

## Two Poems

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### Screaming B-Movie Victims

You can see them on DVD or TMC,  
stampeded by the Blob, Godzilla,  
the Giant Gila Monster, by Them

or the It from outer space  
or beneath the sea. They sprint  
down Main Street, glancing over

their shoulders, coattails flapping, skirts  
flying up. A few stumble and sprawl  
or stand there staring up in terror,

shot from the creature's viewpoint  
as they're about to be pancaked  
or devoured. It's hard not to laugh

at the way they ham it up, ditching  
inhibitions for the primal shriek,  
bugging their eyes and waving

their arms as their B-grade bit-part  
fates unfold. You can buy a set of them  
in plastic, thumb-tall figures

sold for their comic kitschiness,  
something Eichmann thought  
he saw through the peephole

at Auschwitz when the Zyklon pellets  
dropped and the Jews shrieked  
and waved their arms, made a human

pyramid up to the small air vent.  
The bodies were laughingly called  
*figuren*, meaning “puppets” or “dolls,”

which is what they looked like  
when shoved into ovens or dumped  
in graves long as football fields.

In a model made for Lanzmann’s movie  
*Shoah*, the dolls file to their “shower”  
in Crematorium II, unwary

as the ants we used to roast by focusing  
sunlight with a magnifying glass  
as they soldiered toward their hole. We

laughed to watch them scatter  
for their lives, then writhe and sizzle  
like haywire windup toys. We were

Marines at Iwo, burning Japs,  
who used Chinese as bayonet dummies  
and were shown on posters as cartoon

bugs or monkeys. In *Life* we saw  
the head of one, hood ornament  
on a G.I. tank, toothless, withered

in the heat, mouth still gaping  
in a scream, like some rubber prop  
from *Attack of the Crab Monsters*.

## Proof of Intelligent Life

*The four words that came to us from outer space . . . are: "Send more Chuck Berry."*

—SNL Skit

In *Go Johnny Go*, '59, burgeoning  
teen idol Johnny Melody is played by  
burgeoning teen idol Jimmy Clanton,  
fame now dead, though his molded

ducktail's got another 80 years.  
Chuck Berry, who's just invented  
rock 'n' roll and whose song provides  
the movie's theme, plays Jimmy's fan,

consigned to spend most scenes nodding  
and pointing from the wings during Jimmy's  
Cloroxed ditties. Like Richie Valens,  
singing his theft of Little Richard's

"Ooh! My Soul" called "Ooh! My Head,"  
Chuck's allowed his blink of spotlight before  
it's back to pimping for the white boy.  
Looking relaxed at the back of the '50s bus,

could he know that, in our distant century,  
the world will still be dancing to his chops,  
and even if we all blow up, "Johnny B. Goode"  
will head the galaxy's top ten.