

JAMES SHEA

Rafael

He was so good, poetry was drawn to him. He once wrote, "Art's nature is to impose human qualities on the world or to find those qualities as they already exist in the external world or both or neither." At the age of 11, he wrote the following lines from the poem, "Ode to Purgatory," which was published in the town-paper: "The region of skin below the eye (high on the cheek) is a land of perfect position for the lips to kiss — its shape was given by the god who (in the cheek division) secretly loved the goddess in the lip division. Hence, the lock-and-key-kind-of-creation we enjoy. Next time you kiss that land, remember (the love from where it began)." He enrolled in an electrical engineering school and wrote poems between classes. His first book, *If There's a God, Why Is He Spending All His Time with You?* was published under the pseudonym of Gary Franklin. It contained a mix of lyrics and epics which inspired readers to write lines in the margins, composing poems of their own.

When he was given the first copy of the first edition by his publisher, he immediately threw it into the fireplace. He said, "There, the flames of craving are satisfied." Later, the Society of Poets awarded him The Most Promising Poet of the Century Prize. For the next 6 years, he did not write a single line. Then, in a flurry, he wrote his greatest work after supper one night. He called it "Post-Prandial." It relates the story of schoolgirls who slowly become men. Its themes include mysticism and the fusion of insanity and sex. During the war, he wrote a series of one-page poems collectively called *The Rifles*. Following the cease-fire, he found life in Europe "as dynamic as an unplugged lamp," and sought to add extra letters to his name. Rafeabally. At this point in his "career" he thought that he knew exactly what he was doing and said, "The moment in your 'career' when you know exactly what you are doing is the moment you are no longer a poet," and he proceeded to study geology with a jihad-like passion. Soon afterwards he married a Danish woman who only spoke Japanese. They had two sons which prompted Rafeabally's return to poetry with his famous one-line poem:

“If God had children, how would he raise them?”
Rafaebally rejected literary criticism
in his 1300-word autobiographical poem,
“Just Prior to Dawn,” in which he writes:
“Don’t study me! Auh! Nooo! fuckers.”
He died on the eve of his funeral,
but his last words were misheard by the nurse.
Either “Blazing cherry blossoms!” or “Blazoning
hairy bosom!” Of the great poets of his day,
he said they were all afraid to stop writing
for fear that they would disappear. He never
overestimated beauty and only once did he
underestimate it. “That,” he said,
“was the day I met my wife.” Some recovered letters
show a deeply methodical and sensitive man
who traveled with poems as his currency.
From Java, he wrote to his wife, “I am worried
that the sky will die on me. And that you
will not be able to learn English in time
to recover my body from the Javanese.” Later,
he closes: “The pink walls of Rome
fill me here, and I cannot imagine
a lovelier place to envision the Colosseum
or the Via del Governo Vecchio.”