

ROSES LUSCIOUS TIGHT
(for EE Cummings)

I want to be a child all my life.
Paint roses on hot beds of white.
Hot potatoes and much calor.
Mucho calor of the rivers before.
The rivers before, the rivers above.
Dolphins remind me what I'm made of.
Drive me under those eerie green lights.
Paint it red and high fizz like kite.
I'm a child no matter what fails who.
What falls to Zero, Hizzoner the Boo.

The roses from sticky polite.
The roses prickly.
The roses luscious tight.

(published in "Terrible Baubles.")

Lo Galluccio

THE SPECTRE OF GUILT

On the point shoes of winter I escaped.
Ghosts of Russian peasants had looked in.
They were sunken-cheeked and ciper-white,
and had me running wildly through the corridors at night
Cinching their pale faces was my sin.

Nestled in pallets there were princesses and lords.
They were sleeping in the value of their youth.
Drunk with fear I went rushing past gold-papered walls.
Aristocrats whispered: How savage and uncouth.

Those peasants rose dead and I ran.
Toward your dreaming daisy head.
I knew our love was sinking.
It had dropped through the palace like dread.
Though I was to blame, I hurled toward you the same. I fled.

Do you remember the gold of those walls?
Our sickness is funny looking back.
Slumped over gin with our mirrors intact.
What weapons did we wield but our lust and our lack?
Poor souls reflecting to get substance back.

That night there was only fog in my head.
From the spectre of guilt I was reeling.
I wanted the hot milk of your reason to suck
but you wouldn't wake to my scheme.
In your unyielding sleep migrating serfs
slipped back into Gogol's dreams.

What were you dreaming then?
You were my savior, friend.
What a rich hard way to be saved.
Into your breathing I came in that anguished midnight raid.
I still don't know whose souls were dead
or why we were betrayed.

Lo Galluccio

*References in the poem are to Adams House at Harvard College and to the Russian novel by Gogol called, "Dead Souls."

SOME THINGS

she made her hand flicker
back and forth from whole to lame

the way she swallowed his fake eyeball
to see into his past

she pulled a tiny pink plume
from her lips

the gun became a lollipop
and the strand of pearls switched necks

the way the ship ploughed
through the red sea in my mind

the cabin became a madcap movie

the way we danced into the pool

the way the fake grandmother looks
out from the hot chocolate label
at my little red riding hood

a burning hole and ice cream

that book is coveted because of
the pull of Saturn

all strangeness all weakness
the way deformity is beautiful

the way Texas echoes so mythologically
in the diamond spaces of his bedroom window bars

and sometimes twinkle green with tears

the way his farewell bouquet of roses led
me in the right direction

the way bloody noses can be
stopped with ice

the way some words are repeated:
Bambi, busload, blackjack, mission

the way white fingers soon enough
go blue and you smell chicken broth

poets have thieving camera eyes

the way seagulls are scavengers

the way a dwarf collects images
for its conjury

a stranger speaks to you
and you might wake up or turn over

men finger their saxophones
in water-swept phrases
umbrellas crumple in homage

it goes maroon

you chew your biscuits

you can never clench hearts
the way you may want

fish never freeze

parades gain space
and lose time

heat sweetens a chestnut

blindness is catching

the way you can hover or take root

the way a tongue is held
in someone else's mouth

Lo Galluccio

(Published in "Hot Rain.")

BENAZIR ASSASINATED

Benazir, beautiful named, Bhutto
I walk in the early morning the day after
your assassination through the dawning skies over Boston.

She was with raised fist in royal purple shrouded arm.
She was red pleated at the throat, torn through like a bird's by bullets.
She once had the ripe maroon lips of a Queen.

Bhutto says my people, my people, my people
need me. Democracy needs me. Feed my people
justice. My father was hung for this land and I will

stand up for it. Oh Benazir beautiful named Bhutto
like a Kennedy, rash and vain, she stood up in a sun-roofed
car and was slain.

But martyred Benazir, beautiful named, Bhutto
we honor you; we mourn. For your purple shrouded arm
raised in fist in the air at the rally was the sign for Pakistan
to be reborn.

Note: The assassination of Benazir Bhutto December 2007. She had served her country twice as Prime Minister and was then the leader of the opposition forces. She was campaigning for the election at the time of her killing. Also, Benazir means "beautiful" in Arabic.

RAIN ON THANKSGIVING

And there is rain.
The sound of horses.
The brain becomes its own breakfast.
Like green velvet in store windows
and truffles my nose only tastes.
Will you cook? Will you cook?
Oh, marzipan, sweet potatoes.

Those chattering teeth Puritans.
With flintlock faces they picked
through feathers –
forests of feathers –
in perfect rows of death.
And they feasted. For hundreds of years
in scorched winters of pumpkin seeds.
Smell the smoke of those huts.

Will you cook?

Gobble, gobble. Puritans.
Calvin's your genie.
Splendid and harsh with a face puckered
in on itself and eyes black
as rain-soaked trees.
Minced meats, bitter roots.
Rising like a storm cloud
his fingers are light.
Why then is crackled
from cold fields?

Your breath smells of cloves,
your eyes squared off like dice.

When you came the ship dipped
in the bulging eyes of the Atlantic.
A bell toned in minds.
Dark flashes and the froth of God's
spittle in water.

The sound of horses pouring down.
Tremendous. Feathers.
Turkeys stand mouths open
and feathers full.

Sometimes they drown.

From hooves of rain.

Puritans bound and clenched
in covenants. Contrasting
here and there, light and dark,
good and evil. Penitents
of chasm. Those swelling seas
inside and out.

Little cubes of thatch
storing water.

Ice. Cranberries. Squash.

You swallowed the shadows
between you.

How did you turn your backs
against the winds of origin?
Wasn't the voyage a threshold;
the ocean and its pit of rain;
the winters when a cold
snuffed out all but your work habits
and repressed urge to grab.

One another's heads. Wives. Fates.
And gobble, gobble. The turkey
plucked like a Catholic bishop
on the plate..The catechism of its death
when your bony hands hovered. Thin
lips licking stern reproaches.

Sometimes, in those winter,
weren't there after all
only smells of woodsmoke and leaves?
And the rain that cavalries my head,
for you it was the dread of rotting.
In one of your descendant houses,
--it is charging --
--it is pouring
I drink it.

Calvin, when the Magi come, give yourself over,
a dark cartoon, to the baby in the creche.

(Originally published in "Hot Rain.")