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Cold Pavement
And Two People

By J. D. Hyde

On that brisk February evening Elizabeth and I stood side by side on the Greyhound station waiting platform. It was so cold I thought my feet and fingertips would freeze. I could see no reason why everyone had to wait so long to board the bus. Although I wasn't enjoying it at all, it didn't seem to bother Elizabeth; she seemed very comfortable as she held tightly onto my arm. It struck me as if zero, waiting, and our coming separation weren't in her mind at all; I knew she was trying not to think of them. I felt bad that I would be back home in fifteen minutes and she had a twelve-hour bus ride ahead of her. In spite of being very cold and impatient, I thought of these things. I knew my love for her was as cold as the pavement and empty air around us. This was the reason that I shivered heavily underneath my coat and gloves. I knew why she did not shiver as she stood so straight in her high heels. I knew why she held my arm more tightly and that she was probably looking at me and smiling. I just couldn't look in her eyes very long. Everytime I did her love seemed to come forth in that look, and I knew it must return injured; it had never met what it had itself.

It was only four days ago that we had enjoyed each other. The first time that we really had since we met last summer. Only four days ago that I began to think and wonder why I didn't really love her. My feet were freezing. Where could that damn bus driver be?

"Gee Liz, I hope the bus is warmer than this. You should have worn some knee socks or something." She just smiled and said, "I'm not cold." She must have been a little cold. I knew it was cold. I was freezing. I wished that bus driver would come on; I was running out of comments about the cold, the people, the Greyhound service. I looked down at her, and still that warming, affectionate, smiling grasp of my arm. Damn! I felt sick inside. It was really horrible. I didn't seem to care at all. My stomach shivered and tightened.

Before I realized it people were boarding the bus. She kissed me goodbye with a quick questioning embrace that brought from me only a weak smile, and no words. I felt then that she knew. As I started to say I was sorry, she was gone. Then she gave her ticket to the driver, entered the bus, and disappeared in the dark green tinted windows. Stand-
ing there and watching the bus pull out, I knew if I loved her I would feel differently right then.

I did feel different. I was alone on the waiting platform now; it made the hollowness inside me more real. I looked around. The pavement was cold and dark. I didn't especially want to go anywhere. I just felt very empty.

The thing that bothered me the most was the joke of it all; it was as if something was both there and not there. The next thing I knew I was walking through the terminal station. As I walked out onto Main Street I looked to the right. Down away Elizabeth's bus was just pulling away from the traffic light at the corner. The street lights shone through the windows of the bus; passengers in their seats were outlined by the dark green haziness, distinguishing them from the darkness of the sky and the shadowy store fronts. I put my hands in my coat pockets, and didn't notice the cold as I walked to my car.

**Attic**

Up the stairs to the cool Attic,  
the dark Attic.  
To sit alone, leaned against the stair-wall.  
Attic is the high and solemn intellect  
of house: its memory is there,  
and a fear that things unused  
will somehow come alive for want of use,  
driven by the pain  
of their solitude:  
the dolls,  
the clothes,  
all the great trunks.

And now the multitudinous fingers of  
cool hand of rain are  
strumming,  
strumming,  
with an unconscious impatience  
on the fitted beams, the rhymed and shingled roof.  
and the sound, like a thousand tiny elves  
 twinkling down attic stairs around me;  
silent.  
leaving only their small rush of air,  
and time.  

RAY PAVELSKY

A Parable

As we talked and drank  
in the room, a hollow voice  
Which came from none of us,  
Said: "You have each but  
Twenty-four hours to live,  
But to make this curse easier  
To bear, you may choose on  
This, your last day, to  
Relive any day in your life."  
then silence.

When, in a few moments, one  
Spoke, it was as if a dam  
Had burst, and words flooded  
From all mouths save mine.  
Some saw this as a chance  
To correct past mistakes.  
One would unbreak her  
Mother's heart, another  
Unsteal his best friend's wife.  
Others thought to relive  
past joys:  
One his day of burgeoning  
Manhood, his first woman,  
Another her first day  
And night of wedded bliss,  
Another his day of public  
Adulation and success.  
Still another cackled at the chance,  
Armed with hindsight,  
To revenge themselves for  
past wrongs.  
I heard all these thoughts,  
And, weighing them with  
Great care, chose:  
"I think tomorrow would be nice..."

HUGH MATER
Newman and the Autobiographical Tradition

Thoughts on the Centenary of the *Apologia* (1865-1865)

By JOHN F. ROBBINS, C.S.B.

Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* is now in its 100th year of publication. By way of tribute, I would like to discuss the *Apologia* as an autobiography, but one of a very special kind—an autobiography of the mind.

Joseph Riley in *Newman as a Man of Letters* remarks that "the greatest romance in the world is the romance of an individual's life." Indeed, in the centuries preceding the *Apologia* there did appear a number of autobiographies and memoirs that recorded an historical epoch through the ambitions, the fears, the triumphs and failures of a single individual. In such stories of the self, we witness not only certain historical happenings but the universal, continuing drama of the human soul, with its inner conflicts, victories, defeats, and dreams. Where, for instance, can one capture so perfectly the spirit and essence of the Renaissance as in Cellini's autobiography? Or the temper of late eighteenth-century France, before and after the Terror, as in Marmontel's *Memoirs*? Or the romanticism of youth and the balance classicism of maturity as in Goethe's autobiography, *Poetry and Truth*? Indeed, *Rousseau's Confessions* inaugurated the Romantic Age by resurrecting the Renaissance cult of the personality. The ego was put into the spotlight, in the middle of the stage, in costume and mask. Rousseau stated that he wished to "make his soul, in a way, transparent to the eyes of the reader." And this he does, as he says, with a Zola-like naturalism, "not as a moralist, but as a botanist would do."

Before the *Apologia*, there had appeared a few autobiographies that raised this genre to a height of greatness. I would suggest that St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, and Wordsworth's *The Prelude* are of special distinction, because they delve the deepest into the human soul.

Why did Augustine write his *Confessions*? He was very much aware of the close unity of the early Christian community and of its close interoperation in winning God's grace; he had seen the effects of his mother and other Christian friends on his own life. He further realized the value that lay in the public profession of the Christian faith by learned and great men, such as the rhetorician, Victorinus.

Augustine thus recorded his own interior struggle between the flesh and the spirit, and the wide gap between knowledge and doing. The battleground of the action was his soul. Finally, he set clearly before the reader the principle by which the war would ultimately be decided: from the age of nineteen, his mind had chosen as its goal the attainment of wisdom.

I prefer to delay my remarks on Rousseau and Wordsworth for the moment; later I shall relate them to developments in eighteenth-century philosophy.

When one turns to Newman's *Apologia*, what strikes one most forcefully is that this autobiography narrates, not the life story of a man, but rather the history of the development of a mind. Thus in his preface Newman states:

I will draw out, as far as may be, the history of my mind; I will state the point at which I began, in what external suggestion or accident each opinion had its rise, how far and how they developed from within, how they grew, where modified, where combined, where in collision with each other, and where changed.

This purpose, thus set down by Newman, is very close to that of Wordsworth in his autobiographical epic, *The Prelude*. And of all the autobiographies, *The Prelude* is the closest to the *Apologia*.

In discussing the question of the *Apologia* in relation to other autobiographies and memoirs, I would suggest that there are two main considerations which merit some attention: first, the effects of eighteenth-century philosophy and of Romanticism in focusing attention on the human mind as a scene for drama, and secondly—something particular to the problem which Newman faced—that no answer but a detailed history of the formation and principles of his mind could accomplish what he hoped to achieve.

First, then, this interest in the mind is a late eighteenth-century phenomenon, an effect of the interests of the English philosophers Locke, Hume, and Hartley during that century. Locke's speculations on human knowledge in *An Essay on Human Understanding* in 1690 ushered in a whole century of speculation on the human mind. The mind, as I remarked earlier, came to be regarded as a scene for drama: with Locke it was a dark, isolated cottage, a few rooms of which are lighted with stored and associated memories—some strangely associated. Rousseau, for instance, talks of the images in his memory, which have combined with one another to form trains or "successions" of mental states that interplay one with another. Thus, he says, "I always endeavor to develop the first causes in order to make the connecting links understandable."

Moreover, post-Lockean writers such as Rousseau and Newman, were also aware that the images of memory deteriorate with time—and with the conjunction of more recent images and present feelings, suggestive of the passivity of the mind. Rousseau, for example, comments, "By surrendering
myself simultaneously to the memory of the impression received and to my actual feeling, I shall paint a double picture of my state of soul, namely, at the moment the event occurred and at the moment I described it." Wordsworth too was interested in several states of mind, mirrored one within another in a series or mirrors held up to a present moment. Thus Newman asks, "Who can know himself, and the multitude of subtle influences which act upon him? And who can recollect, at the distance of twenty-five years, all that he once knew about his thoughts and his deeds?"

Furthermore, in a more positive way, Wordsworth's Prelude, with its description of the powers of the imagination, with its celebration of a mystical inner-outer union, comes as the full sounding of the theme in the final movement of this symphony of fascination with the mind. Even Keats, who had been drawn more towards the non-egotistical objectivity of Elizabethan writers, came at last to place value upon the inner workings that seemed to be a mark of his age. He wrote to a friend, John Reynolds, that he had come to recognize that Wordsworth had a special genius of exploring the dark passages of the mind. "Here," Keats declared, "I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, ... [who] did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done." Indeed, Wordsworth subtitled his great epic, "Growth of a Poet's Mind," and writes:

Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Hence, I think, philosophically speaking, that Newman's age in 1864 was well prepared to read with interest and enjoyment the drama of the life of a mind.

I turn now to the second consideration, one more pertinent to Newman's own special situation in which he found himself—why he wrote such a self-revealing book as the Apologia? Why would a man of his excessively fine sensibilities and naturally reclusive character make himself, as Chesterton says, "a naked man who carries a naked sword?"

This question itself has two aspects: first, and simply, why did Newman write any type of autobiography, even aside from it being a portrait of his mind? In answer, one may eliminate the reasons that had commonly motivated so many earlier memoirs and autobiographies: Marmontel and Benjamin Franklin's wish to put their experiences to the service of the younger members of their family; Casanova and Rousseau's wish in a time of acute frustration and growing old age to turn their thoughts to memories of their youth, and a happier time of the spirit; or John Stuart Mill's wish to share his own triumphant synthesis of the best qualities in two of the movements of his age.

Now, the circumstances surrounding the reason why Newman had to write a defense of himself—the attacks by Charles Kingsley in the book review of Macmillan's Magazine and in What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean? on the veracity of Newman and of the Roman clergy—are a matter of record. Hence, I wish, rather, to dwell on the less obvious aspects of why his Apologia took the form of a study of his mind.

In What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?, Kingsley did far more than repeat his implication against Newman's veracity. Perhaps Kingsley's own words will best convey the serious and devastating quality of his accusations: "Dr. Newman had a human reason once," he wrote, "but has gambled it away. I am henceforth in doubt and fear, as much as an honest man can be, concerning every word Dr. Newman may write." With such statements as these, Kingsley, as Newman points out, "has poisoned the wells." By this Newman means that Kingsley had successfully placed the English people, Newman's reader-judges, into a suspicious and mistrusting attitude towards all that Newman might say in reply. Thus, a merely logical and argumentative array of facts would serve no purpose. As Newman himself expresses it,

... the more I succeed, the less will be my success. If I am natural he will tell them, "The true art is to conceal one's art"; if I am convincing, he will suggest that I am an able logician; if I show warmth, I am acting the ignoble innocent; if I am calm, I am thereby detested as a smooth hypocrite; if I clear up difficulties, I am too plausible and perfect to be true. The more triumphant are my statements, the more certain will be my defeat.

The "poisoning of the wells," then, is, as Newman states, "the bias of the court," his judges and readers. What was needed, as he rightly expressed it, was to "break through the barrier of prejudices against me, if I can."

But how was this to be done? At last the answer came; he tells us:

I recognized what I had to do, though I shrank from the task and the exposure it would entail. I must, I said, give the true key to my whole life: I must show what I am, that it may be seen what I am not. I will draw out, as far as may be, the history of my mind.

And thus he begins to retrace the events leading to the great revolution of his mind, his turning towards Rome. He sets forth in Chapter I the im-

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planting of those principles by which his mind will work, a rather complex and surprising blend of principles. Moreover, the Oxford Movement itself is raised to a mental movement and is presented only as an influence on the mind.

The stage is his mind; the action is personal, not controversial or argumentative; and thus we watch the inner-outer play of person and event.

Something Other

I dream of Spring
And Summer in the Winter;
And the red-brown leaves of
Autumn and the White that comes later:
This I dream in the Summer.

I dream of Lotus Land
In hard Winter—
Of easy living when working hard;
And of working when there is easy.
I dream of when things will be better,
And when Better comes,
When Spring and Summer come—
When there is freedom—
Then I realize that
There is no Better
But only more Dream.

Yellowbrownd, then
White and dirtblack to uglify
And all dissipates into earth again
Whereof comes green again
And something called hope again—
And sometimes... Him again—
Something beyond Dream.

PHIL PARISH

Of A Daughter... stillborn

O God
Why she?
Who never even saw the light of dawning gray
Nor heard the robin greet the new-born day
Who never felt the warmth of June
Nor broke the dying night with startled tune
That trumps the infant’s safe arrival there...
Nor smelled but one brief breath of air...
Why she
O God?

Do you give the sot and harlot hope
And offer paradise to those who grope
In vice and shame their life’s long day
And only in their dying gasp do say
Their sorrow, steeped in sin and mire
Do you wash them clean who but desire
You in the end, sin’s joy run dry
And death’s icy stillness frosting up the eye?

Will she
Unwashed of Adam’s sin
Never be
Allowed to enter in?

Or are there
‘More things in heaven, O God,
Than arc dreamt of in our theology?’

CLARENCE A. AMANN

*and only conditionally baptized by the attending doctor.
To V. F.

I that saw the world unrisen
Lie in deepest slumber still
Cried from anguish in this prison
Still an empty void to fill.

Then a light fell on the darkness
Light of love and light of peace
Sea of light was love so boundless
Will to live will never cease.

I that found my soul unrisen
Found a light so bright to guide
Laugh that now there is no prison
Only love to find inside.

JOSEPH G. GENDUSO

Across The Table

Across the table
once she laughed and loved
at me a while
and the world bright babbled before me.
She, like ripples, touched my shore
alive and wet and warm in the sun.

Across the table once hands met
with a glimpse of other and self
melting, molding, twining around
the roots of we.
Words glued silent to the noisy door of my mind
(the key lost)
faded, yellowing with time, curled with (mis)use.

Chained, I yelled with eyes watered with need and candle light
Words, words yet,
not yet words—still feeling forever locked
lost.
The key lost.
Yes, lost forever?
I called for the cheek.

GREGORY CONCHELOS

Madras

BY RAY PAVELSKY

The three was not so much the plastic uniteness of “trio” as three individuals moving, vibrating about one another and their invisible nucleus, (a veritable god-figure: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I will be, in the midst of them”).

The pattern of their moving, ever-changing stances reflected the nature of their god: sometimes swaying together, close, then ebbing apart, turning, a harmony and bitter-sweet discord of motion.

It was a love-symbol: when a tone was needed, it gave itself, fulfilling the moment. And sometimes there were the most rare and only-could-be clefts of silence, small, dark nights of tone-soul which gave that soul its needed need, and its meaning.

And the banjo was being tickled to life and he hurried in excited ups and downs around the graceful, still guitar who stood with her heart beating, saying yes.

Préméditation

Écoute—écoute l’harmonie des oiseaux,
Les arbres pleins de joie—les orphelins
Accueillants,
Le ciel presque obscure—le soleil
Se coucheant ...
Voilà la Création pour un petit moineau.

VITO MARCELLO
SUNSET

By MIKE GOODWIN

The green came silently with thunder of ants and soft suns at dusk. I could feel the old man's bones softening imperceptibly day by day. The distant brittleness that had somehow crystalized with each succeeding snow vanished from his eyes and rounded itself into a haziness that settled at the tobaccoed corners of his mouth and showed itself only here and there in a cragged upturned word. He was eighty-seven years old. He had seen his springs, he had beaten his winters.

We often sat and talked together at dusk. He would rock and chew, spit an unerringly arc or two over the rail, look at me and wink, look at the sun while he wiped the edge of his mouth with his knuckle, chuckle quietly at his accuracy.

There was a great humility in this small pride of tobacco arcs; a great wisdom in the quiet of his smile; a great peace in his eyes as the sun shattered itself to sleep in the red of the earth's edge.

I watched many of those dying suns chisel themselves silently into the fine etched webs of the old man's face before I learned of that special clarity which comes sharp and birdlike over old men sitting on porches at dusk in the spring. I was slow to see communion pregnant in the air like static, somehow akin to the hurrying tensed for the prey, waiting for death.

He would talk quietly of small yellow flowers growing between the stones of the footpath, of yulelogs cracking, of cinnamon sticks and the lamented loss of true penny candy and pickles by the barrel. In short, he spoke quietly, softly, with the surety of a man who has turned over stones in a field and planted seeds in their place, who has seen fox dens and treed 'coons firsthand not in dreams, who had lain with a woman he loved and buried her forty years later still loving. He would talk quietly and I would listen, and then together we would listen for katydids. Finally we would move on in.

I still marvel at the subtle strength of trembling petals moved by the shy yellow sun, at stones sprouting with rain. And at dusk I still sense the quiet of that old man, long gone now, once sitting on a porch in the spring at dusk: softness, the earth, and the old man breathing quietly together, a smile indenting the air, and seeds begetting saplings.

SPRING

The day was warm with the smell of spring on every nose the joy of the season bounced from every eye Winter had been chased down the alley of time and the conquering hero was strutting for all to praise

On the land the buds invoked the heavens in hopes that a bath might be given to their parched skins While the fishes of the deep cast their winter ice an' began to play tag with the baited hooks of fate Men too shed their winter garb of red nose and chapped lip In favor of the pink and copper of the sun's paint brush which was gently stroking their pale shell—

By DAVE FISHER

Downtown

Downtown in sidewalk cinder over time's cracked yet gilded ways i another twofold sole pavement pedal Aloneliness except for the little negro girl who skipped and whirled and looked up at me with round brown eyes.

J.J. ATTINASI
Forsaken

By R. Nicholson

The torrent of the rain had fallen in wind-whipped sheets, each swollen droplet crashing on the street like so many shattering crystals; and now, in the late afternoon, the flushed city streets began to steam as a cooling breeze followed in the wake of the summer squall. Above the indistinct bustle characteristic of the town could be heard the dull rumble of a gasoline-laden truck approaching a busy and congested intersection. No one, however, seemed to notice.

Crouched low in the reeking cab sat a small, owlish man, his wispy light brown hair dishevelled and his drawn face frowning behind horn-rimmed glasses. He stared gloomily at the deep black asphalt ahead, mesmerized by the insistent sizzle of heavy high-pressure tires on the wet pavement. The heat had lifted in hidden waves, and now the slight, spring-scented breeze, sweeping through the streets, chased away lingering clouds.

The intersection light suddenly flicked amber, and while he jammed the accelerator to the floor he wrenched the wheel to the right. Stopped, stilled.

Yet slowly, as if guided by a giant invisible hand, irresistibly, the dead-weight tanker behind him, which had been so obedient on the earlier part of the run, began to skid beyond the curve, beyond its accepted bounds, into the next lane of cars. It swung as the tide goes out—ponderously, heedlessly, but always overwhelmingly—drawn by a hidden magnetic force.

Recovering from his shock, the driver instinctively knew what would happen, and as a sudden flood of paraplemitism came to his forehead, he threw himself on the cab floor.

With a dull crunch metal clashed with metal, chrome co-existed with chrome, windshields dispersed, and an outcry of gasoline was seen over an oppressed black coupe. It flooded over and into the cab in a drowning wave, seeped into the upholstery, and overwhelmed the shaken young man inside.

A curious wide-eyed crowd quickly gathered. Dazed and bewildered, the young man could but gaze speechlessly at the crowd. His brain, fogged with shock, could neither comprehend what had happened nor sense any pain. His left leg was crushed—splintered from the knee down; the impact of the clash had ripped the muscles in his shoulders, rendering his arms limp and helpless, and the seeping acrid fumes burned his nostrils and seared his eyes.

The muttering faceless crowd had already grown to a murmuring mob, encircling the devastated coupe with a human ring of passive spectators. Slowly, but so very surely, the white heat of pain from his pulverized left leg increased, and consciousness began its slow march to the young man's mind, bringing agony and torture as its companions.

He could see now the ever-thickening mob, and he wondered why they stood there, talking, motioning. They could plainly see him and observe his plight, but yet they remained apathetic to his silent plea for deliverance. A shot of pain from his arms stunned him momentarily. Here I am! he thought. I guess they're waiting for an ambulance. What ambulance? Of course they sent for an ambulance! Who? Who sent for an ambulance? He raised his stricken limb to gesture to them, to catch their attention, but the sickening pain brought cascades of salt-water to his eyes, and he was engulfed in a torrent of agony. Very slowly, as he sensed the nature of his predicament a wave of awareness rolled in on him. The image of the crowd faded from his mind; it seemed to be miles distant. He realized in the same instant that he was alone, that he was approaching his sole inevitable fate, that he was helpless. Despair rode astride the wave of awareness.

The gasoline was still pouring forth from the mountainous gray tanker, and as the surging tide flooded the hood of the coupe, small sinister streams stealthily crept closer to the twisted hole above the red-hot engine head.

With a flash the smaller vehicle was devoured in an envelope of flame.

By now his head was reeling with pain, his mind thickened and drugged with shock and his vision distorted. The car was a stifling oppressive furnace, the flares of heat rising and stabbing throughout, burning away his hair and eyebrows. Instinctively the crowd turned and protected itself from this pyre, but he could not turn, could not protect his face, could not sit and nourish the starving holocaust.

His eyes wandered through the pall of flame to the crowd beyond, but he could not, through the smoke, discern distinct figures, and the misty wall again enshrouded the car. He thought of nothing, of everything; he saw amid the dancing vapors of heat a cool, brisk, soothing pond, shimmering with glints from the golden sun, and he was staring at his wavering blurred reflection when he felt the pressure, the ponderous, pulsating pounding in the ears. He felt for the first time the overwhelming suffocation, the roaring boil of this blazing cauldron, the scalding pant of these
all-encompassing fires. He was nauseated by the musty stench of . . .
He shuddered—his foot was afire.

The savage blast was relentless, and he felt he was enclosed in a fiery brazier, a reeking morbid tomb, darkened by the oil-black clouds of smoke which suggested to him horrible menacing arms grasping for him, soon to clutch him and drag him down to the depths of the baleful amber hue. Ghosts of memories shot through his aching brain like pale wisps of drifting smoke. He crashed down, sinking into the inferno, torrid, seething.

The flame crawled up his leg like a cancer, throwing unsparking torment to his brain, eating away, always the throbbing torture of pain! He writhed like a gaffed captured shark, turning, twisting, adding with his convulsions more racking pain.

As he threw back his head in a wild, uncontrolled seizure, the thirsty tongues licked at his chest, pouring heavy billows of black to his blistered countenance. An enraged demon—some crazed ogre—clung to his shoulders, dug its powerful talons into his soft body, and ripped him apart, thrashing and flogging him with a red-hot lash. He twisted about the furnace like a wounded snake, alternately moaning and screaming, gesticulating with a nodding torchlike head.

He succumbed with a shrill piercing shriek, anguish personified, configuration consummate.

Like an infant tiring of a new toy, the disenchantéd crowd turned, grasped and stumbled, split into individuals, and trudged to its haven. Soon, like a flock of vultures, the fervent band of photographers would descend on the scene to record for all time the grotesquely crumpled and half-cremated human at final rest in the middle of Main Street.

. . . like the rat in dark horde
   with its ugly grin
   lifts its green eyes glaring in their hollows
   bares its pale fangs
   to some light
   flashed by its hole

D. Callahan

Love

that blind
whiskerless cat
padding over spiked fences
slinking down glass paved alleys
sniffing hopped trees
scrounging from bottomless slop pails
love
That cracked skull-like shell holding
with-in its security the compass of truth
the direction of reality
the bank of joy charity peace patient
even happiness (whatever that means)
love
that fortune teller from Brazil who reads coffee grounds
before the crowd of percolator worshipers
who are trying to avenge instant coffee
or at least stamp out the commercials
love
that commodity that the rich can't buy
yet
the poor never admit they own
only because they are afraid they'll forget themselves
love
that intangible thing all need
to survive
love
that word

Dave Fisher
Tales of Twelve

By Theodore Vallone

"She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. She was nineteen, but her fully matured body and large frame made her appear in her early thirties. It was sad to see her crouched like a Hindu on that straw and thistled covered floor clutching her child as though at any moment it might be snatched from her. She sat motionlessly with her bare knees pointing awkwardly at oblique angles toward the stone walls. How I would have dressed this queen! With gowns and furs and a tiara for her long black hair. But as it was her beauty was housed in a short plain dress made gray and thin from too many washings. And yet she had elegance. Her smudged forehead and darkened eyes could not obscure this fact. And she was gentle. She shared her natural warmth with her child and with an infant lamb which lay curled snugly against her hip."

"Lucia's mother stood waiting impatiently with a large bowl in her hands while her daughter unfolded, adjusted, and readjusted the table cloth she had spread upon the warped boards of the outdoor table. Since the first hot days of summer, the family ate dinner together under the shade of an ancient rusty-leaved apple tree which stood just beyond the path leading to the fields. It was too stuffy to eat indoors, and besides Lucia could not bear to be separated from her beloved tree. This little twelve year old tomboy with blue jeans and chestnut-colored pig tails made the upper stories of the tree her playground from sunup to sundown. Even when ordered by her mother to set out a few dishes, she could not forget the tree, and so she danced and jiggled around the table like leaves shaken by the wind. Her mother seemed not to notice Lucia's antics and went about her own work. Perhaps she remembered her own childhood days and realized how quickly they could slip away. She was young herself, though the hard work required of a farmer's wife had left disastrous effects upon her health. An appearance of oldness seemed to extend to the very spirit of this small, fragile woman. And indeed it was a spirit dulled by constant strife with herself, her husband, and the world. Her graying hair was tightly drawn back from her plain and featureless face—a face which could do nothing but wrinkle with age. Dressed, as all peasant women are, in a long black dress and shawl, she could see herself with ugly hump-backed ladies on the way to light candles or to the evening novena. This she could see all too plainly and it made her bitter to think there was no escape.

When the table was set, two men appeared on the path walking slowly homeward. As they passed the storage shack the larger of the two pointed
toward the structure and grunted. The younger man said nothing but continued to walk with his eyes straight to the ground. In a moment his companion ducked into the doorway and was gone. When Raffaello reached the table his wife and daughter were already seated and waiting. Together they blessed the food and began to eat.

"Isn't he coming?" the wife asked sullenly.

"You know he will not say grace with us. Ah, see, he is coming now.""

"Let me tell you about the fat man. He was amusing to look at. He wore a short sleeved shirt with an open collar and large baggy trousers which were spotlessly white also. Even his carefully clipped hair was white. There was no other color to him except for a tanned face and a black leather belt which he wore loosely around his waist. As he swayed and waddled down the path he looked like an enormous cloud the wind was playfully pushing along. But when he plopped down on the bench, his mass seemed to consolidate and then he looked like one large melon ripening in the sun."

"For days now she had sat alone with her child and allowed no one to go near. It was the product of her own flesh and the season of impulse which she held in her arms. Her child was premature and sickly and as she bathed it with her tears she thought her love would have the strength to nourish it back to health. She wanted so badly to love it, yet she was unsure. It was her baby and it was her ruin: how could she love both? And if she loved the infant, had she to love the sin of its conception? Her mind was unsettled and unclear. She thought back to that night she crossed the threshold of womanhood. It was then her dream began. The hostile world became so calm and loveable that she entered a sleep from which she had not yet awakened. Now her dream was an ecstasy which grew weaker with time, but one which she would not give up."

"Necia e morte sono accidenti naturali, sposalizio, noi io possiamo scampare. Non è vero, Raffaello?" (Life and death are natural accidents, marriage we can avoid. Is that not true, Raffaello?) the large man asked with a slightly distorted smile on his opulent lips.

"Yes, yes. You always were a clever one with sayings, old man. Ha Ha."

Raffaello jerked his head quickly toward Lucia and met her bright eyes with a stern countenance. 'Lucia! Stop that giggling. You know it aggravates me. Here, pass this oil.' Then calming his voice he said, 'Tomorrow remember to first pour two full spoons of oil into his bowl before you add the scarola leaves. He likes his salad rich.'

With both hands Lucia carefully took hold of the tiny crystal decanter which seemed so out of place among the plainer ornaments of the table. The rays of the noon-day sun struck and held fast within the bottle and the golden liquid shimmered as she placed it before the feasting man. He gave her a kind, gentle smile which she returned a hundred times magnified.

"How jolly he is," she thought. 'He is always joking with daddy. I know I will come to like him more and more. I will."

"Yes, she loved the infant. She could no longer doubt it. Every last fragment of energy she possessed was now focused on one end—that it might live. Before its birth she had prayed that it would be a strong baby and live. But always then she kept within her a faint hypocritical fear that her prayers might be granted. Now when her mind and soul were of one accord she could not pray. She was too ashamed, too proud, too overcome by the beauty of this skinny red babe. She felt too close to God to speak. But with the slow ebbing of the child's life her spirit waned. She ceased to believe in the omnipotence of her role as creator and so more and more she found herself on her knees. Still without that total air of resignation due to more ethereal beings, she whispered, 'Our Father . . .'

"Our Father, Who art in heaven," she prayed and you pray likewise. But you are mistaken. Your father is here. Do you not meet him a thousand times each day? Why will you not know him? Your father gives to you life and energy . . . he holds your mortgage. Your father gives to you sons . . . he makes you sleepy. And he takes away. He takes away your failures because he gives you pride. He makes you religious because you are lonely. He annoints you with the oils of success, wealth, and fame because he, too, gets sick of your petitions and promises, your holy sobbing voices. He turns the hourglass of causality so that good runs into evil, and evil into good. He invented death because there were too many practicing martyrs."

"What I remember most about the old man is not his aphorisms, but the queer sheepish grin which accompanied so vast a bulk. With his hooked nose turned downward and the rounded corners of his mouth turned upward, he gave a perfect appearance of a boy who had stolen candy, or one who had stepped on a toad. A boy! He was too large to be a man! An elephant was a pigmy to him. As he ate Raffaello looked at him in disgust. And when he reached across the table to spear sausages with his fork, Raffaello shuddered.

"Aren't you done yet?" he said angrily. 'We have finished ten minutes ago."

"Ah, but you do not work as hard as I do," said this farmer in white. 'And what's more, you must be good to me or I will tell where your money is hid.' At this he broke out laughing so loudly that Raffaello had no choice but to join him. And again Lucia giggled.

For Raffaello, as for his wife, there was no escape."

"Each new day was like the last. Each new table was set with the same ware, and each meal was filled with the same trivial talk. Finally with the
impetuosity that only a young mind has, Lucia one noon violated an unspoken rule.

‘Why does the baby cry so much?’ she asked. ‘Doesn’t she care for it?’

‘Of course,’ Lucia’s mother replied compassionately looking at her daughter’s bright eyes, ‘but she has no milk.’

‘But we have milk.’

‘Goat’s milk is too sweet. The baby will not take it.’

‘We can go to the market for cow’s milk.’

‘No, my child,’ she said. ‘It all goes to the men who are fighting for our country.’

For a long time there was silence. However, failing to receive an expected reprimand, Lucia’s dare increased. ‘Hasn’t the baby a father?’

‘He is in the war, God save him. He had to leave his wife to fight for our liberty. She was with child when she came to us last December.’

‘Was he at Anzio?’ Lucia asked rapidly.

‘Be quiet!’ commanded her father. ‘You ask too many questions, you are too noisy. Why can’t you . . .?’

‘No!’ her mother sharply interjected. ‘Let her talk. It is only natural she would wonder.’

‘All right, all right,’ he said quieting himself. ‘He was at Anzio. And this man is her godfather. There, now you know everything.’

Then slowly a wry smile came over his face at the thought of what he had just said.”

“Her tiny room formed her retreat. There under a few square yards of thatch she had watched the winds and rains, fiery sunsets, and cold star-filled skies. Now that was past. The child which she grasped to a heart of quickening terror was dead. How long was it before she would admit the fact? For one, two, three days—who can tell?—she hung on to that motionless remnant of her dream.”

“Somewhere high in the branches of the olive trees, cicadas buzzed a dull monotonous song while, as if without heed to this phenomenon, cloud formations became mobile and began to shift. Here was the irony of the universe spoken in terms so simple and commonplace that even the least of

the schooled could understand. What is the power of sages and philosophers standing in the naked face of nature? They are voiceless dying men.

The winged creatures, so plentiful that August, were always accurate when they sang. It meant the following day would be bright, dry, and intolerably hot. No field laborer had ever ignored this sign, and always before setting out at dawn he would slip an extra flask into his pocket to supplement an inadequate water ration.

But equally trustworthy was the sign given by the heavens. First white globules of misty cloud began to fuse and thicken. They grew dark with swelling, and then with great vertical development they became heavy, mountainous, cauliflower-like masses which hung overhead and threatened.

Sailors learn the sky before they learn the sea. The next day it would rain!”

“She waited until dusk. It came but she could not move. Everything seemed so different, so unreal. There seemed no reason for anything, not for herself, not for her child, not even for things impersonal. She would close her eyes and lapse into unconsciousness. Each time she awoke she saw only a colored blur. The world had melted and run together into a vast plain. And what was she?—one tiny upright speck of flesh. She could not bear it. She wanted only to spend her eternity in that spot, to lose herself in the endlessness of space.

The evening became morning. Once or twice she was shaken to reality by the violent clap of thunder born of a tempest in the making. ‘Before the rain comes,’ she said, and slowly she crept out of her shelter into the open air. Dragging a shovel behind, she made her way across an open field and then down a shallow incline to where the soil was sandy. As she walked the sultry winds pressed close against her face and nostrils and made it hard for her to take a full breath. It was the bosom of nature returning to her the same full embrace which she had lavished on her child. But for her it carried no warmth and only sent an agonizing chill through her body.

She worked assiduously and with care, though not quickly. The sky had calmed a bit and there seemed less necessity that she should hurry. The dawn light was diffusing over the land. She had almost finished when her shovel struck something hard. She tried to dig around it but it was too large. Stone perhaps lay beneath the entire bottom of the gully where she was and she knew it was hopeless. She cleared the sand away from an area of the rock and then fell down weeping bitterly. Not even this last act as a mother could she do properly.

She wept long and hard but when she had lost all the fluid from which tears are made, she gained a sort of peace and her courage came back. She
placed the body of the child upon the stone and surrendered her right to its life. Her son she placed upon the stone.

There was a feeble light in the horizon just beginning to assert its presence as she walked homeward. The sun, like a glowing coal struggling for life, rolled and trembled in the sky. Now its moment had arrived and it burst into radiance.

**Struggle**

Life often sparkles and shines,
Then suddenly I close my door
And fall into the night,
There I wander aimlessly
Until I find the stairs,
Then I climb and climb;
Finally I reach the top
And happily burst outdoors.

J. R. Pike

And I,
in the dawning stillness of your eyes live reflected,
reflecting on the unideaness of you.

Gregory Concheles

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**The “Inspected by 84” Ticket**

I am an “Inspected by 84” O.K. shirt
Don’t just throw me away with those pins and plastic
84 works hard and barely supports a home
Just stop what you’re doing and say hello to him!
He looked at me on an assembly line
I remember because he inspected me quickly
He was trying to get in a quick smoke
His teeth are yellow from smoking too much
I’m not O.K. but that’s all right
He really couldn’t have cared less
I heard him talking to 88
Mrs. 84’s new baby just died
They couldn’t afford it anyway
84 isn’t very happy today, and 83 doesn’t listen so well
Don’t just throw that “Inspected by 84” ticket away
So easily
How often does 84 say hello to you?
So easily?

Jim Hyde

**Chi verra vorra**

My parched lips raw;
Your cooling spring
Phlegethon* to me.
With fever song my feams prick your car
Your heart not so.
Once loving touch cold and limp.
The chill can find no warmth
In your gray hearth.

I search a way;
You leave me blind.
Time, the rushing torrent,
Rivers ’tween us.

D. Callahan

*Phlegethon—the river of fire in the underworld.
It is refreshing in appearance, but is burning to the taste.
As the last vine swings

there are ages in a man's minutes
there are silent days once swung among
and still deeply singing sunward
pierced ward fear to fore and fastback far
to other suns
and there are future fearward lights
chalk soft and screaming
on flush bright barking moons
there is slow begone hunger
to run thus moonward in the monkey pain
to caper in the wind quick veins
of craggled trebel trees
and gambol mong the echoes
of refracted fractured truth

and now
there is shivering in the night's bite
and sway away swims in watery thought
and fingered days lit by suns running
in all their bird light laughter
behind chalk soft screaming moons

and ever
a whisper:
where there is nothing necessity sings

Mike Goodwin
in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

e. e. cummings