

Capitals

b. 1938, d. ? Along the way
 he turned into a capital, survived
 a war. And now he ponders
 maps, searches for street
 signs not in an international
 and wordless symbol-speech —
 and all to find out where
 he is, or what. This could
 be Warsaw, most painstakingly
 restored (and who could tell,
 therefore?), baroque; it could
 be labyrinthine Prague, saved
 by surrender (whatever that
 means), melancholy, compliant;
 it could be Berlin, quite
 transformed (who would know
 it? who would really desire
 to encounter its glamor again?),
 a prism rising from its ruins.
 His finger pokes direction
 into realigned lines, a triangle
 of getting by. Each year,
 there are the bicycle races —
 180°
 completed to the cheers of crowds.

JOHN DITSKY

The Anatomy of a Prude's Dismay

This springtime of birds, mating:
 these are such days as to make
 the person inquiring politely,
 or *not* inquiring, as politely,
 into the possibly messy details

of the lives of friends, house
 guests, or disappearing clergy —
 to make that same first person
 feel *himself* the voyeur, pervert,
 or Puritan for his holding off

a ways, maintaining his "open
 mind," but in the clear fresh
 air. Or as to make the grimace
 with which he faces the fetus-
 chuckers and the free-flingers

he's told he ought to reverence
 as prototypes of the New Man —
 to make that grimace a fake
 acceptance and an insufficient
 damning, both, and augmenting

the wearer's unease. And rage
 is futile, scoffed at. Still
 they bring their little victories
 to him, waiting to be approved
 for what they'd once have hid

— like cats with dead things,
 trophies, horrible offerings
 made the more awful to those
 who can see, looming over them,
 ice of ages toppling to the sea.

JOHN DITSKY