

from

WINTER STORIES

John Hawkes

Wesleyan

1966

IF THE OWL CALLS AGAIN

at dusk
from the island in the river,
and it's not too cold,

I'll wait for the moon
to rise,
then take wing and glide
to meet him.

We will not speak,
but hooded against the frost
soar above
the alder flats, searching
with tawny eyes.

And then we'll sit
in the shadowy spruce and
pick the bones
of careless mice,

while the long moon drifts
toward Asia
and the river mutters
in its icy bed.

And when morning climbs
the limbs
we'll part without a sound,
fulfilled, floating
homeward as
the cold world awakens.

MOURNING FOR RUE _____

For Jim Stober

I know that you've been described as the spacy half-wit in the green house, but I saw your dead dog draped for three days over the mailbox for all the fast motorists to see. And the little sign below him that said, PLEASE SLOW DOWN. And suddenly I saw you Halloween, three years ago, dressed in a blue pin-striped suit wearing a real pumpkin over your head. You were grand too. And you won first prize for costume. Later I heard that a couple of people said they wouldn't have voted for you if they had known you were under there. I know that stinks and I know your sweet dog has left his body and that's just grief hanging there with a shiny collar around its neck. Christ Jim, I'm helpless too. George was run over on Chester Avenue in Bakersfield, 30 years ago, run over just like that, and Jimmy Duncan, who was never my friend, cried telling me. The way I see us right now we could both be dead, without our bodies, unable to reach down. Love, I think, lies somewhere between the wrist and the shoulder, Jim, a small red boat with immense stars overhead. There is the usual confusion of course. Everyone is pointing. We are all on it.

TOM
CRAWFORD

David Ignatow (b. 1914)

GET THE GASWORKS

Get the gasworks into a poem,
and you've got the smoke and smokestacks,
the mottled red and yellow tenements,
and grimy kids who curse with the pungency
of the odor of gas. You've got America, boy.

Sketch in the river and barges,
all dirty and slimy.
How do the seagulls stay so white?
And always cawing like little mad geniuses?
You've got the kind of living
that makes the kind of thinking we do:
gaswork smokestack whistle tooting wisecracks.
They don't come because we like it that way,
but because we find it outside our window each morning,
in soot on the furniture,
and trucks carrying coal for gas.
the kid hot after the ball under the wheel.
He gets it over the belly, all right.
He dies there.

So the kids keep tossing the ball around
after the funeral.
So the cops keep chasing them,
so the mamas keep hollering,
and papa flings his newspaper outward,
in disgust with discipline.

Randall Jarrell (1914-1965)

THE DEATH OF THE BALL TURRET GUNNER

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

OF THINGS ODD AND THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL

Your lovely obsessions
calm these blue mornings
scuffed by the voices
of hungry jays.
What in sleep we remembered
crumbles like birdbell seeds
rain-loosened into mulberry shade.
Which are the animals
we adopt for ourselves today,
a blend of swimmers,
amblers and flyers?
From duckweed to palm trees,
to beyond and below,
we move and are moved.

At the zoo
each foot of these flamingos
collapses upward as it's raised
out of their pool,
black hooked bills
straining the water
in s-trails.
It is easy to imagine
feather-stitched bones,
the keeper's saw
that made their wings two-thirds
and independent of wind,
cries like a rusty stroller wheel.
They rest on top
of themselves
like a bright pillow,
two feet above the grass
on one locked knee,
with the other leg
stuck out to dry.
They seem to have
wire skeletons,
coathanger architecture
twisted into something
that balances.
Maybe they've fallen
off a carousel
and no one noticed.
I don't know.
It is here among
these logy acrobats
you say, *Marry me*
if you know I'm dying.
For the benefits.
But not until then.
So like you.
Yet, we wander quiet
to the chimpanzee
shaking the storm
out of its cage,
spitting through the bars
at all the jeering adolescents,
until finally it gives
only a matted profile
and a look at fingers
too close to our own.

For the rest of the afternoon
I wonder about that time
when I'm supervisor
of your bone bits and ash,
would it be ok
if I put them
in with the elephants,
when they dust themselves
behind the ears
and under their bellies,
or toss sloppy bundles of timothy
onto the barren pastures
of their backs,
where you could ride
queen of things odd
and therefore beautiful above us all.

WALTER PAVLICH

Buffalo Bill

By Edward Estlin Cummings

Buffalo Bill's

defunct

 who used to

 ride a watersmooth-silver

 stallion

and break onetwothreefourfive pigeons justlikethat

 Jesus

he was a handsome man

 and what I want to know is

how do you like your blue-eyed boy

Mister Death

A Supermarket in California

By Allen Ginsberg

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked
down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking
at the full moon.

 In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon
fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

 What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at
night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!
--and you, García Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

 I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking
among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

 I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops?
What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

 I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you,
and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

 We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy
tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the
cashier.

 Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in a hour.

Which way does your beard point tonight?

 (I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and
feel absurd.)

 Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade
to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

 Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automo-
biles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

 Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America
did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a
smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of
Lethe?