

## THE NEXT TIME WE SAW PARIS

“The next time was the last time.”

One morning we saw de Gaulle  
himself in uniform chauffeured  
alone in an open Peugeot.  
He seemed to dare assassination  
as he did near Notre Dame  
during the Liberation parade.  
On house fronts and doors we noticed  
small bronze plaques with names  
followed by *Victime de Nazis*.  
We'd read reports that *Enfants  
des Boches* reached 100,000  
during the Occupation.

“Horizontal  
Collaborators” were shorn bald,  
spat upon and marched naked  
through the streets.

De Gaulle  
pronounced all executed traitors  
justly punished.

We focused  
on Paris of the postcards: Sacre-  
Coeur, the Eiffel Tower,  
the Champs-Elysees, the Louvre.  
The Folies-Bergere booked sellouts.  
The Bateau Mouche was packed.  
Lounging by the Seine, a fisherman  
propped his rod against  
a bench and smoked a Gitanes





and share alike is worlds  
away from all our public  
massacres or wars we wage  
for warfare's sake.

It seems  
we are the lone species  
that kills its kind by choice.  
Lately we've invaded space  
and set our sights on Mars.  
Will we retain our malice  
in the stratosphere and be  
as lethal there as here?

The first  
murder on the moon will tell us.

#### THE PAINTERS OF NUDES

Like girls not yet aware  
of what a woman's body  
means, they offered Renoir  
the texture of skin.

On canvas  
they became an old man's dream  
of women playfully nude  
for him alone...

Picasso's  
early nudes look almost  
like cartoons.

His fans  
anointed them "Picassos."  
Compared to what he mastered

in his “Blue Period,” they seem  
at best a phase...

Pearlstein’s  
nudes appear exhausted.  
The only feeling they arouse  
is sympathy...

Egon Shiele  
and Gustav Klimt painted  
like “Peeping Toms.”

The yawning  
thighs of their nudes expose  
the hidden orifice of queens.  
Drawn to perfection, they qualify  
as art.

Photographed, they’d be  
pornography...

Compulsive over  
cleanliness, Bonnard’s wife  
spent hours in a bath tub.  
Her husband painted her there  
time after time...

Rembrandt  
painted Saskia in costume  
or naked in bed.

Her expression  
stayed the same in both.  
Theories are a waste of time.  
A woman attracts; a man  
reacts.

Art as reaction  
says less about the woman,  
more about the man.

$$E=mc^2$$

I think of Luther, Rosa  
Parks, St. Joan of Arc  
and Albert Einstein.

Could

Luther have assumed that saying  
“I can do no more” would launch  
the Reformation?

Did Rosa

Parks foresee that keeping  
her seat in the front of the bus  
would change the South forever?

Who could predict that Joan  
of Arc would rise as the soul  
of France after being cursed  
and burned alive?

And Albert

Einstein?

His perfect equation  
of energy, mass and light  
has nuclearized the world.  
The formula is small enough  
to cover with a postage stamp.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

Unless we feel, we fail  
to remember.

Those killed in war  
become just names or numbers.  
And those who took their lives  
by choice?

Additional numbers.  
Or those who took the paths  
of least resistance?

More numbers.  
If we believe Erasmus,  
the world is ruled by folly.  
What passes for honor is folly.  
Statues commemorate the least  
noble.

The infamous and wealthy  
are known eternally by name.  
Assassins and saints are buried  
alike in cemeteries groomed  
like gardens.

The folly of faith  
without love or action sullies  
what passes for religion.

Entrepreneurs  
and men of state confirm  
Erasmus as a prophet...

It takes  
a rebel, often a woman,  
to choose the option of fools  
and live for others.

Folly

has no defense.

By feeling

what she means and loving how

she lives, she cares for what

is overlooked or lost

and makes what's lasting last.

For Janine Bayer