



leads us to hope that in further volumes his predilection for shying tomatoes at top hats will be indulged--to our delight and his.

Haifa David Hofman 1978

#### PART ONE PORTRAYALS

O ye apostles of Baha'u'llah! . . . Behold the portals which Bahá'u'lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain; how unique the favours with which you have been endowed.... I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements.... Be not concerned with the smallness of your numbers neither be oppressed by the multitude of an unbelieving world ... Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

#### MARTHA ROOT

1872--1939

A dowdy girl, was Martha, and a real gadabout . . .

(remark by a contemporary)

Have patience, Martha, we shall forget the hastily-hemmed hand-me-downs the laddered hose the horrent hair shall understand you yet, cease to care whether virtue be photogenic, dare see in your eye's lens the apocalyptic images ineffaceably etched there-- the poisoned air the towers afire the maimed trees the human pyre--these which sent you hurtling in exquisite arc across the blackening sky, your life a solitary warning cry against engulfing dark and ultimate night. Your eyes were dippers used against the fire, purchased brief respite that on the ramparts might arise - the legioned guardians of light.

Be patient: we may yet ourselves become God's gadabouts, meteoric, expire Martha-like, in conflagrant holy urgency.

#### A LETTER TO KEITH

Now Keith, she was a looker ...

(remark by a contemporary)

Why did you do it, Keith, And you a looker? Not your usual religious dame in need of a good dentist and a fitted bra. Not one of those skinny ones who make it their painful duty to love mankind and purse their lips a lot to let you know it isn't easy. Not one of those. Sharp dresser, too. And brainy. Not every man's kind of woman but a looker. And a real good talker, too. It makes no sense, Keith. You could have put your passion

to another use.

We grow them odd here in Michigan, but you were an odd one even for us-- why, just your name, for starters. And all your mooning about the library, reading too much, making notes in little books. And your preaching. I suppose your life was full enough but your interest in God--was that normal? We always said you could pray the paint off a barn door at twenty paces, but we meant no harm. It was as though you were always looking for something you hadn't found.

And gallivanting around the world like you did, visiting the Maoris and savages like that, which we had only ever seen in National Geographic. In those days we thought we were doing pretty good if we made a trip to Chicago. Nobody faulted you for going to the Holy Land, you always were the studious kind and they've got a helluva lot of religion there.

We heard you were sent on a special mission to fight for a good cause. Well, you'd be just the girl for that; but why Persia, Keith? Life still isn't worth a nickel there and what do they know about plumbing? With a tongue like yours, I'll bet you told those folks a thing or two. And when word got back that you had died there's some as said you'd found what you wanted at last. I'm one who thinks you did, Keith, who thinks you did.

All these years later standing at the marker they put up for you here at home and reading those words and listening to what these decent people are saying about you being a glorious martyr and all-- I'm bawling, me a grown man, three sons and wife in the grave and not what you'd call sentimental.

Why did you do it, Keith, and you a looker?

LOUIS G. GREGORY

1874-1951

He is like pure gold; that is why he is acceptable in any market, and is current in every country.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Across the angry decades that separate us from him may there still be found true and stainless words unwarped by the suppositions and suspicions of these hurtful times to honour this

gentleman of colour?

We need the lesson of this lite; need  
know that the alchemy of service and  
obedience mints coin of purest gold.  
In his modesty he almost eludes us but  
we will know him yet.

Travel, the Master said, I want  
them to see you; you are very  
dear to me.

And dear to us, Louis, who see  
you now and love, as He, O Louis,  
love, even as the beauty of your  
dusk, your gleam.

#### VISIT TO A VETERAN

I often thought that Horace Holley might have been a bit of a  
rake when he was young, but he straightened up real good.

(remark by a contemporary)

Wilmette, 1953

You had a mandarin's tranquillity, A Jesuitical poise, but I  
was keen to see If the legends of you held validity. You knew,  
of course, but smiled and offered tea.

'The ego our sole, our deadliest foe . . .' I nibbled cake and  
mused it might be so. 'This battle is the bravest act I know .  
. . .' I feigned agreement and arose to go.

Homage to homily! Cliche well spun! A wasted meeting--and this  
our only one-- The gift then not seen (my struggle scarce  
begun) Your face: archive of victory sorely won.

#### 'ABDU'L-GHAFFAR OF ISFAHAN

What fish is this that struggles to the shore,  
For whom this absence is a fiery death, And,  
plunging, finds but anguish all the more, Each  
scorching wave a torment to his breath?

What lure aland inspires this frantic flight? Toward whose  
strong skein turns he his questing eye? The poet told this  
knowing fish's plight: Here sea; here hapless, burning  
lover, dry.

#### MASTER CRIMINAL

From every land Thou hearest the lamentations of  
them that love Thee, and from every direction Thou

hearkenest unto the cries' of such as have  
recognized Thy sovereignty . . Thou knowest full  
well, O my God, that their only crime is to have  
loved Thee.

Tell, Duarte Vieira, kindly tell, What crime won  
you a prison cell?

Your testament, a biscuit tin-- What, Duarte  
Vieira, was your sin?

What was the error of your ways That heaven's  
Concourse sings your praise?

What offence did you commit? Tell, that we may  
follow it.

Reveal your secret so that we May, too, gain  
immortality.

Our skulking fears by you allayed, We seek a  
crime so richly paid.

All Africa now vastly blessed: Baha's felon laid  
to rest.

Tell, Duarte Vieira, kindly tell, What crime won  
you a prison cell?

MARION JACK

1866--1954

Let them remember Marion Jack . . .  
Shoghi Effendi

We are not menaced by this one in our  
silent, steely rise to power. The  
unseen worm sleeps blissfully in the  
silver apple.

This is not a master. The world  
justifiably ignores the conventional  
inept daubs and we affirm that  
charitable neglect. Our hand will not  
tremble as we reach for our brush; no  
standard born of her rebukes our  
palette.

Not even as a woman does she  
intimidate. The body is a  
commonplace, the domestic bulk  
foreshadowing varicose veins. We see  
her as a cardiac. The face, an

artifact, looks homemade. If our  
glance lingers it is to find  
confirmation that fat people are  
jovial. Observe the open grin that  
cannot imagine refection or  
destruction.

Let us pass her by, one of those useless  
people drowsing on park benches who would  
embarrass our friends. We need not dignify  
her paintings by affording them critiques;  
history in its mercy will dispose of them.  
We deal in success, we understand these  
things.

But what is this achievement looming  
indestructibly from the acme of another  
arc? Mourn loss immortal heroine . . .  
greatly loved and deeply admired by Abdul-  
Baha shining example pioneers present  
future generations East West . . . The  
worm stirs. Precipitately the apple  
tumbles forward. Holding it in the mind's  
blue light the teeth engage-- but this  
shall taste of ashes. Envie not greatness  
. . . Be not thine own worm How chill the  
murk behind our opaque, earthbound eyes.  
Regard the larger canvas: a masterwork.

Marion! Guide us as we seize the brush!  
Teach us the colours of immortality!

E A G L E  
Lua Getsinger  
1871--1916

Mother-teacher of the American Bahá'í Community . . .  
Shoghi Effendi

Studio of Juliet Thompson  
New York  
13 June 1912

Here at the giddy summit of our acute and secret need,  
above desire's burning desert and ambition's  
treacherous bog, in this perch gained painfully by the  
heart's frail ladder and reason's faulty bridge-- all  
means by which ~e sought approach-- we nestle in the  
dappling light in His love's green and leafy warmth.

We who think we know Him, who found in Him more than

we could have known to want of the Good of goodness,  
who see Him as Father, our Christ-need dream fleshed  
out and fruit of every creche made real, Son of the  
Eternal Sun, Perfection wrought ideal, whitest white  
of White, the rosiest Rose,  
prismatic fire of diamond, honey's  
amber inmost essence and flower's  
unseen core-- now are given more.

Despite our pain and vertigo the  
goal not gained ! Our understanding  
sags and sighs beneath the blue and  
reeling loft we must claim else die  
on this flint and lonely precipice.

If eagle will know sky it must  
trenchantly seize air in plumate  
frenzy, pummel, conquer, rise,  
soL~r -  
he eagle.

In the throbbing hiatus  
as we mutely cower He  
reads one heart:

I am the Centre of God's Covenant He  
said.

You must understand this. I am the  
Centre of the Covenant in your midst.

Lua I appoint you the Herald of the  
Covenant.

In tears the fledgeling lunges toward a  
chaste and unknown splendour: 'O Master\_  
re-create me for this task!'

We see her earthfree in avian ascent sweep toward  
heaven's arch; her receding joyous cries flake down  
faint as echo's echo.

We would have this azure authority, ask strengthening,  
wing and tendon, for this flight.

THE PURCHASE  
Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi

Afflictive woe unbearable; they grieve. One uncalm  
mourner cannot reconcile to this And through unreasoned  
act buys their reprieve, Below his drooped mouth carves  
a scarlet grin of bliss. Egregious deed attended by

reward, He lives and, exiled, gains reunion with his Lord.

If madness purchase immortality  
Grant compounded madness, love's full insanity  
HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY  
CONDUCT THE ROBBERY OF  
A LITTLE OLD LADY

To ard the end of herlife, u\*ileservingasaBaha'~'pioneer in ~he Canary Islands, Prudence Ceorge (189~1974) of the British Baha'l' community had her handbag snatched b~ a young thief. Upon her calling aloud the Greatest Name the boy dropped the purse and ~!ed in confusion. Prudence uas left calling him back in order to listen to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

I am the first to admit that William Carlos Williams is the ultimate authority on how to conduct a funeral but I'm glad you came to me about this matter.

Mine was the perfect crime, you see, I retired wealthy at an early age and my victim and I have become the best of friends. We sometimes sit around of an evening and reminisce about the robbery. What could be nicer, more civilized? I'm able to say with some little pride that I'm something of an expert in my field. Williams couldn't help you here; you did well to come to me.

I'm afraid you handled your little affair rather poorly, my dear chap. Admittedly you chose your victim well. She was an obvious mark, of course, conspicuously a foreigner moving through the town with the curious innocence and vulnerability of the stranger. Her age was in your favour-- older ladies can rarely run very fast.

You never know about their lung power, of course. Some seem to have waited all their lives for a chance to indulge in some justified high-decibel screaming-- but that's a chance you take.

Yes, she seemed a good choice, as victims go, but you bungled it, young fellow. There was little excuse for it-- you slim as a jack-knife, capable of moving fleetly and with stealth-- not that these were necessary qualifications for the job.

No, it was your mistaken judgement. That's how you muffed it, my boy, in going after the handbag. No value there. If you'd given her half a chance she'd have offered you a pearl beyond price. If you'd handled it correctly it would have been a piece of cake as we used to say in the trade.

Now next time, my lad, here's what you do. Forget about handbags--they're usually filled with bus tokens, hairpins, photographs of grandchildren, throat lozenges, theatre programmes, shopping lists, shredding facial tissues, grubby pencil stubs and astonishing quantities of lint-- rarely the sleek travellers' cheques you imagine sprout there.

So forget the purse. Instead, approach the victim eagerly wearing a friendly smile.

Extend your hand in a warm greeting and say:  
Madam, have you anything to tell me? And the pearl is yours! There, you see, as easy as taking candy from a baby. Duck soup, as it were.

For heaven's sake, lad, take a little pride in your work.

Go now, I think you are ready.

## T H E D A N C E R

Catherine Rudyerd (Heward) Huxtable

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh (Gulf Islands, Canada)  
1932 1967

This Irailest seated girl who'd choose to dance,  
Yet cheats ungracious nature's cumbering trial,  
Gallops her mount without a backward glance,  
Knows well she will be with us but a while And  
undeterred by body's withering blight Achieves  
the valorous victory of a Knight.

Wariest bird, the shadow ever near, Outpours her  
song--we would not have it end-- Lavishes joy,  
nor deigns to squander tears, So imminent reunion  
with the Friend. Departing then, example left as  
trust, To Africa consigns her fragrant dust.

She dances now, enthroned in love's fair keep. We  
see her vacant chair and do not weep.

## FUJITA WITH PILGRIMS

Dearly loved tireless steadfast Saichiro Fujita . . . His rank in van-  
guard, first Japanese believers his labours World Centre his dedication  
humility sincerity love will forever be remembered . . .

The Universal House of Justice  
(Cablegram of 7 May 1976)

What was 'Abdu'l-Bahá really like? The Master was always very kind to me. But what did you hear Him say? Everything He wanted to teach us is

in His Writings and His example. To think you had the bounty of serving Him ! I never felt that I could do very much for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One thing I did was perhaps acceptable-- sometimes I made Him laugh. And what did He say to you? He told me to be a good boy.

There is a rightness in our meeting here. He is proprietorial in the garden, the dwarfing verdure seems to nuzzle him. Acquitted of triviality by a pain and loneliness that might instruct us, rescued a halo's-breadth from isolating sainthood by an exonerating intolerance and his need for us but still a holy man he accepts our homage not in full innocence yet more in his Master's right than his own, mikado of mirth, the Servant's servant.

Impaled upon our need for validation, (Approve us, you by Him approved!) above our pity or patronage, with a rare awareness of his assured immortality, he offers for our Polaroid delight a harlequinade, inattentive to the dignity he has unassailably achieved. Against our expectation of dogmatic declamation or prescription for joy his pantomimed haiku attests: There is no mystery here; only fidelity and service. The children accept the sage as secrete-less, admit him to their world, converse in a language we have lost. We chafe at the edge of their enchantment. We are aspiring esoterics, giddy with statistics and formulae, swooningly obsessed with apocrypha and eschatology; our questions swarm through the mute garden like raucous insects. Sedated by sunlight the geranium gape in crimson consternation. His certitude is chivalrous, does not accuse; it is older than the garden.

Our anguish cannot hold him. Eluding our slender claim he turns from our doubt to the flowers and silent concerns, ambling away with a wink and a wave betokening our affirmation. He courts annihilation; a fairer garden calls. Beyond our view his comic stance is shed; he is listener, suppliant, awaiter. His yearning towers with the patience and solemnity of trees.

We had not thought the journey such a lonely one. In the backwash of his inviolate renunciation we stand, waist-deep in the dumb geranium disconsolately tracing our distance from the goal, churning the weightless air with our questions and our words, our endless words.

Someone asks: Did you take his picture?

Haifa

April 1975

A CUP OF TEA

Persian Muslims will tell you often that the Babis bewitch or drug their guests so that these impelled by a fascination

which they cannot resist, become similarly affected with what the aforesaid Muslims regard as a strange and incomprehensible madness.

New York, 1912:

No more tea, Emma dear, you have been more than kind and the cake was most delicious. The strawberries are extraordinary this year, are they not . . . sweet and plump; like small red hearts.

But returning to your question, yes, I have been seeing dear Miss Thompson and her friends; Juliet is a charming and talented girl and her friends are kindly. Many of them are well placed--somehow one doesn't quite dare hope for that among the religious, if I may say so. I try to warn Miss Thompson to hold little hope for me--as you know, I'm essentially pragmatic--but she does insist so sweetly that sometimes I attend. She is always gracious at the meetings though I understand little of what she says--since her visit to Palestine she has seemed--how shall I say--not quite of this world; she lives in a state of ecstasy. She talks of nothing but the one she calls the Master---an occult-sounding term; I quite dislike it--but I confess he does intrigue me; I mean, a prisoner for forty years and now at an advanced age coming to America teaching a message of brotherly love and peace--it's like a fable. The newspapers are full of it, of course.

Miss Thompson has been beside herself since learning he would come and I naughtily allowed her to persuade me to meet him, not giving her false hope by permitting her to see how avidly curious I was. You can picture it--my pretending indifference yet half fearing she would cease insisting, and then my casting about for some means to accomplish this without upsetting my husband. Wingate is an avowed agnostic, as he eagerly informs anyone who will listen, and no doubt would disown me. His conception of my social role outside the home, I'm afraid, extends no further than my service on the Opera League and my charities; and he has always been embarrassed by what he calls my brother's Episcopalian delusions. Charles studied for the ministry, you know, until he contracted tuberculosis. After he regained his health Wingate rescued him and gave him a place in the business.

But where was I? Oh yes, the Master--how queer that that name should come so readily to my lips; 'Abdu'l-Bahá or ~Ahhas Fffendi would be proper forms of address, I suppose. Despite my subterfuge, arranging an appointment was not so easily accomplished; there were many meetings but all were crowded--devotees pouring in from as far away as California, I hear. But at last we succeeded in finding a mutually agreeable time and I was Miss Thompson's guest at a gathering at someone's home--a rather good address--though what Juliet told the hostess I cannot think, and indeed I never met her,

so great the crush. A strange assortment--some orientals-- Persians, I suppose--a coloured gentleman--Wingate would use another term but, you see, one can in the South without offence--two Chinese, and some of what one might describe as the labouring class; a struggling artist or two, and one who might have been a poet, from Miss Thompson's seemingly endless circle of co-enthusiasts. Others, too, of course, who appeared both charming and distinguished. but on the whole one was struck both by the ordinariness of the people in the group and fascinated by the idea of their being linked together through curiosity or devotion. And the Master was present --'Abdu'l-Baha--and he appeared--how shall I say--oh, noble, majestic, serene--it was rather as though a great light had entered the room---do you find me sentimental? One felt an overpowering need to win his approval--like a child with an adored teacher. And he spoke. Not at length, but with extreme simplicity and power. His voice is gentle, hypnotic, one might say irresistible. I scarcely remember the words--it was rather his presence which compelled--but something of his father's sufferings and his message, and a few words about his own imprisonment--the words seemed the least part of it. One could not resist feeling a sympathy, of course, but for me what he said was not the central point. How can I say this and be sure I am understood--as he spoke I asked myself: why is he here; what does he want of us; he is not young--what can possibly come of this journey in the West?

And it came to me that his being here represents an unvoiced invitation--perhaps I should say command, for it is his presence which expresses it rather than what he says--a command, then, that we make an adjustment in our lives--am I making sense? I almost exclaimed aloud: 'He wants us to be like him!' Not in an imitative way--not that--but to step into his world, and to somehow transform this one. And I wondered if the others knew this too--perhaps this is what Miss Thompson has been telling me all along and I simply have not understood. But it bore in on me there in his presence--profoundly bore in--that he asks us to make an adjustment of the soul, if I may use that term--to become spiritually renewed.

This all happened in a flash, as these things do, Emma, and there was more. In that moment I knew I might--if I were free--what shall I say--follow him, in the sense Miss Thompson uses that term. Oh, not on my knees in the dust as she doubtless would--though perhaps that too--but, in my own way, follow him; that I might become one of those women who weep at his mention; that he might represent a standard to which one could devote one's life--forgive me if I ramble, but I scarcely know words to describe this and if I embarrass you I'll stop. It's just that there is no one to whom I have been able to tell it all. I'm inhibited in speaking to Miss Thompson--she's so hopeful of my being won over and in fairness I must not encourage her. There I

was--in my mind--throwing myself at his feet, sobbing, and covering them with kisses. It was most unsettling.

But in the same moment of realizing this truth about myself I felt a sense of deep loss--a heart-piercing loss. I heard myself saying--not aloud, of course, though I scarcely knew at that time what I might have done--heard myself saying 'It's too late for me!' And tears stung my eyes at that instant. Pictures of Wingate and the children flashed into mind, and a picture of our house and myself presiding at one of Wingate's functions. And I looked about the room and thought, how can I open my home to all these people? How can I present them to Wingate's mother? In following the Master, you see, you open your door upon the world. My choices have been made, I realized. And in my feeling of loss I saw the faces around me suddenly as alien, hateful--in that moment I felt a loathing even for Miss Thompson who has been the essence of kindness. The people appeared--how shall I put it--smug and conspiratorial, a closed circle. I felt excluded and I detested them. I saw them as Wingate might see them, as pitiable objects of derision--as calf-eyed and fawning, mooning about like biblical figures at the feet of Christ in a shabby tableau. They seemed naive, even incredibly stupid. Of what use are any of these to him, I thought? He is of a different world ! What can possibly come of this journey he is making, these talks, this pathetic handful? How can any of this matter?

All of this in a split second, as I said. And then I closed my eyes against my tears. It is perhaps as well I had not met the hostess because then, unforgivably--I blush to say it--I fainted. The room was stifling and I had unwisely worn a velvet frock. I have never in my life engaged in that deplorable female diversion--Wingate's mother faints at every conceivable opportunity--I despise the practice, always having supposed it to be an artifice. But there it was--picture it, if you can, Emma. I must have blacked out for only a moment--someone was fussing about and making well-meaning but clumsy efforts to loosen my collar, and my eyes opened to see the Master rising and coming towards me bearing the cup of tea someone had just placed in his hand. He came to me urgently--and, yes, tenderly--and handed me his cup. 'Drink! Drink!' he said, and his voice and eyes were almost stern. Wherever he is the Master is the centre of attention so of course all eyes were upon me as I took a timid sip. No offence to you, dear, but never have I tasted such tea as from his hand. And then he smiled dazzlingly and leaning down to me whisDered in English--his tone was so pitched that no one heard 'It is acceptable.' His eyes appeared to lend a significance beyond what the words conveyed. And then he turned and the others engaged him. I was happy no longer to be the focal point of the room. Soon it was over and we all left. I have not seen Miss Thompson since, nor answered her calls. And I will not discuss

this with her-- isn't it strange, but I feel this is private, in some acutely intense way it is mine. Obviously I must extricate myself from her group--gently, of course, for I have no wish to hurt her. However laudable or desirable the objectives of her circle, it is too late for me; perhaps it is even too late for all of us. How my husband and my parents would scorn all my gushing--all the emotional tumult that meeting has unleashed--though perhaps I do not really know them at all, and Wingate least of all. Do you ever feel that those you love are strangers? I cannot imagine how I appear to my own husband and children or explain the sense of remoteness from them I sometimes experience. It is odd to feel divorced from one's own life's centre.

But, anyway, too late, you see, too late. As Wingate says, this is the age of reason and enlightenment, the century of prosperity and progress and peace, and the world struggles along well enough without its seers and sages. He may well be right--he makes a study of these things. But, Emma, the Master! If only you could see him!

Extraordinary, wasn't it, his saying what he did? I wonder whether I shall ever understand it.

#### MARK TOBEY: A LETTER AND TWO SNAPSHOTS

It is one thing to paint a picture and another to experience it.

Mark Tobey

24 April 1976

Haifa

I came along too late to know you well, Mark-- geography and our ages against it, an ocean between-- so, learning of your death, I sift for photographs and memory serves up only two. Others must have many; I am content with mine. Both speak to me of courage: you will not find that strange.

The Temple in Wilmette is background to the first. It was 1953, in spring. I came, new to conferences and the House of Worship, excited, claiming it all, drunk with seizure. You were on the stairs looking curiously lonely in the bubbling crowd. I saw the wistfulness. Someone whispered your name and I broke away, rushing at you in adolescent ebullience, bristling to possess my first celebrity. You were a Bahá'í--public--mimic like the Temple and the nine-pointed star. I saw your momentary wince, the flash of what I knew to be a customary irritability, saw you as victim, as target, as too often possessed and made, trivially, an unwilling familiar. Meetings and martyrs are of many kinds. In that moment I could have wept for your vulnerability. What name do we give the process that translates private pain into human service? We clutch the ready cliché 'he did the

Bahá'í thing' and hope we're understood. I do not know what need you read in me but instantly you took that step. Leaned towards my abashment. I cannot measure your cost, saw only the warm smile, the reaching out, the bestowal of the gift. You would have me be your fellow-conspirator, pretended rescuer, playmate for Peck's bad boy. 'Let's escape and have some tea', you said, and led me away, appointing me your shield, feigning to be led. The crowd would have held you but for the perfection of your pantomime: two established friends hastening through the jostle to the deserved privacy of a longstanding, self-promised tryst, the venerable one acknowledging greetings on the fly, the younger appearing the more eager to be off. Do not suggest it was mere expediency-- we know when we are used.

The stratagem succeeded. Companionably seated in the cafe', in snug anonymity, I was dizzy with expectation: what would be revealed? Soon I knew. You spoke of the weather in Seattle, the food in Switzerland, of arthritis, of growing old. And not a word about painting or the Faith. I was not long puzzled. In that pedestrian flow I was given access: Mark Tobey was revealed. You are a painter--you paint: there, on canvas, your words. You are a Bahá'í: befriending the young stranger, offering tea, presenting the Faith in transaction. Even then I was grateful to be spared discipleship and a gratuitous verbal tour of those landmarks that trace the outermost fringes of the stronghold of belief, or a recital of those polite bywords we erect as barriers at the remotest courtyard of identity to discourage rather than invite entry or homecoming.

We separated smoothly; I, your debtor, not made to feel one. It was as though we had spoken many times and grown secure in our partings.

More than twenty years have passed; the picture does not fade. I have my own Mark Tobey, unretouched, and often I consult it when courage is the prize. I would not trade it and no, Mark, it is not for sale.

London, 1963: spring again, the Jubilee, another picture, an even larger crowd. I did not look for you among the thousands but found myself seated again at tea with you in a random gathering, you winking playful recognition of a long-ago ruse. When, by chance, we were alone you spoke of the weather in London, the food in France, of arthritis of growing old, of loneliness. Again I was not puzzled: By then had seen your paintings, had trembled, had heard and seen you in the white writing, knew your themes, your swoon.

'Martyrs are not popular subjects', you once remarked. I did not ask why you painted martyrs, Mark, though I marveled at

your valour. Martyrs bear witness to belief; they are the  
supreme lovers; they die for love. Who would paint martyrs  
in an age that debases the word to a tag of parlour-game  
psychology? Who would dare paint love in a world that has  
forgotten it? Who, indeed, would frame and hang his soul?

#### AND ALL THE ANGELS LAUGHING

Bernard Le~ch

In Memori~m

7 McIl 1979

Bernard beckoning shyly at the door. Mark beaming now and  
Reg agog with glee, and all the angels laughing welcomingly.  
Does Juliet excitedly scatter the risky cherubs, pour  
equivalent Or tea, maternally attentive to the chatter Or  
the reunite(i ~hr ~

boyish, how incorrigibly boyish! even in their  
immortality, speaking delightedly of palette,  
glaze and brush, chuckling companionably, till  
Juliet cries 'Hush! One at a time!' and Mark,  
the wag, exclaims the tea's di~ ine, dear  
Bernard, but Juliet's a nag!' and the air is  
warm with laughter.

Does this amaze? Would we ask more of  
celestial matter, or know that heaven peopled  
by such folks can well accommodate their  
jokes? Can love's Kingdom be less domestic  
than the glimpses we are given? Need we strain  
toward etheriality? Perhaps. Still,  
domesticity even there must have its lot.  
God's economy would will that it's the known  
good we regain at first, and His surprises  
after. which earth's grief but restrain. Leave  
them to their laughter and discussion of the  
circle and the dot. See! Bernard tells an  
anecdote, describes a favourite pot. It is we  
who speak Or pain.

#### TH E A PPO INTM ENT

In 19~7 Corinne True carried to ~kka a parchment scroll  
containing the names of more than a thousand American  
Baha is who asked permission to erect a House of Worship.  
Hiding it behind her on the divan she first presented the  
gifts sent by the friends. But the Master strode across  
reached behind her and grasped the parchment and held it  
aloft: This is what gives megreat joy. Go back and  
workfor the Temple it is a great work. Deuote yoursey to

this project. Make a beginning and all will come right.

Pilgrim notes of Corinne True

Wilmette Illinois: I May 1912

There is another kind of clock  
its cogwheels fixed in the  
unknowable convolutions of  
God's mind, perhaps our  
galaxies its smallest jewels, a  
clock that marks some celestial  
piecing of eternity, one that  
runs silently, invisibly,  
forever, fluidly forward or  
back, cancelling our time, its  
tick perpetual, attuned to the  
omniscient and eternal heart.

It is respectful of the  
boundaries we erect

against the terror and the mystery;  
humours our pasteboard timepieces; is  
charitable to our insolent need to  
feel, invulnerably, that our measures  
are solid and docile to our will,  
that real is real and then and now  
stay put and our world does not slip  
or warp or wobble.

Coincidence is the uneasy name we  
give stark moments when intervention  
rises up to melt our mathematics or  
intersect our schemes. Our departure  
inexplicably delayed, we read of the  
sunken ship, the crippled, flaming  
plane, with congratulatory  
satisfaction and a faint contempt for  
others' luck and planning. The  
fortuitous arrival of a letter we  
glibly assign to impulse and hold  
hope that horoscopes foretold the  
sudden meeting that brought love  
there on the ugly, accustomed street  
under the stranger's shared parasol  
in an unseasonable shower.

And so we are waiting inflexibly  
correct under the canvas marquee for  
the Master to take His part in our

rehearsed pattern, faint with  
excitement, flush with historicity,  
adjusting our impeccable neckties,  
fingering our fashionable pearls,  
stroking the gold watches that pulse  
in the vest pocket or wilt, pendent  
on slender chain, at the bosom,  
their claim negated by another Time.  
We long for authority to check the  
uncontrollable lakeborn breeze that  
chills the perspiration heading in  
our palms.

Enthralled, loving Him, we see His  
radiance approach, mirror to the  
sun. His reely vigorous stride sets  
the shining robe twining and  
swirling into eloquent motion. His  
head is raised to drink the wind-fed  
air. Unfaithful to our plan

He leaves the carriage, comes on  
foot in perfect grace. Soundlessly  
we gasp at humility and majesty in  
peerless balance.

The power which has gathered you here  
today notwithstanding the cold and  
windy weather is indeed mighty and  
wonderful. It is the power of God the  
divine favour of Baha u l lah which has  
drawn you together . . .

Appropriate to our expectations are  
His simple words. Our souls drift  
like somnolent fish in the warm tide  
of His approval. We do not strain to  
understand. Secure in our ritual we  
may not see, as in His eye, the  
Temple risen, long since risen,  
lighted, a pulsating refuge, peopled  
. . . and beyond that, and beyond.

He makes a gesture with the golden  
trowel,  
graciously accepts that emblem-toy as He  
does our childlike love-- but service is  
His Call. With axe and shovel, then, the  
soil is turned, as unresisting to His hands

as our hearts to His words. Compliantly the earth parts before that force; perhaps we only imagine that it pulses with expectancy. Under our heavy hats of felt or feathers the brows throb: what seed does He plant here?

## VII

The Temple will have a spiritual influence a tremendous effect upon civilization. From this beginning thousands of Temples will rise . . .

Again the schedule is sundered. Beckoned by His smile the solemn, silent friends surge towards His upraised hand, open the earth, each a spadeful, in the name of all mankind, for this Temple shall be Mother. Our doubt dissolves in the calm assurance of His words as we crane toward His vision.

## VIII

We had politely grimaced  
~~ ~hP wPll-known tale

of Nettie Tobin's uoices instructing her to bring a stone; we pictured her squat, bustling, inelegant, middle-aged and panting, her red-faced frenzied scuttle, weaving her course in shabby, tilting shoes across uneven ground, trundling the child's cart with a splintered rock rejected by a builder, her contribution of a cornerstone. New to love we smiled indulgently upon her zeal and did not know our condescension. 'Now all is in readiness', she had said, as a complacent housewife might remark surveying her set table, but wondered, too, at her impulsions as she stood alone at the bleak and vacant site.

And now His hands are on the stone. He turns to it as to an expected guest, His eyes caressing the jagged shape as they would a dear friend's face, this appointment longingly awaited. He gently nestles the rock to rest in the raw brown loam where we yearn to take its place and

earn the light smile that  
plays across His face. He turns and speaks:  
The Temple is already built!

We almost understand. 'What a wonderful  
lesson! How kind and utterly sweet He is!'  
we say, glancing at our watches, gathering  
up our programmes and our rustling wraps,  
edging irresistibly closer to His gleaming  
form, loving Him and wondering--past reach  
of names by which we know Him-- wondering  
what clock or calendar keeps Him and Who He  
is.

#### THE PIONEER

- for all the lovely ladies -

Ye are . . . the soft-flooding waters upon which must depend the  
lives of all men. . . the breezes of spring that are wafted  
over the world . . . Through you the countenance of the Lord  
hath been revealed in smiles, and the brightness of His light  
shone forth.

Bahá'u'lláh

You will meet her anywhere,  
the river, market, roadside, bus, in Carcross, Nairobi,  
Liverpool, Duluth and the old girl will be smiling: she knows.  
The sincere costume, the workworn hands, say little. Satin or  
leather, the good, earnest face  
belongs on a chocolate box, affirms,  
could endorse nutritional causes on billboards or in glossy  
magazines;  
but she has far greater power than Westinghouse or General  
Mills. I warn you, she is dangerous.  
In her bag there is a weapon  
more potent than a gun.  
If her lips move noiselessly she is not litanizing her  
grievances nor reading subway signs.  
She carries more than recipes in her head.

It is fatal to speak to her, no comment so mundane she cannot  
bend it to her own design. Chance a remark about the weather  
and she may tell you of The Tempest,  
leave you re-examining the roots of social unrest and  
worrying about the fate of the House of Hapsburg. She is not  
dismayed by headlines, calls them as her witness, carries  
answers like neat balls of coloured yarn, familiarly handled,  
spun of truth. The mysteries are few and she lives with them  
companionably, sibyl or saint, mystic or madwoman, in ready-

made dress and sensible shoes.

She has faced it, reconciled it all, the whole human struggle, the journey from the cave, the love and the ashes, the song and the blood, the suffering, the stillborn, the greed, ordered, forgiven, reconciled it all. Her compassion spans eras and epochs, finds room for Luther King, Lenin, Lao-tse, all our lost leaders, sorted, accommodated like the memory of good or wayward children she has known; finds room for the Aztec, Ibo, Tlingit, Vietnamese-- she might be one of them. Fashions in indignation puzzle her. It did not come as news that black is beautiful (may be herself black); - knows Eskimos ~or is one); calls the Kalahari Bushmen brothers; counts the Maoris as friends; would have shielded the hapless of Nagasaki, Warsaw, Buchenwald, with her own body, if she could. Long ago she wept and worked for causes

not then named, knows symptom from disease and is not resigned to evil.

No, you do not imagine her authority; dynasties might dissolve before it or her concern melt mountains. She is dangerous; she cannot be dismissed. Your eloquent despair does not dissuade her: 'The fu~ure is inestimably glorious, and when one considers the life to come . . .' You will want to hurt her, destroy her dream but her words hang like heavy golden pears and she knows your hunger. Even as you strike she heals you and in so doing heals herself. You may crush her but she will not die-- she yields like grass and is as indestructible. She knows what you defend; many times a midwife, she understands rebirth. Your credentials don't impress her; she tinkers with souls.

Do not accept the invitation to her home to meet her friend from Adelaide, Tihran, Kaduna; they are conspirators and drink from the same well. Her own certitude is baked into the cakes she serves with tea tasting of her own contentment that leaves you crazed, thirsting forever for assurance. Be warned, she is dangerous.

The moment is selected. You will not see all heaven's angels, all ancient good, the very weight of history rush to her support as she gathers breath (her smile never more gentle)-- ~fal~e r ou heard the Message of Baha u llah?-- nor will you know that God Himself throughout all worlds gives ear to your reply.

I tell you, she is dangerous!

GRAVEYARDS ARE NOT MY STYLE

Thornton Chase

1847-1912

This remarkable presence was the first Bahá'í in America ..  
his . . . (especially) will be remembered throughout future ages  
and . . . . For the present/ his world is no longer hidden in  
the future it will be ineluctably dear . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá

L. (J. . . . .) October 1912

That's a good woman you've got there. Paddy, a good

woman. I like the way she knows how to come and go, if you find  
it . . . Like her letting you have me round for a good meal

every Thursday and then setting out the stout and cards and slipping off  
to see her mother and leaving us to have a quiet game and talk. A man  
needs that, he gets lonely on his own

I wish I weren't so clumsy with words, I'd like to tell your Rosie how  
much it's meant to me, coming here so often. I know she can tell by the  
way I dig into the food that I'm grateful and she probably thinks they  
starve me at my lodgings --Mrs D'Arcy, bless her, would die of shame if  
she thought Rosie believed that about her, and it isn't true because the  
old woman runs a good place and is a generous soul.

But it's more than that--it's the friendship you and Rosie give me and I'd  
like you to find a way of letting Rosie know I appreciate it. I know Rosie  
and I joke together and I like to make her laugh, but you know how I am  
with words when I try to be serious, they never come out the way I mean  
them. So try to let her know.

Since I left the old country I haven't made many friends-- I'm not what  
you'd call a mixer--and you people treating me like family has meant a  
lot. Now with us, it's different; I can talk to another man, and a soul  
needs that--at least I do. And the truth is, Paddy, if it's all the same  
to you, I'd rather just sit a minute before we deal the cards because I  
want to speak my mind.

You see--well, I might as well come right out with it, like-- I'm thinking  
of getting married--I mean I am going to get married--to Lil. Not right  
away, of course, but--well, I mean I asked her last week, on the  
nineteenth, to be exact--and she's accepted and now we're betrothed. No  
surprise to you, I guess, after all my talk about her. I knew the first  
time I met her at the shop that she was all I ever dreamed of. But there  
was the problem of religion--well, you must be sick of hearing about that,  
and all the fights we had, and her trying to make me see the light and  
crying at her failure. I guess I used hot words but you know how I stand.  
I mean, what would my people say, me coming to the new world and getting  
mixed up

in some queer religion--they might think of it as heathen. My poor old  
mother couldn't hold her head up in the village and the priest wouldn't

take it lightly. As far as he's concerned the Church has a monopoly on God and he isn't one to divide the spoils with the competition. You should hear him go on about the Protestants--thinks they're the devil's own. Not that I'm religious or care what other people think, you understand, but it is a consideration, don't you see, and my mother in frail health. She wouldn't understand if Lil and I got married and had children and they weren't baptized. My mother's a simple good soul but fierce in her faith. In every letter she asks me have I been to ~lass. Well, I never miss at Easter, as you know. She makes novenas for me too, God bless her.

And more than that, I'm jealous of Lil and I can't see why I'm not enough for her. Religion shouldn't come between people, as I see it. But my point is, why isn't it enough that we have each other? You know, sometimes I've even called for her with a drop on my breath just to have her take me as I am, to make her see it my way. A shameful thing for me to torment the poor girl, but dammit what's a man to do, and me half crazy with the love of her. And anyway religion is really a woman's business in the end; she has to give the children a decent start in life and some kind of training and see that they go to Church. But with Lil, religion's such an important matter--she's always trotting along to some meeting or other. Not that she doesn't invite me, but I'm uncomfortable with crowds and a man should be careful in choosing his friends. The truth of it being there are all kinds at these meetings--even Japanese. Not that I've anything against them, but what do you say to people like that? Words come hard with me at the best of times. And some of Lil's friends are comfortably off, you know, a little on the lace-curtain side, if you follow me. Not that they make an issue of it, but I feel a proper fool sitting on their fancy chairs, my fingers feeling like buttered sausaFs, balancinP a daintY teacup and little sandwiches you could park

in your cavity, and not having enough hands to hold it all, and worrying am I going to spill something on the Turkey carpet. And not a drop of spirits served, either, that might give a man courage. And all the talking that goes on and me not understanding the half of it. 'Why can't they have Churches like everybody else?' I say to Lil and she always answers 'Just try to understand'--as if I was working at not understanding--and then we usually wind up with me yelling, hot-tempered as I am, and her crying, and it'S the longest time before she lets me hold her hand or peck her cheek and make our peace. And it leaves us both feeling sad and kind of hopeless and strained in our talk, like there was a sheet of glass between us.

Well, I've told you some of that before and maybe you've guessed that it wasn't all roses between us--that's why I brought her here just the once. She liked your Rosie a lot--I should tell Rosie that--and I saw them talking between them with their eyes over the teacups the way women do. But Lil would soon be dragging her off to meet her cut-glass-

andcrystal friends. Maybe Rose would like that for all I know because they are good people, in truth, and they love my Lil and her being in a shop and me in a factory isn't held against us or anything--at least most of them really feel that way about us and the rest seem to be honestly trying to feel there's no difference. But I still can't see why Lil's friends don't just go to Church on Sunday like everybody else and say their prayers when they remember to, like the rest of us. So after all the times I've told you how impossible it seemed between Lil and me--and sure there were some bad times-- you must be wondering how we got it sorted out, our differences I mean; well, not really settled, but more or less, anyway. And to tell the truth I don't really know myself except that it began with Lil in tears--a change in pattern because it usually ends that way--and ended with me in tears. I don't mind admitting that to you, Paddy--I cried; blubbered like a baby I did, at the end. I thought I'd forgotten how to cry--a man outgrows that unless he's well into his cups and feeling homesick.

What happened was I picked Lil up at the shop to take her for a bit Or an outing like we planned and she asked me to take her to the graveside of one of her friends--a nice old fellow named Thornton Chase I'd met and liked who died just the end Or last month and was laid to rest all the way out in Inglewood. You know me, Paddy, I don't mind a good wake but I don't like funerals, and graveyards are not my style at all. Well, that was just a part of it. She wanted to be there because of the Master--that one she's always talking about with the name I can't pronounce. I find it easier to call him Master much as I dislike the term--it jars, foreign like. And he is a foreigner. as you know--you've heard me go on about him before and how he was in prison all that long while, and now he's come lo America to see his followers; and after being in the East a bit he's come all the way to the West Coast and him an old man. Soon as she mentioned him I got a bit feisty. I landed in New York from the old country and came west too, I thought to myself, and I'll bet he didn't have to cross the country hard-timing and hoboiing it like I did on my way west thinking to myself you know. So I was a little heated up beforc I even opened my mouth and of course the words tripped me up and within minutes Lil was crying. The fact is, Paddy. I was jealous and I felt tricked and I knew there'd be a gathering with all Lil's friends, and speeches and sermons and hymns. and we'd not have a minute alone; and she'd been to Chase's funeral but a few weeks before. So I had good reason, in a way, for flying off the handle.

It was a kind of grim journey I can tell you but I got through it hy being quiet. Even when Lil wanted to stop and huy flowers I didn't make a fuss. It wasn't the expense of them. you mind; it was the way she took so long selecting them that mi~h~ havc bothered me. But it didn't. It was watching the

careful way she chose them, like a bride picking out her bouquet you

might say, that made me see how important this meeting must be to her and I saw it through her eyes so to speak. Meeting the Master must be one of the joys of her life, says I to myself, and so I really tri~d to make it up to her by speaking softly and telling her that I knew it was a special thing for her to be seeing him for the first time--why, I'm sure she'd follow him across the country if she had the money--and I told her that I appreciated the fact that she would honour me by allowing me to escort her to the meeting, and things like that. And you know I meant it--it was all true--and she smiled and her eyes took on that secret dreamy look they do and--well, I never felt closer to her ever before.

Don't take offence if I don't drain my glass, Paddy,--you've a kind heart and a generous hand--but I need my wits about me to tell the next part and I swear I don't understand it myself; but it would in truth seem a strange thing to be taking a drop and talking about this at the same time, like cursing in Church, do you see.

The thing is, it wasn't as bad as I thought it might be. Of course, I'm always more at ease out of doors to begin with but it was more than that. I suppose I have to say it was the Master. What a fine old gentleman he is. Oddly dressed to be sure, and looking like a bible figure in the stations of the cross and yet so natural, as though you always knew him. So I didn't feel so out of place. The old gentleman walked to the grave with great dignity and laid some flowers on it and took Lil's flowers and the others' and scattered them, too, and spoke a few simple words. Not the least unusual in a sense, but it was the way he leaned down to the ground with tenderness like a father bending to his dearest child to pat and comfort it. And I thought to myself ~hat I would give my life to have him look at me that way. Well, says I to myself, this should tell Lil's friends something--that this old man would come all this way to do this simple thing at the grave and say what he did, that

Mr Chase would never be forgotten. The old gentleman seems to expect great things of Lil and her friends and no doubt they all well know it. I cannot bear to think they might disappoint him. If they broke his heart they'd hear from me about it, I swear it, Paddy, by all that's holy.

Then the Master turned to the people and said a few words to each so I hung back not wanting to spoil it for Lil. Her face was glowing and she looked so beautiful it took my breath away. And the old gentleman did the strangest thing--took her hand, as he had the others' too, and then reached for mine, drawing me forward. And there we were, him holding our hands in his, all three joined and touching, and he looked at each of us slowly and deeply and he said in English 'Yes'. Just Yes. It was eerie, as though he were answering a question --no, more than that--as though he were blessing us in marriage. I felt as though Lil and me were the only people in the world at that moment. And then he smiled a lovely smile and turned away.

We didn't speak on the way home--I guess we were both lost in thought; I know I was. And then suddenly I was sobbing my heart out with Lil patting my hand and saying 'It's all right, dearest, I know,'--like I was a child; and that's just how I felt to be sure. But I had been thinking of that look on the old gentleman's face when he was leaning toward the grave and wondering if ever I would be loved in that way by anyone. And I guess that's where the proposal came in because I couldn't help myself--I asked Lil if she loved me. And she said that she had always loved me, and that because she loved me through her love for God, as well as loving me for myself, her love would last through all this life and beyond it, too.

So I said to her--and it wasn't easy to say it and my eyes were still running with tears and my voice was cracking: 'Mavourneen, I want this for you if this is what you want. I want you to be his follower and I want you to be a good one, the best you can. And I'd be proud if you were. I don't know if I can be Part of what you and your friends are doing, but I'll try to understand. All I can offer you is this: I know that this is good; I know he is a Holy Soul.'

'Well, my dear,' says she with one of those smiles that would melt a man's heart, 'that's a beginning, a very fine beginning.'

So you see, Paddy, that's how it was, the beginning, the real beginning with Lil and me. And now we're getting married. What puzzles me is that she's so calm about it all--goes about smiling and singing to herself as though she always knew it would come right.

There's no understanding women, is there, Paddy?

SIEGFRIED SCHOPFLOCHER

1877--1953

'When I first heard of the Bahá'í Faith, I said to myself  
"Freddie, if you get involved with this, it will cost you a  
fortune." Well, I did. And it did.'

(remark attributed to him)

Ach, Freddie, mein lieber Kerl, make light of it if you  
will, malign your munificence, we are not taken in. But have  
your little joke; assume the wry smile, the classic shrug,  
ask: 'What's a nice Jewish boy doing in a Cause like this?  
Extend the jest, say: 'I surrendered profit and loss to  
Prophet and Laws'-- still, we are not deceived.

Freddie, you walked in with eyes as open as your heart,  
knew it to be the deal beyond compromise;  
survived the imagery accommodated to  
nightingales and roses endured our pious  
vagaries and poor arithmetic loved the goyim  
were loved made of heart and palm a purse and  
emptied both and learned (or always knew) that

God does not strike bargains.

T.~\* ! Freddie splendidly generous, your private charities betrayed you; we only pretended to accord the anonymity you sought. What man builds a shelter for mankind? The Mother of Temples casts no greater shadow than that of your humility; how can you hide from us? Daring to have loved us you must suffer now our love, and having given all accept our gift, your modesty a magnet to our admiration.

Ac~l Freddie mein lie~er Freund make light of it if you will-- you, inspired.spendthrift, lavish legator; we your grateful heirs left solvent in the knowledge that we need fear only bankruptcy of God. A c 11 Fr~ddie ! A~l~ nl~i)l liel~er Freund!

#### VERDICT OF A HIGHER COURT

[also available in Microsoft Word format]

In the interest of posterity we are asked to review the case. The dossier is before us. Shall we get on with it then?

Transcript of Proceedings of the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District State of Minnesota, held on the 8th day of August in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and . . .

Well, so that's how it is. Not yet a decade into the twentieth century and life is just a bowl of cherries. Live on your wits and cover all the exits.

The prisoner, Fred Mortensen, will rise while the Court pronounces sentence.

Hot-shot, aren't you, Fred? All set to highstep it into the years of the Greatest War on Earth and then to go twentythree-skidooing into the Jazz Age--if you live that long--with a bottoms-upboys-for-tomorrow-we-may-die and all that razzmatazz.

In considering the evidence before it the Court has given due weight to the extreme youth of the Defendant . . .

About twenty-one or so, are you, Fred~ But then, mugs must make an early start if they are to amount to anything--with a down-the-hatch-fellows and a chug-a-lug-a-lug and don't take any wooden nickels.

Before passing sentence the Court expresses regret that one of such obvious potential should have launched himself upon a course of action that can only blight his future, brand him an enemy of the public good and break his mother's heart . . .

So you found yourself in prison with a gee-there-ain't-nojustice and a blast-itI've-been-framed? Well, Fred let's review the facts.

Although he has taken the path of a common ruffian the Court appeals to whatever tender feelings may yet stir within the Defendant's bosom . . .

Easy does it, Fred. Florid oratory is a hazard to which most Judges display little resistance. But we take it you will concede that even tough guys have feelings? Remember how you cried a little in the darkened theatre during one of Mary Pickford's films and had to quickly conceal it from the gang with an improvised coughing spasm? And how a lump came to your throat each time you heard Eva Tanguay sing 'Mother'?

At an age when the Defendant's mother is entitled to his comfort and assistance, she faces the tragic and humiliating consequences of her son's iniquitous

- conduct. The Court is satisfied on the evidence that the Defendant's mother is an upright, decent, God-fearing. . .

Patience, Fred, he's only doing his job. Admittedly he does get a bit carried away. But the docket is light today and his gout is under control and perhaps he is pontificating out of boredom. But maybe the

old boy has a point there. We confront you with your own testimony:

'My dear mother had done everything in her power to make me a good boy. I have but the deepest love for her and my heart has often been sad when thinking how she must have worried for my safety as well as my future well-being. Through it all and in a most wonderful way, with godlike patience, she hoped and prayed that her boy would find the road which leads to righteousness and happiness. But environment proved a great barrier to her aspirations and every day in every way I became tougher and tougher . . . '

Come now, Fred, is that how tough guys talk?

The Court is charged with the responsibility of protecting society from those who wilfully disregard its laws. Equally, the Court has the responsibility of imposing sanctions which will afford the maximum opportunity of moral rehabilitation . . .

Relax, Fred, and don't let the hi~h-flown language get you down. Look at it this way--the judiciary has a vocabulary just as specialized, though somewhat less colourful, than that of budding thugs. But on the subject of rehabilitation, that came later through a man with gentle eyes. Remember Bert Hall, Fred? One of the finest lawyers in Minnesota, it was said, and a remarkable human being. Do you recall what the Hennepin County Bar Association said of Albert Hall?

'He was essentially the poor man's lawyer; no client was too mean, nor was his cause too small, but that Bert Hall gave him his untiring and unstinted effort.'

Well, you were a mean one, all right, and whatever had been your cause you were presented with a new one, a cause of intimidating magnitude, as the Judge might

say. Let us read into the record your own words:

'Albert Hall told me, hour after hour, about the great love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Honestly, I often wondered then what Mr. Hall meant when he talked so much about God's love, Bahá'u'lláh's love, 'Abdu'l-Baha's love, love for the Covenant, and so on. I was bewildered. Still, I kept returning, and I wondered why. Later I realized it was the power of the Holy Spirit drawing one who wished to be drawn.'

Fine talk for a tough guy, Fred! It is lamentable that one of the Defendant's age should have amassed shall we say, so impressive a record of criminal activity .

..

Euphemism is the backbone of courtroom wit, Fred. One gets used to it, though developing an appreciation of verbosity is another matter. For instance, 'Learned Judge' is sometimes a euphemism for old windbag. But let us hear him out.

. . . disturbing the peace, using abusive language, harassing members of oppressed minority groups, being drunk and disorderly, assault, theft, escaping from custody, aiding the escape of a fellow prisoner, violating parole, resisting arrest .

Well, all that must have kept you pretty busy, Fred. But one impulse you could neither resist nor arrest, remember? Will you disavow your own incriminating words:

'I felt urged by the Holy Spirit to go to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre, Maine. When I heard the rumour that He might not come west, I immediately determined to go and see Him. So I left Minneapolis for Cleveland where I attended a convention of printers for a few days. But I became so restless I could not stay for adjournment. As my finances were low, I of necessity

must

hobo my way to Green Acre . . . '

We note that euphemism is not the exclusive indulgence of the Court. But to continue:

'I rode the rods . . . '

Now that's more like it:

' . . . to Buffalo, then to Boston, then to Portsmouth. I was exceedingly happy. A boat ride, a streetcar ride, and there I was, at the gate of Paradise . . . '

An interesting destination for one of your proclivities!

Do you remember first entering His presence and His asking you whether you had a pleasant journey? Let us examine your own account of this: 'Question: "Did you have a pleasant journey?" Of all the questions I wished to avoid this was the one! I dropped my gaze to the floor--and again He put the question. I lifted my eyes to His eyes and His were as two sparkling jewels which seemed to look into my very depths. I knew He knew and I must tell. I answered: "I did not come as people generally do, who come to see You." Question: "How did you come?" Answer: "Riding under and on top of the railway trains." Question: "Explain how?" '

And you explained while His eyes twinkled. He gave you fruit, kissed both your cheeks and touched to His lips the soiled hat you had worn. And after that, at His invitation, you spent a week in His presence at Malden.

What are we to make of that, Fred?

The Court invites the Defendant to consider that in a land of limitless opportunity one of his age might, by pursuing the proper course, make his mark on its history . . .

Restrain yourself again, Fred. There might be something in this. There has been entered in the record, and marked Exhibit A, a Tablet addressed to you from Ramleh, Egypt, bearing date 12 September ~913. The

signature is that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

'That trip of thine from Minneapolis to Green Acre will never be forgotten. Its mention will be recorded eternally in books and works of history . . . '

Annexed to Exhibit A is a copy of God Passes By. We are asked to note the reference on page 290. Let it be so noted.

The Prosecuting Attorney dwelt at considerable length . . .

He means excruciating length, Fred.

. . . on the circumstances in which the Defendant was apprehended at gunpoint, in a barrage of police bullets, his capture being accomplished a~ a result of breaking both legs in scaling a wall while attempting to elude the police, and has repeatedly emphasized that for four years the Defendant was a fugitive from justice . . .

Easy, there, Fred. Why not relax and read Exhibit A?

The Court cannot view lightly the Defendant's contempt for the rules which must govern a civilized society. It emerges from the evidence before the Court that the pattern of the Defendant's behaviour is determinedly antisocial . . .

He does turn a vivid phrase, doesn't he? Fulgorant, it might be said. We toss that word in to see whether we still have the knack--we abandoned grandilo4uent rhetoric a long time ago; too time-consuming. Actually it has never been determined whether Judges are expected by lawyers to talk like that or only think they are.

But speaking of patterns emerging from the evidence which seems to be the point the good udge was making--another pattern emerges. Will you deny that over the long haul you laboured diligently--sorry, it is so easy to lapse into the jargon; but the

following words mean just what they convey--for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth and that

until the eve of your death on 13 June 1946 you were so engaged?

Tendered as Exhibit B is an outline of your service on the Bahá'í Temple Unity, your pioneering to Montana, your service as a national travelling teacher and as a member of the Chicago Bahá'í community, your preparations for a journey to Austria, to name a few. Let the Exhibit be marked.

Although ever inclined toward leniency on the basis of what has been adduced before it the Court must be satisfied in considering the question of sentence that the interest of justice will be fully served. With that in mind it is the opinion of this Court . . .

And yes, one final piece of testimony. Let there be marked as Exhibit C a document described as a cablegram sent from Haifa in June 1946 to members of your family:

'Grieve passing beloved Fred. Welcome ~ssured Abha Kingdom by Master . . . His name forever inscribed Bahá'í history.'

The evidence, we submit, is irrefutable. Let the verdict be recorded: Guilty of spiritual recidivism.

Next case.

THE COURIER

O Son of Love! Thou art but one step away from the . . . celestial tree of love. Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity

Bahá'u'lláh

The Hidden Words

How many steps, Salman, Salman, To world of God from world of man? How far, how far, untutored fool, From Land of Ta to 'Akka's Jewel?

Coarse of mien and taint of breath, In each pace might have lain your death. Companioned by lone wheeling bird You

brought the lovers Love's Own Word.

How lonely were your many miles Fuelled by onions and  
friends' smiles? If dust leapt up to kiss your sole Had it  
not guessed and blessed your goal?

To hostile eyes not once revealed The treasure in your hat  
concealed. Behold, a stricken world knows now What safely  
rode above your brow.

By some, scorned as unlettered oaf, How educated was your  
troth ! So trained to scan, your simple heart Chose who  
attained, who stood apart.

How many are the steps that bring The loutish vassal to his  
King? Tell this halt, fugacious son In what sted is the  
soul's home won?

How many steps, Salman, Salman, To world  
of God from world of man~ Lend him your  
courage who has none And treads all paths  
save one. Save one!

#### EA R LY WI NE

Thomas Breaku~ell, ~hef rst English Baha'l, accepted the Faith  
in his twenties in the summer of 1901 as a result of meeting  
May Ellis Bolles Startled by a mystical experience which  
followed upon theirfirst mee~ing he asked her whether she  
~houghr he uas parting with his senses. 'No,' she replied, 'you  
are just becoming sane.' He made a pilgrimage to 'Akka not long  
thereafter and within a short time died of consumption. Abdu'l-  
Baha reuealed in his honour a eulogy of unparalleled beauty.

For you was May detained that you come sane And in the wind  
hear Christ has come again, In your life's doomed May, in the  
oblivious air Of inattentive Paris. What mute prayer Brought  
you to the waiting singular door Of one--of all the  
servants--frailest; core And mother-soul of Europe?

My Lord, I believe. . .

Now could your cask decline and you not grieve; But 'Akka  
gained, the lover will exclaim:

Let life endure that I taste more of pain !  
Your Spring s brief yield, love-wine immortals drink; None  
mourns to see the slender goblet sink.

O Breaku~ell O my dear one! Th~~ Lord hath verily  
singled thee out for His lot~e . . .

First grape of Albion, fruit of fragile vine, Not ours

to stay from King this early wine. The pain-perfected  
vessel God lets slip, But first had raised that sweet  
draught to His lip.

PA R T TWO. CLIMPSES OF  
'A B D U 'L- BA HA

adapted from the diary of Juliet Thompson

No word of mine would suffice to express how in\*~mtl~ the  
ret~elation of Abdu l-Baha s hopes expectations and  
purpose. . . electrified the minds and heart.s oJ those who  
were pril~ileged to hear Him who were made the recipients  
oJ His inestimable blessings . . . I can net~er hope to  
interpret adequatel~ the Jeellngs that .surged u ithin those  
heroic hearts as the l .sat at their Master:s Jeet . . . I  
can net~er pay sul: hc~ent tribute to that ~spirit of  
unyielding determinatlon which the impact of a magnetic  
personality and the spell oJ a might~ utterance kindled in  
the entire company oJ- those returning pilgrims these conse-  
crated herald.s of the Godenant of God . . .

Shoghi E~endi

GLIMPSES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

Adapted from the Diary of Juliet Thompson

[also posted separately at [bahai-library.com/white\\_season\\_glimpses\\_abdul-baha](http://bahai-library.com/white_season_glimpses_abdul-baha)]

Akka: July 1909

We drive along a wide white beach. Sea waves curl  
about our carriage wheels, Camels approach on the  
sand, cloaked Bedouins attending. Palm trees in a  
long, long line and in the distance domes and flat  
roofs, dazzling white.

Walls. Walls within walls. Menacing walls. Tall,  
prison-like, chalk-white houses, leaning together,  
rising towards a rift of sky, slits of barred  
windows set here and there in their forbidding  
fronts. Streets so narrow that our wheels graze  
buildings on either side-- streets sometimes  
bridged by houses meeting in an arch at their  
second stories. Pervading us, a sense of the divine  
joy towards which we travel, here in the Holy City,  
the New Jerusalem.

Before us, suddenly, a broad expanse: a garden, the  
seawall, the sea, and then the Master's door. Too  
soon we have arrived, too suddenly. and unprePared.  
He bursts upon us like the sun with His joyous

greeting:

Welcome! Welcome!

His effulgence strikes me blind!

Are I~ou u~ell? Are you happy?

I cannot speak.

He takes my hand in His-- in His so mysterious  
hand-- delicately-made, steely-strong, currents of  
life streaming from it:

Your heart ~our spirit speak to Me. I hear. I know.  
Do not think ~our serl~ices are unknown to Me. I  
hal~e seen. I hal e ~een u ith ~ou. I know them  
all. For these ~ou are accepte~l in tle Kingdom.

My services! Their pitiful smallness! And my lack of  
love! Pierced by shame I cry: 'Forgive my failures!'

Be sure of this. Be sure of this.

My knees yield; my heart draws me down to His feet.

Later, my eyes upon His white-robed Figure, I listen  
as He dictates Tablets, see Him pace about a room  
grown suddenly too small. A force born of the energy  
of God-- restless, uncontainable-- spills from Him.  
The earth cannot contain Him,

nor yet the universe. When He pauses by the window I  
sense His spirit free as the Essence Itself,  
brooding over regions far distant, looking deep into  
hearts at the uttermost ends of the earth consoling  
their secret sorrows, answering the whispers of far-  
off minds. Often in His leonine pacing He gives me a  
long, grave glance. And once He smiles at me. He  
smiles at me!

Thonon-les-Bains LakeCene2~a. August

A great white hotel, set amid oleander flanked by  
mountains overhung with clouds. Beyond the green  
terrace and marble balustrade the lake. In the halls  
and through the grounds the artificial, dull-eyed  
people stroll and chatter. Silently, majestically,  
unrecognized but not unfelt, He passes among them,  
the cream robe billowing, light glinting in His  
silver hair. The metallic voices break off. The  
shadowed eyes lift and follow, lighted for a moment  
with wonder. His presence is an affirmation,

stirring them to recall their lost vision of a higher world and their own beauty. The eloquent assertion of His silence! His magnetic power! His holy sweetness!

At a country inn I see Him in a half-circle of children, girdled with children, festooned with them, waist-deep in children with violets to sell, the small ones, themselves a bouquet, pressing about Him, waving the purple clusters, their faces raised with grave astonishment, His own a benediction as He bends to buy their blooms, buy all their blooms, drawing from His pocket handfuls of francs, giving to each child bountifully. They beg for more. 'Don't let them impose!' At the edge of the swaying crescent, a newcomer, the smallest, stares up in awe, timid as a fawn:

To this little one I have not given . . .

And the Master gave.

On the road back, suddenly, spectacularly, a waterfall, rolling from a great height, scattering diamonds as it froths down a black precipice. Full of excitement He hurries forward, alone, to sit in silence at the very edge, the swirling water far below. I see Him in profile, kingly against the cascade, intense rapture on His upturned face, and my tears flow. After a time, smiling:

yl come to America will you inuite Me to see such uaterfalls?

I promise Niagara ! 'But surely, my Lord, Your coming to America does not depend upon my invitation!'

My invitation to America will be the uniry of the believers!

A heavenly day of charming informality, taking tea, He talking gaily or tenderly, taking little notice of me. But in spite of this I glimpse something vaster than before, feel a new awareness of His unearthly power, His divine sweetness.

Coming upon Him as He stands talking with a friend the sweetness of His love, that celestial radiance, again bring tears: If He never gave me so much as a word if He never glanced my way, just to see that sweetness shining before me, I would follow Him on

my knees, crawling behind Him in the dust forever!

New York: 11 April 1912

April 11th! Oh day of days! I awaken before  
daybreak with a singing heart, the moon's waning  
sliver framed low in my windowpane. I hasten to the  
pier. The morning is crystal clear, sparkling. I  
have a sense of its being Easter--of lilies, almost  
seen, blooming at my feet.

A mist settles over the harbour but at last, at  
last, I see a phantom ship, an epoch-making ship,  
coming closer, closer, ever more substantial, till  
it swims into the light, a solid thing. He sends His  
love and asks us to disperse-- we are all to meet at  
four. Obedience is overruled by love: three of us  
conceal ourselves and wait. Stepping into the  
limousine, the Master turns and smiles at us! Three  
frozen statues dissolve in that bestowal, no love-  
born child-prank ever so rewarded. Oh the coming of  
that Presence! The mighty commotion of it! The  
hearts almost suffocate with joy and the eyes burn  
with tears at the stir of that step! Our skyscrapers  
had delighted Him:

The Minarets of the West!

What divine irony!

New York. 11 April

He shines in white and ivory, His face a lighted  
lamp illumining the Bowery Mission:

Toni--I am here! 17 April

Join the line-- come here to meet my friends.

I consider you my relief--

My companions and I am! our

comrade . . .

A sodden and grimy procession streams down the  
aisle, perhaps three hundred men in single file--  
derelicts, failures, broken forms, blurred faces--  
and here 'The Servant' receiving each outcast as His  
beloved child. Into each palm, as He clasps it, He  
presses His little gift of silver-- Just a symbol  
and the price of a bed. None is shelterless this  
night and many find a shelter in His heart; I see it  
in their faces, and in His face bent to theirs.

We drive up Broadway, aglitter with electric signs.

He speaks of them, smiling, much amused. 'It is marvellous to be driving through all this light by the side of the Light of lights.'

There is only the beginning. We will be together in all the works of God. You are not really here until that moment. You cannot imagine it. You can learn nothing of this in the elements of the world or in the material. Me in the Eternal World.

New York. 5 June

I am to paint His portrait! Surprise, dismay, fear, joy, gratitude, flood me. He sits before me in a dark corner His black 'aba melting into the background. I quail.

I want you to paint Me. I feel

that I cannot

Only the Holy Spirit could do so, no human hand. 'Pray for me, or I am lost. I implore You, inspire me!'

I will pray and as you are doing this only for the sake of God you will be inspired.

Fear falls away. It is as though another sees through my eyes, works through my hand. Rapture takes possession of me. My hand is directed in a sort of furious precision. The points, the planes in the matchless face are so clear my hand cannot keep pace with the clarity of my vision. Freely, in ecstasy, I paint as I never have before. In half an hour the foundation is perfect.

Once, bidding Him rest, I find I cannot paint-- what I see is too sacred, too formidable. He sits still as a statue, eyes closed, infinite peace on that chiseled face, a God-like calm and grandeur in His erect head. Suddenly, with a great flash, like lightning, He opens His eyes. The room seems to rock like a storm-tossed ship in the power released!

Wesley: Englewood: 29 June

A luminescent summer day green countryside, and He our host. The Unity Feast has ended and the darkness settles in, gently smudging the outline. Or the

mi~hty trees.

Many of us linger, unable to wrench ourselves away.  
Cncket songs--the scent of grass-- a breathless  
expectancy in the soft, warm air. He sits in a chair  
on the top step of the porch, some of us surrounding  
Him. Below, dotting the lawn, on either side of the  
path sit others, the light summer skirts of the  
women spread out on the grass, lighted tapers in  
their hands. In the dark, in their filmy dresses,  
they become great pale moths, and the burning tips  
of the tapers, flickering fireflies. Knowing our  
thirst, He speaks to us again, words of consuming  
tenderness. Rising, He starts down the path, still  
talking, passing between the weightless, dim figures  
with their lighted candles, talking, still talking,  
till He reaches the road. He turns and we no longer  
see Him. Even then His words float back to us, the  
liquid Persian, and the beautiful, quivering  
translation, the sound and the echo hovering and  
drifting, an exquisite note almost unbearably held:

Peace be with you. I will ptayforyou.

Oh that voice that speaks out of His invisibility,  
when He has passed beyond our sight! May I always  
remember. May I always remember and hear that voice!

New York. 5 December

The last morning.

I stand at His door, my brimming eyes  
fastened upon that divine Figure as He moves  
about the room. Taking my hand, He consoles me:

Remember I am uith ~ou alua.ys.

Baha u llah u ill be uith ~ ou alua~ s . . .

And then the ship, and His last spoken message,  
the Master pacing the crowded cabin filled with  
flowers and broken-hearted friends:

. . . ~our ef~orts must be loft~. Exert  
~~ourselves u ith heart and soUl .so that  
perchance through ~our efforts the light of  
Unil~ersal Peace ma~ .shine. . . that all men  
mal hecome as one family. . . It is MI hope that  
~ ou ma~ hecome .succ es.sful in thi.s high  
calling. .so that like ~~rilliantl~lmp.s ~oumcl~  
castlight upon the I~ orld oJ humanit~ and  
quicken and .stir the bod~ ol exi.stence like

unto a spirit of life. This is eternal g/or!  
This is everlasting felicity. This is  
immortal life. This is heavenly attainment. This  
is being created in the image and likeness of  
God. . .

I sit opposite Him at a little distance, weeping  
quietly. At each parting I was left with the  
hope of another meeting, and now my question  
must be answered or I shall have no peace. 'Will  
I see You again, my Lord?'

This is my hope.

'But still You don't tell me, my Lord. Not  
knowing, I feel hopeless.'

You must not feel hopeless.

Only that. That is all He said to me.

It is death to leave the ship. I remain on the  
pier, in the grey light, with the impervious,  
stolid pigeons and the anguished gulls. Tears  
blur my eyes. Through them I see the Master in  
the midst of the throng, waving a patient hand  
to us.

It waves and waves-- that beautiful patient  
hand-- till the Figure is lost to sight.

Haifa. 9 December 1956. In Memoriam

Deplore loss much loved great admired Juliet  
Tillompson outstanding exemplar handmaid Abdu  
l-Baha. Older half century record tantamount  
meritorious services embracing concluding !  
earliest Heroic opening decades Formative Age  
Baha; Dispensation ~I on her eminent position  
glorious companion triumphant disciples heralded  
Master Abha Kingdom. Adhise hold memorial  
gathering Maslriq I-Adhkar part befitting  
tribute imperishable memory one so illustrious  
consecrated Faith Bahaullah fired such  
consuming delusion Centre His  
Covenant. Silloghi  
PART THREE.  
LINES FROM A PERSIAN  
NO TEBOOK

The cause of the rejection and persecution of the Bab u-as  
in its essence the same as that of the rejection and

persecution of the Christ.

Shoghi Effendi

Introduction to The Dawn-Breaker.s

DR CORMICK DECIDES

Tabr1- 1848

Well, not an auspicious beginning to this day, the tea undrinkable and Ah. mad in a sulk for one of those mysterious reasons no mere Englishman could understand-- an advantage we unfeeling barbarians have, I suppose, over these excessively sensitive Persians.

And the beastly report to be written of that curious interview. I have little heart for that. How to find the balance between my observations and what the ears of power might hope to hear about the poor wretch, or to know the disposition of my Persian colleagues and what might sway them from detachment to a devious or dictated course? They could be agents of an ill-wisher. At best they are Western only when it serves them to be. Sane or mad, the authorities will bring about this death if that be their wish. Exercises in futility weary me; the examination I suspect was merely a token nod towards justice, some aspect of the unfathomable and interminable face-saving ceremony. Can one ever understand their ways?

As for my part, what can I say? I found myself admittedly disposed most kindly toward the Bab-- his courtesv and di~nitv of bearin~~ struck me much.

Attractive, mild of manner and melodious of voice--nothing offensive there. I might remark upon his delicacy of stature and his tender youth--but what relevance has that?

No surprise that he, knowing the purpose of our attendance upon him, should have been loth to answer our questions, merely regarding us with a gentle IGok, continuing with his chanting-- hymns or devotionals, I suppose. And this the one who claims to be the Mahdi of the Mussulmen! What to make of it all?

I shall weight my report in his favour, no doubt; I see no other way. It would please me well to think his life were spared. 'Frankly,' I shall say, 'I am impelled in the circumstances to recommend the utmost leniency in this difficult matter . . .' The words will come as I apply myself to it.

I cannot take sides in these affairs, of course, and it would appear to be of appalling significance that this

young man should have subverted the religion of the realm and convulsed the populace with his cry: 'I am the Promised One.' The Promised One indeed! Well, no doubt he believes it. An infernal nuisance, the whole affair. And what to make of his assertion that Europe will espouse his cause-- the intensity with which he regarded me as he said it? Extraordinary, really. Most extraordinary. I suppose my part in it is over and I shan't see him again.

One wonders what might become of such a fellow. Perhaps, of course, it's just another tempest in a teapot. Ah well, with the Persians, it is always something.

Today--yes-- I think, today, the grey cravat.

### A CRIMSON RAIN

And there shall be martyrs and saints

T. S. Eliot

Chorus No. 6 from *The Rock*

Fort of Tabars

Ma~ indara'n

May 1849

His head now cushioned against my breast, I see how lightly his closed lashes shadow the soft cheek; even in death my friend is beautiful. He has met his end with a startled, gentle courage, his recumbent form assumes the chaste and artless grace of a child or dancer. So must his mother have held him, and so wept, but wept for his bright promise. With what joy would I have led him to his wedding in a season less sanguine. Never, now, will I dandle his gurgling children on my knee. Never again will we fatigue the aghast stars with our chanting and our laughter, or huddle, chilled and yawning, as t'le last candle fails, talking of honour. These slender hands--do they supplicate for the accustomed book and pen? My tears do not erase the bruises.

How young, how pale he is! This pallor is not earned by dissipation. What had this sheltered scholar need know of soldiering or death? It was no feat to kill him. What resistance might this frail vessel offer or rage this bosom store? That delicate shattered cage held no aptitude for hate.

See how timidly his blood now stains my tunic. Comrade-in-Faith, would that this thin, reluctant trickle might brand your name upon my flesh for all to know. His name? Ah world!

you would not care, nor does he need your tawdry accolades.  
Lavish them upon your athletes, your fawning princes, your  
debased divines. God keeps his name! And I, his friend, shall  
keep it while I draw breath, though that may not be  
long--Husayn felled, Quddus injured, our number dwindling. But  
in this moment this death, this name, are known, and God's  
moments are eternal.

The siege resumes, and now I fight for two. Weeping, I  
leave you, my gallant-,n-God, even my grief sacrificed to  
this awful hour.

Seminal your death, little brother-- all our deaths. O  
Persia ! Pitiless Persia ! One day you shall, v.~, shall  
know what you have done.

Though the~~ go mad they shal/ be sane.

Dylan Thomas  
Death Shall Haue No Dominion

Fort of Khajih  
Nayrlz  
Autumn 18S

Yes, certainly I knew him. The man was a fool, I say, and  
worse, a heretic. Ask the townspeople, they all revile him. I  
grant you he knew the Qur'an well and once had my respect. He  
was honest in his dealings and had honour. ~ut to disgrace his  
family as he did, and at his age! Life was comfortable for  
him-- small merchants do well enough-- and he threw everything  
away, bewitched by a green turban. God spare us the snares of  
senility and keep us safe from the persuasion of roses and  
women ! Ah, my friends, let us pray the years will bring us  
wisdom, if not piety--too much to hope for, eh'.~-- and a  
dignified death.

He fell with the fort, of course, his head carried aloft  
through the street with the others'-- the grey beard tinged  
gruesomely scarlet-- while the crowd jeered. I daresay the  
vultures dined well. His brother turned to me for comfort,  
sick with shame. 'He was a fool', I told him; what more could  
I say? A degrading, grisly end, but just what he deserved. I  
am a reasonable man and give religion its due  
but it excites unseemly passion. Certainly one can hope God  
winks at human foibles, but to flout authority and violate the  
Faith is madness. God and His Prophet deal with those!

I dreamed for long of the head, the expression curiously  
peaceful-- one might almost say smiling. I confess it rather  
rattled me. But that was last summer and life again is normal.

You see, it came to nothing, as these things will. Come, let us enjoy our tea; why spoil a pleasant day with talk of this? One has said it all in saying he was mad.

Well, now, have you ever seen such pomegranates! So large and red, and yet so strangely bitter; I, at least, have no taste for them. Is it age?

.pa-hetic scenes Uolloued] upon the di-ision of the  
inhal~itants of Zanjan into tuv distinct camps, by order of its  
governor. . . which dissoll~ed ties of uorld/y interest and  
afrection infavour of a mightier loyalty. . . Shoghi E~endi God  
Passes By

For~ of 'Ali-Mardan Khan  
Zan.jan  
Deemher Is50

In this interval of silence, mother, we count our dead or find solace with our loved ones, and so I write to you with but faint hope my words will reach you. The scribe assures me that a

kinsman may find a way to carry this beyond the walls. How weary these stones must be of our long struggle here! It has not been easy--food and fodder in short supply, brackish water--and the cold is constant. Death and suffering are now familiar, but still I am not reconciled; only my own death will cause me to forget what I have seen.

But I do not forget you, mother dear, no matter what befalls. Twice we are divided, by marriage and by faith-- you must observe my father's will, and I my husband's; and as I adopt this as my own will, are we thrice separated then? Oh ! may we all drown in the will of God ! The times twist us but behind these walls I love you. Though heaven be in upheaval let me reach across and speak--there may not be another time for this! Attend me with your heart, mother, for I carry your grandchild and hope this news will bring you joy. One day you may receive us with smiles. So, you see, life continues, even here.

Rumours will have reached you. Too large for reality seem the people here-- even the women garb as men and seize the sword. It is all too strange and troubling. But God inspires what He will in this great day. You may find me somewhat changed but you will know me--what has the governor's decree to do with our love? Am I not still your child, your jigar-gushih? Offer me your hal~~a and you will know! I am better suited to prepare the samovar or dawdle among the girls over some light task with chitchat and melon seeds than to live in the camp of heroes;

yet God has brought me here. And, yes, your own good life has set me on this path. These fingers which you guided towards gulduzi now tend the wounded. I am slow. My friends show great patience with my awkward ways; they give, I think, more than my share of food. I have cut my hair to bind the muskets but find dressing it is simpler. My hands which were your pride when daintily patterned with henna now wear a more vital, deeper dye-- but still they would hold you to my breast. And with it all, your place in my heart is unchanged, nor must you worry. I move with care, watchful of my trust.

The one called Hu.Liat is here and the enemy will soon be upon us-- once more the noise and the blood. Birth cannot be soundless or without stain. Though much and many will it wash away I do not fear this crimson rain for every drop must tell and all shall be fed of the heavy harvest.

If I live I shall again take up this letter and, if not, may you one day rejoice, mother, that mine was not an idle death.

I ask little in a world that shows slight mercy but this I beg of you: Speak gently to my father and win him back to me!

ii.c~r~ I crm orndearment. equivalent to your heart!~ remnant. t  
il kin-3 or~mhroi~ery.

#### COMMAND PERFORMANCE

Ablaze like a theatre, voice upraised in song, one comes dancing in the dust, costumed in candles, his performance lighted with flames fed by his own flesh.

The crowd jeers, not knowing this to be solo by royal command, spectacle beyond applause; this the music of Am I not your Lord? this the choreography of Yea verily thou art!

#### A MOUSE AMONG HAWKS

The women and children were captured and subjected to brutalities which no pen dare describe.

Nabil

The Daughters.

Nayrlz. June IsSO

Qamar is a beauty, her skin unusually fair; it did not go well with her after they seized us and we were given as playthings to the troops, the soldiers drunk and brutal. Mocking us in our disgrace. God alone knows our sufferings, the indignities we bore.

I was spared much, being older, the cast of my eye

thought an evil mark. But Qamar, unmarried, slender, with the quick grace of a gazelle, lovely as the moon whose name she bears-- what can I say? She was a mouse among hawks. Her virtue and shyness incited them to shameful conduct. One officer singled her out for his attentions and won her stern rebuke. Glancing at the lance on which her father's severed head was held aloft she called: 'Beloved Father, had you thought me worthy of so brave a suitor?' Even some of the men tittered at her audacity. The humiliated officer struck her face and turned her over to the regiment. For all her tears and pleading they showed no mercy. She was silent then, woodenly compliant, as if removed to another world, as they led her away. I cannot think it gave them pleasure.

When it grew dark she crept to me, bruised and sobbing. I freed her wrists and wiped the men's spittle from her face, rocked her in my arms till she grew calm. We chanted softly, clinging together. Here and there a child whimpered, a sleeper cried out. In the distance the men revelled, cursed and made lewd boasts. I felt that God saw our misery, heard our prayer.

Later we slept, though fitfully, cramped and crowded as we were. The night was chill and we had not been given rations. When I awakened the sky was growing light. Qamar stood with her back to me and with a small blade was hacking off her hair which fell soundlessly in black drifts to her feet. Her hands worked in measured precision across her scalp among the jagged tufts and bristles. 'Qamar! Your lovely hair!' I gasped. She turned then to silence me and I saw the oozing stripes her nails had raked across her cheeks and breast--these she'd daubed with mud to staunch the bleeding. As I again cried out in horror she advanced toward me like one moving in a trance. 'Rejoice for me,' she said softly. 'Now only God may find me pleasing.'

#### THE CONJURER

These eyes hal~e gazed upon Ilis coun~enance . . .  
Mirza Muhammad~Aliy-i-Zunuzi (Anis)

Tabri\_, 18S

It is the way of boys to lie brooding in their shaded rooms languidly conjuring the heroic images or the nipped voluptuousness by which budding men assert their dreams and annul the dull existence of the practical furniture that sombrely

clamours to define their life by diminution;  
their way to weep over H. afiz or Rumi for our  
fleet hour, the mortality of roses, song so  
soon ended, and to sigh for the fragile  
throbbing flesh which can yet but imagine love  
nor know its tyranny.

It is the need of parents to deny these  
tremulous flights which in anarchial, merciless  
privacy annihilate our lives disclaim our  
features and demolish our decisions; our need  
to call the youth to the substantial meal, the  
headlines of the day, the unpaid bill and the  
educated compromise. We who are good at sums  
and court no scandal foresee the poem  
forgotten, have known the tender yielding lips  
and slender slanting thigh coarsened, grown  
flaccid with boredom and trivia.

And so, Anis, we too would have summoned you to  
our reality here in the secretless glare of  
sunlight, bidden you select the prudent career,  
embrace cautious choices; would have had you  
marry.

replicate our worth with children, watched your  
waist thicken and your hair pale, responsibly,  
respectably, resigned to the dulling of your  
eyes, and left you at the end ungrudgingly,  
content that you would tend our grave.

And for all our wisdom would not have known how  
idle was our hope, Anis, who in that tearful  
hour moping alone among the unaccusing  
dustmotes in your shuttered room conjured God's  
very face, were pledged to lay your cheek's  
childbloom upon His target breast, your atoms  
elevated to eternally commingle with Dust of  
dust.

## THE BLUNDER

.Tihran, 1852

Some blunder into history by a simple act  
without the panoply of the punctilious marriage  
that secures a dynasty, without the  
calculatedly outrageous flourish or  
unconsidered heroic feat.

This nameless crone, for instance.

She purposefully hobbles through the street's loud and roiling crowd toward her goal. Care was never lavished upon her face, teeth, hair; she needed no cosmetic art for her role in this affair.

There is a magnificence in her rage. Stooped arthritically, slowed by age, yet she seizes up the stone, strains to keep pace. Swooning with imminence, inebriate with righteousness, she hurls the missile toward the mark. Indignation and triumph stain the dignity of her punctate face. Now we know God accepts even intended virtue; the gentle, clement target turns to aid her blow. Sluggish with its burden of finality the stone describes a languid arc.

There in timeless tableau we see Archetype and archetype: but how to read its sense? Does the hag know she enacts our rejection (who have not her innocence)?

#### CASE STUDY

As psychologists, gentlemen, you may wish to consider this study. By all means take notes.

The subjects are unexceptional in the context of the exceptional times. The youth, an only son, conventionally handsome and doted upon; the mother, simple and pious. In another period she would not likely have imagined a world more complex or demanding than her kitchen. What could be asked of one who has so little?

There were disturbances in Zanjan, one might say, not to put too fine a point on it. The boy, then, handed over to the mob, is led to certain death. He has a noteworthy aplomb but countless youth have shown an equal valour in causes less than this. Ratner, gentlemen, observe the mother, summoned to the place of execution. She strides impatiently toward this appointment so long foreseen. Familiar with giving, she had not thought to withhold this last token; gifts are given once and this was all decided long ago.

The enemy, relying heavily on the predictability of mothers, urges her to extend to her child the impertinent, the unforgivable invitation. Her life cannot purchase his nor her tears save him, so she rescues him from regret, sweetens his departure: I will disown you as my son if you incline your heart to such evil whisperings and allow them to turn you away from the truth.

The boy's choice condoned, he yields gladly to the sword. Dry-eyed with pride, approbation and knowledge of compensation, the mother sees the severed head roll toward her. She turns slowly from that sad souvenir--had never attached strings to her gifts nor asked receipt.

Well, gentlemen, there you have it; admittedly not a conventional domestic situation. Now, learned doctors, do you care to expatiate on sacrifice and resignation? Explain if you will, what is asked of us.

### AT HER LOOKING GLASS

T h r a n

August 1~52

No rings, then. I have almost done with symbols; the white silk is enough. The face a little flushed, I think-- no colour needed there! But even this becomes a willing bride. How eagerly the blood goes to its task, and this but the beginning!

Ah, little mole that always troubled me, today you are my jewel. Let me go to him flawed,;human. And oil of the rose--roses for love!-- for am I not a lover?

Yes, this will do. I like the spare economy of this; this plainness pleases me. Beauty (and they have said I have that) is best achieved by discarding all but ~he essential. (Do you not see, my sons, the Bridge of Sirat must be crossed alone?) Is there an ode here? Ah well, no time for that: I have sung my songs and they succeed if they bring~ me this!

Yes, this will suffice-- there is no room for vanity in this meeting, this appointment kept but once! Let them hurry! Or does my unseemly haste offend my beloved? My fast has made me giddy ! How well he knows my joy!

Foolish woman! Would you forget the scarf? choose carefully now!-- yes, nuptial, the finest, softest, and draped just so? Or carried? I kiss you, lovely thing, in anticipation of your sweet purpose !

Ah, how easy all this is. Now let them come!  
One more journey, one last garden.

Soon, my unborn sisters, we shall see what  
comes of this!

#### HOW STILL. THE CENTRE

We are not astonished after the star-strewn  
career the drunkening drama the dark  
turbulence noisily tumbling her from  
periphery toward the wet sucking maw  
of the angry vortex to find in the still and absolute  
centre this bland and yawning domesticity: the woman  
pacing her room, sorting, arranging, consigning a few  
trinkets to a wooden chest for memento or bread-and-butter  
gift and, as housewife to greengrocer, milady to backstair  
maid, issuing the calm order My last request is that you  
permit no one henceforth to en~er my chamber . . . in the  
confident excluding tone born of the assured, rare and  
unsunderable marriage.

#### LULLABY

Are you infants that you will not sleep without my tales! I swear  
you turn my poor head grey; I have been far too soft with you. If  
your mother knew we spoke llke this your poor old nurse would  
pay, my little tyrants. Would you have your nanu disgraced that  
way? Ah, but what harm--we are children only once and that is  
brief enough. Let me close the lattice against the laughter from  
the banquet. The nightingales are still tonight.

So, you would have the story of the secret stone-- do you not  
tire of that old tale yet? I fear to give you morbid dreams. But  
yes, we all love secrets and it satisfies me well to tell it; I  
do not have an endless store, for all my years.

It was long ago, in Tihran, in the time of your father's father,  
cousin of the Kalantar. I came as a young girl into the service  
of his wife. My people were honest and my home decent. I was  
clean in my ways, swift and soundless on my feet and quick to  
learn. Fate was often cruel in those harsh days but I found a  
good life and pleased my mistress. My hands could move gently as  
brown doves across her silks, and I was skilful with the comb.

The day when one of high birth, a man of Nur, was taken to the  
Siyah-Chal, in chains, the household was abuzz. A festival was  
made of it, the servants watching from the roof as he was led  
through the rabble of the streets. I was glad enough of the  
event--not every day one of my station can see a nobleman in such  
a plight, and we had few entertainments.

A strange sight indeed--like seeing a white rose in a swarm of gnats. He walked in dream-like majesty as though he did not hear the curses and abuse-- his head bared, his feet unshod, his garment soiled with refuse pelted by the mob. In excitement I seized up a white pebble--sharp it was-- and raised my hand to hurl it. And then he looked up at me, as though the better to receive its full force. I froze. It was his eyes, I think. I turned and fled, sobbing and shaking. Afterwards I was much teased by the others for being an hysterical girl. In shame I hid the pebble. And that was all.

Later he was exiled, I heard, but what became of him I cannot say. Some said he was an enemy of God, and some a holy man. I do not know about such things-- it was enough to have seen that face. Perhaps I should have cast it, but my hand was stayed. I took it as an omen.

I keep the stone in this small pouch about my throat-- you may touch it if you promise you will sleep-- see how smooth it is worn. It grows. I think, more white each year. The silly amulet of an old fool, I suppose, but when I am ill or sad it comforts me.

Did I not close the window? I smell the heavy breath of roses!

So there you have it; it was his eyes, you see. It was as though they gazed beyond us to another world.

Now will you sleep, my little ones?

#### A DREAM OF FIRE

Mission of the Good Shepherd

Tihran

I 5 September I 852

My dear Edwina,

It is not yet dawn and the house is still. I have wakened from a troubling dream and am too agitated to successfully court sleep. Therefore I have lighted a lamp, drawn a light shawl about my shoulders and taken up my pen to write to you. You will realize at once, my dearest sister, that I am shamelessly using you--I hasten to admit it at once--but the dream (about which I shall say more later) has left me not only sleepless but intensely homesick. For the first time since I so eagerly consented to accompany Aunt Edna on this adventure, begun now so many months ago, I am engulfed in homesickness--it is a keenly felt physical sensation, like waves of nausea, one might say, or the occasional distress one experiences on a sea voyage.

It must be that the night air and the stillness of the hour are

conducive to confession--your intrepid, unorthodox little sister feels homesick! But with it I enjoy a delicious sensation of guilt and the small conceit in which I suppose all insomniacs indulge--the notion that I am the only one in the world awake at this hour. I picture you and Thomas as having long since retired to a deserved and blissful sleep, and their children folded into innocent dreams, their pink faces as sweet and mysterious as unopened blossoms. Your house in London I see as a warm refuge in the large impersonal city, a harbour from which sails forth in all weather the stable ship of the goodness of your lives whose cargo of genuine Christian charity and grace enriches all who enter the wake of your argosy. That last sentence, as I read it over, strikes me as being affected and preciously poetical--and in truth I have of late excessively exposed myself to the scant English library here in part no doubt to counteract the strangeness of this setting, to assuage my boredom and Perhaps to cultivate and invite the homesickness I

am now experiencing in such full measure. But despite the extravagance of my flight of fancy I hope you will understand and accept the sincerity of my thought which I expressed, alas, so inadequately.

What I intended to say is that you and Thomas demonstrate your religious feelings so fully and naturally in your lives whereas for me, despite my struggle to achieve a sense of peace and to live a Christian life, faith of the quality I hope to acquire seems often an unattainable goal. I long to have been able to inherit faith, as you have, with an unquestioning humility and gratitude (and must now, I see, add envy to my growing list of sins!) The minor mortifications of the flesh I impose upon myself (such as not spending quite as much time at my toilet as my vanity invites me to) do not bring spiritual attainment but do, I hope, serve to ward off apathy and self-satisfaction. In my darkest moments my Spirit chafes against my desire to believe and to experience the reality of religious truth; indeed I sometimes feel that whatever degree of faith I have is of no more consequence to my soul than a mosquito bite to my physical body. Perhaps, I tell myself, I have only willed myself to believe. In you and Thomas I do not see such a conflict--you wear your beliefs as comfortably and unselfconsciously as you do your skin. Will I ever achieve that wonderful condition? It saddens me unbearably to imagine I might not.

I know you would attempt to console me at this moment by making kind allusions to my serving as companion to Aunt Edna on her visit to Cousin Robert's Mission and my willingness to serve here temporarily as a nurse but I must perforce dismiss your charitable observation at once, it being swept away before the cold onrushing recognition that I was prompted in this instance, as in so many others, not by a desire to serve our Lord but by a crasser motive--my vile curiosity and selfish wish to see foreign lands. An even more difficult admission is that the dreadful sin of vanity played no small part in my making this journey--my vain hope of proving to myself that I am the heroic woman I

thought myself to be when I was a child--and the perhaps equally sterile hope of meeting the challenge of some great and mysterious destiny. I suppose--no, I must say I know, for I try to be honest with myself (at least in important matters!)~I know that I have set aside the question of marriage until some of my questions are answered. Surely marriage is not the highest destiny of a woman ! Oh dearest, I do not mean to hurt you for I have nothing but the deepest love and admiration for you and Thomas and I believe with all my heart that you perfectly fulfil God's purpose in your family life--I mean only that I have not been able yet to find established in myself the sure foundation of belief you have achieved on which a family and home, in the fullest sense of those words, must rest. Mama always complained of my wilful and headstrong ways and I am sure she is convinced that I have barred myself from the Garden of Eden (she so clearly sees marriage in that light) and have dealt unfairly with Stephen. What is important to me is that I have never lied to him. I have resisted his suit with a cool aloofness, although I admire him very much, and it delights me on the one hand that he should endeavour so earnestly to understand, and on the other it vexes me to distraction that he should consent as he did to await my return from here to give him my final answer. My heart and head continue their battle for domination of me ! Do not think that I shall never marry--I may yet marry Stephen--for I long for a home and children but these things must be, for me, a part of a more imperative destiny, if only I may find it.

Will you chide me for pouring out these rambling thoughts in this letter rather than confiding them blushing to my journal as well-bred romantic young ladies are expected to ? The truth of the matter is that my diary has remained untouched for days and I cannot bring myself to write a line. Recently I glanced over the entries and they seemed to me to be of excruciating triteness. I had thought the record I proposed to keep would be the means of my entertaining you and Thomas and the children with exciting tales when we gathered around the fire after tea upon my return to England (it would be raining outside, of course, and we would be a cosy warm circle near the hearth) but I find the words flat and dull and perhaps not even true. Since the journal does not interest me I cannot imagine that it will be a source of interest to anyone else, no matter how dear they hold me in affection. I was bored by my tedious descriptions of our voyage, my enthusiastic account of the strange sounds and sights and scents of Persia, the trivial details of life at the Mission and the dull recounting of our side trips to centres outside Tihran and what we saw and ate and whom we met and what we said, my superficial and probably inaccurate dissertations on the subtle mind of the Oriental and the morals and manners of the Persians--none of it now strikes me as being of any significance. It is all so banal, like those countless journals I have read by travellers in Europe which I seized up so eagerly because they held out so much hope of answering the need of the

soul but which contained, after all, nothing but descriptions of mountains. I do not feel myseywhen I write in my journal--who am I addressing when I write in it~.--and because it intimidates me I become formal and conventional like a school girl composing a 'correct' letter to Mama. I am dissatisfied, too, with the watercolour sketches I have made here; they are pallid and smugly proper and cannot possibly convey what I have seen or experienced in this curious country.

Instead, I think what may be of more lasting interest are my letters. I hope you have kept them. It occurs to me that I shall enjoy reading them again some day. They constitute, I daresay, a more honest record of my journey--I almost wrote 'quest' and I do not dispute the accuracy of the impulse that led me to that substitution. Perhaps if I read my letters at a later time I shall find some key in them to what I have searched for all my life; perhaps my own destiny is written into them in some cryptogrammic fashion as yet indecipherable and veiled from me.

Alas, another flight of fancy! You will be impatient with my musing in this aimless way. To aid you in your ever-forthcominR for~iveness of me, reflect on the fact that I have changed so little since you last saw me--always consulting the tea leaves and the Tarot, tearing apart the flower to find its invisible heart, searching for the unknowable secret of existence. Do you remember how I would waken in the morning as a child bitterly sobbing because I could not remember the beauty and mystery of some dream that had been interrupted by sunlight flooding the room or by nanny's call? I was always certain that the meaning would have been revealed if I had not been disturbed.

I have said little in my previous letters about Cousin Robert but it is a comfort to speak of him now under cover of secret darkness for I am troubled by what I see. Although I saw him but infrequently at home and knew him not well I find him strangely changed and cannot believe he finds that life here has met his expectations. He is a saddened, disillusioned and almost embittered man. If Aunt Edna has observed this she has not revealed her thoughts to me nor is she likely to do so. As many rigid people do she demands propriety in life rather than happiness. I sense in Cousin Robert no joy but instead a kind of grim obstinacy, and feel that he remains here through some personal need of his own. I can even imagine myself adopting a similar attitude of resignation if I were to remain here long. He truly needs our prayers! And privately I pray that I either find a living faith and joyful conviction or else lose faith altogether, for I should not want religion to become for me a spiritless habit or a formula clung to through loyalty or fear. Forgive me, dearest, if I seem to stand in judgement; we may be sure that God well knows what is in Cousin Robert's heart and blesses his service. I simp~~r wish he were happier than he appears to be and long to know what he really feels about God and faith. We cannot spealc together of these matters because he treats me rather patronizingly, perhaps to conceal from me the weight of his

failure, and he firmly assigns me the role of 'visiting distant relative'. Even his many kindnesses seem designed to create distance between us. (How uncharitable of me! But it does seem so. There is, in all the kind things he does, the laboured and elaborate quality of one who does not like children extending himself for a child out of a sense of form or duty.)

No doubt there are reasons for all this. As I told you in an earlier letter this is not a fertile field for Mission work.

The Muslims are incurious and indifferent to the Christian message and pick their way among the various Missions as disinterestedly as they do among the competing stalls in the bazaar, whilst the Jews view us with an ill-concealed hostility. How strange we must seem to both groups, divided as we are in our own faith! I am able to sympathize in some degree with what is, I suspect, the amused disgust with which even those who pose as friends or converts view us.

Cousin Robert's friends--if they may be so designated--are for the most part associated with other Missions, vague and dispirited people who hold each other in tepid esteem through sheer loneliness. European, British and American, Christians of all persuasions are united in an unaffectionate, formal and uneasy fashion through a shared contempt of the barbarous Orientals, and most of our social engagements are given over to their despairing accounts of Persian intractability, deviousness and unredeemable savagery. I have grown so weary of it I could scream! And even these dismal gatherings have been curtailed in recent weeks due to the unrest that is sweeping some areas of the country because of the activities of the Babi movement about which I wrote to you.

A veritable holocaust of fury has been unleashed against them by the Muslims. The reports of the indecent and gruesome tortures and the ferocious slaughter of which they are the victims are so heinous that they cannot bear repeating. I cannot sift through the conflicting accounts of their doctrines to determine what it is they believe or why they should be the object of such furious attacks. They include in their number men of important standing, great lords, members of the clergy, military men and merchants; and the Muslim community is seething with rumours and accounts blaming or approving the Babis, exalting them or heaping upon them maledictions and

the vilest curses. The view generally held among Cousin Robert's friends is that they are heretical and politically dangerous. It is said the Babis--men, women and even children!--go to their deaths bravely, chanting the praises of God and singing hymns. What a strange and powerful vision must inspire or delude them. I confess I am both intrigued and horrified and in a curious way envious--to be able to believe so deeply in anything! And yet I recoil from the idea unlikely though it is, of such an uncontrollable force as

animates the Babis overleaping the borders of this country and sweeping Europe and the rest of the world into a maelstrom of chaos. I would hope in such event to shield you and Thomas and the children from it with my own body if need be; I could easily die to protect and secure the virtue and tranquillity of your good lives. No doubt the ferment here will gradually dissipate, though one of Cousin Robert's friends remarked that it is certain the martyrdom of the Babis will win them new adherents and admirers and that it is great unwisdom on the part of the authorities not to let the movement die for lack of momentum .

In my earlier letters and perhaps at wearisome length I have raged and railed against the plight of women in this country. I was deeply stirred to learn that among those who in past weeks were caught up in the turmoil surrounding the Babis was a woman named Qurratu'l-'Ayn who, I am told, was one of outstanding beauty and intelligence and a poet of considerable merit. She was put to death in a most horribk fashion, strangled with her own scarf. She seems by all accounts a most unusual figure to emerge in this land--the women I have met are vapid, fatuous and bovine--and one would least expect a woman of her calibre to be affected by this movement unless she saw herself as a suffragist or was a visionary like Ste Jeanne d'Arc. Already she is something of a legend among the Muslims. I am desperate to know more about her--the information which reaches us is so garbled and sparse (and, I may say, coloured by the bias and contempt of the narrator) that one cannot ever be sure one has possession of the facts or understood them. My interest in the Babi movement seems somewhat to embarrass Cousin Robert and his associates and more than once they have furtively interrupted their conversation when I entered the room. It is almost as though they were jealous of the rapidity of growth of the Babi movement measured against the scant fruit of their own sincere, often sacrificial but seemingly unrewarded efforts. The massacre of the Babis seems of interest to them only as an illustration (rather welcomed!) of the innate and insatiable savagery of the Oriental nature.

It is likely that these unsettling events gave rise to the dream from which I arose tonight trembling and excited beyond recall of sleep. I shall tell you what I remember of it for I shall be interested in reading this record when I return to London and have long since forgotten the details. As is often the case I seemed both to witness the dream and participate in it and I remember that I saw colours. I stood, it seemed, on a high mountain at the utmost tip of the earth, or perhaps even was suspended above it for I could see the globe below me, the mountains and oceans clearly defined. Before me stood a woman--in the dream I did not question but that it was Qurratu'l-'Ayn clad in a dazzling white gown and a veil of the kind worn by Eastern women. I was wearing my ordinary clothes--my garnet

muslin, in fact, for I remember thinking how dull the fabric looked compared with her gown--and I, too, was veiled in the fashion of women here in some grey diaphanous stuff. The woman gazed at me in silence and with great intensity as though probing my soul. She then drew from behind her a small book exquisitely illuminated in Oriental motif and with a resolute and deliberate movement removed her veil. As she cast her eyes upon the book's open pages the little volume burst into brilliant flames. I knew, as one does in dreams, that it was the book of life and that it held the answer to my heart's deepest question and I was overcome with a longing to read it. As I approached to do so the woman again looked into my eyes. With a solemn deliberation she touched the book to the hem of her lovely robe and then, as she placed the book in my hand, she became a column of gold flame. It was flame without heat or smoke--like the fire in the heart of a jewel--and it gave forth a wonderful fragrance. There was no horror in any of this--it seemed a most natural event though I was shaking with excitement.

I looked upon the book's pages and could see nothing but the brilliant fire and knew I must remove my veil. It would not yield ! I tore at it firmly and then with frenzy, my heart bursting with anguish. Dropping the book I clawed frantically at the thin obscuring gauze, screaming aloud in vexation and awoke hearing the echo of my own cry to find my fingers beating the air and my face wet with tears. It was so vivid that I shiver to remember it!

And so I began this letter in a mood of desolate deprivation and homesickness in the dark hours and see now through the window that the sky has lightened and the pale stars of morning mock my foolishness. It will be another warm day. Life stirs here at an early hour. The gardener in the courtyard below is moving about raw with sleep and is indolently fussing about the tuberose. He is a slow-moving man, mean in spirit, and has, I think, no love of flowers; but Cousin Robert tolerates or is indifferent to him.

The spell of homesickness has not yet fully left me but it will give way to the trivial routine of the day. Soon I must prepare Aunt Edna's tea and coddled egg; she does not entrust so delicate an undertaking to the staff. No doubt she would ask this of me even if we were guests in the palace of the Shah. I think she feels that the English invented tea and the coddled egg!

I neglected to tell you that Aunt Edna's letter of introduction to Lt-Col Justin Sheil has resulted in our being invited to tea next week. I understand that his wife is charming and attractive and I eagerly look forward to meeting her. She has, I am informed, followed the Babi movement with considerable interest and is thought to be well informed. Perhaps she can satisfy my curiosity or throw some light on the confused and conflicting reports that have come to us. If anything interesting comes of it I shall write in detail, you may be sure. I

plan to wear a wonderful turquoise silk you have not seen-- you cannot imagine the beauty of the silk here.

Greet Thomas with deep affection and kiss the children for me. May God keep you well and in good spirits until we are reunited. I remain your ever-devoted and loving sister,

Veronica

#### THE SALT

Tell us, young man, outstretched upon the rack, Is hot brand on your soft flesh felt as kiss, And butcher's cruellest blow a lover's act, His searing touch a source of rapturous bliss? Speak to us, lad, of pure love's highest use-- (Pain, cherished bride to whom your hands uplift?) Do you translate as song the foe's abuse And vilest gesture welcome as a gift? What school, unruly boy, did you attend And what diploma win to qualify As rare salt of the Tablets of the Friend-- You, truly crowned, as those who never die?

Tell, tell, Badi', before fiend stills your tongue, Is rashness virtue only in the young?

#### RUBABIH

Yazd 1903

This bed-wise woman has known too many men, lives beyond expectation of kindness in a sad knowledge unameliorated by surprise.

Interrupting a yawn she now moves to her window, watches impassively the man dragged through the street; sees the mob wrest from his body his sobbing, clinging wife who is beaten unconscious, left torn and bleeding, obscenely exposed, as the perverse procession moves on. In the hushed sector the shutters close indifferently on the still form of the wounded woman and her whimpering children. Not even the prurient or idly curious remain in the deserted street. Rubabih, who knows the world to be this way, sighs heavily at recognition of yet another variation of rejection.

Even stereotypes make choices. Let's not be astonished that it is she who

descends,  
gathers the children, carries  
the victim on her back to house  
and heal her: Outcasts, one  
remembers, have nothing to lose;  
have, in every age, come highly  
recommended.

PA R T F O U R:  
SO N G S A N D SO N N E T S

A tender tumult stirs meek dust to motion  
A green and gentle ~violence ueights eadh bough  
Strained the net uouldst banquetfrom this ocean;  
Another song ano~her .seasan n/~u  
LINES FROM A BATTLEFIELD

Ponder auhile. Hast thou ever heard thatfriend andfoe should  
abide in one heart? Cast out then the stranger, that the  
Friend may enter His home.

Bahá'u'lláh

Come, let me fete you, beloved foe, for I tire of this old-  
born war. It would shorten did I not so ruinously adore each  
endearing stratagem your consummate cunning devises; your  
enamouring intransigence enchants me, your very implacability  
an aphrodisiac. In this moment when fatigue calls truce let  
me say it: if I loved you less I should not plot your end as  
we embrace. Claspd to your bosom I gauge it for my blade's  
dark use. Beware the honey posset and my proffered kiss!  
Caressing your unloosed hair I plait a noose and with a  
traitor's hand I stroke your face. May it be said I loved my  
enemy but sought the Friend.

In these graceless hours when faith strains feebly against the  
unbelieving night I am alienated from angels and celestial  
concerns, unmoved by the testimony of flowers. Locked in a  
grief so ancient as to have no name, in this dimming light,  
even magnificence menaces, estranging me from excellence,  
trivializing my pitiable trophies--minor virtues garnered in  
a sweeter time-- my nurtured imperfections not so epically  
egregious as to embarrass the seraphim ruefully yawning at  
their mention; nor will my shame, as once I thought, toDDle  
the cities, arrest the sun's climb.

What assault on heaven guarantees attention? Inured to the  
banality of pain and the ordinariness of suffering (sanctified  
or plain!) it is joy that is remembered.

Ah well, not every day can witness an anabasis and I, a sorry

soldier, camp in ruins, speak from weariness of battle far  
prolonged. From shining names on scattered tombs I fashion a  
paeon; to vanquish dread, invoke the victors:

Breakwell/Brittingham/Blomfield/Benke/Bolles/Baker

Barney/Bailey/Backwell/Bourgeois/Bosch

(Do I presume? I swear a radiant rank appears, assuring as  
sunlight, familiar as bread!) Dunn/Dole/Dodge sterling  
Esslemont! rare Wilhelm! unrivalled Townshend of the silver  
pen! imbibor of the scarlet cup, Badi' ! shield of the Cause,  
Samandari ! brilliant Keith! immortal Lua! steadfast Thornton!  
courageous Marion! incomparable Martha! constant Juliet! noble  
Louis of the golden heart! selfless Sutherland! Duarte Vieira,  
ebony prince! Johanna Schubarth! Conquerors of continents,  
movers of hearts, they are a legion stretching to horizon's  
end, champions of the Peerless, the darlings of the Friend.

A beachhead beckons. I read auguries of triumph in my  
campfire's dwindling plumes. Remove the garland, still the  
Iyre, my love. It is dawn: the engagement resumes.

IN THE SILENT SHRINE AN ANT

It beho~~eth the people of Baha to die to the world and all  
that is therein . .

Bahá'u'lláh

In this sovereign and articulate silence Will faith seize the  
dull, recalcitrant heart, Beat down the truculent will and  
cleanly part The passionate mind from violence, The stratagems  
and dogma of our curtained lives? We court a miracle and see  
the candles fail, The petals rust. What do our tears avail?

No sword of vengeance cleaves us as we stand, Our supplication  
brings no answering shout. An ant crawls by persistent as our  
doubt And in the comprehending hush we understand Our  
mediocrity and godliness: We are the question and its own  
reply. The heartbeat thunders: Here, Lord, here am I!

But stillness gives us back with scented breath, Who chooses  
love of Me must first choose death.

WHO HAD NO CANDLE

He Who had no candle has here, ensconced in circled circle,  
amid adoring flowers and green deferential trees, this whitest  
marble taper tipped with gold. It gleams serenely from Carmel,  
inextinguishably lights the world,  
our reverential hearts the willing wick.

This light will melt remotest snows, outlast the

names by which we know it.

See, Adhirbayjan, this constant flame which casts  
no shadow.

#### ASK IN PERSEPOLIS

Why should we honour these who spurned our world,  
Our exhortations, prizes and our praise, Turned  
their back on prudence, reason's pearl, And solid,  
vital commerce of our days?

Persepolis tell out your tale.  
What shall fade and what prevail?

Why should we honour these who held no hope For our  
fastidious scholarship, our power; Who sought a  
kingdom past our mortal scope, Held cheap the  
fleetness of man's salient hour?

Ask crumbling Crecian marble bust:  
What shall endure and what leave dust?

Why should we honour these who held the earth As  
less than pebble sinking in the mire? We gladly  
would have tutored them in worth, Shown all to  
which deserving men aspire.

Ask slave in market-place of Rome:  
Who leaves trace uho tomb and bone?

Why should we honour these who scorned our gold,  
Dismissed as insignificant our dream? In future  
times our history will be told, Theirs be erased as  
written on a stream.

Ask in Chile Chad and Khmer: Does life but lead to  
sepulchre?

Why should we honour these of no acclaim Who  
followed vapoury image as thing real; Who found  
flamboyant deaths and left no name, Proved deaf to  
cogent logic's stern appeal?

Ask the wise ones of Tabriz: Did darkened sun at  
noon bring ease?

Our lofty errands could not stay their course, Nor  
woman, wine nor wisdom cause to veer; Perversely  
doomed, accursed by evil source, They turned from  
all the beautiful and dear.

Stones vf Akka be our eyes. On u\*at Beauty does sun  
rise?

We shall not honour these who did not see  
The scheme our cautious wisdom would apply,  
The ordering of the world our destiny  
And theirs, who follow phantoms, but to die.

Ask on earth ask in heaven. Which the loaf which  
the leaven?

Then leave the world to us, who steer by star  
Anciently fixed by will and intellect; We design  
the wars and spires, course afar, Posterity  
inherits the effect.

Historian pray judge it well: what path heaven what  
path hell?

NEW SONG

And he hath pu~ a neu song in my mouth  
Psalms 40:3

It was comfortable in the smalltown smugness of your childhood.  
You were born securely into salvation's complacent trinity, a  
Catholic, Protestant or Jew. In a spasm of spiritual megalomania  
you praised His good judgement in selecting such eminently  
deserving souls for the gift of His exclusive One True Faith.  
But only on Sundays. The world was small and safe and familiar.  
And very white. No red or black offended our prim steepled vaults  
of self- congratulation. Indians were the bad guys who got licked  
in movies, dying copiously amid candy wrappers and the popcorn  
smell of matinees. Amos and Andy probably lived in some far  
place, like Hollywood, or maybe in the radio. And there was no  
proof that God spoke Negro. You knew that He loved  
Canadians--they didn't start wars. He would approve our thrift  
and industry and seeing our virtuous sunlit wheatfields, our  
unpretentious brick, He would agree with the Chamber of Commerce  
that ours was a good town in which to live. Yes, it was  
comfortable then.

Of course there were a handful who found sojice in the medicinal  
doctrines of Muriel Sweetbun Udder, or the burnished tablets of  
Myron J. Hammerschmitt; a few who gathered in tents or behind  
vacant storefronts with

~

ambitious titles attesting orthodoxy or reformation; but then  
every town has its malcontents. A small brave band scorned our  
comicbook catechism, our insolent litany of insularity, and made  
a kind of faith of not-believing. Still, God did not strike them  
dead. He was said to be extraordinarily patient with sinners and  
heathens. When you heard that God had died, you wondered whether

it was from sheer boredom-- all that joyless music and our impudent prayers. Your sophomoric selfrighteousness would have been enough to do Him in.

So you would have described it then, the frightened child striving against acne and Auschwitz and an anger that sought release in a word powerful enough to shake the universe, intimidate the stars, blind to His love of the people ~f your town for the innocence of their aspiration blind to their genuine virtue and power and beauty.

The tempest came in your twelfth or fifteenth year, a clean cold wind, and you were left like a stripped young tree in autumn with a cynical winter setting in and nothing large enough to house your impulse to believe. The need lay as quiet, unhurried and insidious as a seed snowlocked in a bleak and lonely landscape. But forgiveness came, an unselective flooding rain, and the seed was there, a promise kept. Even your rejection was forgiven and, in the burgeoning, lovesap slowly stirred. God hadn't died, of course, abandoned us for Russia, ndr moved to Uganda.

"7

You caught a glimpse of Him in the clearing smoke of the rifles in the barrack-square of Tabriz; heard a whisper in the soft silk dress of Tahirih, bridally white. His fragrance was carried by the wind startling the wildflowers of the fields of Barfurush where Quddus was felled. The stones of 'Akka saw His beauty and His pain and cried aloud. On Carmel's sandy slope you traced the outline of His tent and saw, in its tall cypress, the talisman of His triumph.

There is a new song. Up from the Siyah-Chal it rose, breaking the Shah's dream; the Sultan turned in terror as its sweetness grew. It echoed through the palaces of Europe, empty now. The bells grew silent, the minarets fell mute; the full-risen sun embarrassed our disputatious sputtering candles. Our doomed and desperate dissonance was stilled, trickling out like the dismal incense rising from our saddened, separate altars. The dust of Shiraz throbbed as Thornton Chase took up the song and all the roses of iran spilled their musk triumphantl~ at Lua's peal. Martha heard the music; its accents captivated May. Westward it moved, and worldward, rejoicing the trees of Adrianople as the chorus grew-- Esslemont, Breakwell, Dreyfus-- and grew and grew. Now the earth is flooded with the felicity of this new song, this Godsong.

I falter, Lord, I quaver; yet I sing.

#### SONNETS FOR THE FRIEND

To whom am I to sing if not to You Who know, well know, the singer and the season And listen still

and know the verse be true Who are Himself the  
music and its reason. My barren fields lie  
parched beneath the sun Nor orange and olive  
yield in arid earth And fallow stay till  
husbanded by One Whose pledge embodies all of  
death and birth. Of what then shall I sing if not  
of this: I learn the ancient patience of the  
land, Mute witness to misfortune's scorching kiss  
And reach for rain, as reached I for Your hand.  
When I but sound Your name in prayer or dream  
Behold! My rivers run, my orchards teem.

Why would You have my feeble, feckless love?  
Another's charm compellingly holds sway.  
Inconstant, from Your kiss I'd turn away Often  
and often to him, the mated dove Truer than I,  
more passionately whole. I share another's wine-  
cup and embrace. Encouched with You, I'd  
helplessly extol The enslaving power of that  
other's grace. Your song would not hold me. With  
half my heart I'd hear You and at faintest first  
call flee Truckling and grovelling to my sweet,  
tart And jealous love who asks fidelity. Yet,  
faithfully, You call this faithless one And  
stumblin~. halt. at last to You I run.

What love exacts I had not thought to yield, Nor guessed the  
crazing dart the Hunter hurled, Or might have found indifference  
a shield And built of gold and pride a dullard's world. But sure  
the Marksman's aim and keen His sight; I could but dress His  
raven locks the night. I might have fled His perfumed, silken  
tent But for the madding blandishment of grape; Heart ravished  
by His voice, resistance rent And, flagon drained, I could not  
seek escape. In passion's sweeping tide I lost all fear And  
could but stroke my Captor's brow the year. What love demands  
I had not thought to give Who, dead of this, am yet left here  
to live.

#### A M ETROPOLIS OF OWLS

Il ~ta. nol the Black Dungeon of Thran, for all ils 11orror  
and ehains, u\*ieh Ne (Bahá'u'lláh) named the Mosl Creat Pri.~on.  
He gave that name to 'Akka.... Nol He Himseyalone but the Cause  
of God uas in prison.

George Townshend

Named by her past suitors 'Akka, Ptolemais, St Jean d'Acre,  
she is no beauty, this aged courtesan, meanly rouged by sun,  
squalidly abandoned to beg her bread with perversely tasteless  
baubles ~and tawdry bits of tarnished brass, her historically

frequented bed the nest of roach and rodent.

The moon's cosmetic kindness does not erase the horror-hollowed haggardness of her pocked, stone face. The enthusiastic stars fail to cajole nor can the soaring birdsong raise in her joyless breast an answering trill. The wafting apotropaic perfume of the Bahji rose, seeking to condole, pleads for entry at her unrelenting gate, but is turned back, its forgiveness spent among children playing on Napoleon's Hill.

With disconsolate dusk the carnival of her bazaar subsides leaving her in darkness, with no warming fire, leaning toward the water's edge where the mortified day will expire. Low-squatting, knees clasped to her thin unsuccouring chest, she does not raise her bat-encircled head at the hawk's cry, nor heed the querulous questions of the owl. The pale paste jewel of her lighthouse beckons wanly but the senile, impotent mosque can only lewdly smile. She does not see the stricken night huddling comfortlessly by her garment's soiled, unfastened hem nor hear her own demented keening echoed in the lamenting surfs low moan, much less gaze adoringly at Carmel entreating greenly from across the bay. Indifferent to the lascivious mist obscenely fingering her lank hair her stare is inward, fixed upon her private stunning grief, turned from the world, consumed beyond self-pity or contrition.

She knows the moment when she chose her death, knows it, lives it, nightly as the murmurous sin-whispering waves pile in, forty upon forty, restless with accusation: the Cargo of cargoes ignominiously spewed ashore; the metallic futile protest of the rusted chain; the thickening indignation of the sordid, misled mob; the unwilling lock-key turning in a prison cell; the infamous farman piously read (she knows it well, the parchment crackling wildly in her reeling brain); the shattered skylight and the frail youth's twisted frame; the mother's sob and then and then  
Oh then, unbearably, the scratching of a Pen!

The dawn releases her to trinkets, plastic wares, the haggling of housewives, and leering merchants' trivial affairs.

She rises shivering, and disfiguring her face, rehearses a grotesque, coquettish smile for her reeking market-place; but leaving, looks back to where the denunciatory waves recede, her unspeakable, lip-locked, bosom-buried crime (till their eve's retelling) a secret aqueously kept: To have seen the loneliness of God and not have wept!

ALWAYS IT IS WOMEN

It is women, always women, who reveal the way, who see and understand what well serves life. Forced from prehistoric day to yield in love and birth, to bend and stoop to cradle, fire and field they gazed to earth were befriended by what nurtures and grew wise.

Men went gladly whooping to the hunt happy with the power to devise schemes of war, instruments of death and magic to hold congress with the stars. If the rich game thinned or weather turned adverse they might placate capricious spirits, blame illest luck or totem's curse and range afar. But women knew. Leaning and listening they learned what in stillness is acutely earned. Crouched closest to the soil they saw the berry sicken, the water fail, the sweet clay spoil, knew incantation would not avail nor sacrifice behoove. Soon the camp would move.

It was the Magdalene who as she pored over the dust that held her Lord read the message of the Nazarene and knew for what the men must cast their nets. Always it is women who reveal the way and who, conceiving, conceive what fosters life. But man for~ets.

Again it is a woman. At Badasht, prostrate in prayer, she hears the shrilling trumpet pierce the air and knows the Nightingale is listening. Rising she tears off her veil, steps blazing, glistening, from her tent-- the past is rent. Men groan in consternation, constellations pale, the age shudders, reels and dies.

Slowly the camp moves toward the world that she espies.

#### THE CAPTIVE

There was one name that always brought joy to the face of Ba/la'u /lah. His expression would change at the mention of it. That name was Mary of Magdala.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

You, Mary of Magdala, there in your garden of pleasure, amid the jasmine and the sweet, green figs, going your perfumed way, secure in your Roman's love, knowing the ways of men, but waiting, waiting; your dreams cool as your pavilion's marbled floor, contained, guarded,

blanched and rustling like the gnarled olive, your heart testing the coils of love, remembering your village home, your heart captive, captive.

You, scented and oiled, your glistening hair a

dark cascade, smooth-armed, gold-bangled, fingers  
slender, turquoise-laden, stroking the ivoried  
lute, your smile dawning, tentative in trust, or  
flashing and accomplished in guile, often alone,  
waiting, waiting, or, not alone, practised in words  
men wish to hear; sometimes weary of the songs, the  
wine, the dice, all games of chance; and sometimes  
sad, your thoughts an echo of the mourning dove,  
pensive, bleating, alone in a world of men, your  
mind captive, captive.

You, marking one man, unlike, apart, one beyond  
your art, your wiles, one knowing, accepting as  
none has, true as sunlight, one to warm the marble  
dream, to still the dry and rustling tree, to hush  
the dove's lament, one who is for ever, his words  
a soft rain on that stony hill,  
you, listening, listening, starting in anguish at the augury  
of the red anemone there on the sanded slope parched in the  
slanting sun.

You, learning one kind of death, seeing your Roman go, go  
baffled, bronzed and glinting in the sun's last rays, go to  
his legion and to other loves, go in anger, jealous, proud,  
not knowing how, alone in the chilled and darkened villa,  
you fill the lilac dusk with sobs; and he, wondering,  
wondering, why you should will him go, why his wealth nor  
power not hold you, and why his gods have failed.

You, in simple robes, coarse against the pampered flesh,  
following the other the long miles through the dust, with  
the faithful women and the few and urgent men, unmindful of  
discomfort, your peasant source remembered, his smile your  
nectar, his word your bread, thrall to his will, learning,  
learning, giving alms, growing in grace, resuming humble  
ways, your will captive, captive.

You, with fragrant spices, lavishing unschooled kisses on  
the unshod feet, your tears their true anointment; and are  
not done with weeping but will kiss that head that bea, s  
the bitter garland hanging above you on yet another barren  
hill you, waiting, waiting, while love dims and ebbs and the  
world goes on, uncaring.

## VII

You, seeing the voiceless vault and seeing more, oh more,  
the light dazzling, dazzling, the hurt dissolving in the  
balm; then hastening, hastening to tell the gentle, grieving  
friends, you, radiant with seeing, the first to know, to

see.

## VIII

You, now brimming with the vision, ignited, a gladdener of ears, telling of love's kingdom, lip to lip, town to town, making many journeys, calling, calling, breast to breast, land to land. An Emperor will hear you--but stone, but stone. Only jaded Rome, darkening, doomed and sinking, will still your voice; but none will still your song. Others call: the spires of Europe will rise.

And you, Mary of Magdala, dying for him at the end, triumphantly dying, rejoicing in this death, your Roman looking on, puzzling, puzzling, who still would save you had you not abandoned all love's lesser claims and are dying, dying, ecstatic in this death for love, your soul captive, captive. You, Mary of Magdala, so magnificent your thralldom that down the centuries at sounding of your name, Love Incarnate, God's Own Thrall, smiles.

## SUPPLIANT: BAHJI

Is this then all there is, a simple garden, And a silence that displaces need for words? What portent in the blood-red wayside poppy? What message in the music of the birds?

The hero's heart is hoisted on a cypress, The saint's is softly folded as a rose; But mine lies shattered here among the pebbles On the only path the fainting coward knows.

## RAINY EVENINGS IN GREAT CITIES

Always on rainy evenings in great cities when I am passing on a bus I see beneath a brightly lit marquee a slender girl clasping a pathetically inadequate umbrella a rippling crowd floating about her on a crest of animated chatter on which they glide out of the black through the submarine light into the theatre swirling to either side in twos and threes gregariously grouped, companionably coupled, selected, grown insolent, she parting them like an apologetic boulder her hair a little damp forehead glistening with rain or stigmata face pale and straining. I watch her pantomime of anticipation as she consults her watch with unnecessary frequency establishing credence, purpose, her eyes eagerly scanning the faces lips, lifting, parting in what would be for him a

familiar smile if he existed. The cruel light exposes  
her unanswerable loneliness as if by X-ray.

Always I wonder how she can be seen on rainy  
evenings in each great city when I pass on a bus  
and how I know that she will see the play or film  
alone. Inexorably my bus moves on a mindless  
mastodon to an unknown destination and the windows  
look on darkness. Her picture stays with me forever  
a slide arrested in projection. Overhead the bus  
ads pitilessly postulate that loneliness is cured  
by choice of toothpaste. It is the girl's umbrella  
that enrages me: Never has it shielded her from  
disappointment.

### SONGS OF SEPARATION

Are you interested in renunciation?

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Love would suffice me, I'd have bade it stay, And  
sinned, if this it be, implored our God In mercy  
cast His eyes another way To win my will, and not  
have thought it odd. But you who are much less than  
I a fool Knew rootless tree could not survive the  
frost And, leaving, drank renunciation's gruel, So  
loved me as to pay the torn heart's cost.

Though blade to breast would be an easier death And  
meagre comfort's found in sage advice, Though  
separation tortures with each breath And roses in  
my hands now turn to ice, Yet what you dared  
foresee I've come to know: I claim you still  
because I let you go.

Our love will pass unnoticed into time And history  
not record our names or cause, Nor future lovers  
weep to read this rhyme, The hastening crowd not  
give it thought or pause; Yet must I write these  
lines for my heart's ease, Recall our perfect hour,  
taste again The wine pressed from a berried moment  
seized, Joy's lavish-yield even, yes, the pain. Had  
I but known that exile were the toll Still would I  
offer that committed kiss, Release you then to God  
for His Own role Though death itself were paler  
deed than this. In banishment, I learn that this is  
true: I gave Him all, thus gives He ever you.

I hold you in my mind and think of death As ever it  
was lover's wont to do, Would barter every spoil,  
my very breath, To be empowered to stay that hand

from you. Were our devotion but the only stake I  
might betray it for a lesser prize; With heaven  
ours, the covenant we make Exalts our trust beyond  
all compromise. Love outgrown proof, it now remains  
to find Acceptance of our parting for the feast;  
Our final fear, when this to one assigned, Survivor  
be endowed to bear it least.  
Host chooses guest, yet does this coward pray Soul's  
strengthening, lest he be bidden stay.

Would that the times were tame and lovers free To savour  
life's most brief and scented hours Oblivious of history,  
besieged towers, The chaos and the unmoored stars; but we  
Are wrenched, torn, flung as unremembered leaves Driven in  
doleful patterns the wind weaves. Glad days are gone. A  
bastion given each The long nightwatch begins. From fitful  
dreams I waken wet-lashed, racked by choking screams, Seeing  
you fall, alone, beyond the reach Of my caress and comfort,  
dying there-- Your lifeless hand extends in lifeless air--  
Hurlled down, as hero, without last softening kiss. O dearest  
love, I did not ask for this.

#### WHO SHALL TELL THE SPARROW?

So blind halh become the human heart that neither the  
disrup~ion oSthe city nor the reduction of the mountain in  
dust nor euen the cleauing of the earth can shake off its  
torpor.

Bahá'u'lláh

She awakens to the ordinary terror of the day, hand trembling  
at the saucer's edge, the tabulated, headlined horrors of the  
sleeping hours waiting, folded, complacent,

to be consumed with Cheerios and orange juice; and, fresher still,  
by radio excitedly magnified in chilling, urgent precision:  
framework of the morning.

The toast has burnt. She abandons it uneaten, swallows vitamins  
against the lethal level of the smog and the reading on the  
Richter scale, adjusts an ear-ring, selects the perfect scarf and  
pin (only their absence would be noticed) and clutching the  
unnecessary leather case races into the subway's cargo of  
psychotic, kin~~ and mediocre men, in equal fear of all.

The man in the lift, with sad and burnt-out eyes, failed saint,  
mugger, suicide, or hero maimed by executive compromise does not  
see her. She chooses another car, welcomes its brisk ascent to the  
cool, chrome chaos of her familiar working day, its humiliations  
balanced by a sense of salaried kinship with the power of its

suave and flannelled men. She has been invisible for years: indifferently they accept her crisp presentation, the knowing poise. She moves through susurrous corridors of the polished concubines of corporate avarice, enters in a bright sprinkle of efficiency, metallic 'good-mornings' spilling like paperclips under the brutal neon tubes. Her glossy smile conceals a scream. She is numbed by dictation, wounded by telephones, submissive to the accomplished sadism of the typewriter. Decisions are made, stratagems rehearsed, appointments arranged, but they change nothing. The sumptuous carpet does not stain though she bleeds mutilating a notepad during the conference where her promised recognition aborts under top-level intrigue. B.J. beams at his promotion, calls for a round of drinks, modestly confesses it came as a total surprise. He surreptitiously pats her with a lasciviousness made innocent by ritual and absent-mindedness, delights in her programmed cringe and does not know she might respond to need.

She struggles against migraine to compose a memorandum in the meaningless marital chitchat of commerce in which nothing is revealed. It goes badly for some reason her horoscope does not explain. She crumples the paper with sudden viciousness, flees to the cloakroom to blot her streaming eyes and smooth powder on her hysteria. Rage has erased the sky; a grey smudge of disapproval hangs in the space beyond the skyline. Like a family quarrel the bruised morning clatters and chews itself to an unlamented end.

VI

Passing newsboys, palely freckled avenging angels of the municipality, shriek accusations of pollution, infanticide and political corruption.

I ~4

In the crowded luncheonette ordering an impersonal salad, she tyrannizes the oppressed waitress-- insensitized by bunions and coffee-scalds-- resolves to withhold the tip and weeps o~er her hired novel. Her stomach burns. Repairing her mouth she curtails the hour to return to imagined crises amid the litter of her desk but the Oracle has not written and the irresolute afternoon yawns itself away in disappointment.

Her unloving lover whom she does not like has furtively planned a concupiscent suburban evening with his wife and does not call. Gratefully hurt she hurtles home in feverish fatigue to her selected emptiness and her Klee prints, the

untasted, convenient dinner and calculated chores. Her hair is set and stockings drip dolorously in the bathroom. In conspiratorial concession to insomnia she pours the earned, luxurious drink and gathers the comforting loneliness about her. The door is double-bolted against fears accustomed as her bathrobe.

A wailing siren cuts the sun's throat- it sinks beyond her window in a hazed fug - acidly orange. She pulls the shade, - tries to remember the sound of crickets - on fragrant summer lawns, but the memory was lost with the doomed elms of childhood, has seeped away with all she knew of poetry and music. The philodendron gasps for breath on the bookshelf,

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its leaves layered with a dross of unnamed sorrows that curl and settle in the corners of the room like favoured pets.

Flashing and spurting, the evening news comes on: three thousand dead in an earthquake, the dollar devalued, the pound skidding, and hemlines dipping in the Fall. She succumbs to the fetish for the exalted fatality, is vicariously victimized, hears war, murder and other desumed disaster dispensed with unctuous unconcern from the lighted, chirping box. And among the diffuse, anonymous deaths a cosy local few, personalized with individual addresses, illustrated by views of draped white forms and resigned or outraged next-of-kin gesticulating in bafflement, calamity's celebrities, their private griefs immortalized on film.

Her name is not mentioned among the enumerated casualties. With an acceptance blunted by a hidden wish she assumes she has survived so cleans her teeth and winds the clock as is expected of the living. Beyond the window, the voluble, smitten night, exhausted by merchandised desire and rented embraces, is pierced by frightened cries and strange fires. The heavy air seethes and writhes like a strangling sleeper in an anxious dream.

O who shall comprehend the anguished darkness? Who shall tell the sparrow: God has seen?

WE SUFFER IN TRANSLATION

Moun~ of Olives Village  
Israel

Intimidated by the relentless Hebrew sun that oppresses the dusty garden the olives have bleached to a silvered insipidity and the oranges gleam weakly in their dark, glossy roosts.

Flushed with their exertions the children press near, wan and wobbling in the unalleviated glare. I struggle against the urge to reduce them to gauche trivialized effigies in a nativity pageant. By now I am a familiar figure, have been assigned grudgingly a slight substance, the Canadian who lingers here-- someone more plausible than a tourist. Tell us about Canada! they shriek in utter disbelief of its existence and still in faint uncertainty of mine.

And I am precipitated into homesickness that stubbornly casts up arrogant contrasts to support my reality, that aggressively flaunts images of northness, seasonality, spaciousness, magnificence, extravagant teeming abundance-- nothing ordinary or moderate. On my mind's canvas Canada is obdurately autumnal or gripped intransigently in the hushed or howling drama of winter's death; its mountains loom in gargantuan aloofness dwarfing these dun and arid fibbing hills.

I call as each witnesses the confident bravura of colour reproductions of the Group of Seven whose violent spectrum leaps from the page in eloquent rainbowed reinforcement of my words and am reprimanded by the children's reproachful silence.

I have offered too much. Television has conditioned them to hope for cowboys and Indians. I squirm under their disappointment and helplessly watch them dismiss Lismer and the others with a disapproving shrug. Even Emily Carr will not be trusted.

Nothing must challenge their pastel parched experience. You should not tell lies says one prim boy, his eyes glazing with selfrighteousness. Israel is better! Our snow is white our trees are green. I capitulate with ease before this wrenched credulity. Smiling, I recant: Ken ken! And the oranges orange!

They accept the vindication passively. The small forms glide from my strangeness, rinsed away by the choking heat and vengeful sunlight. Behind my eyelids in profuse explosions blaze images of the brilliant hoard of Kleinburg defiantly reclaiming me in a lush and cooling incarnation.

THE CONFUSED MUSE  
MEMO FROM THE CENSOR

. . . a poet getting pious is a terrible thing.

Ralph Gustafson  
The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse

I've been meaning to speak to you about this  
for some time, White;  
I mean this tendency of yours to be found  
scribbling in a notebook every night--  
Poems, one might suppose--  
A mug's game, as Eliot said, and heaven knows  
He is unquestionably right.

I concede I sei~e a pen sir  
Not e~-er~ day but nou and then sir.

A singularly unhealthy activity I should think.  
Why not~ instead, take a wife or take to  
drink--  
Do something uncharacteristically rash,  
Paint the town red, raid the petty cash,  
Get yourself thrown in the clink?

I'll surely gil~e your plans some thought  
But like my chaste and narrow cot.

And worse ( how you do compound your crimes! )  
So many of the pieces you write contain lines  
Which have, shall we say, an unfortunate  
religious connotation.  
How can one explain this embarrassing  
infatuation  
So incompatible with these enlightened times?

Would my verse be more e.-fectual  
If more cerebral intellectual?  
More grim still, the chilling thought  
That reading all your tommyrot  
So--take no offence--unhairy-chested,  
One might justifiably conclude you think  
yourself invested  
With--good grief!--belief,  
Might one not?

What I feel and what I say Are two parts of a  
whole, I pray.

In conclusion, let me remind you, my lad,  
The spectacle of anyone with spiritual  
delusions is sad, but seen in a poet  
inspires revulsion.  
Do try, old chap, to contain your  
compulsion.  
It's enough that history may charge that  
your poetry is bad--

But to be thought pious? Egad!

I'll write my poems and hope they're true sir;  
But I'll not show my lines to you, sir.

#### SPIRITUAL DISORDER OF THE DOMESTIC KIND

Of all the swains who courted me One lad  
I loved the best; Oft, smiling, sank in  
pleasure, His head upon my breast.

Golden were his tousled curls And blue  
his pleading eyes. How well I loved his  
slender hands And alabaster thighs.

I would have wed this fairest man But  
feared his ardour cool And younger loves  
might claim him, Then I be left a fool.

And so I sent the wight away (To tell it  
my heart grieves) And marked how poorly  
he was shod, How tattered were his  
sleeves.

I prayed the saints heal passion's hurt  
For these, we know, forswore it. I  
rasted, said a Mass or two, And felt the  
better for it.

Another beau came calling And sweetly did  
converse. I noted well his melting song,  
Gold gaiters and full purse.

No beauty this, with hoary head And  
bulbous, warted nose, But in his soul I  
thought might bloom An undetected rose.

So wed I him and long have lain Beside my  
snoring dear. But Oh ! my arms are empty  
! And Oh! my breast grows sere!

I bear my lot with dignity  
Concealing my heart's thirst  
And solaced till my death will be By thought of  
him loved first.

I rue the day I cast aside. That one who might  
bring shame. In dreams I kiss my early love, My  
dearest what's-his-name.

#### JUST ADD WATER AND STIR

This is the perfect poem, a veritable horn of

plenty. Note how cunningly it is constructed as to contain something for every taste: a distinctively contemporary format, one

example of typographical cuteness, and an obscure but fresh and arresting image

.....

to be inserted by the reader, in the space provided, to ensure freshness.

You may bet your bottom iambic pentameter it contains a foreign phrase (tucked in currente calamo) to enhance the aura of erudition; a naughty word ~ (reader's choice); and a built-in zippy clincher. The poem is guaranteed to be indistinguishable from others currently available on the market and because it is biodegradable may be consumed in complete comfort without distressing after-effects (boredom and nausea excepted). Intensive research has proven it cannot linger in the memory and will not arouse emotion. The poem is offered in three lengths and comes hermetically sealed in plastic for your protection. You may personalize it by inventing a title and ascribing the poem to the author of your choice. Be the first in your neighbourhood to own a new disposable poem. Easy-to-follow directions are included . . .

Reader, kindly wake up. The poem cannot continue with you snoring.

#### VISIT FROM A PURITAN

In my view, one of the grave dangers the Baha'~'Faith may encounter is the effort, conscious or not, of those who have never had an authentic religious experience, to impose upon the pristine purity and joyousness of the Cause the deadening stamp of simpering puritanism, in which the uncourageous, the fake and the spirit~ ally dead take refuge, that spectre which has appeared at the deathbed of all the great religions of the past.

Michael Sears  
Letter to the author

My dear, I have hesitated to mention this before, but after what I can assure you was the most loving consultation the Committee instructs me to say that we abhor certain aspects

of life referred to in your poems. It was the cause of some alarm that one of your verses contained explicit reference to--was it an arm?--some part of the anatomy. We disapprove, you see, of what one might call the baser instincts, the viler passions, although we recognize that such references are the fashion. We who have constituted ourselves guardians of these affairs (no salacious innuendo intended) do not care to have our delicate sensibilities offended, nor those of others. We choose to think that human sweat--that is to say, perspiration-- does not exist or if it does that one should not dwell on the fact that it might st . . . I mean that it is malodorous. We believe in the utmost purity of thought and since you profess to uphold unity

we know you will agree with us, will you not? No doubt the whole nasty human adventure will, in future, improve when we are granted wafting, astral bodies in which to freely move. Perhaps we shall exist on eau de cologne, butterfly wings, rose petals, and whatnot-- pure speculation, of course, but isn't it a charming thought! We may evolve so as to communicate by mental telepathy or sonic vibration which one might hope would lead to elimination-- no vulgarity implied--of the need for poetry. Think of all those books gathering dust on shelves! Ah well, enough of that; it is my commission to advise you that we know you yearn to have us hold you in the high esteem in which we hold ourselves and which, if you acquire humility, you still might earn. We think it would augur well for your development if you were to invite our instruction in what to think and feel and write-- \_ not that we for a moment claim to know poetry, but we know of it, a fact which gives us considerable objectivity. Poetry, of course, is unquestionably the product of psychological disturbance or fear, and we know that deep down you long to acquire our degree of poise and happiness, dear. If we must have poems let their themes not be expressed too starkly; we like our verses to be well tit-willow'd, hilled and daled and somewhat sky-larky, just as we like our angels to have wings and their golden tresses curled, to behave predictably as angels; and we like our heavenly gates well-pearled. True poets, you know, in any age, do not experience exultation, let alone

rage. Frivolity and humour have ever been at war with piety, for the good Lord--as His friends refer to Him-- endorses High-Mindedness and Sobriety. One of even so obscure a religious persuasion as yours surely cannot avoid conceding that among God's many attributes are those we share with Him-- impeccable taste and good breeding. Poems should be given over to a rarified cerebral devotion and not the unseemliness and vulgarity of emotion. We prefer, don't you know, reverence of whisper and tippy-toe; that is to say, the fluttering wrist as opposed to the clenched fist. In your verses we suggest you not refer to martyrdoms--they're so essentially physical, as it were. Well, much as I know you'd like me to stay, my duty done, I must away. I can see that you've already profited by this visit--well, you've the Committee to thank-- you've sat there an hour and conceived a poem so abstruse and pure the page is blank.

#### FISH STORY

And plu~k till time and times are done  
The silrer apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun

W. B. Yeats

William Butler Yeats went fishing And  
caught a little trout. A silly thing, I  
thought in youth, To write a poem  
about.

Yeats' fish became a maiden, Danced him  
across the glen; A most unlikely tale,  
thought I Who was but fifteen then.

I caught a trout at twenty. What use  
was that to me? And though it seemed to  
vent a sigh I ~ossed the thing asea.

A~ thirty and at forty In each love I  
looked upon A fish form mocked me from  
the depths Then, glinting, darted on.

Now faint at fevered fifty I cast an  
urgent line And cannot name what I  
would give to land a trout all mine

To dance across the valley  
And up the dappled hill.

I'd lead her to the orchard  
To claim at last my fill,

Feast on gold and silver apples,  
A time and times partake, And know that these,  
alone of fruits, My thirst and hunger slake.

I make my home along the stream, My mourning trout  
glides by Nor sees the foundrous bone-paved shore  
On which I gasp and die.

SETTLING THE SCORE  
WITH MR OGDEN NASH FOR  
'THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL AGES OF  
MRS MARMADUKE MOORE' AND  
THEREBY ACHIEVING IF NOT A  
BETTER VERSE AT LEAST  
A LONGER TITLE

The Baleté and others who speak Setswana should  
get along, but they don't wanna. The Afrikaner  
and the !Xhosa are not drawing any !Xclosa. The  
French and Germans hate the Dutch who don't like  
anybody much. The British view is quite  
reprehensible; they find all others  
incomprehensible. Their Empire fell that fatal  
night God proved not Anglican nor white. They  
don't like each other, them's the grim facts (It's  
a matter of 'aitches' and syntax). Cockneys don't  
know a spondee from a dactyl (neither do I, as a  
matter of factyl). The Irish idea is even eerier--

'The likes of them? Sure, we're superior!' No  
doubt amid the Arctic snow someone hates the  
Eskimo. Pity him, in his most important span, only  
the walrus to feel more-important-than. The Congo  
Pygmy's deeply loathed by Africans more fully  
clothed so 'spit in-yer-eye' is the loud retort  
(hard for the Pygmy, he's so short). Canada is a  
hate-free nation but just don't mention  
miscegenation for whiteman's standards one  
preserves by putting Indians on reserves and  
placing Blacks in a sorry plight: 'You are  
equal--I am right!' Americans discard all such  
priorities, democratically mistreating all  
minorities. Some think the Vietnamese are nice  
though it's rather a case of let-'em-eat-rice.  
There are those who have aversion to anybody  
speaking Persian; no doubt one day a foe will

sunder them pulling their carpets out from under them. Persian calligraphy gives Arabs the giggles, they much preferring their own strange squiggles. The Iroquois and Navaho hate lots of folks they don't even know while Polynesians (with which little rhymes) say it's best if you're like Heinz. Swedes and Finns and other Caucasians suffer each other and loathe all Asians. Historically, Brahmans detest the untouchable which some find rather much-too-muchable. Those whose script is Sinhalese quite detest the Japanese who, in turn, avoid the sainted Lapplander, thou~h not acquainted.

Samoans feel if you meet a Papuan it's almost a cinch it'll be your ruin, while Papuans say if you meet a Samoan he's bound to hit you, at least for a loan. Time-honoured tongues are declared now extraneous to the woe of the Sard and the Alsace-Lorraineous. The Tlingit dimly view the Haida and other groups they can't abaida. Some feel the Negro freedom fighter could come to dine if he were whiter. One view it's said there's no appeal from whites exist for Blacks to steal from. Yellow hates brown and in addition, both deplore the beige Mauritian. Israelis love all people, though-- ask the Arabs, they should know-- but gentile heathens they eschew which seems the Kosher thing to do their theory being, if you can buy it, that God prescribed the Jewish diet, while Orientals think themselves most pious because He designed their eyes on the bias. In Latin climes the noble Quechua dislike the Spanish you can betchua. Loving the Russian is no longer vogue, once hailed as hero, now seen as rogue. The problem one gathers is largely political, allegiances being essentially cyclical. (For a trustworthy guide on whom to vent pique consult current issues of Neu~sueek or write a best-seller called, let's say, Whom lo Snub on Fiue Dollars a Da~s) Mention the British to the Buganda and in the hospital you may landa. Cannibals' manners are highly reproachable (they want to know if you're par-boil-or-poachable). If asked to dine think twice or then you

may find yourself on tomorrow's menu. Their customs being so detestable one can only hope to prove indigestible. They should concentrate on erudition and not so much on deglutition. We race to the

planets to spread racial blight-- who'll be the first  
anti-Venusianite? Altogether, the world's a mess,  
it's rife with tension, it's in distress. Called into  
being a strange fate awaits you: the moment you're  
born, somebody hates you. Now, none can impersonate  
Ogden Nash but somebody had to settle his hash (his  
skill's a fact over which I'm not wrangling none left  
participles more amusingly dangling) and though the  
result may be deplorable it brings us directly (at  
last!) to the morable and if morals are something you  
just can't endure reflect on the fate of Mrs  
Marmaduke Moore. Dare one pay heed to the heavenly  
call, becom~ a Bahá'í, and love them all?

#### SURMISE

Since Moses was a swarthy Jew some  
maintain that God is, too. I didn't  
think I'd like a god who said Shalom and  
Rega ahad And so I went my merry way; my  
life was brief but oh, so gay. When I  
died and went to hell Old Satan smiled  
and said, Ve/I, l~ell!

#### THE GRIM REAPER COUNTERED

A messenger of joy are you  
Who bring last mortal sleep; Haste  
not to call, if this be true;  
Will not the good news keep?

Think not my jibes mask fear of you  
Nor yet exemption ask.  
Who dies for love a time or two  
Comes practised to the task.

#### PRUFROCK IN SUBURBIA

About the room the women dash, and talk  
of their ills and diaper rash. Would  
that the women whom I know mi.~ht speak  
of Michelangelo.

#### IMPATIENCE

If I aspire to be a saint  
Think not that this is due To  
predilection for the goal But  
shortness of the queue.

#### SHO RTCUT

I try to love my fellowmen, The Arabs,

Jews and others, But sometimes wish us in  
the tomb In sleep to live as brothers.

There tutored by the levelling worms In  
silent, chastening vault, To know  
ourselves, at last, as one Nor care who  
was at fault.

CONSIDER, MR ELIOT . . .

If it is true that naught avails, No love  
so strong but that it fails, All beauty  
not for long prevails Nor cure is found  
for sore hearts' ails And none is placed  
beyond Death's reach: Why, Prufrock, then  
resist the peach? The ruthless stalker  
will not care Whether. or how, you part  
your hair.

A SEAT ON THE SUBWAY

O Children of Negligence! Ye are even as the unwary bird . .

.

Bahá'u'lláh

I do not remember consenting to this the fading hair, the  
shortened breath, arthritic twinges; not I who honoured his  
father and mother, who paid attention to his choice of soap,  
his tie. This was not the promise of the billboards and the  
silver screen; nothing has prepared me for this ignominy, I  
who have never cared for ruins. Who is this pallid man I  
shave whose inac~essible mirrored eyes look past me toward  
some lost omniscience? What do I know of age and who can tell  
me? My grandparents were old, of course, but always old,  
stirring faintly on the edges of my childhood like dazed  
accident-victims whose bandages obscure identity. Kate  
Spottswood beguiled me with her legend but how could I see  
the merry girl from Sligo in that grey and aproned woman  
kneading dough in timeless rhythm, gesture?

No, I do not approve of this, do not consent; I should have  
been consulted. I shall need time to think about this  
outrage, muster my arguments. Let it be understood that I am  
not without resources; I have responsibilities, appointments,  
and do not like to be nudged into situations. I am at ease  
with the familiar.

Will elevators still rise at my command and the stenographer  
come giggling at my summons?

Now will she cross authoritative legs, have eyes only for her  
notebook and the clock, cease paying the compliment of

challenging my grammar? When she yawns behind her hand might I not scream? If I mention an event a decade past will she look away as though I had uttered an obscenity or gaze with the vacant, incredulous eyes of one reading descriptions of museum fossils?

Let me say I am not paranoiac; I do not go so far as to suggest it is a plot. But why on sensuous city nights do I pass invisibly, invisibly, the blade-thin stalking boys in clothes assertively skin-tight, their flat abdomens, seething thighs, threatening like an accusation or dismissal? Can they not see that I am a menace to their women? Do they believe they invented desire?

Consider: it will grow worse. I the skilled, manful dangler from subway straps, consummate juggler of newspaper and leather case, will watch a girl, a shining, hateful child rise and yield her seat and call me sir, her smile the one expended on kittens. Casually she will turn from my humiliation and slip through the door, purring with virtue. She will not know me as the peerless dancer of tangos, the prosilient dancing youth with invincible limbs-- where has he gone? Is the prostate, then, the seat of premonition?

And ah, the subway, the subway! Dare I guess, at last, its destination? Am I to understand that even I shall die?

#### NURSERY RHYME

The game is up at last, old chaps, Come, put away your toys--  
The cannon, bombs and ships and maps-- Have done with blood and noise.

Our sons unnumbered you have slain, Our daughters bowed with weeping,  
Is it such fun to wound and maim You can't see shadows creeping?

Why strut and posture, bluster, bluff, Now looms the day of reckoning?  
Come, children, we have had enough, Maturity is beckoning.

Humpty-Dumpty needs your care, Jack Horner's growing weary,  
Simon longs to taste your ware, Jack Spratt now finds lean dreary.

George-Porgie Pudding-and-Pie, Assisted by some others, Strafed  
the children, made them die, And broke the hearts of mothers.

Margery Daw, King Cole and Mary, Well see your garden grow, With  
mushroom cloud, quite contrary, And corpses, row by row.

Behold the black shee-p down the lane, And Blue-Boy's rusted

horn; Regard the meadow, mountain, plain, And fear what's in the  
corn.

While Chicken-Little's sky still holds,  
Bake fast your pat-a-cake; Goosey  
Gander's time now folds, Come,  
sleepyheads, awake!

The ladybug has flown away, Her house,  
her children, burn; London Bridge fell  
in a day, The Rhine has had its turn.

What say the Bells of Bailey now? What  
nose the blackbird pluck? The mouse upon  
the clock will vow The Hour has struck  
and struck.

#### PART ONE; PORTRA YALS

The opening quotation is taken from Shoghi Effendi, *The World  
Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 77

#### MARTHA ROOT

See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. VIII, pp. 643-8

#### A LETTER TO KEITH

Keith 'Nannie' Bean Ransom-Kehler. See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*,  
vol. v, pp. 389-409

#### LOUIS G. GREGORY

See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. xn, pp. 666-70. For the opening  
words by 'Abdu'l-Bahá see Elsie Austin, *Above All Barriers*. The  
italicized words in the poem are adapted from Louis Gregory's pilgrim  
notes published as *A Heavenly Vis~a* (see Bibliography)

#### VISIT TO A VETERAN

Horace Hotchkiss Holley (1887-1960). See 'In Memoriam', *The Baha; World*,  
vol xlll, pp. 849-58

#### 'ABDU L-GHAFFAR OF ISFAHAN

See 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of ~he Faithful*, pp. 59-60. cf. Sana'i's lines  
quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Seven Valleys*, p g

#### MASTER CRIMINAL

Eduardo Duarte Vieira, 'first African martyr'. See 'In Memoriam', *The  
Bahá'í World*, vol. xlv, pp.389 go. The opening words are from Bahá'u'lláh,  
*Prayers and Meditations* by Bahá'u'lláh, 20

#### MARION JACK

See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. xll, pp. 6747. Admirers of  
George Herbert will recognize his two lines

## EAGLE

Louisa (Lua) Moore Getsinger. See 'In Memoriam', Star of the West, vol. 7, no. 4, May 1916, pp. 29-30; no.lg, March 1917, pp.

The introductory quotation is Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 257. Other quotations are taken verbatim from Juliet Thompson's diary. An entry for 5 July alludes to the Master having made public His station in a talk given on 19 June 1912. The events of 13 June are described in an entry for 16 June.

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