F. J. Bergmann - Falling Barometer

In the rear-view mirror you watch summer spread her tarpaulins of rain, smearing the dead grass with the glistening patina of water. She slams her screen door until its spring breaks, hand-tints the sepiachrome house. In her brain a clock is unwinding. On the parlor wall astronomers, philosophers, and dead kings glare at each other from behind curved glass that is slowly melting in carved walnut frames. Thick braids of glossy hair coil under bell jars. The hyacinths have died of thirst under the parched lawn.

An emaciated dog on the porch will not awaken when the wind sends desultory sprinkles beneath the eaves nor when a stranger with a briefcase practices his smile and handshake on the grinning doorknocker, which bites. He nurses the teethmarks, worrying about leprosy, and storms off into the weather. A craquelure of clouds that flake and slip like decaying paint. His briefcase is packed with stories to which no one listens. Never mind. Tomorrow in the diner, during a hurried lunch, the tinkle of the waitress’s bracelets will send him into an irreversible trance.

Wearing a Marilyn Manson t-shirt, summer slumps on the velvet davenport. She lifts postcards from a marquetry box while a spider climbs the perilous tablecloth. Eighteen hundred little footsteps. White lace. There are photographs of sunspots, the Eiffel Tower, Babylon: proof that something or other exists beyond this dry room. The wine does nothing for her mood. When you start the engine she lifts her head, then looks away. As the car turns the corner the radio announces a tornado watch until 3 am. A fretful rain spatters the windshield. The city limits are five blocks away.

first appeared in *Foliate Oak*