

## Encores

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.