

Wayne Dodd

Down Among the Turks in Hoi Polloiville

"Dixit et avertens rosea cervice refulsit . . ."
 (She spoke and, turning away, glowed with beams from her rosy neck). So Vergil wrote, speaking of the moment when *pius* Aeneas, cast up, with his men, on the unknown shores of Libya, realizes the person he has just been talking to, there on the wind-blown coast, is his mother, the Goddess Venus. That's how you could recognize them then: The Immortals had red necks.

Things change, of course. For instance, the days are long gone when every third person in America was a farmer, someone who spent a great deal of time following a plow, head bent forward slightly, eyes fixed on the furrow (or, alternatively, on the row of whatever crop he was cultivating). Day after day after day, as the earth held its unchanging course, the sun beat down on his unprotected neck, until, in time, the skin above the collar turned the deep color of brick. And that was how you recognized them, the farmers (the un-urbane, the provincial, the unhip). Today, almost everyone in America lives in cities, or at least not on farms — even, Gods help us, the red-necks.