

FICTION

The "part" of me which must succeed must never get lost, but the "part" of me which needs to live must be free to wander without fear of wandering.

I found that line in an old novel of mine I looked to today to respond to my bitterly Jesuit-trained friend Eugene in response to poems he sent me; my response is meant to illuminate the richness of our seminar yesterday and at the same time the decades-ongoing banter he and I swim in, into which you also are welcome to wade (...and this is not writing, but wandering, which, as I said, I must). What the Jesuits taught you and Eugene indeed is to read (and other friends of mine, some still tormented). You Catholics are almost Jewish with meaning, almost Platonic with palimpsests and palindromes, cabalistically crusted with gematriac gems. We all hate tedious messages such as this, but things could be worse--I might send you all the notes my mother sends to me, or I might read this novel to you over the telephone, charges reversed. Anyhow, if I find your address I'll send you this mess, and good luck to you. Had you never learned to read you might just hunt mushrooms and catch fish and never worry with Herakleitos.

It is a dive. The Devil's Den is bleak and not at all colorful. The red and blue bulbs cast so little light they leave the eye straining to discern forms dark and colorless. Oh, you can make out everything, but no detail or inherent hue is manifest. It is as if your eyes felt things blindly in the dark, like radar outlining the somethings, where they are, but not at all like it would be to see a streaking screaming silver fighter plane spinning and careening, laying out its spider-web fiber staid and stable in the sky as the plane itself is mercurialness, this cloudy trail a flag, a battle banner strong but flexible in the wind left behind by its airplane-lover in his wake so that even were the plane to crash this flag would remain waving like a delicate white woman with a white lace handkerchief, would still stand on the platform loyal when the train had long gone from sight--but here is none of the shape and color and detail and character which would be in the white sky of bright day--just blips, the scantiest pattern only, by which a submarine carefully will navigate the profoundest blackest depths perilous and oppressive.
...She is white, all white. She is long and pale, her dress is white eyelet taffeta puffed at he shoulders and dipped at the breast (and her breasts are pale as marshmallows as I see and almost smell the warm dry softness of their sugar powder surface when she dips to pick up her carefully dropped handkerchief), her hair is silver white, and in her hand she holds the white lace handkerchief which sketches vapor trails in the dark as she freely gesticulates pointing to herself, opening her arms away into the distant sky, and again pointing to herself.

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ONE ON ONE: OF ALL THAT IS

NATHAN POLLACK



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The spiritual autobiography of Kenneth Grahame

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