

Kouros Posing and In Repose

1.

Modest about his secret identity: ideal.
The Gold Standard of more Straightforward Times.
He is the North Star, the very eyetooth
Of the heavens' great dark mouth.

Your apology, I'm sorry to say,
Is quite weak in this economy,
And your credit is a mess by standards you may
Not recognize while nonetheless they hold.

I'm sorry, you tell me, meaning:
Don't be angry, or, Stop acting like this or that.
Contrite, you call me to order, only sidelong,
No idea in your head of what you are sorry for so words

Sound foreign turning over in your mouth.
And I find I want to be the one
To educate you in contrition,
Embittered as a starless, toothless night.

2.

Covers aside in lamp—
 dimmed by a slip
—light lightly
breathing lightly muscled
parted lips and russet
garland of curls

Repose
and caution: one hand
over his penis
 the other shielding his heart
from night thieves
ghosts up late leering

fondly moved by death
 —dimmed as sleep—
how it lends the living
 —what could it be if it is not
 —and truly—
youth

The Brontë Girls

Malaise in the groundwater
Our maladies drawn at the well
From the fenced yard on the far hill
Claimed for the family dead
Tapping with spare bones the roots
Burst through their rotten cabinets
Winnowing a life in the earth
Sharing our thirst like a guest at table

We all tried to be as good as our chairs
Our faces plain as plates
Our teeth brittle crockery
At the school for girls like us in circumstance
One two three our sisters died
Leaving us to drink the bitter tea
Drawn up in pails from hell

EARTHLY DELIGHTS

OUGHT I TO RECOGNIZE THIS GARDEN
I NEVER HAVE A THOUGHT
OR A MEMORY ANY MORE
DAY AND NIGHT ARE THE SAME
WHY ARE YOU UPSET
I HAD THIS ENTIRE LIFE AN ORCHESTRA
IN TUNE WAITING FOR MY CUE
WHO IS THAT MAN IS HE MY SON
THESE THESE ARE HIS OWN CHILDREN
WHAT I KNOW TO BE TRUE
I AM AWAKE IN A FINE FRUITING GARDEN
I LOVE THE FRUITING TREES
I LOVE TV COMMERCIALS
APPLEBEES
THEY MAKE THE WHITE COMPUTERS

Me and John in the City

We used to stand on the safe side
Of the suicide fence
The Brooklyn Queens Expressway under
We'd look at the cars
You could tell them apart by model and year
I could tell you very little or probably all
About my days in exile from a love
I was ashamed to have dragged into the city
We were all lonely anyway
Do you like that one that beige sedan not that Buick
Like we were shopping for other lives
All just as feasible
Then when you finally calm down
What do we pass but a corpse sheeted
And then everyone is an under cover enemy
The inevitable boy shedding his coat after
Another worse day than we could imagine
Even as a dutiful audience

When you left in that new car
I went and got my old one upstate
If you could just drive away from me to California
I didn't have to miss you from Queens
All coked out admiring traffic
Ignoring my phone
I knew it wasn't you calling
I knew we weren't in love like characters
I knew which cars you really really hated
I hated them too

Sundowner Pantoum

Then how old are you now already so tired
I had two babies when I was your age can you believe
Those trees are eyeing me giving me mean looks
Your husband must be wondering where you went

I already had two babies can you imagine I was your age
Back then things weren't so difficult they really weren't
Your husband is probably wondering where you are
How old are you to be so tired and nervous

Things weren't so difficult back when I was how old now
People weren't going around looking for trouble
You're not old enough to be so tired it makes me nervous
Don't those pines look mean about the eyes

Why do people now all go around looking so troubled
When did the plain old world turn into such a mess
Don't you give me black looks like that
You best not make your husband nervous

I was your age when you were a baby
How in the world did my years turn into such a mess
Old enough you should have at least two babies
That would tire you out get you to sit still

You are too old to be so difficult
I already had two babies and my husband
Going around who knows where looking for trouble
Just like you tired and nervous and won't sit still