

## NOTEWORTHY NIGHT OF A MINOR POET

About midnight, that noteworthy night, Alonso, a minor poet, died, he slunk into his unkempt garden searching for a verse of poetry, a verse to free him from his chronic, painful writer's block. Alonso flashed his light, scanning the garden's depths. Our tragic poet whispered:

Shadows sinister-purple advance  
Formality's unkempt borders.  
Overtake careless perimeters.  
Deep dark emboldens parasite-infested  
Night scavengers. Cities' street-smart  
Encroachers. Possums. Racoons. Strays.  
Preternatural discs for eyes aglow.

The frightened poet tread down the weed-rioted path. Alonso spotted what, in his confused imagination, he believed a bit of poetic verse making its way slowly, bit by bit, across an upheaved paving stone. It, this wriggling thing, might be the bit of poetry he was looking for. Alonso's aged, worn, twisted spine cracked as he bent down to examine the unusual creature, then speak to it thus:

Dun, sluggish verse dragging itself from under  
Mossen decay. Hungering. Trailing slime  
Mucus-thick.  
Other-worldly tentacles prey, see, smell.  
Seek brothers to cannibalize,  
Unsuspecting worm to assault,  
Fresh flower bud to bend. Verse,

Disguised as common garden slug, rain-bloated,  
Vestigial shell weighted, suppressing locomotion  
As if crushing memory. Slowed to  
Microscopic motion.  
With finger gnomonic, indexical, night-inked,  
I pry you from stone.

With a dirty, unclipped fingernail, our senile poet unstuck the sticky slug off the paving stone.  
Examining it closely for any signs of poetry, he squeezed the poor slug with his pinched fingers  
'til it squirmed. It did not feel like poetry. It felt kind of gross.

Our disappointed, disillusioned poet watched the slug saunter down his palm to his wrist.  
Its suckers sucked onto his pulsing artery. The peculiar poet put his lips up to the slug's slick  
body as if to give it a kiss. Alonso pleaded:

Burrow your twenty-seven thousand  
Razor sharp teeth into mold-spotted,  
Leaf-thin skin.  
Deplete leech-like, mollusk, 'til  
Bursting blood-swollen.  
Leak metallic filaments from a corroded heart.

The slug kept right on slugging, Alonso's wish unheeded. Then, it began to drizzle, a cold,  
typical spring rain in this northern, North American, city. The frustrated poet dropped the  
spineless blob onto the muddy path cruelly, vented his spleen:

I crush you under my boot heel.  
Embryonic. Misshapen snot.

You mock the significance of life.

Watch as your gory guts burst out!

Verse ensanguined.

End of all poetry thus.

The enraged poet turned back up the path to his dwarfed, squat-backed, neglected elderly house (perfectly suited to Alonso's own faded, age-ravaged face, droopy, despondent, his small, hump-backed stature), an elderly house cramped between two newer renovated homes, whose inhabitants were neighborly, if not strangely mundane.

The monomaniacal poet gave himself a little pep-talk before going back inside:

Inside gloomy rooms, verses reside.

Most poetic verses ever known, necessary

Components for my masterpiece. Crowning achievement.

Masquerading as common household objects.

Enchanted. Camouflaged. Whose true nature

Only the most ingenious poet detects.

Sneaky verses.

You'll see my poems are destiny.

With a new resolve, Alonso took the rickety back stairs up slowly, careful not to fall. Then, about to enter, heard rumbling past a cargo train on the tracks nearby blasting its horn. Any abrupt noise irritated him. The sensitive poet muttered:

Iron tail thunk, thunk, thinking.

Segmented stomachs pregnant with waste,

Lurching along a monotonous, endless track.

No poetry left in this loud, inconsiderate,  
Self-centered world.

At that moment, all the dogs down the softly snoring street barked back. The mad poet slammed the door as hard as he could.

Once inside, Alonso, stiff, sore, sat down at the top of the basement stairs, moaning. The achy poet complained:

This antiqued body needs rest.  
Age-spot patinaed, disintegrating here in these  
Stooped rooms. Ungodly, earthly home,  
Where I fail to construct a solid verse.  
Rafted bones sink under gravity's  
Grave-ward pull.

Grumbling, Alonso rose from his seat, switched on the basement light, blundered down the stairs to try to catch poetry hid amidst musty furniture, soggy boxes, ephemera. Our determined poet inspected cob-webbed corners, behind the rusty furnace, under the oily workbench, overcome with emotion:

Spring floods. Sadness seeps  
Cellar walls. Centipedes, silverfish eke out  
Meagre, millennial existence, scurry into  
Cracks in crumbling foundation,  
Under mildewed refuse of the past,  
Dusted with dead skin, stores against  
Death's inevitability. Moldy memories.

Unrecollected. Relic-Less.

Anonymous bones in a mass grave.

Coming across some rusty medals, torn citations, former prizes, Alonso began to obsess over his past success as a poet of some renown. Nostalgically, bitterly, he rehearsed his never-ending resentment, griping:

Poetry. Betrayer.

A sudden storm on a sunny summer day.

Amongst all these painful memories,

How could you fail to manifest?

Once, I thought we most loyal lovers.

I stroked seductive lines

With strong, pen-calloused fingers.

You placed a laurel wreath

On, what you said, were my Apollonian locks,

My gorgeous Grecian curls, not these white,

Wispy tufts sprouting every which way from a

Mottled scalp.

Accolades, applause, uproarious ovations.

Then, one fateful day,

I spied your true beauty,

Heart-stopping,

Not the veiled face you had shown me

Up to that moment,

But the face you kept from me.

And after that...

See what, who I am?

Bereaved! Benighted! Besmirched!

By this time, our overblown poet had unidentifiable crud all over his face and hands, a mouth gritty from the breathless, never-ending hyperbolic orations, from his crazed search. A whirlwind of dust spun through suffocating air, making it impossible to see, especially, because, Alonso, in decline, near-sighted, wore thick glasses, and his pupils in his faded colorless eyes did not dilate as well as a young man's. Asthmatic, he trudged slowly back upstairs, stopped in his dilapidated kitchen for a glass of brandy, then headed to the bathroom to wash up, to begin his search again anew, refreshed, refocused. (After our bizarre poet turned out the basement light, reclusive spiders returned to their webs, gratefully, suspended in the basement's corner where our small, hunch-backed, heterodox poet failed, luckily, to reach.)

Scrubbed up at the bathroom sink, the soapy poet stared into the broken bathroom mirror. He reflected:

Half of me, a mere sliver.

Partial perspective,

Obscure angle.

Alonso, the despairing poet flooded with painful memory, with the incident, the revelation that spurred his mid-life crisis, the life-changing event that set the course for his future dismal, wretched life said:

That afternoon I saw your real shape,  
Unsurpassed poetry.  
I passed by this very door,  
Door to eventual gloom and doom.  
I spied you,  
In front of this once lucky, now cracked, unlucky  
Mirror, admiring yourself.  
Exotic prince out of an erotic tale.  
Out of One Thousand One Nights.  
Awed at your mythical body in guises  
Of Ganymede, Cup-Bearer,  
Unique form filled with desire.  
Beautiful warrior Achilles,  
Battling for art. Quizzical you seemed.  
As if imagining the sense of sensation,  
Feel of feeling felt. How it might be to be  
Human. Other than poetic, imagined, rather real.  
More than a site for make-believe.  
Wanting admiration for physicality.  
Waiting for completion.

Yearning for dimension.

If only you had turned to me,

You'd have seen how eager

I was to please, Master.

Offer my body for your

Own realization.

Why, cruel destiny, did I dare

Look into this self-same mirror

Trying to spy you there?

A cursed decision.

A secret revealed

I take to the grave.

There, staring back at me, instead of

Your miraculous face appeared

Mine mortal-futured.

Plagued, shame-racked, ruined, undesired.

Not fit for immortalization.

Not soul-reflected.

Not a writer's face of unsurpassed

Talent, with inimitable poetic phrases.

But a second-rate hack.



Uninspired. Witless.  
I realized all my former poems mere  
Approximations of your greatness.  
The greatness I saw standing there,  
Your form before me, not the mediocrity  
Looking back at me in the glass darkly.  
An ugly failure.  
Repulsive face metaphor for flawed creation.  
For suffering humanity. Human all too human.  
Our limited, failed, impossible, idealist  
Quest to re-create creation.  
Our incomplete, striving, ambitious,  
Exhausted literature.  
Poetry, you must have seen this one-dimensional face  
In the mirror too.  
Realized the foolishness of being human.  
So, you abandoned me.  
Dissolved mystically.  
Returned to the immortals.

After this passionate outpouring, Alonso, our overwrought poet, decided he would go upstairs to the attic to contemplate, maybe start work on his masterpiece in case his invocation of the muse worked.

The electric light hung at the top of the stairs, so Alonso took his time ascending, climbing each stair carefully, arthritic knees snapping and popping, reaching top finally and switched on the light that cast a sickly glow. He saw mice had befouled his neglected, dried-out drafts strewn atop his writing desk, crumpled pages scattered, fecal-flecked. The disgusted poet raged:

Know what will get creative juices  
Flowing?  
Lure one of those bedraggled,  
Scarred, scabbed, skeletal,  
Worm-riddled alley cats to stalk these  
Sacriligious pests  
As I have done oftentimes before.  
How I enjoy sitting here watching  
Feline ears perk-up.  
Detectable sounds of rodents gnawing on the  
Nest of wires behind hollow walls.  
My regal killer revels in  
Her glorious murder like a medieval queen  
Torturing a traitorous subject  
Who attempts to overthrow her queendom.  
Let it satisfy its murderous birth-right,  
To enjoy revenge without remorse.

The cruel, cynical poet, after this tirade, swept all the papers off his desk. He walked over to a broken-down wardrobe, pulled aside ratty, tatty garments quickly to see if he could catch any

poetic verses hid there. Alonso found his wool coats, cashmere scarves moss-eaten. Irate, he spit invective on the poor moths who had obviously committed these crimes:

Holes, holes, holes. Webbing moths weave.

Eggs morph larvae where larvae morph moths.

Destructive maggots hide inside cloth.

Feeding tunnels color-disguised in

Regurgitated fabric. Foul excretions.

Persistent hunger.

Endless need to feed, to be fed.

Repellant. No wardrobe for poetry.

Disgusted, Alonso, fatigued after expending all his energy on mice and moths, knew he needed sleep. But our childish, sore, befuddled poet refused to retire. Rest evaded him. Too troubled, he justified staying awake thus:

Sleep unsound in a soundless room.

Insomniac. Cocooned in darkness.

Blankets redolent with befouled nightmares.

If unconscious, no satisfactory dream-ending.

Spectered happiness flies after one wished, spirited kiss.

Now our sleepy poet shuffled to the top of the stairs, unsure of his next move, the next step in his poem-crazy search, the search for unique verses he hoped would relieve his abjection, emptiness, ugliness, loneliness, poverty. The despondent poet, mumbling to himself how bored he was with melancholic tropes, shut out the attic light, tapped, slipper-footed, blindly for the top stair, and since near impossible to see, especially with his bad vision, he went down head-first,

landing half-dead at the bottom. Now a dying poet, Alonso spit out his last words, along with his bloodied rotten teeth. A poem, his masterpiece, according to legend, left unrecorded, lost to minor history.

I imagine Alonso, the minor poet, recited something like this:

Universe.

Skin-stretched.

Obese.

Obscene.

Mythical.

Hermaphroditic beast.

Copulating couple.

Misbegotten Birth.

Monstrous Mythology.

Redundant Reproduction.

Endlessly recursive.

Infinitely regressive.

Energetic madness.

Godhead from Godhead.

Vast vastness

Ordinary in its

Profligacy.

If star-stuff made,

Fissure foreign particles.

Conflagrate.

Burn out darkness.

Fuse. Implode in blackest force.

Obsessively devour creation.

Void all. Voiceless Void.

Silence the Word that moves

Upon the face of the deep.

Pray no holy prayers.

Scream resounding profanities.

The noteworthy night of the minor poet ends with dawn. Garbage trucks wake sleepers from funny dreams. School buses bounce happy children happily down the road. Pesky dogs chase fluffy-tailed squirrels. Neighbors to neighbors smile, wave hello good morning, head off to work. Possums, raccoons, strays scope out safe, secluded corners to sleep sated until time to forage again.