

WOLFY

*Incalculable
are the benefits civilization has brought us, incommensurable the
productive power of all classes of riches originated by the inven-
tions and discoveries of science. Inconceivable and marvellous crea-
tions of the human sex in order to make men more happy, more
free, and more perfect. Without parallel the crystalline and fecund
fountains of the new life which still remains closed to the thirsty
lips of the people who follow in their griping and bestial tasks.*

He was in the laboratory working away in pursuit of his dream: to create a perfect human race. There's no way off the island, you must face the fact. You're beautiful inside. You're beautiful outside. You're an extraordinary creature. These small things are just a question of chemical imbalances. And if in my tinkering I have fallen short of the human form by the odd snout, claw, or hoof, it really is of no great import. I have seen the devil in my microscope, and I have chained him, and I suppose you could say in a sense, metaphorically speaking, I have cut him to pieces. Not to kill for pleasure. Not to kill for hatred. Not to kill anything, any time. Evil is he who breaks the law.

“How strange tonight, the city. As if something trembled
below its surface, waiting to burst through.”

The bums stood outside like a receiving line.

I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. For that reason I live near the broad free downland, and can escape thither when this shadow is over my soul; and very sweet is the empty downland then, under the wind-swept sky.

*

To live is to evil
because love
between people
doesn't exist.

It rises in the gut
—my little ache
our misery—
and carries us
out
on the same
surging tide
that moves orcas
in thrall
of a smooth baby gray
to kill, portion off

and everybody eats—

bloodthirsty
love.

Whole groups bound together
in the giving and taking of death.

Of course, it's just the way with carnivores. After a kill, they drink. It's the taste of blood, you know. He glanced about us, standing astride over the mess of dead rabbit, his eyes roving among the shadows and screens of greenery, the lurking-places and ambuscades of the forest that bounded us in. The taste of blood. He took out his revolver, examined the cartridges in it and replaced it. But then we have to prove that he killed the rabbit. I wish I'd never brought the things here. You see, they are all supposed to have a fixed idea against eating anything that runs on land.

“Ideas are so novel to them. Once they get hold of one, having the vague idea it is somehow precious, they wish to keep possession of it.”

The hard,
lifeless I covered up the warm, pulsing it; protecting and
sheltering.

“We're gonna go out
and get that toaster now.”

And it was as if, for a moment, he had become the pelado, the thief—yes, the pilferer of meaningless muddled ideas out of which his rejection of life had grown, who had worn his two or three bowler hats, his disguises, over these abstractions: now the realest of them all was close.

If some brute has by any accident tasted blood—. I wonder what can have happened. Then, after a pause: I did a foolish thing the other day. That servant of mine—I showed him how to skin and cook a rabbit. It's odd—I saw him licking his hands—It never occurred to me.

“Now you see what sort of creatures we are, Hugh. Eating things alive. That's what we do. How can you have much respect for mankind, or any belief in the social struggle?”

It is not Mexico of course but in the heart.

“Perhaps. It is difficult to understand how an English explorer thinks. Was it the Antarctic? What sends the English into these terrible places?”

Godolphin stared at nothing. “I think it is the opposite of what sends English reeling all over the globe in the mad

dances called Cook's tours. They want only the skin of a place, the explorer wants its heart. It is perhaps a little like being in love. I had never penetrated to the heart of any of these wild places, Raf. Until Vheissu. It was not till the Southern Expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her skin."

We must make an example. I've no doubt in my own mind that the Leopard-man was the sinner. But how can we prove it? I wish you had kept your taste for meat in hand, and gone without these exciting novelties. We may find ourselves in a mess yet, through it.

"What did you see?" asked Signor Mantissa, leaning forward.

"Nothing," Godolphin answered. "It was Nothing I saw."

Yet who would ever have believed that some obscure man, sitting at the center of the world in a bathroom, say, thinking solitary miserable thoughts, was authoring their doom, that, even while he was thinking, it was as if behind the scenes certain strings were pulled, and whole continents burst into flame, and calamity moved nearer—just as now, at this moment perhaps, with a sudden jolt and grind, calamity had moved nearer, and, without the Consul's knowing it, outside the sky had darkened. Or perhaps it was not a man at all, but a child, a little child, innocent as that other Geoffrey had been, who sat as up in an organ loft somewhere playing, pulling out all the stops at random, and kingdoms divided and fell, and abominations dropped from the sky—a child innocent as that infant sleeping in the coffin which had slanted past them down the Calle Tierra del Fuego...

"That war, the world flipped. But come '45, and they flopped. Here in Harlem they flopped. Everything got cool—no love, no hate, no worries, no excitement. Every once in a while, though, somebody flips back. Back to where he can love..."

Tell me why you make the pain if we are your children. Uh, you see, you are my children, but law is necessary. If there is no more pain, then is there no more law?

"Maybe that's it," the girl said after a while. "Maybe you have to be crazy to love somebody."

"But you take a whole bunch of people flip at the same time and you've got a war. Now war is not loving, is it?"

"Flip, flop," she said, "get the mop."

You're not the same as them. Nor are you the same as me. You're something far, far finer—

“Esther, I want to give. I want to do things for you. If I can bring out the beautiful girl inside you, the idea of Esther, as I have done already with your face...”

Silence was as infectious as mirth, she thought, an awkward silence in one group begetting a loutish silence in another, which in turn induced a more general, meaningless, silence in a third, until it had spread everywhere. Nothing in the world is more powerful than one of those sudden strange silences—

Thou art the grave where buried love doth live.

*

*Some menace to humans
was lurking in the silence.*

The creatures I had seen were not men, had never been men. They were animals, humanised animals,—triumphs of vivisection. You forget all that a skilled vivisector can do with living things. For my own part, I'm puzzled why the things I have done here have not been done before. Small efforts, of course, have been made,—amputation, tongue-cutting, excisions. Of course you know a squint may be induced or cured by surgery? Then in the case of excisions you have all kinds of secondary changes, pigmentary disturbances, modifications of the passions, alterations in the secretion of fatty tissue. I have no doubt you have heard of these things? I am only beginning. Those are trivial cases of alteration. Surgery can do better things than that. There is building up as well as breaking down and changing. You have heard, perhaps, of a common surgical operation resorted to in cases where the nose has been destroyed: a flap of skin is cut from the forehead, turned down on the nose, and heals in the new position. This is a kind of grafting in a new position of part of an animal upon itself. Grafting of freshly obtained material from another animal is also possible,—the case of teeth, for example. The grafting of skin and bone is done to facilitate healing: the surgeon places in the middle of the wound pieces of skin snipped from another animal, or fragments of bone from a victim freshly killed. Hunter's cock-spur—possibly you have heard of that—flourished on the bull's neck; and the rhinoceros rats of the Algerian zouaves are also to be thought of,—monsters manufactured by transferring a slip from the tail of an ordinary rat to its snout, and allowing it to heal in that position. These creatures you have seen are animals carved and wrought into new shapes. To that, to the study of the plasticity of living forms, my life has been devoted. I have studied for years, gaining in knowledge as I go. I see you look horrified, and yet I am telling you nothing new. It all lay in the surface of practical anatomy years ago, but no one had the temerity to touch it. It is not simply the outward form of an animal which I can change. The physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature, may also be made to undergo an enduring modification,—of which vaccination and other methods of inoculation with living or dead matter are examples that will, no doubt, be familiar to you. A similar operation is the transfusion of blood,—with which subject, indeed, I began. These are all familiar cases. Less so, and probably far more extensive, were the operations of those mediaeval practitioners who made dwarfs and beggar-cripples, show-monsters,—some vestiges of whose art still remain in the preliminary manipulation of the young mountebank or contortionist. Victor Hugo gives an account of them in 'L'Homme qui Rit.'—But perhaps my meaning grows plain now. You begin to see that it is a possible thing to transplant tissue from one part of an animal to

another, or from one animal to another; to alter its chemical reactions and methods of growth; to modify the articulations of its limbs; and, indeed, to change it in its most intimate structure. And yet this extraordinary branch of knowledge has never been sought as an end, and systematically, by modern investigators until I took it up! Some of such things have been hit upon in the last resort of surgery; most of the kindred evidence that will recur to your mind has been demonstrated as it were by accident,—by tyrants, by criminals, by the breeders of horses and dogs, by all kinds of untrained clumsy-handed men working for their own immediate ends. I was the first man to take up this question armed with antiseptic surgery, and with a really scientific knowledge of the laws of growth. Yet one would imagine it must have been practised in secret before. Such creatures as the Siamese Twins—And in the vaults of the Inquisition. No doubt their chief aim was artistic torture, but some at least of the inquisitors must have had a touch of scientific curiosity. But these things—these animals talk! He said that was so, and proceeded to point out that the possibility of vivisection does not stop at a mere physical metamorphosis.

“I think, mi amigo, sickness is not only in body but in that part used to be call: soul.”

A pig may be educated. The mental structure is even less determinate than the bodily. In our growing science of hypnotism we find the promise of a possibility of superseding old inherent instincts by new suggestions, grafting upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas. Very much indeed of what we call moral education, he said, is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct; pugnacity is trained into courageous self-sacrifice, and suppressed sexuality into religious emotion. And the great difference between man and monkey is in the larynx, he continued,—in the incapacity to frame delicately different sound-symbols by which thought could be sustained. I asked him why he had taken the human form as a model. There seemed to me then, and there still seems to me now, a strange wickedness for that choice. He confessed that he had chosen that form by chance. I might just as well have worked to form sheep into llamas and llamas into sheep. I suppose there is something in the human form that appeals to the artistic turn more powerfully than any animal shape can. The fact is, after I had made a number of human creatures I made a Thing. It was killed. I don't understand, do you mean to say —It killed several things that it caught. We chased it for a couple of days. It only got loose by accident—I never meant it to get away. It wasn't finished. It was purely an experiment. It was a limbless thing, with a horrible face, that writhed along the ground in a serpentine fashion. It was immensely strong, and in infuriating pain. It lurked in the woods for some days, until we hunted it; and then it wriggled into the northern part of the island, and we divided the party to close in upon it. We shot the thing. After that I stuck to the ideal of humanity—except for little things. He became silent. I sat in silence watching his face. Sometimes I rise above my level, sometimes I fall below it; but always I fall short of the things I dream. The human shape I can get now, almost with ease, so that it is lithe and graceful, or thick and strong; but often there is trouble with the hands and the claws,—painful things, that I dare not shape too freely. But it is in the subtle grafting and reshaping one must needs do to the brain that my trouble lies. The intelligence is often oddly low, with unaccountable blank ends, unexpected gaps. And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere—I cannot determine where—in the seat of the emotions.

“Precisamente,” the doctor said, swiftly clasping and unclasping his fingers. “But a mesh? Mesh. The nerves are a mesh, like, how do you say it, an eclectic systemë.”

“Ah, very good,” the Consul said, “you mean an electric system.”

Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst forth suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear. These creatures of mine seemed strange and uncanny to you so soon as you began to observe them; but to me, just after I make them, they seem to be indisputably human beings. It’s afterwards, as I observe them, that the persuasion fades.

“But after much tequila the eclectic systemë is perhaps un poco descompuesto, comprenez, as sometimes in the cine: claro?”

You remember
the old Christmas song, which is a linguistic joke. Perdrix,
pear tree. The beauty is that it works like a machine yet is
animate.

Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say, “This time I will burn out all the animal; this time I will make a rational creature of my own!” After all, what is ten years? Men have been a hundred thousand in the making. He thought darkly. But I am drawing near the fastness. This puma of mine—And they revert. As soon as my hand is taken from them the beast begins to creep back, begins to assert itself again.

Enter the dog
inner wolf buried
in woof—

...it
looked up at the Consul with beady, gentle eyes. Then, thrusting
down its poor wrecked dinghy of a chest, from which raw withered
breasts drooped, it began to bow and scrape before him. Ah, the
ingress of the animal kingdom! Earlier it had been the insects; now
these were closing in upon him again, these animals, these people
without ideas:

See, I can play!
snarrrrrl
Looks of love...

No more forage or killing
just mutual delusions exchanged
for food
and whatever else lacking.
Doing our part,
advancing the age.
Try to keep busy or the hollow
prevails—
“...she loves it and not me...”

That's not love, it's absence:
between you and the dog, dog
and dog bone—between me and us
and everything

O woe! What else?
The hollow refrain.

Domestic deceptions
keeping it down,
they mask horror
the way pants hide our
tails.

The Thing was evidently faithful enough, for it might have fallen upon me as I slept. It is well, I said, extending my hand for another licking kiss. I began to realise what its presence meant, and the tide of my courage flowed. Where are the others? I asked. They are mad; they are fools, said the Dog-man. Even now they talk together beyond there. They say, "The Master is dead. The Other with the Whip is dead. That Other who walked in the Sea is as we are. We have no Master, no Whips, no House of Pain, any more. There is an end. We love the Law, and will keep it; but there is no Pain, no Master, no Whips for ever again." So they say. But I know, Master, I know. I felt in the darkness, and patted the Dog-man's head. It is well, I said again. Presently you will slay them all, said the Dog-man. Presently I will slay them all,—after certain days and certain things have come to pass. Every one of them save those you spare, every one of them shall be slain. What the Master wishes to kill, the Master kills, said the Dog-man with a certain satisfaction in his voice.

Presently the mares grew tired of whinneying, so in a way he had learned Hugh whistled instead. He had pledged himself to guard the foals but actually the dog was guarding all of them. Evidently trained to detect snakes, he would run ahead then double back to make sure all were safe before looping on once more. Hugh watched him a moment. It was certainly hard to reconcile this dog with the pariahs one saw in town, those dreadful creatures that seemed to shadow his brother everywhere.

"Look at you, masquerading like a human being. You ought to be junked. Not burned or cremated."

*

"Evil is real," he said.
"Bowling is fun," he said.

"History will ultimately judge
whether I made the right decisions or not,"
he said.

The sky right now
is positively pea green.
“Everybody's got to make a living,” he said.

“I gotta pay the bills,” he said.
“Pee in my mouth, and I'll stop complaining.”

“—”

“—”

In so many small and terrible ways
you lie 'cause life is not that great.

“Back to the House of Pain, the House of Pain, the House of Pain!” yelled the voice of the Ape-man, some twenty yards to the right. When I heard that, I forgave the poor wretch all the fear he had inspired in me. I heard the twigs snap and the boughs swish aside before the heavy tread of the Horse-rhinoceros upon my right. Then suddenly through a polygon of green, in the half darkness under the luxuriant growth, I saw the creature we were hunting. I halted. He was crouched together into the smallest possible compass, his luminous green eyes turned over his shoulder regarding me. It may seem a strange contradiction in me,—I cannot explain the fact,—but now, seeing the creature there in a perfectly animal attitude, with the light gleaming in its eyes and its imperfectly human face distorted with terror, I realised again the fact of its humanity. In another moment other of its pursuers would see it, and it would be overpowered and captured, to experience once more the horrible tortures of the enclosure. Abruptly I slipped out my revolver, aimed between its terror-struck eyes, and fired. As I did so, the Hyena-swine saw the Thing, and flung itself upon it with an eager cry, thrusting thirsty teeth into its neck. All about me the green masses of the thicket were swaying and cracking as the Beast People came rushing together. One face and then another appeared. Don't kill it! Don't kill it! In another moment they were keeping away the excited carnivorous Beast People from the still quivering body. The hairy-grey Thing came sniffing at the corpse under my arm. The other animals, in their animal ardour, jostled me to get a nearer view. Confound you. I wanted him. I'm sorry, said I, though I was not. It was the impulse of the moment. (An animal may be ferocious and cunning enough, but it takes a real man to tell a lie.) I felt sick with exertion and excitement. Turning, I pushed my way out of the crowding Beast People and went on alone up the slope towards the higher part of the headland. It was easy now for me to be alone. The Beast People manifested a quite human curiosity about the dead body, and followed it in a thick knot, sniffing and growling at it as the Bull-men dragged it down the beach. I went to the headland and watched the Bull-men, black against the evening sky as they carried the weighted dead body out to sea; and like a wave across my mind came the realisation of the unspeakable aimlessness of things upon the island.

...there was nothing
there: no peaks, no life, no climb. Nor was this summit a summit
exactly: it had no substance, no firm base. It was crumbling too,
whatever it was, collapsing, while he was falling, falling...

I feel like the polar bear
starving, alone—its little berg

melting on the sea of dreams.
Ecstasy saves me but what about the bear?

A strange persuasion came upon me, that, save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form. The Leopard-man had happened to go under: that was all the difference. Poor brute! Poor brutes! Before, they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand; their mock-human existence, begun in an agony, was one long internal struggle, one long dread—and for what? It's all instinct and reason—instinct and reason! What's instinct to a dog? To hunt. To kill. To run with the pack. I wanna go to dog heaven.

He
saw those people like spirits appearing to grow more free, more separate, their distinctive noble faces more distinctive, more noble, the higher they ascended into the light; those florid people resembling huddled fiends, becoming more like each other, more joined together, more as one fiend, the further down they hurled into the darkness.

See, I was led to believe that he had saved my life, but in fact all the time he intended to take it. We have to be what we are, not what the father tried to make us. The stubborn beast-flesh grows day by day back again.

There the bird was still, a long-winged dark furious shape, a little world of fierce despairs and dreams, and memories of floating high above Popocatepetl, mile on mile, to drop through the wilderness and alight, watching, in the timberline ghosts of ravaged mountain trees. With hurried quivering hands Yvonne began to unfasten the cage. The bird fluttered out of it and alighted at her feet, hesitated, took flight to the roof of El Petate, then abruptly flew off through the dusk, not to the nearest tree, as might have been supposed, but up—she was right, it knew it was free—up soaring, with a sudden cleaving of pinions into the deep dark blue pure sky above, in which at that moment appeared one star.

Before me was the glittering desolation of the sea, the awful solitude upon which I had already suffered so much; behind me the island, hushed under the dawn, its Beast People silent and unseen. Most days I keep the memory far in the back of my mind, a distant cloud. But there are times when the little cloud spreads, until it obscures the sky.

*

Naked beauty
peals
across deep buggy water:

nothing connects us,
I'm alone in this wild—

The woods will be wet. And occasionally a tree will come crashing down. And sometimes there will be a fog and that fog will freeze. Then your whole forest will become a crystal forest. The ice crystals on the twigs will grow like leaves. Then pretty soon you'll be seeing the jack-in-the-pulpits and then it will be spring...

and the ripples
fade, dispersing
on the dark unimpressed
stillness
as dreaming,
death retakes us.

“None escape,” said one of them, advancing and peering.
“None escape,” said I.

“Strange—“ the Consul said.
A hideous pariah dog followed them in.

Go away! There was something very suggestive of a dog in the cringing attitude of the creature. It retreated a little way, very like a dog being sent home, and stopped, looking at me imploringly with canine brown eyes. Go away. Do not come near me. May I not come near you? No; go away, I insisted, and snapped my whip. Then putting my whip in my teeth, I stooped for a stone, and with that threat drove the creature away.

*

Be Mexico.

Have you not passed through the river?

There's an attractive young Latino about the noir neighborhood lately, with a tight chest and sinewy legs which he models appealingly in grey, brown, or orange skinny jeans. He looks up from his small computer, untethered by headphones. Today he says hi and looks at me inquisitive, seeming calm and a little hungry, his open demeanor inticing and suspect. Hustler? I wonder. Or a creamy Puerto Rican boy with rain in his heart. And I think next time, next time...

Presently the ravine grew narrower for a space, and carelessly I stepped into the stream. I jumped out again pretty quickly, for the water was almost boiling. I noticed too there was a thin sulphurous scum drifting upon its coiling water. Almost immediately came a turn in the ravine, and the indistinct blue horizon. The nearer sea was flashing the sun from a myriad facets. I saw my death before me; but I was hot and panting, with the warm blood oozing out on my face and running pleasantly through my veins. I felt more than a touch of exultation too, at having distanced my pursuers. It was not in me then to go out and drown myself yet. I stared back the way I had come. I listened. Save for the hum of the gnats and the chirp of some small insects

that hopped among the thorns, the air was absolutely still. Then came the yelp of a dog, very faint, and a chattering and gibbering, the snap of a whip, and voices. They grew louder, then fainter again. The noise receded up the stream and faded away. For a while the chase was over.

*

Somebody appeared beside me once at the proverbial window,
and we sat mute like old men feeding pigeons. Uncanny accidents of duplication
dotted our view—the same red little bird eyes dimly looking back
at each from the register of the other's vision and language.
No obligatory drear like in family, nor understandings
that stand between friends. Not even the rawness of fisting
but this one impossible certainty:
of something mutually shared which made us a community
cosmically indefensible as anything real, until it too passed unremarked (*c'est la vie*).

*In Paradise roasted pigeons fly directly into your mouth.
There you enjoy yourself without being forced to.*

I would see one of the clumsy bovine-creatures who worked the launch treading heavily through the undergrowth, and find myself asking, trying hard to recall, how he differed from some really human yokel trudging home from his mechanical labours; or I would meet the Fox-bear woman's vulpine, shifty face, strangely human in its speculative cunning, and even imagine I had met it before in some city byway.

“Days filled with cheap and
tarnished moments succeed each other, restless and haunted nights
follow in bitter routine: the sun shines without brightness, and the
moon rises without light.”

“Call it a kind of communion,
surviving somehow on a mucked-up planet which God
knows none of us like very much. But it is our planet and
we live on it anyway.”

Grab your rainbow by the string
and hang from the sky!

(Hitler's wash
diverges
in a perplexing 'Y'.)

Somebody threw a dead dog after him down the ravine.

*

The Hyena-swine avoided me, and I was always on the alert for him. My inseparable Dog-man hated and dreaded him intensely. I really believe that was at the root of the brute's attachment

to me. It was soon evident to me that the former monster had tasted blood, and gone the way of the Leopard-man. He formed a lair somewhere in the forest, and became solitary. Once I tried to induce the Beast Folk to hunt him, but I lacked the authority to make them co-operate for one end. Again and again I tried to approach his den and come upon him unaware; but always he was too acute for me, and saw or winded me and got away. He too made every forest pathway dangerous to me and my ally with his lurking ambuscades. The Dog-man scarcely dared to leave my side. The little pink sloth-thing became shy and left me, to crawl back to its natural life once more among the tree-branches. Of course these creatures did not decline into such beasts as the reader has seen in zoological gardens,—into ordinary bears, wolves, tigers, oxen, swine, and apes. There was still something strange about each; in each had been blended this animal with that. One perhaps was ursine chiefly, another feline chiefly, another bovine chiefly; but each was tainted with other creatures,—a kind of generalised animalism appearing through the specific dispositions. And the dwindling shreds of the humanity still startled me every now and then,—a momentary recrudescence of speech perhaps, an unexpected dexterity of the fore-feet, a pitiful attempt to walk erect. I too must have undergone strange changes. My clothes hung about me as yellow rags, through whose rents showed the tanned skin. My hair grew long, and became matted together. I am told that even now my eyes have a strange brightness, a swift alertness of movement.

Yes, but

had he desired it, willed it, the very material world, illusory though that was, might have been a confederate, pointing the wise way. Here would have been no devolving through failing unreal voices and forms of dissolution that became more and more like one voice to a death more dead than death itself, but an infinite widening, an infinite evolving and extension of boundaries, in which the spirit was an entity, perfect and whole: ah, who knows why man, however beset his chance by lies, has been offered love? Yet it had to be faced, down, down he had gone, down till—it was not the bottom even now, he realized. It was not the end quite yet. It was as if his fall had been broken by a narrow ledge, a ledge from which he could neither climb up nor down, on which he lay bloody and half stunned, while far below him the abyss yawned, waiting.

(The mescalito death trip to Baja was part of this. After writing you I stumbled drunk down to the shore, laid myself out by some rocks and jerked off onto bluffs before ignorant stars.)

I don't know who I am
anymore—
I used to be someone, but now
I'm becoming a boring boy
who sits in the clouds
day-dreaming.

“Are you Elaine?”

...but no,

not quite, for there was still something there, in some way connected with it, or here, at his elbow, or behind his back, in front of him now; no, that too, whatever it was, was going: perhaps it had only been the coppery-tailed trogon stirring in the bushes, his “ambiguous bird” that was now departing quickly on creaking wings, like a pigeon once it was in flight, heading for its solitary home in the Canyon of the Wolves, away from the people with ideas.

I was lying in the shade of the enclosure wall, staring out to sea, when I was startled by something cold touching the skin of my heel, and starting round found the little pink sloth-creature blinking into my face. He had long since lost speech and active movement, and the lank hair of the little brute grew thicker every day and his stumpy claws more askew. He made a moaning noise when he saw he had attracted my attention, went a little way towards the bushes and looked back at me. At first I did not understand, but presently it occurred to me that he wished me to follow him; and this I did at last,—slowly, for the day was hot. When we reached the trees he clambered into them, for he could travel better among their swinging creepers than on the ground. And suddenly in a trampled space I came upon a ghastly group. My Saint-Bernard-creature lay on the ground, dead; and near his body crouched the Hyena-swine, gripping the quivering flesh with its misshapen claws, gnawing at it, and snarling with delight. As I approached, the monster lifted its glaring eyes to mine, its lips went trembling back from its red-stained teeth, and it growled menacingly. It was not afraid and not ashamed; the last vestige of the human taint had vanished.

*

Three

black vultures came tearing through the trees low over the roof with soft hoarse cries like the cries of love.

The boy reappeared like a ghost from a long forgotten dream. It was several blocks away and a whole season later, in a bodega at Alvarado and 8th. I put a deodorant stick on the checkout belt 'cause it's hot and I stink. He's right behind me in line, getting driving gloves. And I get the strange feeling I belong with them—him, the gloves—and not here, that together *we* are the hazy thing haunting this place, as a cloud emerges from clear sky. He smiles, not remembering me and the instances we'd locked eyes before (or not letting on), just hovering slightly out of focus with me in our trance. We talk of the heat beating down on us as we wait in line; meanwhile our stuff, abstract against the looping blacktop, advances in irregular spurts. I say I've seen him around and he tells me he lives with five dogs behind El Taurino, where the whole bull is eaten—about a block away from me and I realize the gloves are for dog walking, not golf. What a gorgeous fag I think as I fall a little bit in love.

“You are walking on the edge
of an abyss where I may not follow. I wake to a darkness in which
I must follow myself endlessly, hating the I who so eternally pursues
and confronts me. If we could rise from our misery, seek each other
once more, and find again the solace of each other's lips and eyes.
Who is to stand between? Who can prevent?”

I dreamed of swastika man (why?) weeks before I ran into him: first (outside the bodega where I'd met the boy) in a beige cap and shirtless, with two of the lucky crosses magic marked black over his nipples, kinda burlesque, and flappy fart notes blasting from his lips; then days later, wearing kind of a '80s boyfriend shirt with a big shiny pink one nail polished on the front pocket like a badge—"Oh! how lovely are you?" she cooed, her face painted robin's egg blue and rose. Smiling, I stepped off the curb.

—"You are one born to walk in the light. Plunging your head out of the white sky you flounder in an alien element. You think you are lost, but it is not so, for the spirits of light will help you and bear you up in spite of yourself and beyond all opposition you may offer. Do I sound mad? I sometimes think I am. Seize the immense potential strength you fight, which is within your body and ever so much more strongly within your soul, restore to me the sanity that left when you forgot me, when you sent me away, when you turned your footsteps towards a different path, a stranger route which you have trod apart..."

In the dream it was Fasching, the mad German Carnival or Mardi Gras that ends the day before Lent begins. The season in Munich, under the Weimar Republic and the inflation, had followed since the war a constantly rising curve, taking human depravity as ordinate. Chief reason being that no one in the city knew if he'd be alive or well come next Fasching. Any windfall—food, firewood, coal—was consumed as quickly as possible. Why hoard, why ration? Depression hung in the gray strata of clouds, looked at you out of faces waiting in bread queues and dehumanized by the bitter cold.

...for ah, how alike are the groans of love to those of the dying...

art: a chance encounter with a bum. Intimate abjection, detachment seemingly beyond you. A life made of nothing (it has no choice). Inscrutable animal you're suddenly too close to, in the way of—it brays its demands, which like the smell of shit invade and invest you:

What do I need? What do I need? *Tell me what I need!*

"I feel what you need when you're inside me."

Eye to eye with the difficult thing, the universe opens, releasing you:

—into a wild sky full of stars rising, and Venus and the golden moon at sunrise, and at noon blue mountains with snow and blue cold rough water—

It happens
every month in a succession of encounters between groups
of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care.

Look in any yearly Almanac, under “Disasters”—

and the vague cloud evaporated
in the tinder blue sky.

...had he not and with a vengeance
come to live among the Indians? The only trouble was one was very
much afraid these particular Indians might turn out to be people
with ideas too.

Then I would turn aside into some chapel,—and even there, such was my disturbance, it seemed that the preacher gibbered “Big Thinks,” even as the Ape-man had done; or into some library, and there the intent faces over the books seemed but patient creatures waiting for prey. Particularly nauseous were the blank, expressionless faces of people in trains and omnibuses; they seemed no more my fellow-creatures than dead bodies would be, so that I did not dare to travel unless I was assured of being alone. And even it seemed that I too was not a reasonable creature, but only an animal tormented with some strange disorder in its brain which sent it to wander alone, like a sheep stricken with gid.

“Salud: I hope you are not as sick as I am. You were
so perfectamente borracho last night I think you must have killèd
yourself with drinking. I think even to send a boy after you this
morning to knock your door, and find if drinking have not killèd
you already.”

I found a thousand difficulties. Sometimes I would give way to wild outbursts of rage, and hack and splinter some unlucky tree in my intolerable vexation. In the evening I started, and drove out to sea before a gentle wind from the southwest, slowly, steadily; and the island grew smaller and smaller, and the lank spire of smoke dwindled to a finer and finer line against the hot sunset. The ocean rose up around me, hiding that low, dark patch from my eyes. The daylight, the trailing glory of the sun, went streaming out of the sky, was drawn aside like some luminous curtain, and at last I looked into the blue gulf of immensity which the sunshine hides, and saw the floating hosts of the stars. The sea was silent, the sky was silent. I was alone with the night and silence.

Gilgamesh—a king, at Uruk.
He tormented his subjects.
He made them angry.
They cried out aloud:

Send us a companion for our king!
Spare us from his madness!

Enkidu, a wild man from the forest
entered the city.
They fought in the temple.
They fought in the streets.
Gilgamesh defeated Enkidu.
They became great friends—

Gilgamesh and Enkidu, at Uruk.

The new friends went out
into the desert together,
where the great bull of heaven
was killing men by the hundreds.

Enkidu caught the bull by the tail!
Gilgamesh struck him with his sword!
They were victorious.
But Enkidu fell to the ground
struck down by the gods
and Gilgamesh wept bitter tears, saying:

He who was my companion
through adventure and hardship
is gone forever.

They took the cadaver off to a ravine to toss it in.

*

And then came a day, a wonderful day, which I spent in ecstasy.

How continually, how startlingly, the landscape changed! Now the fields were full of stones: there was a row of dead trees. An abandoned plow, silhouetted against the sky, raised its arms to heaven in mute supplication; another planet, he reflected again, a strange planet where, if you looked a little further, beyond the Tres Marías, you would find every sort of landscape at once, the Cotswolds, Windermere, New Hampshire, the meadows of the Eure-et-Loire, even the grey dunes of Cheshire, even the Sahara, a planet upon which, in the twinkling of an eye, you could change climates, and, if you cared to think so, in the crossing of a highway, three civilizations; but beautiful, there was no denying its beauty, fatal or cleansing as it happened to be, the beauty of the Earthly Paradise itself.

Long lines of light sag
through the October window
and the woman with the swastika handbag
goes about her business.

Take me from me,
lead forever away,
purge domestic dreams
from my guts/blood/bones—

Suddenly the Consul thought he saw an enormous rooster flapping before him, clawing and crowing. He raised his hands and it merded on his face.

O MacArthur Park!
You smell like bandaids tonight.

The peacock wanders the alleyway
picking at shit; meanwhile
Valentino, Sheik of the skies, sails through the clouds
reading magazines.

“All right. But what goes on underground. Do we I
wonder come out the same people at the other end?”
“There are things under the city”—

“No se puede vivir sin amar”—

“Come, amigo, throw away your mind”—

It was extremely dark, this passage, after the blinding sunlight reflected from the sulphurous ground. Its walls grew steep, and approached each other. Blotches of green and crimson drifted across my eyes. My conductor stopped suddenly. Home! said he, and I stood in a floor of a chasm that was at first absolutely dark to me. I heard some strange noises, and thrust the knuckles of my left hand into my eyes. I became aware of a disagreeable odor, like that of a monkey's cage ill-cleaned. Beyond, the rock opened again upon a gradual slope of sunlit greenery, and on either hand the light smote down through narrow ways into the central gloom. The little pink sloth-creature was still blinking at me when my Ape-man reappeared at the aperture of the nearest of these dens, and beckoned me in. As he did so a slouching monster wriggled out of one of the places, further up this strange street, and stood up in featureless silhouette against the bright green beyond, staring at me. I hesitated, having half a mind to bolt the way I had come; and then, determined to go through with the adventure, I gripped my nailed stick about the middle and crawled into the little evil-smelling lean-to after my conductor.

...they are
beautiful and terrifying, these shadows of cars that sweep down
fences, and sweep zebra-like across the grass path in the avenue
of dark oaks under the moon: a single shadow, like an umbrella on
rails, travelling down a picket fence; portents of doom, of the heart
failing... Gone. Eaten up in reverse by night. And the moon
gone.

A deeper, sadder place—
it might as well be here.

