

Family men. They were a school
of pragmatists
but he --
he will be sitting by himself
with a pile of notebooks in a one room flat
hungry with philosophy
recording in his tiny script
the struggle to communicate
the phenomena
of being.

Another Poetry Reading

He was nervous and he struck his head
on the microphone. They laughed.
He read "Dark at the Bottom of Delmore Schwartz."
They applauded. They liked him
so he nailed his right hand to the podium.
They did not know what to think.
"That's o.k.," he assured them
tearing it off, eight
penny nail and all, waving the wound
over the orchestra pit.
He read "Fierce in the Whiskey of Death."
Some cried. "What suffering,"
moaned a professor
with nothing to profess.
"Do you want to see suffering?" he asked.
"Yes."
He took an ice pick from his shirt
forcing the point through his tough
right eye, popping its humours.
"It's only a trick," he told the chairman
of the department. "Don't leave.
Please don't leave. Art is illusion."
It made them all sick and he read
"Beginning of the End in Pact with a Friend."
Drippings from his eye dotted the manuscript.

Then he tore his pants off
ripped open his shirt
waved his wrinkled prick above the audience
pissing on the floor. Some of it splattered
the American flag and police came up the aisles.
Without missing a beat
he took a pistol from the rostrum
stuck the barrel in his mouth
turned his back on the crowd
and sent his brains out
over the front seats
collapsing on his poetry.

When the show was over and they had cleaned up the mess one of the kids outside asked what had happened. "It was just a poet," said the prof. "He shot himself, pissed on the flag, cut his eye out and nailed his hand to the speaker's platform." He gave her a piece of the skull adding "it looks like a chunk of coconut -- sorry I can't get it autographed."

-- Ben Pleasants

Beverly Hills CA

The Exorcist

When you see him, he may
or may not be the same man,

but he will be consistent in age
and size; suit recently pressed,
wings elegantly groomed,
(both black), quick to vanish

when you see him in the full
of your eye, but at quarter glance:

clearly the one man living
who can grab an irritable ceramic flagon
by the stem when it hovers
at half the height of the door
on the fury of jagged wings,

before it lunges, lashing half
a pint of black strap molasses
from its tilt in your face. And he
will seize it, even when it rockets
to the roof of the porch and clatters
its impertinence against a column.

Close Call For The Secret Agent

The tiny quintets of toes that had spattered
the parapet, as if after intermittent
catfalls during the preceding night,

disquieted investigators,
who wondered why they were indelible,