

THE MAN WHO LAUGHS

Garth L. Waite

He flies great airplanes of roaring laughter which circle overhead in evening skies. He is spring's first kite flying in later afternoon over fields rancid with rain and rot, attached to earth by strings clenched in tiny fists running to mother's yelling look! look!

His laughter chases cumulous billows over horizons and into tomorrow before returning for ham sandwiches with cheese and perhaps a croissant.

He laughs in rolling wet convulsions when remembering late summer thunderstorms.

He laughs the way a happy man farts, or a sleeping dog chases imaginary cars after dinner.

He is a Coca-Cola with caviar at poolside. He is a gate without a fence. He is a fire dancing on thin legs supported by a very fat ass.

He is a loaf of bread singing of molasses and cheese and baked beans on Saturdays.

He is a moonbeam on a popsicle stick.

He is a man standing in open windows singing in springtime. He is a man who ties tin cans to lazy dog's tails.

He is a man who wears plaid pants and baggy underwear with hearts for all the neighbors to see and wonder who does his shopping let alone his wash

He is a man who risks pneumonia by dancing with the moon on puddles barely frozen and does not even care when his zipper is down on crowded street cars.

He is a man who strikes terror in the hearts of men who clip hedges and mow lawns religiously on Sundays.

Calling all writers:

I need more material for this page!

Contact Mark Stevens

at the Bruns.

By MARK STEVENS
Brunswickan Staff

Well, it's late Wednesday afternoon, and the deadline is fast approaching. The editor, (God bless her) has just suggested to me that I write some kind of introduction to this embryonic literary page.

How depressing...first of all, I dislike the word "literary". For most people it has unpleasant connotations. I suppose we all remember having literature rammed down our throats at school by teachers determined to "improve our minds." Even here at university there seems an inbuilt resistance to reading for fun. I guess this stems from the misapprehension that creative writing can only be appreciated

by those who spend hours in the English coffee lounge endlessly pontificating about the meaning of poetry. Rubbish! Nothing could be further from the truth.

A few years ago, I was talking to a friend of mine about a poem by T.S. Elliot. In a suitably pedantic manner, I was trying (unsuccessfully) to explain what the poem meant. She listened politely for a while, but finally boredom got the better of her. "You know," she said, "I don't care what the poem means. I just like the sound of the words."

Basically her argument was that you don't have to be a graduate student in English to be able to enjoy reading what we mistakenly put on a pedestal and call "literature."

Anyway, I hope that you approach this page with an open mind. But most of all, I hope that you enjoy it. Perhaps you might even be tempted to write something.

THE LAST SPIKE

Mark Henderson

Ribbon of iron, rusted with blood,
Devil's paintbrush and the alder's onslaught
have made you quaint.
The rolling wheel that keeps you burnished
is the memory of my father.
While the Atlantic breeze
wiped the sweat from his brow
he could lay his hand to steel
that pierced the hearts of B.C. coolies.

Tie-plates from a torn-up track
are bookends now,
the alpha and omega of the story of his life.
Remembrances colouring my mind's eye
hang larger than life in railway stations,
tributes to a man who could paint the night
and capture the freedom of the sea.

The auld man who piped the sun down ivory
houses
is gone, but sandpipers still sing glinting cuts
in the waves' rhythmic wash,
like the scrape of rough knobbed hands and the
whiskerburns
that are a child's dearest legacies.

NOSTALGIA

How it must have been back then
the alphabet scattered all over the street
clinking like gold coins under your feet
When women were wimmen and men men
and all rhymes meet

Back when the language had blood to spill
and flesh on its ribs and muscled thighs
and a thick black pelt and scum in its eyes
and the smell of French on its genitals

The days when barrel-chested vowels
pissed on their prissy p's and q's
thumped oak boards with brimming soups
and spoke their thoughts aloud

It was a time when verbs had room to move
and a noun knew where it came from
Munificence fitted our princely tongue
and the last e got its due

The world practically begged to be called forth
and all our dead metaphors and familiar similes
perched brilliantly in the tops of tall trees

Randy Campbell

Incoherent Rambling
From Five Countries

By Barry Parkinson

(Thanks to RST et al, for allowing an unkept ex-pat use of the typewriter and everything else.)

...okay, stop now...dammit ...

and another car fails to slow, fails to stop and yer left squinting in the sun, trying to look harmless. it's getting late and there's more than 7 hundred k's to go: won't somebody please stop? i've got no gun and my knife is deep down in my bag, lost, and i dont want anything more than a ride anyway. this is one helluva way to travel...

night-time in the medina -the corners are sinister, yeah, but the rest is dead: most everything closes up about 8 or 9. there's the cafe, full of football fans tonight - and everyone's a football fan here -and there's the nut shop. that's all.

i wonder how this guy with the nuts makes any money: isn't open half the day and there are no customers after dark, 'cept the odd nightowl like myself. doesn't seem to mind, 'tho.

he's black, which is odd. blacks are a sizeable minority; but you never see them with a stall in the medina.

my french is useless here; i don't know the names of the nuts and the man never seems to reach for the ones i'm pointing at.

d'accord?
yeah, d'accord...even if they're not the ones i really wanted...dirhams over the counter and i'm walking alone again, into the shadows, warm peanuts in my hand...

hey! why not stop?

whatever happened to all these famous truckers who'd take you 500 k's in one shot? dont tell me these were myths of the 60s.

i actually need a lift this time. gotta get to the sea by dawn. shouldn't have bought that bloody ticket till i knew about getting to the coast. if i don't get that boat, i'm out plenty of money that i can't afford. almost impossible to get a ride after dark. c'mon...

late winter sun is rising and finally a cafe opens. i bin awake far too long, but i order coffee anyway - i've also bin cold far too long. the guy behind the counter stares at me, uncomprehending. realizing that i ordered in portugese instead of spanish, i shake my head, mumble the "lo siento" of self-disgust and try again. with a sympathetic smile, he begins making the coffee. these midnight border crossings have got to stop.

i always enjoy watching the actions of spanish barkeepers ('cos this really isn't a cafe), especially when it comes to coffee: unscrew the ground-basket with a quarter-twist of the handle, tap the grounds out, fit the basket under the coffee container (the funnel's getting low) and give it three twists,

back into the machine, cup in position and the knobs are turned ON. saucer, spoon and such all appear. as an after-thought, i look up and say "con leche, por favor" and he begins to steam milk. the calcium will be good for me...

a turnsignal! he - no, she - is actually stopping! her car's almost rear-ended by a tailgater, but now she's stopped and i'm running after her, bag swinging in my hand -citroen hatch-back; she - early 30s, black hair, glasses, nice - is reaching across to unlock the door. enthusiastically expressed thanks in language i no longer remember and we're off to this port town as an old sun fills the rear-view mirror...

sitting on the edge of the bed, slicing a bowl a vegetables into my pot. shouldnt eat so much so late in the evening, but you've gotta have something to do at night here; and cooking seems about as good as anything else. stop for a moment to refill my glass; actually, it must have been a jam jar at one time. ah well, the local wine doesnt call for crystal.

out to the patio to light the stove. not too much wind tonight, so there should be no hassles with keeping the flame alive. quite nice out here, cool but clear. the moon's not out yet and the stars fill the sky, sparkling like ground glass in the sun. there's a ship that hasn't moved in 2 days, its lights all you can see on the water.

a bubbling sound; i crouch down to lower the fire and give things a stir ...owl! a flame up the side of the pot catches my left hand. is that damp wetness steam or blood? hard to tell in the gas-blue light.

a dog begins to bark. for a moment there's the quiet of water on the shore; then another dog. i go inside to find dried blood on the back of my hand...

...yes, i speak english, but i am not english.

that makes her laugh.

no thanks, i dont smoke.

and, now, a nod of approval as she lights up her own cigarette. marlboro, of course. more and more talk as it gets darker. she's meeting her boyfriend - he arrives on the same ship i'll be taking out. lucky man. quieter for a while, then she slips a cassette into the player. good music. she drives and i listen, staring into the glow of dashboard lights...

out of the bar now; how many bars have i left? alcohol's a drug alright...still; not drunk, just tired: 2 a.m. and another 3 hours of not sleeping before i can get the train out of this city. streetlamps halo'd in the cool humid night; listening to my own breathing.

this city has an interestingly bad reputation. but no one is out on the streets. all alone tonight.

no; i speak too soon. up ahead is a whore. left-over from the night's business? on a second shift? cant say; i dunno from the world of prostitutes..whatta fine young man. i walk on, disinterested.

later, headlamps of an oncoming car. i step into a blind alley. rats get excited and run into caverns of rubbish, into black corners. why'd i hid from the car? getting into the rhythm of the city...?

sky's overcast, but getting lighter with the dawn. the rain begins about 15 minutes out of town. by the time we reach the port, it's comin' down in sheets. she stops by the gate, stretches; the long inactivity of the night is over and i have to get out. best get through customs early; she's gonna wait in the car for the ship to dock.

reach back for my bag, pull on my coat,
well, thank you very much/it was no trouble/good-bye/good travels; ciao

an' out into that rain, walking. no sense in running since i'm gonna get soaked no matter what. look up, water on my face now, to the lit building a hundred metres away. customs, i figure; coffee, i hope. early start this morning...