

Chapter I

I Am the Walrus

*The Aesthetic Appeal of Craig Stadler
(and All That This Implies)*



The Backswing:

I had written only occasionally on golf before the spring of 1997 when I received a phone call from the editor of Attaché magazine, then U.S. Air's in-flight magazine, who asked if I would like to become that publication's monthly golf columnist. This seemed a marvelous moonlighting gig, and it so proved over the next decade. This regular assignment drew me into the world of golf, and once there, I found myself exploring different topics for other readerships, including that of my old alma mater, Sports Illustrated.

As to this piece, it seems, in placing it close by my preface to this book, to fit the phrase "by way of further introduction." It also is a picture of Tiger as a much younger man. Do you remember what he looked like and sounded like, when he looked and sounded like this—in August 1997?

I watched the beautiful Nike® youth come marching, marching, marching across my TV screen, bags in tow, and swinging, swinging, swinging—lovely, large, smooth swings—and declaiming, proclaiming, “I am Tiger Woods!” “I am Tiger Woods!!” and “I am Tiger Woods!!!” I thought upon *Tiger Woods* for a moment, upon his exotic heritage, his preternatural poise, his apparent intelligence, his unconscious concentration, his perfect swing, his impossible length, his bold putting, his Sunday charges, his minus-18 at Augusta—later those wide-margin U.S. and British Open wins—his seven-million-clams-plus years (not counting endorsements, just purses). I took a deep draught of beer, sighed, and said to myself, “Well, I’m not *Tiger Woods*, that’s for sure.”