

POETRY & PROSE

Obituary

The Death of Apathy

by Barry Drogin

Apathy was never a friend of mine. She used to hang out in the wrong circles, and I did my best to keep her name from being associated with mine, from even being mentioned in my presence. Still, the news of her death made me pause in my busy day, made me stop and think.

When I was a freshman, she had already had her heyday, her share of *Pioneer* headlines, "Apathy at Cooper," etc. Yes, she had made her mark on the scene, set herself up as symbol of the seventies, had done her best to influence the populace and subvert the powerful. Perhaps she had had no choice: her family's reputation preceded her arrival; was, in fact, quite infamous. I didn't know the facts of her childhood, her upbringing, what had made her the way she was; all I

knew was that I had arrived at an institution where she was enrolled, and that she was carrying on the family tradition.

As a freshman, I did not realize that she was already dying, already fading in mind and in spirit.

Was it a cancer she bore, or some hereditary disease? Could we have prevented her death—or did we, in fact, cause it? No one would answer these questions, was even asking them; her death came as a surprise to most of us. There was a rumor, and then we realized she was dead; it was so sudden, so unexpected. We asked her friends: What was the cause of death? When did it happen? Why?

They would not respond.

In fact, they implied that she was still alive, that the rumors were just rumors, but we knew better. She had made a last appearance at the Ties & Tails Party, but found herself with no friends to talk to, no dancing partner. She

silently sat in a corner, underdressed and undernourished, a melancholy smile on her face as she pondered her own mortality, her social failure, and her meager accomplishments.

I approached her at the party, probably due to pity, or guilt. How are classes?

She claimed she was too busy, overworked. She was no longer a free soul, that had been all before, Cooper was different. She was planning on taking a semester off, or risking probation. She was so confused. Did anyone care?

I don't know what made me do it—was I not thinking clearly? Was it the beer, or the emotion of the moment, or a true revelation of my inner being? My hate for her antics of the past seemed to dissolve away, and I was obsessed with a compassion for her well-being. I said, "I care."

A shudder traversed her entire body, and her head fell to between her knees, all quite suddenly. I reached out to her but she cringed, then fled.

I never saw her again.

Farewell, dearest Apathy. We confess our sins. We talked about you behind your back, accused you of many minor and major offenses, rationalized your actions and protested your beliefs. Some of us fought you to the end. But now you are dead, and we have no one to blame but ourselves.