



Writer's Portfolio

ATAR HADARI

LAST OF THE GALLANTS



2021 PAMPHLET SERIES



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**Cover Image:** Cropped screenshot of Peter O'Toole from the trailer for the film *Lawrence of Arabia (film)*, 1963. Public domain.

## LAST OF THE GALLANTS

The last of the gallants has gone -  
Who's to lead the tributes?  
Ollie Reed who drank himself to death  
In a break between "Gladiator" shoots?  
Or Richard Burton who coughed his last  
Over a diamond for Elizabeth or some wife after,  
No-one remembers now. But Peter, lovely Peter,  
Sandy haired raconteur not to say liar,  
Eyes blue as quartz staring across a dune,  
Lovely Macbeth of the back stalls bar,  
Last of the great young boys to come  
Claim the sword from Larry's hand.  
Who shall speak the speech over you my lord  
When the barrel is empty and the boys  
All gone like vagabonds?

TONY SOPRANO'S SON-IN LAW  
(ED VASSALO)

I opened my old school's magazine  
And found a death notice for an actor  
I had not seen in twenty years.  
He played some roles for me when we were younger.  
I looked him up to find obituaries, tributes that might matter –  
But only a paid death notice in the Times  
No lasting sense of what he'd done, what was the sticking plaster,  
What the wound, what kept him sometime from disaster?  
No star. In fact, among the few remains  
Google washed up was Philip Seymour Hoffman,  
As if there wasn't any actor dead  
Couldn't lose his lustre from that setting monster –  
But if a string of roles in off-Broadway shows  
And a recurring role in the Sopranos,  
(Tony's son in law) doesn't merit more  
Than the gloss of a few friends you helped put on their pantos  
What hope is there for those who didn't finally matter?  
Leukemia they said it was. Brave battle lost.  
Leaves a wife, no pitter patter.  
The names of charities he'd care to name  
(including the company mentioned hereafter)  
But no idea what caused his free for all  
-Is it just a thing that comes for us all –  
No saying what we did before we saw  
That glint of a river over the horizon  
A last role photographed in an exceptional resolution  
That turns out on to be one we never got beyond.

COLIN WILSON

Colin Wilson's 30,000 books  
Line the padded shelves in his back garden,  
One shed devoted to his own works

numbering over a hundred.  
He started about outsiders –  
A general correlative  
Of how the genius fared in the modern flux.  
He was hailed as a brilliance, then quarrels broke out  
With critics and fathers-in-law,

he fled for a house on the South Downs  
and started writing those 99 other books  
About aliens, the occult, psychopaths:  
The public love to read these things.  
When they stopped caring about Van Gogh

The papers would always print  
Thousands of words about sods who slash cunt.  
He made a mint. He served his guests

smoked salmon and Aquavit.  
The shed slowly filled with first run prints.  
His picture in the paper showed  
A man less aged than steeped –  
a tea-bag dried pale yellow like a leaf  
left on the china plate overnight.  
Who remembers the critics of 1956?  
Colin Wilson's sheds embrace the shelves of books he sired  
And his titles repeat his name and one thesis:  
THE DEATH OF THOUGHT, THE LIFE OF THE MIND IS  
EXPIRES.  
Repent, before your books catch fire

All anyone remembers is what you desired.

## THE BALLAD OF STAN AND OLLIE

Walking into the darkness of the vacant Glasgow Empire  
 Stan Laurel took his bow to the unending rows of flowers  
 Crinkling in women's hair and limp in tired men's buttonholes  
 And opening just after nine, again for second house.  
 You do not know you've died until you've played the Glasgow  
 Empire.  
 You do not know and Stan never died  
 Because he lived on celluloid  
 But there he went again, to take belated bows  
 While Ollie stayed up on the screen to piano notes  
 And didn't smell the chorus.  
 So Oliver stayed young because he died of an embolism  
 While Stan rode the railroad ribbons  
 Back the way he came from California  
 To the boat and all the way the frames  
 Reversed would spill, light from the Glasgow Empire  
 Projectionist's black booth and flowers like all the crystal  
 Sets receiving in the dark while he finally found himself  
 Back on that stage taking his last bows  
 Where he had left to boos, to silence in between his footfalls.  
 And he envied Oliver, that died up on the hills and never felt the  
 pull of film  
 Back and back and back after the dancing disappeared  
 After the last good crack with the back of his hat and Stan crying  
 in the reels –  
 It all ran back till finally Stan was there shaking his stick  
 While Oliver was still up and away shining white as his shirt  
 While Stan mouthed at the screen, "Another fine mess you've got  
 me in..."  
 Ollie grinned twiddling his gabardine  
 While Stanley held the strange girl's fore-arm  
 And went back in to the Empire  
 then went out and stars were spinning, like grease stains  
 On one of Ollie's black felt ties made of rolled twine  
 then he let go of the girl's hand  
 Said, "Thank you dear," and got inside the car

to go home, where he hoped not to stir  
Until sunset, when the stars are only golden squares  
And Ollie says, "Oh there you are..."  
Then he will sink where he stands  
And wake to say "I want to be in Switzerland"  
To the nurse who will say, "Why Switzerland?"  
He'll say, "I'd like to go skiing."  
"Do you ski Mr. Laurel?" she'll ask him.  
"No but it's more fun than this," he'll say  
And she will die laughing.

## WINTER WEATHER

SEAMUS HEANEY 30/8/2013

They have started dying off  
just like sparrows  
Stiffening with the cold,  
scattered in gutters  
Like after-wedding sweeties,  
Sparrows turned ice in the flash freeze  
As if the first to feel  
what was always coming  
But some professions expel cold  
They insulate you from the turn of the weather  
Poets, like pit canaries, smell the trouble first  
So when poets die you can hear the winter  
Coming in, branch by branch  
Turning the woods into a corridor  
Flush against the ice rink.  
The warrior, statesman and orator  
Each die on their sword –  
The poet flies with a winter crowd  
Bearing away his last words.

### About the writer:

Atar Hadari's *Songs From Bialik: Selected Poems Of H. N. Bialik* (Syracuse University Press) was a finalist for the American Literary Translators' Association Award. His debut collection, *Rembrandt's Bible*, was published by Indigo Dreams in 2013. *Lives of the Dead: Poems of Hanoch Levin* was awarded a Pen Translates grant and is out now from Arc Publications. He contributes a monthly verse bible translation column to *Mosaic* magazine.

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