

August 2021

1950s short story: The Melody Lingers On by Angela Bowen

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Recommended Citation

Bowen, Angela (2021). 1950s short story: The Melody Lingers On by Angela Bowen. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(8), 32.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss8/15>

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The Melody Lingers On

As we threaded our cautious way through the snarled up traffic, my companion made many comments on the forthcoming jazz concert. He was convinced that because I had accepted his invitation to attend, I was finally paying some attention to him and beginning to like jazz. Nothing could have been further from my mind; I was going for just one purpose: to hear (as well as see) that gentleman with the great big voice, Roy Hamilton.

When we got to the Boston Arena finally, after parking the car five blocks away and walking to the Arena, the lobby was so packed that we couldn't get inside, even though we had brought our tickets in advance. After stepping on toes and getting pushed around by the excited mob for nearly twenty minutes, we got inside at last and proceeded to locate our seats.

We had been settled for half an hour watching the sights, which consisted of a few middle-aged ladies in Bermuda shorts, a crew of hep-cats in pegged suits and be-bop caps, two very "oomphy" blondes in tight black dresses and mink stoles, and various and sundry other strange people, when suddenly the lights dimmed amid a roar of applause, while the master of ceremonies stepped out on the stage. He was none other than Symphoney Sid, the disc jockey, who is my pet peeve of the moment.

After hours (or so it seemed to me) of sitting through performances of boring jazz musicians like Count Basie, the modern jazz quartet, Wild Bill Davis, and others, I finally got the thrill of my life, for my idol of the moment stepped into the spotlight and began to croon amid the hysterical screaming, crying, and fainting of women of all ages around us. I could feel Walter looking at me surreptitiously out of the corner of his eye for a long while; then he turned his head front again and sighed relievedly, "Honey, I'm glad you're level-headed, not like these screaming dames." I felt my lips creak slowly up at the corners in a frozen facsimile of a smile, for what he didn't know was that I was thrilled motionless to my chair and had I opened my mouth, only a gurgle would have been emitted.

After Roy Hamilton came Sarah Vaughan, who couldn't live up to him, although she was billed top on the show. While she was still singing, Walter whispered to me, "Come on, let's leave now before the stampede starts," and taking my hand, he led me up the dark aisle. Holding my hand was a gesture of pure affection on his part, but little did he know that if I didn't have him to cling to, I

would have fallen into the aisle in a dead faint (the after-effects of hearing and seeing Roy Hamilton.)

We drove for an hour or so after the concert and I was thankful for the chance to clear my head. I was quite annoyed with Walter, for he kept breaking into my thoughts with his banal comments to my memories of Roy Hamilton's fabulous voice. Suddenly I realized that we had been sitting still for some moments, and, looking out of the window, I saw that I was at home. Walter was looking at me strangely. He said (in a voice which indicated that he had been saying it for quite some time) "Honey, I don't think Roy Hamilton lived up to our expectations; he was sort of disappointing, don't you think?"

I snapped out of my daze in one second flat. "Why, you've got a nerve. How dare you say he didn't live up to expectations? If you are disappointed, you're about the only one in the audience who was. Until you can change your mind, I don't think we'd better mention Roy Hamilton again."

Walter stared at me in stunned disbelief. Then he turned and walked back to the car muttering, "Women—they're all alike. It's only the exterior that looks different." I heard the car door slam as if from a great distance, for I was drifting slowly back into that semiconscious state, my daze over Roy Hamilton.

ANGELA BOWEN, '55

Her First Real Doll

I had just given a poor little girl her first doll. Upon the child's face was an expression of absolute joy as she clapped her hands with delight. She hugged the doll very tightly, then held it off to see it better, uttering little sighs and coos of delight as she found each new attraction. Her eyes looked big as stars and danced happily. As I stood beside her, I, too, looked at each part of the doll, remembering just a few of the many incidents of my early childhood. I remembered how excited I had been when I received that doll as a gift. Then the doll was new and fresh, and vivid with bright colors. Her hair was a brilliant gold and her eyes a dazzling blue; her cheeks had the hue of a pink rose. Now, because of the years spent in my attic and the many years cuddled in my arms, her hair has lost its curl, and the paint that gave her life and animation has begun to fade. While I was humbly accepting the little girl's thanks and her childish appreciation, I silently thanked her, for in my mind I was reviewing all the pleasant memories she had helped me to recall.

ARLENE BAKER, '55