more than do these critics. We want just as much as they to increase the number of contributors from ten to fifty or a hundred. But we cannot dredge up material for publication out of a group of men who never set pen to paper for anything but routine classwork, or when they do, produce writing that would under no circumstances appeal to a student audience. In confining the material in an issue to the work of five or six men, we are not selecting articles for publication out of large quantities of submitted material. We are compelled to rely on a very few writers to give us enough to make up two sixty-page issues a semester.*

Whether or not there has ever been a literary tradition at Union, there is none now. If the phrase means anything, it means a tradition handed down by more than a handful of men to express the campus mind that distinguishes Union from any other college. When such a tradition has existed at Union, we do not know. It certainly does not exist now when only a few men write, and those few hardly represent the whole student mind.

The year: 1931; **The Idol**, a mere three years old.

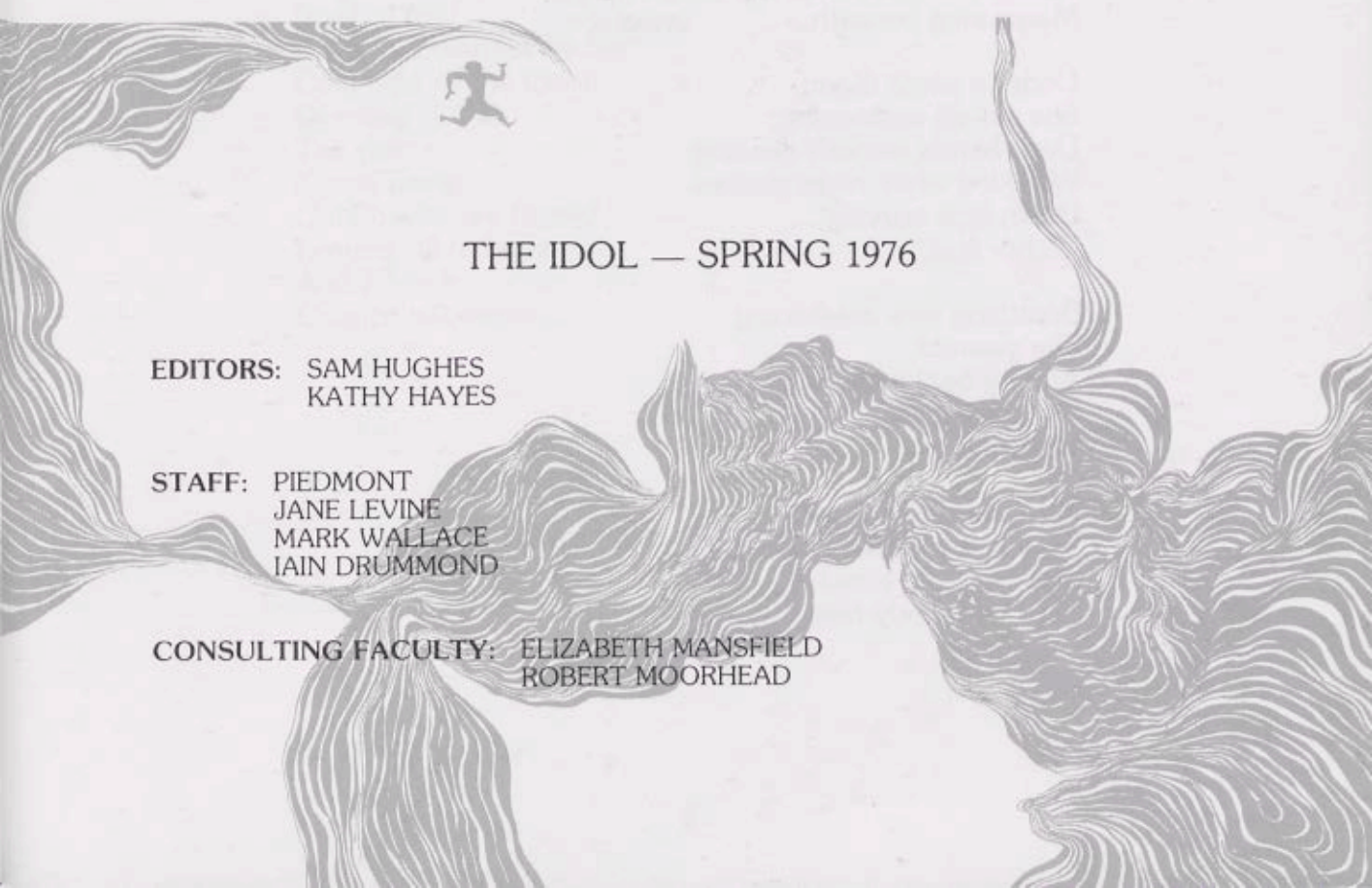
Those same editors also found reason to grouse about certain professors who do nothing to help the cause of undergraduate writing and everything to hinder it Some men who are suppose to take an interest in student efforts refuse to suscribe to

The Idol because it falls below the standards set by such magazines as **Harper's**, **The Atlantic Monthly**, and **The Dial**. On the face of it, that statement seems almost ridiculous. Yet the editors have heard cavilling criticism which indicate exactly such an attitude. Any observation that discovers **The Idol's** failure to approach professional standards is too obtuse for more comment here.

Forty-five years later, but if the shoe fits...

But we have probably rambled on long enough. This, then, is **The Idol**. Perhaps herein lies a statement of sorts by a small and probably unrepresentative segment of the Union College community in the Spring of this twisted year, 1976. On the other hand probably even that is carrying it too far. But here it is anyway.

S.M.H.



THE IDOL — SPRING 1976

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Mohawk Madness

The frozen river sat cold, wanting
A cloud break,
The sun to rake her surface clean.

The months were grey, while under she lay scratching,
Fingernails furious,
Up at the dead white.

Too long she had rested,
Before the sun tested the gurgling rage
Murmuring beneath unseen:

Under a silent moon
She sat up undressing;
Dark hands smooth pushing
Wrinkled white night clothes
Down hips curving
To her feet.

Breathing new awakening
She yawned,
Arming banks muddy,
Sighing a flow,
Unleashed;

She trod white grapes
With black passion dancing
Barefoot wild about
Her black body free.

She set men to a scurry
Flailing their arms, failing
To wrap up lives
No time
For silverware,

For knitting left on the couch,
No time
To say a word
To the child watching barefoot
The water
Creeps under the kitchen door,
Chills the toes of the kitchen table
Bowl of fruit
shocked colorless by the
Cold light of the moon
Draining all but
The rise
Keeps rising
Until backs are turned
Leaving all to hope
And a black
Chance awakening.

Iain Drummond

The Lovers in the Next Room

They lie in their room
this moment, her legs
twined around his chest
the way a lightening struck tree
folds in on itself; her bathrobe
draped around them, receiving
her shoulders, warding off the chill.

I listen outside their door
knowing the arching, the pushing
will be told tomorrow
across the kitchen table.
She will blush as she tells
it, puffing her chest like a hen.

Someday I will steal
into their room, into their
soggy love nest, watch them turn,
burrow into each other,
having been finally found out, flailing
lines crossed and recrossed,
angles pointing to no logical reason.

Kathy Hayes



THE SAMURAI

Jody Green

It is said that many many years ago an old man of the merchant class lived with his family in a small town near Tokyo, then Edo. The Monkey has given up its region on the year over twenty times since then but this tale lives on because it has never ended.

The old man, known as Hiroki, had a wife and two sons, Ichiro and Itaru. Hiroki was a dealer of teas and was highly respected by the people of his village for his kindness and his reverence to the Buddha. Hiroki and his family lived a good life together, but Hiroki regreted he was not born a Samurai so that he could give that honor to his sons whom he loved so dearly.

One year, the village had been especially prosperous and in turn Hiroki's shop did well. Both Ichiro and Itaru were beginning to have hair darken on their faces and Hiroki decided that they were old enough to make the journey to Edo. The boys rejoiced for they had heard so much of those bustling streets, theaters, and many entertainments and they were so filled with excitement that they could not concentrate on their work in the shop.

"Itaru! You have been working on that same batch of leaves since dawn. Where are your wits my son?" Hiroki would call. "Ichiro, you have placed the green canister beside the orange—that will not do. Please, we have six more days until we leave for Edo. Please try to do your chores."

Both boys tried, but one moment they would be looking at the tea leaves they had to separate, and the next they would be visualizing the tea houses of Edo. The day for departure came none too soon, for their mother found she could not get them to eat one grain of rice, and she was very worried. Finally, the day arrived, and the father and his sons set out on the day-long walk to Edo.

The sun rose in the sky as they traveled, two prancing fawns and the stately stag. The dirt road passed through the rice paddies and neighbors called out:

"Hiroki, so this is the day your sons see Edo?"

"Do not let Itaru and Ichiro near the geisha, they will not want to return to their mother. Ha!"

"The Kami have given you a fine day for journeying. I believe there is a cool breeze at your backs."

Hiroki returned their greetings but did not stop to talk. There were many hills and rivers between his town and the city. All day long the sun smiled down on Hiroki and his happy sons, and remained with them until they were close enough to see the lantern lights in Edo. In the outskirts of the city, Hiroki found a clean, small inn where he and his weary Itaru and Ichiro could pass the dark hours. They ate an evening meal of fish and rice, and after praying to the Buddha, fell fast asleep on soft feather-stuffed mats.

The sun slipped in and nudged the boys awake. As soon as they remembered where they were, there was no quieting them until they had roused their father and were out into the streets. So many things to feast their eyes upon: bright shops with ducks and fish, shops where the singing insects of the field were sold in tiny cages, shops where many colours of paper were sold, and tea shops like Hiroki's. They saw rickshaws and women wearing many layers of kimonos, each slightly shorter than the one beneath to make rustling rainbows.

As they walked through the overflowing markets, they entered into the entertainment quarter of the city. It took Hiroki a while to realize where he was, but by the time he did it was too late.

"Bunraku! Oh look Father, a puppet theater!"

Both boys clamored so to see those puppets which they had heard of for many many years. Hiroki, who too had never seen Bunraku puppets, although he himself carved other kinds of puppets, finally agreed. Once inside the crowded theater they sat upon straw mats and faced a wide stage. The show began and the first puppet moved onto the stage.

Hiroki gasped, and Itaru and Ichiro froze their eyes upon it. The puppet was beautiful: its face was that of a young brave man, and his brilliant clothing revealed him to be of the Samurai class. Three men, hooded and dressed in black supported the wooden man.

"Who are those men?", asked Hiroki of a man nearby.

"They are the puppeteers. They manipulate the doll and give it life. You will soon forget that they are there."

Soon enough, Hiroki and his sons forgot about the men, they forgot about everything except the young man who proved himself over and over again to be a true Samurai. They watched him carry his aged father out of a fire, fight against incredible odds for the emperor, and sacrifice his own young son's life in accordance to the honor code to preserve peace in the realm. (So honorable was he, so true, and so courageous!) He was kind too, and loved the small creatures of nature—a true follower of Buddha! When the performance ended and the young warrior became a limp wooden doll again Hiroki in awe asked the man beside him. "And the puppeteers who make the puppet a Samurai, these men, they are Samurai also?"

"No they are but artisans, not much more than actors."

"How then," whispered Hiroki, "how then do they together, the three of them, create such a man?"

"As with all that the Buddha teaches, it is unity of thought and motion. Most important, it is said, they breathe together."

With moist eyes, Hiroki and his sons left the theater. Try as they might, for the rest of the day they could not leave behind the magic of the puppet. Itaru kept repeating, "He was not a puppet, he was alive!" Ichiro would answer, "The puppeteers did not manipulate the doll, the doll manipulated them. Did you not see how the men were almost dragged along with the motions of the Samurai?" Hiroki could only mumble, "A Samurai made of common men!"

The next morning they awoke before the sun. Without speaking, each made ready his belongings, and the father and sons still with eyes as round as full lotus flowers prepared to return home. On their way out of the city, Hiroki stopped to buy brocades and silks. He chose gold and silver for the thicker cloth and for the fine he chose the colours of cherry blossoms, sunsets, and the noonday sky. Once outside Edo and on the road to the village, the three sets of feet fell into the same rhythm, the three sets of arms swung the same pattern and the three chests heaved in unison.

They passed through the rice paddies before sundown and the neighbors cried out:

"Welcome back, Hiroki!"

"Tell us about Edo, Hiroki!"

But Hiroki did not stop to tell them, and he and his sons walked on saying only, "Greetings, neighbors." When they reached their small home, Hiroki's wife ran out to welcome her family.

"Husband, I did not expect you to return today, I will prepare more rice. How was your journey?"

"My good wife, Itaru, Ichiro, and I have much to do—I will tell you all later."

Hiroki and his sons went to the back room of the shop. There, Hiroki had many blocks of soft wood from which he carved tea canisters. The old man and each son sat down, each with some wood, and began to carve. The woman returned with a tray on which she had placed three bowls of rice, chopsticks, and a lamp. She picked up her samisen and played quietly and sweetly in the corner. Her two sons were too enthralled in their wood to look up, but Hiroki, hearing his wife's music looked

up and smiled tenderly. The rice became cold and the woman knew she could not press them to eat. She began to sing old songs and tales of deeds and honor, and her husband and sons worked all the more fervently. The night entered and mingled with the music and lamplight. Soon the woman saw forms emerging from the blocks. The men were carving human heads. They scraped and scraped the soft wood, forming the forehead and next the cheekbones. Late into the night three noses were completed and eyes were curved and softened. As dawn approached, lips were carved and smoothed. The woman thought she recognized a fisherman, and two farmers in the carvings. Without a word, Hiroki picked up a hatchet and split the wooden skull twice, threw the four pieces into a corner and then said, "Dawn is near and so are customers. Let us make our shop ready." Both Itaru and Ichiro chopped up their carving and placed the pieces in the same corner. The old woman, not understanding, got up to make morning tea.

Soon the people entered the shop saying, "Hiroki, you must be tired from your long journey." Hiroki smiled and answered, "Yes, I am tired." All day the woman watched her sons and husband stare at nothing, needing to be spoken to several times before they would answer. "Husband, what is it? Why is it like you have not yet returned from Edo?" He could only answer, "You will know all soon," for he was visualizing a most beautiful face, a face whose lines and hollows were those of great courage and honor.

The sun went down but Ichiro and Itaru did not notice. They had passed the day doing those chores which were necessary, and then staring into their plans between work. Their mother managed to get them to eat some rice, but she did not believe that they were aware that they had. Hiroki closed the door behind the last customer, and he and his sons again went into the back room. The women went to the house and returned with more oil for the lamp. Again, the night was spent with the sounds of scraping and the samisen. As the morning approached, the wife saw that these heads were not those of common men but puppet heads of Samurai. The lines were more refined and the eyes and noses finer. Again, Hiroki chopped up his carving at dawn and again his sons followed his actions.

Hiroki and his sons had failed to prepare the shop for the day, but opened its door anyway. This day, the customers mumbled to themselves and exclaimed. "What disease has Hiroki and his sons caught in Edo?" Finally, one man said to Hiroki, "For two nights a lamp has burned into the dawn in your shop." Hiroki replied, "It is difficult to see at night without a lamp." Many times, Hiroki did not hear a customer's request and the person would leave the shop angrily. This distressed Hiroki's wife, but she knew her husband would not hear the word which she might speak to him.

Evening came and again Hiroki, Itaru and Ichiro were carving. This night, however, their strokes were much slower, much smoother. They worked upon the wood as if they were caressing the face of a loved one. When late night became early morning Hiroki's wife noticed that her husband and sons grimaced as if in pain as they gently worked the wood. She thought, "It looks as if they are giving birth and these are their labor pains." She fell asleep at her samisen and when she awoke she saw three most beautiful heads. Itaru's carving was of a brave and dignified Samurai, Ichiro had formed a young jubilant hero, but Hiroki—Hiroki had mixed his sons' faces with the lines of a Samurai. The head needed no body, it was a god's head. The grain of the wood looked as soft as a young girl's skin and was the colour of honeyed ivory. The face reflected truth, kindness, and courage and through the wood shone a wisdom. The face was that of the truest Samurai. This was the head which they chose.

The shop did not open that day. Hiroki, to whom puppet making was not foreign, knew how to make the moving parts. He worked in a glow and made eyes which opened and shut, eyebrows which expressed the most complicated of emotions, and a mouth to open and close around the words the Samurai would speak.

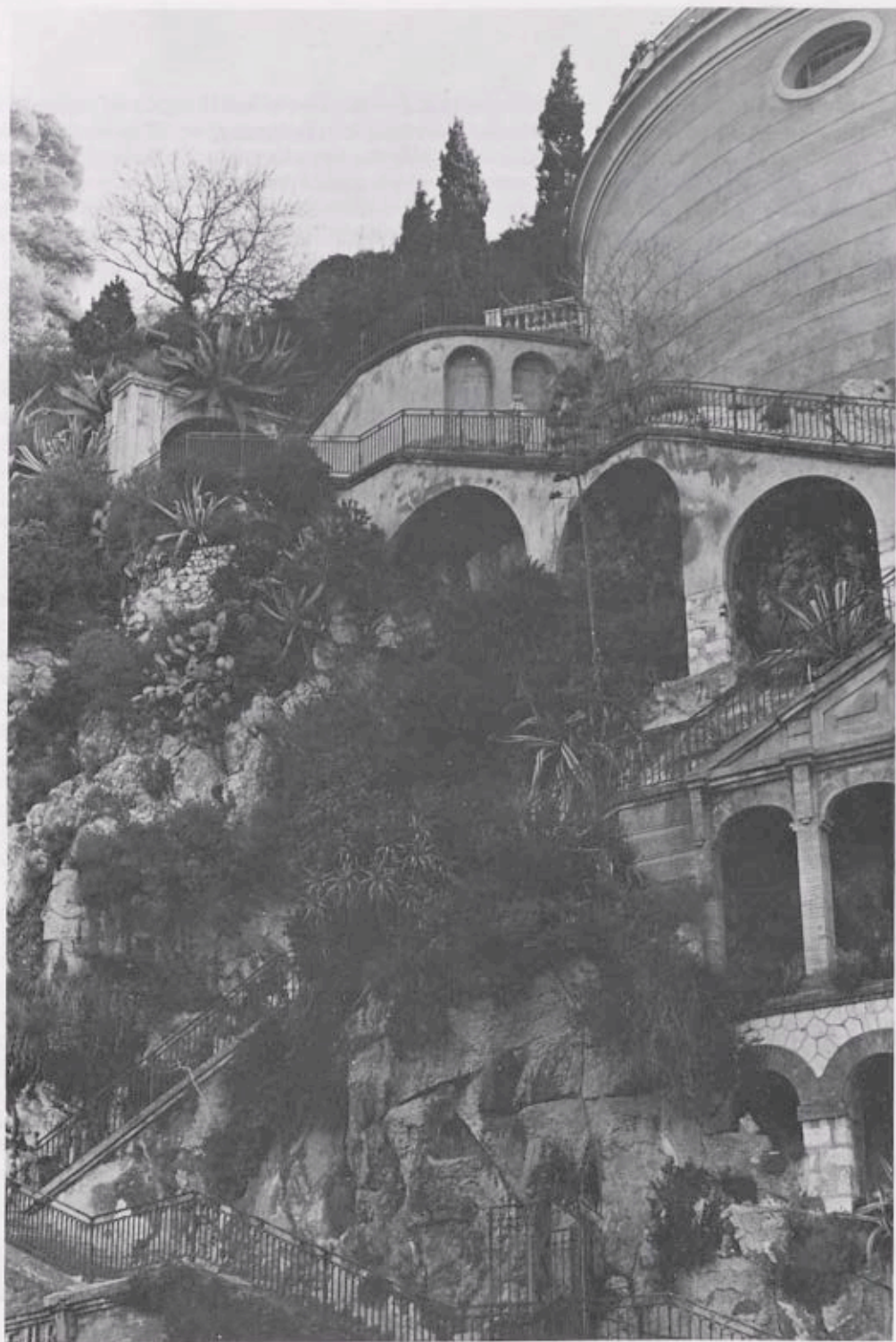
The woman now understood. She took the cloths which Hiroki had bought and began to sew. Itaru and Ichiro began to make the body which would wear the clothes and would move the Samurai through his world. By midnight, Hiroki had finished with the movable parts and began to paint in the fine features. The eyes were deep wells of amber in which the knowledge of life was contained. The mouth could smile shyly, frown in concentration, and taste the sweet fruits of summer. As Hiroki finished the painting, his wife handed him long shining black hair from her own ungraying head. Hiroki closed his eyes and smiled for he now knew his wife understood all. By morning each part was completed and ready to be put together. The eyes, eyebrows, mouth, and wrists were strung with silken cord and a pole connected the arms and legs to the delicate head. The wife came forward with the clothing and dressed the puppet. He was dazzling! So beautiful was he that tears flowed freely from all of the family. The Buddha as he reached nirvana must have looked as he did.

Hiroki was first too timid to touch the little man, but soon could not resist, and hugged the exquisite creature with joy. Itaru and Ichiro fell into their positions next to their father and began to move the puppet, to breathe life into him. Hiroki said, "Good Wife, we will need black cloaks and hoods. . . ." "I will begin now, dear husband," she replied. The father and his sons pulled each string lovingly, gently, and moved the puppet in each way possible. "Now we will begin," stated Hiroki, and the puppet became a Samurai; he walked, he danced, he fought. His movements were more perfect than temple dancers'. All through the day and night they worked the Samurai, made him laugh, sigh, love, cry. When morning came again, the hoods and cloaks were ready. Hiroki said "Good Wife, tell our friends to come to the fountain, to come see Bunraku. Tell them to hurry, our Samurai is impatient." The woman went and gathered her neighbors in the center of the village, by the fountain and waited. Soon the three hooded figures of her family appeared with the puppet in a sack. The village people sighed and sang in anticipation. Hiroki brought the puppet out of its shrouding and the people hushed.

The young Samurai was even more beautiful in the sunlight. He sparkled and his clothing was brighter than the colours of the day. Hiroki, Itaru, and Ichiro were in their places and they began. The Samurai awoke. He moved before the townspeople with more grace than flying geese or swans upon a lake. When the Samurai smiled the audience felt a warmth spring up inside them, and when he was brave they believed there was no opponent that he could not conquer. The peoples' hearts now beat with his every action, and their eyes flooded at his will. For three long hours they sat perfectly still and watched this man of men. The performance drew to its conclusion, but the puppet did not stop. Hiroki's wife called to her husband that that was enough, but her sons and their father could not end the Samurai's motions.

The Samurai pulled towards the mountains and Hiroki, Itaru, and Ichiro had to follow. The warrior pulled with more strength and the three men went faster towards the hills. Hiroki's wife screamed and ran after them, pulling at the cloaks, trying to free her family, but the Samurai was going too fast now. She followed them out of the village and up into the steep faces of the mountains.

Hiroki and his family never returned to their home. The tea shop was left untouched for many years for the villagers thought a demon might dwell within. It is said that even today, if one wanders up in the mountains near the village he can see a most perfect Samurai manipulating three hooded men, and if one sends his voice deep between the rocks the echo will return as a woman's voice singing old tales of valor.



Serenade

Her white arms, bare
in the glow of the porcelain lamp
His black hair waved
chin resting on wood

She closed her eyes
Fingers running over the white and black
Her pale dress draped in lovely folds,
moving slightly

She watched her lovely fingers
He watched his.

Terese Cohen



The Cliff Divers

(for SR)

“Dios Mio!
the cliffs are high, amigo,
see how far out...”

their legs settle,
the brown and white
faces are deserts on TV;
a small leap, a short flight—
good luck
to hang in midair
to flash
like a monster pelican
after fish
downed into a porpoise—
walk again as a man.

‘I think they’re
crazy Anna.
You’ll never catch me
doing that.’

‘Could I have another
stinger please...

they are awfully
macho, though.’

Two little ones,
brown, silt warm skin
softly framed, hollow
sucking eyes.
Run, I don't know
where, in the city—
hitch their pants,
blink while
panhandling sleek Yankee women, watch the divers
on hard sunny days.

"I will be a diver
when I am older amigo.
Look how that Yankee woman
drools.
Surely a diver is better
than begging
or making poses for post cards
or polishing an infinity of silver
belt buckles.
Yankee women would buy me
automobiles and shiny
sunglasses
if I were a diver."

identical cousins
different only by
name
and one broken
tooth.

hanging
 watching pebbles and crags
drift by
 three or four days it seems
to look
 then tuck into a
 water bullet!
SHOCK at the fingertips
through the body
shuddering and the throb
faint, barely felt
of the trapped sea—
the heart pounds
to make up for lost
time in flight;
2 or three seconds.

Darkness, and Acapulco
don't mix,
light froths and bubbles—
seltzer shot into scotch.
Fish swim on their heads
in desert sand,
owls hunt them
under the sun.
night is a light dome:
for pleasure to be found—
for tourists.

two small dark ones
(not tourists)
climb among invisible black
cliffs lunging and they retreat
circle wide and climb again
in the espresso night
hearing the organs at mass
their eyes shaded
but glittering

One, eager, skins his shin
blind in the night
but sure of his wings.
The other: twisted stomach
ashamed—shamed into inching
on all fours, dry
mouth licking his tongue.
The Yankee women should
have heard it
rasp on that sheared tooth
waiting to dive.

.

On the patio sipping,
the white woman
attentively—
his thighs glisten
a stomach can be
woven of dark twisted
cords.
sponsor bought swimsuits
keep him flexed and dressed
formally.

The woman unconsciously amuses,
raping the flesh of his living
with her eyes.
His teeth gleam as he smiles
like a star-lit
night in shiny sunglasses
and only one tooth is broken.

Piedmont

RIE

Ray
VOLAIL S

POU

PO

PIG

CAN

CAII

COQ

LAPI

DINE

escalop
roti

!
NON
EXPOSITION



Demi-Gr

P S
FREIN
Cole



Occasional Images

Some days I am like
the ghost of my mother's
voice, ringing at the other
end of the phone, whining,
plying with words borrowed
from a greeting card.

Her hands are like mine
only softer, folds of flesh
around her knuckles
like the dough of the cookies
she hated to bake.

She wears her red hair
in permanent copper waves
still bouncing and giggling
when she tosses her head
like a girl.

Runs in the stockings
of the tired teenage mother,
dresses too tight while the
daughter hones her body into
hard angles; sharp.
Their faces, like twins looking
into distorted mirrors,
one open, vacant, one trying
to avoid the other.

The shadow of a cord
slices through our conversation
marking the distance, connecting
the two ends; the ghost of her
voice still waits in one corner.

Kathy Hayes



THE FRENCH SOLDIER'S FIANCEE

John Hanson

When Francois Marceau awoke on the morning of 1 April 1809, he was no longer confronted with the decision that had been constantly on his mind for the past few weeks. In the post that morning came a call to arms from the Paris consulate. At twenty three years old Francois Marceau did not know why he had been conscripted so late. Of course, he hadn't asked; he preferred to remain quiet and let his presence go unheeded by the French officials.

But in the weeks before the notice came, he became less and less repelled by the idea of going to war. All of his acquaintances had left long ago, save those that were unfit to fight. Also there were some definite advantages in enlisting. A soldier in a successful battle could expect fame and was almost guaranteed a good governmental job in the future. And defending the country really was his duty as a Frenchman. His fiancée and her well-to-do father had pointed that out the previous evening. So when the notice came in the post that morning, Francois Marceau didn't have to ponder about enlisting any longer. He filled out the form from the consulate. Yes he would enlist instead of waiting for the conscription date. It would mean perhaps leaving a few days earlier and returning a few days later, but certainly this way it would be more honorable.

Francois Marceau left for Danzig, Prussia in the middle of June, 1809. He had had only two months of training prior to leaving France, but there was no time for further exercises. The trip was long and tedious. Most of the travelling was done in horse drawn carts filled to capacity with soldiers. The rest was done on foot. Francois Marceau talked little with the others. He spent most of his time sitting on the hard floor of the cart, smoking cigarettes and staring out between the planks at the scenery going by. Sometimes he would look out the back of the cart at the line of soldiers and horses travelling the long road that would someday take him back to France.

The soldiers arrived in Danzig 11 July. The city had been in French occupation for two years at that time, and there was no longer any resistance. The people walked the streets and paid little attention to the French soldiers. Every one had grown accustomed to living in an occupied city.

Francois Marceau stepped down out of the cart. He stood about five feet ten inches with his boots on. A three week beard covered the lower part of his boyish face and his dark curly hair was almost back to its previous length. His uniform fit well, and although it was dirty the brass buttons shone off the sun. He carried his musket in his right hand; his left was in the pocket of his trousers. He stood in the Prussian street and lifted his eyes to the sky. It was a cloudless day, and the sun was bright and warm. The weather had been good; it usually is during the summer in Prussia.

While in Danzig, Francois Marceau was assigned to the docks on the Vistula river delta. It was a fairly menial job, nothing to be done. The British had blockaded the Baltic sea from all vessels except their own, and France, having no navy to speak of, was unable to send in supplies. Even neutral nations were kept from trading by the British fleets. So Danzig, once a great trading city was slowly dying as its lifeline was shut off. And Francois Marceau saw it. He spent most of his days sitting in the idle local bar, listening to the old dock hands tell stories. He knew that they were dying too. Their life and their tradition were both disappearing. Eventually, he got to know them well, and he became attached to them. Except for them, he had no friends in Danzig. As they told their sad stories, his mind would wander back, eight hundred miles back, to France and his fiancée.

Each night after talking and listening to the dock hands, he would return to his room which was his home. It was a converted lodge which held four men in a room. Once a fine hotel for visitors arriv-

ing in Danzig, it was now a common shelter for soldiers. The bar room on the ground floor used to be alive with singing and merrymaking; it now lay dormant, silent and dusty, the wine cabinets empty. Francois Marceau would sometimes sit at one of the tables, alone in the deserted bar room. He would light a candle and watch the shadows quietly dance on the walls. A small glass beer stein sat on the counter top: it probably hadn't been touched since the French occupation started. No one cared. He would look at it, in the flickering light, until the candle died.

The correspondence to his fiancée while he was in Danzig was limited. Most of the letters were lost in the mail. He thought about her every night. Every time he closed his eyes to sleep she would drift into his imagination. He could see her running on the beaches of Normandy, splashing in the chilly surf, her hair blown by the wind. He could see her in her long white and black dress sitting in the gardens of her father's villa. He would hear her petite voice calling him again and again. All these things he imagined as he drifted off to sleep.

Time passed slowly for Francois Marceau. The change of seasons seemed to take forever. The summer eventually passed into the harsh winter where the days were short, the nights cold. Four feet of snow feel that year smothering the seaside town of Danzig. But the winter faded. And somehow, two years went by.

It was the winter of 1812. Francois Marceau sat at a table in the local bar with the dock hands. He had come to know the room well. No detail of the wooden floor or the dimly lit rafters had escaped his inspection. He was familiar with every knot in the tables and every scuff mark on the counter. Likewise he knew every detail of the dock hands with whom he spent each evening. On that particular night, one of the old sailors was telling a story. Francois Marceau was deep in thought, not paying attention to the old man. Outside the snow fell steadily as a dark figure came to the bar door. As the door opened, Francois Marceau snapped out of his dreams and looked at the French soldier who had just walked in. The soldier silently beckoned to his compatriot. Francois Marceau shot an uncertain glance at his friends. He followed the soldier out into the snow. It was a message from the Danzig commander General Devout. The Emperor of France had arrived in Danzig. Henceforth Francois Marceau would train to prepare to join the French forces in the Russian campaign. Furthermore, the Emperor would be occupying the hotel where Francois Marceau had been staying for two and a half years and all the soldiers would be moved to another location.

As Francois Marceau walked back to his room that night he felt a mixture of emotions. He was angry. He was angry at the fact that he'd be leaving Danzig, for he had come to believe his only duty was there. He felt cheated in that he still had some work to do. It seemed to him that his time was served. But of course, it was useless to argue. He would go to invade Russia, like it or not. Even in his anger however, Francois Marceau felt somewhat awed. He would fight alongside the great emperor, and he knew the French would win again. Here was his chance to be a hero in the greatest war of all time.

When Francois Marceau reached the hotel after receiving the notice he heard great commotion from inside. It sounded as if there was a party. Outside, a white horse was tied to a post. Someone was guarding it. Francois Marceau was questioned before he entered the hotel and he was told to gather his belongings and come back outside. As he packed his few clothes he could hear singing in the downstairs bar room. Before leaving, he glanced in the open door of the room where he used to sit alone. It was filled with men in uniform. They were drinking wine and telling jokes. They were officers of the French forces. Francois Marceau noticed that the small beer stein no longer sat on the counter top. Instead it was on a table, filled with red wine. He looked at the misfit for a second before he noticed the man standing on the same table. While making a toast to the boisterous French officers, the man's heel knocked over the beer stein. It smashed on the floor, the red wine staining the wood. No one seemed to notice. The man on the table was Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Francois

Marceau regarded him for an instant, then turned and left the hotel.

The training for the invasion was hard. Francois Marceau had been used to doing things as he pleased, but when training started he was strictly disciplined. He had to wake up early and go to sleep early. He had to exercise, target practice and train with hundreds of other men who would invade Russia. To himself he cursed and complained, but no one knew. And when the summer arrived and the troops were ready, Francois Marceau was ready too.

On June 23, 1812, the invasion started. One hundred and fifty six thousand men crossed the Neimen river and encountered no resistance. In general, the morale was high but there was the tension which always comes with a conflict. Francois Marceau, lost in the crowd of soldiers, looked about warily. His musket was always ready. He didn't see any action until the fifth day. The soldiers had travelled fifty miles by the time they encountered their first resistance. It wasn't a serious battle, only a squirmish. Francois Marceau found himself behind the lines carrying packages of gunpowder for the soldiers using flintlocks. It was over in less than half an hour and there were only a few casualties. This first minor victory set the morale high, and everyone was anxious to get on to Smolensk, the Russian stronghold.

The walk to Smolensk took more than a month. There were no difficult battles on the way. The Russian cossacks retreated as the French forces progressed. At strategic points along the route, soldiers were left in captured villages to support a supply train. Francois Marceau was never called for this duty, and he had to keep on walking. Each day, from dawn to dusk he would walk as the officers rode their horses. By the time the soldiers had reached the Russian stronghold, Francois Marceau's feet and hands were tough with callouses and his body was exhausted.

The siege of Smolensk took a full day of intense fighting. Francois Marceau, along with hundreds of others, was stationed outside the south wall of the city. He aimed his musket at the figures on top of the wall who were firing back. It went on and on, the sounds of gunshots never ceasing until dusk. At noon time that day Francois Marceau saw a man die. The fellow was reloading his musket, pouring a measured amount of powder into the hollow steel shaft. He was being very careful as to not spill any when an enemy bullet crashed through his skull. The blood gushed out of the hole in his forehead; gushed out of his nose and mouth. The eyes turned to glass, and though they were open, saw nothing. The body lay inert on its back, the musket leaning on the right thigh with the gunpowder spilled carelessly in the grass. Francois Marceau vomited several times. He still felt nauseous an hour later when the medics came to drag the body into a shallow grave. And Smolensk fell to the French just after dusk.

Starting in the morning on 20 August, the troops set out for Moscow. During the few days rest at Smolensk, Francois Marceau had felt numb and empty. Nothing had excited him: not the thought of good food and rest, not cheering soldiers, not the thought of his fiancée. He knew he should write to her, for he didn't want to fall in disfavor with her father, but he put it off. And all too soon he was back on the road. Moscow was still two hundred miles off, and no one seemed ready for the walk. To make matters worse, the Russian cossacks were employing the tactics of destroying the small villages so the French forces wouldn't have shelter or food. It was a situation that Napoleon had overlooked. It wasn't long before the troops were hungry and complaining. Francois Marceau felt disillusioned. He had been promised a comfortable bed and a fine dinner each evening and he got neither. Around him he saw soldiers falling sick and deserting, and he saw the French officers, well fed and rested, riding their horses. Then the weather turned bad, and rains caused delays and more sickness. By the time the forces reached the camp outside of Moscow, fifty thousand men had either died or deserted. Francois Marceau felt sharp pains in his stomach from not eating. His feet hurt from boots that no longer fit. His clothes were wet and he was cold. But he was just three miles outside of Moscow. He knew that the next day would bring all the food he needed and a warm bed to sleep in. Napoleon had

announced that the Russian forces were weak and that Moscow would fall in a day. This was the only thing that kept Francois Marceau from giving up.

The day before the last siege, Francois Marceau lay in a foxhole, writing a letter to his fiancée: "My Dear,

I am writing to you three miles outside of Moscow from our camp. For the first time in five days it is not raining, but it is very cold. I believe we will have our first frost tonight. I am sitting in a mud hole which is my bed for the evening. The men around me are all disillusioned. We have not eaten well since Danzig, nor have we slept well. The barbaric cossacks have burnt their own villages leaving us no food or shelter. However we are now just outside Moscow which will provide us well tomorrow. Taking the city should be no problem really, the difficulty is to keep the men together before then. Morale is falling quickly but as soon as Moscow is ours, spirits will be high again.

I am going to be apprehensive tomorrow morning, I always am before a battle. As soon as the first shots are fired I shall feel more at ease. The thought of losing my life does not upset me. I can stand the pain and certainly there's no nobler cause. Only the thought of never seeing you again makes me wonder. I will put this in my pocket with instructions to have it mailed to you if I am unable. If you learn that I won't be returning, please don't cry. Know that I am doing a greater deed here than I could ever do at home in France.

Dusk is upon us now, I have to stop writing. We are not allowed to use lamps for fear the cossacks will see them and attack. Please give my love to all of you at home and pray for us."

The fiancée of Francois Marceau never received the letter. In the spring of 1812, a plague of typhoid spread through France killing most who contracted it. The young woman had caught a cold, and in the weakened state, the typhoid had set in. She had written a long letter while lying ill in bed, but it, like so many others, was lost along the road to Moscow. Soon afterwards she died in the night. Her body was buried quickly to avoid spreading the disease, and had been buried for months when the soldier slept in the mud three miles outside of Moscow.

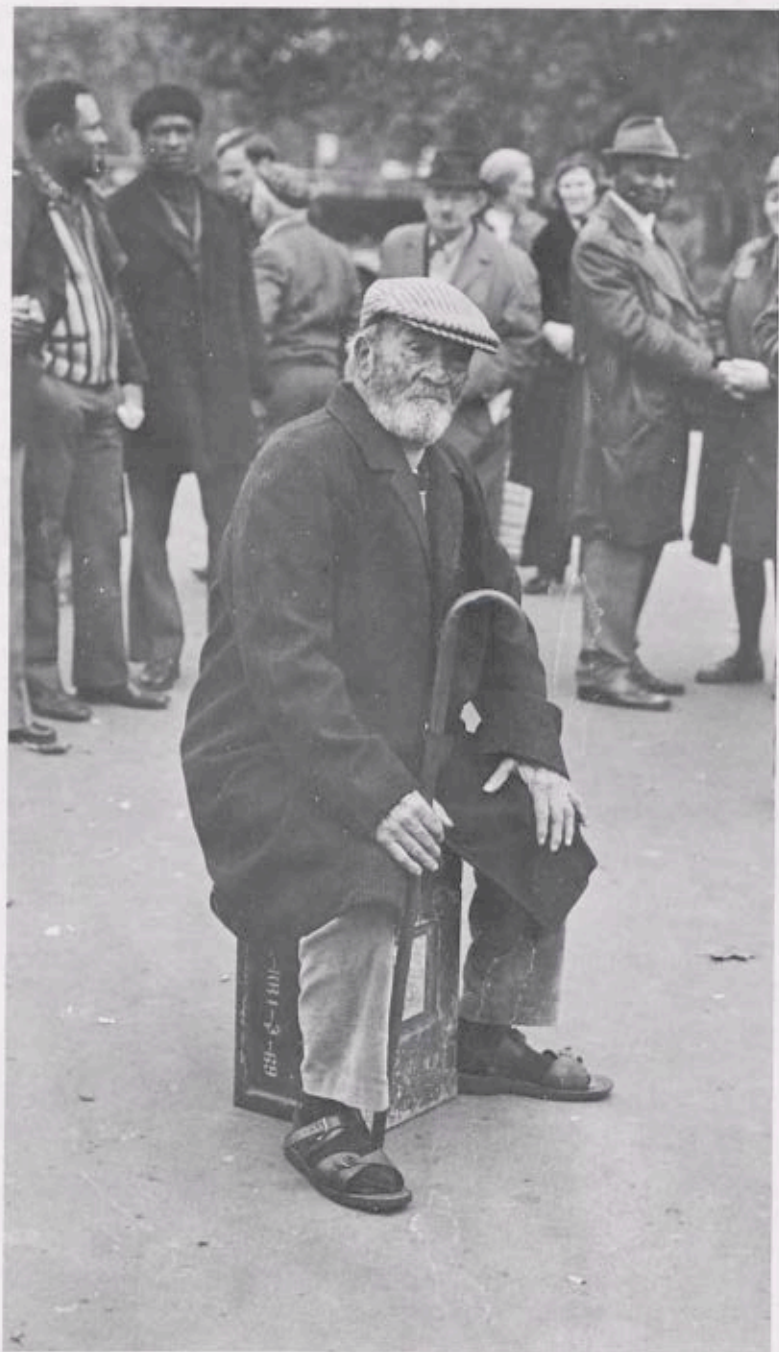


If my day yawned long enough
to bake bread
brown, soft crusted bread
and to watch it rise,
restrain it back
and watch it grow from the pan

my nights would not fly
slow winding glides
down closer
and soar up the black winds
to fall in on me again.
No clinging to my heat
as it skittles off the sheets
and rises.
I would not hear my ears
shrilling the corners
nor women mime voices probing the wall.
I would not wait to exhaust my eyes closed

and in the easy light
of mid-afternoon
my kitchen would glow
with ruddy cheeks of bread.
The dough would double
and redouble
until gestation was through
after ten minutes in a hot oven
and another forty in a moderate,
and at supper
my hands would have left their quivering
deep within the kneading.

Jody Green



In Angel Alley

white sign

behind the dark velvet
of industrial London
on bloodbrick alleyway wall
covered with citymuffle vibrations
rebounding over rain riddled grimefloor,

broods

over huddled crates
barren, even of drunks
crumplewedged in littered
crevicecorners,

under clear sweeping sky

no wings in fallen snickets—
this is a dead end,
bricked solid,
a bread oven full of
embers and ashes.

door faced in faded memos

held by sticky yellow spiders
in dustwebbed windows,
jammed open staircase
cavern creeping up and
around wooden walls
throbs with posters,
the faded manuscripts
of protest and revolution.

upstairs on the littered tables
inkbound, ride the red and black
cavaliers,
dust wedded and ordered
on bookstore shelves,
stilled, waiting. . .

Lady anarchist,
her shrunken,
ragged-sweatered frame
moving easily,
tells of the time when
the magazine paid for itself—

downstairs
the wind sweeping
over the damp ashen floor,
fires embers caught in webs—
tight, pinpoints of waiting in
Angel Alley.

Eddie Rayher



Sad wrinkled faces
sat on park benches
with their smiles folded
on their wrinkled dresses

The shadows lengthened
the faces dropped beneath the benches
the smiles rolled over to the grass
and the faces sat holding paper flowers wrinkled.

Terese Cohen



THE REMAINS OF "DEACON'S DIARY"

Edited and with an Introduction
by Brian J. Shoot

From the mid-56th century, (when the remains of "Deacon's Diary" were discovered by the first settlers returning to Earth), to the present day, "Deacon's Diary" has been universally recognized as a historical document of paramount importance. Indeed, the diary represents one of our few links with the dark ages, (identified by Brewstar as that period beginning with the Alpha Expedition of 2348 and ending with Great Return of 5556.) Apart from the diary, very little is known about the fate of those who chose to remain on Earth and not follow Melton and the Alphas into space on the Alpha Expedition. In fact, only two facts regarding the fate of the terrestrials can be stated with certainty. First, it is certain that in the centuries immediately following the departure of the Alphas, the remaining Earthlings developed a technology which dwarfed that of the 24th century, and was even far more advanced than that of our present society. Secondly, we know that some time between the 27th and 30th centuries, civilization on Earth ceased to exist. (Moon believes that the end came some time in the mid-29th century.)

In the last decade, it has become fashionable to question the validity of "Deacon's Diary". Although the diary's authenticity is above reproach, (the diary certainly dates from the 27th century), Haily and Orion have suggested that the "diary" was, in fact, a work of fiction. Morningstar and other psycho-analysts accept the diary as history, but maintain that Deacon was a classic paranoid psychotic who was often unable to distinguish imagination from reality. Contrex even goes so far as to assert that Deacon never existed and the diary was written by one of the last computers of the Dark Age. Yet, although it may be more comforting to dismiss the diary as inaccurate rather than to accept the chilling message that the diary offers us, it remains indisputable that the diary is consistent with everything else we know about the Dark Ages. Even the seemingly fantastic account of the Somnabulists is not without confirmatory evidence. A similar phenomenon was alluded to during the course of Earth's last radio transmission to the Alphas. In the end, despite our misgivings, we are compelled to conclude that regardless of whether Deacon was sane or insane, fictional or real, "Deacon's Diary" is primarily factual, and it is most unfortunate only a small section of the diary, (probably towards the end of the complete diary), survives to the present day.

In this edition of the diary, great care has been taken to minimize changes from the original text. Only those words which have become totally archaic have been replaced. However, the ancient system of dates, (months, years, etc.), has been preserved, as well as several archaic nouns, (which have been defined in brackets). One improvement of this edition over past editions is the inclusion of footnotes whenever possible. Deacon makes several references to the second section of *Technology and Man's Future* which was, fortunately, among the books that Melton chose to take on the Alpha expedition. Consequently, it has been possible to cite the author and, (where applicable), the page number, (in *Technology and Man's Future*), to which Deacon refers. Of course, it has not been possible to footnote all of Deacon's literary references as all of the literature from the Dark Age, and most of the literature from the pre-Dark Age era, has disappeared with the onslaught of time.

THE DIARY

and even now I still think there is hope. This morning I asked one of the technics [a sophisticated robot that was probably originally designed to serve as a domestic servant] how man had ever been able to make such stupid and harmful decisions and the damn machine told me that it was not programmed to respond to the question. I knew, of course, that the technic was lying, but I didn't press the issue. It would have done no good to raise their suspicions again after they were just getting over my argument with the governor [a robot designed to make decisions affecting local governance and production.] So, instead I asked to see a book, an old book in which man looked towards the future. I have to know where we went wrong.

November 13th—Sunday

The technic gave me *Technology and Man's Future*. These technics have a marvelous sense of humor. I asked it for an old book so it gave me one from the 20th century. I wonder if we went wrong that long ago.

I thought I heard a human voice over the radio today, but by the time I reached the transmitter the voice had stopped.

November 15th—Tuesday

The medium is the message. [Marshall McLuhan, p. 66.] I suppose in the 20th century they did not believe that statement to be trite. How could they know that 5,000 human beings would willingly, (willingly!), surrender their consciousness and succumb to the technology's opiate, the power of illusion? 5,000 Somnabulists! I can picture it. Underground somewhere, packed into their aluminum cylinders, not hearing, not seeing, not feeling, for all appearances, dead. Of course, they're not really dead. The machines pipe images into their heads, fantasy like in the old style movie houses. One hour they're exploring the outer reaches of the Milky Way. The next hour they're acting out a tender love scene. A tender love scene! The only tender love scenes left on Earth are imaginary. The medium is the message.

Still no repeat of last Wednesday's occurrence. No voices over the radio. I'm beginning to think that I'm alone.

November 18th—Friday

Yes, liberty is not what you can choose to do, it's what you do choose to do. [This seems to be a reference to Marcuse, p. 78-79.] Isn't that what happened to us? We chose to let machines work for us. We chose to let machines think for us. Eventually, we chose to let machines live for us. And then we were unnecessary. So we let ourselves die. Yes, nonconformity is socially useless, and even individually worthless. [Marcuse, p. 74.]

I feel tired all the time now, tired all the time. I'm tired because I haven't been doing anything.

November 19th—Saturday

I heard a voice on the radio! She was a young, beautiful girl. At least she sounded like a young, beautiful girl. I told her that my name was Deacon, but she said that my name wasn't Deacon. She said that there were no people left anymore. She said I was a technic, and that technics didn't have names, they have numbers. Then she was gone.

November 21st—Monday

No, I can't accept Ellul's conclusion. I agree that it was a mistake to allow technology to transform from means to end. [Ellul, p. 92.] Yet, I can't agree that technology is because it is. [Ellul, p. 103.] Technology is because we let it be. Technology is because we weren't strong enough to say it wouldn't be. We were not innocent! We were not blameless!

I don't know who I'm writing to. I suppose this whole diary has been rather futile. Maybe some day a somnabulist will arise and find this diary. Or maybe an Alpha will find it. Or perhaps some civilization from the outer limits of the galaxy will reach Earth years from now, centuries from now, and find the lead capsule I've placed my diary in. If anyone does find this diary, I want to tell you. .Who am I kidding? I want to tell you that I'm tired.

November 27—Sunday

I am the true technological man! Long may He live! No, Ferkiss, technology can't do anything for man, it can only do things to man. [Ferkiss, p. 120.] And I am technology's final achievement! I am Undershaft. I am Don Juan in Hell. I am Trofimov gone mad. I shall crown myself king and rule graciously over the wood elves and the governors, the nymphs and the technics. But the machines will try and stop me. So, I must be alert. But how can I be alert when I'm so tired.

November 28th—Monday

The machines have been watching me. They suspect. So, I gave them a surprise. I went down to the old main warehouse and got an old-fashioned lasar gun. Then, I came back to my quarters and shot my technic with it. I annihilated my technic! Today I am King.

November 29th—Tuesday

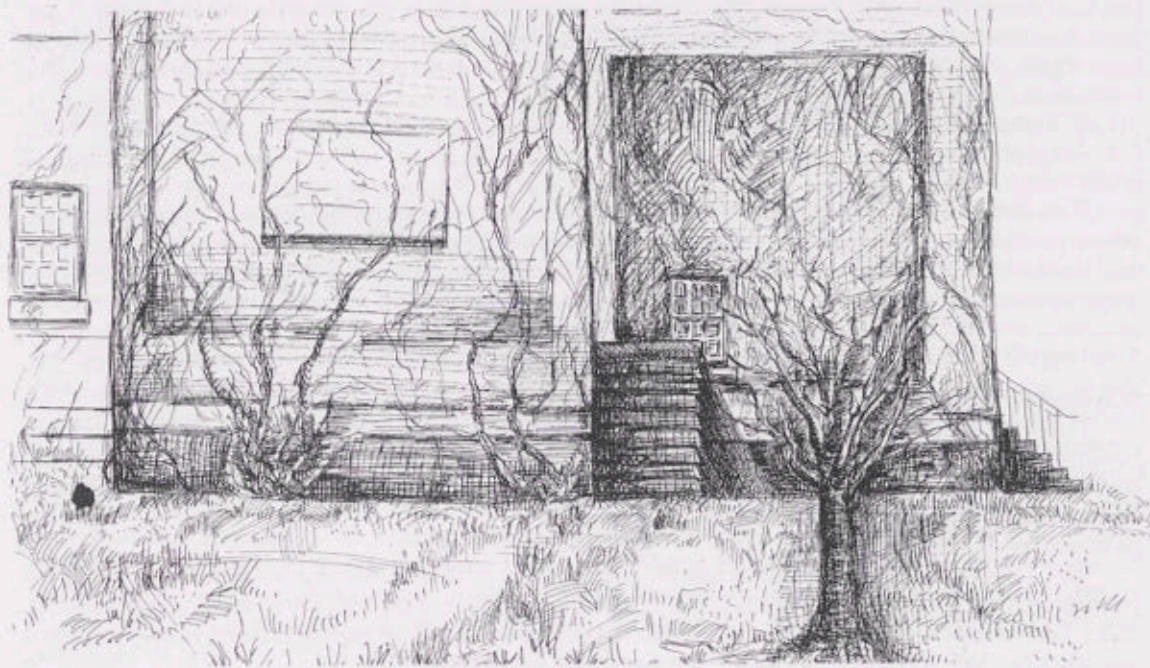
Twelve technics came and took my lasar gun away. I didn't want to give it to them, but they said if I didn't give them the gun I would have to become a somnabulist. I didn't want to become a somnabulist not because I didn't want to become a vegetable, but because I didn't want my life extended.

December 15th—Thursday

I don't listen for voices on the radio anymore.

December 25th—Sunday

Today is Christmas so to celebrate I...

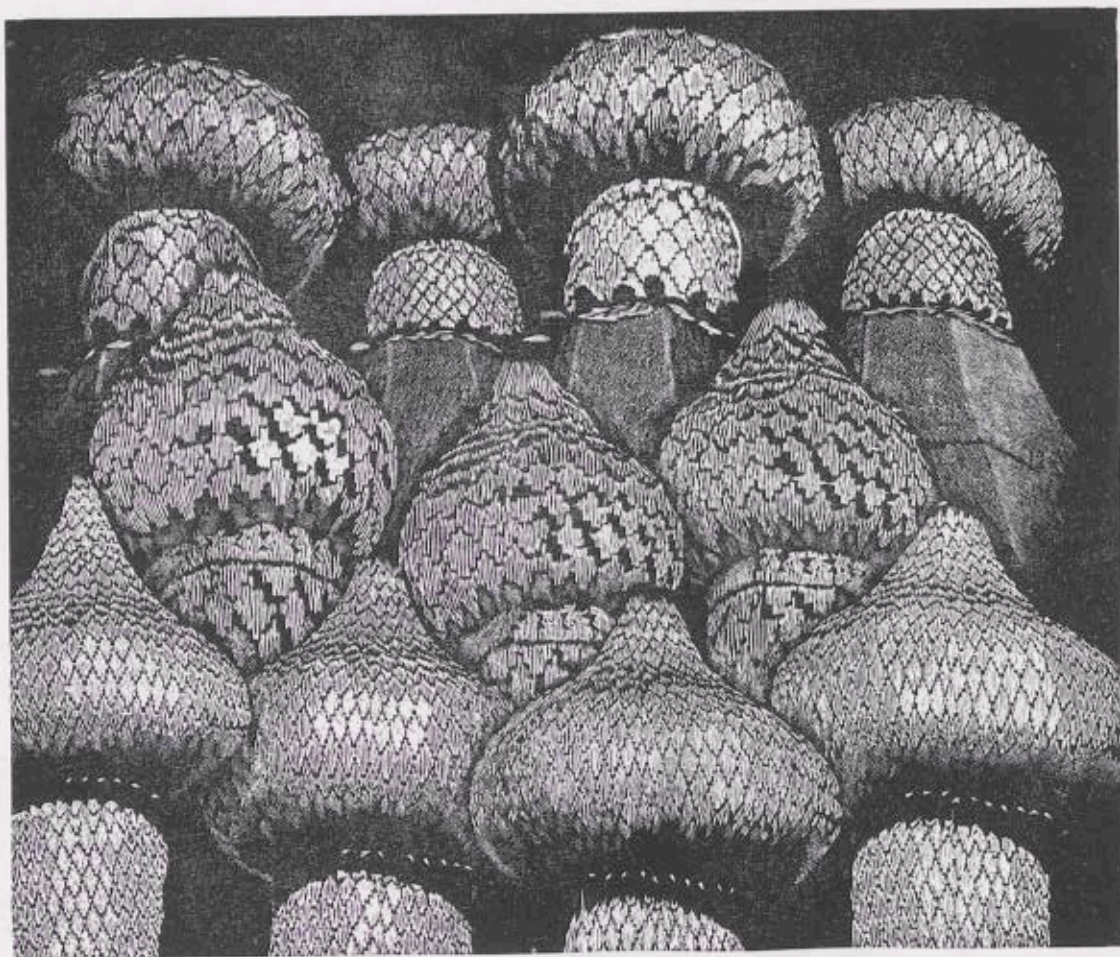


Passages

My mother is having
a nightmare, moaning
high and windy, sounding
far away as the dream must be.
I steal in, afraid
to interrupt bad dreams
as if they were conversations.

There have been no
night voyages for years.
The solitary child has
stopped wailing, closes
the door to her room;
her dreams keep uneasy
silences. Now,
the mother, hands waving—
talking to each other
like children at an imaginary
tea party, demands
the turned down covers, asks
for the lights left on.

Kathy Hayes



"Russian Mushrooms And Onions"

Footfalls

My feet are wet
because I splashed kneedeep
in puddles of sunlight
that dripped from the boughs
and soaked this humus until it could hold no more.

The grasses which blaze up, like Chinese rockets,
and beckon—grasshoppers—
launch themselves into my arches.
Some point up,
isolated.
They separate my toes
and cut the softer skin found there.

Turning: I watch the others succumb to that desire in orderly fashion,
like campers as the sun strikes them in turn.
A sweeping edict commands the lowly to rise
while I stand guilty of having corrupted.

I cannot hear them,
the footfalls.
The wind stirs.
Upon me falls the inconsolable cry of a bird.

Craig Diamond

In the Greyhound Terminal

Old woman;
your brown paper bag of gin,
and the announced departures
protected you from
the screaming blizzard outside.
You dozed with the white
of your eyes showing through
half open lids.
Your legs are swollen like dead fish;
chapped red by the wind.
The cop kicked your cane
and told you to take a walk
Mary.

Piedmont



NIGHTBIRTH

The pine wood
Shafts up
Holding the moon
Still
Full and bright,
Casting a thin clear web
In and around
The heavy Black
Velvet robed arms
Arching,
Silently tranquil

Sky words

Spelled ancient diamonds
On the clear face of night
Holding their meaning
Above the tall tree tops

The air is stunned:
Not a feather's breath, not
A needle turned
Solid under moon's frozen gaze.

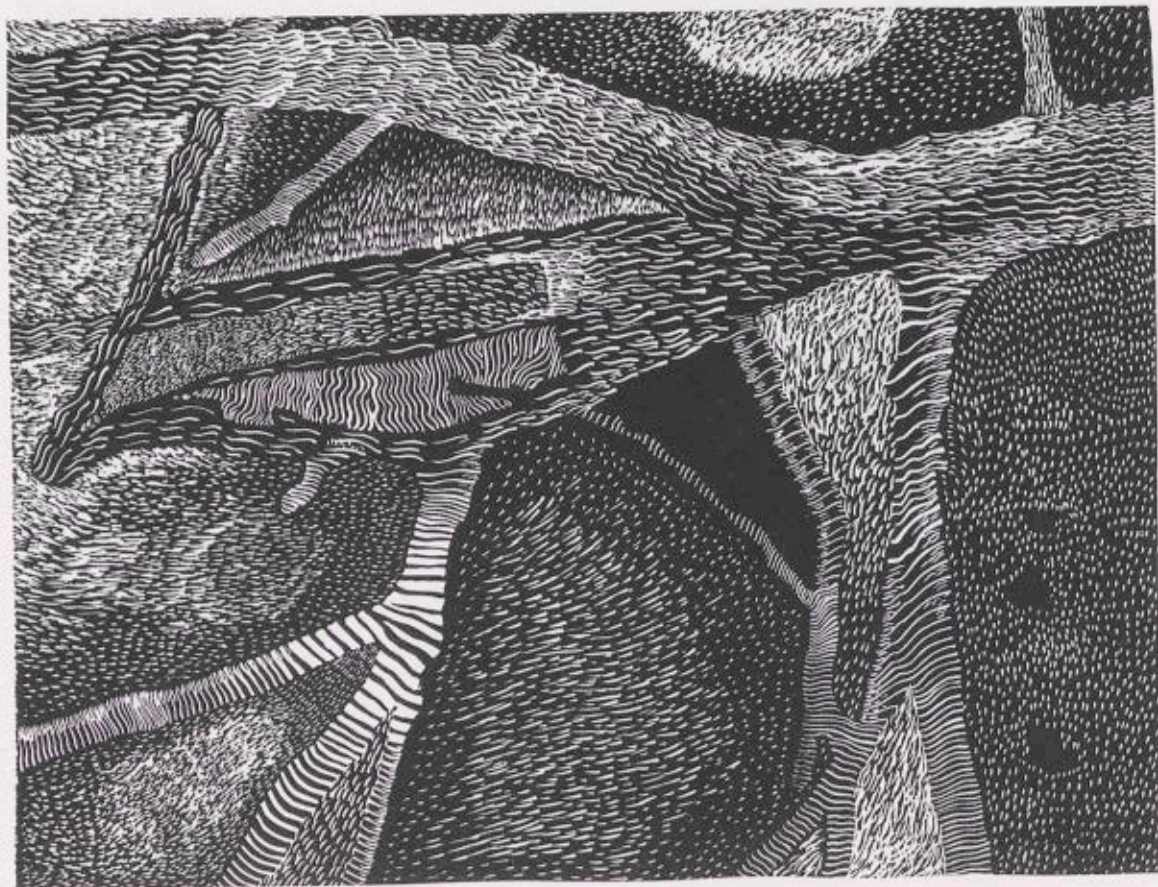
A shiver

In the Black
Pines quiver slightly
As a pregnant mare
Before—

Suddenly Launch!

Black wings spread on deep blue
Slicing the silence
Of lost seconds
Never returning
Past
The moon.

Iain Drummond



SUE

By Matt Brief

The entire action of the play takes place in a cemetery. As the curtain opens, Sue, a tiny, frail, aged-looking woman in her mid-fifties stands in front of two gravestones. She is dressed inexpensively but neatly.

Time: present

Except for a few scattered gravestones, the stage is bare and should look so.

Sue

She reaches to the ground and picks a pebble. She places it on the top of the stone she is standing in front of.

A pebble for Molia (pronounced *Malya*) and Nadee. The Goyim put flowers on their headstones. But flowers die and what is given to death must last as long as it. So we put dirty, filthy, pebbles, worn away by the weather, the rains and the snows as memory pieces. And their memory lingers forever.

Molia, that's the forty-fourth pebble. Since 1931. For Nadee only the fourteenth. We knew that you wouldn't last too long in the new country. Not after little Judah died on the boat. He was keeping you alive. Your fingers clutched his dead little body like ivy vine clings to walls. The trip was too much for your frail body. Only the young and the strong survived the trip. Poppa Nadee waited for the day you would pass on. He confronted Anne, Jeannie, and me when Dr. Horowitz told him that it wouldn't be long. He said that we would have to help him in the candy store.

Poppa was such a glorious fool. He thought that he could operate a candy store without keeping it open on the Shabbos. He'd close around five on Fridays and not even open on Saturdays. The best times for the children to get candies and chocolates.

You know how the candy store made most of its meager money? Slot machines. Not put in by Poppa of course. Dutch Schultz put them in. Crazy name, Dutch Schultz. His real name was Arthur Fleagenheimer or something like that. He was a racketeer. They found him shot dead in a puddle one day. A handsome young man. Once in a while he'd drive by in a Cadillac, a Cadillac on the Lower East Side! Anyway, he'd personally pick up the slot machine winnings in the area every once in a while. He strut around the neighborhood, one who'd made it. Double-breasted pinstripe suit, Italian shoes, gold jewelry, styled hair cuts. And young for such a big gangster.

Of course he'd take quite a large share from most machines. But when he came into our store for the first time he looked at Jeannie, Anne, and I and say, Sir, such pretty young girls! He was such a gentleman. Is their Mother as beautiful as they? Then Poppa replied that she was. Dutch turned red and hardly took anything after that either. Occasionally, he would drive one of us girls home in his Cadillac. That was quite a thrill then. Of course now, most of those on the Lower East Side have kids that own Cadillacs. Poppa hated one of his precious teenage girls to ride with Dutch. He didn't want us dating Dutch or his boys, and of course he dreaded that we might become one of their

"working women." But Dutch, what a salesman, convinced Poppa that his motives were kindly. Besides, everytime Dutch came into the store, he bought who knows how many packages of gum. Always chewing gum. Soon, Poppa liked him, he called him Arthur and would always scold him for skipping synagogue. It was quite a shock that day when we saw the front page of the paper and there was Dutch, a sheet over his body, lying in a puddle. We all knew he was a crook, but not so bad that he should be killed by anyone.

Poppa stayed sharp until the day he died. Seventy-eight years old. Two newspapers, he read everyday, one in Yiddish and one American. He was even our apartment house's organizer for John Kennedy. He saw two of his great grandchildren. Moishe and Marjorie. My great niece and nephew. He'd bounce Moishe on his lap and teach him Hebrew, at six years old. Well, he's next to you now forever.

As we grew up, we were able to get fairly good jobs and rent a nice apartment on Eastern Parkway. I got a job as a receptionist for an Irish lawyer. Jeannie got a job in Bartons as a saleswoman, and Anne, she wrote so wonderfully, wrote free lance for all these magazines. I've been yelling at her for years to write a family history, you know. But she'll never get around to it of course. Moishe is twenty now and he likes to write; maybe I'll get on his back.

Jeannie was the first of us to get married. *Suddenly she stops and looks up.* No thank you I've already prayed. That was one of the old men, you know they mourned with you and you give them some money for their efforts. Anyway, Jeannie married at eighteen, pretty, beautiful Jeannie, our fairy princess. To Harry Bloom, this fat salesman who was thirty-five. Imagine! She could have had any young man in the neighborhood but she married this fat salesman who she felt sorry for because he loved her so much. That was her problem, being so good. She placed pity and the feelings of others ahead of herself. She was unhappy with Harry and he knew it. After three years he just upped and left. Leaving just beautiful red-headed Rachel. They moved back into the apartment with us. Jeannie never had any real life, she could have been a stage star with her beauty. After awhile, the next man to fall in love was Ben the cripple, a miserable old man who walked with a cane and told her he would commit suicide unless she married him. Our tender little loved one gave in and submitted herself to aggravation that would make Job look like things were easy. The man barely walked, screamed at her, I suspect he even beat her once in a while. Of course, Jeannie the suffering angel never said a word. He did give her Michael and he was a joy. And he took in Rachel. Rachel was as beautiful as her mother, except she had flaming red hair while her mother's was blond. Rachel even modeled for Christian Dior clothes and got herself through Long Island University with a degree in English. She met this young man, William, at a temple dance, a nice boy, a real estate appraiser who did very well for himself. They bought a big house in Long Island, had two kids, Moishe and Marge. Two gorgeous children. Jeannie went out there often. Those kids were the happiness that she had missed all her life. The house was an escape from Ben, who I must admit was nice to his step grandchildren, buying them toys and stuff, even though it was with Jeannie's money. I think he just did it so William would give him money. Jeannie went out to the house for Pesach in 1963, we were going to have a grand Seder. She was setting up for the dining room, suddenly she keeled over and collapsed. I still remember Moishe's shrill scream, we all ran out, and there she was lying on the floor. She never regained consciousness. Rachel broke down, they were inseparably close. William took care of Moishe and Marge, who barely understood what was happening. I phoned a doctor, who came right over and pronounced her dead immediately. Then I called Ben, you know what the schmuck did, he called Michael, over the phone in college and said come home your Mother's dead. Just like that. Michael retched, and got sick all the way home on the train.

Michael, it's been tough for him. Your oldest grandson. A father who wanted nothing to do with him. A nothing himself. No incentive to learn. And Michael was so bright. Instead he played basket-

ball all the time, Rutgers in New Jersey gave him a basketball scholarship. He played there but did poorly in his studies. C's. After he graduated, he went to work in Anne and Milt's Pharmacy. Until Rachel, introduced him to Lynn, a girl who lived down the block from her and William. And wouldn't you know it, they fell in love. Lynn's parents have taken Michael into their business and he'll be rich some day. And the best news of all is that Michael and Lynn have a child, four years old, blond and beautiful named Jessica. She looks just like Jeannie did when she was a child. They're living on Long Island too, near Bill and Rachel. So if things didn't work out for Jeannie, Molia, nothing but the best has happened to her children. Moishe, Rachel's son, is a big wheel at his college, student government and all. He's applying to Yale and Harvard law schools. You know he wrote me a letter which said he wished Jeannie were alive just to see all the good things he's done, he's won humanitarian awards, all sorts of stuff. I cried an ocean; he remembers her somewhat. I'm keeping the letter forever. As for Marge, she's the prettiest girl in her high school. I just hope that she chooses a better mate than, well, Jeannie did.

Isn't it strange though? You and Jeannie had such rotten times of it. Life giving you such a hard break, and now Rachel and her children, Michael and little Jessica all have the world to stuff in their backpockets. Fate, I guess, you never know how she'll act.

If you care, Ben died soon after Jeannie, he's buried somewhere in Florida. None of us visit him or want to. After Jeannie's death, we sold the apartment on Eastern Parkway. It used to be such a beautiful neighborhood, we'd sit out on the benches on Shabbos and shmooze. Now the shvatzas live there, and the buildings have dirty words painted on them. On Halloween, they throw eggs at Brooklyn Museum. Their parents drink liquor out of their welfare checks. They have ten kids and never stop. Why can't they go to school and learn? After all, we did. It's no wonder so many people hate them. They don't even try. I've known some shvatzas, good ones. Smart, cause they went to school. But most of them; well they destroyed Eastern Parkway. I don't see how Anne and Milt still stay there.

Anne was always the smartest of us all. Read everything in sight. Poppa used to claim that she ought to spend more time preparing herself to be a good wife than reading. But when he saw the checks that came in for some of her short stories, he didn't complain half as much. He couldn't understand writing as being work. Anne, what kind of work is this? Jeannie is a salesgirl, Sue is a receptionist, you just walk to a park bench., sit down, open up a notebook and make some money. Anne just shrugged him off or would tell him to go study the Talmud more.

The girl was a whirlwind. During the war, she was one of the main organizers for local efforts. Afterwards she dabbled in politics, but I'm afraid her views were a bit too leftist for popular consumption. She worked like hell for Henry Wallace. Some of the neighbors started calling her a socialist and the like. She really caused a furor when one day she announced that she was a Socialist. And when the early fifties rolled around with that drek, Joe McCarthy being everybody's hero; guess whose stories were suddenly being rejected by magazine editors? But even that didn't get to her. I remembered her marching in front of the courtroom during the Rosenberg trial. She even wrote a letter to Ethel saying that she would take in their two little boys if need be. Pinko, Red, they called her everything. And only one name bothered her.

Old maid. She was about thirty and that was awful late to be single in those days. Goodness knows, Anne was doing too damn much to worry about being a spinster. Still, the whispers of the older ones always riled her.

She met Milt in 1951. He was a war vet, a pharmacist. A real shorty, maybe five feet three or four. Of course Anne was barely five feet herself so that didn't make much difference. Poppa met Milt and found out that his brother was a doctor, after Milt left, Poppa asked Anne if she could somehow meet his brother. Not that Milt wasn't smart; you know he's considered a genius? He's in that Mensa,

the club for geniuses. After they dated a few months, Milt proposed, and of course Anne accepted. We were all overjoyed; after all Rachel was already nearly engaged to William and we didn't want a niece getting married before the Aunt.

Milt owned a tiny pharmacy on Ralph Avenue. Still owns it, only it's one of the ten largest pharmacies in Brooklyn. Guess because of whom? Anne. She moved right in, told Milt that she wouldn't languish in some sweaty kitchen and before we knew it, Milt's patronage was increasing faster than his inventory could supply. And she still works there, side by side with her husband, twenty five years later in this huge pharmacy in this lousy neighborhood. You know, the animals got to it again. And Anne, age won't slow her down one bit. When Michael graduated Rutgers, they took him in, treated him like a son and gave him a great job in the pharmacy. He only left when Lynn's parents took him into their business. That was an offer too good to pass up. Anyway, Anne now teaches black kids that come into the store how to write. She's even started some kind of poetry workshop. Amazing. She found Milt late in life, but the two of them, well, they're happier, happier than even you and Pop-pa. They live for each other. She always kids Milt about his size. He's sensitive. He displays these medals in the living room of their apartment on Eastern Parkway. They refuse to move; I guess Anne won't leave those good memories even if they've turned dark, if you pardon the pun about the animals. Anyway, Milt's got these medals he won in Burma or Thailand, one of those places in the jungle. Just to show he's tough. They always say they're looking for a house in Long Island, but they'll never leave Eastern Parkway. Anne won't leave.

They have a son. He's mixed up. David, he's twenty three. He went to some drama college. No education. Now he lives on the West Side of Manhattan in some dingy apartment. His big claim to fame is one idiotic TV commercial. He played a soldier in the foreign legion. You know he eats his parents' hearts out. He told Rachel that he smokes marijuana every night and thinks his father hates him. Hates him! Milt and Anne give him everything! They pay for drama lessons, voice lessons, speech lessons, dance lessons, lesson lessons, it's insane. Milt should have made him become an accountant or something. David will never be the next John Garfield. Last month, Anne and Milt took him to see a revival of *Death of a Salesman* and after the show, David, that dumb ass told his father that he reminded him of Willy Loman! You died before Arthur Miller wrote *Death of a Salesman*. But Willy Loman is a frustrated salesman who realizes the failure of his life and to communicate with his sons. Anne told me Milt cried that entire night in bed. The only one who David can really talk to is Moishe or Rachel and I think even they're getting sick of his self-indulgent over dramatic whining. I can use some pretty big words when I want. Maybe, I should write that family history myself.

She walks away from the stone and walks around the stage. She talks to various tombstones.

Mr. Herman Schwartz, meet Miss Bella Feinstein. Sara Gould, say hello to Sam Zirinsky. Sidney Plotzke born 1891 died 1968. That's pretty good. Seventy seven. I hope at least you died before that creep Nixon came in.

Jenny Rosenblatt—1963-1974. Brain tumor. Horrible. With all the money doctors get, they can't save an eleven year old pitzel with a bad headache.

She walks back to Molia's and Nadee's tombstone.

Death is all around here. Except for the grass, I guess that I'm the only living thing. I'm not scared of death. Not even dying. I am scared what will happen to my boys. There are people that need me to be alive. I don't want them to experience the grief of my death. That's the worst part, when I think about dying. I see Rachel and Anne sitting on wooden boxes in a darkened corner of my house, deciding who will take in my boys, in between hysterical outbursts. I remember when you passed away, there we were, all sitting in this small little apartment, huddled on the boxes. Rabbi Crichtman came to pay a condolence call. You were the prettiest mother in the congregation. I

remember that I kept promising myself then that I would be as pretty as you. But I'm not, Molia, no one could be. Nor as gentle. Remember how you used to play with that blind little boy who lived down the hall. I know, he did look like Judah. Still, all the older ones looked at you as the gem of the younger generation, under forty that is, in the Congregation. You made your own beautiful dresses, smiled at everyone despite our hardships. Why did the Lord take you?

You, Molia, and me. We seemed to have gotten in the end the bad side of the stick of fate. Jeanie, she at least saw Rachel happily married and got two grandchildren. Anne has Milt. Me, I had Al.

You would have loved Al, Molia, He was big, good, and kind. We met in college. He applied to medical schools, but you know those Goyim with those quotas. You couldn't have too many Jewish doctors in those days. Anyway then Al went overseas to kill Nazis. You missed them. Hitler. *She spits on the ground.* We're six million less because of the dybuk. I don't touch a German good anymore.

Then Al came back from the war. You would think there were millions of jobs around. Al got himself a laundromat, we did okay for a while. Then I became pregnant with Michael. That was a bad time, I was sick continually. The birth wasn't smooth either.

Michael was a sick kid from the start. Very smart, a Math genius. But he had no friends. All he did was beat up on Howard and Stanley. Constantly, he fought with Al. God forgive me but I think that he precipitated Al's heart attack. When Al died, there was no check on Michael. He got a scholarship to Buffalo while I did my best, managing the laundromat. Too bad the crazie came home after school.

You know what the drek of my blood did at Moishe's Bar Mitzvah? He got drunk and sat in front of the bathrooms. Wouldn't let anyone in. Picked fights with waiters. After he graduates with his fancy Math degree, what does he do? Hustles pool. I wanted to have him committed. The whole family hates him. Anne, Rachel, William, the other Michael. Now he just stays in the house and sucks off me. Actually, he's got a job managing a laundromat for a friend of mine. It pays his keep.

Howard's another story. He's also a genius. Smarter than his drek brother. The brightest in the whole family. Al died just before his Bar Mitzvah. Weeks before. Howard's a quiet, introspective child. Of course Michael constantly beating up on him made him somewhat subdued. Howard was, what do you call them, a National Merit Scholar. Got a full scholarship to Rochester. Phi Beta Kappa. He got the entire Greek alphabet.

We've only fought once, Howard and I. In college, he met this blond shiksa from Cleveland. He was shy, never too good with girls. Anyway, you know how these shiksas are, they know Jewish boys make the best husbands. Howard started dating her. The worst was when he brought her home for a Seder. Finally, one day I said to him, Howard, you've got a mother who owns a small laundromat and works like a dog to give her boys reasonable clothes. For all her work, you return her love by loving a shiksa? Howard always really was a good boy and he dropped her. The next year or so, there was, what do you call it? A lack of communication. But Molia, you'll be happy to know he's over it. He went to NYU law, and now he's gotten his law degree. So where does the legal bigshot work? In a fancy law firm in Manhattan? No, that's not good enough for my young schmuck. He's got to do something to help the poor. Legal Aid. He defends shvatzas. It's funny, the animals that destroyed our old neighborhoods he defends, for pennies yet. He's got lawyer friends not half as bright as he making twice as much. But he's bright and good and I know he'll go far. I just hope I'm alive to see the day.

I've got a third boy. Little Stanley. He's real smart too. All my boys are smart. Like their father. Stanley is so frail. He was born with a bad heart. But a good head. He won a full Regents scholarship to State University in Binghamton. He studies History. When he was little, he had a rough time, cause he couldn't play sports due to his heart. You know how kids are, no sports, no friends. Now in

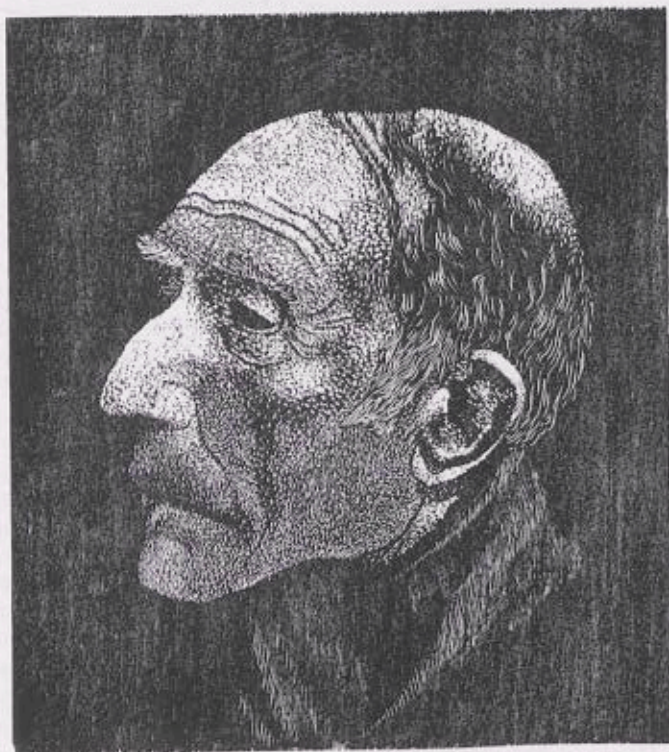
college, he's so smart, plenty of friends. He's going to be a History professor. Not much money, but you never know, Henry Kissinger was a Professor.

So I'm alone in the house now. It's small and in a place called Seaford. Howard and Stan write and call but still it's lonely. You have Poppa again. I suppose soon that I'll be with Al. Anne, Rachel, and Michael always invite me over but I feel like such a burden I usually don't go.

That's all the important stuff. I mean I could tell you that Hilda Rosensweig died in a car accident and Muttel got remarried. Or that Sidney Hershkowitz got shot in his grocery store because he wouldn't give some shvatza three dollars. He's okay, Golda takes care of him.

Israel is a country now. I was there and it's beautiful. I'm thinking of moving there but I couldn't leave the boys, not even Michael the idiot.

Pray for me, Molia. Maybe you can give me happiness. She laughs. On second thought you couldn't even pray so well for yourself. Or else you'd be here today and I wouldn't have to tell you all the dirt. I'm going to go back soon, it's almost dark and driving at night is a pain in the neck. *She picks up another pebble.* Here, another pebble. For Molia. Only Anne and I are still alive from the boat ride. *She starts to walk away.* I'll dream of you tonight. A dream lives on forever.



Daffodils in March

This morning at the Florist's
they sold for 99¢

YELLOW

daffodils in bunches
enough to clasp in the palm
and to pretend that they were picked
by you
picked from a butter sea
where you
had run among laurel and narcissus

Florist's aroma
of whitewashed funeral homes
grandmothers' perfume.

And there, children's eyes ran into their mouths.
A lap of yellowest warmth
sound ivory arms
and fussing preening hands,
filled softly with wrinkles,
pressed well into the mahogany box
behind the spring whispers of rose sprays, glads,
and daffodils

So as I passed
the flower bargain
I saw their young faces
smile teeth ringed lips into the sun.

Jody Green



An Old Harlem Man

He sits on the steps of an old Harlem ruin,
watching his life pass while
reflecting on his youth.

Seeing the streets busy again with the running
and jumping feet of little black kids.

Remembering the games that were played in
this same wall-less hall way.

Asking if he can stay out for one more game
of regalevio;

RCK was his favorite game.

He loved kissing girls without getting slapped in the face.

Getting up by the support of his battered cane

that has become his best friend,

he walks up the street and compares the cracks in the sidewalk
to his life

Reflecting...

Why this crack reminds me of the time I was caught
stealing a 15¢ candy bar from the corner grocer—
shaky and scared.

And this...why, I do believe this is where I fell
years ago, busting my mouth...look, my blood left its stain.

Oh...this crack..."if you step on the crack
you break your mother's back."

Wonder if that's why Charlie's momma fell and
is permanently paralyzed.

Safely making it to the corner—he stops and talks with some old drinking buddies at
the mail-box.

—Looking good Charlie...how's your mother?

—'Pectin' her to go any day now

—When you gonna give the bottle up?

—You know me...cain't live without it now...
part of my blood.

—So long Charlie, take care.

He goes on his way with his rusted cane
Stopping to tighten his baggy fitting coat
 (of heavy wool)
which hides his worn and urine-stained baggy pants.
Heading home he counts each street as
ten-years of his life.

After reaching the steps of his old falling
but warm tenement, he's aged considerable.
It takes about twenty-minutes for him and
his cane to climb the stairs of his five-story building.
He reaches the top and both he and his cane rest.
Putting the key in the door and turning it to
permit entrance has become more of a task
but it's all worthwhile when he finally gets in.
He relieves himself of the heavy wool coat.
He puts the left-overs on the stove fire,
He goes to the window and takes his favorite seat
in an old worn rocker.
High above the streets he watches the goings on below . .
glad to be at home.
Everyday the same thing . . .

out for a walk,
talk to a friend,
making it home to the left-overs,

then, the best time in his day . . .

relaxing in his old worn
but comfortable rocker—watching the goings on below.

Phyllis James

A Cricket Evening

Thin layers of sound are
Stacked carefully
Upon the silence of night.

Orchestrated by sun's flight
And moon's open eye,
Symphonies emerge as
Flocks of notes
Passing over
Forests of rhythms.

Iain Drummond



TO CRY IN THE DARK

Samuel Hughes

Actually, before Rom decided to take matters into his own hands, his name had been Claude. It was because of bad luck, nothing more; his father's name was Claude, and since both Mr. Gabriel and his wife were inclined to defer to tradition in such matters, they decided to name their first son after the father. All through his childhood and early youth he had to respond to "Claude," and, by an inexcusable and somewhat puzzling oversight, he never managed to acquire any nickname that lasted for more than a week. Which was too bad, for although he was no poet, he did have a reasonable sensitive ear, and the sound of his own name gave him no more auditory pleasure than the love-cry of a mosquito.

Finally, at the age of seventeen, something inside him reached the breaking point. One night during dinner he informed his parents with a stern look on his face that never again, under any circumstances, were they to call him "Claude."

"From now on my name is Rom," he announced as he cut through a piece of veal. "That's what the Gypsies of Eastern Europe call themselves."

His parents, being basically understanding and even rather intelligent people, did not try to force the issue with their son. His bursts of romanticism were usually harmless—to be expected in one his age, though not, perhaps, to the degree Rom sometimes carried them—and, if the truth must be told, both parents were a little too awed by their eccentric offspring to interfere. His mother had long since given up trying to win an argument with him, since not only was he considerably smarter than she; he also had a tendency to throw things when she refused to recognize her own obtuseness. Once, when 2½ hours of the most rudimentary syllogisms failed to make her see the light of his views, Rom suddenly began to snarl like a cornered wolverine. He walked over to the kitchen stove, and, grabbing it from the side, hurled it through the open door past the nose of a beagle who was sleeping noisily on the terrace. Considering that the stove must have weighed half again as much as he did, such a feat of strength would have to be called miraculous, at least prodigious, especially in light of his inability to lift it more than six inches off the ground the next day when his blood had cooled a bit.

His father, a rather stout man with a well-trimmed grey moustache, a sailor's complexion and a weakness for good Bordeaux, told his wife that he thought they could trust Rom's judgement on matters like this, although he was a little surprised, even disturbed, that it was his own name that so offended his son. At the office the next day he confided to a colleague that he didn't really give a sheep turd *what* the kid called himself as long as he didn't run amok with the stove again.

It was about this time, the next day as a matter of fact, that Rom first began to howl. Not that he had never howled before, for on occasion he had, like everyone else, let out something roughly equivalent to a true howl. But he had never really understood what he was doing, nor had he taken any note of the possible significance in the act. It wasn't until he left school that he was ready to test his vocal chords in earnest.

The circumstances precipitating his departure from the Hopkin's School were a little odd. While his parents, who might have been within their rights to try, had done nothing to prevent Rom from abandoning his old name and adopting the new, the school proved somewhat less broadminded. Midge Morton, Rom's music teacher, was a short, determined woman with an obstinate little chin and a rare gift of sarcasm; she announced that she had no intention of calling any student any other name than that entered in her role book.

"What on God's green earth is the matter with 'Claude?'" she asked in a tone of restrained incredulity. "Or have you taken it upon yourself to trade it in for a new model every seventeen years?" She looked around the class and a few voices tittered.

Rom glared at her but answered patiently. "Since I'm the one who's got to live with it, I think I ought to be the one who decides what it is. 'Claude' sounds like the name of a white rat. My name is Rom." He pronounced the word slowly, stressing the last letter.

The teacher looked around the room again and rolled her eyes skyward. The class was silent, wavering between apprehension and amusement.

"But that isn't even a name!" she smiled.

"It's a whole lot more of a name that 'Claude' is, that's for sure," he growled.

Mrs. Morton turned to a pile of uncorrected tests and announced with a flick of her red pen that whatever he chose to call himself outside school was his own business, but in the eyes of this institution he was still Claude, and would continue to be until he graduated. Assuming the matter closed, she bent over her tests until she suddenly became aware of Rom's presence hovering before her like a thunderhead. By then it was too late. He looked at her small brown eyes, now widening with fear, with an expression that trod the fine line between pity and contempt. Then he turned his back to her and, with the utmost deliberation, passed wind—a sullen, snarling burst of flatulence that was destined to become a school legend, and with good reason. It really was an appalling fart: not a raisin fart, wriggling out like a tadpole; not the short rip of cardboard that follows a spicy bowl of chile; no, by any standards—sulphur content, bass, treble, persistence, verve—this wind was clearly bound for glory the moment it entered the atmosphere.

It certainly made short work of its first victim. With a strangled cry, the unhappy woman began blindly clawing at the brownish-yellow cloud as if it were so many leeches, but to no avail. Whether from the fart or from her own frantic and sweaty exertions, all of her skillfully applied make-up began to melt and trickle down her face in little streaks of assorted flesh tones. And had it not at that point decided to let well enough alone and slip out through the open window, her peculiar Nemesis could have presented her with some respiratory problems as well, since most of the oxygen molecules in the immediate area had quickly been gobbled up by the sulphur. As it was, the dignity of the unfortunate teacher, not to mention her complexion and olfactory sensitivity, had already suffered irreparably. None of the students were molested by the fetid cloud, surprisingly enough, though a number of previously clear complexions began sprouting pimples a few days later. The room itself was given a precautionary disinfecting before it was used again.

But where, it might well be asked, was Rom while all this was going on? Having dealt his blow, he had promptly gathered his books, marched proudly but quickly out of the classroom and into the men's room, where he scribbled a note to the headmaster (who had more than once intervened on Rom's behalf when one faculty member or another had lost all patience with the stubborn pupil), telling him what he had done and assuring him that he would not be offended if the headmaster chose to expel him. He then delivered the note to the headmaster's secretary and began the long ride home on his bicycle. By the time Mrs. Morton had recovered enough of her wits to rush to the ladies' room, the infirmary and finally the office of the headmaster (who had just finished reading the note), Rom was already several miles to the east.

Which leaves us somewhere between the school and Rom's home, on a thin and pock-marked road through the fields of southern Pennsylvania. Rom peddled on. He made an effort to keep his eyes on the road, but he couldn't help taking note of the strange countryside surrounding him. It was April. Curiously, the landscape appeared to be sharply divided by the road itself. On one side the recent rains seemed to have pierced the drought of March to its very roots. Tree frogs squeaked insistently from a nearby slough, buds swelled out of the brown limbs of the trees; the air was ripe with

spring.

To the right, however, the soil seemed cruel, reluctant to relinquish the warm dry blanket of winter. Here and there a few lilacs had poked through, but the ground was too dry to offer them much hope of survival. The land seemed dead, out of sync with itself. It was April.

Although he was as much affected by one side as by the other, he found himself being pulled more and more to the left. Whether it was the little explosions of color that grabbed his eye every now and then or the smells that sifted through his nose hairs—honeysuckle, the blossoms of some fruit or another, the just plowed fields, the horse dung—something was beginning to cause a considerable ruckus down in Rom's loins, though it wasn't until he and his bicycle began swerving violently across the road that he realized what was going on. At that point he lifted up his head and let out a howl—not a very skillful howl, but it had plenty of character. And it was sometime during that howl that he thought of Nellie.

Nellie had been his first love a little over two years before. She had really known how to howl, though she wasn't exactly artistic about it. She was tall, rawboned, smelled a bit like the stables where she worked and could laugh like a mare. They used to roll around in the pasture behind the beech woods for days on end during the summer—under the sultry July sun, at night when the dew added a little moisture of its own, even in the rain when their bodies would be slathered almost beyond recognition with mud. Once they got going the only thing that stopped them was when after a few days the food would run out—and once when in the shuddering clasp of passion they had rolled onto a yellow jacket nest. That was a disaster. At first Rom had assumed that her cries were those of uncontrollable pleasure. He merely clasped her more tightly and drove himself deeper within her, a little awed by his own prowess. The poor girl must have suffered awfully, though her ample derriere was probably the best possible place for her to be stung fourteen times. When she finally succeeded in rolling Rom onto his side, uncovering the nest, he got away no less painfully. He only received seven stings, but all the rest put together didn't equal the pain of the third, when a particularly savage little bee settled on his still partially inflated balloon and sent him bellowing through the grass clutching his groin.

He and Nellie had wandered off in separate directions for half an hour or so, nursing their wounds and their injured dignity as best they could, finally reuniting by the banks of the Brandywine Creek where each had sought the solace of the sycamore trees, the water and the soothing mud.

"Love can really hurt like hell sometimes, can't it," Nellie had said bravely, trying to make Rom laugh and forget his pain. And his only response had been to rub some more mud on her stings and let the salty water leak from his eyes unimpeded, for he knew that he could never ask for more from a human being than that.

Strange to say, it was the howl that brought back the memory, though it was something about the memory that caused him to howl in the first place. Rom was confused. Which came first? Either? Neither? Both? Perhaps he might have reached a conclusion as he careered about the road had he not suddenly swerved into a fence and found himself arcing through the humid air several feet above a cow pasture.

"I'm transcending," he thought delightedly, swiveling his head from side to side until his momentum was abruptly terminated in a small bog-wallow of mud and the dung of many cows. Slightly stunned, and filthy, but otherwise intact, Rom stumbled to his feet. Behind him lay the road and his bicycle—upside down, with the wheels spinning madly. Before him lay the field, stretching on and on into the distance.

Suddenly something at the base of a hill some distance away caught Rom's attention, and he shielded his eyes from the sun to get a better view. There was no doubt about it; a young woman, quite without clothing, was reclining languidly on one elbow. What was more, Rom noticed as he began to stride briskly in her direction, there was something quite odd about the lush head of hair she sported: it was green, the color of fresh seaweed. She was slender, with a sadness of mien that spoke of flowered panties and folk guitars strummed softly and repeatedly in the pattern of C-Am-F-G. As Rom approached she looked at him sorrowfully yet invitingly, as if the tears that lay in insidious profusion had always been intended for him and him alone, promising to spawn a florid garden of pastels out of the blood-red clay of desire. He felt dizzy, as if the oxygen in his blood had suddenly been replaced by helium, and he stumbled repeatedly as he drew near.

When he was just a few yards away and sweating violently, the girl ran her tongue slowly and wetly along her upper lip. With her free hand she scooped up a handful of mud and proceeded to slather it about her legs and loins. She then added a crude representation of a fish to her pale belly. It glistened in the sunlight. Rom knelt down beside her in the grass covered mud, his veins gorged with blood. Gently putting his arms around her torso, he closed his eyes and lowered his mouth to hers until he felt the soft wetness touch his lips, and he kissed her long and fervidly. Then he opened his eyes, and spat out a curse mixed with spit and soil. She was gone. There was no one beneath his chest; he had been French kissing with humus. More hurt than angry, he got to his feet and looked around. At first he saw nothing and began to walk back towards the road, feeling puzzled and increasingly agitated. Before he got more than a few steps away, however, he felt the hairs start to rise on the back of his neck, and he spun around. Far off in the distance, almost out of sight, he saw the flash of green hair moving away from him across the field. Rom took off in pursuit with the vague feeling that he was leaving something behind to which he could not return, although he could not have said what it was.

He also felt for the first time in his life a gnawing sensation, like vermin, almost a vacuum down in his guts. It was a sensation that he was not to shake off for the next seven years, either, during which time he wandered and starved and stole his way about the corners of the earth. He travelled by tanker across the Atlantic, by caravan across the Sahara, by railroad and bus in South America, and by thumb and on foot and by luck everywhere else. For a dollar he bought a flute in Morocco and learned to play for his meals almost anywhere. He ate seal blubber with the Reindeer People in Lapland, drank wine with the gypsies in Andalusia, and chewed coca leaves in Peru. He barely escaped castration and a permanent job guarding a harem in Saudi Arabia, and he was on the thin edge of consciousness high in the Italian Alps when a grizzled St. Bernard suddenly appeared out of nowhere with a cask of Chianti strapped to its neck. He lost part of his left foot to a near-sighted Hammerhead Shark off the coast of Australia, and the use of one eye to a piece of shrapnel during a border dispute in Paraguay. He copulated an average of seven times a year, fathered three sons and four daughters, and never once fell in love. He contracted several different venereal diseases, including one that turned his member the color of a rotten banana when a group of drunken Colombian shepherds gave him the choice of fornicating with a mud-splashed old ewe or having his bum scorched with a branding iron. His body seemed to be in a permanent state of sexual unfulfillment; the lust trickled into his veins at a slow but steadily increasing rate until by the end of the seventh year he was sporting a perpetual erection.

Finally, after six years, ten months and eleven days of incessant wandering he stumbled upon a small fortune in the pearl beds of the South Pacific. After selling them all to a shrewd merchant in Tahiti, who paid him less than a third of their actual worth, he then took a luxury liner to France, drinking champagne and surrounding himself with young women all the way. He arrived in France with a crippling hangover and almost 900,000 francs in his pocket. In the next three weeks he spent

over 600,000 francs on eight course meals, wines from Chateaux Lafite, Margaux, Nuits St. George and d'Yquem, and an interminable parade of the most expensive prostitutes in Paris.

The rest of his money fell out of his pocket one night when he plunged into the Seine trying to embrace the reflected image of the moon. Heavily laden down by onion soup, leeks vinegrette, quiche lorraine, veal cordon bleu, canard a l'orange, several cheeses, bread, salad, one bottle of champagne, four bottles of red Bordeaux and a bottle of vintage Port, Rom sank like a blood-glutted tick to the bottom of the river. The personal valet he had hired at an exorbitant price four days before jumped in at the risk of his own life to save him. When he discovered that the wallet containing the remaining 300,000 francs had been lost in the river, however, he became so enraged that he pushed Rom back into the Seine and stalked off to a whorehouse in the Latin Quarter, muttering and dripping. Rom sank to the bottom once again and was saved only by the mercy of a street cleaner who happened to be passing at the time. By the time the street cleaner was able to hoist Rom onto the shore he was covered with vomit. Eclectic vomit, too, with smatterings of canard a l'orange, paella, cous-cous, moo goo gai pen, Yorkshire pudding, fried rice, innumerable wines, Cuban rum, Scotch whiskey, salt water, red clay, sand, a few mosquitos, part of a young bat, and quite a few other nutritional odds and ends Rom had ingested over the last seven years. And when Rom finally came to, burping, hiccupping and reeking, the vermin in his gut had fled and he knew that his wandering could finally be put aside.

A few days later Rom arrived in New York, having scrubbed toilets to pay his way on the same luxury liner on which he had been drinking champagne less than two months before. It took him several hours and a great deal of charm to get through customs. He had lost his passport on a beach in Tangiers four years before, and he had the scurrilous look and the poverty of the sort that customs officials were inclined to detain indefinitely as undesirable aliens. Over his shirt he wore a shepherd's robe and around his head a sash of muddy orange silk. His boots were of sheepskin, and knee high, and he leaned on a walking stick out of whose head was carved the hooded head of a cobra.

"Check him for dope," muttered a burly customs official to a colleague whom Rom was approaching.

"Passport," challenged the second official.

"I lost it," replied Rom wearily. He was unshaven, and there were deep semicircular creases beneath his eyes. The customs official raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry, pal, but I can't let you through here without a passport. You'll have to see the supervisor."

A few minutes later Rom was seated inside a small office filled with filing cabinets, an old Remington typewriter, and a fat, wispy-haired man of about fifty who had a habit of spitting into a waste basket through the gap in his front teeth.

"Now then mister, eh, (squit) Gabriel. You say that you left this country just over seven years ago, and that between then and now you have managed to lose your passport." He flipped through a small stack of papers and looked up. "Tell me, (squit) just what have you been up to all this time? What have you been doing with yourself for the last seven years? Hmmm?" He leaned back in his chair with his hands behind his head.

Rom sighed with such genuine weariness that for a moment the supervisor wished he hadn't asked. He was on the verge of letting fly another thin stream of spittle when Rom suddenly took a fathomless breath, let his head roll back, and emitted an extraordinary sound that arrested the other man's thought and movement like a stop button on a movie projector. For a full five minutes Rom howled, during which time the only sign of life from his interrogator was the trickle of saliva that ran slowly out of the side of his mouth and down his chin. It was a deafening howl, during which all time and space seemed to be sucked out of the room like dust, though the supervisor was unaware of any

noise whatever save those sounds that corresponded to the myriad stroboscopic images which flashed before his eyes like machine-gun fire. They began with the near-silent sough of the wind weaving through the grass on a muddy hillside. Then as if a multi-dimensional snapshot had been taken each day for the last seven years of Rom's life, so the thread of his months of wandering was pulled like a lit fuse through the supervisor's imagination, ending with the peculiar fireworks Rom had disgorged that night on the bank of the Seine.

When the sound died away and the kaleidoscopic panorama gave way to the reality of the office and the peculiar stranger in front of him, the supervisor thought that he had undergone a sudden attack of violent amnesia.

"Fucked a sheep, huh?" were his first words upon regaining composure; "huh."

Rom returned to the house of his youth and found it locked and abandoned. He did not need to be told that his parents were dead; the dumb and obedient dust upon the furniture that had not been re-arranged in seven years said it all. Several panes of glass had been broken by wandering children in search of amusement, and when he forced a window and crawled inside he found that the house had turned into a sanctuary for starlings and sparrows, mice and squirrels, centipedes and ants. Honeysuckle, with its languid, opiated blossoms had all but covered the walls, and in several windows had pushed lecherous fingers into the holes in the glass or beneath the frame, invading the chastity of the indoors.

Above the family portraits—Rom, awkwardly arrogant at sixteen; his parents, each with a tentative smile that belied their growing recognition of mortality; his maternal grandfather, imposingly dignified in his stovepipe hat and watchfob to which no watch was attached—sparrows had built nests of twigs and mud, and the features of the faces beneath them were all but obliterated by the callous white splashes of the birds. Rom made no effort to clear them off, taking instead the philosophical stance. "Such is the stuff of memories," he said addressing the sparrows, who took no more heed of him than they had of his portrait.

He found that the caches of his father's wine and cigars produced far more tangible and recognizable memories than could photographs or paintings. With the murky convolutions of cigar smoke and the violent hallucinations brought on by the wine Rom would hold conversations until well into the night, sometimes becoming so enraged with whomever he was speaking that he would begin hurling furniture and empty wine bottles about the room, muttering darkly about truncated syllogisms and circular reasoning.

One night the smoke seemed to cling to his body with a gentle persistence that he could not shake off. It drifted about his face and tickled his neck and wrapped itself around his arms, chest and legs. Rom tossed the bottle from which he had been drinking onto the mound of broken glass in the corner of the room and added another log to the fire. Then he realized that the smoke that had been carressing his hands was taking shape, solidifying into the robustly voluptuous body of a young woman. It was Nellie. She laughed at the curious blend of incredulity and apprehension that marked his features.

"I was wondering when you were going to get to me," she chuckled. "I didn't realize how much you cared about your kin."

With a cry that caught in his throat like a fishbone Rom sprang across the room to embrace her. Forgetting to allow for his own drunkenness, however, he found himself grappling instead with the dusty air, and fell to the floor with a profound crash. He looked up bewilderedly. "You're not as naive as you used to be," said Nellie gently, standing above him, "but you aren't a whole lot less foolish." She sat down beside him and ran her hands across his face. As her fingers tickled his nose he caught

the rank scent of earth and worms and he looked up at her in alarm. Nellie smiled sadly and shrugged. "What did you expect from a memory," she said. "I've been dead for some time now."

Rom's eyes filled with tears. Then suddenly he laughed. "That doesn't matter," he smiled, patting her splendid rump. "Do you still do it doggie style?"

Nellie clapped her hands delightedly. "Thank God!" she exclaimed. "At least you haven't lost all touch with reality. I was beginning to worry." Then she grew serious. "Of course I can't," she said in answer to his question. "I'm nothing more than a cloud of smoke, for God's sake. As soon as you



sober up I'll be gone. She glanced at the broken glass. "That should give us about a week."

Rom smiled, but he felt the spasm of desire seize his solar plexus. A wash of jumbled memories swept in front of him, and without realizing what he was doing he began to howl, softly and mournfully. Nellie was overjoyed. "Splendid!" she cried. "I had almost forgotten about that. Remember that yellow jacket nest?"

Rom had not forgotten. He stopped howling and began to laugh from the belly, deep and loud and inebriate. Nellie laughed along with him. "Do it some more. Tell me what you've been up to since

I last saw you."

Rom threw back his head and howled once again, the same tune that he had sung for the customs supervisor, but this time with a volume and intensity that caused the roots of the honeysuckle to quake in the ground.

"You've come a long way," said Nellie, impressed, "though you've got to branch out. You indulge yourself too much—all that intensity just to see yourself in the movies. Tell me—what have I been doing for the past seven years?"

Rom was confused. "How the hell should I know? I thought you were going to tell me. All I know is that you're dead."

Nellie looked annoyed. "You just aren't trying. You're not putting your ear to the ground. Apparently the only reason you thought of me at all was to satisfy your infernal lechery. Now that's all good and well—I'm sure you know by now that your own bottomless potential for depravity is at the roots of your squealing—but there's a lot more to it than that." She exhaled an impatient stream of smoke from a cigarette that had materialized between her lips. Rom sat quietly, slightly awed by her eloquence. She continued. "You've got enough voices inside you to blow the goddam roof off. Why aren't you listening to them? What do you think made you go running off around the world like a rat in heat anyway?"

"It's just a stage young men go through," answered Rom sagely.

Nellie lost all patience. "Great God! Do you think some eternal vagina is going to keep pulling you along by the schlong forever? Look inside yourself! Listen to yourself—or listen to me, anyway. I'll tell you a few things that might interest you if you'll just stop shoving your head in the sand and let me."

Rom raised his eyebrows. "What makes you think I'm not listening to you now?"

She sighed. "Forget it. I'll let you sit on all this for awhile. You've got something else to tangle with before I can tell you anything more."

"What's that?" Rom's eyes flickered in the firelight.

"Chaos," whispered Nellie. And as her body began to dissipate back into the acrid smoke of the cigar, her face alone remained for a moment, staring at Rom with the anxious eyes of immortality.

Rom stared into the fire for a few minutes without blinking. Then he noticed that the windows were beginning to lose their quality of reflectiveness, and that dawn was breaking. He stood up and took a few deep gulps of air to wake himself. It occurred to him that he had not eaten anything for nearly four days, relying instead upon the nutritional content of the wine. The thought itself sobered him up, and when he realized that the house itself was barren of food he began to tremble for hunger.

He went outside and walked through the weeds to where the vegetable garden had been. As he had suspected it was wildly overgrown, choked with a hirsute glutting of chickweed, crabgrass and thistles. It was as if they were asserting a fanatical revenge for the years of exclusion, and when Rom tried to walk through in search of stray vegetables he found he could not enter more than a few feet. Thistles raked his hands, chickweed bound his feet and nearly sent him sprawling, briars slashed at his arms and legs. Puzzled, he retreated. As he walked past the mulchpile a short distance away, however, a huge bird the color of soot and ashes burst out of the vines and rotting soil with an indignant explosion of squawks and flapping wings. Moving closer, he noticed that amid the furiously tangled weeds and grasses, spawned by load upon load of rotting compost and horse shit, lay several cucurbits of a hue so brilliant they seemed almost treacherous. As he reached to pull one off its vine he found himself staring at a large, tightly coiled snake of colors equally as brilliant, equally alluring, staring beadily back at him. For a short second something in the imperturbable eyes of the serpent reminded him of Nellie, and he froze. Then to Rom's astonishment the snake, its tongue flickering lasciviously, slid swiftly and unctuously into a large hole in the very zucchini he had been about to

pluck. Not being afraid of snakes on principle, he yanked the plant off the vine and held it in front of his chest at arms length, expecting to see at any moment the flickering tongue and crystal eyes poking angrily out of the hole. But they didn't, even when he shook the zucchini roughly, not even when he poked a stick into the hole and wriggled it around. Puzzled, Rom cut into the plant gingerly with his pocket knife. He found it filled only with the flesh of zucchini, with no trace of a snake whatsoever. Shrugging his shoulders, and concluding that it must be full of the vitamins and minerals he had probably been lacking in his diet of wine and cigar smoke, he devoured the plant on the spot. He had always found eating to be one of the holiest of primal joys, and he grunted and smacked his lips like a wort hog as he ate, the seeds and juices dribbling slowly down his chin. When he was finished he folded his hands, bowed his head and emitted a long and sonorous belch.

That evening found him imbibing in front of the fire once again. Hoping to be able to summon back Nellie, he went through several bottles of very good wine and smoked so many cigars that he began to feel ill. The room was just beginning to whirl when Nellie stepped out of the smoke. This time she was fully clad. Rom tried to greet her but managed only a sharp hiccup. Nellie laughed. "You're really clocked, aren't you." Rom nodded. "I wasn't going to show up tonight," she went on, "but it seemed a shame to waste all that good wine." She came over and sat on his lap, putting her arms around his neck. She kissed him, and midway through the kiss her clothes vanished into the smoke.

"Cut it out, Rom," Nellie said sharply. A hurt look crossed his face, but her clothing reappeared, or at least most of it did. Her right breast remained conspicuously uncovered. Rom grinned feebly.

"All of it," she said sternly. Rom sighed. The breast disappeared behind the now intact blouse.

"Oh, stop pouting," she said. "Tell me what you've been up to since last night."

He began to describe to her the incident in the mulch pile, but she cut him short.

"Sing it for me," she begged. Rom nodded. He took a deep breath, threw back his head, and vomited noisily over the back of the chair. Nellie almost collapsed with laughter.

"Eloquent, my boy, very eloquent. I guess content is really only an extension of form. . . ." She paused to catch her breath. "Hey, don't look so shook up. That's what it's all about. Just sit up and try again."

Rom did look shaken, but he cleared his throat and took another deep breath. The howl quavered slightly at first, but soon gathered resolution along with momentum. He recounted the garden, the mulchpile, the zucchini, and his strange encounter with the snake. When he finished he looked up at her for approval. She looked hurt.

"You can stop listening anytime you please," she said softly. "I'm just trying to help you keep your ears open. If you don't want to listen, fine, but don't blame me for what's already there. Men have been doing that since it all began. Good God, it's not my fault any more than it is yours. I thought you had learned that much by now."

Rom sat up straight. The room was whirling faster now.

"I think I have," he said, and his eyes were dark. "It's not that—it's not you—it's the fact that you're here, now, that scares me. I don't scare easily—but you're wrong about one thing: it's too late to sober up now."

By now the room was spinning crazily. He was having trouble focusing upon anything but her eyes and the embers in the fire. A noise like the buzzing of bees began to accompany the whirling. He felt confused. He began to howl, fiercely, in an effort to drown out the buzzing, but the noise did not cease. The more passionately he howled the louder the buzzing grew, and the more difficult to overcome.

Suddenly Rom became aware of the presence of others in the room. Disembodied heads, with faces—faces he had known, faces of relatives, enemies, acquaintances, friends; faces he had never

seen before, evil faces and kind—spun about him, fading in and out of focus. He stopped howling, and realized that the buzzing was coming from them, from the skulls and faces that were murmuring now, not just buzzing, murmuring demonically or in anguish, he could not tell which. Then they were howling, desperately, as if the awful weight of all their experiences and illusions were rolling behind their voices like hurricane waves about to break upon a rocky shoreline. He found that their howls were somehow familiar, that they seemed to tap into some primal, vibrating gut inside him that led circuitously to his own voice, that all of their howls were just a part of his own, and that they were all his for the asking if he but dared to listen.

Yet something was wrong. The violent spinning and the chaos of howls were getting out of control. Rom glanced down at his hand and jerked it to one side as if he had burned it. Smoke was issuing forth from his fingertips. As he stared at it his entire hand began to lose its texture, slowly turning from solid bones and flesh and hair into smoke, no more solid than the cigar smoke from which Nellie had sprung. He felt the juices of panic begin to squirt into his bloodstream, but as his fear increased, so did the rate at which the flesh became vapor. He grabbed the arm of the chair with his other hand, and saw that it too was beginning to dissolve. He appealed to the rules of logic. "*Argumentum ad hominem*," he growled. "The whole is equal to the sum of its parts." Yet his hands continued to give way to smoke, and the room spun about him even faster than before. Out of fear he tried to howl, but no sound came forth. The smoke poured out.

By now it had claimed nearly half of his left forearm, and up to the wrist on the other arm. He looked around desperately for Nellie. She was standing in the doorway with an anxious look on her face. She motioned for him to come outside. He scrambled to his feet and strode through the wild cacophony of echoing howls to the door, lurching back and forth like a sailor trying to walk on dry land after months at sea.

Once out the door the smoke began to trail off, and his hands slowly regained their normal texture. It was quiet outside, with only the profound grunting of the bullfrogs breaking the silence every now and then. He followed her out to the fields, and they sat down next to each other in the tall wet grass. Rom stared at the hillside in front of him. In the grey light of almost dawn it looked like an enormous buttock, soft and rounded. A light breeze tickled languidly through the tufts of curled grass. He shivered, catching the gamey odor of the soil. His trousers began to bulge. He stood up.

"No, Rom," whispered Nellie. She looked as if she were about to cry. "Don't."

Rom gazed at her sadly. "I can't go back in there," he said quietly.

"Why not?" she demanded.

"I'd never make it out again. I was beginning to *dissolve* in there. What makes you think that I wouldn't out here, too? I'd still hear those voices, even if I never opened my mouth again." He shivered at the thought.

"They can't do a damn thing to you if you don't let them," she said softly.

Rom laughed. "Let them, hell! They were going to eat me alive in there. I didn't have any say in the matter. They just appeared!"

Nellie gave a snort. "The only reason they scared you at all is because you gave in to your own fear. Don't you see? Those howls have been inside you ever since you were born. It just took a while for you to learn how to hear them. It's *chaos*, my friend, leering slobbering chaos. It's a damned frightening thing to have to face up to, which is why so few people are able to—except on an intellectual level, and even that's rare. And some of those few who do don't make it back again. They're the ones you find in the padded cells, if you can find them at all. You began to panic, which is why you began to disintegrate. Once you accept those howls as a rightful part of you they won't get out of hand like they did tonight. They're just part of the human condition, like farting and sex, though most people don't realize it, or don't care to admit it if they do."

She paused, and looked down at her hands. They were beginning to turn into smoke. She smiled sadly. "Enough of this dung. My time's about up. You won't be seeing me for awhile. I'll be back in there"—she pointed toward the house—"but I think I'll keep out of sight for a spell."

"Why?" asked Rom.

"I'm taking up too much of your time—no, it's true. You can't spend the rest of your life talking to me—you saw what smoke can do to you. The business of flesh and bones is flesh and bones. Keep that in mind when you go back in there and the smoke won't bother you a bit. Compared to what's out there"—she pointed her finger to the stars, which to Rom's astonishment were not only fading off into the light of dawn but were unmistakably hurling themselves away to the farthest reaches of the infinite as well—"you're on pretty solid ground. That's one reason that I don't want you to stop making all that racket. Keep howling—it's awfully quiet out there these days."

With that the last of her body yielded to the smoke, dissipating quickly as it drifted up and away from the ground. Rom took a deep breath and threw back his head. Then, heedless of both the slippery mud that squished beneath his feet and the dizzying tug of the stars, he began to walk across the field to the house that loomed before him like a stern and unfathomable god.



On Being 19 and Discovering Certain Things I Knew When 9

Gramps spun out of his trench.
Grey coats can't hear the pistol
rusting in mud.
Grandfather was skinny once and slid,
his backbone sinuous
and quiet like a snake,
between vaterland jackboots.

He was a War I pacifist without weapon
slithering nervous through enemy lines for
rescue.

The gold medal hangs framed and draped
on our old fortress landing.

Piedmont



On My Forty-Second Birthday

In the middle of the Atlantic—was it twenty years ago?—
I felt the sea lift up its head to pull me off the bow of the boat,
Off into the water.
Nothing moved: the boat, the air, the water—they were all still.
There was only the pull of the sea,
A skin drawing me down,
A needle eager to tap into the flow of my blood and drain me,
Slowly, out of myself, into the ocean,
To squirt me like squid's ink around the warm legs of the seaweed.

I held back, grabbed the rail, stayed;
For years and years I stayed, looking down into the water,
Stayed while our bodies might have slipped together like snow wound off a roof by
the wind,
While our bodies might have slapped gently together like water against a dock.
While we might have joined softly together like China fog
I stayed, stepped ashore,
And the needle buried its head back into the water.

There is no one at my breasts this evening,
No pull, no sea, no one to tap the empty fountains
That have stood cold and damp these forty-two years like a grotto.

Mark Wallace



