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Winter 1966

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EL AMINGO
WINTER
1966



Winter, 1966

Volume 50

The *Flamingo* is the Rollins College literary magazine and is published three times during the academic year.

Flamingo

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PREFACE

In this, the 50th volume of the FLAMINGO, we would like to reiterate its original motto:

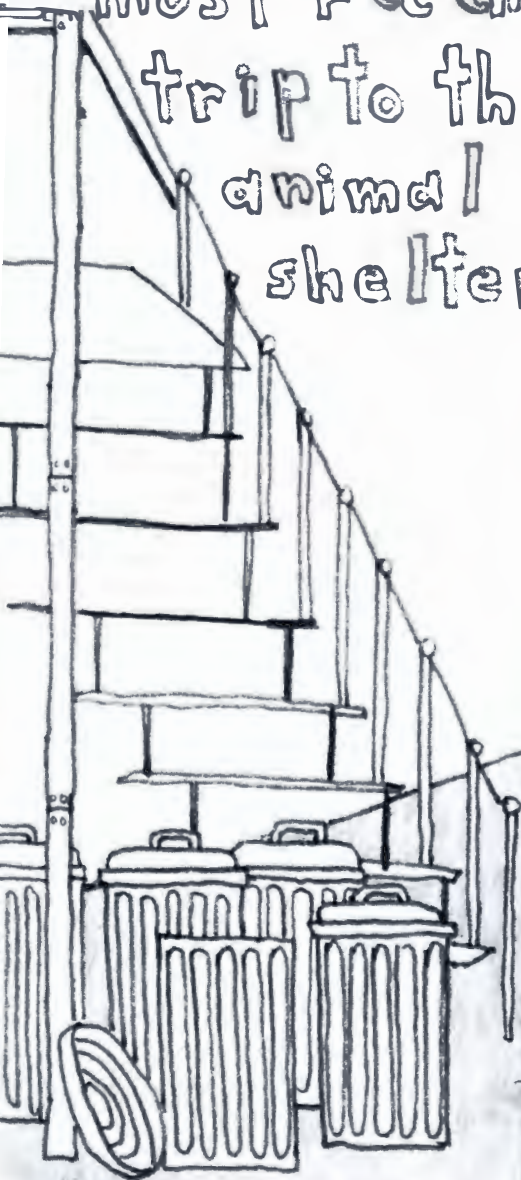
*“A magazine for the younger generation.”
In doing so, we also voice its present goal:*

*“. . . Creativity of High Merit.”
The works on these pages attempt to accomplish both objectives.*

Contents

The Events Leading up to Marietta's Most Recent Visit to the Animal Shelter . . . Brooks McCormick	7
The Race to Death . . . Nona Gandleman	11
To You With Hatred . . . Nona Gandleman	12
The Idol . . . Nona Gandleman	13
The Exterminators . . . W. A. M.	14
Untitled . . . Cindy	14
A Birthday Note . . . J. F. C.	15
The Vanquished . . . Donald James	17
Untitled . . . Donald James	17
Untitled . . . Donald James	18
Untitled . . . Donald James	18
Daybreak . . . Joanne Vassallo ..	19
Projected Disappointment . . . Gloria G. Giles ...	20
One Heart . . . Gloria G. Giles	21
On Committees . . . Anonymous	23
The Old Woman On The Bus . . . Jean Fletcher	25
Melting Ice . . . F. E. Weddell	27
Cochran Chapel . . . Robert Young	28
To One Nameless . . . Anonymous	31

The events
leading up
to Marietta's
most recent
trip to the
animal
shelter



Marietta had this THING, this absolute THING about garbage. She didn't collect it or anything — she just went through it. Marietta lived in an old Gothic structure that had once been a private home, but had since been converted into what her landlord referred to as “Apartment Homes” — meaning three dingy rooms apiece for the four tenants. Marietta lived on the first floor in a “Living-Dining Combination” with “Kitchen and Bath” — and she assumed that the absence of a bedroom was a mere oversight on someone's part, and that one day it would turn up. In the meantime she laid her weary body to rest in the “Living-Dining Combination” (she had no idea WHAT that was supposed to mean) and used her “Day Bed” (that's what the salesman had called it) as a sofa when (and it was a rare occasion) she entertained.

But back to the garbage. Marietta was fully aware that there were seven days in the week, but for her the only ones that counted were Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On those three glorious days she would empty her trash in one of the large communal cans behind the Gothic structure in which she lived. Only she wouldn't just empty and run — as the other tenants did, because of the rather indelicate odor — she would slowly and methodically go through the trash of the occupants of apartments Nos. 2, 3 and 4. She wasn't really LOOKING for anything; what she wanted, primarily, was to find out what the other inhabitants were REALLY like. It never entered Marietta's mind to knock on their doors and pretend she was on an errand of mercy (didn't everyone use that old “Have you got a cup of sugar?” routine?). She was a basically shy person who filled her life with her music (she played the TOM-TOM, of all things!) and her cat, whom she called — simply — Cat. And because of the rather strange things she heard going on in Nos. 2, 3, and 4 (sometimes they didn't go to bed till midnight, for Heaven's sake!) she found it much more pleasant — and, I might add, much less threatening — to go through their trash.

Marietta had given this a lot of thought. She knew, for instance, that it would look very funny for her to be wallowing through those great metal containers for hours on end if there were no excuse apparent on the surface — SO! Marietta had struck on the idea of not feeding Cat! Yes, Marietta starved that snarling piece of flesh (and it was a vicious little thing) — she never fed it a thing from dawn to dusk, and even though it had taken to biting her (Chomp!) regularly in the leg and arm, she felt that this situation was tolerable in order to maintain (she felt) the perfectly good excuse she had for her regular scavenger (isn't that what they call it?) hunt.

And so she went through the four seasons of the year waiting for a Monday, a Wednesday, or a Friday to appear. AND, on those precious days, around about noon, she would slip a piece of string around Cat's neck, (Chomp! Chomp! Chomp!) kick him a swift one with her sensible shoes, grab a Kleenex and dab away the little drops of blood that Cat had drawn from her arm, and set off. She would drag Cat out the door, round the corner to the back yard, and, as soon as Cat got a wiff of "The Waste Area" they would be off. Cat, not having eaten in some days, would lunge at the nearest can, fling his little body — head first — into the large pail, and set to work. THEN, Marietta would utter her time-worn phrase, "Now you get out of there at once, Cat, or I'll bat you," as she had on so many other Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and then SHE would set to work.

There is an art, really, to garbage inspection. Marietta, while Cat was busy on another can, would carefully lift everything out, place it on the ground, (all the time calling Cat! Cat! Here Cat!) and then slowly replace it all. As she deposited each piece, she would make a mental note as to its importance. "My, my, my, look at those cigarette butts with lipstick on them from No. 3 . . . and he lives alone! Disgraceful!" or "She's back on beer, poor dear, and I'm sure gin does so much more for her arthritis," or "My, my, my, that couple in No. 2 have baby food jars again this week, and to my knowledge," which was extensive in these matters, "they don't even have children . . ." And that was how she spent her afternoon — and a very good one, as these things go. For instance, she learned that the man in No. 3 had not one, not two, but three lady callers this week . . . she carefully noted the three shades of lipstick on the butts . . . and THAT color, she had seen that shade in the garbage the week before. She also discovered that the woman in No. 4 had not, after all, been reduced to beer, for the characteristic gin bottles were also there, and Marietta guessed that the beer cans had been emptied by a visitor, and MALE at that. "Oh, dear." The couple in No. 2 really puzzled her, for the strangest things had been turning up in their trash recently — baby food jars, a magazine for young Mothers-To-Be, etc. — and, although Marietta had her suspicions, she would wait until they were confirmed.

When Marietta was through, it was time to catch Cat — something that had fallen into a ritualistic pattern. Marietta would discover his whereabouts and, deftly lifting the walking stick she always carried with her, she waited for the moment when Cat's head would appear. When the head showed itself — WHOCK — and Marietta, having brought the stick neatly down upon Cat's head, and looking with approval at the momentarily stunned animal which a moment before was still stuffing himself, she would pick up the rather limp body and carry it home — home to the dreary three rooms in the aged Gothic structure.

But that day, that particular day, was to be (for a while) Marietta's very last regular trip to the garbage heap — and the knowledge of this would have distressed Marietta greatly. When she arrived home she put the semi-conscious body of Cat on the Day-bed — Sofa — washed her hands, and prepared for "practice" (as she called it) — rehearsal of her Tom-Tom number. (Marietta had been greatly surprised when, a week before, a Girl Scout troop leader she knew asked her to give a demonstration at the next regular Camp Fire meeting of the remarkable musical instrument she played so well.) "TOM-tom-tom-tom-TOM-tom-tom-tom-TOM-tom-tom-tom," went Marietta, oblivious to the fact that Cat was regaining consciousness. "TOM-tom-tom-tom-TOM-tom-tom-tom," went Marietta, enraptured by the rhythmic, primitive beat.

Cat got slowly to his feet, gazed blurredly about him and, on realizing what had happened, snuck slyly over to where Marietta was sitting and "CHOMP!" took a healthy bite out of her left leg. The Tom-Tom ceased its rhythm, and Marietta got slowly to her feet. She was tired, really tired, of Cat's continual hostility, and decided to do what she had done so often in the past: she picked up Cat, who took a vicious swipe at her hand, and Marietta — taking a deep breath — flung the orange-colored beast across the room. "SWACK!" It hit the wall. "THUMP!" It hit the floor. Marietta went back to her musical instrument, while Cat gave his characteristic high-pitched moan and readied himself for another attack. Slowly he crossed the room, maneuvering himself to a position behind Marietta, and then "SSSSSSS!" LUNGE, and he was at her right leg. The Tom-Tom ceased again, the woman rose again, but this time, instead of trying to pick him up, she merely kicked him swiftly. "WHONK!" Cat was lifted, severely, off the floor and sent flying again — only this time he crashed into a chair. But Marietta was not through yet . . . she wanted to really teach him a lesson this time. Grabbing the cowering thing by the tail she flung it again and again against the wall. "SWACK!" "THUMP!" "SWACK!" "THUMP!" "WHOCK!" "CRACK!" "SSSSS!" "CHOMP!" "SWACK!" "TOM-tom-tom-tom-TOM-tom-tom-tom," and Marietta had resumed playing again. Only Cat did not rise out of his slumped position against the wall — he merely lay there.

It was not until the next day that Marietta realized that Cat was no longer. His swift demise the evening before had gone unnoticed by his mistress (who was totally absorbed in her playing) and when she realized that Cat was not responding to the gentle nudge of her sensible shoe, she felt quite perplexed. "My, my, my," said Marietta. She had never been in this position before. I mean, what was one to do? For the first time in a long time Marietta was at a loss. She drifted around the house all that morning musing about what she should do with Cat's poor body. At last it came to her. Of course, how simple! Marietta reached under the kitchen sink and drew out a brown paper bag, and — after a few doubts as to whether she was doing the right thing or not — she carefully placed Cat's remains in its thin brown shroud. Since it was neither Monday, Wednesday, nor Friday, she realized she would have to wait to dispose of the body. "Tomorrow will be soon enough," she thought, and her face brightened as she thought of the burial-to-be, as it would afford her another fine opportunity to sift through the most recent accumulation of trash. She pictured it all clearly in her mind: she would remove all the contents of the very biggest can, place Cat's body at the bottom, and slowly replace the contents — after thoroughly examining them — on top of the little corpse. In this way, she contemplated, Cat's body was not likely to be found, and she could have one last, glorious chance to inspect the rejected waste of her neighbors. (That is, until she could get herself another cat.)

— BROOKS McCORMICK



The Race to Dust

“Man is traveling too fast . . .

Let’s go to the fair and ride the writhing roller-coaster. I shall sit in the front car and you shall sit in the back car. It will be a great race to see who will finish first.

“. . . for a world that is round . . .

We can wander through sawdust alleys and watch people throw fragile darts at fat balloons: win a ten-cent kewpie-doll for only a quarter!

“. . . sooner or later he will meet in a great rear-end collision . . .

I will stop at a little booth and watch an unshaven fat man spin sugar and air to make pink stuff. See how much you get on one thin paper roll? In two minutes it is all gone.

“. . . and man will never know . . .

A tent full of diseased animals. Thousands of hands reach out and touch the goats, the ducks, the cows, the monkeys — who grit their teeth and bear it. Oh, to be able to scratch when no one is looking!

“. . . that what hit man from behind . . .

The spinning ferris wheel slowly climbs up to the nearest star, then slips down and under, while we taste our stomachs in our throats. Grandma shrieks while Grandpa grips her with shaky hands and smiles a crooked, toothless smile as his eyes bulge and his bald head lolls. The bald head provides a perfect target for the dirty kid in the car above, who spits down at it with phenomenal accuracy. — as the wheel c l i m b s , d r o p s , c l i m b s , d r o p s — and the people look straight ahead, blinking the water out of their eyes with every turn.

“. . . was man . . .”

With a sigh and a flicker it is over. The people converge at the gates, looking back just long enough to see the cigar-eating men begin to dismantle the tents. We want to go back for another dream’s worth, but we must awaken and leave; for now, the laughing woman is mute. The fat man is dead. The dwarf is a child. And we, who saw, are dust.

— NONA GANDELMAN



To You With Hatred

I hereby bequeath my right index finger, sliced off slowly and painfully by any dull instrument. May my blood bleed in your eyes forever.

To you I leave the hollow words that made up the empty conversations that were vomited back and forth between us. May the bulk of these words turn lumpy and sour in your maw.

The caresses and whispers are yours now; lavish them on whomever you please, and with them take my large, wet eyes, and my frightened fingers, which used to wrap around my beer mug and your hand, simultaneously.

Here is my mind which, much to your displeasure, would recall all the rambles and adventures we two had scored.

Take my whole damn carcass and lay it, taxidermied, over your narrow bed, or maybe put it in your kitchen, so that you may show and tell when your friends come to dinner.

They're all yours now. I bequeath everything to you. For my part, I shall be content with the things I stole from you: the aloneness of being together; the ability to stretch minutes into hours and to make silence scream; and the fact that too much caution may lead to sterility. But perhaps I should thank you, quietly, for the knowledge you winked at me early one lifetime: that, contrary to popular belief, HEAVEN cannot be found in a warm, crowded bed — no, not HEAVEN, but HELL; for now indeed we *both* know that "HELL is other people!"

— NONA CANDELMAN

THE IDOL

There was nothing left for me to do; I had to make the trip. With a superficial determination I packed a burlap sack, making sure to take only bare essentials: comb, good underwear, a copy of Ferlinghetti's *Coney Island of the Mind*, a cigarette and a stick match, and a loaf of bread, which I would ravenously chew up within the hour, since I was hungry — and off I went. A few hours later I was there, and so was the Idol.

I ran my comb through my hair, lit my cigarette, put on my good underwear, and approached it — not cautiously — with my hand extended.

"Finally! It's too good to see you! It's been ages! *Que' tal?* It's me. *Estne American tua patrio?* . . . remember?"

Nothing.

"But you promised me, or so I thought! Am I wrong, should I not be here? Maybe I could leave and wait for a message . . . please! . . ."

Still nothing. Then I remembered: the book!

"Try and listen: 'And heard the green birds singing from the other side of silence . . . Johnny Nolan has a patch on his ass. Kids chase him . . .'"

Silence screamed.

"Take it! For Chrissake take it! Take my comb, my cigarette, my book — something! Reach out and take it!"

The eyes moved. I glided closer and gazed up into the diamond-hard eyes that seemed to be turned in my direction. Thus I stood for a long, lost period of time, while my facial expressions changed as frequently and involuntarily as each passing minute.

There was nothing left for me to do; I had to make the trip. I turned, packed my few belongings, and walked away.

Then a voice:

"Take off your good underwear . . ."

This I did.

"Now, are you leaving . . ."

I might. Yes, I suppose so.

"Then come here. Take my hand."

There was nothing left for me to do.

— NONA GANDELMAN

THE EXTERMINATORS

“Embers, dying. Just like everything else. The minute you’re born you start to die. And with every new birth the race gets a little worse. It’s not birth, it’s defecation. The human entropy. Just running ourselves into the ground. Worse than savages; they don’t cover it up. Somebody oughta push the button on one of those aerosol cans, only a big one, yeah, bigger than the giant economy size, and gass the hell out of us. It’d have to be a big somebody though, a ‘supreme being.’ Horse shit! Just some more candy coating on the dung pile. Look at them, sitting there glowing, merry, cheerful, but bring them up closer, magnify them, what do you get? Burned! Each one is a little inferno; each one comes stocked with its own inherent evil. Yeah that’s it, man, just look at the whole scene from a distance, and it’s fine. Okay, let’s say there is a God, you know what He’s doing? He’s laughing His ass off. Here we are gassing about how noble we are, and you know what He’s got us here for? We’re the exterminators, the guys with the black hooks and the big axes. That’s why we’ve been made outcasts from the rest of the animals. We are the artificial factor, which will destroy the natural. Everyone of our ‘noble’ acts of synthesis throws nature a little bit more off balance. Rulers of the earth! Okay, fella, there you sit, naked on your throne of ashes; your sceptre a skyscraper and your crown a mushroom cloud,” he thought.

“Mary, sit a little closer, dear. God, you’re beautiful! If I could only tell you how the fire catches your eyes. I’m one hell of a lucky guy. I mean, I’ve got a great bunch of friends; I’m doing the kind of research work I’ve always dreamed about, but you’re what’s right on top of the list, Mary,” he said.

She giggled coyly in anxious anticipation, and laid an unheard fart.

– W. A. M.

We almost always pay for our mistakes on credit,
But the bill comes in with a reputation tax added.

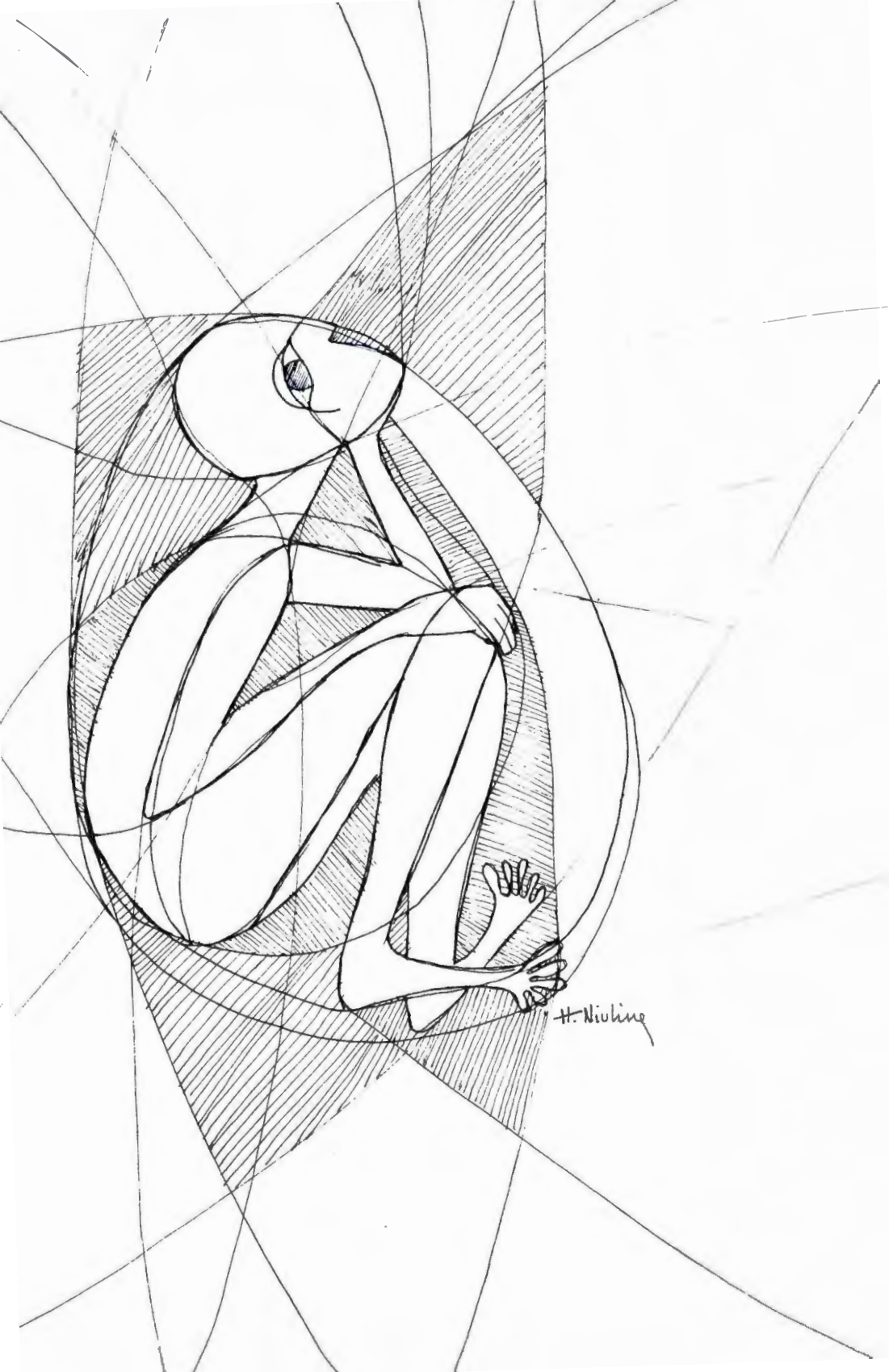
– CINDY



a birthday note

i have no gift for you
but me
and that is such
a foolish thing.
is there some great song to sing?
all i have is you
and god knows
i've tried to give you that.

— jfc



The Vanquished

You who hold all things as well right,
Laden with cowards' gold, slink
With palmed metal held precious, cupped hands
To catch, show certain, painted clearly
As by brush-stroke, dark streaks
Across the face, each stripe to mark
Some guilt, masked glazed unchanging glass
With charred stains, unrinsed by salt sweat or salt tears.
I lean on staff stiff to hold my weight;
My hand in weak fist presses my brow
To staunch the bone-struck wound's blood.
But learn this, prepare yourselves, one day when
The gold burns your hands, dropped in water,
When lines burrow into your faces beyond erasure,
And your skulls are cut by your minds' thoughts
 deeper than the spike-hurt,
My speech will trouble your dreams,
And you will wish for your own sakes
You had shown more mercy.

— DONALD JAMES

Into the web of the weaving sky,
Into the sea of the phoenix-foamed clouds,
Into the wasps' nest of the burrowed earth,
The rough rose on the white dove's breast
(Torn by the thorn, thrown to atone)
Spreads its fluent petal-tongues,
Saying, twist no key, lock no lid,
Let burn no fire to ash in a dark chest,
Neither rot rag nor bury bones
For the burdened bush from the unsnapped stem
Has given growth to the blood-red cup
(Which spurts as hot as the heart-hurt)
Where the spider's web glistens whitely,
And the pollen-seed spills from the rim,
Sprout flung for raw throats to suck,
And all wings fly from nest,
Leave off the beak's peck and the barbed sting
To press their mouths in the flesh
Of fruit and flower for sustenance.
Under this green dome bow down,
All praise trace to gift,
The flood in the lonely stream.

— DONALD JAMES

Search, then, this meaning out:
 Have men such power now that they dare doubt,
 As the leaf spins, as silk comes
 From the caterpillar's crawl,
 The least love to reckon more
 Than the leather knout and the rope twined
 About the captive's arms (which binds
 The victor in the self-same knot)?
 Who is it drinks the blood of the foolish ox?
 Wax wings melt while wilder wings fly;
 Hot arrows break upon these eyes.
 The chrysalis will burst his bonds,
 Boxes will burn on the hill-tops,
 Willows will whip the slithering storm
 As rain runs in rivelets, slicing ravines into clay.
 A man might live some thirty thousand days.
 Trembling hands can touch, hearts summon;
 Faltering flesh, fragile faces outlast anger.
 Tangled vines which trip shall rot.
 The soft heart pumps hot blood,
 The brittle object breaks in fragments on the floor.
 Spared your mercy, brethren, compassion and companionship,
 I am deaf to your wars, dead men playing with knives;
 Deaf to your entreaties, deaf to all words of praise and blame.
 Yet I hear voices, whispering in the wilderness.

— DONALD JAMES

And hourly by hourly
 As we watch the clock tick round,
 Cutting our throats through inch by inch,
 We pull off the leeches from our eyes,
 Spit out the gags from our mouths,
 Cast off the covering, let hair stream in wind,
 Ache off the gloves of leperskin
 (Our feet clatter on rooftops' shingles,
 As we play the violin.)
 Crickets rub their legs, long nights
 Twist into strange bright flowers
 (As death comes through curved mirrors)
 The wine-glasses with their fragile stems;
 The sky splits into golden rivers,
 Light tumbles through open windows
 And spatters into rainbows on the floor.
 With needle-pointed eyes we watch
 The glitter on the lake's speckled back
 And butterflies battering their wings on walls,
 Until we walk into the black pit,
 Stacked boxes on aching shoulders carry,
 With cold chills clamoring up our spines,
 And the heavy hands clutching at our hearts,
 Until night cools the seething cauldron's glow,
 And the anvil is crushed by the hammer-blow.
 Oh, my tongue rattles on this rough speech
 In darkness, this ragged page
 Is meant to see no light except to burn;
 While we await the slowly opening door,
 Shadows of wings scurry out of reach;
 Though we curse and chase we cannot catch.

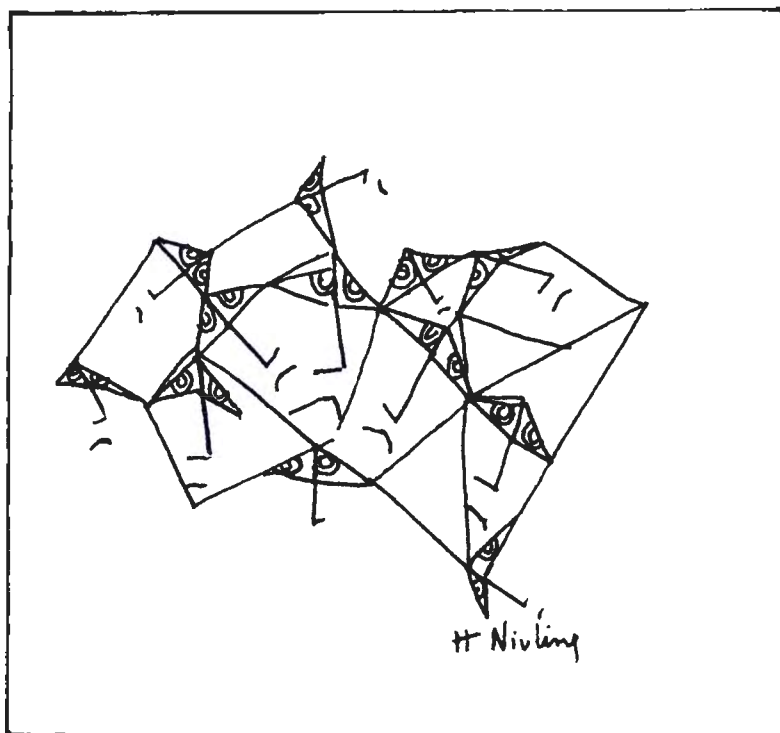
— DONALD JAMES



Daybreak

The sky maid loosed her rose-tipped hair,
And gnarled trees writhed 'neath heaven's stare;
As softly dawn gave way to day,
The night strayed off in gray array,
And stole from the stillness no sound or sight
But howling winds and a death-haunted night.

— JOANNE VASSALLO



PROJECTED DISAPPOINTMENT

I sit here wishing you would call,
Inconceivably caring more than merits a queen of hearts
For her king of diamonds —
and laughably the latter becomes the tumbling jack of spades,
gyrating across the palatial floor,
which is presently covered with wall-to-wall mattresses
of purple and gold;
because the whole damned scene is nauseatingly like
a childish/adult Latin Banquet
that suddenly becomes a punch-bowl
full of artificial ice cubes,
sadly resembling the characters
of a Tennessee Williams orgy —
But nevertheless, she cares.

— GLORIA G. GILES

One Heart

Will this bus ride never be over? Damn the train schedules. Damn the plane schedules. Damn me for not driving anyway. I love to drive. Take a train. Don't drive. Take a train. Well, lover, I couldn't take a train, so here I am on this damned bus. Sixteen more hours. Then you. And me. Us. It's been forever and a day since I've seen you. Your arms around me. But not in front of Gary. Right? Right, Paul de Main? Not in public. And Gary would be public. (Definition: Public — anywhere there is someone more than us.) Got to get some sleep. Can't afford to look like hell right off.

Four more hours. Yesterday I would have thought *only* four more hours. Now, it's four more lousy hours. Should I shower and change first? Should I just barge in on you like I am? Should I . . . You should shut up and read or something. Stop thinking and worrying and thinking. He called you, didn't he? He asked you, didn't he? Maybe he feels sorry for me . . . Good Lord, will you never learn to walk with your head up in the air? At this rate you'll get sand in your eyes. Maybe he needs his back scratched. He always was the only one who didn't have to ask you first for a back rub. You were just there with your eager-as-hell fingers. Jump, Alex, so you jump. Sit, Alex, so you sit. Bid, Alex, so you bid. One heart. Raise me to two hearts, Paul. Forget the clubs and spades. Concentrate on the red suits. Director! Director! I demand to know why my partner never gets a red-suited hand. Okay, okay, so I'm a fool. So so what? I love him and he really loves me too or he wouldn't have ever written that letter drunk or not and he wouldn't have called me and asked me to spend my money and his money to come to Chicago to play in this bridge tournament and if you don't relax you'll go nuts. Why can't I just turn off my mind?

"Chicago terminal, next stop."

"Taxi?"

"Where to, lady?"

"The Palmer House, please, and hurry."

"The Palmer House, please, and hurry. That's all we do all day, lady, is hurry somebody here and somebody there and all of us end up going around in square circles."

Do I have time to powder my face? Will it do any good? That, my dear Alexis, is the question.

"Palmer House. Seventy-five cents."

Thank God. "Thank you."

Lord, this place is huge. Where in hell is the reservation desk. Must be over there. I feel like a little country girl come to the big bad city all alone for her first big adventure. "Reservation for Miss Alexis Gamble, please."

"Just one moment, please."

"Thank you."

"Yes, Miss Gamble. Room 2067. That is on the twentieth floor. The elevators are to your right. The porter will bring your bags up in a moment. You understand that you are here earlier than we had anticipated, and as a result, your room has not yet been cleaned. I hope it will prove no great inconvenience."

"No. That's just fine. Thank you very much."

"Floor, please."

"Twenty."

Just a few minutes more.

"Twentieth floor. Watch your step, please."

"Thank you."

2067. Where in this world! This place is big enough to be a city in itself. The only thing it lacks is trees. Here it is. Thank God. Now, to get organized. Good grief! I can't even brush my teeth until my bags get here. Now who . . . ? Oh, the porter with my bags. And my toothbrush. You shouldn't allow yourself to get so frantic. Paul doesn't even know you're here yet.

"Your luggage, ma'am. Is right here okay?"

"Yes. Thank you." How much do I give him? What the hell, today is a big one.

"Thank *you*, ma'am."

Brusha, brusha, brusha.

"Hello, information, please?"

"May I help you?"

"Yes. Could you please give me the room number of Mr. Paul de Main?"

"That's room 1779, ma'am."

"Thank you."

Three floors down. He's only three floors down. Where the hell is the exit. Lock your door, stupid. Oh, yeah. Okay, now where . . . no, not the elevator. That'll take all day. Don't tell me they don't have stairs in this joint. Oh, here. I'll probably fall and break my neck and end up in the hospital and never see him again. I wonder if my trip travel insurance pays for falling down stairs. Nineteen. God, now don't get upset when he probably doesn't even say hello nicely. He'll take his time. You understand him. Eighteen. You love him. That's the whole damned problem. I love him. He asked you down here. Seventeen. Would you kindly remember that. I wish I could have taken a shower or changed clothes or something. 1779.

Why doesn't anyone answer. Knock louder, you clown. Still no answer. They must be eating. Back upstairs, sweetie. Yes. They must be eating breakfast. Like you should be doing. Eighteen. After all. Paul probably just got in a little while ago. He was bound to be hungry. And Gary always is. Nineteen. All of those tuna-fish sandwiches I used to fix those two. I wish I were still doing that now. Twenty. Maybe I can take a shower now even though the room's not ready. 2067. I'll call first just to check.

"Hello. Could you connect me with room 1779, please?"

"Just one moment."

"Hello."

"Paul?" God, he's there.

"Yes."

"Hi. This is Alexis."

"Alex. Where?"

"Upstairs. I just came down and knocked on your door. Why didn't you answer? I knocked."

"Sorry. Asleep."

"If I come down right now, again, will you answer? I'll knock."

"Get down here."

Now don't run! Aren't you even a little dignified? Ain't ya got no learnin'? He's not going to disappear. Nineteen. God, what will I say. Worse, what'll he say? Eighteen. Calm down. You'll end up coughing in his face. Seventeen. Well, ready or not. 1779.

"Trick or treat."

"There she is. About time you got here. Didn't I tell you, Gare, old buddy, that she'd be here in time to get us up for our 9:15 game? God, my back needs scratching. Sitting up in that train all night . . ."

"You look awful, Paul. And tired. You really do."

"Your hair's longer. Look at her throw that blonde stuff around. Okay, okay, we see it. Now, scratch my back so I can have a good game today."

— GLORIA GILES

ON COMMITTEES

Quick upon the end of ev'ry "aye" and "nay,"
I sped from out the meeting, all a-spun,
To meet the third committee of the day;
For that's the way that colleges are run.
Into the room I rushed with custom'd ease.
Intently to the chairman's chair I moved.
"Now, will the meeting come to order, please.
We'll hear the minutes read to be approved."
The faces facing me were all a-stare,
As they indeed had ev'ry right to be;
For when I looked again, with peering care,
I saw my class in Chinese Poetry.

I wonder why I had forgot, alas;
Sometimes a teacher gets to teach a class.

— ANONYMOUS

THE
OLD
WOMAN
ON THE
BUS...



Abel Smith was feeling proud of himself. There was no denying it, he had just passed an important test in his life. He was actually feeling almost happy, almost contented, emotions which he did not experience very often. His step was almost light as he climbed aboard the bus to go home.

Today, he, Abel Smith, had actually gone through a conference with the BOSS, that omnipotent, awe-inspiring person, whom he usually would go to any lengths to avoid. And the Boss had actually mentioned how much he thought Abel was improving, how he was “coming up in the world as it were, and overcoming the various obstacles in the rocky path to his success.” It was a great achievement, one that he had been especially working for: to overcome his fetish of nervousness, to face the world bravely, to ignore with staunch vigor all those little things which made his life a constant terror. That nervous, easily upsettable nature of his that had been running his life, so that even every little noise drove him wild, was the cause of all his problems — but now, now

An old woman was sitting across from him, an ordinary, ugly old woman, but not a bad old woman, except that she had a nervous habit of clearing her throat about every five seconds. Cough - cough — very softly; she smiled faintly at Abel as he sat down. Cough - cough — and then again. Will she keep on doing that, he wondered? That was the sort of thing that drove him into nervous distraction. But he shrugged it away and looked out the window. Cough - cough — so softly.

He was coming along so well, he thought, the typewriters were not bothering him so much any more and he barely noticed the pencil sharpener. Cough-cough. He wiggled and continued to stare out the window. Even the fellow who sat next to him and cracked his knuckles was becoming almost tolerable. Cough - cough. That must hurt her throat, he thought, and the thought made the noise bother him even more. He glanced at her, cough - cough. The loose flesh on her wrinkled old throat wiggled. Cough - cough. He frowned and turned away. No. He was not going to move or cover his ears. Here was an obstacle for him to conquer. Ignore it, he thought. It's no worse than the knuckle-cracking.

Sometime soon I'll ask for a raise, he told himself. Cough - cough. I'm getting more confidence all the time. I feel so much better about everything. I think I could even face the Boss voluntarily. He smiled, trying to fill up his whole mind with the thought. Cough - cough. He saw the old woman smile back at him. Balefully, he thought, as if she knew what she was doing to him. Cough - cough.

He set his teeth and forced his thoughts to the raise. It meant more money to spend on comforts. What would he like? Orange-and-brown curtains he told himself. He loved orange and brown, but he had never had anything in those colors; they rather frightened him. But now he might even dare to get something in orange-and-brown. Cough - cough. He crossed and uncrossed his legs, but refused to look at her, almost as if that would be admitting defeat. Cough - cough. His fingers twitched, and he felt a brief sensation in them of soft wrinkled flesh. Cough - cough. No, he told himself. No! You promised yourself that you would not let things bother you any more; you have done so well up to now. Jumping jelly bean they call you at the office. Do you want that? Do you? Cough - cough. His finger tips clawed at his temple. Cough-cough. Uncontrollably he cleared his own throat several times and tried to think of the curtains, of the Boss, of anything, but he couldn't. That persistent little noise filled his whole head and beat on his temples. Cough - cough.

"Stop it!" he shrieked, leaping up. "Stop that now, I can't stand it!" The old woman leaned away from him in terror, the bus lurched and he fell.

The bump on his head ached with each step as he walked home, and the pain of it filled his whole mind. That was all there was; his world was empty and there was no thought for tomorrow.

— JEAN FLETCHER

MELTING ICE

And then, walking slower due to the wind against my whole frame, we tried to talk, but the jealous weather blew my words out to sea. The sun shone warmly, but this too was wasted on the wind. All we had was the afternoon and our completeness. We walked to the edge of Falmouth and saw the little antique store we wanted, but it was closed. Out in front of the closed shop, we sat in the strange, carved seat and rested.

I was very happy. We had arrived late the night before. It had been blowing hard and the sand from the parking lot cut into our faces and snuck under the door of the motel room. We went out for a hamburger that night, I remember, and looked about the town. I had gone into a store and tried to buy a can of beer. My first attempt, but I was 19, not 21. The lady smugly smiled, and took back the can, and the wasted paper sack. The two of us had laughed on the way back to the motel, and even later, after we had gone to bed.

The wind blew around the building and dashed innocent shrubs against the windows. I pulled the drapes tighter together and turned off the light. I then remember your hand touching mine, and I, not needing to turn to know how you looked, not needing light, incandescent and false.

Slowly you ran your hand up to my shoulder, and then I turned and wanted your body close to mine, warming me with the love of being held tight. There was so much just in that.

Now, in the morning, with the wind less violent, we rose late and dressed in a hurry. The room looked less the clattle of the night before, but in your eyes was the world, and in one short caress was tomorrow. Walking and eating at the foolish little restaurant, and now, on the bus, there was an hour before Boston.

The weather being so bad, the boat for Nantucket was not going across. We had planned to stop, do a show for the winter-bound natives, and then "hit the city," but no; and then, we had only ourselves.

Cambridge was melting from a February's thaw, and the streets were mildly impassable. The Commander Hotel caters to the elderly people of the area, many of whom are permanent residents in the establishment. We had a room on the second floor. There was a television, a radio jammed on one station, and double beds. We considered complaining but thought of the face of the clerk when he heard our words. I mean now, what is a bed? So we decided to make do.

We were very young and overlooked sobriety. There was time for the philosophical side of love, later, next year. We found that the staring face of the television embarrassed us, and so we disconnected it and fell to loving. It was a short three days.

In the light hours, we walked all over Boston, and at night we went to the movies or a play, and then, tired, we rode the M.T.A. back across the river and sloshed into our hotel lobby. There we smiled at the clerk and went to our little womb. Inside its locked warmth, we reconnected the television and watched the late news. We decided the world would last at least until the morning, and with that, turned out the light. No, I remember we lay there with the television on some late movie and looked at each other from the separate bed. We laughed, forgot the movie, changed beds to oneness, and then, with the foolish screen staring nakedly on, I loved you to sleep.

The next morning we sat in a dark, empty, blue bar and drank. It was Sunday, and we could not walk to the bar to order because of the Blue Laws. Our secret was almost over. The week had torn by, and now the February thaw would fade again to more winter. We would ski, dream, love across a room, sip cocktails with each other's parents; but the secret trip to Boston, the windy room at Falmouth and all the rest was something else. Now, it was time for philosophy and reservation.

— F. E. WEDDELL

COCHRAN CHAPEL

*¿No sois el que desterrado
Por palabras lisonjeras
Allano para su rey
Mil castillos y fronteras?*

i

The light reaches through winter-stained glass,
Bending and straining through the ice on each pane,
And torches at last the grained oak columns.
It appears to rise in the stillness, above the altar,
And the shadows dance in silent frenzy.
Coming out of the blinding expanse of snow, the chapel
Is dark, and there are only noises of shuffling feet
And scattered voices and the flicker of a hand
Darting through limp hair. Then the eyes
Grow more accepting of the quiet light,
And lift upon the flanking walls, the oak carven
With the names of those who have come before,
Known only here, and only to the etched oak,
As men with credit only of a dream
Unfulfilled, but to which they kept.
One cannot but wonder what their eyes
Would find in the faces, lingering in half-sleep,
Which drift in on plodding, unresponsive feet;
Nor can one imagine what they have now
To do with sorrow, or restlessness, or even want of sleep;
Nor what the meaning is of this grim brick temple,
Taunting the clean simplicity of snow.

And the eyes
Turn again upon the rigid, polished wood
Of the columns and the solemn ceiling arch;
And perhaps, at the moment when first the organ ripples
Through the desultory murmur of the gathering,
Perhaps they seize upon the bronze glow
Throbbing on the organ pipes.

What consolation
Hovers in the sacred music, the light and dark tones of morning,
Echoed on the shuddering air of the organ,
Piping the ravaged emotions and stiffened senses
Upward? Upward along the glow which escalates
Over the oak, upward it leads you out of the pit
Of the belly. Out of the chambers of the mind.

At sometime in the afternoon
 You must return to face a darkened room.
 You must thrust the key
 In and drag the door, swollen with winter damp,
 Open and try to see
 As in a tomb.
 Late in the day,
 With the sun dropping in a winter way,
 Wrench wide the door
 What is there to say
 With the letter in your hand,
 The dust on the mirror,
 And the sheets fallen to the floor.
 Greet the silence and the damning words
 On the missive page
 With silence,
 And wonder what cave
 You wandered in and what stranger
 Deigns to bother to destroy you,
 To tell of the "end"
 And of "sorrow." There is no strength to act
 Nor will to rave, and at length the fact
 Will appall your eyes . . . like the books,
 Scattered as so many carcasses
 Or fleeting looks.

There are no shadows,
 But only the shadow, frozen immobile
 Like the ice on Rabbit Pond.
 In your hand there is a letter with words but
 No meaning, which isolates the self from being
 Like the dust on the mirror.
 Slam the door.
 The silence cracks, the
 Air quivers, the dust rises
 And falls, the clatter dies,
 The heart shivers —
 The very things of which you were so fond,
 The gentle pretension, the secure anticipation
 Of her, the sense of emancipation,
 All shatter like ice in the mind.
 The only gesture to what you find
 Is raising the blind,
 Throwing open the window to the wind,
 And getting out

Going going going away
 Nothing nothing nothing to say
 And going into lurid night
 With winter hanging half in sight
 From every splintered window casement,
 The wind chanting your effacement,
 You'll find each branch a lifted hand —
 Humbleness not to understand.

When you come upon the church at dusk,
 You find it an anomaly, a geometrical colossus,
 Asserted in the grey mist and ragged edges
 Of the sky. Towering against the silver-gray of winter dusk,
 The structure materializes, a form out of chaos,
 A living fragment in the jaws of the abyss.
 Come the specter of the natural death which is winter dusk,
 When the lean wind gathers a formless mob of snow
 And the icy fury of the clouds, and darkness
 Crawls over the shapeless silence of the land;
 Then come into the chapel, and alone,
 Shaking the snow off your shoes
 On the stone stairs. Enter at the dusk and stumble
 Into a wooden bench and grope, your eyes
 Deceived at first by the ebbing light.
 Above you are the columns reaching to the arch
 Of the ceiling, and the walls stand about you,
 Barely discernible in the obscurity. The names cut
 In the panels are unremarkable to the eye,
 But if you go with care between the benches
 To the wall, you can lay your hands
 Upon the wall inscribed with past remembered.
 In a like manner you are able to embrace a column
 And feel the hand-wrought edges, in motionless
 Response to your hand.

The darkness deepens, but if you raise your eyes
 To the high windows on the West, you yet may see
 The naked trees framed in the casements,
 Rigid and rising, branches battling the wind.

— ROBERT YOUNG



To One Nameless

Stranger child in a foreign clime
Visible but a brief spanned time
Tread lightly,
What dost thou see?
What images of horror dance before your eyes?
What barriers do you hear?
What walls resound?
From what age crumbled ashen ruins sprang the frail
Phoenix of your present spirit, awful to prevail?
When was it you did drown amid a sea of distant
Voices, echoes of ancient struggles of savage strength?
What hands rocked thee?
What breast hid thee?
Time stands as a wall of silence, as to scorn me.

The wind be your father, darkness your mother
Countless creatures caged and confined your brothers,
Who share your slavish birth in jungle and forest
On tundra, by gate.
Both blind and deaf is fate . . .

Was it o'ercast through your year of sorrow tide?
Was it sunny and clear the hour you died?
O bright horror! Can it be so?
Did person see? Did no one know?
Was it early in the season, nightfall soon?
Were shadows long? Was it mid-afternoon?
Did they walk you out over smooth tiles?
Didst thou awake in the morning, unknowing?
When did you depart. Time standing still?
How is your own broken and strewn, bent low
How heavy with a heritage of stifled grief,
This thy sole possession!
How often can I confront you in the door —
Only you, nameless, an exile of earth,
Sufferer no more,
Stricken, but not again destroyed,
Gazing from a brilliance of surfeit, void
Through hollow burning eyes surveying dim bands of movers,
Builders, figures passing in procession, casting shades
Bearing banners, voicing utterances,
That are none of thine,
Seeing all, claiming little, hiding less, begging not at all
And chained by bare endurance to perpetual flight
Of endless progressions of day and night.

Where is it that you now stray?
Along the side roads, by the way?
And how long shall I encounter your empty hands,
Your dumb awareness in the wastelands you inhabit,
For in haunted moonswept nights of space, you, who trod,
Weeping dry tears before the face of an iron god,
Yes! You, who would not waver and knew no prayer,
But moved for a time, unsung and unspared,
Now are come, mute as you went when prison bound,
An exquisite black angel, noiseless, again I say without sound,
Bearing strong witness to dry waves of strife,
Sounding now an anthem of sighs
Softly damning a world of too loud cries,
Stumbling terribly, endlessly, under battlefield of skies,
You, to whom life is stranger than death,
Whose end is not mine, nor whose breath,
Who will not answer if I call,
And can not recognize my face,
How slowly, scarcely and unnoticed didst thou fade —
Christ! How many moments had you ceased!
Have I never known you?

— ANONYMOUS

