

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 2 | 1993

Family Memoirs

Richard Shelton

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

The Prose Poem: An International Journal is produced by
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)
for the Providence College Digital Commons.
<http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/>

Richard Shelton

FAMILY MEMOIRS

One night, soon after they were married, my parents decided to go to the movies. It was probably a Clark Gable movie. My father looked remarkably like Clark Gable except he was a redhead, and my mother loved Clark Gable movies. They left their rooming house and caught a streetcar to the movies. When they got on the streetcar, all the women turned to stare at my father because he looked so much like Clark Gable. My mother loved to be seen with him.

But in her excitement over going to the movies with a man who looked like Clark Gable, my mother had left a lit cigarette in their room. When they returned from the movies, the rooming house was burned down and nearly everybody who lived in it was dead. That was not a very auspicious beginning for our family, but it was typical. It was also typical that my mother denied having left the lit cigarette and even denied that she smoked, but my father told everybody and would never let her forget it.

This probably explains why I and all my brothers and sisters are liars and smoke too much. My sisters lie about their ages and even who the fathers of their children are. They smoke in secret. My brothers are celibate but lie constantly about their sexual conquests and abilities. We suffer, like everybody else, from carelessness and good intentions, and things have not worked out very well for us. We are all redheads and only one of us, my younger sister, looks remarkably like Clark Gable.