

A Short History of Failure

in 1912 “Mystical experience”
sifts down around Rilke at Schloss Duino,
as he leans against a tree
the agony of Attis
or some suicide
trapped on the “other side of nature”
where the “domain of the sayable”
does not suffice
so Rilke does not attempt to say it

Bach wakes shot up with a Passion
a real drug rush
which Stravinsky, several centuries closer to the source
hears as the entire Dance of the Sacrifice
for Le Sacre du Printemps
sits down at the piano
roughs it out
never connecting it to the dead, blue thing
delivered in the trenches
as the sacrifice
of 10,000,000 men in WW I

back just a bit
Coleridge,
in an opium faint
sees the whole delivery system
the big black trucks driven by Lyssa and The Furies
think's it's a poem
not a drug deal believers are making with Hell
to inspire war
wakes with the Deadly Langour
but does deliver the Beauty Secret
to the English Department
as the Demon Lover

Plath, who dares call the Muses “disquieting”
gets shot up with a huge dose of Daddy
real Wrath shit
angels shoot up serial killers with
which both critics and fans
mislabel “mental illness”
not the cold blooded murder of Niobe's children
by Apollo and Artemis

Berryman, who has the gall
to take the angel's dress off
will get the Satan agate in his booze
 while William S. Burroughs will crawl back to his hammock
and his Intravenous of Dante
 because he wants to forget what he saw the nine of them doing
to Bob Dylan after his motorcycle accident
in the basement of the Kaaba

in penance
Burroughs will play Isis in drag
 tear up Lancelot's notebook --
 particularly the Grail visions
the critics will call this a stroke of genius
 his "Dismemberment of Orpheus Technique"
Eliade will write a scholarly monograph
 on one partially reconstructed body part
calling it:
 "Ritual Dismemberment in Shamanic Initiation"

Lancelot will wake
 thinking himself unworthy
of the Mystery of the Grail

Dobie Poems

For Dobie, my son's German shepherd, killed by pulp truck in front of our house.

1. Deposition

big beautiful shepherd
I have to crook your frozen paws
angular Mannerist maneuvering of body from cross
like some kind of Pontormo acrostic
agony in scraggily jack pine
frozen sand
patches of snow from Mars
a pulp truck swallowing you up
one yelp then your back broken like a twig
so you fit in this poem
I take you down off your cross of beast
your frozen tongue that licked the curse from Jonah's face your heart too good for any
saint

The sand was hard to dig
it hurt my shoulders
the whole geometry of never 3 minutes for a slam

14 lines on the subject of grief for a contest
500 words on how to be dead in a poem
it hurts to have your howls stolen
by heartless poets to cowardly to raise their own savior

my teeth hurt, Dobie
but cannot bite this chill wind
down from Duluth
this futile grief
these scrub oak branches
but a Stephen King novel with its throat torn out 10,000 hamstrung Dr. Jekylls
the soft underbelly of Revelations ripped open
the entrails of the Reverend Robertson's
black ops department
oopsed out of his church
his fingerprints
and Bush's Dark Father semen all over the earthquake will prove this pet has fangs
and that we, beloved friend are alive in this poem

2. Pet Sematary

the pulp truck
the big, white pulp truck
with the jagged joke jaws on the radiator slammed over you
twenty ton hit and run horror
on its way to be published
in an earthquake fault or school shooting the fountain of youth for senile religions
governments, artists

we buried you behind Jonah's trailer in the shroud of a child's sheet
with colorful dinosaurs on it
we buried you with a picture of Jonah your blood brother

who drank with you from your water dish who lay down beside you

in a brotherhood of growls so beautiful

it cannot be said in a poem

we buried you in a place they can never find
with their gangrene fingers and zombie hands

their rigor mortis revelations
and rapture rabies
we buried you in a place they can never touch with their war
their call for beast after beast
to rise from the Pit
crawl out of graves under coven of darkness
to terrify already black sheep back into the fold we buried you with your bright face
and tongue licking away our tears
we buried you with your teeth

Beware!
for we are the Rough Beasts

you have been warned about

Beware!
we are the werewolves of Delfi

the Cujos of Wabigoon

Beware!
we come with sharp fangs to Bethlehems of poems to rip out the throats

of angels stabbing the earth with God's scythes

Good Friday Spell

he let the dog out of the car
she found the tossed out deer hides soaking in the Yellow River water hung up on the
snags of re-bar poking up from chunks of concrete the large plastic laundry basket
on the shore begged the question whose laundry was it

Dark clouds scudded by overhead it was the day before Good Friday

The blue panties hanging from the tree branch said something erotic
but desolate
a cry

his cry
caught on a twig

He could not tell if they were men's or women's he could have used a stick to get them
down but they seemed intentional
to signify something

a flag maybe

he remembered walking home covered in Judyensau slime semen
even his eyes

where he could still see
Luther's orders to the German Princes to burn down all the Synagogues transfer Jews
to community settlements;
confiscate all Jewish literature, which was blasphemous;
prohibit rabbis to teach, on pain of death;
deny Jews safe-conduct, so as to prevent the spread of Judaism; appropriate their
wealth and use it to support converts
!!!! and to prevent the lewd practice of usury; assign Jews to manual labor as a form
of penance
through his tears.

these were the elements of Easter then the deer hides, the plastic laundry basket the
Yellow River sign
the chunks of jackpine on the hill

the blue panties on the tree limb
the transected deer
cut precisely in half on the side of the road oopsing Luther's orders

how hard is it
to resurrect what has been forgotten How hard to forgiv

Sleeping with Franz

he is steel thin
fleshless as a legal tract a concentration
camp victim
his eyes are a summons to appear before God guiltless

guileless but

convicted nevertheless

to spend
life in this prison this black site
he does not tell you what to do

with the whip and the spikes

your job
is to be
a kind of obstetrician to deliver

the most exquisite cries that shock you

with their utter abandon

afterward
he will be like a criminal whose appeals
have failed

for whom the dawn means the execution of the child

The White Mare

stops in Buffalo, Gillette
"Sharpest Town in the West"
no barker needed to draw the hard faced cowhands
or the softer brand in Broncos and double breasted suits ride herd on black angus and
bank accounts

from their desks cowboys no longer used to horseflesh between legs

would not know what to do with the white mare but to bucking jeeps
gelded machines in the Longbranch bars
not the desire to become regal with you

no barker needed to draw the crude soaked wildcatters or the turners of spigots
of the faucets on the pipeline
of the infinite cash-flow away from the land

stops in Sheridan, Billings
amid sage and dwindling herds of white-rumped pronghorn over Crazy Woman Creek
the pus yellow water beneath shock white cliffs
the bright forehead of the dream gone bad
as the same old crew rise from the black caldron
to pump away like drilling rigs

stops in Norman, Cosmos, Wall
home of the World Famous Wall Drugs
at least until the freeway bypassed the town like life bypassed the housewife
watching the wild mustangs of her energy drain down the Maytag at the laundromat

Tolstoy, Northfield, Grinnell
through the corn belt
her tired body a tongue of shade
danced into the wounded faces of the failing farmers her strip like a nitrogen fix
for the played out ground
of connubial bliss blown away like the top soil
a tiny shower of relief
a pity piss for the migrant workers burned nearly black a petit buzz of terror for the small
town solid citizen the good evangelical Christians
in for the leer

experiencing what their pastors warned them about the lewd obsessed frog

through buttes like breasts
the Holy places of the Native Americans covered with the graffiti of passing pioneers

and later aboriginals in black leather jackets the Tribe of Gad inscribed on their backs
and she feels the knife point of every stare initial her flesh

through the dark earth of tilled Iowa sow to pig farmers
smelling like ammonia and cracked corn relief for sun obsessed men

looking for the knowledge of the dark in her tent the dark not to be found at home or in
church with the "Little Woman" whittled nearly to bone

the river towns

Sioux Falls, Bismark, Mandan

always the same crowd behind the rope always the same hands groping for her secrets
dirt driven deep

as though uprooted from earth

or pale as money dust

as accompanied by the tinny music

on the tiny record player

she dances the tornado into town

that rips open the vault of the Poweshiek Bank and lets all the darkness out

because all the men wilt

when it comes to mounting

the white mare