

WILL JAMES



# The Woman in Dark Clothes

Poems

# *The Woman in Dark Clothes*

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*Will James*

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*"There is another heaven & earth beyond the world of men"*  
*Li Po*

*With Our Eyes Closed*

Darkness descends without a sound on the wings of an invisible horse.  
No one knows his name, this stranger in love with his own shadow.

We are walking backwards now with our eyes closed.  
We have nowhere else to go.

*The Woman in Dark Clothes*

(for Edith Stein)

She adored Husserl, the depths of his thought.  
But philosophy was not enough for her.  
She became a student of love.  
We breathe in the ashes of those burned  
in the ovens of Auschwitz.  
Flowers bloom out of the dust.  
She walks with us in the darkness.  
She is familiar with it.  
She knows the way out.

They were not aliens from another planet.  
They put their human faces on just like us  
before they dropped Zyklon B in a hole  
in the roof and waited for the bodies to fall.  
That they shared in our common humanity  
somehow made monsters of us all.  
But why should we feel responsible  
for their crimes,  
when we barely recognize our own?

But the stain remains just the same.  
It will take all of human history to recover  
from that loss.  
We breathe in the ashes of those burned  
in the ovens of Auschwitz.  
Flowers bloom out of the dust.  
She walks with us in the darkness.  
She is familiar with it.  
She knows the way out.

## *The TV*

They left the TV on for years. No one ever  
seemed to watch it.  
Often, I could see it through the open drapes  
illuminating the room at night.  
Eventually the TV caught fire.  
Flames shot out from the walls  
and the roof.  
Someone called the police.

Neighbors gathered in the street.  
They opened their mouths in wonder  
but no one spoke. They watched it all  
like some kind of ancient sacrifice  
as they witnessed clouds of smoke  
floating up into the heavens,  
sending signals to those  
no longer left on the ground.



*The Hills of Judea (The Woman in Blue)*

She walked in from the hills  
wearing blue jeans with frills.  
She sang a song in a broken voice.  
It was the only one she had,  
she had no choice.  
Some say she took pills  
to kill the pain.

She was a stranger here,  
no one knew her name.  
There was beauty in her eyes.  
There was a wound she could not hide.  
Her hair had a touch of gray.  
There were lines in her face.  
She sang a song in a broken voice.

It was the only one she had,  
she had no choice.  
She walked in from the hills  
wearing blue jeans with frills.  
She sang a song in a broken voice.  
It was the only one she had,  
she had no choice.

*The Hereafter*

How many clowns would fit into a toy car in the hereafter?  
Imagine them piling in. Imagine the laughter.

We search for poltergeists in a darkened room.  
Will there be space enough for them to bloom?

We wake in a world of make believe, as we hover between  
what is seen and unseen.

We scan the brain  
and enter into that mysterious terrain.

Human consciousness is a mystical thing,  
seemingly held together with two tin cans and one lone string.

We look out at the heavens from a darkened room.  
Will there be space enough for us to bloom?

How many clowns would fit into a toy car in the hereafter?  
Imagine them piling in. Imagine the laughter.

*The Planet of the Blind*

Light shone all around them but they did not see it.  
They had eyes but they remained closed.

No one analyzed their dreams.  
No one even knew if he they had any.

Like Oedipus they walked in a world of darkness.  
They existed in a land of unknowing.

They built war machines.  
In air conditioned rooms, they piloted drones

by touch and dropped bombs  
on innocent women and children.

Whirlwinds of dust blew all around them.  
Radioactive clouds darkened the sky.

Ultimately, they considered themselves blessed  
by their blindness.

When the end came, no one cried,  
no one was left to tell their story.

Light shone all around them but they did not see it.  
They had eyes but they remained closed.

*Death of a Televangelist*

They claimed children would be blessed and would impart wonders  
to others by touching the TV screen,  
that the dead would be raised by being placed in a room  
with a TV tuned to their programming, coming from signals  
high in the sky. (Surely the moon  
witnessed their conspiracy to defraud viewers of their savings.)  
Even as the pope abandoned his papal palace,

they continued to broadcast their gospel of prosperity  
on satellites worldwide.  
They flew not on the wings of angels  
but on the wings of private jets.  
In a platinum pink bouffant wig (like a drag queen in a John Waters film),  
the one sat beside the other.  
They lived in mansions paid for with promises

they could never keep. The fault was not in the Gospel.  
The fault was with them.  
(God is not a genii in a bottle to be bought and sold.)  
Paul Crouch is dead. But his body will not be resurrected  
in front of a TV screen tuned to TBN.  
He is caught in the eye of a needle.  
There is no need to send any cash.

*Here in the Shade of Blue Televisions*

Here in the shade of blue televisions,  
we winter in the outer dark  
and cast our nets  
into an ocean of stars.

We wait for a signal.  
We long for a sign to guide us,  
a word, a beam of light that will render us  
sanctified and whole.

We cling to scraps of paper in skyscrapers.  
(The world is ruled by admen  
and conjurers,  
lobbyists and salesmen.)

The dead live among us.  
There they stand,  
those that we once turned away,  
long hidden in the folds of time,

now transformed,  
made new again,  
born out of invisible waves,  
crashing on an invisible shore.

Here in the shade of blue televisions,  
we winter in the outer dark  
and cast our nets  
into an ocean of stars.

*We Open Our Mouths But No One Knows How to Sing*

While a dictator is deposed, monsters wait in the wings,  
their eyes shining in the darkness.  
From the top of the world everything seems so small.  
From the top of the world is a long way to fall.

When the student of a poet guns down thirty two people,  
her books suddenly fill the library shelves,  
she is interviewed on TV, her books begin to sell.

After over one thousand are gassed outside of Damascus,  
the president asks congress for authorization to drop  
American bombs to rid Bashar al-Assad of his ghosts.

We open our mouths but no one knows how to sing,  
even the stars have lost their meaning.  
From the top of the world everything seems so small.  
From the top of the world is a long way to fall.