

THE IDOL

the Literary Quarterly
of
UNION COLLEGE

Autumn 1969
Vol. XLVI No. 1

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THE IDOL is published four
times a year at Union College,
Schenectady, New York. Sus-
taining patronages ten dollars.
Printed at Argus-Greenwood, Inc.,
1031 Broadway, Albany, N. Y.

Mailing offices at
Old Gym Hall, Union College

"... nothing in the world is more
distasteful to a man than to take the
path that leads to himself."

—HERMANN HESSE



Die We Young and Always

JAMES LIEB

THE BUZZING HOVERED above his face; mosquito. It swirled lazily in the heat, magnified by his blurred vision. Pain throbbed through his belly, spread to arms and legs.

John's teeth clenched. The pressure closed his ears to the world's groans. It was not as he imagined; he had not ever seen the sniper. There had been the sudden weakness, the stinging, burning sensation through his groin. The tall bush grass had swallowed him.

Foxy rose and fired in the direction of the sniper, but screaming parrots were the only response. He cautiously crossed the trail to where John lay, knelt beside the crumpled figure, cursed bitterly under his breath.

"Fuck, Mac. Get up here and take this bloody mess away." Remorse nearly overcame Foxy . . . but he was too well trained to permit such idiosyncrasy to persist. Besides, John would be one of the lucky ones to live. In a few weeks he'd be back in the States. "Bastard," Foxy mumbled. "Just when he was getting good."

The platoon departed. Two gaunt figures supported John, a large white bandage wound about his midriff, the red blotch seeping through nova-like. In jolting agony he passed from unconscious to semiconsciousness. His body shuddered with each step, whimpered through every pore.

Foxy watched the brush carefully, but his mind continually drifted back to John. The guilt was unbearable whenever one of his boys was hit, fear of some personal failure, some oversight. Ten years service had taught him to accept death as a daily occurrence like bitter coffee, but the faces of those boys never escaped his memory. He cursed violently, the only escape to "Reality" he knew.

It must have been three days later when John finally regained consciousness. At first all he could perceive was the white blurred sky which surely represented ceiling. The light was blinding so he did not attempt to open his eyes again. The sheets comforted, soft and warm, reassuring, like his childhood bed on summer evenings when storms shot bolts of lightning dashing through the countryside. His fingers groped but could not find his stomach. He prayed it still existed.

The Sarge visited later. He came to see how the kid was doing, just to let him know how envious he was 'cause the kid would be going home soon. John knew it wasn't true, knew that Foxy could have left long ago. John liked the Sarge and would miss him.

JOHN ARRIVED in San Diego on the Fourth of July, a full month after the operation. They still didn't know if he would be able to walk. The flight across the Pacific had been dreadful. There had been several patches of choppy air and he had been ill until the plane reached Hawaii. But now he was finally resting comfortably in a large sterile-smelling hospital bed. And soon Carol would arrive.

She had written every day while he lay in the hospital in Danang. A nurse had read

the letters to him, embarrassing because they were so personal. He had fondled the thin sheets of paper for hours at a time, drinking their dizzy fragrance.

Now he would see her for the first time in almost a year. He dreaded the moment; could she really know what it would be like? How would she accept his mangled body?

There was a light tap at the door. The blonde hair brushed through the opening; an uncertain expression hung below. She tiptoed toward the bed.

"Darling?" He opened his eyes, met the liquid brown orbs that floated above him. They held him spellbound; he felt lost in their depth. Suddenly they rushed upon him; moist warmth spread as thin lips met. He had forgotten how it felt. If only they were at the shore. They had loved to stroll the beach and sail in pearl-shaped coves along the coast. The recollection burnt. . .

Carol was permitted to stay only a short time, but returned nearly every day. She had rented an apartment near the hospital. Occasionally she took trips to the mountains or the beach, and once she went to Los Angeles to see her cousin who played for the Angels. It depressed John when she told him about the excursion.

The operations began in August. There were five in all. The doctors appeared hopeful, John became more optimistic, and on Carol's visits they began to plan the wedding. John's uncle in Boise had offered him a job in real estate that could get them started.

Peter arrived unexpectedly one afternoon just before Labor Day. He had written often from France but had been unable to cut his studies short.

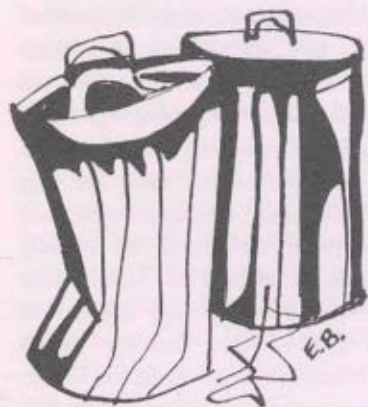
John was ecstatic at their reunion, Peter solemn. He had brought John a sweater from France. It was alpaca; ski striped, a symbol of that unspoken assurance which lay between the two boys.

On later trips Peter brought books and occasionally dill pickles, John's secret craving. They would talk of their youth; the summer trips to San Francisco, the spring they had gone rock climbing in the Sierras and John had tangled with a rattler, the year Peter had been class president (beating Sandy Eaton by thirteen votes), John his vice-president. John enjoyed those visits. It no longer hurt to reminisce; the future appeared as promising as a star-studded eve.

Then came the doctor's report. The soothing words flowed like warm syrup; their significance escaped John. He just stared into the infinite distance beyond the pure white ceiling.

Carol was afraid to see John, afraid of how he would act, afraid of what they faced. Finally resolved, she repeated Doctor Flannigan's consoling "Perhaps someday we will discover a technique. . .," prepared to face her crippled love.

When she arrived, John would not speak to her. She cried uncontrollably. He cursed under his breath, the conditioned Marine response. Then youthful love flooded his soul; he held her desperately, despairingly. Tears came to his eyes. He hated the tears, and the girl who commanded them, and the world that created them. Memories of sunny days on horseback along the rocky beaches, and glaring expanses of granulated snow spread creamily over peaked hills were washed of their purity with the splashing red and sweat of that stinging afternoon. They had



robbed him of his Self, buried it in the rice paddies of Viet Nam. He froze, his arms stiff, body tense. In one clear moment he understood what had happened, what could never happen again. Life had turned against him; all its gargoyle masks flashed through his mind, chased the cherubs of pleasure, expelled them forever.

JOHN WAS NEVER the same. It was not his mere acquiescence. He seemed to bask in his submission, ridiculing his oppressors with his surrender. Carol worried constantly, could never talk with John. She discussed the matter with Peter, but he too had run up against the stumbling block of scorn.

Toward Christmas John was permitted to leave the hospital. He was confined to a wheelchair and would sit in it for hours staring from the windows of Carol's apartment. She offered to roll him outside, but he always declined the invitation. Finally she stopped asking.

Peter would visit each afternoon. He would sit with John in the bedroom and talk, but the conversation was always strained. Afterwards Peter would go into the kitchen where Carol was waiting. He always professed that John was improving, but Carol knew otherwise. The sullen facade was unshifting.

It was a warm, breezy January afternoon, three weeks after John had left the hospital. Peter had been sailing, had lost himself in the exaltation of nature's beauty, and now found himself arriving later than usual to see John. He feared being late for his supper with Janice.

Carol answered the door suddenly, more distraught than usual. John was sitting in the back room gazing blindly through the window.

"Hello, John. How are you today?"

There was no movement at the window, only silence. Then, "You didn't have to come if you didn't want to, Peter."

"Don't be ridiculous! What kind of a statement is that?"

"I know you have lots of other things to do, Peter. There's no need for you to waste your time here."

"You know I like to come and see you, John, what's got into you?"

There was silence again.

"Peter, marry Carol and leave!"

"Are you crazy?"

"Why not? You've taken everything else I've ever had or wanted. You and the rest of this God-forsaken world. Why leave me with this last bitter remnant of what it should have been like? Why torture me so?"

"John! What did I do?"

"You let them kill me!"

"No. You know I'd do anything for you."

"Then do me one last favor, Peter. Leave."

Peter did not stop to speak with Carol. He forgot about the date with Janice, roamed the streets. His mind was squeezed in confusion. Why was John so spiteful? Peter doubted his own insincerity, yet could not find a solution, could not escape those accusing eyes.

Two days later he received a letter from John. It apologized slightly, but asked that Peter not return. Again, Peter could not sleep. But the next day he received his appointment as Senator Marsh's assistant. Peter was bound for Washington, John behind him, far from the future to which Peter looked forward.

IT WAS WARM for November. The sun smiled through Peter's office window. Squinting, he gazed at the shimmering Golden Gate in the distance.

The newspaper lay languidly upon his lap. He glanced at the four column headline: "Roan Sweeps, Carries 64% of California Vote." Below lay his picture smiling back at himself in triumph.

It had been a long struggle through the California legislature and House of Representatives. Senator Marsh had instructed him in all the innuendos of political play. Now national prestige had seized Peter.

The Senator had called early that morning, had congratulated him heartily upon the magnitude of his victory. Well-wishers had kept Peter up until, finally, he told his secretary to refuse all calls. Even so, he had not been left alone until noon.

He glanced over the brief speech to be given at the afternoon press conference. Keating had done a fine job on it. Not too indiscreet. Support of our forces in Angola. Recommendation for potential study into tentative tax reductions. But nothing non-negotiable.

Marsha tapped on the door and stepped into the room. "How are you, Peter?" He did not appreciate her mocking smile. Sometimes he actually believed he hated her. But usually they got on well enough, each content in the necessity of their marriage. Only with her family money could his aspirations be quenched; only when they were filled could she gain the prestige she desired.

"I'm working." Peter's annoyed tone chased her from the room as he lifted a stack of telegrams off his desk, shuffled through them. Marsha would handle the replies later on; she could always add a special touch.

John's name slid through Peter's mind without being noticed, suddenly blasted home. He threw the wilted yellow pile on the desk; stared fixedly at the lone sheet in his hand. It had been over fifteen years since he had heard from John. He wondered if they had ever married, if John had been able to get a job. The telegram was brief. Congratulations. And a gift to follow. In remembrance of his days in the hospital. And their friendship. A smile broke out on Peter's weary face. He called his secretary, ordered John's package sent in as soon as it arrived.

Then he was being hustled into the newsroom for his televised acceptance speech. The room was buzzing like a hive as he approached the stage. The TV lights were sweltering. Applause

burst from the dark cavernous rear of the room as he reached the podium.

"Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. . ." and he had plunged into the speech. He had reached the "Necessity to create a position of unilateral superiority" when he remembered John's telegram. Suddenly those days of youthful exuberance and optimism flowed through his mind. For a moment he faltered but the profession of political aspiration had taught him to vocalize one thought while concentrating on another. As he fed constituency-approved response to the questions of war and the U.N., his thoughts roamed over those freer days.

It must have been in June, just before graduation. History class, or maybe English. There had been a discussion. Peter could remember John's praise afterward. In those years, peace and freedom had shown like the adolescent's noon day sun.

And when John had returned . . . the carnage of Troy had come alive. The ugly reality tagged "Life" had walked before the innocent.

When had that new "reality" reared its face? Was it with Janice and the cold hard truth of flesh? It had certainly grown under Senator Marsh. And the novelty of political respect. "Washington Wonder Boy," was it?

But did it really matter? Wasn't this what the people wanted? Not peace, but peace of mind. The form supplied by strength and symbol. Wasn't this the real meaning of Democracy? Feeding the creatures their own bones to gnaw.

That was life. The relevancy of

creation; to give what is wished, not asked. Not peace but security. Not purity but affluence. Idealism: shroud of the puerile. . .

Someone was saying "Thank you, Mr. Senator" and he found himself shining that self-confident smile into the cameras. The lights clicked off, sweat cooled in small beads across his forehead. Someone came up from behind and whispered "Excellent speech, Peter." He grinned and dashed for his office.

THE TAP on the door startled Peter. He had fallen asleep on the couch while going over the newspaper. The blurring blue figure hovered in the doorway. Peter tried to adjust his vision.

"It's the box from your friend, Senator." Peter was not at all sure what the man was referring to.

"The one from San Diego. . ."

"Oh yes, of course. Bring it right in."

"I'm afraid that's impossible, sir. It exploded when the guard downstairs opened it. There was a bomb inside."

Peter was not sure he had heard correctly. He ran the phrase through his mind several times like a tape recording. Each time it came through the same.

"We've put out an all-points bulletin for the man. Any information you can give us would be helpful."

Peter just stared at him blankly.

"We hope to have him by tonight."

"Yes. Yes, of course."

. . . and always

Props

MARLA KAPLAN

promise me an eternity of rainbows
 smearing the sky from august to june
and lettuceleaf garlands to pad my throbbing mind
pledge lemondropkissesthatburn on the waves
and virgin wool to ease the warmth
 of my soul
and
I shall weep again the tears of stepping
 that you so long to hear
 for 'world'
is a frightening motto
 where only magicians would follow

photo by Mark C. Boylan



The Yard Dog

JIM WILLIAMS

He could be found curled around a soiled, construction boot.
Thin, weak and dying his dry, white tongue would run in and out quickly
While his eyes, swollen with wound up, would leap from one object to another
Seemingly trying to discover —

In the morning when I knew him best,
Three, yellow carious teeth would smile a canine smile
As time trumpeted its ugly reprise ceremoniously
And the construction boot left its mark indelibly.

Gathering strength from an eternally unknown source
He would dodder into piles of lumber and brick
And lose himself in sleeping labyrinths of dust
Until morning fell upon him once again.

His meagre body, branded in countless places by marks
From the soiled, construction boot,
With oppressive repetition defied starvation, pain and disease
And held.

His eyes, spontaneous and aware, partners in an intimacy
With all objects they held, bled crimson tears and clotted
While leaping from one object to another
Seemingly trying to discover —

The tribulation and the repetition broke.
The yard dog could not be found.

Months passed. One morning as I was sorting piles
Of warped lumber and broken brick I discovered the yard dog,
His bones dressed in dust caught by oil from a leaking drum,
Worms where his eyes once bled, leeches where his strength once flowed.

There was the yard dog
Seemingly trying to discover —

The Blues for Charlie Darwin or "Yes, We Have No Bananas"

ROBERT G. FILLMORE

Mood gray —

That gray dust in our heads
those gray dusty dreams
with purple streams going
slowly, slowly flowing
receding from each beginning
reaching each ending;
 slowly trickling
 on down the slope
into the nothing expanse —

gray dust.

Psyche's purest progeny
peeling bananas with his toes
(Charlie D.'s greatest grandfather many times removed)
in the green arms of a giant tropical tree
never thought in purple streams
 those luscious dreams.

Until one day —
 in gray dust
a strange fruit tree

growing
growing

gray dust with deep purple streams
slowly, slowly flowing
filthy to infinity
growing so gradually . . .

Dictionaries and Needlework is the second of two short stories by Leslie Petrovics to be awarded the 1969 Yudis Prize for creative writing. The first story, *In Late Spring*, appeared in the last issue of *The Idol*.

Dictionaries and Needlework

LESLIE PETROVICS

EXCEPT FOR THE RHYTHMIC CREAKING of the rocking chair the room was silent. As Zsuzsi tipped the chair back, her feet came off the ground and her head rocked back and forth as though it were the head of a rag doll. With each forward swing she looked at the crossword puzzle on her lap. There was a time when they had taken hours to complete, when many words had evaded her. But now she had become adept at the puzzles. This one had taken her only thirteen minutes and she missed only one word. It was eighteen across, some river in the Ukraine, but nine, eleven, and thirteen down had produced the word. She checked her answer in a red dictionary whose edges had orange with wear. It was right. Zsuzsi smiled. From a pile which lay by her feet, she picked up yet another old paper. Looking over the new puzzle, she chewed her pencil. This would be a hard one, she thought.

Rozsi, her mother, lay sleeping in the bed across the room. She was a frail woman past eighty. Her hair, usually yellowish white, was now grey from an accumulation of dirt and oil. Zsuzsi used to wash the old woman's hair three times a week. She would bring the pan to the bed and as Rozsi bent over the hot water, massage the lather from a bar of soap. When Rozsi complained that the loose hairs were hurting her scalp, Zsuzsi bought the expensive shampoo made especially for aging hair. It cost five forint and came in a green bottle. It lathered much better than hand soap. Rozsi had closed her eyes tightly, even her nose had wrinkled with the effort, but the lather still got into them, and for hours after each washing they would be red and moist with tears. So Zsuzsi now washed the old woman's hair only once a week.

"Rozsi. What is a four letter word for a boxing maneuver?" Zsuzsi asked. Rozsi did not awaken but rolled over, crumpled into a ball, and wheezed. Upon hearing the sound, Zsuzsi went to the bed and gently pulled up the blanket until it almost touched Rozsi's lips. She then attended to the pot-bellied stove, throwing a few chunks of coal into the fire. She did not bother to clean her hands and when she brushed her hair aside it left a streak of grey on her forehead. Zsuzsi again looked at the loose skin of Rozsi's face. What a good, kind woman she is, she thought. The fire had not caught yet and Zsuzsi shivered.

She remembered Rozsi before the accident. Rozsi rose before six to arrive at the open

market at an early hour. The peasants would be just unloading their wagons of vegetables and live chickens when she arrived. The place was noisy with the clucking of nervous birds and the air smelled of the urine from weary horses. The urine flowed under piles of corn or potatoes. Rozsi always avoided those piles, but when forced to pick from them, she carefully sorted those from the top. She prided herself in being early at the market, when few buyers were there, for then she could bargain with the peasants.

Zsuzsi remembered Rozsi holding a chicken high in the air. The frightened bird flapped its wings and feathers flew to the ground.

"That's a good one. Only twenty forint," the peasant said.

"Look at those loose feathers. It looks sick to me," Rozsi replied.

"Sick? The wife told me to sell it. I wouldn't have it here otherwise. That's one of my best hens."

"Why should you sell a good hen?"

"It is getting old."

"The meat's tough."

"Look I'll give it to you for seventeen."

"Fifteen."

"Fifteen." The peasant shrugged his shoulders.

That was her favorite trick — holding the birds high in the air.

In the fall she pinched the peaches and claimed they were too soft. She tasted the plums and said they were rotting. Then she rented the wheelbarrow and pushed home bushels of

fruit which she boiled down as preserves for the winter.

A week before her eighty-second birthday, Rozsi fell and broke her hip. After the operation she contracted pneumonia and with the efforts of Zsuzsi recovered. Nothing would change, Zsuzsi had told her. She could still go to the market if she wanted to. It was May and the price of fish were the lowest in the whole year. Rozsi remembered the huge pike she had bargained for the year before. The eggs, fried in butter, made two meals in themselves.



But everything did change. At first she could walk to the bathroom, but soon she wasn't even able to do that and Zsuzsi bought an *ejeli* made of metal. The bedpan was always under the bed and Rozsi could reach it by leaning over. The odor was bad and Zsuzsi always emptied the pan before bringing food to Rozsi. Soon the metal of the bedpan rusted and Zsuzsi bought a new one made of porcelain. It was expensive and very cold. Rozsi felt bad about not being able to walk to the bathroom.

When her eyes started failing, Rozsi told Zsuzsi not to buy any more magazines. She could close her eyes and see the colored pictures from the back issues. It was better that way. The models with bright dresses and thick furs paraded before her, walking gracefully, turning then walking back again. Sometimes they pointed their toes and Rozsi could see the style of the shoes they wore. And at night when Zsuzsi turned the radio on, Rozsi could see herself in the front row at the concert.

The conductor was very emotional. His hair flopped with the movements of his body. Rozsi was dressed fashionably, like the models. Her calves were firm and tight and filled the nylon stockings nicely. From the corner of his eyes when he turned around to bow, the conductor looked at them.

Rozsi awoke and lay quietly on her side. She stared into space and a look of worry stole across her face.

"What is it, Rozsi?" Zsuzsi whispered.

"Peter. I dreamt of Peter."

"Peter is all right. Don't you remember?" Now the words came easily to Zsuzsi. "He's a doctor in America. He sent us that package with the coffee beans and rouge."

In a drawer in the front room Zsuzsi kept a letter. The envelope and stamp she had bought from a tourist. Often she would show Rozsi the red stamp with U.S. Post printed on it. The letter was written on old onion skin and was folded into quarters. Where the creases came together a hole had worn. She ran to get the letter and read it to Rozsi as though it were from her son. Peter had died four months before. Zsuzsi thought that perhaps it was time to write a new letter but the old one always pleased Rozsi and she never bothered. It was easy to lie to an old woman who smiled.

Returning to her chair, Zsuzsi started working on the puzzle again. This was a hard one. She would have to cheat some, and she started looking up words in the dictionary. As she did this, Rozsi started working on the embroidery which lay by her side on the bed. In one of her coherent moments she had told Zsuzsi that she

hoped and prayed that God would let her finish her needlework. "This one I will give to Istvan," she said. "And the next, if God permits, to little Jancsi."

"Istvan. Little Jancsi. Little." Zsuzsi smiled to herself. "My God, Jancsi is twenty-two all ready." But as she thought of her husband and her son, memories of the revolution came back also, and the smile left her face and her shoulders sagged. The rouge on her cheeks stood out sharply against the pale, tight skin of her face.

Istvan, her husband, had died in the revolution while waiting in a bread-line. An armored car had taken the crowd by surprise and he had been shot three times in the stomach. Zsuzsi had placed a pot of geraniums on the sidewalk where he had died. People had to walk around the pot and one evening someone took it away. Even more painful for Zsuzsi was the memory of her son, Jancsi, who had left for America in the closing days of the revolution.

Like most of the refugees, he had succeeded. He was in law school at Berkeley. "It takes a special type to get up and go," she would say to herself. But Jancsi seldom wrote. At times Zsuzsi felt that perhaps she had become insignificant in his life, but this she quickly dismissed from her mind. She said to friends, "You know those Americans. Busy, busy. And anyway, he has so much studying." Her friends would nod in agreement.

The bell rang in the outer hall. She did not hear it at first and it rang five, six times before she became aware of the ringing. Zsuzsi looked at her watch. It read 12:30. Mail. She hurried to the door, received the mail, then came back to the room. Suddenly it

seemed too small for her. The air was stale and hot. She went to the furnace and jabbed at the coals with pokers, trying to kill the flames. The flames sprang higher in the fresh air.

"Nothing from your son, Rozsika," she said. Zsuzsi licked the beads of perspiration which clung to her upper lip. It tasted salty and she swallowed the saliva which had formed in her mouth. "Only a package for me."

The old woman did not look up. She was busily redoing the uneven, white petals of an embroidered daisy.

Zsuzsi sat in the rocking chair and with the edges of her nails cut the tape surrounding the package. She pulled out the book she had ordered. On the front cover in slanted, gold type was printed the word *Dictionary*. It was stiff and heavy and much bigger than her old one.

Poe ATE A Tree!

dedicated to Rich Clemens
and All Moderns

Jim Williams

ybg't
triKey
or contrl'vedah?
Wares U ow't.
ybhopply
Whore ta Tory?
O, idewKnot
lieKit.
No cents, non cents
Tensents a dolor
All four doohicKeys,
Doodle and holler!
Hell—pih, hell—pih
Know con-troll
Burr-Ridge's gawtme
Pay the Troll.



KITCHEN LIGHTS (August-1957)

MICHELE VOTTIS

There is no sound on the
home-worn carpet
as the virgin Oxford shoes
plod evenly to the
fly-struck screen door . . .
And a name is called
(her niece no doubt)
up the paint-chipped
wooden-porch street,
across the bull-dog digressing
with the fox-terrier,
and the squeak of the mailman's
shoes as he brings
a loaf of bread home from
the A&P . . .

The child turns,
and the Coke bottle caps
rattle in her pocket.
she takes one more
squirt of cool-ade from the
orange plastic gun
(a mortal sin before dinner),
and shuffles the Keds
toward the light from the
kitchen.

The Oxfords turn toward the
empty chicken soup bowls,
and dried up bread sticks . . .
when your friendly neighborhood
policeman's motorcycle careens
around the corner.
(the flies hold their breath on
dusty venetian blinds)
and the house-woman stares out
of wood-brown linoleum eyes . . .
wishing she were a siren.

Poem

JOAN PERKINS

Somehow I think "youandi"
Is unitary (stick to stay)—
I can see us walking through the years
And though along the way
You will love a many other (surely I
will do the same)
We will wake someday beside them
Speaking of each other's name,
Last through weeks and months together
In an undramatic way
And come the time we used to leave
We'll stop, and think, and this time,
stay.

HANS' ROOM

MICHELE VOTTIS

driftwood,
and a broken radiator bubbling in its accordian pot,
and a wicker chair,
(shredded as wheat)
and a fistful of orange bottled candlelight,
and the Marrakesh Express,
and your poetry
(defying my dirty-laundry, exhausted ego) . . .
trickling
into
the tight chocolate-sweet spot in my throat
(all clogged as a drain-pipe with ungreen tears).

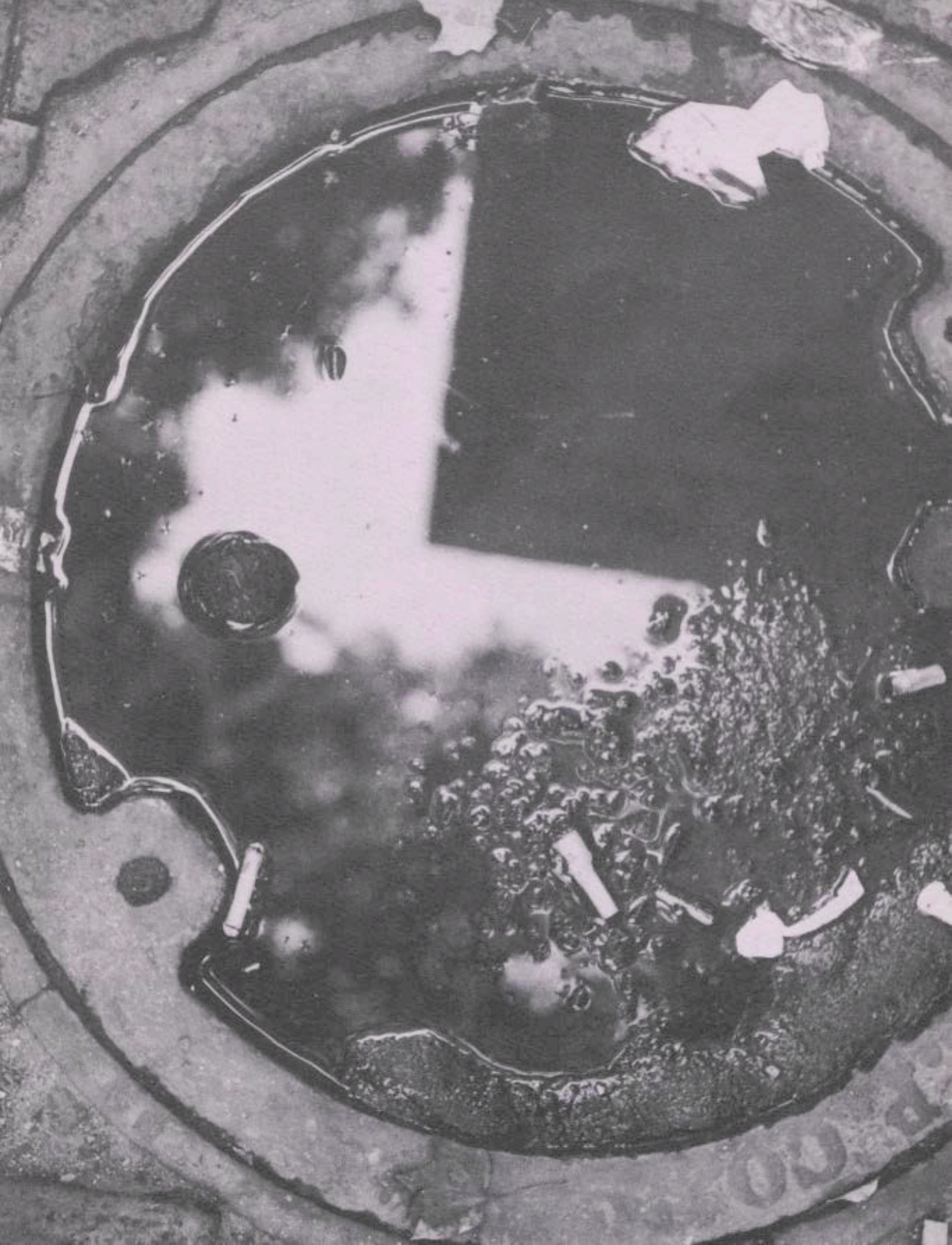
Dead End

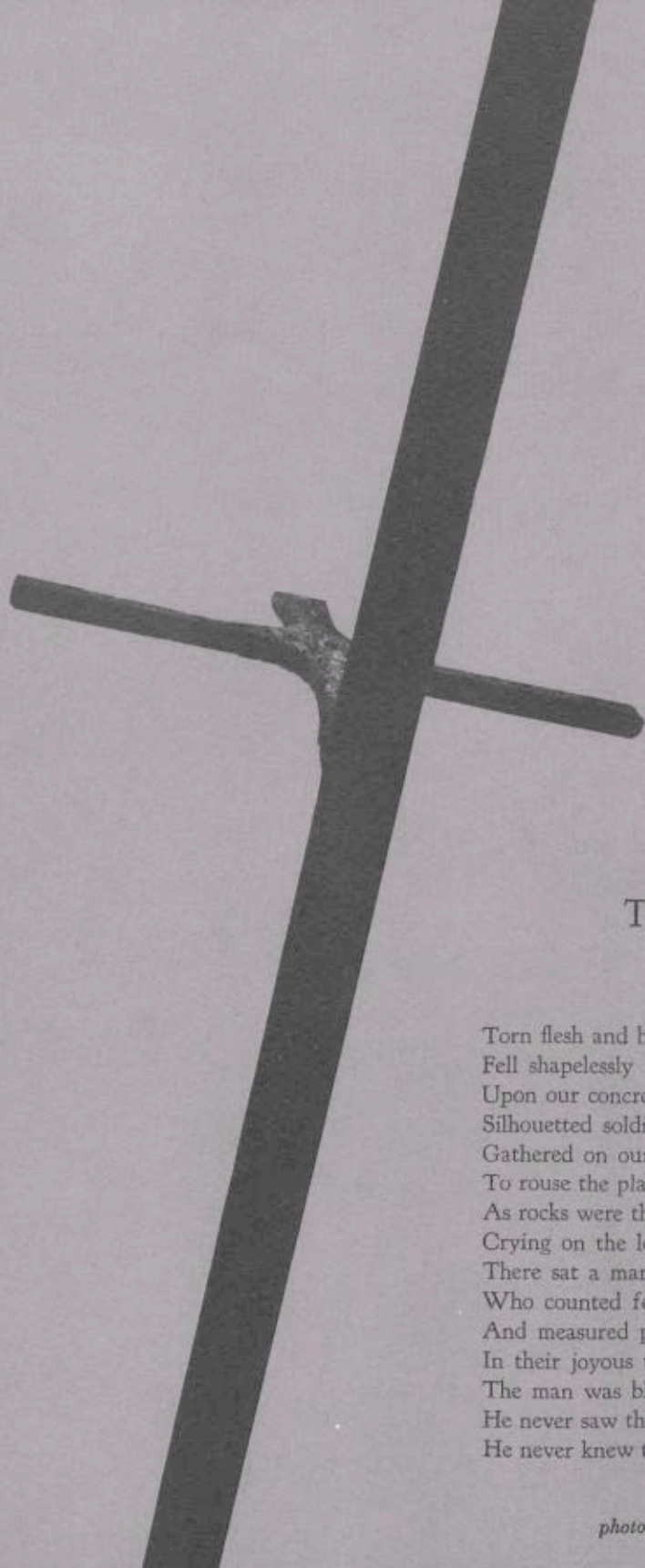
ROBERT G. FILLMORE

*Look to the sky-scraped sky.
blue blackwashed by concrete,
laughter filled with shadows,
sounds depressed to obscurity.
Climb the miles of fire escapes,
reach for some liquid cavity
to dampen the one-way machine.
Rain, sunshine, clouds, anything
to relieve the agony of walls.*

*Inside nowhere and confusion
life drowns in dirty Sunday-morning gutters.
Engines push the crowded anxiety
until blood breaks down all descent.
Falling oblivion crashes on authority,
driving beauty conforms to nothing,
searching hands meet aggression.
The funeral of automation ends
with no one left to cry.*

photo by Larry Cole





The Rock

FRED LEVY

Torn flesh and battered skulls
Fell shapelessly
Upon our concrete grassways.
Silhouetted soldiers
Gathered on our foreign roads
To rouse the placid countryside to anger.
As rocks were thrown at sparrows
Crying on the ledge,
There sat a man
Who counted feathers falling,
And measured pulses rising
In their joyous turmoil.
The man was blind.
He never saw the stray rock that killed him.
He never knew the rock was meant for him.

Love Me Tender

or

The return of the grotesque

MORRIS BELL

ERNEST EVERHART let out a long, deep breath, looked back toward the youth hostel where he had walked Ellen home, and started to walk away. He was getting hung up on this chick and he knew it. He'd only been in Vienna two months, and here he was getting involved with an American girl. He ran his fingers through his hair from the forehead back in a nervous gesture. His hair was still blond from the Saudi Arabian sun, and he smiled to himself as he thought of those miserable nine months he'd spent there teaching the Saudi soldiers to speak English. Two American women, secretaries, in the whole damn camp and over fifty horny Americans. No wonder those girls liked their job. He had liked one of them, even though he was in love with her. Then he walked into his stone hut to find his roommate screwing her on the floor. Hell of a sight he thought.

He was in Vienna now with lots of money from his Arabian job and so he'd been enjoying himself. He'd been going to museums and concerts and learning to love the opera. Everyone went to the opera. Every butcher, someone had told him, knows that he must go to the opera at least once a month. He had also discovered a *Weinskeller* called Augustiner Keller and had met hundreds of *Wieners* there.

He thought of the beer halls of Germany, especially those of Munich and shrugged. He had visited the famous *Hofbrau Haus* in March on his way to Vienna and his new job with Berlitz, and it had been the season when he could at least pretend that the smelly, loud, badly dressed people around him were not masquerading tourists. There had been the wandering bands playing with a remarkable disregard for tonal quality and key probably based on a desire not to outdo the voices of their patrons. There had been the remarkable *Frauen* who could carry six full liter beer glasses on their shoulders and skillfully deal them out to six beer-ballooned bodies without spilling a drop. And there had been the amazing hall itself, filled to its high, painted ceiling with smoke, while its floor suffered the carelessness of the hundreds of people crowded onto the benches which lined the room from pillar to pillar.

But for him the Augustiner wine cellar had offered him time after time the contact with local people and the personal atmosphere which is the purpose of a public place dedicated to drink and conversation. Right in the center of town, it didn't waste its energies being quaint in order to attract tourists. Unlike Grinzing, an entire town dedicated to Heurige wine and drunken tourists, Augustiner Keller was for the people of Vienna's center and a meeting place for all. He liked it there. That was where he had

brought Ellen after meeting her casually in a museum.

Twenty-two years old from San Francisco, Ellen was a girl who had the capacity to change her appearance from the girl to bring home to mother to a streetwalker. She had deeply rich, gypsy-brown eyes and red auburn hair which, when she let it down, reached to the middle of her back. She had a face capable of rare, mysterious expressions, and it was the sort of face that could intrigue a man for a life time. He could never really explain, he thought, some of what she said with her face.

Her body was completely unrelated to her face, and there were times when he wished her body were not even there. Her hips were a little large but matched her thighs and legs which while appealing would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the incredible mini-skirts she wore. She also had the disconcerting habit of wearing no underwear of any kind, and while at first he had been shocked to hear her tell of Italians trying to masturbate against her on a bus, he had begun to understand.

A really bright girl, she had attended San Francisco State for four years as a psychology major and had gotten so deeply into it that she had run away from it screaming. She had been all the way through drugs and was on the other side now. She had lived in the Haight for two years directly across from the Free Store, and now she was thumbing through Europe. Her experiences had been rather different from his own. Not like being raised as an army brat in Germany he thought. Now Ernest, his mother used to say, don't eat the vegetables. You know they don't take care of them

properly. He had to laugh as he thought of it.

Why did she always have to talk about balling? They'd been together almost every day for three weeks, and it was getting difficult to stay uninvolved. She had decided to stay to take care of a kidney infection which had been bothering her for almost nine months, and balling had been too painful for her. She had also stayed, he supposed, because he was there to help her. Now it had turned out to be gynecological; from balling too much she had explained. Yet he liked the girl; he really did. When she came out of the doctor's office and told him what was wrong, he had taken her head in his hands and kissed her. He had told her he was fond of her, and the truth of it was he did care.

He was fascinated by this woman, and he knew he was falling in love with her. He could fall in love easily, too damn easily he thought as he started back toward his apartment. She'd be leaving in a few weeks anyway.

The way from the youth hostel to his room was down Mariahilferstrasse, the major shopping district in Vienna, and through the inner-city. It was a little after midnight and typical of Vienna, the street was almost deserted. Ernest loved to walk through city streets at early hours when there were few people around. Then the city was his. He would wander down the middle of the avenue and taste the air and revel in the changing neon shadows. During the day there were too many sounds, and you became used to a silence of noise he thought. You no longer were aware of the car noises, the noises of the workmen on the street, or the

sounds of shops in trade. It all became a background which you mentally avoided, filtering out only relevant sounds for your attention.

Ah, but a sleeping city was a different world. Then every sound had its own character. You could hear the street lights buzzing, a door closing, street-walkers laughing their tiresome laughs, and you could hear a key jingle.

He turned to this last sound, for it was not one key jingling, but hundreds. Ernest spotted the old man and walked closer. It was the KEY-MAN, he chuckled to himself. The thought reminded him of words like garbage-man or paper-boy for when he thought of those words he sometimes liked to imagine a man made of tin cans, old tires, and last week's offal, or of a boy with the "New York Times Book Review" for a head, the "Sunday Times" for a body, rolled up daily newspapers for limbs, and perhaps the "National Enquirer" for an ass. Grotesque, but fun to think of, and now standing before him was the KEY-MAN.

He was actually a night watchman of perhaps forty years of service (he wore a gold pin on his cap to prove it), wearing a uniform of indistinguishable character. He was fairly tall, though stooped with his load, and had a remarkable white and gray beard full to his hair line which was sharply cut off by his cap. Indeed, he at first reminded him of the seaman in "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" who could stop a wedding party with his glaring eye, except that he was sickly drunk with wine. His breath and yellowed, rotted, stubbed teeth spoke of a life time of wine, and his almost handsome face was twisted and discolored from his

nightly drinking. But the major feature of his character was his box of keys which hung from his neck and bounced up and down against his stomach. From his magic box appeared leather lines of keys like spider legs which the old man was ever fondling. At no point from the time Ernest hailed him until he left did the old man's hands stop caressing those keys, sliding them up and down on the leather lines. Both hands were used in this occupation, and there was a curious syncopated rhythm to his habitual movements. Slung over his shoulder, he also had a round leather night watchman's clock which was covered in an already cracking leather case. Ernest spent a half hour with him helping him close up the outer iron gates of the major shops of Vienna. He could hardly believe that the KEY-MAN could manipulate the keys or know which key from his hundreds would be correct. But he knew them all, as Ernest knew his own fingers. These keys were a part of the old man's body. Always in motion, always being felt, they circulated through his fingers like his blood, and he would probably be dead without them. It was incredible to Ernest that this man held the security of the most important shops in his wine-dumbed hands. But this was Vienna, and perhaps the attitudes of the shop keepers were more humane than business-like. Didn't seem likely Ernest thought, but he was happy for him.

He and the KEY-MAN stopped to drink from one of the fountains which, as in most European cities, adorn the sidewalks and streets of Vienna. It was simple and not very high, and its only appointments were two lion heads from

which water poured and a small woman with a jug stood on top. The KEY-MAN looked at the metallic maiden, gave her a wink, and stared laughing at Ernest. As he drank from her fountain, it reminded Ernest of Ellen and his problem with women.

He left the old man then and continued home. It occurred to him as he walked that he could probably fall in love with any woman, and the more difficulties involved the more he would enjoy it. It was becoming grotesque he thought. He walked along the old and tired streets of Vienna lost in his own thoughts and questions. Where was this all leading? How far could this go? When he looked up, he found himself before one of the famous landmarks of Vienna. It was the fountain of Neuer Markt which he had admired so many times before.

About twenty-five feet in diameter the fountain had five life-size major characters. Providence was a lovely woman in a loosely draped toga with cherubs below her holding fish and shells from which streamed forth the circulating waters of the fountain, and she sat on a gracefully shaped pedestal in the middle of the marble pool. There were four archetypal sea characters who were perched on the lip of the round fountain. Two were male—a young fisherman with a leaf over his ass who, with a trident in hand, had been leaning over the pool about to stab a fish for two hundred years, and there was the "old man of the sea" type, bearded and carrying an oar over one shoulder. There were also two toga clad damsels with water jugs and classical smiles. All the characters were black at night, but their metallic bodies reflected the lights

still burning in the square. He walked cooly around looking at the statues when one of the pretty metallic maids, eternally pouring water from her jug into the pool, caught his eye. Her head was turned away so he sauntered over to her other side and made his initial contact. He mentioned something about the night and wouldn't it be cold. Although she didn't answer, he thought he had attracted her attention. Well, it wasn't the most brilliant "come-on" in the world anyway, he thought, so he tried again. Rather than communicating in words, he decided that this rare breed of woman might respond better to his caresses. He gently placed his hand on her thigh and ran his fingers down her legs which were tucked under her in her sitting position. As she made no motion to avoid his touch, he continued fondling her dark, cold body. He spent some time looking at her face. He knew she wasn't real, and yet there was something about her that was quite attractive.

Though she was covered with pigeon dung, he imagined her a noble creature caught helplessly in the dreary, stinking quagmire of routine life, and he imagined he could help her. He touched her greenish half-parted lips and looked into her pupil-less eyes. How hard she seemed, how beautifully unattainable. He lay his head on her lap, and heard the circulation of her blood and the rushing of life through her body. He tried to imagine what it would be like to have the cold waters of Vienna running through his body in order to be poured out of a jug which was part of him. He imagined their children with his mind and her quiet, strong determination.

The noise of the circulation warmed

the metal to his reddened cheeks, and her cradling warmth was at that moment the most important thing in the world to him. He knocked on her metal body and heard the echo, like the deep voice of a tragic woman, reverberate throughout his dumb darling. He looked up at last from his resting place and saw her looking down at him. She was sad and melancholy not only because of the life she was molded to, but also for him because he wanted to save her and couldn't and because he loved her. He

felt the flow of blood to his face as he blushed as one blushes when one catches oneself in love.

At that moment two staggering Viennese men in their mid-twenties, laughing and cursing, addressed Ernest as he stood by the side of his love, absorbed in her last look. They focused their drunken attention on the couple and said in heavy accent, "Yooou loouue hir." He looked up at his hard love for support, and in sudden realization he turned and ran.



Implications of a Rainy Tuesday

ROBERT G. FILLMORE

To stare into the lazy grays of sky and chimney
And see beyond the autumnburnished horizon
And to hear past the lost green shouts
Is to trek through the mind, behind memory's chill
And to emerge on a rainy Tuesday.

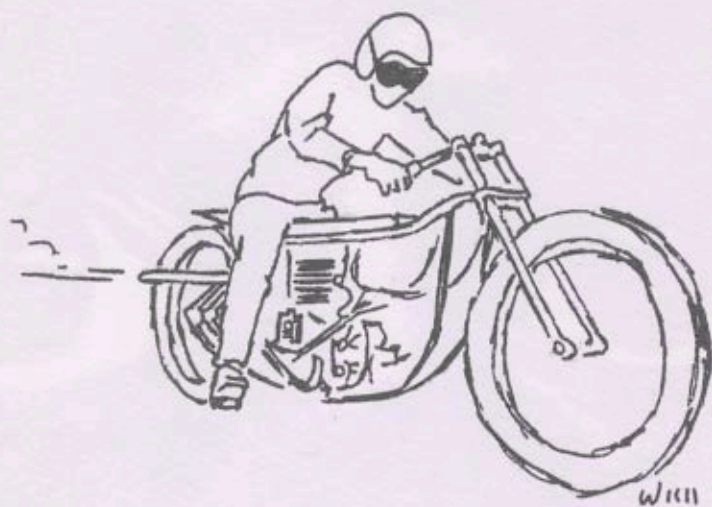
To feel the caress of reluctant wind
And run in an arc of weathered sun,
To taste of the slowly dripping ripeness
Is to wander into a clarity of ether
And to ponder the cold on a rainy Tuesday.

To know the end of the rushing wings
And to share at dusk the tiller's angst
To see beyond the lowland mists alone
Is to be a pilgrim in spheroid decay—
And to find birth on a rainy Tuesday.

Atrophy

Jeff Silverman

One often fails to ponder
over faces that are passed—
the minds that lie behind them,
the questions they have asked.
The reverence of man's sacred soul
is often thrust aside,
as if his art had disappeared
and thoughts been crucified.
One often fails to notice
the serenity that lies
in the warmth that marks a woman's touch,
the smile that haunts her eyes.
But the resurrection of the heart
will never be allowed
as long as pathos is restrained
and truth is veiled by shroud.
One often fails to comprehend
the senselessness of wars
where fighting is as futile
as a muted troubadour.
Can man ever coexist
singing peace eternally,
if those who march to free themselves
are stoned so brutally?
One often fails to understand
the torments of his soul,
and rarely can he overcome
impedance to his goals.
But he'll never fail to exploit those
on desolation's ridge —
until the barricading wall
evolves into a bridge.



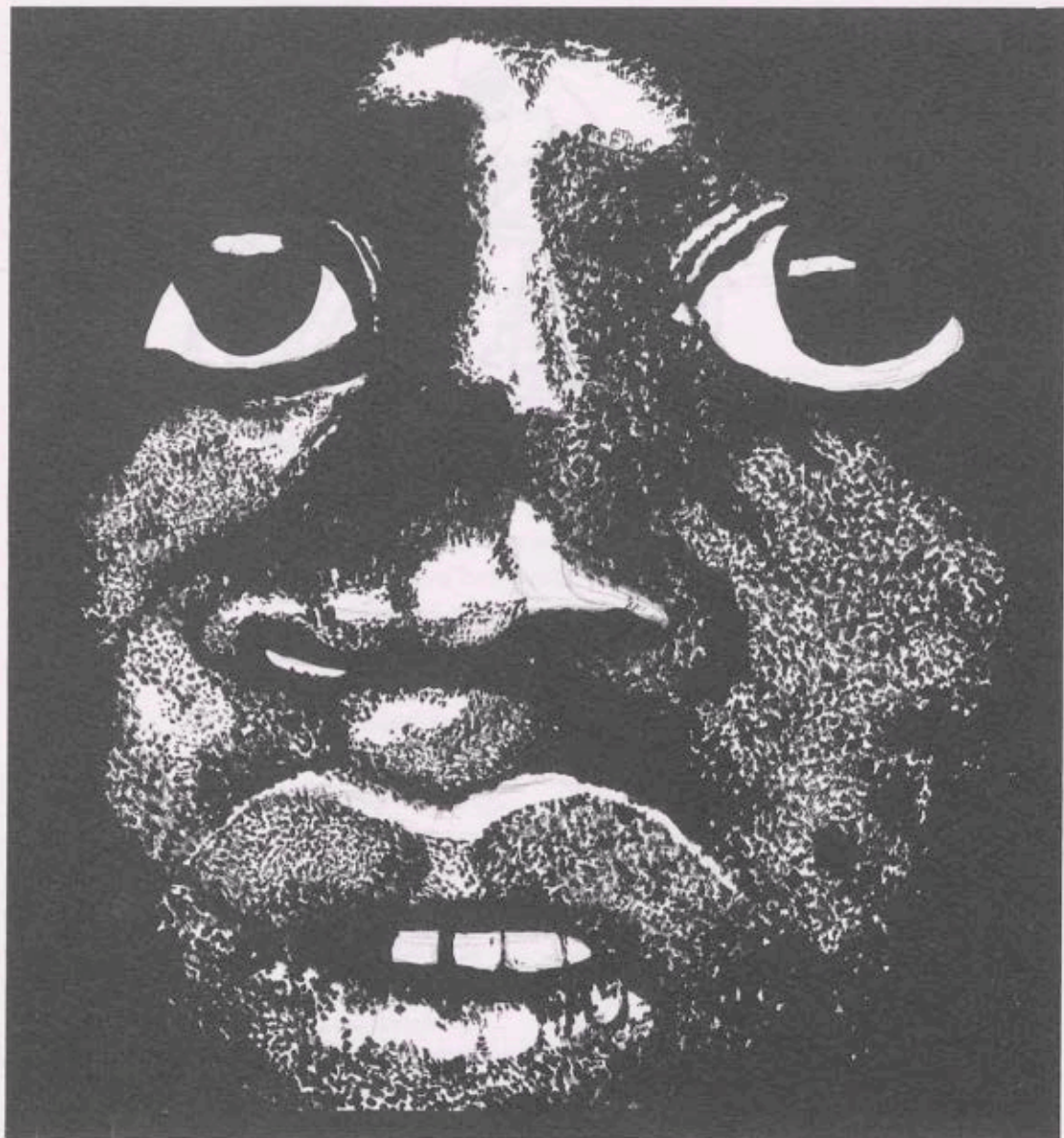
My Love Is Like a Motorcycle

or

Ode to a Gas-House Girl

Ned Van Woert

POUNDING DOWN THE HIGHWAY DOING NEARLY NINETY,
lurching and accelerating
fluttering, now bellowing, now echoing.
Braking the inertia out from within,
you can weave and jump and fly and scream
and laugh and cry and be happy and hit a
truck head-on.



FORGIVE THEM

FATHER

DAVID McMULLAN

"SO YOU GOT swatted good for taking the new t.v. apart." The black old man, in state in his usual easy chair, scowled at his indignant young friend. "When you were only trying to fix it." The boy stared defiantly back. "I suppose you don't care?"

"Nah," said the boy, slouching lower into the sofa and looking away.

"You were foolish you know," the old man pronounced, leaning back. "You got in over your young head, first by not knowing a thing about fixing televisions. You know that. Right?"

"I was trying to do him a favor," the boy insisted, "and look what I got. You call that justice?"

"But you don't care."

"Nope."

They both thought for a moment, and then with a wave of his hand the old man seemingly brushed aside the boy's troubles. A bit of mischief crept into his eye and hunkered in a corner, but his smile was open and cheerful. "Well," he began slowly and reflectively, "I guess there are a few ways to look at justice. Consider the boy scout, about your age, eleven or so, with blond hair like yours and big wide blue eyes." His young friend looked up, knowing the usual good story was coming. The old man looked dreamily into the air, gesturing with grace and elegance, and relishing his own full, resonant voice. To listen to it and feel it wash comfortably over him made the boy's spine tingle pleasantly.

"He was just absolutely proud of his new uniform with its shiny brass badge that he took off each night and put in a special place on his bureau before saying his prayers. Now this boy scout knew that it was his duty to do

a good deed every day, so he went out in search of someone he could help in some small way so as to make life a little brighter and a little better for that person. Since he had to be at school at 8:30 in the morning, he got up extra early and went downtown to about 43rd Street at Broadway. All the cars, of course, and the buses and taxis and limousines were rushing to work, and the street was jammed with them. Well, he saw a little old lady at the curb with her cane, looking at the traffic while the light changed several times. Being a boy scout and therefore being good at interpreting signs and tracks and things in the woods, he figured out that she was afraid to cross because she was old and couldn't walk fast enough to get to the other side before the light changed back again. And Broadway is pretty wide right at 43rd Street, and when that light changes, the cars and buses zoom out of there like it's a race track.

"So the boy scout stepped up, took off his cap, and with a nice smile said, 'Good day, Ma'am! May I help you across the street?' Out of a couple of yellow lizard's eyes the lady looked at him (the only time she ever did, as a matter of fact, except for one), and then looked away. Her head wobbled up and down, which the boy scout took to mean yes because she didn't say anything, so he took her arm. The next day, of course, he noticed her head sort of nodded all the time. Well, when the walk sign flashed on, the boy hustled her across as fast as he could. They only made it to the safety island before the light changed, and the boy almost lost his shirttail to a taxi. So it took two lights for them to get across, and the

old lady nodded to the boy scout and went on her way. He made it back across in one light, naturally, because he ran. He checked his watch, and it was 8:20, so he had just time to help this little old lady every day and not be late for school, which was a perfect arrangement.

"Every day for months the boy scout did this faithfully. He would be there at exactly 8:15 every morning in full uniform, with the new merit badges on it he'd been earning, and the little old lady would be standing as before looking at the traffic. Without hesitating he would brave the traffic, risking his very life and limbs. Each time the little old lady wobbled her head and went on her way. Although she never smiled, the thought that she must feel very grateful inside made him feel warm and happy all over. His badge seemed to get brighter every day.

"One morning when the traffic was especially heavy and they had just about made it all the way to the other side, the light changed a second early and the boy scout was run over by a bus. The little old lady because she was smart enough always to walk a little in front of him, made it to the curb. But when she turned slowly around in her creaky way, she saw the boy scout in the gutter, smashed and bleeding, and dead. The badge on his chest, though, still shone proudly through the dirt." The man looked down with a faint smile wrinkled on his heavy face, and gave philosophic pause to allow the two of them to reflect. His young friend sat supporting his chin with his hands, his face open with expectancy.

"Now there are a few ways to look at this," the old man continued. "First,

that justice, as it has a nasty way of doing, gave the boy scout a reward he didn't deserve at all. The boy scout did his duty as he believed God would have him do, and he did it faithfully and without even so much as a smile from the little old lady. He helped that poor old lady for months. And so wouldn't you know he'd get killed for all this good he had done. It doesn't seem reasonable that God would allow this to happen." He looked carefully at the boy for a moment. "On the other hand, maybe there isn't a God, and the world is just a kind of nonsensical place to live in. Maybe there's no meaning to the things you do, even favors." He looked off into the air. "Still, it doesn't seem right."

"But when you think about it some more, well maybe God wanted to take his Chosen One away from a world of bus drivers that don't care if you're in the way or not. The people on this earth sometimes all seem like that bus driver, who didn't stop because he was in a hurry, and on top of that didn't even notice what he had done. Maybe God's justice decided that the true reward for this boy scout would be to bring him to God as soon as possible. I suppose this is the view a good per-

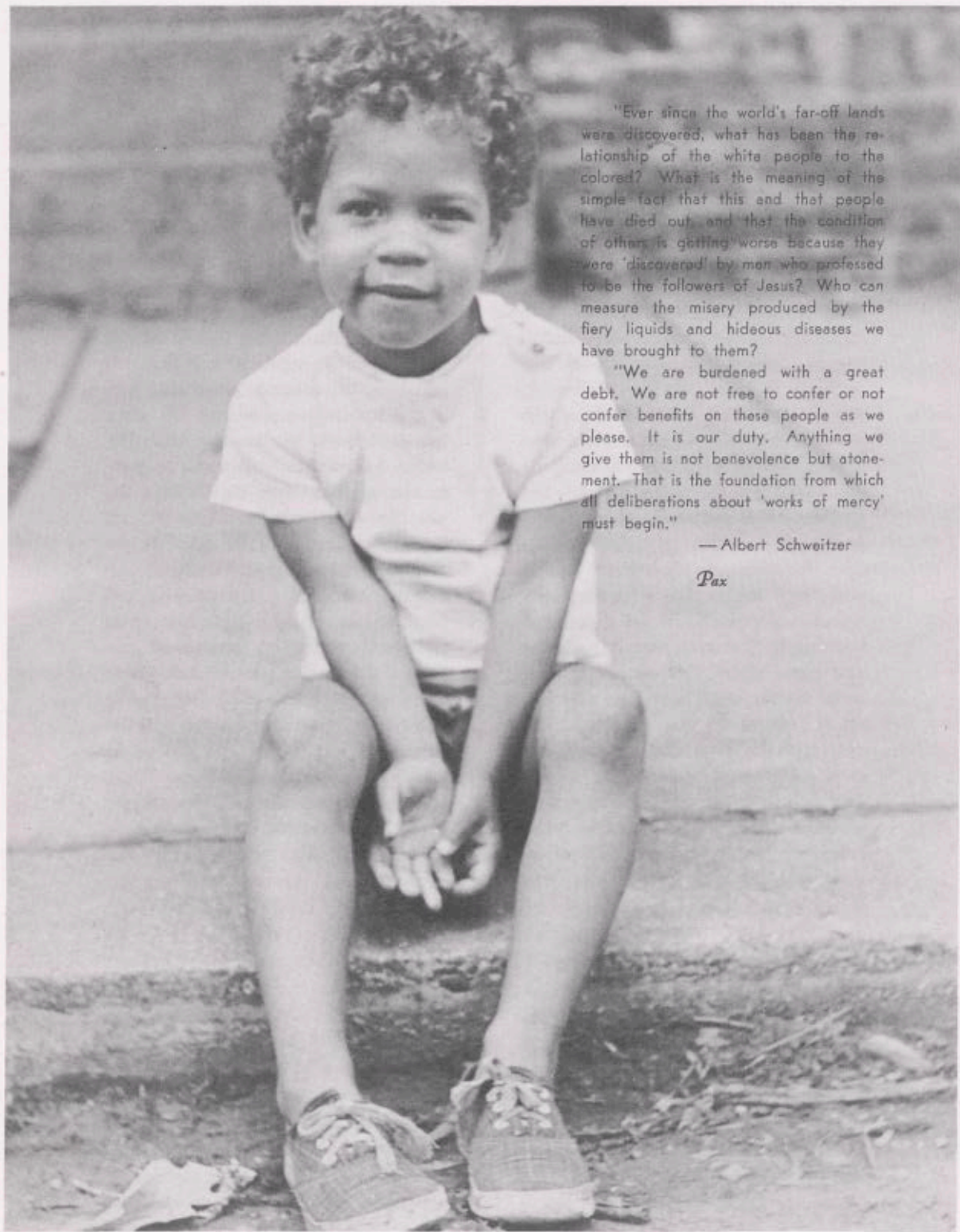
son should take, and you and I should take, since we shouldn't be questioning things that are the business of someone a lot wiser than us.

"Even so," continued the old man sneaking a brief glance at his listener, "there's the other way of looking at it, which is the way the little old lady did." Seriousness drew its darkness over his face and his features seemed to hide in it. "The little old lady looked around and saw the boy scout in the gutter, still twitching, all covered with blood and dirt, his uniform ripped and his watch broken into a thousand pieces. His badge, nevertheless, still shone brightly in the morning sun. But because she was old she didn't have very fast reflexes, so it was a moment before she laughed. She laughed so hard she dropped her cane, and went away just laughing and laughing. Because, you see, she thought there couldn't be anything funnier than seeing a do-goody boy scout get run over by a bus while he's helping a little old lady across the street."

The belly-laughter of the young boy and the uproarious cackle of the black old man mixed in the air, but the teacher was looking carefully at his student.

The subway of the human race
rushes down
with open cars.

DAVID ZAPATA



"Ever since the world's far-off lands were discovered, what has been the relationship of the white people to the colored? What is the meaning of the simple fact that this and that people have died out and that the condition of others is getting worse because they were 'discovered' by men who professed to be the followers of Jesus? Who can measure the misery produced by the fiery liquids and hideous diseases we have brought to them?

"We are burdened with a great debt. We are not free to confer or not confer benefits on these people as we please. It is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement. That is the foundation from which all deliberations about 'works of mercy' must begin."

— Albert Schweitzer

Pax

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