

*Within our apartment, at my desk, I sat in classic pose, forehead on my fist.*

*The idea was that I was composing poetry and that I was, therefore, not to be disturbed. The fact that the paper before me was blank was evidence only of the process in action; poetry being the pure distillation of a multitude of abstracts...*

*What nonsense I used to talk. What nonsense people once so gladly believed of me. The poetry of Farley Judd was a gross pose. Granted, I had once had some poems published at a publisher's expense, but that only goes to show how totally gullible are the people of these times. The first use of poetry, for me, has always been to impress myself softly into the small warm ears of women, to ease myself soulfully into their accommodating beds. And, in my poems, I have accused other artists of wanton cynicism...*

*Let me here declare that at fifty I was too old to be a poet, was just being clever with words. Any poetry written by anyone beyond the age of thirty is a passionless pastime, is whimsy only, is a narcissistic playing with words and form. Poetry at that age is not the fountainhead of emotion, be it of love or disgust. And I still owned loyalty enough to the poetic ideal to despise my beyond-thirty pretence.*

*Truth be told, even here I am being unfair to myself: I early had sense enough not to mistake a seductive pose for a vocation. Twenty two published poems are a precarious foundation on which to build a livelihood. Instead I stuck in Service and played the dilettante.*

*And old social habits die hard: I'm used to mocking either my poetry or my Service post, depending on my audience. That pretence has become me.*

*I'm trying here to be wholly and prosaically honest and I am finding it heavy weather. Because, to be honest, I enjoyed both my poetry and my D-of-C work; but, such is our society, that I was not expected to take pleasure in either.*

*To survive in this society, to excel in my career, I have become ingrained with subterfuge. I have lived lies. I ache now for honesty.*

*To add to my own confusion many of my more psychoanalytical friends have queried my almost singleminded desire to bed women. They have called it a twisted sublimation of my latent homosexual desires, have called me chronically insecure, have said that I suffer from penis inferiority, vaginal envy, impotency fears, Oedipus and Atlanta complexes. For my own complex part, citing my artistic tendencies, I have claimed that my poetic sensitivities have been ravished by the classical form of Woman and my life's desire is to fully experience Her Body.*

*Privately I am more of the opinion that I simply like fondling the tits and buttocks of goodlooking women prior to sticking my upstanding member into them. Amend that — the tits and buttocks of women: they don't have to be goodlooking.*

*My Service position and my poetry enabled me to indulge my pastime. Find a quiet corner*

*in a Service social gathering, lower my voice to a husky tremolo and use, at random, profound and multisyllabic words; which when added up don't mean a damn thing, save that I think the woman's sensitive enough, dupe enough, to be impressed by them. And I watch their pupils dilate with the very throaty and intimate culture of it.*

*Nor are intelligent women immune to its transparent charm. The very meaninglessness of the spiel appeals especially to the more cynical women. It amuses them to make of me a mere plaything, to toy with and gratify my carnal masculine lusts, while verbally abusing me in the process.*

*This use that I make of what passes for poetry is another of the reasons I don't much like the company of men. My whole persona is geared towards getting inside women's underwear: any attempt to simultaneously impress men would detract from my seduction technique. Whereas, with guttural poetry, I can brush aside all flimsy objections, all tenuous loyalties and vague moralities. Such poetry out of context, however, will not impress the menfolk: they readily see through the pose to my lecherous intent towards their womenfolk.*

*Not all women, more's the pity, are so readily forthcoming. A few happy words and a glad hand on the left buttock might suffice a very few; others require a lengthier courtship. One such was sitting in silence behind me that evening, was the sole reason for my pretence at creation.*

*That evening I didn't want to talk to Perri Erbach.*

*The reason being that Perri Erbach had the knack of eliciting confessions from me even by her silences. And she could be monumentally silent.*

*My guilt was making me keep my distance. And I felt guilty not because I'd been unfaithful to her bed. (Though in actual fact it was my bed. Being a Service apartment it had made economic sense for her to move in with me.) No, with my life style, being caught in flagrante is an occupational and occasional hazard; and in an enclosed society is inevitable. Indeed there is no bigger farce than being unfaithful to your woman in a small closed society — is she only pretending not to know? Or does she know that you know she knows you've been unfaithful? Etcetera. So Perri may well have known about, or suspected, my peccadillo three nights previously with the sixty six year old. (I don't mean to harp on about her age: it is simply a convenient distinguishing label.) But, until Perri chose to act on any knowledge, or on any suspicions she might have, our arrangement was safe.*

*No, what I felt guilty about was wanting to leave her. Such a desire was new to me.*

*Normally my women left me for what I regarded as my perfectly innocent transgressions. At bottom, I think, it was my lack of discrimination that offended most of my women. Should their rivals have been more fashionably attractive than themselves — as was sometimes the case — then they all could have beaten their own fulsome breasts, have bewailed their female misfortune, and*

*have schemed narrow-eyed to hang onto their peripatetic man. But when their 'rival' resembled, at best, a squashed pastry on doughy legs, then their disgust rapidly took them from me.*

*Why, you may wonder, would I be attracted to a squashed pastry on doughy legs? An aphorism any discerning shopper knows is not to be misled by the packaging. With such an amatory policy many is the time that I have indiscriminately chanced upon a 'bargain'...*

*You may also wonder why, with my philandering proclivities, I should cultivate a regular attachment. But, as I have already said, some women require working upon; and it seems inequitable to reap just the one night's reward for a month's cultivation.*

*This makes me sound far more cynical and unsentimental than, in reality, I was. For instance I was genuinely fond then of Perri Erbach; and her pretences to me and mine to her were no more than most cohabiting couples. As I have also been genuinely fond of most of the women with whom I have lived, have been sorry when they have left me. To say, though, that I loved them, which I nevertheless did say, is not wholly accurate.*

*With my experience I know which women will immediately reject any overt or ribald advances. Though, thankfully, I can still be occasionally surprised — a timeworn innuendo bandied back and Farley Judd's in happy business. But there do exist women to whom the idea of sex simply does not initially occur. Such women, so alien to my lewd self, fascinate me. I set out to win them. To do so I have to fill their every horizon. Their every thought has to be of me. And this is a lascivious strategy without equivocation, not some perverse ploy to satisfy my ego. Because to win her I have to loom large before her; to be the focus of her obsession, of her infatuation. In order to love I first have to become loved.*

*And such I had done with wistful Perri Erbach. Poetry and painting had been employed; so too fine wines, exotic foods and soulful concerts. Thus did I satisfy all of her senses but one. That aching void she finally begged me to plug. But on her terms. And living together we accommodated to one another; and desire evolved into, slowed into, a fondness for, an indulgence of one another's foibles and oddities.*

*Thus indulged I sat there aping poetry and felt guilty. So unused was I to leaving a woman that the very unfamiliarity almost provoked real poetry. However, so blithely unaware was she of my self-agonising, that I came close that evening to hating her.*

*The above emotion was familiar, has to be known by many a philandering man. You spend hours picking up courage to look directly at the woman who knows you have been unfaithful to her. And when, finally, unhappily, you turn your unwilling eyes onto her... she's looking elsewhere — into a screen, into a book — and she's smiling! You're the one then who feels betrayed. All those dark self-accusing thoughts you've done battle with, the ignominy you have heaped upon your own treacherous head, all that bravery in the face of her overwhelming righteous criticism, that sense of*

*martyrdom on the altar of your own ultimate honesty — all of it gone to waste because something else has caught her fickle attention.*

*I cautioned my galloping thoughts. The only reason I felt guilty was because I wanted to leave her now. It was not as if I did not want to return to her. I did. I would have been quite content to keep Perri Erbach as my constant companion, watch the years fatten her... After I came back.*

*Why, I asked myself, did I want to leave? The answer was simplicity itself — because I like moving. Normally I never stay anywhere long enough to hang the pictures on the walls. Before this station the longest I had spent anywhere was 2 years on a station where the DD and I had shared an understanding and her capacious apartment. And I had been two and a half years on this station already, the latter one and a half with Perri Erbach, and she had hung some pictures on the walls.*

*Perri was an illustrator of scientific journals. She didn't though seem that interested in her work. Didn't in fact seem that interested in anything very much. Her holos were often sloppily executed. Her fitful housework too always seemed incomplete. She gave me the impression of someone passively waiting; and, whatever it was that she did while she waited, was of no account. However, when, whatever it was she was waiting for arrived, she'd then, although she didn't yet know what it was, but she did know she'd then breathe fire and perfection.*

*So it's not as if I felt trapped by Perri's vigilant domesticity. She allowed me great latitude, never queried my excuses for my occasional nocturnal absences. No, I simply wanted to move on, to leave the place, to have it at a distance and the memories of it encapsulated in a smell, a taste, a tune. Stay in any one place and, I knew, the memories would lack edges, would be simply Before Now. Then. Sometime. Once. My going away now would give me a memorable datum. And my going, after all, was on official business.*

*Taking a deep breath I decided to throw myself on fate, to let events take their course. (Not that I'm a fatalist, but I tend always to take an historical view of the present — what will all this matter in ten years time? I am temperamentally inclined, therefore, to see any actions of my own as inconsequential. A humility that is at odds with my otherwise robust ego.)*

*"Perri," I turned on my seat to face her. She had a book in her lap, read to the end of the paragraph before looking up.*

*"I've got to go off-station in the morning. Those missing Talkers. No saying how long I'll be gone."*

*"You want me to leave here?" It was her stock response, her verbal hold on her sexual independence. Her finger marked her place on the page.*

*"Of course not. I'll just be gone awhile."*

*"You got everything ready?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Anything there?" she nodded to the desk, her finger still on the page.*

*"Not yet."*

*I turned back to the blank sheet of paper. She moved her finger off the page. I wondered if she would have continued reading if I'd asked her to vacate the apartment.*