

Harvest Moon

Harvest moon,
frosty night.

Back seat of a '49 Ford
in a marinade of acrid chemical smog
irritating our nostrils,
cooled by a mist of Tule fog,
a gossamer screen across the face of the distant,
yellow wisp of moon,
fingers caressing her wet and welcoming vessel.

Youth,
what did we know then?
Just exploring, learning, awkward.

Is everyone like this
at sixteen?

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I LEFT YOU ALONE

I left you alone
at 7,000 feet in the High Sierra
to sleep alone
among white, raw relentless clouds.

Frosty sunshine reams your marrow
like a laser.
You yearn to bask in meager warmth,
like a worm,
in peach pulp womb warmth.

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CLOUDS

Swiftly moving clouds,
the prelude to a storm,
turbulent mists sweeping the crest
of their verdant background,
the Berkeley Hills.

Rolling and plunging mists which,
as they race across a gray sky,
revive their ascent with sudden
upward thrust.

Then each cloud reaches the zenith
of its swirling crescendo
with an immense, energetic surge,
only to roll over with the resistance of the air currents
and plunge again to the crest of the hills,
before resuming their dramatic ritual of natural ferment.

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THE DEAD ACROSS THE LAND.

My people, a string of country graves across the land,
buried beyond finding, beyond touch, beyond recovery.

And before then, broken men and their gaunt,
long-stemmed rag-weed women,
creatures now barren,
One child,
the harvest of one night's thrashing.

My legacy:

bloody stones on a trail of
broken horns, broken bones,
and broken dreams.

Hulls of weathered houses
set against a shimmering haze,
borne away
upon the Dust Bowl winds.

Sitting still, seeking less what lies ahead;
seeking more that lies behind.
Go backwards to see and savor the spirits of
the overlooked and unrecovered,
and feel how much is lost forever.
Go backwards and find the things
I left or lost along the way.

Go backwards from a new and different vantage point,
a porch, a desk, a chair, a fragrant, sunken garden,
an arm's length vista,
to fill my empty sockets,
with form and color, with faces,
to substitute the imagined
for the real but unrealized.

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AUNT POLLY'S HOUSE

They tore down Uncle Neil Hardy's old place
In Blossom, Texas,
where Aunt Polly had been living.
Aunt Polly moved to the low-income housing,
630 West Division, Number 1,
not far-away from
Uncle Neil Hardy's torn down place.
In tiny Blossom, no place was very far-way
from any other place.

Even in the "low-housing,"
Aunt Polly lived like a packrat.
Aunt Polly never cleaned.
She was always visiting
with nearby neighbors
or calling friends and kin on the phone,
telling stories about her childhood.

Old photographs from her past
adorned her small apartment.
An old photograph of her mother,
And of my mother's mother, as a young woman,
sat prominently among the old photographs.
Mother's photograph was tinted with oil paint,
frayed, dry, peeling and flaking.

Stacks of old newspapers covered the floor,
accompanied by metal Armadillos, flowers,
real and artificial, dried, and rags for cleaning,
spread unused in the kitchen, and
grocery bags, shiny and brown
filled to overflowing with "extras",
and cockroaches.

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