

## Gene McCormick

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### The Flat Cap

Even at reduced speed, half-speed,  
it's a minor wonder the cigarette ashes  
didn't blow back in his face,  
but they didn't.

A young man, twenty-and-a-half,  
bicycles by wearing a cloth cap,  
tweed, pulled tightly on his head,  
while puffing a white cigarette  
which stays lit in the moderate drizzle.  
His hands are on the handlebars,  
the cigarette in his mouth,  
smoke streaming up and over his head.  
Ashes do not fly back in his face.

The flat cloth cap, a cap shaped like a Frisbee  
with the front angling down as gradual as a  
beginner's ski slope to an abbreviated bill

which fends from neither rain nor sun  
—some call it an Irish cap—  
is usually of sturdy flexible weather resistant  
material in tweed or herringbone,  
but Brooks Brothers has  
cashmere flat caps in solid colors.

His sister (at home sleeping) is not a goth  
but dresses mainly in black:  
leggings, sweater, coat when it's  
absolutely frigid, shoes.  
Her underwear is black when she wears any.  
Women, young, who dress like that are assured  
and directional and the bicyclist envies  
his sister but doesn't even wear  
his cap turned backward.  
He wishes he were a female, sometimes.

## **Vivaldi & Friends**

It began at 11 AM, sitting in the car  
with the temperature at a comfortable level,  
listening to classical PBS music,  
occasionally putting his head back  
and shutting his eyes but mostly looking out  
the windows listening to classics.

The doors are locked and he is parked  
in a desolate section where disturbances  
are minimal. The music plays on with a  
preponderance of strings, scant percussion.

Closing his eyes, he doesn't sleep.

By late afternoon he notices the level  
in the gas tank has gone down, and hunger sets in.  
Perhaps a cognac.

An entire day of being warm and comfortable  
and undisturbed listening to Vivaldi and friends.



## **A Way Of Life**

He takes trips to the nearby forest preserve on days when there are high winds so he can walk deep into the most dense areas, barefoot, to take off his shirt and stand next to trees with low lying branches and let the wind whip the leaves across his back.

The stronger the wind, the harder the leaves lash back and forth.

Red welts form on his back and if the wind blows long and hard enough the edges of the leaves become knife blades, cutting into abused skin.

Returning to the car, his wife smooths salve across his back and insists on driving home.

**Gene McCormick's** latest book, *Obsessions*, is available on Amazon or direct from the publisher, Middle Island Press.