

# LITERARY PAGE

## WELCOME TO OLD MISS

The cool is pleasant  
thick green and soft;  
not Northern winter,  
just flaming ivy curves  
orange on green  
along walls sturdy  
as ancient as  
Southern ways.

He is not dead  
I suspect, but his ghost  
black and cynical  
hardened for the task  
strolls in daylight  
and I wonder when his head will hang  
on panels of the cool guest house  
and read: "James Meredith,  
our first black guest."

Alex Haley was met there,  
he is not so black as that  
but in Mississippi  
some whites still cringe  
at the melodrama of slavery.

Blues music crackles  
and then melts the daylight  
to shades of grey,  
and at night we listen  
in the silence for Meredith-  
his footfall lonely on the road.

It is hard to gaze in old blue eyes  
and trust smiles of how-di-do  
drunk and giddy in Southern drawl.

*Two four six eight  
We don't want no niggers here!*

It is hard to think stubby pink fingers  
did not clutch red bricks  
and hurl anarchy through windscreens;  
eyes alive with ivy flames  
on Oxford's soft green lawns.

*Two four six eight  
We don't want no niggers here!*

1963 is the year after I was born.  
Do we change much in twenty-five years  
without being born again?

"James Meredith was the first black man  
to be accepted as a student at the  
University of Miss. Oxford."

KWAME DAWES

## HE THE INDIFFERENT NIGHT

He stared out  
across the Frozen landscape  
the houses and buildings silhouetted  
against street lamps ablaze  
each a little star radiating  
softly their hues

He wonders whether  
these little lamps  
in showering warmth  
are reflections too of warmth  
beneath their starry umbrellas  
or exists there only the ice,  
and chill of indifference  
that Frosts his soul

Then suddenly  
larger, more colorful lamps  
Shoot upward  
crackling great bursts of light  
paper-bomb gods of hope, of joy  
each worshipped for a fleeting moment  
then forgotten

The fluff of explosions  
are a great crackling fire  
boldly beckening the night  
to draw near the bursts of warmth  
but the night, unmoving  
remains cold and still  
around his soul which unamused  
remains unflinched by the enthusiasm

Sounds of song  
now string from the end of the street  
the trappings of merriment rise  
Vapour trail notes of warmth  
in buffs gently roll  
off the nights outer flint  
but alas no spark of joy is seen  
the notes trail off  
their creators filter inside  
and leave the night to his chill and silence  
He sinks back  
from the frosted glass  
the chair creaking beneath him  
his countenance reflects the  
soft hues of the lamps  
but cheerless, smileless,  
he remains still and unmoving  
as the last notes of the twelfth hour  
ring out the dawn of the year  
and the night is still and cold around him

EUGENE DERENYI

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