

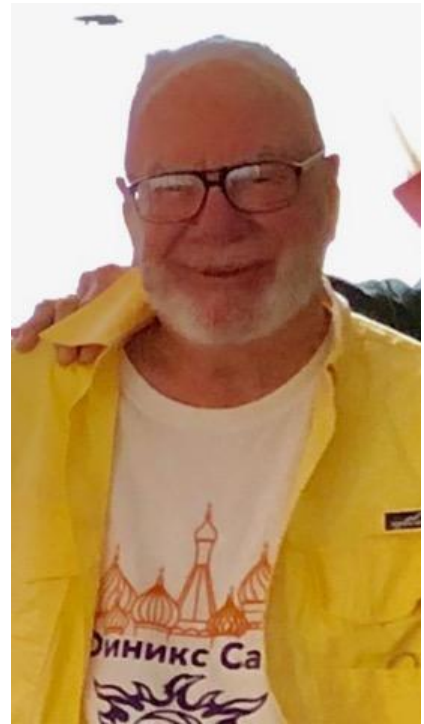
Janus - an elegy

"I felt a funeral in my brain..."

--- Emily Dickinson

spurt spurt pulses red
splashing blood in arcs overhead
Ernest Davies poked a hole
in the palm of his hand
in Mrs. Wilson's chemistry class
she popped a fat corset

how wonderful it is to be
deeply human and dust
devil's dung and angels' wings
to trust the journey to eternity
how grand to love be loved
forgive forget let go give thanks
express our lust all passions sublime
increase increase provide provide
for something greater than ourselves
larger than our solitary lives
our wives
our kids
deceased deceased it cannot be
young Lycidas is lost to sleep
far before his time
I wonder
if we're all lost sheep
in need of verse and rhyme
Joe overdosed on 36 aspirins in the boy's room



the pills kicked in just in time
all 6 feet nine inches of him passed out
and without a shout
he lay sprawled and slobbering
across the long desk in
Mr. Meagher's mild-spoken English class
Joe recovered to serve in Nam
only to suffer electrocution in Chile in August '69
one died for beauty one for love
some of us by suicide
and all of us had great pride in EHHS
this poem's energy pumping pumping
(like Ernie's squirting severed artery)
spends its force in images and tropes
of Joe's at-home chemistry experiments
which after a bang blew our eyebrows off
October 1957 sputnik flew through
Mrs. Wilson's chemistry class
and the circuits of our brains

non scholam sed vitam

Paula Pitkin took off her petticoat one day
in Mr. Briarton's senior English class
sitting next to her I flushed red
wished I were dead
like O. E. Polvaag's **GIANTS IN THE EARTH**
which we were reading at the time
"eeggchually, Paula...!" Mr. B ____ would have said
in his faux Brit-lit accent
but he was out of the room just that moment
I'd rather be in bed

to this day he reminds me of James Merrill
(our gay, deceased Connecticut poet of some renown)
Zipping around town in his white MGB classy coupe
how many of you know that Mr. B
sporting one undescended testicle?
(with him it was always a good day for a lay)
one of our class ladies still drives a truck-
that's right! "good night, Irene, good night..."
another tries her luck
each night at Foxwoods
we've produced architects who resurrect:
J Frank Fitzgibbons of Rome, Italy, and LA.
Roman splendor in Los Feliz and seven hills;
Peter Paquette's plaster of paris
sand castles practicing on sound view beach;
in 1959 everything was within reach
we felt no class inequities
except with Liz Larabee's cold, reluctant hand
in the Honor Society's reception line
Irish Polish Italian Dutch French Afro or Greek
Yankee Russian Danish and Swede - no matter
for we were all royalty in our mother's eyes
and Mrs. Marie Davis came along to save us
from those sweet sisters Larabee
some came out bleary-eyed from Mrs. Cleary,
Miss Howlett ("scratch") Miss "froggy" Fry
History biology Mr. Bowden's geometry
Finally, I flunked gym

Janus - an elegy

Part 2

EHHS 1959

"the countless silken ties of love and thought"

Robert Frost

Across the red rainbow we flew
like flocks of pigeons
swooping and circling for the joy
and ecstasy of young energy
we swarmed in class on the field
on stage in high school's DRAMA'S mysteries
formed packs of party-goers
birds-of-a-feather shone together
in high wire acts for display
our mutual bonds blossomed
in friendships clubs romances
our teams triumphed like Greek heroes
running like grunions—sometimes
the wrong way on the football field
we come here
not to bury or praise the dead
but to express our deepest compassion instead
for one another
for our botched lives
our broken dreams and missed gold rings
for material things losses
costs of caring lack of sharing
in deepest human sympathy

we were dream-catchers ripe fruit

my innocence betrayed me
my ignorance — to boot
blind to high crimes and misdemeanors
I missed all the shades
of the new Dillinger days
some personal tragedies
sidelined one or two like me —
unable to get free from childhood trauma —
we were delayed fuses
hidden in the ashes of emotional poverty;
others were captured early by the muses
drama song painting dance
we were demons of art in a trance
drowned in creative inspiration and romance
Oh! Why? oh why did I swell in my seat
when Tab Hunter did his cowboy dance
what if love will finally free us all
like the Greek ideal of early school days?
we were inebriated drunk on education
on harmony balance proportion in all things
the Greek golden rule: nothing in excess
of which we have made a big mess
what if love will save us all?

Francis E. Crowley
January 30, 2009
Tucson, AZ