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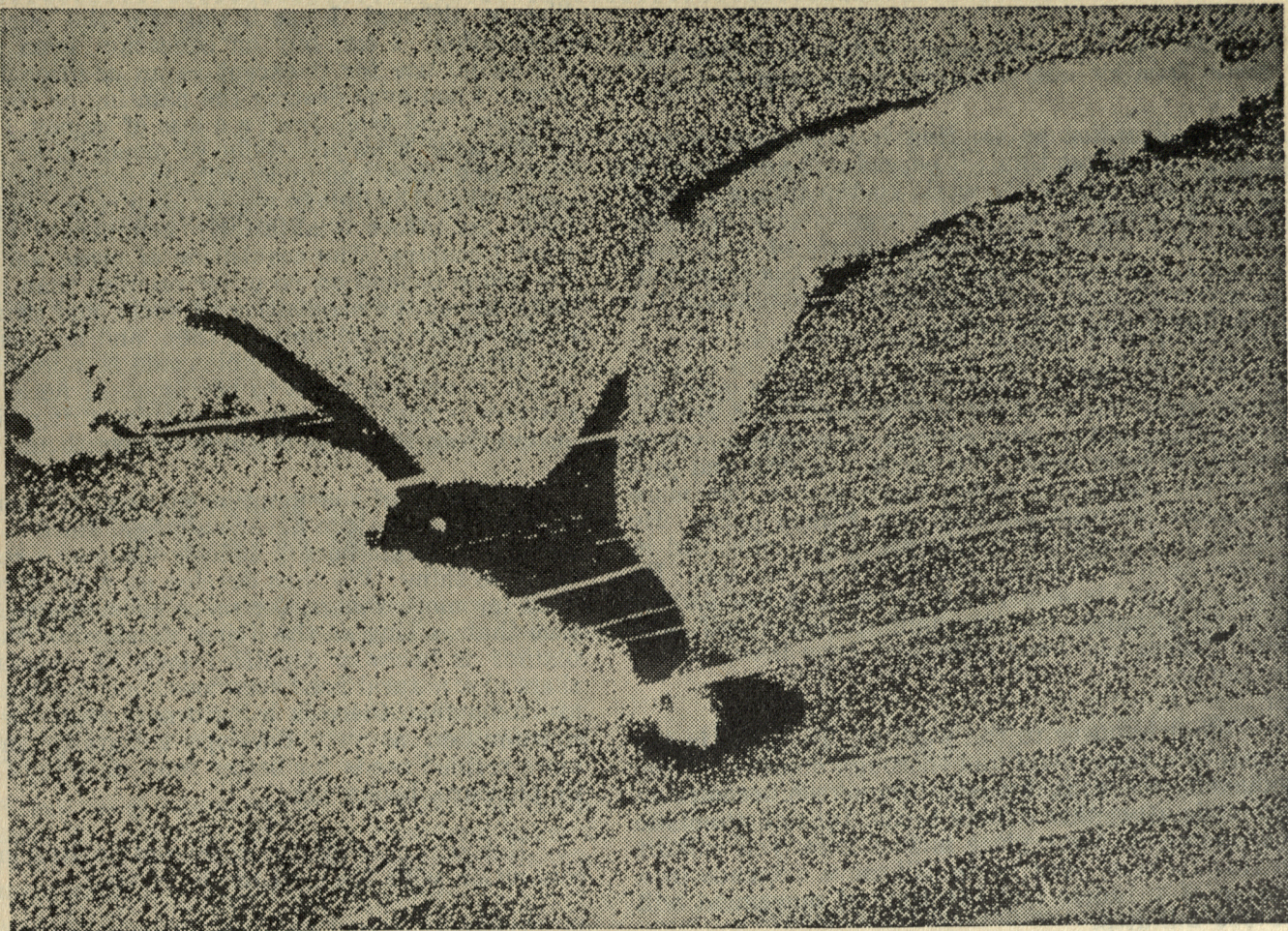
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e.e. cummings



Children, when was
 Napoleon Bonaparte born,
 asks teacher.

A thousand years ago, the children say.
 A hundred years ago, the children say.
 Last year, the children say.
 No one knows.

Children, what did
 Napoleon Bonaparte do,
 asks teacher.

Lost a war, the children say.
 Won a war, the children say.
 No one knows.

Our butcher had a dog
 called Napoleon,
 says Frantisek.
 The butcher used to beat him and the dog died
 of hunger
 a year ago.

And all the children are now sorry
 for Napoleon.

—miroslav holub
 (in translation)

Let me put it in this way:

If I were a German
 I could say to myself Mozart & Rilke
 But I would also have to say
 Goebbels & Bergen-Belsen
 Word I could not pronounce lightly.

If I were a Frenchman
 I could say Moliere & Camus
 But I would also have to add
 Napoleon & Petain & The Maginot Line
 Which would spoil the whole bit.

As a Belgian I would have to reconcile
 Verhaaren with the Congo,
 And as an Englishman subtract
 The Boer War & The Playing Fields of Eton
 From Milton & Yeats
 Which might leave me with very little.

As a Russian I'd have to work hard
 Fixing my thoughts rigidly on Tolstoy
 And trying to forget all about Djerzhinsky,
 And if I had to call the US of A my home
 It might be more than my selective memory could handle.

But being a Canadian
 by conscious and considered choice
 I have to remember no one & nothing
 Which in this year of grace
 Suits me just fine.

—george jonas

