

Spring 1959

## Reflections in the Plate Glass Window

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### Recommended Citation

Park, Don (1959) "Reflections in the Plate Glass Window," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 5 , Article 24.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol5/iss2/24>

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# Reflections In The Plate Glass Window

## I

It was January and it was cold and the recession had come to staid old Brooklyn. The dirty gray sky cast a dingy hue over the perennial drabness of Pitkin Avenue . . .

## II

. . . he shivered in the cold winter bleakness and stared hopelessly down the deserted street and saw the other cold, shivering salesmen staring hopelessly back at him. He looked at his watch . . . it was eleven . . . and glanced back down the lobby through the plate glass doors with the words

hi and sol

clothiers

decaled on them

in red letters, and shrugged . . .

. . . hopelessly . . .

## III

. . . he sold clothes because he liked to sell clothes . . .

. . . he sold clothes because he wanted to go to college . . . but he couldn't afford to . . .

. . . he sold clothes because the recession had come to bleak, gray, cold, dingy, deserted, staid old Brooklyn . . .

. . . and he couldn't do anything

else . . .

## IV

. . . a bitter raw gust of biting cold wind cut through his skin and bones and made him hurt all over . . . he hurried back into the store and took a brownish Scottish tweed top-coat off its rack and slipped it on over his own imported brown lambs wool sport jacket.

"Don't they ever get cold?" he wondered. "Don't they ever get cold and hurt all over and want to buy a nice warm tweed top-coat?"

. . . he went back to his station in front of the store in the bleak and cold and dingy of Pitkin Avenue . . .

. . . he cursed his luck and thought of the other people his age . . . snug and warm and intelligent and inspired in the auspicious halls of Columbia and Brooklyn and Adelphi and Long Island and CCNY . . . he cursed the luck that made him live on the island instead of the city where he would be eligible for a free education . . . he cursed the luck that made him live on the island and work in Brooklyn . . . he cursed the luck that put him out on his own at the waning of the post-war boom and the beginning of the recession . . .

## VI

. . . he liked clothes and he liked to sell clothes, but he didn't like to stand out in the cold and not sell clothes . . .

. . . he liked the tweed coat and wished it were his . . . it was warm and pretty and it felt good on his shoulders . . . he touched the right sleeve with his cold left hand . . . he mused at how the girls love the feel of fine imported tweed . . . girls love tweed on a man . . . he wondered how many men knew that . . . he wondered if he could work that into a sales pitch . . . if a guy wants to make out his tweed jacket is one of his biggest assets . . . they love to feel it and hold it and snuggle against it . . .

. . . his mind wandered toward  
obscurity . . .

## VII

. . . he wondered what the depression had been like . . . worse than this? He supposed it was . . . he supposed that if the railroad hadn't bumped his father out to Hempstead during the depression he'd still be living in Brooklyn . . . and going to Brooklyn College, free, instead of standing in the cold of Pitkin Avenue trying to sell ties to non-existent customers . . .

## VIII

He watched the sucker glance at the \$69.00 charcoal gray suit in the recently revived Ivy league cut in the plate-glass window. He saw the salesman at Crawfords' staring after his lost prospect. He counted the man's steps as he passed the window . . . one . . . two . . . three . . . NOW!

"That suit'll make you look five years younger mister," he grabbed the startled man's arm, "latest style, Ivy league, the coming thing . . ."

"I donned no suit, Mack, leggo my arm . . ."

"Come on inside and take a closer look at it, I want you to see what you'd look like in that suit. Believe me, mister, you're just right for that style, believe me, I know."

"Sure, it's nice," the man said, looking back at the perfectly tailored suit on the perfectly proportioned mannikin, "but sixty-nine bucks is too much money!"

"Ferget sixty-nine bucks—look—a guy like you—in that suit you're a walking ad for Hi and Sol—fer you—fifty-five bucks."

"Think it would be good on me?" The man said tentatively.

"Believe me." He pleaded, spreading his hands in exasperated emphasis.

"You said fifty-five, did ya?"

"I said fifty-nine, but ferget that—all I want you to do is see yerself in that suit—I mean it—the price we can work out." He put his arm around the man's back and gently began walking him towards the plate-glass doors, "Why worry about money? You got five bucks with ya? The suit's yours. You don't have five bucks? We'll hold it for ya. Easy terms, take six months to pay, who cares."

Another salesman came out of the plate-glass doors and held one of them open for the two men and smiled a warm and bright smile that made cold and dingy Pitkin Avenue warm and bright.

COLIN WILLIAMS

## Spring

The sun led the last snow from behind  
the warming buildings.  
The first green tips of a precocious crocus  
Gave a bird friend in my garden reason to sing.  
The cherry tree awoke and, finding herself all naked,  
Threw a frothy new white dressing gown  
About her shoulders.

Spring rustled my curtains and with sweet tears  
for her tardiness spread all her things about  
For her visit.