THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 6 | 1997

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THE PRODIGAL SON: AMNESTY

In one of the photographs from Giza, he's riding the obligatory camel whose humps, through the generosity of perspective, appear as tall as the pyramids that rise in the background. So much is missing. In those reckless early days just after the West discovered the region, eternity was disturbed by thieves. He wonders, in the letter that accompanies the snapshots, what has happened to the loot over the years. He writes about the Nile, about the time he came so close to blowing up the Aswan High Dam, how sometimes he regrets the attempt and sometimes he regrets having walked away. He says that you can actually see the shape of history being defined and deformed by the river and its floods. There are ruins more beautiful in their decay than most human faces in their prime. Ultimate justice, he says, must be something like Olympus or Valhalla (as far as he knows, Egyptians have yet to name the place) turned inside out at the other end of the eternal spectrum, an empty field where every dead pirate, every vandal of mummies and canopic jars, returns something stolen, and the pile grows into a spontaneous monument to ourselves.