

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

George Sparling
Francis Bacon's Painting 1946

A floating umbrella in the foreground hovers, its flimsiness squandering all hope of sanctuary. I stand beneath it, fearful, alone, sterile, the cold, hanging slabs of meat offers no sustenance. I am engulfed by crucifixion's parody, my bone-hand clenched, burnt beast-face, my sharpened rows of teeth good for ripping things apart not clinging to sexual blobs. Who would love me, this ugly eminence in these vile times? An ossuary, that is what I am, the white bones of war, of death-camp scrapes before me, that yellow Star of David, place of the skull, pokes up in my business cloak's pocket.

I too am that carcass hanging its sinews like outstretched arms; if the hulk had hands and fingers, they might reach out and grasp another hunk's sexual organs, gratifying mutual death-raptures. Unseen blood, though drenched in your oils, siphoned off as gasoline used to burn unwanted prisoners, so many to roast to a black crisp, your own face black death personified. The jejune thrives, enveloping my exposed, trembling carrion I lug daily.

I am the ostensible mortician as well as the split, martyred carrion stripped naked for newsreels, movies, headlines, and misshaped, leprous poets. My life as near to nothingness as conceivable, and, in the best circumstance, I would rather decompose than stand here forever.

I stare at the painting, then walk out the museum's door. You burst my heart to shreds, Mr. Bacon.