



America, Again, Frederick & Paulina

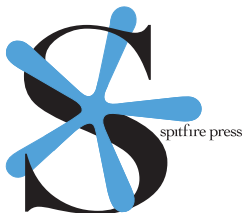
RADOMIR LUZA Jr.
ART BY SPITFIRE PRESS

Spitfire Press, Print Shop Project, Vol. 1, Fall 2004.

You are free to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: Attribution. You must give credit to Spitfire Press, the original author and the original artist involved on this project; Noncommercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes; No Derivative Works. You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work. For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above. This is a human-readable summary of the Legal Code (the full license). This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.

AMERICA AGAIN FREDERICK & PAULINA

by Radomir Luza, Jr.
Artwork by Spitfire Press



Spitfire Press, Print Shop Project, Vol. 1, Fall 2004

MOTEL

66
ROUTE 66

FREDERICK & PAULINA

RESTAURANT
CLEAN ROOMS & POWER
WASH TO YOURS
WASH YOURS
TRUCKS ON **24 31**

He wrote at 6:02 in the morning.
The words came. He did not know why. His beginnings seemed to end too soon. His ends had no beginnings. But he wrote in the mornings because they were not the nights. He wrote with a pen because he liked to feel the plastic in his hand. He did not have any talent. He did not want to look into his own soul. Sometimes, though, the writing came like a sandstorm. He wrote to stem the tide of anger and pain. He wrote to avoid himself.

She was beautiful. It ravaged her like a painful memory.

He did not lie, but he did not tell the truth.

She paused before sex. Before her partner could touch her breasts.

He walked slowly. Often stopping altogether. Other times stopping to get out of the way of a car or another person.

Poetry was new to her. It allowed her to express what she already knew.

She slept naked for the first time since she was a little girl.

He could write only while watching television. He would sometimes write on weekends.

And then she walked away. She had had enough of the silence. She wanted more.

He did not miss her. He wanted less.

She said she wanted love. She said she was willing to work at it.

Yet she still loved him. She always would.

She counted the numbers on his driver's license.

He walked home from work.

She slept late on Sundays.

Tomorrow everything would change. Tomorrow things would stay the same.

AMERICA



And Marlon Brando, James Dean and Montgomery Clift opened the floodgates,
And Lenny Bruce drowned in them.

Where Chevrolets, Buicks and Ford pick-ups find God.
And God finds us weeping under interstate overpasses between swigs.
In an America too cold to care and too indifferent to change.
Looking for tranquility or just quiet in abandoned bathroom stalls and overused needles.

Where New York City blows its nose on disaffection and disillusionment.
Like an avalanche on a paralyzed climber.

Where ecstasy has replaced cocaine as the mature drug.

Where America dons a disguise too ugly for Halloween and too pure for Christmas.

Where a truck driver like Elvis Presley changed the world. By not listening to it.

Where Jesus speaks every Sunday morning. And is mute the rest of the week.

Where Joshua, Vladimir, Rashamba and Mary jog around
Central Park every Sunday morning together.

Where Ray Charles, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, Duke
Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Marvin Gaye lived, struggled and died.

Where boys dare not be girls.

And girls dare not be more than 125.

Where peer pressure is always a step ahead of His pressure.

Where intellectuals, artists and scientists are nothing more
than freaks at somebody else's dinner table.

Where liberals and conservatives find only black and white.
When they should be looking for gray.

Where gay men and women who love each other
Are called dykes, faggots, queers and cunts.

Where beards meet beards,
Lipstick meets lipstick,
Hands cup breasts

2



And fingers grip chests 24/7

And sex still has a price.

Where the idea of me and you has been replaced by me.

Where fame lasts fifteen minutes

And blow-jobs fifteen seconds.

Where funding has replaced art

And Dick and Jane can't find a house under half a mil.

Where yes means no and

Courtney Love is another name for pain.

Where Buddah and Allah and Jesus drink from the same water fountain in Crown Heights.

Where love means sex and sex means nothing.

Where girls reading People and Us and In Touch realize that their
souls belong in the garbage and their tits in the wind.

Where polar opposites are often polar opposites.

Where the Sunset Strip has become a cartoon

Where a white guy won't ever see BB King in concert
And a black guy Bruce Springsteen.

Where you and me and every person in their house should
take the tv set and ram a dictionary through it.

Then look-up imagination.

Where cell phones should be outlawed everywhere.

Where slam poets should be taught that there is more to the art of poetry
than the same three words and that annoying sing-songy delivery.

Where forests and trees and meadows and plains should be preserved for my son and his daughter.

3



And the Rocky Mountains and Grand Canyon should be, well, left alone.

Where alcohol should be outlawed everywhere.

Where Hollywood should get fined 50 million dollars for every degrading,
badly-acted, unrehearsed, coldly-written film it releases.

Where therapists need ten years of study before they can practice.

Where prostitution should be legal for anyone 18 or above.

Where politics should be regarded as an artform
Not a corrupt joke.

Where poets like me can live off their work
Not somebody else.

Where the voting rights act was signed nearly forty years ago
And there is still a black America and a white America.

Where John, Medgar, Malcolm, Robert, and Martin were assassinated not coronated
For speaking-out against oppression, hatred and violence.

Where a revolution gave us birth and a millionaire in Afghanistan is trying to send us to death.

AGAIN



Is it the alley, stinking from day-old vomit, the kind the frat boys from Tulane deposited in the corner because they were too frightened or lazy to find a bathroom, or is it the half-empty bottles of vodka the homeless men and women left after another night of heavy drinking following another day of heavy sleeping that smells the worst?

Life really is surreal here on the Sunset Strip. The redness colors the street and outlines the neighborhood. It no longer matters who you know or how much money you have. What matters is who you are and how you carry yourself.

Los Angeles may be racially mixed, but on this night the sidewalks are filled with white college kids. It is rare to see an African-American or Hispanic. They seem to be parking cars and cleaning tables.

The Comedy Store boasts an alumni second to none. But many of the comedians in the open mic are alcoholic or homeless. A parade of lost and angry souls straddles the stage for three minutes seemingly holding-out for a chance at stardom they know will never come. Even on this night, sadness is difficult to avoid when leaving the building.

The Laugh Factory, also on the strip, is smaller and less famous, but it too hosts comedians from television and film. It is often one of these seasoned performers, I am sure, who soil another alley before going on stage.

The restaurants attract throngs of status-conscious Los Angelinos. The human traffic often flows onto the sidewalk where bouncers and security guards are forced to direct the indifferent masses.

It hardly matters anymore whether a young man or woman wants to hold onto their innocence. It is taken away from them by a world too desperate to care, and too jaded to notice. Indeed, it is almost better to have sex without love than vice versa. You get more respect, it seems, from the mainstream. Love is either too hard or too unrealistic. It is no longer worth the effort or the anxiety.

There is no love tonight. Not here. Not on these streets. Not on the Sunset Strip.

Radomir Luza Jr. is a writer/actor/comedian who believes that vulnerability and emotional transparency are the backbone of his work. Radomir would like to bring poetry into the same arenas and stadiums that rock and roll occupies. He has been writing poetry since 1986 and only recently started writing prose. His work has been published in publications such as The Boston Globe, Long Story Short, Seldom Nocturne, Nerve Cowboy, New Laurel Review and many more. Radomir's parents fled their Czech homeland in 1948 to avoid Communist persecution. Radomir was born in Vienna, Austria in 1963 and was raised in New Orleans, LA. He received a BA in English from Tulane University in NO in 1985. He has lived in Jersey City, NJ with his wife Monica for over five years.



For more information on Spitfire Press and the Print Shop Project,
please go to www.spitfirepress.com