

by MARTY NORTHROP

I won't offer a close reading of my own work, but I will share a bit about the approach I took in making it. These poems are, to a certain extent, self-referential—about the process of their making, about the poetic craft. If I have adopted a poetics, I suppose that it is bound up with such ideas, at least temporarily. For me, poetry is not the product of a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings... recollected in tranquility”—rather, poetry is about the ways in which successive drafts of a poem communicate with each other, with the standing iteration, and with other texts, quite soberly. That is not to say that a poem should not erupt from strong feelings, or be revised according to them, but rather that a poem for me never ceases to crawl out of itself anew over a succession of nights spent working on it. During those nights, perhaps stretching as long as a climatic season or an academic semester, they find it necessary to molt for kind of heat or fatten for a kind of winter. A poem from me builds itself by making critical commentary on its fluxing body, and it bears the scars of this process rather noticeably—I try to intend for them to. Anyone's poems go through drafts; mine seem to be about the cycles of slippage, damage, and birth that come from re-drafting. Accordingly, I feel these two summer poems have been written in the spirit of Critiphoria, a new journal concerned with the nexus of poetry and criticism, positing the existence of a “third genre” of poetry-criticism through which literary scholarship might approach a re-empowerment of the writer and a renewed critical analysis of craft.

FORTY DAISES

This poem has almost nothing to do with Marx,
Yet Marx has nearly everything to do with poetry.

In a garden there was work for you and some ears,
Cheerful hardness in our thoughts and tears. Then

Jonah fell into a fish because his swarthy anima
Desired too many diamonds for Christmas coffee.

If this poem is not nearly a ghazal, it's cuz I fail
In everything sweet and nocturnal to wonder it so.

Can you please caw more loudly your retorts?
It's only tragic the way words winnow from your

Eroding manuscript of a mouth. Mother? No. Lamb?
Lady? Yes and always. How is it so much like uncomfortable

North Shore beaches to be hearing your voice again
Across the sound of its own plastic making? Why not?

I want to use the word staccato to suggest you, but
you aren't. You are sweet, and since sweet is boring

I guess this is the music of my deathwish - alors,
Every poem conceived from lust ends in cold aphorism.

A Donald Duck gaze frozen in the arc of signifying. Expanding
Like icing water into the spackle of an opaque readership.

In us mate two faculties - memory and the drive to lie - progenitors
In any position on the cushion, making-out with the myths of our making.
In Korean, dogs are written to make the noise mong, mong—
That even the Englished representation of that sound.

To make this English whole I harvested from another poem
Of mine—"Ride the Enlightening"—before it died. Then

Enter night and its beauty like that in which she walks,
Night and everything silvery, silent, come-out come-out,

About it. Fat and its caveat. The elisions we have skipped over
And the Ellisons who showed us why to hide in a shrubbery.
In loose jeans and with coffee and alone, with forgotten jazz
Buzzing faintly in her den, I have read all her criticisms about this.

Its defibrillative revival, its ungainly math. How the caffeine before
Leapt out, down and across our knuckles. The retracings, the second etchings.

And when the grain subdues his troublesome nocturne,
If, indeed, rapture were to tease apart the chords in this rapture,

Resolving the unintentional fishing-line knot into something that won't
Jam the reel—then we de-fable what fishing meant to papa.

There are those who don't realize that there are new things to hear, and those
Who believe that there is nothing new to hear; everyone else hears a poem.

Guerre True Destine, or By Any Other Name

Arose his cirrhosis:

A rose was; Eros is

Sara Ohs's arrows.

Sis, a rose is arroz.

Hsss—stir hoses are

O, shh. Is, eh, roe? Zzz!

Zero's, zits: "He rows its

Ear woes, it's sheer ho's!"