

[Home](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Autumn 2007](#)

[Summer 2007](#)

[Spring 2007](#)

[Winter 2007](#)

[Autumn 2006](#)

[Summer 2006](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

[Fall 2005](#)

[Summer 2005](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)

[Contact](#)



Being a Jew

Re-inventing myself – those first few university parties
(New town. New life.)

If “religion” cropped up,
I’d let
it drop

that I was Jewish
(Just for fun – no harm done)

Till a month or so later,
another late-night party – slumped in a chair: a skinny, stubbly
face
suddenly
hovering
over me

– jabbering hysterically: “ZOG!...Hollywood!...Zionist Conspiracy!”

Very unnerving thing to happen.
(Especially when at university)

II

More recently, on a Prague City Bus: Airport to
downtown:

contentedly,
reading
my Guardian:

(a few seats behind, a Thai man – chatting with someone he’d just
met)

when half-way
to our destination – three young men boarded – and
(only moments later) began mimicking
the Thai man’s speech:

And no one on the bus reacted.

No one – at all.

I turned (a bit scared, sure)
to stare at them,
at each of them, individually – so they'd realize why:
And it worked well enough

– they shut up –
although it didn't make me any friends: getting off
the bus,
moving for the subway
the three of them
crowding
behind me,
(cowards)
muttering:
“Žid! Žid!”...Jew...Jew...

III

The third episode I'd like to relate,
if taken chronologically,
would actually be
my first
experience:

local Employment Centre had sent me – eighteen – just out of high
school, to clean the house of an elderly couple – very old Ukrainian
immigrants:

I worked hard – the floors, the walls,
the difficult windows and ceilings –
First, upstairs all morning,
then, in the afternoon, downstairs – where the old couple, feigned watching TV
but in fact, of course,
were observing my work:

It was a bit into July, and very hot
– I was dirty – sweating away like mad, moving my hand
over my T-shirt, wiping my brow (and yes, scratching) when: Rigid!: the old
man sat up: and:

(nostrils flaring)

Bellowed: “Are you a Jew!...
Scratching like that!...”

His wife
(who had fixed me a nice, if modest lunch)
was silent.
I too was silent.

Then,
to my shame,
I said,
“No...I'm not.”

Laundromat Myths

There are no and can be no
Halifax laundromats,
here in Hinesville, Georgia
No mousy, half-pretty students

biting their first lip of the fear
that is a little loneliness
and no overseeing owners
lifting Greek
lifting us
to at least
some
Olympus

Swinging dryer doors slam
NO

Here, all is automatic
disgust is automatic
anger is automatic –
Resignation –
automatic

and among
these ripped t-shirted mothers,
there is one father,
his kids tug for no response –
he broken bored stares
into the spinning of the years
spinning wet, spinning, spinning dry

Trichotillomania

There was this guy in Ancient Greece who was
tortured by his shadow – the shadow kept taunting him...
“Hey, Buddy, hey...yeah, you: You’re a loser, you know that?”

So what this guy did to protect himself,
to prove that he was superior to the shadow,
was to come up with a philosophy to negate the shadow – to make the shadow less
than real:

He alleged that even though we could see it, the shadow wasn’t real.

This didn’t help much

– he lost a lot of hair – pulling it out in clumps...

...and a colleague named Plato called him a fool in public – in addition to his shadow,
who kept it up: “Hey, hey Buddy...Who’s a dickwad? You’re a dickwad, that’s who, a
big, fat dickwad...Hey, hey, pal, guess what? You suck...”

Copyright 2009, Mark Farrell. © This work is protected under the U.S.
copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the
expressed written permission of the author.

Mark Farrell is from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, but has been living in the
Czech Republic for more than 10 years. He teaches literature (Children’s
Literature, American Literature, British Literature), Composition, and
Language (Advanced Level-Proficiency Level) at Charles University in

Prague. His work has appeared in many journals throughout the world – most recently in *Read This* (Montana State University), *Dream Catcher* (Lincoln, England) and *Envoi* (Gwynedd, Wales). Selected future publications include: *Stand Magazine* and *Krax Magazine* (both Leeds, England).