

wall; a sickening smell of frying grease soon mixes in. A small, obviously unattended, two-year-old clad in a dirty diaper and buried in blackness crawls down the hallway. He has found that the roaches are his only playmates. For company he may pull up and look out the window to see the neighbors walking, standing, and sitting outside, no matter what the hour of the day or night. There are so many people that to look out onto the street they seem to have no identity; they just seem to exist.

Never so many people, never so much filth can be captured anywhere else as in this God-forsaken, inescapable blot. Here the horrid ugliness of reality arises and surrounds and suffocates us on all sides. This is *el barrio de Nueva York*.

My Window on the World: A Surrealistic Credo

Adrian Ford

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

JOHN 15:12

Man—of all ages and cultures—is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one's own individual life and find at-onement.

ERICH FROMM, *The Art of Loving*

I SWUNG open my window on the world. My reason stood gazing through my dreams, the sheer curtain of dreams billowing in the breeze. I saw a plain without a horizon, and flowing through its center a river without banks. The plain was my hope for mankind and the river was time.

On the plain were thousands and thousands of men. It appeared at first that some were moving slowly in groups, but I looked closer and saw that this was an illusion caused by their number and closeness—they were all moving alone. And their closeness was itself an illusion, for the distance between them was the greatest in the universe.

Then, in my heart, I heard the clock without hands strike the Hour of Man. I knew that some of the men had heard it before me, but not most. I knew that all of them would never hear it at once, just as they would never move along the river as one body. This mechanism of awareness, the clock without hands (Love is the soul's correlate of time, for the soul's time is movement in love), this clock must strike the Hour separately in each man.

A mist covered part of the plain and I could hear moaning within it. But when I heard the Hour of Man, I saw a bolt of poetry strike the plain and ignite lyrical fire which flickered in every direction. Another bolt cracked the sky and tore the mist apart. Angels,

the Ideals of men, descended and placed golden fingers to their lips: and the moaning was silenced. I knew that the lightning was born in the tension between the men and between the men and sky; that it was man's nervous need for man and for God. The air was charged with vigor by the bolts and the plain was lit with quivering beauty. I knew that some of the men had seen what I saw, but not most.

The lyrical fire flickered out of sight, but I knew it would never reach the limits of the plain, which were the limits of sight only. I now sensed that the men were restless, unhappy with themselves. Some of them went farther from the river, into the wilderness and away from their brothers. I watched one of them. It seemed that he wanted to fly like an angel—his visions were wings upon his shoulders. But he had twisted the strands of life into ropes and was bound with tough cords of memory. When he attempted to fly, he was thrown against the earth and bruised. He wept, and the wings of his dreams were drenched with disappointment. Then his Ideal rose from his body and floated above him, caressing his hair and smiling like a mother upon her child. And I saw in my heart the angels of all men arising; their fingers were the winds caressing blue locks of sky and their smiles threw light upon Creation. When the man's Ideal had thus comforted him he rejoined his brothers by the river.

I watched the men moving on the plain and knew that they all moved in search of love, or wandered toward what they thought was love. And I knew their progress along the river was not in vain, *could not* be in vain. They did not move toward an eternally vague question, but rather their moving toward and with one another was the eternally certain Answer. I thought to myself: "May these men never be paralyzed and unable to approach one another! Would they not then be the most frightening creatures in the universe—human souls paralyzed in disobedience to God? In disobedience to the new commandment of the Son of Jod? They would be as statues on the plain, and the plain an endless Hall of Infamy." But this would never come to pass. The Holy Spirit would always move in them, and move them to keep the commandment, and move with them along the river.

A steady breeze was blowing through the curtain of dreams. My reason breathed deeply and was refreshed. I knew the breeze had come across the plain along the river from beyond the limits of sight. I knew in my heart it was blowing from the sea to which the river flowed, the sea without shores which is the love of God. Then I sensed that the curtain of dreams was not hung in the window, but was actually one with my reason. I was a whole person standing at the window. So I went down to the river and moved with my brothers toward the sea without shores.