

WILLIAM BLAKE

London

*I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.*

*And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.*

*In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear*

*How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls*

*But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse*

LINDA PASTAN

Ethics

*In ethics class so many years ago
our teacher asked this question every fall:*

*If there were a fire in a museum,
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting
or an old woman who hadn't many
years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs
caring little for pictures or old age
we'd opt one year for life, the next for art
and always half-heartedly. Sometimes
the woman borrowed my grandmother's face
leaving her usual kitchen to wander
some drafty, half-imagined museum.*

*One year, feeling clever, I replied
why not let the woman decide herself?
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews
the burdens of responsibility.*

*This fall in a real museum I stand
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,
or nearly so, myself. The colors
within this frame are darker than autumn,
darker even than winter — the browns of earth,
though earth's most radiant elements burn
through the canvas. I know now that woman
and painting and season are almost one
and all beyond the saving of children.*

ZULFIKAR GHOSE

Decomposition

*I have a picture I took in Bombay
of a beggar asleep on the pavement:
grey-haired, wearing shorts and a dirty shirt,
his shadow thrown aside like a blanket.
His arms and legs could be cracks in the stone,
routes for the ants' journeys, the flies' descents,
Brain-washed by the sun into exhaustion,
he lies veined into stone, a fossil man.
Behind him there is a crowd passingly
bemused by a pavement trickster and quite
indifferent to this very common sight
of an old man asleep on the pavement.
I thought it then a good composition
and glibly called it "The Man in the Street,"
remarking how typical it was of
India that the man in the street lived there.
His head in the posture of one weeping
into a pillow chides me now for my
presumption at attempting to compose
art of his hunger and solitude.*

JOHN COOPER CLARKE

I wanna be yours

I wanna be your vacuum cleaner

Breathing in your dust

I wanna be your Ford Cortina

I will never rust

If you like your coffee hot

Let me be your coffee pot

You call the shots

I wanna be yours

I wanna be your raincoat

For those frequent rainy days

I wanna be your dreamboat

When you want to sail away

Let me be your teddy bear

Take me with you anywhere

I don't care

I wanna be yours

I wanna be your electric meter

I will not run out

I wanna be the electric heater

You'll get cold without

I wanna be your setting lotion

Hold your hair in deep devotion

Deep as the deep Atlantic ocean

That's how deep is my devotion