

The Buzzing

The bells of St. Phillip's sound from across the river, grazing us with clear columns of sound. Our redeemer waits with a *pichet* of rosé under the arch decorated with the heads of martyrs.

In the lobby is the head of a bull. The director calls him *Toro*. Guide books hype bloodless bull fights. The director assures us, *They always kill Toro*. And over there, the blue plastic tables.

Down the street men sit. In the stillness the sound of kissing, the two German lesbians follow us from restaurant to restaurant across bent days. We order catsup with our frites and cognac.

Each afternoon we put on long sleeves and sweat through them. Laundry piles by the bed. Women herd children down the lane behind us where the old city, shuttered, twists its tail.

On rue Victor Hugo more men sit at small plastic tables drinking espresso in *Le Corniche*. We punch in night codes, the director sets out the *confiture abricot*, the men always there.

With each ratchet the earth cranks round more slowly. Days arrested. A drive to Lourmarin to feel air move, see old Camus and his garden up the little lane below the chateau. Tonight

we'll go to the restaurant near the station, eat the good lamb and watch the trains come and go to Arles and Marseilles. In the *Tabac* more postcards, which I will not write,

will find broken in my luggage -- slick and gaudy, sun flowers, now bone-colored, dried for seed, waiting the machine. *Ils sont là*, there in the fields of night beyond the traffic circle.

Tables covered with small white cups in the fluorescent glow. Men sitting outside under the blue shutters of the *Aladdin*. We count fifty-euro notes under a wall decorated with combs.

Olga

Paraguay is land locked.
If you want to see the sea
you must head for Montevideo
or another Atlantic port.

Reverend Ted puts down the brochure.
Picks up yesterday's paper again.
He's already finished the funnies,
the crossword and the Sudoku.

The news makes him too mad.
Ted opens the box the UPS driver left
at the rectory's back door,
tries on the black cassock he bought on eBay.

Up in the attic is a full length mirror.
Ted checks out the length, the drape.
The best 12.50 plus \$6. shipping he ever spent.
He wonders about Montevideo. If she is still there.

He folds the cassock, puts it back in the box.
He'd wear the old worsted wool,
the one he still had from seminary.
The hem had been frayed for years.

He liked it because it reminded him
of a vow of poverty he had never taken.

What Makes You Think It Was Over?

I waited too long. I could smell hot oil.
The bad kind of hot oil. Machine oil, ready to go,

combust, burst. Soon we will be biting our own tails.
My shoes had holes the same places as my sox.

There were clues. We were out of money and drugs.
We wait in line for postage. Dear little sun,

Curve the day in our direction.
Warp round the black holes and day jobs

to slant some rays into our back door, warm
the linoleum under my kitchen table.

Grumbling and low thunder from the next room.
Brooklyn, she says, *was great*. Alabama floated his boat.

A cold lake in the Poconos is shaded most of the day.
We talk vacations, stringent exercises into how much

we can take of strangers and their cant lingo.
The line is an injured snake, wriggled and warped.

She says, *OK enough*, after Brooklyn, it started
to squeak loudly and it was getting dark too soon.

We looked out from the edge of the map
but beyond the paper there was nothing.

Once I thought I saw the flicker of distant stars,
but I'm sure it was nothing more than fireflies.

This Is What Went Wrong

Well, first a Windsor knot is a bitch to pull off,
to not make it look like you're putting on airs.
And the fish forks were in the wrong place.
It was cloudy and our sundial was set to Eastern Standard time.
A minor point, but all those calories did add up
like that fruit Danish or the second helping of *Strudel mit Schlage*.
This should have been obvious, it would go better
if we had all been speaking the same language.
We didn't notice the splinters at first,
or hear the cries from the women in their saffron robes.
The weather had left us limp,
dispirited and altogether surly.
It was tough I'll tell you, trying to keep it all together,
but in the end we have no one to blame really.
As we started across the suspension bridge
that snapping sound should have been a clue.

Weather

Today there is another cold front coming,
says old Smiley on the tube.

Fronts occluded, he says. Arctic air masses.

He promises clear skies after morning fog.

The old woman listened to the weather forecast
on the day she died. Her only channel there
in the vaporous years beyond 90.

An umbrella? Yes or no. Her London Fog,
or the blue shorts.

All we talked about was the temperature.

Are the black and red hurricane flags flying?

Always, always.