

1

Fridowsky is a character, very much a self-conscious character, a self-creation. De Man questions the genre of autobiography in one of his essays. We like to think that the autobiography is “written” by life itself, but maybe it’s the other way around. Maybe a person like Fridowsky let the (virtual) writing of an autobiography determine his moves in life. For tis a question left us yet to prove.

2

Fridowski may or may not be the official toetag of the meatunit at the keyboard. But should that be our measure of truth ? Fidelity ? Or the virtual **more real** than the incidental ? De Man writes of the nothingness within us and the self-destabilizing subject. He writes of perception being dominated by imagination. Frydowski is never done finding new words for the one haunting transcendent realization. All is “hevel.” This “hevel” is a Hebrew word that is already metaphorical. But let us choose one of many plausible translations. *All is vapor.*

3

What does it mean, in general, to say *All is X* ? “It’s all just candy. It’s all just noise. It’s all just the chewing of hungry girls and the chugging of thirsty boys.” De Man quotes Nietzsche as saying (basically) that figurative language (tropes) are not ornamental but rather the essence of the linguistic. Anemic mythology. The philosopher never transcends myth. But this is not to say that all myths are equal. Myths do describe a world that, as the referent for metaphor, therefore has an elusive kind of being.

4

So Frydowski’s gimmick, in my view, is the surprising blend of scientific seriousness with an ice cold “pessimism.” He’s a grizzled detective who still believes in science, but “for no good reason.” For no external reason. A bit like “ethics is esthetics.” An artistic attachment to the smell of honesty. This kind of hero (and we do have at least a “talking class” anti-hero here) is already in the stew provided by Nietzsche, but Nietzsche (perhaps because of his overflowing genius) doesn’t stay

put and exist in a determinate way. Frykowski is constrained by the recognition of the foundation implicit in all science as such. Call it honor or taste or whatever. It more beautiful or noble or something to be coherent and consistent and actually know what you are talking about, or (more realistically) to strive toward that goal which is ever on the horizon.