Memory’s Return

Seymour Banks*

*Iowa State College

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By Seymour Banks

GREEN barriers on brown-black earth, heat that stung and stultified, light that beat on more than skin—these encompassed Farm A, station in a corn-hybridization program. All day long I had been moving down long rows of corn, beaten by the sun’s impalpable scourge. Now it was late afternoon and the heat haze had lifted so that the fields, at least, were of finite length. The red slashes that had been cut into a minor pattern of pain by sun-blighted green knives were being merged now into the brown of my body.

On the last circuit, I was facing westward and looking down those living walls which were to me, city-bred, entirely foreign; yet through some primordial memory, I knew of the sun and the rough feel of the earth. Against the horizon, I could see the twisted branches of a squat tree, black and harsh against the red disk of the sun.

And as I raised my hand to pull the tassel from a stalk, a realization came over me. I knew that slight pull that outlined the ridges of my deltoid muscles. The touch of the leaves against the inner hand seemed to travel along nerve passages that had felt this stir before. Familiar in my nostrils was the bitter smell of dust. All bodily sensations were as pieces fitting into a pattern. I had done this before. I knew—I knew somewhere—what was to happen next!

SOMEHOW as I recognized the repetend of past action, time became fluid, past transversing present, and time-consciousness disappeared or was lost. It was as if I had arrived at the state of mental freeness where time and motion had liquefied, and thought lost the concreteness it once had. I knew my body was doing something, but I felt that the action was controlled by past thoughts. Freed of any call upon it, my conscious being was suspended in ether and was being gently moved by currents of infinite duration.
Harshly, the limpid surroundings of my quiet were torn, disintegrating the multiple images of myself, set, illuminated, somewhere inside of the blackness of my skull. I had taken another step and all that intricate structure was gone—memories, thoughts, sensations—all disappearing like the flashing colors of fish dragged onto dry land. All were lost because the environment that transmitted them was lost. Only the feeling of unreality remained, puzzling and annoying, like dead perfume in a long-closed house.

"Hey, Sleepy," I shouted, "what day is it?"
"Wednesday, of course. Th' hell's matter? Ya nuts?"
Perhaps. It is a strange thing, this loss of certainty.

Vision

By June Gaylord

Last night I saw you coming down the lane,
So tall and slim. I knew your weary walk
That stirred the dust, but you—you did not talk,
And I could not, for you were back again.

Your overcoat was thrown across your arm,
And there were scattered ashes on your vest.
My eyes blurred then. I couldn’t see the rest,
But it was you—returning to the farm.

You didn’t see me standing at the gate,
For you passed by, though it was opened wide.
And in the darkening gloom you seemed to slide
Away from me. I called to you too late.

Oh, Dad, I’ve waited three long years for you
To walk with me, just as you used to do.