

CONSECRATION OF 5 POEMS

By R. T. Castleberry

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: Why do we get so much fine poetry from Texas? Castleberry's work has everything but that friendly drawl. I admit the South can turn the most engaging phrases, and I hung on to every word of Shelby Foote in Burn's series. Here is a taste: "I deny memories useless to me— /week-long binges, wives I've cheated with." "I look away, watch the ceiling fan / swirl shadow circles on the blinds." "the signet ring is a stranger's fit. / I use Crown Royal to share my voice," "Yours rattles with sketch pad and pencils, / Bowie knife and Beretta."HS (Spacing is poet's own.)

CLEARING OUT

Simplifying a house of secrets
I'm stranded on the firing line,
dreams argued and denied.
I'll not be a lawyer, a teacher,
but son of the lazy wasted,
brother to the fearful,
the indebted and delinquent.
Locked like winter into ordinary retribution--
slammed phones after sweatshop accusations,
I stand heroic, the droning tone
like a bombing plane at my ear.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE SICK HOUSE

I watch in the world,
amused by massacre and gin,
homeland walls, holiday wars.
Viewed from the barred gate
darkened surveillance cars prowl,
aimless under winter afternoon skies.
Cold weather tramps straggle past

construction generators, pavement gaps,
work order water leaks.
I take into consideration
the symbolic and the sin.
I deny memories useless to me—
week-long binges, wives I've cheated with.
Unsettled by panic attack, I leave
a dark bedroom for couch and cable tv.
Lessons located in news video,
detention gangs scour migrant dives,
mercados, work warehouse.
I look away, watch the ceiling fan
swirl shadow circles on the blinds.
In jeans, a Steely Dan tour tee shirt,
almost ready for silence,
I allow days clear of music.

CALLED BY NAME

I used another name last night,
took initials and a ringleader's bandanna
into calibrations of changing moonlight.
I carry knives in every pocket,
a coin lucky for the week.
Loose on my hand,
the signet ring is a stranger's fit.
I use Crown Royal to share my voice,
a shoplifter's Mont Blanc to sign
broadsides written for the war.
Fortunate in a year of injury, circuit failure,
I select a difficult souvenir,
take a motorcycle track
and a letter to Sam Houston.
Like war movies I've seen,
the ethics of death aren't his concern.
I stand at bayou's edge, watch
campfire consorts spill Beaujolais.
Let Barabbas explain the next message.
I wrap black silk around a racer's derby,
lean my bike towards the nearest coastline.
I'm gone from here.

DEATH IS IN THE CONVERSATION

Three of us stand in street corner rain,
kicking at a glass crucifix, savaged in the grass.
You and I pile colored pieces for collage.
Molly bears the stigma of coincidental cuts.
A shirt tail preacher binds his wounds,
clutching a Circe pennant, bullhorn
and Living Bible at his feet.
Soldiers on cell phones
laugh in the park, crossing against the light.
“Something always breaks,” you say.
I bow to the sentiment, “It’s the gift I own.”
A pride of black cats settles
on a storefront stoop.

As we enter the basement bar,
a war song punches through the chatter,
emblem white and blue of the Resistance.
They sing Death like a football cheer.
“I’ll buy one round but I won’t buy more.
The Capricorn heart will stop if I do.”
My messenger bag is weighted with
Zorro’s mask, a list of Jefferson’s lies,
a signed copy of Steal This Book.
Molly’s carries a decoy whistle,
essays from Orwell, Pollitt and Paine.
Yours rattles with sketch pad and pencils,
Bowie knife and Beretta.

After closing,
air raid lights search sky and building.
I’ve memorized addresses
for safe houses, arms depots.
Molly takes first watch.
Laptops charge. A rifle leans
beneath a Miro calendar,
between two easels.
We’ve shared a bed for years.
If the magistrates permit,
we’ll marry in the spring.

THE MOON REMINDS

I walk a muddy street,
boot tread impressions
brutal, random in February stealth.
Sliver of a moon dices
high fog, pitching oak limbs.
A north wind chills footsteps,
exposed layers of sweatshirt and sweater
beneath a borrowed bomber jacket.
Pausing for the parking turn of a car,
I shrug a shivering laugh, remembering
Mother's stories of collision death or kidnap.
At the apartment door
I step back to the sidewalk, that cold tunnel,
center my eyes on Jupiter, waiting for Saturn.
By the news--mechanics made right,
we'll return to the moon.

THE POET SPEAKS: *As a rule, I don't write autobiographically. I prefer a larger stage to work on than the trite confessional. So my work is generated mainly from a dark and skeptical imagination. I think of it as method acting, where the actor takes something emotionally resonant and puts it into a received scenario. My poetry is also dense with recognizable detail. I've found if the emotion is real and the details are right, a reader will accept it as true. My influences aren't unusual for a late 20th century poet muscling through the 21st: Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen for their wordplay and romantic surrealism, Ted Hughes for a threatening lyricism and Carl Sandburg for his ability to find the pastoral in an urban setting.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: *My work has appeared in Blue Collar Review, Santa Fe Literary Review, Pedestal Magazine, Misfit, Trajectory, The Alembic and Comstock Review. Internationally, it has been published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, Portugal and Antarctica. I've had poetry in the anthologies: Travois-An Anthology of Texas Poetry, TimeSlice, The Weight of Addition, Anthem: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen, Kind Of A Hurricane: Without Words and Level Land: Poetry For and About the I35 Corridor.*