

The Reading

1. Pull the Diagnosis Down

the poem
wants to fuck the Crazy Lady
Please, God, stop it!
fuck her like George did
on his living room rug
across from the car wash exit
Miss Texas staring down
from the billboard across Terminal Avenue
Give for Cerebral Palsy

the poem
wants to fuck the Crazy Lady
Please Dr. Abraham, talk it out of it!
amid the stale cerements of Pall Mall butts
pizza crusts, empty Olympia brand beer cans
the poem wants to pull her diagnosis down
while she sings
in Joan Baez's alternate personality

the poem
wants to lick her tiny Tinkerbelle sane
Bishop Berkeley, please prove it doesn't exist!
feel her tarantula bite
know what it's like
who's weaving the dance
down through our heads
the command voices from above to kill our kids

the poem wants to say these things
everything we've been afraid to let it say
about murder from above
the poem wants to arrest the Muses
with the circles in their hands
shooting us up with cursed
from the Gabriel Valley rooftop
please, Calliope, stop it!

2. Over Night Pass

I was playing ping pong with Richard
who'd slit his throat with a razor blade
when it started to come out
so I said "I lift my heart"
so I said "once Electra her sepulchral urn"
in an effort to squelch it
shut it up
I continued to play ping pong with Richard
one of many Boston Strangler suspects
sent to Bridgewater for further training
but his stitches came loose
and this Frankenstein roar

started to pour forth
and I thought it was the Rough Beast about to be born
from the poison well of Charles Manson
like the evil little girl with wet back hair
so I said "The rude bridge that arched the flood"
so it said "I spit on your grave, Coleridge"
no, I didn't say that, I deny saying that Judge Hathorne!
it was like an A-bomb inside
spreading Sarah Connor wide
"and T. S. Eliot too!
you don't have one testicle between the two of you!"

so I said
"I think that I will never see
a poem as beautiful as a tree"
and it said
"the Skylark follows the lemon road, Poetry Toad"
and I saw the Werewolf Woman
open the cage of her thighs
so I closed my eyes
and went to the nurses's station to get a pass
to go home to commit suicide
because I did not want to harm
a single holy arsonist's sonnet
a single therapeutic psalm
meant to calm
meant to quell
"your momma was a maenad!"
meant to **kill** the correct diagnosis exploding inside

3. I Cannot Make this Poem Work

I cannot make this poem work
I cannot make it tell lies like you, Browning
about Saul
cannot make him forget
that dream about being raped
by the Evil Spirit or that prophecy
like Lincoln
who went meekly to the intersection at Ford's Theater
and died

I cannot lie like you, Styron,
turn the Furies into aberrant chemicals in your brain
in your appeal for clemency at Colonus
cannot offer my eyes, Oedipus
because of what I saw the hurricane
doing with Mom
to incubate the next plague
no poem was containment enough
for that Chernobyl

I wanted to die
as I walked home through Somerville
I did not think it was the new age
I thought it was John Wayne Gacy
a new Hitler
to make Armageddon come true for Pastor John Hagee

I figured I was about to deliver
hydrophobic Old Yeller
to infect every European country
with Le Sacre du Printemps slobber
as the words blistered, popped, peeled away
from Diving into the Wreck
to leave the agony of the centaur
skinned because he won the music contest!

that skin is what should be published
not the "paean" to Apollo!

4. By Way of Knowledge

I was just a kid then
I thought I was dying
I wasn't dying
your poem was dying
Browning
your excuse was dying, Plath
your apology for rape by God, Sexton
your Demigorgon in the mouth of the cave, Shelley
a small boy said those things about Prometheus unbound
your train, Eliot
your train going by way of ignorance
was dying
your good Catholic train
goodbye T. S.
Goodbye Cummings
 with you mud lucious bullshit
 which is what the Muses
leave up our butts
 after creating thisbusymonstermanunkind in them
pity them not!
as they die
 wither and die like Dorothy's witch
goodbye Shakespeare
they still think it's funny
a comedy
 to have Puck fuck your brain with false dreams!
fuck O. J. Simpson with Othello
ha ha
murder sleep
 and leave us Bottoms with no bottom

goodbye Stravinsky
I come with the Judas kiss
for the music you channeled from above
that brought us the Dance of the Sacrifice
in the trenches of France
and 6,000,000 dead ballerinas
in olive drab tutus

5. The Reading

I crawled up the mountain of rejection slip steps
the slush pile two miles high
past the rotting body parts of poets
tossed out of every diagnosis
fake rainbows pasted over their mouths
by Doctors Dante and David
to our third floor apartment
started swallowing the little pills
the Bosch ink pot demon was handing me
to make sure I never delivered this baby

I washed them down with red wine
turned on the TV
hoping it would numb me
like the guy in *To Build a Fire*
freezing to death
in *Silence in Snowy Fields*
then suck me down the Poltergeist channel
into someplace warm and cozy
like some movie star's best selling poetry anthology
or the cake frosting special effect heaven
of *What Dreams May Come*

but the NBA finals were on
Celtics versus the Knicks
Bards vs the Scientists
the Damned
against the Dantes
the Psychotics
vs Hospital Psychiatry
I don't recall now
all I know is the red headed center for The Bards
was reading
up and down the court like a mad thing

rebounding dreams
slam dunking proofs of true creation
shooting suitors with Odysseus's bow
hammering home hooks against Harpies
blasting jump shots
through Spielberg williwaw clouds

as he
slammed home a proof
 that hell exists to punish the brave
 no liberal theologian could deny
then dunked a paper
 The Strange Case of Dr. Christ and Mr. Satan
I put down the pills
 began to cry
by now the wine was winning
against the whine of the guy with the pony tail
 about alcohol
 and John Berryman
so I called a few of my friends from the car wash
and invited them over
 then let Asiana flight 307
out of catastrophe's cage to roar
2 casualties
305 survivors

