

CHRISTOPHER KENNEDY

## *Congruence*

I hate to throw away fruit, so I stood in my yard with a bruised pear raised above my head, hoping to learn something about the human condition. A halo of bees, black and yellow striped, hovered, lazy in the late summer heat, in stasis, then orbited above the pear's irresistible lure.

Unable to pull free of the spoiled fruit's gravity, drawn to the slow decay, they swarmed and landed in a clump on a spot of deep brown, nearing black, where they drank, then flew back to their nest, drunk with sweetness, slaked but not sated.

I went back to the house to spread myself with honey and enter my data in a blue notebook. There was still time for me to learn the influence of desire.

## *Dead Horse*

It had been dead for years. The others beat it as if it would jump to its feet and ride off. I saddled it sideways and slid on. There was nowhere to go, and I had the perfect means. The others kept pounding their fists against the rotten hide, expecting an unlikely response. They managed the illusion of a galloping hoof, but only for a moment. They looked at me as if I could tell them what to do next. I set my gaze on the horizon and rode hard in ways too difficult to explain.

*Dressed for Church*

When you get far enough away to see where you've been, it's always smaller, your father is there, swimming in a small pond, like a sunfish you caught in the St. Lawrence Seaway when you were seven. And it's not like you can circle around and come up on it from the back, see it again, large as life. It recedes as you walk, compressing into a pinprick of light. And then your mother stands next to the clothesline with the wicker laundry basket in her hands, all your father's white shirts, hanging like ghosts from the lines. And then she's gone. The shirts flap in the wind a little, and you think of wounded soldiers begging mercy in the snow and turn and walk a little farther, fascinated by the unlikely sheen of your new shoes.

## *Loveliest of Zombies*

I have plans, archetypes, blue prints,  
trapezoidal structures, dug from the ruins  
of my last love affair. Or rather, the last time  
I touched flesh it withered, rotted, turned  
sundry shades of yellow and blue.  
There's something beautifully unnatural about you,  
too, a corpse-like pall that suggests *indoor fluorescence*,  
a "B" Movie sheen that screams out to me  
from the red gash of your lips. You're stitched tight,  
an assemblage of Old World parts that evokes  
an ominous castle in a storm. Given all this,  
can I expect a quick reply? Is it mutual like rain  
agreeing to be rain? I hope not. I'm dressed  
too old for the weather. I love you as if you were dead.

*Plato's Bar and Grill*

Clock of fake ivory, radio music, mostly static  
and bass, the clink of glass on glass. Here  
all arguments speak of Archimedes, and I wonder  
about a body's weight imbued with fluids, if it displaces  
more of the air around it or if it sinks deeper into itself.  
I look out toward the tables' flat horizons, wanting to know  
if the world ends there, while patrons sit and wait  
for night to extinguish, their heads canted slightly down,  
like a chorus of true and melancholy Greeks.  
One by one each raises a finger toward a harried waitress,  
who nods a quick acknowledgment. I leave them  
where they sit, hopeful the next round brings clarity,  
and turn my attention to the flicker of beer lights from behind  
the bar, as on the wall drunken silhouettes begin to dance.

## *Rasputin's Folly*

At night, when it's snowing, horses clomp down an alleyway, pulling a carriage crammed with exiled dignitaries. I walk to the window to see if God is dead. If he is, he's turning in his grave, which begs the question, *Can God dig a grave big enough for him to fit?* I try to remember The Alamo, but I'm afraid of history. Those who are about to die need more than my salute. Mad Monk, were you sent by God to heal Aleksandra's son? More likely you were a source of unreliable information, yet somehow I still find your beard intriguing. That doesn't mean I've given up on America. I'm a sucker for red, white, and blue. And I've got stars in my eyes, an eagle in my heart. But it did end badly, didn't it? The peasants, all jacked up on philosophy, ready to trade one form of oppression for another. And those novels, some of them over a thousand pages! I'm tired just thinking about war. Who has time for peace? You were considered a wolf in sheep's clothing. What can you tell me about the wolves dressed as wolves? Undress them and nothing changes. And is there some way to explain to the lambs that innocent blood won't sanctify? Rasputin, my friend, I'd hide them away, but they're all fighting for their place in line for the slaughter.

*Sense*

Waiter, where is the fly I ordered  
for my soup? Oh, snug  
at the bottom of the bowl,  
his bloated body eschewing wings.

I see. There's a sense to that  
I understand, a fatal dissonance  
that I admire. His choice conveys  
a certain dignity, a monk-like way

of seeing beyond the world of flesh  
that I can't help but envy.  
When you spoon his Buddha-body out,  
lifeless but serene, tell him

I salute his difficult decision to drown,  
despite my own desire to swim.

## *Steam*

Today I had the sense of myself as a cloud of steam, floating amorphously above a smokestack. The air around me was bitter cold, so I kept my shape longer than normal. I amazed myself with the notion of consciousness. I could see a city in the distance. I envied the intractable tall, red buildings. I wondered about the small figures streaming along the sidewalks and in and out of buildings. I noticed other clouds of steam in the sky, shape-shifting as if they knew to be something else. I began to distill into the gradually warming air and lost my sense of self and of the world around me. I resumed my human shape and looked out the window. Another, smaller cloud emerged from the smokestack. I marveled at the great expanse of blue surrounding it and watched as it swirled into the shape of something about to be lost.