

Encores

By Phil Ochs

Centuries took holidays
before these days
became desperately clear
that chariots full of Christmas cheer
could never draw the child near
but this year
one of the last remaining years
Santa Claus is a sniper
on the roof of Macy's
picking off the customers
splattering packages
and miscellaneous toes
everywhere.

Missionaries built milleniums
and caravans of cucumbers were exchanged
before the sin of sharing was uncovered
and the chocolate bayonets were deranged
but this year
one of the last remaining years
the soul brother reindeer
having nothing but nothing to fear
have destroyed all possessions
as the holiest of gifts.

Hymns have swallowed histories
and faded into love
before a winter full of autumns
had covered up their harmonies
but this year
though one of the last remaining years
the fading matinee idol
clutching the memories
of his almost unforgettable performance
turns sadly away
from the diminishing applause
of his most terrified believers.