

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

'London 1802'

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

FRANK O'HARA

The Day Lady Died

*It is 12:20 in New York a Friday
three days after Bastille day, yes
it is 1959 and I go get a shoeshine
because I will get off the 4:19 in Easthampton
at 7:15 and then go straight to dinner
and I don't know the people who will feed me*

*I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun
and have a hamburger and a malted and buy
an ugly NEW WORLD WRITING to see what the poets
in Ghana are doing these days*

*I go on to the bank
and Miss Stillwagon (first name Linda I once heard)
doesn't even look up my balance for once in her life
and in the GOLDEN GRIFFIN I get a little Verlaine
for Patsy with drawings by Bonnard although I do
think of Hesiod, trans. Richmond Lattimore or
Brendan Behan's new play or Le Balcon or Les Nègres
of Genet, but I don't, I stick with Verlaine
after practically going to sleep with quandariness*

FRANK O'HARA

The Day Lady Died (cont)

*and for Mike I just stroll into the PARK LANE
Liquor Store and ask for a bottle of Strega and
then I go back where I came from to 6th Avenue
and the tobacconist in the Ziegfeld Theatre and
casually ask for a carton of Gauloises and a carton
of Picayunes, and a NEW YORK POST with her face on it*

*and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of
leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT
while she whispered a song along the keyboard
to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing*

LYNN EMANUEL

Blonde Bombshell

*Love is boring and passé, all that old baggage,
the bloody bric-a-brac, the bad, the gothic,
retrograde, obscurantist hum and drum of it
needs to be swept away. So, night after night,
we sit in the dark of the Roxy beside grandmothers
with their shanks tied up in the tourniquets
of rolled stockings and open ourselves, like earth
to rain, to the blue fire of the movie screen
where love surrenders suddenly to gangsters
and their cuties. There in the narrow,
mote-filled finger of light, is a blonde,
so blonde, so blinding, she is a blizzard, a huge
spook, and lights up like the sun the audience
in its galoshes. She bulges like a deuce coupe.
When we see her we say good-bye to Kansas.
She is everything spare, cool, and clean,
like a gas station on a dark night and the cold
dependable light of rage coming in on schedule like a bus.*

VANESSA KISUULE

'Hollow'

*You came down easy in the end
the righteous wrench of two ropes in a grand plie
briefly, you flew
corkscrewed, then met the ground
with the clang of toy guns, loose change
chains
a rain of cheers.*

*Standing ovation on the platform of your neck
punk ballet. Act 1.
there is more to come.*

*And who carved you?
They took such care with that stately pose and propped chin.
Wise and virtuous the plaque assured us.
Victors wish history odourless and static
but history is a sneaky mistress
moves like smoke, Colston,
like saliva in a hungry mouth.*

*This is your rightful home
here, in the pit of chaos with the rest of us.
Take your twisted glory and feed it to the tadpoles.
Kids will write raps to that syncopated splash.*

VANESSA KISUULE

'Hollow' (cont)

*I think of you lying in that harbour
with the horrors you hosted.*

There is no poem more succinct than that.

But still

you

are permanent.

You who perfected the ratio.

Blood to sugar to money to bricks.

*Each bougie building we flaunt
haunted by bones.*

Children learn and titans sing

under the stubborn rust of your name.

But the air is gently throbbing with newness.

Can you feel it?

Colston, I can't get the sound of you from my head.

*Countless times I passed that plinth
its heavy threat of metal and marble.*

*But as you landed a piece of you fell off
broke away*

and inside

nothing but air.

This whole time

You were hollow.