



the
share
page

A DENSER SHADE OF BLACK

Nous jouissons d'un automne radieux, doux:
C'est une saison délicieuse — N. D. Plume.

I

Paradise Lost

To write a poem like Milton's lion:
Pawing the speculative air, sucked earthy
By the first silent ground:
To amber the ploughed-up spume of waves
Or the sunstrung tiffanies of a gull
And to cradle these things in the shade
Of a primal spring morning for once,

If only for once... but no, the lion
The blood-cowled birds of this island,
Gorges of summer, now manic, vulturous
Howling teeth clawing, scirling,
Hear the toad voice, sense the snake,
Crunch the murdered bones of Abel,
Of Caine's Kennedys, and await what in the long

Fall must follow. The sadness is that an eye
Lunging so heavily as a cypress to the sky
Trying to name all things right in one Adam-moment
Of poetry, should judder, judder over nature,
And walking along a beach treading kelp-pods
Should not bound back, should see nothing more
Than cold pearls exploding in a cormorant.

II

Agonistes Among Rhode Island Reds

I burned my house down:
I killed the termites
in the woodwork,
and after the phoenix
had settled in the ashes
for the last time
I moved into the chicken-run
with all the chickens.

My friends admitted that they were
very, very surprised.
Some said "we can't get over it."
So I gave them a reason, I told them
the termites had eaten the backs off all my books
they had eaten the pages of my imagists
and idealists.

So they formed a C-O-M-M-I-T-T-E-E they said
"we mustn't let things go on like this
it's got to stop it can't go on
we must do something we must we must."

And they did they did
they took up a collection

And installed a coloured television
in my chicken-run

And I haven't connected it yet.

III

Fragments, Ready and Easy.

In my room, tomorrow already hangs
By the neck until dead like a faceless television.
Then you are normal? No. Crippled, club foot?
No, I live where the sun never sets. **You have**
Insomnia. No. A mantle piece, a cup for tennis,
An invitation, a coffee table, a magazine, a
Thimble, a coffee spoon, marzipan, a chair,
A toilet, toilet paper, but no insomnia. **You**
Are what you eat. Eat shit.

There are lions on a yellow line in Madison Avenue.
I can't imagine it, my imagination isn't very good.
Yesterday at the corner of Stevens and Eliot
I lost my way. It was nothing, no loss of control.
I saw some eyes that I'd seen on a pillow somewhere.
Couldn't picture the rest. **Just eyes. No lions anywhere?**
I have a zipper on my fly, a parking ticket in my wallet.
People remember me by my surname.
Someone once said that dead trees look like broken lyres.
They don't... They look like dead trees.

Crisco me over mazola,
Sightless and unsaturated.
The song of a bird cage
In a garden of dead trees.

Faces in an endless row.
Masks for daytime and after dark.

David Michael Bentley.