

ALL-NIGHT DINER

BY JACK FLAVIN

THE SANATORIUM, LE GRAU-DU-ROI

BY DAVID CHESHIRE

The white beds placed out, neatly, in the sun;
the delicate, antiseptic scrape of the surf
over the beach, the taut shell. I had come
(not as a patient, I thought) with enough
health to see me through. But watching,
each day, the dazzling, washed figures
round a bed like gardeners plotting
some vegetable cure for their sick as
I walked, not spotlessly, over their sand,
I saw why they came here, a place
unplagued by uncertainties. This land,
held for the sea to be by, and to face
the sun, has nowhere else to go,
no hill to clamber and squint from and
no inland jagged motions but one slow
coil of waves in clocks of sand.

Less decorously, nearby, some trippers laze,
unhealing, miserable, secure,
and oil a leathery arm or two, or gaze
blankly at that scintillating shore.
None stroll this far. My traveling eye, though, sees
that those trust the white amplitude of years
to swell recovery into a cure, while these
bodies on vacation roll each half hour, stare
and squirm to ease their burning thighs,
yet coax no bright events out of the sea,
ignoring the sick men with sun-filled eyes
who quietly, grain by grain, build ecstasy,
and in me too, stale pools of sickness, sipped
and diagnosed at last, come clean, break free —
I stand and watch my quick, dead footprints sift,
unhurried as an hourglass, to the sea.

I'm going to teach my owl to sing in Presbyterian.
I think it's fine — it's perfectly all right
the way he hoos the country kids to sleep.
What really bothers me is how he spends his nights.
Am I to go on harboring
a criminal, a dunce, a common thief?
No, no! I'm not a keeper of assassins.
I'll simply teach the bird to sing.
The lessons must begin at once.

THE STATUE OF EVE

BY MICHAEL WOLFE

Slim as a rib, out of the public grass,
In this dying October garden
Where both I and my brother pass,
She begs our pardon

Fearing what parents fear when children meet,
The Elderly Guilty who sense
That disapproval of defeat
And of self-defense

Which is the sole response a child may give
To his inheritance,
The world his parents make and give,
Small recompense

Indeed, for that forbidden Spring-time garden
Each child is cheated of;
An outstretched arm, she begs our pardon
We who now move

In private pattern through her timeless chapel
And mark our time, until
We pluck the dappled death-worn apple
That eats the will.

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