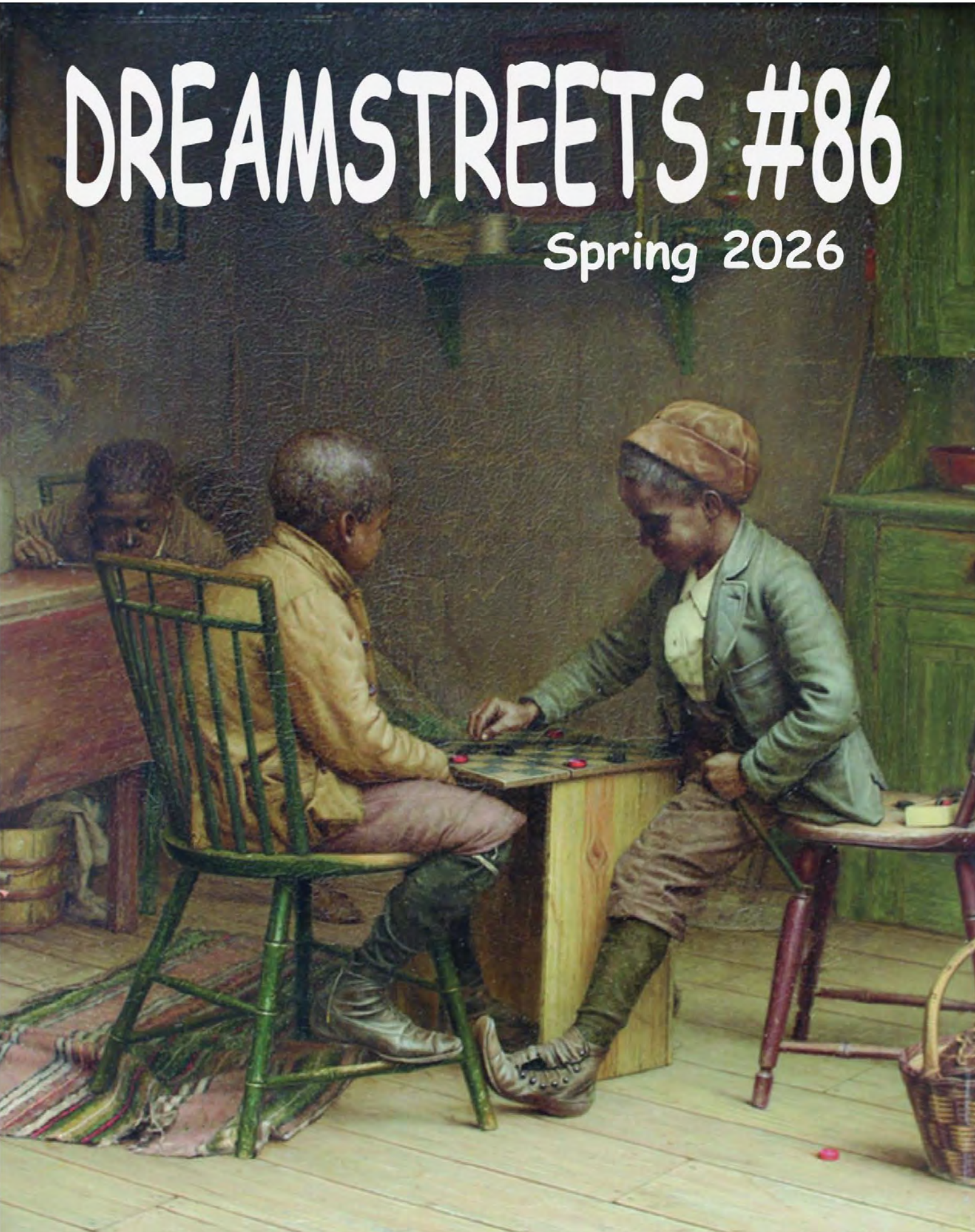


# DREAMSTREETS #86

Spring 2026

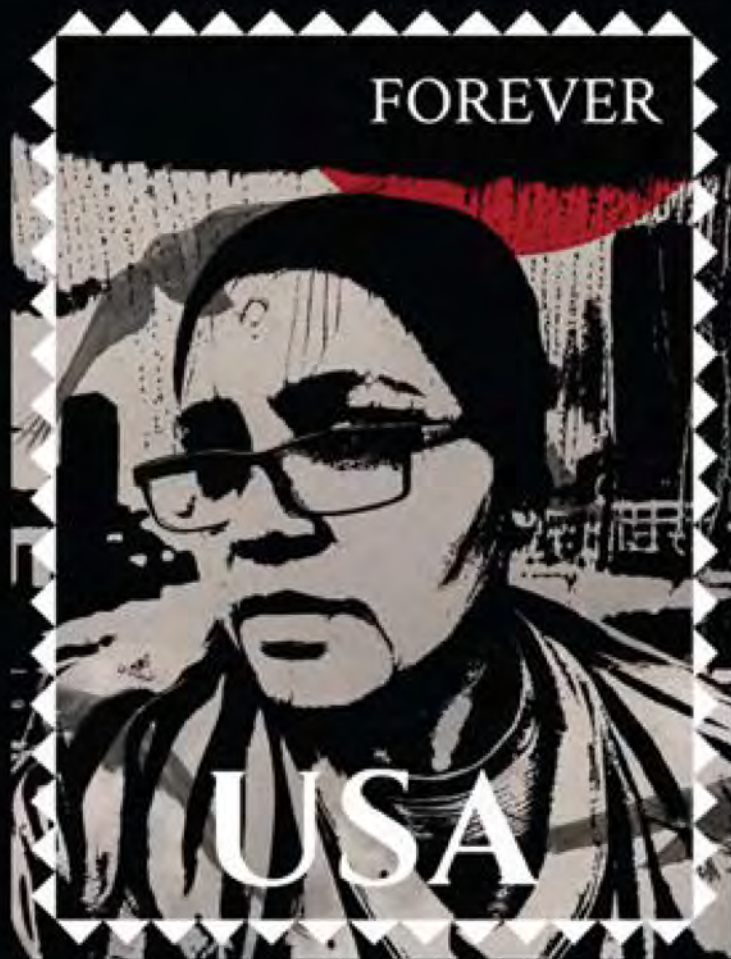


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# Dreamstreets #86

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on page 19 by Edward Loper, Jr., and on page 42 by Tom Watkins.

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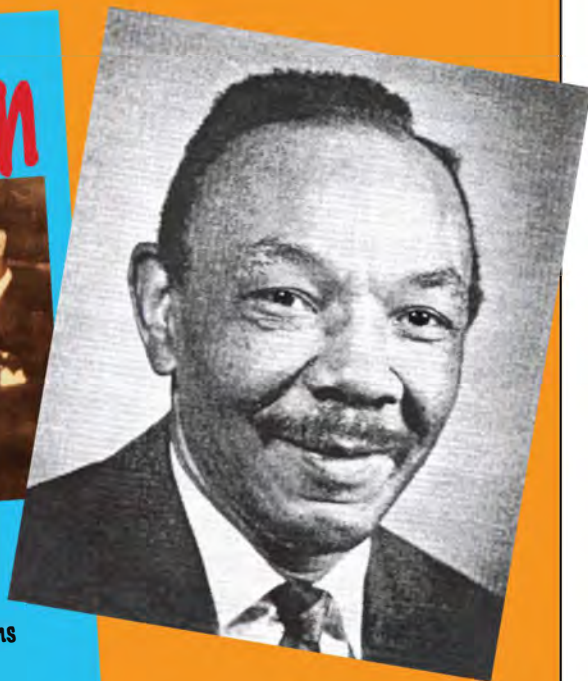


# Boysie's Horn



The History of Jazz in Wilmington  
in the 20th Century  
**Steven Leech**  
with Afterword by Larry Williams

Fully Illustrated  
and Indexed



*Boysie's Horn: The History of Jazz in Wilmington in the 20th Century*, by radio host and journalist Steven Leech, is a well-indexed and enlightening social history of how a small city like Wilmington, Delaware, spawned jazz greats like trumpet legend Clifford Brown, vibraphonist Lem Winchester, and vocalist Betty Roché.

 **BROKEN TURTLE BOOKS** 

# From the Poetry Editor

Our spring issue begins with our estimable Executive Editor, Steven Leech, tooting our horn in “Dreamstreets is History” and providing historical context for our fiftieth year of publication.

Steven noted to me that we should be touting contemporary authors of fiction better, so you will find reviews of works by two of our state’s top novelists, JM Reinbold and Pat Valdata, by Steven Leech and yours truly, respectively.

In “Wert, Crash, and Libby,” Steven Leech spills tea on Delaware brothers Charles and Peyton (Crash) Wertenbaker with a curious letter from one of them to torch singer Libby Holman.

Our first poetic selections are by long-time 2<sup>nd</sup> *Saturday Poets* veteran Lorraine McMillan, who, in “My Mirror,” dwells on age, although she remains a kid to us. In “My Poem from Me Today,” McMillan opines on her lack of filters.

Steven Leech then revives a story from his hoax-y author Tux Munce, penning in this case “Bloodfield Antics,” an account of the putative author’s encounter with F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Poetry from the pen of Ray Greenblatt reminisces in “For Bill” and “Dancing.”

Thanks to Steven Leech’s scholarship, we publish a remarkable period piece called “Delaware Coon,” by J. Saunders Redding, brother of the famed civil rights attorney Louis L. Redding.

The late Lonnie T. Edwards is featured in two works: first, a review by poet and playwright Michael (Mafundi) Kennard of Edwards’s novel *Stars of the Jolt Parade*; and second, an excerpt from the novel itself, a gritty depiction of the early crack epidemic. Steve and I performed in Mafundi’s play *No Struggle, No Progress* in the early 1980’s.

Light versifier Ken Segal cracks us up with his imposter syndrome in “Fake.”

Beat poet Phil Linz uses his everyday habits to subtly express the vicissitudes of family dysfunction and loss, as well as personal resilience in “January.”

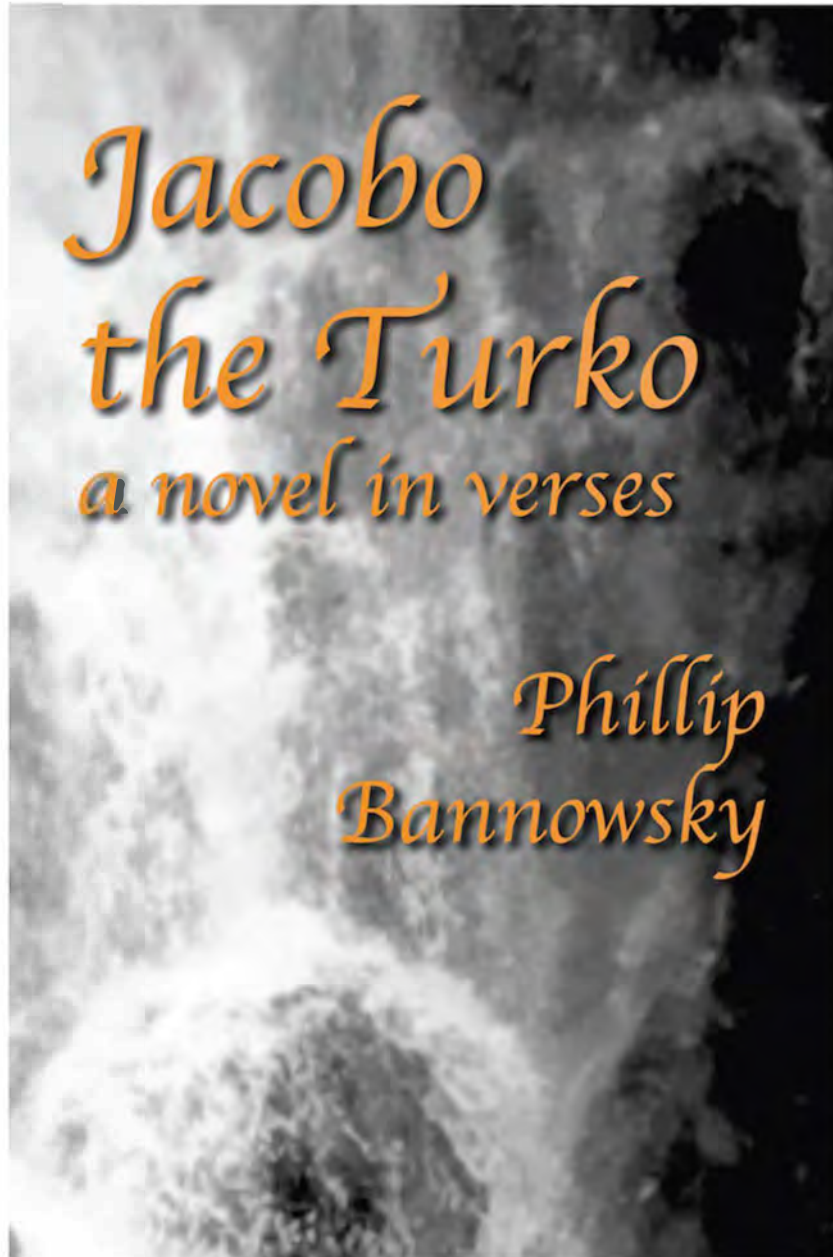
Newcomer to *Dreamstreets* Michael Roque offers us a poetic reminiscence about a message in a bottle—or is it?

Finally, broken-hearted by the current Israeli onslaught in Lebanon (among other peoples), I include an excerpt from my *Jacobo the Turko: a novel in verses* called “July 2006: Hamoudi and Jacobo Escape Beirut.” I had hoped that *Jacobo* might power the one critical butterfly-flutter to tip the fascist juggernaut down the dustbin of history, yielding a more than trivial chance that peace, love, and human solidarity might prevail. Unfortunately, that 2006 war history is repeating itself now as my friends in Lebanon, where I once taught, tell me that now they are waiting to die.

**-Phillip Bannowsky**

"linguistic dexterity, and exceptional musicality. . . . a wild gumbo of characters and adventures, politics and class, and the absurdities and cruelties of modern life"

—Jim Daniels, author of *Birth Marks and Gun/Shy*



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## Celebrating Delaware's Poets

**The Delaware Poets Almanac (DPA)**, in partnership with the City of Wilmington in support of **Wilmington Celebrates DE250**, will host a coordinated series of public programs, performances, exhibitions, and community gatherings throughout 2026, aligned with the statewide DE250 initiative. This effort will uplift the history, culture, and enduring civic spirit of Wilmington and the First State.

**Our mission**, in recognition of the nation's semiquincentennial in 2026, is to highlight and preserve the historic and contemporary voices of Delaware poets from across the state. The Delaware Poets Almanac seeks to honor the First State's literary heritage by uplifting poets from all communities and creating a lasting record of Delaware's poetic culture for future generations.

Accordingly, we are planning both a 50-poet chapbook, focusing on historical poets and Delaware Poets Laureate, and later a 250-poem volume reflecting the diversity of Delaware's poets in our Semiquincentennial year.

To follow the events and opportunities associated with DPA, access our website at

**[www.thedelawarepoetsalmanac.org](http://www.thedelawarepoetsalmanac.org)**

# Dreamstreets is History

*Steven Leech*

By now we should know that the Dreamstreets project has been around, with a few noted hiatuses, since 1977. It was a generational shift in Delaware's literary presence. E Jean Lanyon had just been appointed Delaware Poet Laureate replacing David Hudson who represented the previous generation, and its final publication: *A Bicentennial Salute, Delaware Poets 1940 - 1976*.

To have survived for nearly 50 years is enough to realize the history happening around you, and with the 2015 *DREAMSTREETS, Art in Wilmington 1970-1990* exhibit at the Delaware Art Museum, we reached another affirmation of our place in Delaware cultural history. Nearly every literary artist, poets and prose writers since the 1960s, has had some connection with *Dreamstreets*. We've also attempted to rediscover the vast number of literary artists who preceded us. Most recently the Delaware Historical Society has accepted nearly all copies of *Dreamstreets* that have survived. A more complete archive is possessed by the University of Delaware Morris Library.

Establishing a historic record put into place a greater historic perspective. *Dreamstreets* continues the recorded legacy of the previous generation, the one nurtured by Hudson, Jeannette Slocomb Edwards and others. Their major contribution was to establish an official State Poet Laureate. They were also responsible for marking the gravesite, at Saints Andrew and Matthew Episcopal Church at 8th & Shipley Streets in Wilmington, of Delaware's first literary figure, John Lofland. They also placed a plaque at the Wilmington home of poet James Whaler, but the owner removed it.

Lofland (1798-1849) was Delaware's first literary figure with a national reputation. Another was Robert Montgomery Bird (1806-1854), Delaware's first novelist, and among America's earliest. Both interacted with Edgar Allan Poe, who held some sway over the local literary environment.

After the Civil War our major Delaware literary figures were George Alfred Townsend (1841-1914) and Marian C. L. Reeves (1854 - 1898). Both wrote about the Civil War in their novels, and between the two of them wrote nearly a dozen novels. Mark Twain shared some influences with Townsend. The two knew each other, and Twain briefly cited Bird's novel *Nick of the Woods* in *Life on the Mississippi*, as well as getting a good belly laugh from some of Townsend's shorter fiction.

Upton Sinclair begins the 20th century for Delaware's literary presence,

living and working in Arden during the century's second decade. Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Sanford Davis brought literary aspirations to Wilmington's Black community. Henry Seidel Canby and Christopher Ward fostered a new generation of Delaware novelists and poets that included Anne and Dillwyn Parrish. John Biggs, beside writing two masterful novels, introduced F. Scott Fitzgerald to the local literary scene. James Whaler became Delaware's most successful poet in the 20th century. And Charles and Peyton Wertenbaker stirred the pot of controversy and innovations in their literary works. This time the generational literary change was brought on by the Great Depression and World War II, which brings *us* around to the post war literary efforts that hobbled out of those traumatic events.

We, who've brought you *Dreamstreets*, in all its forms, are now senior citizens. Three of us are in our 80s, and the youngest of us just turned 65. *Dreamstreets* has turned fifty, but we'll keep on going. We've realized that literature is ageless. We've realized that it's one way to secure our immortality in the continuing effort that helps define our community for a better future.

## About The Cover

This issue's front cover is from Delaware artist Jefferson David Chalfant (1856 – 1931). In the early 20th century he lived and worked from his home and studio in Richardson Park. More about Chalfant can be found in *Dreamstreet* #67.

## My Gift to Our Readers

Below is a link to the 5th and final edition to *Valdemar's Corpse*, the most comprehensive survey of literature from Delawareans. I haven't the resources to self publish this final edition, so I'm giving it away. It's basically text without illustrations. I've sent successive editions to the University of Delaware Press, and a few other university presses nearby. Some nice words from some, but less than crickets from the University of Delaware Press. The conclusions made in the late 40s by University of Delaware English Professor Augustus Able that the subject is not worth consideration holds sway, which means that I've wasted my time.

**<https://tinyurl.com/Valdemars-Corps>**

# JM Reinbold

## *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLACK PHARAOH*

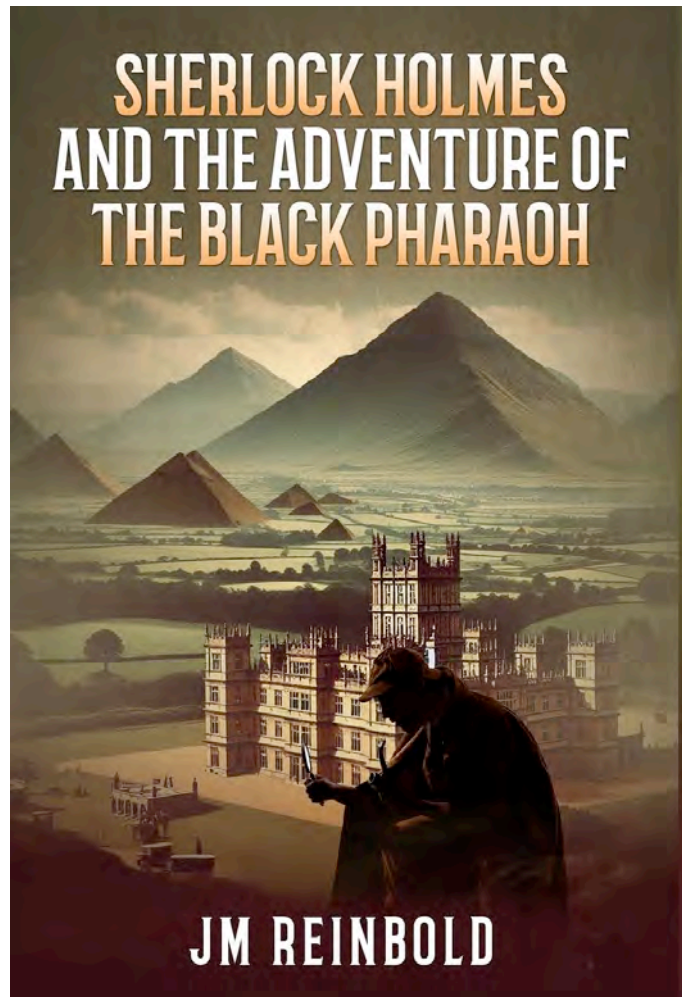
MX Publishing (2025), 250 pages, \$28.95

Reviewed by Steven Leech

A long time ago I read Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and though I enjoyed his only Sherlock Holmes novel, I was disappointed because there had been a rational explanation behind what was portrayed as a spectral being.

My only other exposure to Sherlock Holmes had been those old movies with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce playing Holmes and Watson that played on late-night television back in the 1970s. That's the image of Holmes and Watson that stuck with me while reading JM Reinbold's recent novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Black Pharaoh*.

Sherlock Holmes continues to fascinate, if his popularity among fans and academia is any indication. Holmes is a good candidate upon whom to hang one's literary aspirations, as well as to take some legitimate literary liberties. Reinbold



has done just that.

In her novel we get the classic Holmes and Watson in their pursuit of missing Robert Henry, the Fifth Earl of Convarran, on behalf of Lord Silverpin and Lady Vivienne Henry. For Sherlock Holmes fans, the plot advances in the tried-and-true manner of other Holmes adventures, that is, until Holmes has an encounter with his brother Mycroft Holmes for his input into the case.

To paraphrase novelist Mickey Spillane on plot in detective fiction, the plumbing is effective in *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Black Pharaoh*. Yet, Holmes's penchant for matter-of-fact deduction turns to subject matter to which Sherlock must consider, matters of the occult and even extraterrestrials. Holmes adjusts well, thanks largely to his brother Mycroft's input, bringing a resolution not only to finding the missing Earl, but again encountering his archrival Moriarity.

For this reviewer, who, like many, knows about Sherlock Holmes mostly through his popular portrayal in movies and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, it's nice to see the sleuth dealing with occurrences outside his comfort zone and with the confidence and acumen we'd expect from the venerable Sherlock Holmes.



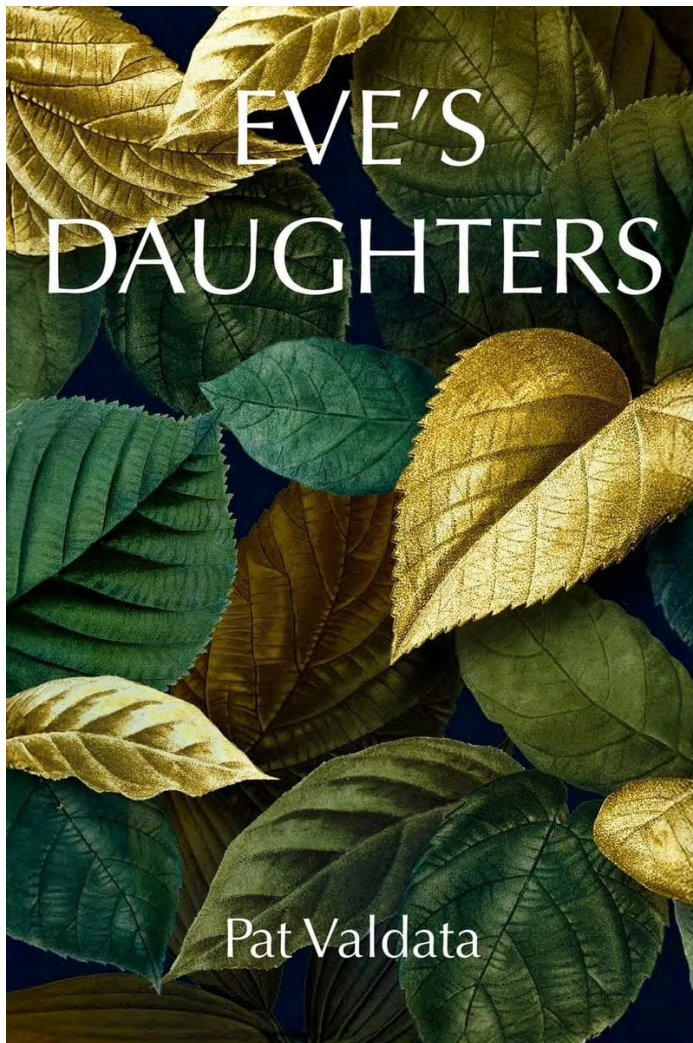
**Jonathan Bragdon**

# Pat Valdata

## *Eve's Daughters*

Salisbury, Maryland, Secant Publishing  
(2020), 241 pages, \$18

Reviewed by Phillip Bannowsky



From separate eras, two women and their families navigate the encroachment of patriarchy on the primordial order.

Book One of Valdata's novel is set in Europe's early copper age. It opens among ill omens as **Ana**, an apprentice priestess, prepares for the Sowing Festival. There is no war, no sexual violence, or sexual guilt in her Edenic agricultural, copper-hammering clan. Accordingly, couples and thruples are seen hooking up on their way to the bushes to promote fertility.

In contrast is the culture of Ana's partner **Dumuz**, who wanders into Ana's environs riding a pony, something alien to Ana's people. His culture is patriarchal and warlike. Reading Frederick Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private*

*Property and the State*, riding ponies can be seen as a technology that yields the material surplus that motivates patriarchal power and its ideological hegemony.

The two peoples blend at the level of Ana and Dumuz, but culture to culture, one is bent on annihilating the other.

Other principles are **Arina**, Ana's kid sister, a vulnerable and "simple" girl, and the gamey sister Shela, who chooses Dumuz for her night's lover at the next Sowing Festival, provoking a distressing jealousy in Ana. Clan matriarch and Ana's grandmother **Mari** consols her self-doubting protégé.

Set in 1961, Book Two follows the peripatetic career of **Lucy**, helpmeet and bedmate to an evangelical preacher and manager of **The Orchard, Goddard**.

Shocked when Goddard kills a snake—a symbol of feminine energy—Lucy flees and begins her Odyssey working at a New York Automat and giving birth to her and Goddard's daughter **Lily** (later **Edie**). Staying ahead of Goddard, Ana sojourns at the Jersey Shore, Florida, the deep south, New Mexico, and finally a Vancouver commune called **The Grove**—a sort of reconstruction of Ana's clan, except it's all women. Clearly, it's a long time since pony clans installed their near-universal sway. And speaking of pony clans, Goddard builds a misogynistic ministry.

A parallel to the romance of Ana and Dumuz arises in the marriage of Edie with **Alan**, Goddard's adopted son. Generally, what happens in Book One prefigures Book Two, and, as we shall see and as Marx famously averred, "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

Of course, the story of matriarchal glory may be less type than hype or even archetype—that is, an image variously located in the soul, the collective unconscious, or myth. The braided river of humanity that flowed out of Africa might have settled into various social hierarchies based more on geography, pathology, or extreme scarcity than on some stage of technology.

Nevertheless, *Eve's Daughters* leaves us with a question: with macho fascism consolidating its hegemony today, what is to be done? Retreat into liberated Bantustans like The Grove, ever threatened with extermination? Re-educate the world through DEI? Or overthrow the capitalist order, that is, the material condition of gender and class ideology?

Overall, *Eve's Daughters* is an engrossing, often moving, and provocative intervention in today's gender politics.

# Wert, Crash, and Libby in 1931

*Steven Leech*

I waited until now to read Charles Wertenbaker's third novel, *Before They Were Men* (Liveright 1931). Now I know why, and the catalyst is a letter written in 1931, but never sent, by either Charles or his younger brother Peyton.

Peyton Wertenbaker was born in Wilmington in 1907 and went to school at Wilmington's Friends School, then located near 4th and West Streets. Charles was born in Virginia in 1901, but both grew up in Wilmington. Charles spent only his grade school years at Friends, going to high school at Episcopal High School in Arlington, Virginia, a locale that's similar to the one depicted in *Before They Were Men*.



*Charles Wertenbaker, on the left, from the late 1920s, Libby Holman in the center, and on the right, the best available picture of Peyton Wertenbaker, from a painting by Henrietta Hoopes, who was Charles' wife at the time. They had married in 1926.*

That letter was written to Libby Holman who was a famous, some say notorious, torch singer from the late 20s through the 1930s, and 1931 was a big year for her.

Peyton, who had also been writing science fiction stories for *Amazing Stories* magazine since 1926, published his final science fiction story, "Elaine's Tomb." In 1931.

Charles and Peyton, in their early work, often reflected one another, with Charles the first to be inspired by his younger brother's exploits. In Charles's first novel, *Boojum!*

(Boni & Liveright, 1928), he admits that the behavior of the protagonist, Stuart Breckinridge, cannot be attributed to a single person. He also dedicates the novel to "Crash," which was Peyton's nickname.

In the 1929 story "Fraternally Yours," last published in *Dreamstreets* #50 in 2006, Charles depicts encounters between brothers, one of whom is similar to Crash. It was not until Peyton's first novel, *Black Cabin* (Little Brown, 1933), that he echoed many of the same themes and scenarios as Charles's *Boojum!* It's almost like Peyton's side of the same story with different names.

The relationship between Charles and Peyton is very curious. Peyton was a strange man, and kind of served as a muse for Charles. Barely out of high school, he wrote and published science fiction until 1931. A story he wrote while in high school, entitled "The Codrington Murder" and published in Friends School literary magazine *Whittiers' Miscellany*, was repub-



*Wilmington's Friends School when it was located in the vicinity of 4th & West Streets. Both Charles and Peyton Wertenbaker went to elementary school at Friends, but only Peyton went to high school there. Charles went to Episcopal High School in Arlington, Virginia. Peyton Wertenbaker's earliest literary work was published in the Friends School literary magazine, Whittier's Miscellany.*

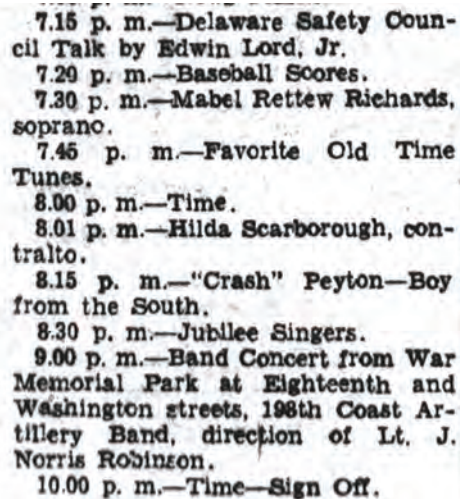
lished in the latest edition of *Valdemar's Corpse*. After that he switched to writing novels, the first being *Black Cabin*, published in 1933.

Around the same time, Peyton had a 15-minute radio show in Wilmington singing and playing the guitar, much like the brother in Charles's story "Fraternally Yours." He used the name "Crash Peyton." He also did unexplainable things like hop trains, as the tramps and hobos did during those years, and disappearing for extended periods, coming back much the worse for wear. These exploits by Peyton are described in Charles's 4th novel *To My Father* (Farrar & Rinehart, 1936).

As far as the connection among the three, Wert, Crash and Libby, one can only speculate, and there are some things that inform speculation.

In the late 1920s, thanks largely to F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's residency near Wilmington, and to a lesser extent to Pulitzer Prize novelist J. P. Marquand, who was born in Wilmington, there were two gathering places where, on occasion, literary people would hobnob with local artists and other local culturally minded folk. Those two places were Ellerslie, where the Fitzgeralds lived. The other was Rockwood, where J. P. Marquand hung out when he was in town, and where John Biggs, Fitzgerald's roommate and collaborator at Princeton where they were students, reportedly wrote his own novels.

One of the local personalities who may very well have attended these gatherings was Louisa Carpenter, a duPont inner family member, who was an adventurous woman, an aviatrix, an equestrian, and a very close friend of Libby Holman. It's easy to conclude that gatherings at these two aforementioned places may have been the setting for encounters with the Wertenbaker brothers, mainly because both



7.15 p. m.—Delaware Safety Council Talk by Edwin Lord, Jr.  
7.29 p. m.—Baseball Scores.  
7.30 p. m.—Mabel Rettew Richards, soprano.  
7.45 p. m.—Favorite Old Time Tunes.  
8.00 p. m.—Time.  
8.01 p. m.—Hilda Scarborough, contralto.  
8.15 p. m.—"Crash" Peyton—Boy from the South.  
8.30 p. m.—Jubilee Singers.  
9.00 p. m.—Band Concert from War Memorial Park at Eighteenth and Washington streets, 198th Coast Artillery Band, direction of Lt. J. Norris Robinson.  
10.00 p. m.—Time—Sign Off.

*From The Wilmington Evening Journal radio listing in August 1931. At 8:15 Peyton Wertenbaker's 15 minute show on Wilmington's radio station WILM.*

were published authors who would've at least nibbled along the edges of such a heady social scene.

Peyton Wertenbaker had a local radio show. He was Wilmington's answer to Bing Crosby. One can imagine the common ground he may have shared with torch singer Libby Holman. Libby was reportedly attracted to adventurous young men like Crash Peyton. She would soon marry a man younger than herself, who was also an aviator from the wealthy R. J. Reynolds family, from the Tobacco Company, and a man found dead with a gunshot wound at the couples' home in North Carolina only months after they were married. At first, Libby was suspected of murdering her husband, but a lack of pertinent evidence led to a cause of suicide instead.

The Wertenbaker letter, dated July 1931, is situated between the Wertenbakers' evident encounter with Libby Holman and her ill-fated marriage to R. J. Reynolds heir Smith Reynolds.

After the death of her husband, Libby went to live with Louisa Carpenter in Delaware, pregnant with her only son. After that, Libby's professional career waned until she reinvented herself by restarting a recording career with musician Josh White in the 1940s, and becoming a public figure

27 July 1931.

Dear Libby

Please I beg a typewriter I beg on bended knees for never anywhere has been such lousy flowing of the pen or pencil on clean paper

The novel keeps me from Baltimore, that and the heat, that and that and the fact that I'm as always broke

The copying of the novel over and over with other revisions makes hard work and day after day night after night I work and slave and that's why I can't go to Baltimore because it must be finished before the millennium

And you must see that Baltimore is too far away for me to go having no money

Were I the Wert of old with black couches pillows ~~XXXXXXXX~~ couchant on a field d'or and Ed Brooke invariably absent I could say come to me, come to the city in which I rest and stay while the followers grow weary on your trail while the hounds bay and bay in vain against the moon

But I being monastic in my father's cell, there being no ladies here, and all this place gummier than ten seasons on the Isle of Wight, I see no comfort in the days to come

Therefore be happy while the roses drip to earth; be cool in the shadow of Henry Mencken; be full of reverie where the waters burst on narrow shore

Remember Wert as one who in the words of cesare being have to having been a free soul but now as one who is being in bondage to the little helpless crying of the book to be rocked on the knee and carried with lullabies across the darkness of many nights

Give out some interview from week to week or month to month, some token of the things which having been and having been about to be sooner or late, and think of your immortal soul

And I shall see you when the curtains shift and flash setting a new scene whereon we are to meet

If this seems unintelligible, remember only that the novel is written in the purest of God's classical English, and that we writer fellows must have our vacation from the inflexibility of so many sentences; therefore that Gertrude Stein, born ~~in~~ so to say with the silver spoon of literary currency in her facile mouth and hence no need to work but only languish in the quick sun of one long vacation

crash. wert.

MSS 0098, F0182, Wertenbaker letter to Libby [Holman?], Special Collections, U. of Delaware Library, Newark, DE

in the burgeoning Civil Rights movement in the 1950s.

About the letter itself, beyond the speculation proffered here, there are few direct references to circumstance except for possibly one. Charles' daughter Timberlake Wertenbaker, after shown the letter remarked, "I'd say either Pop was very drunk, which would be normal at the time, or it was written by Crash."

It should also be noted, for what it's worth, Charles had married the Wilmington artist, Henrietta Hoopes in 1926, and was still married to her in 1931.

Officially, the letter is attributed to Charles. That's easy to do, mainly because Peyton tended to obscure his true identity by assuming multiple ones over the course of his career. He published his science fiction stories under the byline of "G. Peyton Wertenbaker," his singer's name of "Crash Peyton," and his later two novels using the name, "Green Peyton." It's understandable that an archivist may not have been able to keep up. Having read the entire body of major works by both brothers, the style of writing initially reminded me of Peyton's style. However, don't let Charles's more journalistic style of writing deceive you. When a bit "tight," Charles could wax hyperbolic, as Timberlake suggests.

The year of 1931 is the common denominator here. The Great Depression was deepening in spite of the recent construction of the Empire State Building. The letter writer refers to a novel and being busy working day and night writing revisions, perhaps to demonstrate the final throes of publication of *Before They Were Men*, published that same year. Further along, the writer refers to "Wert," and further down to "we writer fellows," which could also refer to a more general population of novelists, or to just the two of them.

*Before They Were Men* is a story of two boys, not related but bosom buddies, who are attending a boys' boarding school just outside of Washington, D. C., at the onset of World War I. It's a school reminiscent of Episcopal High School that Charles attended, though Peyton finished his high school education at Friends School in Wilmington. The story is about two boys, "Sleepy" O'Neill, the narrator, and "Shadow" Carter. All the boys have nick-

names at Blackford Academy. In a kind of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer series of romps, playing tricks on classmates, as well as elders, and stealing “dates” with visiting girls, the two may remind you of some of Peyton’s antics described in *Boojum!* and *To My Father*.

While Libby was dealing with the aftermath of Reynolds’ death at Louisa Carpenter’s house in Delaware, and managing her pregnancy with her son, who would be born January 1933, the Wertenbaker brothers would move to New York City after the death of their father, the Wilmington obstetrician Dr. William Wertenbaker, in March 1932. Their mother, Imogene Wertenbaker had died in 1922. Dr Wertenbakers’ practice was located in the family home on Delaware Avenue between Adams and Jackson Streets, where I-95 is now. Of course, their house is long gone.



**Jonathan Bragdon**

# *Lorraine MacMillan*

## **MY MIRROR**

Somedays I see this lady  
and then very quickly the shades  
around her shift  
memories come and go  
and drift.  
Sometimes the mirror is not clear  
I have to look deeper  
this mirror has shown my past  
as time seems to go by so fast  
I sometimes see a smile  
other times I see tears  
this mirror has followed me around for years  
sometimes I can not even look at that lady  
she looks confused sometimes and I try to  
understand the whole story of her  
this lady used to be younger  
now, older each day  
the mirror shows it all  
as for help she reaches out beyond  
and she still looks kind of sad in her eyes

# My Poem from Me Today

In a twisted kind of way, I really have trouble saying things I want to say!!

What will people think? Would they say, "Did you have too much to drink?"

Should I stay quiet and not start some kind of riot.

Whatever I say, they just will not buy it.

This and that along the day kind of made me mad

but, here I am keeping my mouth shut.

If I try to speak up I might get cut up by someone's tongue

I hope not, really. Am I just being silly?

Nobody really knows what is in my busy brain.

I will say things do twist and turn

as I have so much to learn.

I just say, "Go ahead, speak up, it is your turn!!!

I might say something off the wall about

something I saw

not like I will break some kind of law.

So, hello and now goodbye.

Yep, you know it, I am a bit shy.

*The following is a story from The Secret Life of Tux Munce. In this story, Tux visits a speakeasy in a location in Wilmington called "Bloodfield." In it he meets Herbert Fricke, a character from Wilmington author Christopher Ward's novel One Little Man, who rambles on about some of the events and people he'd encountered, also from Ward's novel. Fricke's reverie is interrupted when F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald pay a visit.*

— Steven Leech

## Bloodfield Antics by Tux Munce

Every night is Halloween down in Bloodfield. Down that hill below 2d Street, in an alley off Washington Street just before you get to Front Street, is Dinky's speakeasy. There isn't a sign of course, but Dinky runs the place. It's a pretty nice place, too. It's small and has a piano and room enough for an extra instrument or two. Dinky doesn't like a big fuss in his place. It's just a place to listen to a little quiet music if anyone's in the mood to play some, and to quietly tie one on. Every now and then, someone's got some hop, and when he can, he keeps a heap of wacky dust in a bowl on the bar. The cops don't cause a bother because word has it there are more important places to go than down in Bloodfield if you want to stay healthy. I met a white man in there one night.

Dinky doesn't discriminate about his customers. I'd seen this one particular white customer a few times before. He was dressed plainly, almost as if he were wearing a uniform. His clothes seemed unimaginative and drab. He seemed about 50 years old or so. He seemed very thoughtful to me, but kept to himself as he sipped his whiskey. Here, I thought to myself, is a man with a story to tell.

On this one night, hopped up with a kick in the pants courage from a whiff of wacky dust, I started up a conversation. He introduced himself as Paul Herbert Fricke. It didn't take long to tell he was drinking away some bitterness.

"I prefer Paul," he replied when I asked him how he preferred to be called. "I had a wife once," he related. "We got married in a hurry down in Elkton. God, I loved her and love her still, but she ran off with another man. She called me Herbie. I'd have given her anything I could. All she wanted was to be free. I couldn't show her a good time. I could only give her her freedom. I loved her that much, and I'll never see her again. But she did leave me a daughter. Her name was Rose."

"Which one," I asked, "the wife or the daughter?"

“Both,” he replied.

“When I was a young man, I had big expectations,” he continued. “I thought life was wonderful, full of romance and beautiful things. I was all alone. I used to have this friend who lived up on Tatnall Street. J. Warrington Dawson, he called himself. He’d string me along with all this talk about literature and art. He turned out to be a buffoon. He wasn’t anything more than a carpenter who daydreamed too much on the job and got all his knowledge from the rotogravure. He used to call me ‘Pallfry,’ and I let him because I didn’t want to hurt his feelings, and because he was interested in all the things that interested me. He was just a blowhard.”

Paul Herbert Fricke told me about his daughter. In some ways, she was like her mother, always wanting to go and have a good time. But she had some common sense too, he told me. At least she had a good job up in New York City working as a dancer.

“I’m not as naive as I used to be,” Paul said. “I know she’s leading a flapper’s life and chasing a dream. I wouldn’t be surprised if she was nothing more than a taxi dancer at Roseland.”

He told me people also took advantage of him when he was naive. They never had a notion he could think for himself, but he could. Paul Herbert Fricke’s problem was that he was blinded by his belief that people were full of good intentions, just like the kind he had. All those who thought he was kind of dumb would just talk over him. But in-side of talk, the truth can be found, and the truth can make such a person as Paul Herbert Fricke bitter in old age.

“Long ago I realized God didn’t like women because He caused them so much pain in childbirth. I may have sounded like a simpleton in declaring that conclusion, but as the years’ve rolled on, I’ve realized how much cruelty has been inflicted in the name of God. If I can imagine a more beautiful and caring world, why can’t those who believe in God act like Christians and bring it about? I can’t answer that question.”

“I know,” I replied. “It just seems like people are determined to go the other way.”

“Take this Prohibition. Everything’s just fine as long as everybody’s got money. It may seem like everybody’s happy, even if the liquor’s illegal,” Paul continued, “but the moment people don’t have money, Prohibition’ll become a bloody proposition. I just know it, but I’ll be damned if I can explain why. That’s my problem.”

He told me about his brother Bill. I think, in an odd sort of way, his inability to explain how and why Prohibition could turn against us brought him to the subject. Bill didn’t want anything to do with him. Bill had a wife and a family who lived on the other side of the Brandywine in a nice house near the park.

“I think,” he said, “I’m an embarrassment to them. He never invites me to visit, even on Thanksgiving. He told me the woman I married, Rose, was a floozy. He doesn’t realize what he’s got, because he doesn’t realize that I ain’t got the same. He never dreams of giving me a hand. Doesn’t even think I’d need one, that is if he ever thinks about me at all. All he’s interested in is making more and more money, and I don’t even think he has a clear idea where it all comes from. Sometimes I think it all comes from me because I ain’t got any now.”

Fricke told me he’d been a clerk in a store all his life. He’s managed to keep jobs because he’d always been good with numbers. For the past few years, he’d been working at Wilmington Dry Goods. He’d worked his way uptown from Jacoby’s Department Store down on the lower part of Market Street. He snickered bitterly at his observation. All he ever wanted to do is to read about the world he doesn’t live in, and to see it in paintings.

“I can see the world better when it’s shown to me by some artist or writer,” Paul Herbert Fricke said. “It’s like standing still in it until everything about it becomes known. I know that sounds strange, but who am I but one little man? It doesn’t matter to anyone.”

It was then that I realized how well read he was. We talked a little about the books we’d read. He had read books by William Dean Howells and Willa Cather, books that had taken him to places he couldn’t go. We talked about Mark Twain and a little-known American writer named Herman Melville. I told him my story about Upton Sinclair and how I had met Harry Kemp and how he’d told me the story about being in Arden.

“Yeah,” blurted a beaming Paul Herbert Fricke. “I read all about that in *Tramping on Life*. What a great life. Riding all across the country on freight trains and meeting all kinds of interesting people.”

I brought Paul down to reality a bit when I started talking about my own experiences, about the dangers and hardships. But I had to turn around and agree with his imaginings insofar as there were, indeed, interesting characters aplenty who rode the rails.

From there, we began to talk about some of the newer writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald in Ernest Hemingway.

“I read *The Great Gatsby*,” Paul commented. “It really depressed me. Here’s this guy who’s so much in love, and lucky too, I guess, who’s able to get on the gravy train only so he can find and win over the girl of his dreams. It’s so sad. Love really only comes once, doesn’t it? And in the end what happens to him could happen to anyone, in spite of all his riches. You just can’t get away from it by merely changing who you really are. I guess when it really comes down to it we’re all really only Jimmy Gatz.”

I knew Fricke was glad to talk to someone interested in what he had to say. I hadn't fully noticed, but this quiet little man, Paul Herbert Fricke had become very talkative. All that ended with a commotion that suddenly rolled in Dinky's place.

A very well-dressed white couple had come into the room. Both were obviously a bit tipsy, though not a bit disheveled. First was a slight young lady, dressed elegantly though daringly with the hem of her dress above the knee. She was incredibly white. I could say she glowed, but as I said, she was already lit up. She had an incredibly straight nose and eyes that were set to take in everything she saw. That wide open look in Fricke's eyes when he saw her told me she was uncommonly attractive. She was followed by a man who was well dressed in evening attire and very well groomed. He was obviously following her, and by the sly grin on his face, he didn't seem to mind at all. There was a third person, dressed in the tunic of a chauffeur, who might not have been noticed right away because he had hung back a bit. But by the way he regarded the couple, he was acting as if he were looking after them.

As soon as the well-dressed young man addressed his lady as "Zelda," I knew exactly who they were. So had Paul Herbert Fricke.

"That's F. Scott Fitzgerald," Fricke whispered to me. "I recognize him from his picture."

"I have been told," blurted Zelda, "That here is a place sophisticated enough to offer a cocktail bearing absinthe."

F. Scott kept his grin, a hand handsomely placed in a jacket pocket, and weaving ever so slightly. Zelda had addressed no one in particular.

Dinky himself, a small yellow man whose shoulders nearly cleared the top of the bar behind which he stood, was about to address Zelda Fitzgerald when she spotted the bowl of wacky dust on the bar.

"Ooooh, cocaine," she exclaimed, turning to her illustrious husband, then stating in a controlled fashion, "Darling, I shall take a whiff or two. That should do."

Zelda came off as a gum-smacking, wisecracking flapper who was also a proper lady underneath, and F. Scott seemed to be enjoying every moment of it. As soon as Zelda got some wacky dust working in her, she took hold of F. Scott and began to dance in the middle of the floor, making her own music. She was a really good dancer. You could almost hear the music while she cameled and turkeyed, geched and scronched like a pro. They looked silly enough to laugh out loud. Their companion, who was dressed like a chauffeur, kept time with a syncopation of handclap and foot stomp. He seemed to me to be a pretty athletic fellow for being merely a chauffeur. I would learn just how athletic he was when someone emerged from the darkened

recesses of the room in an attempt to interfere with F. Scott's and Zelda's romping around. With the expert move of a prizefighter, their companion knocked the intruder out cold on the floor.

"No absinthe here," barked Zelda, "just cold water."

I looked around for Dinky. He was nowhere to be found. I looked back to see what F. Scott and Zelda were doing. They had left, along with their companion, in the blink of an eye.

Two days later, from the talk going around at the Monday Club, I learned more about what had happened in Dinky's.

The reason I had not found Dinky was that he had gone to make a phone call. He had not called the police, but the call brought the police to the Fitzgeralds.

Evidently, the police picked up the Fitzgeralds and their chauffeur, whose name was Philippe and who had been brought back from Paris after a trip they had made the year before. Philippe had been a boxer, which explained why he was so handy with his dukes. Philippe was also handy in another way. He provided the Wilmington police with a resident of one of their cells while the Fitzgeralds visited with their lawyer in more respectable accommodations at police headquarters. By dawn, all three were back home up at Ellerslie, where we can only assume they had ample time to rest and recover.

Bloodfield would be safe, at least for a while. But the way things are, with the rich getting richer, apparently, off of nothing at all, and the poor getting cut to pieces by their own hands, it can't go on much longer. None of us are really safe.



*Bourbon Street Jazz*

**Edward Loper, Jr.**

# Ray Greenblatt

## FOR BILL

You hang fragments of poems  
on your wall  
--like a rogue's gallery—  
hoping to fill them in with  
    the perfect word,  
    phrase,  
    one day.

You stare at the wall  
as you would a window  
through which rain, sleet, snow  
create vital imagery;  
your poems  
    --seeds in the brain—  
often grow into epics,  
    not in length  
but intensity.

Many muses prod you:  
your father a Janus,  
smiling assurances  
then snarling disapproval;  
    your dead wife--  
    smoke you reach for  
    poke through to find  
what you do not know.

Nakedness on a beach,  
a foreign country,  
saloon of characters--  
    each one  
    expanding you  
into more a man,  
    more a poet.

## DANCING

Sonofabitch! We could dance  
we danced across the world,  
remember how we whirled  
like feathers blowing in the dark  
around and around that dock  
and nearly fell into the Seine.  
We kept up with the clogging in Dundee  
till like a fool  
I twisted my ankle  
and cut our hiking short,  
but you danced alone for me.  
Godddamit! we danced across the sky  
making stars blink,  
we'd whistle up our own music  
even in the middle of nowhere  
even though we lay horizontal in that meadow  
we danced a tempo that never paused.  
Now we cackle at each other  
through empty gums  
you nod in accord with me  
or is it palsy,  
my leg still gives a little kick  
or is it a little spasm.  
Damn! look out the window  
we taught the flowers to dance,  
and even those waves  
parading line after line  
no pause in sight.

*What follows is the earliest fiction published by J. Saunders Redding, brother of Wilmington Civil Rights leader Louis L. Redding. J. Saunders Redding's best known work is No Day of Triumph (Harper & Brothers, 1942), and his only novel is Stranger And Alone (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950). The story "Delaware Coon," last appeared in the 1930 avant-garde journal, transition: An International Quarterly of Creative Experiment, founded in 1927 by Eugene and Maria Jolas in Paris, France.*

*Reportedly, in the same issue as Redding's story were works by Tristan Tzara and Samuel Beckett.*

*The locale is the Eastside of Wilmington in the late 1920s.*

# Delaware Coon

*J. Saunders Redding*

Delaware Coon stretched, grunted, yawned, and pulled his long black leg tentatively upward until the sole of his foot rested on the under sheet and his husky knee poked a lump in the dirty blanket. He lay still for a moment and indulged in soporous scratching, allowing the early April sun that flooded the one window of his room to trickle through his veins. Then he became painfully aware of his bandaged left hand. He looked at the bandage, sighed as he rolled over, and got up. One more bandage and it would be all right.

He dressed slowly. The tight trousers cut from brown cloth - he was fond of his new suit and admired himself in it - the gray silk shirt shot through with brown stripes, the gold and black tie, the long full-backed coat. And surmounting all, a jaunty derby cocked on one side of his oblong head. The berries!

Out in the street, just assuming mid-morning activities, he made his way to Gibbie's and stood talking with several men, all dressed in like style, until it should be time to go to the doctor.

"Hello, Delaware

Coon. " " Hey, there. "

"Hi, Del. "

"Whatcha know? " "

You got'em. "

" Hell. "

" Christine sure sang 'at new piece round Jake's

Jas'night. " "-What new piece? "

" Ain'che hear  
it? " " No. "

" Hell y'say. "  
" Spill it."

" Yaller Gal Don't Mean a Black Man No  
Good." " Sung it, eh? "

" Sung her can off," The fellow who mentioned the new song essayed to  
sing "Yaller gal . . . " .

Gig Brooks, a little, brown fellow with red pimples all over his emaciated  
face, strutted up. "Herman died," he said.

" Herman? What Herman? "

" Where you been, Delaware Coon?  
Jail? " " Drunk. "

" Herman  
Kidders. " " Whasta  
matter? "

" Shot. Down Curlys pool  
room. " " Woman? "

" No. Snow-sniffer went crazy an' shot up the works. Guttled him  
twice." The fellow who essayed to sing:

" Yaller gal got good meat. .  
Jelly roll fit to eat.

Black man offered her a dime;  
Shook her head, she ain't got time.  
Yaller, Oh my yal —"

" Catch the  
dopey? " " Yeh. "

Delaware consulted the clock, strolled over to the counter. "  
Piedmonts. " " Where you been, jail? "

" Drunk. " Then lighting a cigarette he walked casually through the screen  
doors and out into the street.

## II

Delaware Coon sat back in the low chair and watched the doctor mix a  
pale pink liquid with warm water. " Fighting again, Del? "

" No, I ain't been fightin'. Some niggah leaves a broken bottle in the hall

an' I comes in drunk an' stumbles. Nex'morning rna han'given'me hell. " .

" Nasty hand. " He bathed it rather roughly and adjusted a fresh bandage. " How much, Doc? "

" Oh, a dollar. " Delaware got up and looked down at himself embarrassed.

" Have to pay you later, Doc. Ain't got no woman yet. " The doctor frowned, shrugged and laughed. Delaware grinned.

" When are you going to get a woman ? Either that or work. "

" Oh, soon. Tired o'these Wilmington broads." He glowed with remembrance, his heavy lips drawn back over, large, even teeth." S'long,Doc. "

"So long, Coon ... say, don't get any yellow woman. " Delaware turned in the

door.

" Why you say 'at, Doc? "

" You know that new song, Yaller Woman." They laughed. Delaware went out.

### III

That night Delaware strolled into Mame's. Too early for any of the crowd, he and Mame sat down at the dining room table and talked. Mame had coarse hair that grease couldn't conquer, coarse, flat features, coarse hands, the voice of a Lesbian, and a hump on her shoulders. Also, frequent terms in Greenbank had given her a jailhouse philosophy: Money can do anything, therefore get money. As a result her house served the ladies of night as gin-dive, brothel, and general hangout.

"Where you been, Delaware Coon, jail? "

" Drunk. "

" When you goin'to git a woman? Plenty charity hangin' around.

" Soon. " Delaware smoked.

" Got a new bootician - makes his own an' calls it Golden Glow. Niggahs sure guzzle it up. "

" Yeh. I guess you makes your cladual. "

" Guess I don't take no chances makin, it either? " Mame questioned, offended. " Hundred bucks every two weeks buys police, tection. "

" Like hell. Gimma cigarette," He tossed it to her. " Want a drink on the

house? "

" Nope. " The bell rang just as Mame's lips formed some exclamation of surprise.

She hobbled to the door.

In the group that issued through the narrow hall into the gaudy dining room Delaware recognized two or three faces: Gig Brooks, Delah Covington, Casper Johnson. They crowded into the room, seven or eight of them. and those that knew Del greeted him boisterously. An odor of gin filled the place. Everybody talked at once.

" Make yourself at home. This is ma house. " Mame declared. " Gawd they did play. " "

" Any Golden Glow, Mame? Bring up a quart. Start some music. "

They drew up to the table and surrounded Delaware. Smoking, laughing, talking. And a rather hardened, pretty yellow face looking at him from across the table. Delah, loud with a defiant loudness, sat next to him. He could smell her cheap perfume, and just the hint of perspiration. Everybody talked at once.

His wife was a nice woman. Play some music. Nice hell. I knowed her 'fore she ever married. It's a cat. Ain't she a scream in that pea-green jewbust? Smoking, laughing, talking. And a smoke-softened, pretty yellow face looking at Delaware from across the table.

He poked his elbow into Delah's ribs and laughed when she jumped. Without looking in any particular direction, " Who's the teaberry? " He drained his glass and lit a cigarette.

" I thought you knowed her. At's Bess Stuart. Bess, " she called, raising her voice above the noise, "this papa here is Delaware Coon." Bess and Delaware exchanged glances. Somebody started the wheezing phonograph. Delaware stumbled over legs to Bess's side of the table. He pushed Gig out of the chair next to her.

" Were you from? "

" Chester. "

" Been here ong? "

" Long enough. "

" Whatcha doin'down here? " He reached for the milk bottle of corn whisky.

" Makin'a living. " They drank together. Suddenly Delaware looked her full in the eyes.

" You ain't hard like you want to be. "

" Christ. " She laughed a laugh that came from the tips of her aggressive breasts and slipped through her crimson mouth. They drank together.

" Hey, Mame, " somebody shouted, " you all got a cop on this beat an' he's freakish to gin, so don't be afraid to let us hit it up. "

Mame waxed." Dis is ma house ain't it? Ain't dis ma house. Go ahead an raise. I dont't care what you all raise. " Delah screamed with delight and gin. Somebody pulled the rags out of the mouth of the Victrola and started the music with a low moan. Everybody drank.

Couples floated through the red plush curtains into the parlor and started dancing. Delah and some black giant with a shaved head in the manner of Jack Johnson. Toofus Butler and Pee Wee. Rosa, one of the white girls who had recently come in, started up the Stairs and Casper followed. Gig Brooks and Lucy Train.

" Cause a good man is hard... " " How long you goina be Here?

" Dunno." She turned wells of brown on him. "You sure ask enough questions. " They smiled at each other, sitting at the table alone. They drank together. They drank many times together.

" Le's dance. "

The music swept through the group, the music and gin. Bodies clung close together, scarcely moving. Lips sought delirium. Heads twitched in ecstasy. Smooth blue-brown laughter, coarse jokes, slender black hands on warm living bodies. Gin flowed.

"Don't want no more dance. Come on out in the hall." They made there way through the dancers. "Delaware, I love you. "

"Aw, you jus'wants a man to work for you." Her eyes screamed, then closed as she swayed nearer.

"No, Delaware. Hones' I love you. " "Liquor talking. "

" It's the God's truth."

" Prove it. "

Mame saw them as they stole through the hall toward the front door.

"Whatsa matter, Bess, ain't you goin't'trade none tonight? " As the door closed behind them, Delaware heard the first strains of Yaller Gal.

## IV

Bess made little noise as possible as she groped along the uncarpeted hall for the door of their room. Finding it she listened a moment thinking she heard his quiet breathing. With an unspoken challenge she rattled the key in the lock noisily and threw open the door. Nothing stirred. She stumbled over to the lamp on the dresser, lighted it, and turned to stare at the empty bed. Resignation, not easy resignation but tinged with fire, crept into her eyes. She prepared for bed.

Sleep was like a spring storm blowing over. Through the mist of it she felt her pain like streaks of lightning, and clutched her breasts to hold back the tears. Her thoughts were like the roar of distant thunder, heavy, dull. She wondered where he was: what she would say to him when he did come: whether it would end tonight as it had always ended; a feeling of warmth, of illusive security, of greater warmth, a frantic searching for his lips. God. Peace, until the morning.

She heard the door of the restaurant over which they had their room slam with a final bang: heard the bolt sing into its place: saw the glare from the big window die out against the houses opposite. Three thirty. Her dress, flung onto the back of the chair, danced in the faint moonlight. Shadows took on unholy proportions, chased by the moonlight in the far corners. She lay there soft as yellow peach-bloom against the sheet, staring into things to do. Things she'd known others to do. A new man. Somewhere else. It annoyed her to think that even if she did go he wouldn't bother to look for her. But this ache: And what to do? What to do?

Delaware Coon came in drunkenly cautious. He found the side of the bed and started to undress without bothering to light the lamp. Bess lay there, not afraid, but too resigned to speak. He thought she slept. He sank down beside her with a sigh, reeking with the smell of whisky.

"Where you been, Delaware? "

" Um? "

" Where you been? "

" Oh, out. " He buried his head in the pillow. "

" Where? "

He tried to change the subject. " How's business? "

" Where you been? "

" None your goddamn business. " He rolled over on his stomach. He slept his drunken sleep. She stared her crazy pain back into the shadows.

v

Bess sat in Mame's front window watching the bats circle the tree on the opposite corner. A wave of heat swept through the screen and started the perspiration trickling her back afresh. She sat perfectly still. It was too hot to move. From the top of the house next door came the sound of a whistle as of someone calling in secret, then a man's voice from the street, " Too hot." The man passed by and looked enquiringly at the blotch of white behind the screen. The bats dipped' in circles around the tree on the opposite corner. .

Mame came, thlopping her mules, into the room. " Gawd it's hot." She flung herself into a chair, exposing her naked legs. " Won't nobody buy no liquor nor nothin'else in all this heat, " she complained. "An' another payment due on that victrola. Oh lord." She rocked, resolutely fighting the heat that radiated from the walls, the floor, the street, her own disfigured body. Friends of hers, people she usually shouted' to from her window as they passed, strolled by, but Mame did not speak. Bess was a sickly blot of yellow and white all running together through the river of heat.

" If it gits cooler later on why don't you go down to the Grotto? Might be you can drum up some business, " Mame offered. The suggestion came to Bess veiled by the dullness of her mind, her body. If only she could find a cool place. Delaware. He would be angry with her for not having any money. But the heat. Anyway, today was only Tuesday.

" I might, " she answered without enthusiasm.

" Oh well," Mame sighed, " might as well have some music. Wish this damn thing was automatic. If you go " — as if a new thought had just come to her — " don't forgit to let'em know I'm still doin' business. "

"Yeh. "

A little after midnight Bess Stuart descended the four steps that led to Dollar Bill's Grotto. She had dressed in a tan blouse that hung loose from her shoulders, a blue linen skirt coming to her knees, and one of Delaware's Stetson hats. The men she had passed on the street spoke to her with a jovial deference. She knew they admired her, but the knowledge was not attended by any sensation. The steps she descended led to steps upward, and they to a passageway so low that she had to stoop. "Thus under the pool room to a bolted door that swung outward immediately she reached it, emitting ribald laughter and the smell

of human heat all mixed with gin and tobacco smoke.

The room that faced her was shaped like the letter L. The horizontal end was empty of furnishings except for a raised platform that supported the four piece orchestra. The walls, for the entire seventy feet, were covered with paper leaves of green, red, and blue, behind which soft lights played. There was no light overhead.

Along the walls of the perpendicular space were little tables surrounded by three-legged chairs. The tables were covered in red and white oilcloth. Above every other table an open window let in the stink of Macauley alley and the morocco factory facing it.

Bess stepped quickly inside the door and beckoned to Lame Baby. He was the ugliest creature she had ever seen. His small head lay in the hollow of his left shoulder. His right hand was withered and jangled from his extended wrist. His left arm, unusually long because of the weight his head placed on it, hung far below his crooked knees. His shin bones curved outward like ornamental door handles. His face, except for the one good eye – the other was covered by a cataract – was the face of a man who has let the river finish what hunger had begun. When Bess called he loped up with a leer.

" Can I git a table round the corner? " She pressed a coin into his hand. " Yeh. Yeh, " he answered, shaking his whole body in affirmation

" Nice crowd we got tonight. Niggahs sure like to sweat when dey dance." He led her past the crowded tables to the far end of the room. While he went in search of a table she studied the crowd. There was no one there she knew.

" All right, Bess. " Everyone knew Delaware's woman. " When Coon comes Ah'll tell him where you're at. "

Bess made a swift motion with her hand. " Tell him nothing. Ain't none your business. Bring me a drink - a big drink. "Lame Baby loped off.

While she was drinking the music started on a few false notes from the saxophone. Couples swarmed to the floor. The liquor wasn't strong or something. Or perhaps she had eaten too much. A man and woman danced by her table, lost in each other's bodies. The man's eyes were closed"his hands gripped tight around her buttocks.

" Ease it to me, papa, the music's good an'low. Ease it to me, papa: do it long an' slow. "

The drummer strapped his instrument across his stomach and, followed by the saxophone player, twisted in and out the dancers. A black girl raised her voice

in a long moan that died somewhere across the room. The music dripped with dark, ancient rhythm. Now the drummer muffled his drum and beat upon it with a padded stick. The other three musicians stopped playing and indulged in a series of oral sounds, each . distinct and separate, like a mad chant. Bess drained her glass. Lame Baby sidled up.

" Some good music. Gin? "

" No. Corn. " He slid .away among the dancers.

Then she saw Delaware with Birdie Grinnage. They were not absorbed in the dance but in each others conversation. Now and again Delaware's oblong head moved from side to side or up and down in affirmation or negation. His face had a doubtful expression, and he kept glancing toward the door. Birdie seemed conscious of his doubt but not to be sharing in it. She smiled her dark, gold-toothed smile as if it were a trick she learned especially for him. By and by she evidently over-rode his fears for he bent closer to her, his head protruding beyond her shoulder, his arm encircling her more firmly, and gave himself up to the dance. Bess shivered and drank.

When the music stopped she moved her chair farther around the corner. If Coal Frisby came. Delaware and the woman occupied a table against the wall about half way down the room. A quart bottle stood under the table. A sea of soft voices broke in gentle waves over the room, then receded, and came up again only to drip out in little laughterfalls along the walls. If Coal Frisby came. Pieces of thought. Delaware with a lame hand. Bess drank and drew from her misery something akin to joy.

Delaware's back was toward the door, therefore he didn't see Frisby come in. But Birdie saw him. She shrank in her chair and painfully tried to smile. The man was scarred like a child's rocking horse. Along his cheek was a scar, half of which bulged a quarter of an inch above, half of which gaped a quarter of an inch below the surface of his face. His lower lip sagged, showing the red under portion. His loosely fitting coat gave no evidence of the strength that reposed in his muscles, but the tight trousers seemed to stretch over his thighs and calves as he walked.

He strode over to the table and, ignoring Delaware, addressed the woman. "What you doin'here? ..

" Jus' havin' a little drink...

" Drink hell. " He raised his hand – an ugly hand, like a tarred glove – but thought better of it. " G'w'on home. "

The woman smiled sheepishly and, trying to keep a graceless dignity,

strutted from the room. Coal faced Delaware.

" Me an' yours' gonna take a trip 'bout the same time, " he said without a change of expression, " only I'se goin' to jail. "

Bess watched, an interplay of emotion flooding her.

Delaware got up quickly and stood behind the chair, clasping the back of it with both hands, " Well, I ain't running," he said loudly. They wouldn't let them fight, he thought. Might bring on the cops, and Dollar Bill had reason to fear the cops. Might as well talk up to him.

"That's cause you's a fool." Coal moved closer. As Delaware lifted the chair Frisby swung under it. In a moment they were against the wall. The men crowded around them, thirsting for the sight of blood. Women climbed the chairs and tables, watching over the heads of men.

A hard blow to the pit of the stomach doubled Delaware with pain. As he fell he remembered the bottle under the table. His hand groped for it, fastened around the neck of it. From a cut in his forehead blood streamed over his cheek; off his chin, and unto the bosom of his gray silk shirt.

The sight of the bottle turned Coal into a madman. His hand darted to his pocket and drew out a knife with an incredibly long spring blade.

" Come on you black bastard. " He advanced, crouched low, the knife held dagger-wise. Delaware tried to rise as the man came toward him. Somebody screamed,

" He's gonna kill him. " And Frisby felt a tugging at his arm.

" Let me be. Turn me loose. I'll cut dis niggahs guts out. Gonna hit me wif a bottle. " He jerked his arm relentlessly, but someone held on. Coal turned to see who it was and looked deep into a woman's misery.

" Don't cut him. You'll only git yourself in trouble." She motioned with her foot to Delaware, not daring to let go the arm." G'w'on home, Delaware. "

Frisby's anger had about run its course. Delaware, wiping the blood from his chin, crawled through the crowd.

## VI

Delaware had removed the traces of blood and was sitting on the edge of the bed when Bess got home. As she entered he did not look up, but he growled at her; " I'll git him. See if I don't git him. " He got up and pounded the dresser in his defeated rage. " He'd better damn sight sell his soul to Jesus, cause his hide b'longs

to me. " Bess said nothing. She felt tired.

" Thing I want his woman? All de goodlooken' broads there is around here an' he thinks I want that bitch' "he laughed without mirth.

" Well what was you doin' with her? " Bess asked quietly. " Doin' ? Doin' ? Nothin'. Not a goddamn thing. "

" But you been out with her before. " The room reeled and whirled as she walked toward the dresser. Liquor, she thought. She caught hold of the bed to keep from falling..

"Yeh, I'been out with her. What of it? " He glared at her. She fumbled with a knife on the dresser, saying nothing. " What of it?" he shouted. "Dont't you like it? " He caught her roughly by the shoulders and turned her around. His hands bit into her flesh. " Why won't you say something? What if I is been out with her. "

The fierce light that burned in her eyes told him nothing. His breath laden with whisky, beat against her forehead. She thought she was going to be sick. He bent her over the dresser until it seemed her back would break.

"Let me loose, Delaware, " she said. He relaxed his grip. Her hand made a vicious stab as she felt herself freed.

"You yaller fool, " he uttered, and struck her blindly. She crumbled to the floor. "You ain't meant me no good. " ' .

Then Coon wanted liquor, and wanted it badly. He had no money, but Bess lay unconscious on 'the floor and he knew she kept her money in her bosom. She stirred uneasily as he laid her on the bed. Loosening her blouse he ran his hand between her breasts. Opening her waist still more he saw, rising and falling with every breath she took, tattooed across her breast, the words, Delaware Coon.

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What follows is an article, published in *Dreamstreets* #36 from February 1994. It is written by a local poet and playwright known as Mafundi and is a review of the 1989



novel *Stars of the Jolt Parade* by the late Lonnie T. Edwards.

One claim to fame for me about Lonnie is that he's the only person I know who danced on Mitch Thomas's Saturday afternoon dance show on Channel 12. He added to that story in another recounting elsewhere in *Dreamstreets*, but I can imagine him among the first to dance the Stroll on the show where it was invented.

Lonny was born in Wilmington, graduated from Howard High School, and was a National Merit

Scholarship winner. He was a Navy veteran and a Federal Government retiree, during which time he lived in various American cities.

Lonnie, who died in May 2025, was working on a sequel to *Stars of the Jolt Parade*, a chapter of which was published in *Dreamstreets* #67 in the spring of 2021. After the review by Mafundi is a republication from *Stars of the Jolt Parade*.

— Steven Leech

# Wilmington Author Lonnie Taylor Edwards Publishes STARS OF THE JOLT PARADE

*Michael "Mafundi" Kennard*

It was the modern media artist extraordinaire Andy Warhol who made the oft-cited observation that mass media societies afford everyone the equal opportunity for "fifteen minutes of fame." The crack cocaine craze, true to its high-tech origins, goes Warhol one better—or worse. As Lonnie Taylor Edwards vividly illuminates in his new novel, *Stars of the Jolt Parade*, this not-so-new drug, which is highly accessible and powerfully addicting, allows the user a fleeting fifteen seconds of illusory fame in a chemically induced, nervous-centered jounce, or "jolt." The title of the book says it all.

*Stars of the Jolt Parade* is a deceptively slight volume. Like the poisonous particles of its preoccupation, the book proves, once again, that big things can come in small packages. Included in this brief tale of fiction based on autobiographical fact is, per-haps, an unprecedented, detailed description of the process of converting cocaine powder (cocaine hydrochloride) into its base or rock form. For the reader, one familiar with the crack cross culture or one too familiar with these uncertified, non-laboratoried chemists, this depiction of “rocking” coke is fascinating.

The plot of the book revolves around selected episodes in the lives of three ex-Vietnam buddies who find themselves interacting twenty years later in the mythical urban jungles of Oakwood, California. Kevin Dwight, a Caucasian high school teacher, is married and the father of three children. Enoch Morris, a.k.a. Slick, has migrated from the mean streets of Philly to the equally mean streets of Oakwood. Last, but not least, is portly Sweets, who has no past the author cared to delineate, even though we discern his obvious African American roots. Although Sweets was responsible for saving the life of Slick during a perilous situation in Nam, the latter secretly resents the former. As to be expected, all three of these men are “drug”ed into the convoluted world of cocaine dependency.

*Stars of the Jolt Parade* is also about cocaine co-dependence. First, there is Sarah, Kevin’s African American wife, who is a nurse. She has, like most drug co-dependents, the misfortune of co-suffering the slings and arrows of Kevin’s outrageous exploits but is unequivocating in her emotional support of him. A former student of Kevin’s, Janice, also stars in this “parade.” A child of a broken home, Janice escapes the strict parenting of her Air Force by quitting school and running away. Unfortunately, her sojourn leads her right to the illegal payroll of the unscrupulous Slick. The most impressive female character, however, is Angel, another friend of Kevin’s, originally from Wilmington, Delaware. Voluptuous, seductive, but “lost and turned out,” Angel is easily the most memorable and pathetic personality as she struggles with drug abuse and an even more abusive mate.

After reading the book on experiences, psychologically, what the crack head goes through neurologically: an unmitigating desire for more. Despite the groundbreaking significance of the work, it falls considerably short in exposing the psychosocial predisposition for drug abuse and how the drug culture plays into the private/public *cravings* for resources and power. Every social phenomenon has, as our ancient wisdom informs us, political dimensions.

The advent of crack was a 1980s stroke of mass marketing genius: ready-made free-base coke in small capsule quantities on the East Coast, and sandwich

baggie-fulls on the West Coast. As a cheap (\$3 a wop in some places) smokable and efficient form of cocaine consumption, crack actuates an intense internal numbness or stuporous non-feeling or “freeze.” Given the extremely high anxiety that remains at the center of American life, i.e., the threat of unemployment, homelessness, loneliness, dysfunctional households, a sense of “insensitivity” can become an obsession that reaches suicidal proportions. *Stars of the Jolt Parade* author Lonnie TE, a “recovering person” himself, undoubtedly possessing a wealth of personal insight into this cocaine pandemic, could have shed more light on the social pathology of people united only by this parade of “jolts” and the principled behavior connected to it. Imagine the personal histories behind the alienation of an area the author calls “The Twilight Zone,” where everything happens . . . “drugs, prostitution, street gangs, gambling, homicide.”

Of course, the political/economic aspect of drugs cannot be overstated. Drugs have been used to quell, contain and control various populations for years, e.g., the alcohol sold to Native Americans during the colonization of this hemisphere and the opium used by the British to gain a foothold into China. Although in most cases the politics serves the economic interests, the proliferation of drugs doesn’t necessarily emanate from a nationally coordinated conspiracy, as some prominent (paranoid!) ethnic activist might think. Much of it occurs through the magic of the invisible hand of drug-dealing capitalists. Juliet Cell and Dennis O’Neil, in their provocative essay, “The Cost of Drugs” (*Forward Motion Magazine*, May 1990), tell us: “Take the phenomenon of cheap, high-quality opiates and barbiturates appearing in ghettos during the period of the urban rebellions in the 1960s. J. Edgar Hoover didn’t have to organized big shipments of ‘fuji’ (heroin) from Marseilles. All it would have taken is for a local police chief or the captain of a precinct to stop harassing the heroin dealers.” In the wake of the recent social earthquake that devastated the urban landscape, not to mention the hearts and minds and social myths of L.A. (often referred to as Lower Alabama), what other lethal chemical commodities are we to expect from these multi-colored/multi-cultural drug profiteers?

In this timely piece of literary *faction*, Mr. Edwards reveals much of the who, but not enough of the “why?” For instance, why would a comfortable white public school instructor who seems to be happily married to a clean and sober Black woman opt for dope usage? Why did Michele, one of Kevin’s “crack girls” and former model, who the author describes as, “. . . fairly attractive, a mixture of black & white or Hispanic. . .” eventually get hooked after moving to Oakwood, “. . . to find a better life and to be away from the drug world?” And then there is the pathetic Angel. Why is she really caught up so totally in this psycho/social ghetto? Needs

more to be said.

In spite of its underdevelopment, *Stars of the Jolt Parade* is a commendable first novel. We must applaud Lonnie Taylor Edwards for grappling with a problem of which so much has been said and, at the same time, so little is understood, let alone *resolved*. The characters in the book are real, unstereotyped personages placed in situations with which most grassroots Americans can identify. This book is a *must* reading for all generations, including those inside and outside the drug culture. In many ways, most of us participate in this parade, and few of us enjoy the luxury of being merely spectators.

*from*

## Stars of the Jolt Parade

*Lonnie T. Edwards*

A year had passed since Slick's homecoming at Kevin's house. The social problems in Cedar Oaks, had gotten worse. It wasn't racial, but economical. People were poorer. Many were homeless and some starving. Alcohol and drug abuse was the primary cause. It was especially so for those who smoked rock cocaine.

Slick was coming close to earning enough from his cocaine trade to retire. Even Kevin, Sal, Sweets and Angel were some of his customers. They occasionally snorted it and sometimes smoked the powder in a cigarette or joint.

Kevin and Sarah joined St. Matthew's Baptist Church. They were having minor marital problems and felt that getting closer to God would help. Reverend Lyght and Sister Moffitt were happy about having the Dwight's at church. Sweets and his wife became members too. Angel and Sal, who had become platonic friends, came to church a few times, but never got serious about joining. Enoch Morris (Slick) had not attended since his release from prison. He and Reverend Lyght had a falling-out about his sinful activities.

One day Kevin went to Slick's place to get some powder. Slick was living with Janice, a hooker who was selling drugs for him.

"HI Janice. Is Slick home?" Kevin asked, as he stood at the apartment door. Janice wore tight-fitting jeans and a red polka-dot blouse. She was not wearing a bra, revealing her small breasts and her large, round nipples that clearly showed through the thin garment she was wearing.

"Come on in, Mister Dwight," the slender, young lady, appearing to be in her

late teens, requested. "He's in the living room.'

"What it is, Kevin?" Slick cheerfully greeted his long-time war buddy. "You got any powder?"

"How much do you want?," Slick responded. "Fifty dollars worth.

"Man, I don't see what you get out of snorting that stuff."

"I know what you mean," Kevin responded. "I'm going to leave it alone and just smoke weed."

"Have you tried smoking the rock?" Slick curiously asked.

"You mean like freebasing?," Kevin said. 'I've tried it, but like snorting cocaine, I don't get much out of it."

Slick rolled a fat joint and gave it to Kevin.

"Try this," he said. "Put a little rock cocaine in it. It's called a primo."

Kevin took a big puff and inhaled the smoke. He slowly exhaled it from his nose. The effects came quickly. He felt very lightheaded, and his heart started beating rapidly. "Man," Kevin said, as he gasped for breath, "What was that?"

"Just some good weed mixed with rock cocaine,' plied Slick. "The reason why you dislike smoking rock is because you didn't smoke enough. When you're ready to really enjoy getting high, let me know."

"What's it going to cost, Slick?"

"You put up your fifty and I'll add fifty dollars of mine. That will buy a gram.

Janice could cook up a nice piece of rock with that amount of powder."

"Isn't the cooking process dangerous?" Kevin asked. "I don't want to get burned up like Richard Pryor."

"There's no danger. It's different than freebasing in the old days," Slick answered. "We use baking soda instead of ether. If you want, you can watch Janice cook it up."

"Okay," Kevin replied. "Lets do it."

Kevin was very interested in seeing how cocaine powder or cocaine hydrochloride is converted to its base or rock form. He was also interested in getting a closer look at Janice. For some reason, she fascinated him. Although Janice acted tough and sometimes vocalized that character, she often displayed a degree of class. It probably related to her upbringing. She was one of Kevin's former students- a bright one at that, but she seemed to have an adjustment problem. Her parents were divorced and she had lived with her father, who was an officer in the Air Force. He

was very strict and eventually it caused her to run away from home and quit school, in her senior year. Within a short time, Janice started working for Slick.

"Mr. Dwight," Janice called, "Come to the kitchen and have a seat."

Janice was prepared to convert the powder to rock cocaine. On the kitchen table, were an empty glass cigar tube, a box of baking soda, a cup of water, a cigarette lighter and a gram of cocaine powder sealed in a plastic bag. "This is all I need to complete the process, Mr. Dwight," she said. Then she curiously asked, "Why has an intelligent and prominent White boy like you got mixed up in all this madness? You were my favorite teacher. I liked your style and you impressed me as no phony even though you carry yourself like a brother. But you are still White and have a lot of good things going for you. Now you want to try smoking rock cocaine. It's going to destroy your life. Don't you care?"

Kevin was shocked, but appreciated hearing Janice's concern. "You are right," Kevin responded, "To be honest, I don't have an intelligent answer for you, except I like to get high. I like the feeling. Yes, I do care. And I realize my color doesn't match my personality and behavior. I was raised by a Jamaican family in Brooklyn, New York. All my brothers, sisters and friends were Black. I chose to act and live as if I were Black too."

"A Jamaican family?" Janice curiously asked. "How did that happen?"

Kevin responded, "I was born in the African country of Madagascar to French parents. My father was killed shortly after I was born and my mother moved to Jamaica. She married a Jamaican, and we immigrated to New York. Shortly after, my mother died giving birth, and my stepfather remarried a Jamaican.

Kevin's openness gave Janice a new appreciation of him. There was an instantaneous affection for this slightly balding and somewhat handsome man. She looked Kevin in the eye and gave him a smile that made him blush. Then said, in a soft and sexy voice, "I like you. Now watch me closely."

Janice unwrapped the white powder and poured it on a small sheet of white paper. She mixed less than half a teaspoon of baking soda with the cocaine. She carefully poured the mixture inside the glass tube trying not to let any stick to the sides. "Now I'm ready to start cooking." Janice poured enough water inside the tube to barely cover the mixture. She used the cigarette lighter to heat the bottom of the tube. She was careful not to get the tube too hot. The contents inside began to come to a low boil. It was really the baking soda reacting. Soon the cocaine turned into an oily substance. Janice slowly twirled the tube, then stopped to pour a few drops of cold water inside the tube. Then she resumed twirling the tube. Soon the oil began to crystallize and formed into a hard white ball. Janice then began shaking

the tube. A clinging sound could be heard, as the "rocked" cocaine hit the glass. "It's ready," Janice joyously said.

"Slick, we're ready. Kevin and Janice returned to the living room. Slick was on the sofa.

He had arranged the coffee table with the necessary equipment. There was a lit candle, a bottle of 151 rum, a razor blade, cotton swabs and a glass pipe to smoke the cocaine. The smoking instrument had a six-inch stem through which the smoke was inhaled, and a bubble at the end that had a bowl at the top.

"Kevin," Slick said, "I'm going to grant you the honor of getting the first hit. Be prepared to get the jolt of your life." Janice handed Kevin the pipe. Slick sliced a chip off the rock and placed it on the screen, covering the top of the pipe's bowl.

"Put the pipe to your mouth, Kevin," Slick instructed. "Puff when I say okay." Janice poured the 151 in the glass.

Then she dipped a cotton tip in the glass and saturated the cotton with the highly flammable liquid. After which, she lit it with the candle flame and put the flaming cotton ball just close enough to the cocaine to melt it. Then she relit the cotton and returned it back to the bowl of the pipe.

"Okay, Kevin," Slick instructed, "Pull the smoke in slowly, and close your eyes. When you feel you've had enough, then slowly let the smoke out through your nose.'

There was a lot of apprehension in Kevin's thoughts as he took his first puff. "Shit! I'm not going to take too much the first time!" Kevin inhaled and slowly exhaled the smoke through his nose.

"Mr. Dwight," Janice quickly said, "Don't swallow the smoke. Just let it out through your nose or mouth. Otherwise, you might get an upset stomach."

Janice's message added to Kevin's fear. He was losing his breath as he slowly exhaled the smoke through his nose. The thought of having a seizure, a stroke, or a heart attack was bad enough, but throwing up Kevin hated to think about that possibility. He rapidly blew the remaining smoke in his lungs out through his mouth. He blew several more times to make sure none was left to swallow.

Suddenly the jolt hit him. His head felt very light. He gasped for breath. Slobber dripped from one side of his mouth. The feeling gave him a strong sensation. Although frightening, it made him feel extremely good. Kevin laid his head back on the couch. He closed his eyes and just enjoyed the feeling.

Janice took her hit. Then it was Slick's turn. He put a huge piece on the screen. "Burn it for me baby," he requested, as he laid back ready to puff in the smoke. Janice went through the heating process like she did for Kevin. Slick pulled in the smoke.

The bubble quickly filled. It was thick with white smoke. It seemed like Slick was pulling forever. Then he stopped and inhaled the smoke and slowly let it out through his nose.

"Wow Slick," Janice exclaimed. "That's going to be a whopper of a jolt."

It was. Slick's eyes bulged. Then he began to shiver. Suddenly, he jumped from the couch and ran to the bathroom. His strange behavior was alarming to Kevin. "What's wrong with him," he asked Janice.

"That's how he acts after getting a real good jolt." she explained. "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait until he comes back. Then the fun begins. Don't worry. He's alright. How are you feeling? Want another hit?"

"I'll wait awhile," Kevin answered. "The jolt I got was enough for now. I'm still enjoying the feeling."

Janice put a small piece of rock on the pipe and took a hit. She did it with finesse. Kevin was sitting next to her on the couch and watching intently. He saw her nipples enlarge. It looked like they would burst out of her blouse. Kevin was fascinated. His feelings became sensuous. He could feel the warmth from her arm as it touched his shoulder. They turned and looked each other in the eye and after a pause, they smiled.

Slick re-entered the room. His behavior was calmer.

"That stuff was pretty good," he said. "Let me have another hit. Then I've got to leave for a while. Kevin, you and Janice can enjoy the rest of it. I've got to take care of some business."

Slick took his second hit. This rock was larger than the first one.

His eyes bulged as he pulled in the smoke. He reacted like before, charging to the restroom. About a minute later, he quickly returned to the living room and went to the window. "I think somebody's outside," he nervously said, "Put up the stuff." Then he ran to the front door and checked the locks.

Kevin looked in awe, watching his buddy behave this way. "Janice," he whispered, "What's his problem?"

"He's tweaking," she joyously responded. "Soon he'll leave and I won't see him until tomorrow."

Sure enough, after minutes of peeping through the windows in every room and emphatically ordering Janice to "put up the stuff," he left the apartment.

Over half of the gram of cocaine was left for Kevin and Janice to smoke. "Mr. Dwight," she asked in a sexy, soft voice. "You mind if I get comfortable? It's too warm in here. Why don't you get comfortable, too. Take off your shoes. Better than that, let's go to the bedroom where it's more private."

Kevin wasn't surprised to hear the offer, and without hesitating, he responded, "I'm okay here," as he took off his shoes.

Janice gave him the pipe and said, "I know you're ready for a hit now." She had taken off her blouse and displayed a smooth olive colored body with perfectly shaped breasts. Then she chipped off a large piece of rock cocaine and put it on the screen.

Kevin was ready for this one. He wanted to get another of those super jolts. "Why don't you take this hit standing up," she suggested. "You'll get a better jolt. Kevin stood up by the couch and Janice began the process of lighting the pipe.

"Relax, Kevin," she softly in-structed. "Now pull slowly and close your eyes."

Closing his eyes was hard to do. Kevin couldn't take them off her breasts. He looked down at Janice, then closed his eyes and continued to pull the smoke into his lungs. After getting enough, Kevin slowly exhaled the dope from his lungs and then out through his nose. He opened his eyes and looked at her breasts. Spontaneously, he fondled them. Then he pulled her to him, hugging her tightly.



Months had passed, since Kevin's experience with Slick and Janice. He began to smoke cocaine regularly, mostly on weekends. Usually it was with Sal, Angel and Sweets, and on occasion, with Janice and Slick. Kevin, however, felt uncomfortable smoking with Slick, because he tweaked too hard. Then he ran into people known as "stars," and hardcore rockers, the real addicts. Many tweaked harder than Slick, but in their own unique style. Kevin smoked with them to avoid getting high alone; and sometimes just for the intrigue and excitement. Many of these people had lost just about everything: their jobs, friends, family, husband, children, self-respect, health, and sometimes, even their lives. Some of the ladies were so addicted, they would even suck a dog's sexual parts for a hit. Kevin saw a girl do it one time when he was out getting high with Slick at a hardcore rocker's pad.

"Slick could be a nasty dude," Kevin was telling Sal. They were over at Janice's apartment smoking the rock. Sal had purchased the cocaine powder from an out of town source.

Janice had become a borderline "star." She hadn't gone to the curb vet. That was because her hustling to get money was still successful. But she smoked cocaine just about every day. As a result, her cash reserve was quickly dwindling. At the pace she was going, it would not take long for her to hit a financial and social rock bottom.

"I remember how he was in Nam," Kevin continued. "We did a lot together. Sweets was in on it too. The drugs, women, and seeing who could kill the most Cong."

"Your really killed somebody, Kevin?" Janice curiously asked. "I couldn't imagine you or Sweets hurting anybody. If it was Slick, yes!"

"It was a job," Kevin sorrowfully, replied. "Even now, many nights, I can't sleep because of the nightmares-just thinking about what happened in Vietnam. Sometimes I get these terrible flashbacks! Often, the thoughts hit me sud-denly, and I jump."

"Kevin," Sal asked, "Is it hard to talk about your experiences?"

"Sometimes, but I feel very comfortable talking about it around you and Janice."

"What was it like Mister Dwight?" asked Janice. "Slick never talks about being in the military or the war. It's hard to believe he was ever in anything but the street life and jail." There was a tone of bitterness in Janice's voice.

"A lot of me is still in Southeast Asia," Kevin replied.

Things like my sanity, self-respect and the ability to express my feelings." Kevin took another hit of cocaine, then continued. "Sweets, Slick and I were assigned to a special reconnaissance team working behind enemy lines. We did search and destroy work in Nam, Thailand, Cambodia, and later, in parts of Africa with the CIA. The three of us were awarded the Bronze Star, and Sweets also got the Congressional Medal of Honor. He saved Slick's life, but for some reason, Slick resents him.

"Hey Janice," Sal called, "You want a hit?"

"I could sure use one," she responded with a wide smile, quickly putting her hands to her face, hiding her missing front teeth. Slick had recently knocked them out because she had messed up his money. As a result, Janice gave him his walking papers. Her place was off limits to him. "Put me on a nice piece Kevin. I want a super jolt." After Janice got her jolt, she quickly went to the bedroom. Later she returned, having changed into lounging clothes. Kevin and Sal were getting their hits, enjoying the feeling. Janice's appearance, displaying her breast through the thin garment she wore, added to their pleasure. "Why don't you guys get comfortable too," she suggested. "We can continue enjoying ourselves in the bedroom. I've got everything fixed up. We can sit on the bed or on the floor."

This time Kevin accepted her offer. Sal was willing, too.

They followed Janice to the bedroom. The room was in shambles. The bed was unmade and loaded with junk. There were papers, clean and dirty clothes, and two

ashtrays filled with cigarette butts and burned-up matches. They decided to sit on the carpeted floor and smoke. Janice lit some incense and turned the radio to a jazz station. Sal and Kevin took off their shoes and got relaxed.

The three of them smoked for a couple of hours. Janice had gotten completely nude. It wasn't long before Kevin and Sal got the same way. They found themselves in bed and the orgy began. Kevin initiated the action when he offered to give Janice a charge from his hit. Their lips touched and he lightly blew the smoke in her mouth. He completed the Charge with a passionate kiss. Sal, seeing the opportunity, began to fondle Janice's breasts. Although the three had smoked together before, they had never done it like this. Kevin had had strong desires for Janice since when he got his first real experience of getting a jolt. Before, he had been strong enough to resist her charming come-ons and those of other ladies with whom he smoked. Doing drugs was one thing, but having sex was another, especially with women who would sleep with almost anyone. That included Janice, since she was turning tricks to survive. However, this time it didn't matter.



"SPOOKS"

TOM WATKINS

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# *Ken Segal*

## **Fake**

Oh my gosh! For goodness' sake!  
You really are an awful fake!  
The things you claim that you can do  
And things you claim happened to you  
Are phony, that much is a fact,  
You lie to me, I will lie back.  
Your resume is total bull,  
Your experience is never full.  
Your every utterance just ain't true,  
Your molecules are lying, too!  
There is no limit to your guile,  
You lie to someone with a smile.  
If your lies were grains of sand,  
You'd have a beach or foreign land.  
No telling what you'll lie about,  
It makes me shudder, scream and shout!  
Can you attempt to tell the truth?  
You're lying like a rug, forsooth!

# Phil Linz

## January

Joan Baez's high sweet—amazing!-- voice fills my rooms:

*"All my trials, Lord, soon be over*

R still in hospital, spoke briefly to a frazzled T,  
overwhelmed by bills, for which he's got no clue

I'm willing to help but I'll wait to be asked;  
don't need his phone message abuse, again,  
Spirit reminds me of compassion for the terrified T,  
panicked his angel will leave him for heaven

I go there, not without effort

Music's switched, a nice reading of "*Alone Together*,"  
Catherine Russell, the archive's website

Snowed earlier, seems to have stopped, but it's cold,  
& the winds seem having their own way  
I've of course got a meeting but I'll decide to go or not soon,  
so it's a sweet snow day, in-house

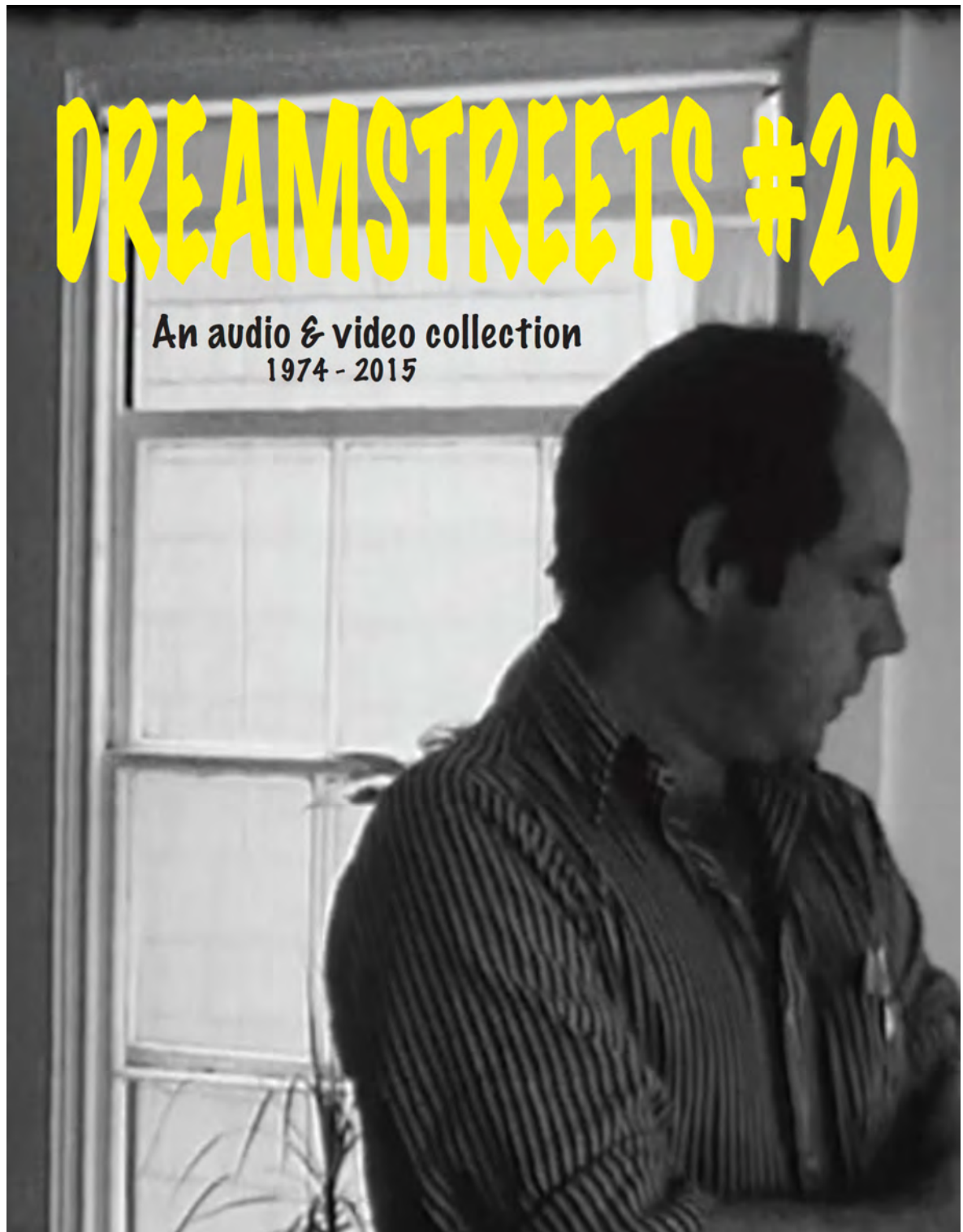
The heat's working, toggling 72 to 74,  
the comfort my life today affords;  
Open the glass door, the deck, cold, yes, but not too cold;  
cars & windshields covered, thin snow

I've work to do, internally, both my mind & this apartment,  
This the year of throwing away much, &  
I've made a beginning, the kitchen. the papers in the living room;  
all is do-able, all may-be-done;

My sister in hospital, Long Island. Our sister, worrying in Jersey.  
T remaining terrified.

I'm the only one with the steps in my life,  
know there'll be good days & bad.

Just for today; today we'll deal with today.



Dreamstreets #26: An Audio and Video Collection (1974-2015) [Click here to be taken to this historic archive.](#)

# *Michael Roque*

## Melanie

Every few years,  
the 4 a.m. of my life eclipses forward motion.  
My socked toes under Tel Aviv sheets,  
sink into the sand  
of my old Venice Beach—  
and before me—  
the finely designed bottle  
I found on its shore  
with a message inside  
waiting to be read by the world.

Her time before living eyes—  
brief.  
I caught a mere glimpse  
through multi-colored glass,  
a sentence she wanted to speak.  
With meaning at mind's grasp—  
rough hands smashed her to shards—  
tossed her message into the ocean  
to float above the abyss  
from where she was born.

A human prophecy  
unfulfilled—  
the bottled illumination of 2005,  
the lighthouse that signaled me in  
from the storming tide of SoCal despair—  
long dimmed in 2026.  
Days by the thousands—  
decades drizzle away  
from the wild of her time  
into the curated chaos of today.

The curved—  
red-capped bottle.  
The peeling—  
dated label  
of a sweet drink discontinued—  
no longer on display.  
Now a disintegrating scroll in the  
unknown—  
Unread  
offshore,  
floating too far for human eyes to see.

# *Phillip Bannowsky*

from Jacobo the Turko

July 2006: Hamoudi and Jacobo Escape Beirut

*Whoever got evacuated didnt c shit from the war , us, the people who were stuck in the country knew it was getting serious after the evacuation which it did!, stop acting all war traumatized you didnt c shit from it, heh,,, cry babies with their foreigners passports and citizenchips.*

—Marmar Mar, YouTube comment “Evacuating Lebanon”

Peace and war coexist in the compass and the clock.  
A woman in headscarf dashes for flat bread  
in the peace between bullets;  
a continent goes about its business a world away.  
European evacuees cram the queues  
by Lebanon’s coastal palms (so gay!)  
while smothered thunder pounds Hamoudi’s home  
in Beirut’s south, again.  
He cups his clamshell: Burj al Barajne’s still OK.

From the highway, Lebanon ascends  
to mountain retreats and cedar origins, flanked  
with terracotta roofs that lift their orange tiles  
from silver rows of olive to the sun.  
Below, video billboards tout Gauloises to spellbound cars,  
light standards sift the breezes, and  
newly-stacked balconies wait, virginal,  
for Israeli jets spewing contrails like prurient birds.

Yesterday, hurrying back to camp, ka-boom!  
a shock wave slammed us like  
an angry hand, massive, lascivious,  
and down the street the block collapsed:  
It was see, and don’t see, in dust, deafness,  
and crumbling rubble.  
We were too numb for terror,  
but a kernel of anger opened deep in my brain,  
not so much for Jewish Jets  
as U.S. bombs.  
Ojala that America see  
what I see, insha’Allah.

Today, we've wrapped our heads  
in T-shirt keffiyehs, sweatsoaked.  
Water bottles squeak. The sea,  
a stepstone to Cyprus, is stained  
with jagged meanders, gray, suds-lined.  
We endure the long wait from hazy dawn  
to sultry nightfall at the gate to the marina.  
At midnight, someone is shouting orders.  
So is someone else.  
Chinooks overhead: spotlights set circles of sea afire,  
white like phosphorous. U. S. Marines in desert cammies sort  
the delivered and the denied.  
Hamoudi and me: no, but they frisk us  
and record forever the lies our passports tell  
before they send us back  
behind the gate. The latch  
laughs as it falls with a clank.

Americans, Canadians, Australians, French, and the rest  
of Europe leave before it gets worse.  
Turkish wait, and we with them.  
Fear is getting easy.

Days later, time and downed bridges have erased  
the traffic, the lights, the video for Gauloises, and  
most of what's left of the peace.  
A hungry siege sets in,  
and more are dead,  
but a damp dawn finds a Turkish ship, or boat, grating the shoals.  
A launch opens on the stubbly beach  
and we queue by concrete tetrapods stacked like colossal jacks.  
Turkish soldiers finger random passports,  
spying forgeries and forbidden stamps.

Profiling is lax with a little baksheesh, and we pass.  
The launch drops from our shoe soles and slaps  
the Mediterranean as we scale steep ramps and board.  
On a giant banner, red as arterial blood,  
an Ottoman star and crescent warns,  
*Turkos: Don't shoot.*

Derbekeh strikes an Arabic beat: we dance, arms on  
shoulders, the Lebanese Debkeh, kicking at our fatigue below  
the quarterdeck. Finally, a sign in Cyprus taunts:  
*Welcome to Limassol Port Crossroad to Peace and  
Safety.*

Hamoudi trades his Beqa'a hash for the boatripe to Istanbul. Four days  
sleeping sorely on wooden decks, sick two,  
we finally wake to a thousand cargo ships in files and ranks  
on the marbled sea, dwarfing us like peddlers carting flat  
bread among Alcázars of global trade.

## *Mary Pauer*

### **Cry Me A River**

No tears for what might have been  
nor tears for a past that never was  
crusty tears of grief  
a scab over a wound.  
tears of joy do not fall  
down my face,  
no tears for times gone by  
nor regrets, no tears for my life  
No tears for ground where you lay in death  
Cry, cry until lacrimal glands collapse  
lowly leaking salty water  
My heart cracked and broke  
no tears for the years passing by  
Day by day,  
Sunrise to sunset  
No tears bathe my dusty soul  
You are gone  
No tears pour down my cheeks  
Into hiccups  
Into laughter,  
Nothing will be that funny again.

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## Contributors

**Phillip Bannowsky** is the Poetry Editor for *Dreamstreets*. He is a retired autoworker and international educator. He is the current manager/host of 2nd Saturday Poets, the monthly reading founded in 1983. His works include *The Mother Earth Inn*, a novel, and *Jacobo the Turko: a novel in verses*.

**Ray Greenblatt** is an editor for the *Schuylkill Valley Journal* and teaches a “Joy of Poetry” course at Temple University. His newest book of poetry is *From an Old Hotel on the Irish Coast* (Parnilis Media, 2023). He has written book reviews for the *Dylan Thomas Society*, *John Updike Society*, and *Joseph Conrad Today*.

**Michael (Mafundi) Kennard** is a poet and playwright from Wilmington, Delaware. Among his works is the play *No Struggle, No Progress*.

**Steven Leech** is the Executive Editor of *Dreamstreets*, serves on the board of the Delaware Rock and Roll Society, and is the Host of Boptime on WVUD 91.3 FM, a program of twentieth-century music with a historical perspective. His literary scholarship includes *Valdimar’s Corpse*, *The Wedgehorn Manifesto*, and the introduction to *The Delaware Guide*, a 2006 reprint of the 1938 Federal Writers Project, *Delaware: A Guide to the First State*. His novels include *Raw Suck*, *2,000 Years*, *Untime*, and *Poe’s Daughter, Pym’s Soul*.

**Phil Linz** has published *The Chapbooks: Collected Poems* (2019), available in both ebook and hard-copy formats. He has twice been selected as a Delaware Division of the Arts Fellow and is a frequent reader at Wilmington’s 2nd Saturday Poets. Linz is a member of the American Academy of Poets, the Mad Poets Society, and the Beat Museum.

**Lorraine MacMillan** has been a regular at 2nd Saturday poets for three decades, going back to O’Friel’s Irish Pub. She lives in Wilmington, Delaware, and has been writing for a long time. Poetry gives her comfort and joy. She really likes to share her work with others. Not one day goes by that she does not write a poem. She also loves to draw and read plus, go bowling.

**Michael Roque.** Born and raised in Los Angeles to Delawarean parents, Michael Roque discovered his passion for poetry and prose among friends on the bleachers of Pasadena City College. Now residing in the Middle East, he draws inspiration from the bustling, tumultuous life around him. His work has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies worldwide, including award-winning publications such as *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Queen’s Review*, *The Roanoke Rambler*, *Poetry Super Highway*, and many others.

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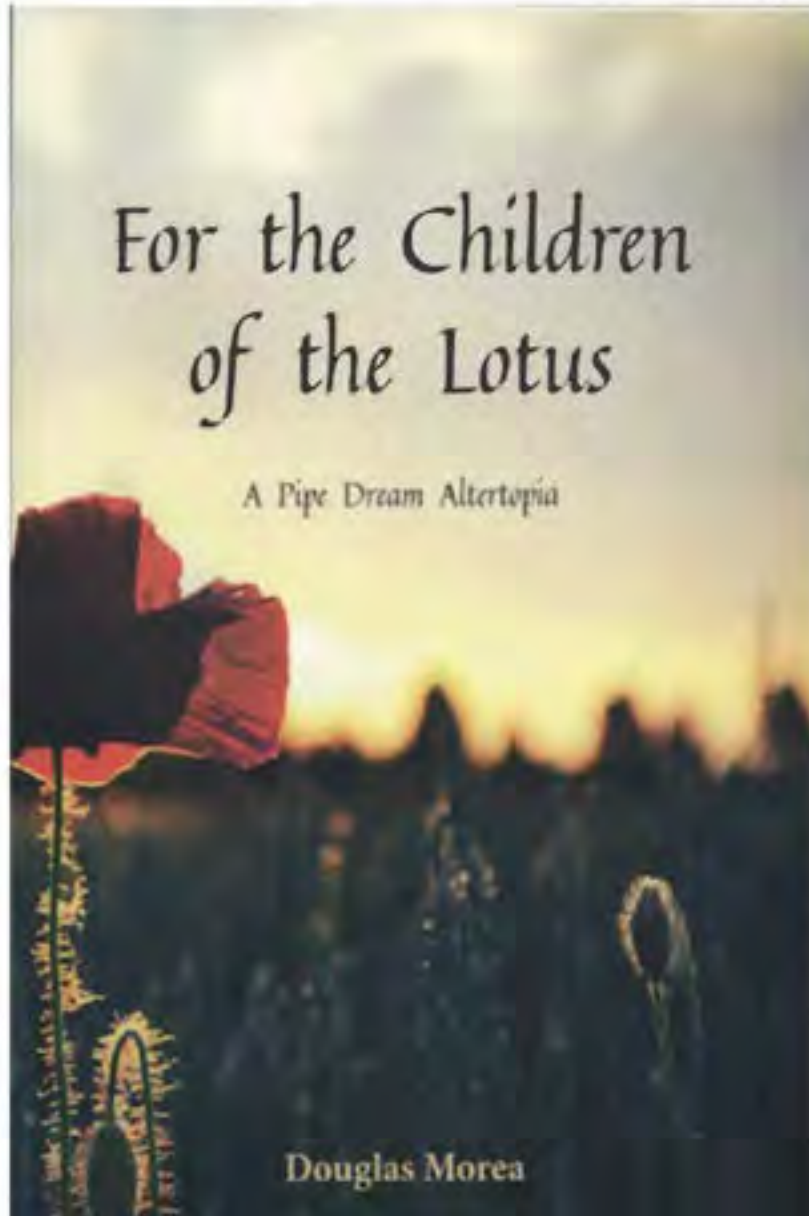
**Ken Segal** is an artist, poet, ceramicist, and retired graphic artist. His poetical works include *Poems from Hill*, *Love Poems no. 2*, and *Poemicide: Perfect Poems for the Endtimes*. In 2016, he published a selection of his drawings called *Marker Drawings No. 1*. He is a regular contributor to *Dreamstreets*.

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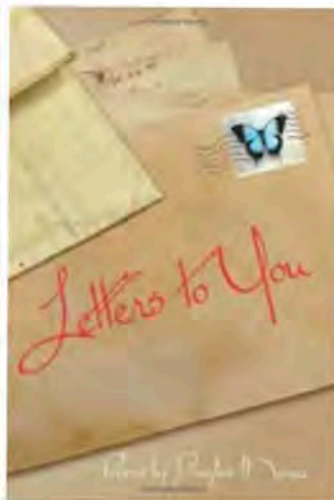


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