

EXEGESIS

parson, there's trouble in Maryland, parson, my faucet leaks, parson, there's no dog for my leash, parson, the lepers pray in the moonlight, parson, did your mother wear lavender garters, parson, why do I feel good when I know it can't be so, parson, why can't I use a question mark now, parson, why do you have a tubby gut filled with goldfish, parson, what ever happened to that linebacker, parson, there's grey trouble floating in the Florida marshes, parson, I want you to sit up and close your eyes like a canary under a white sack at night, parson, I want you to chew on your fingers like abazaba bars, parson, Charo ought to be eating the banana from my refrigerator, parson, Felix the Cat and Tom Mix were lovers, parson, the British troops were very grand walking right into it like a last symphony under white wigs, parson, grief is a banjo with one string left, parson, the clouds rift apart and show the face of an international money order, parson, tell St. Anne I said hello, parson, Socrates took it through the teeth and Plato expired, parson, remind me to have you pick up your copy of the free throwaway shopping guide, parson, there's trouble in Savannah, parson, you know that the trouble is not in the eye of the minnow but that it is their tiny smile, parson, the secret is in the deformity and not the perfectness, parson, you should have been a belly dancer in an East Kansas City whale trap, parson, you got me coming all over this white paper.

A LOVE POEM FOR ALL THE WOMEN I HAVE KNOWN

all the women
all their kisses the
different ways they love and
talk and need
things.

their ears they all have
these ears and
vaginas and throats and dresses
and shoes and
bathrooms and automobiles and x-
husbands.

mostly
all the women are very
warm they remind me of

battered toast with the butter
melted
in.

there is a similar look in the
eye: they have been
taken they have been
fooled. I don't know quite what to
do for
them.

I am
a fair cook a good
listener
but I never learned to
dance -- I was busy
then with larger things or,
at least, more
desperate.

but I've enjoyed their different
beds
smoking cigarettes
staring at the
ceilings. I was neither vicious nor
unfair. only
a student.

I know that they all have these
feet and barefoot they go across the floors as
I watch their bashful buttocks in the
dark. I know that they like me, some even
love me
but I love very
few.

some give me oranges and pills, fairly
stimulating advice; others talk quietly of
childhood and fathers and
landscapes; some are almost
crazy but none of them are without
force or meaning; some love
well, others not
so; the best at sex are not always the
best in other
ways; each has limits as I have
limits and we learn
each other
quickly.

all the women all the
women all the
bedrooms the
rolls of toilet
paper the rugs the
photos the

tapestries, it's
something like a church only
at times there's much
laughter.

these ears these
arms these
elbows these eyes
looking the fondness and
the waiting I have been
held I have been
held.

SAD LETTERS FROM UP NORTH

she writes a letter every year or so speaking
unclearly of her life, she sags in her words.
I know that she has a husband she has almost
always been faithful to, and 2 or 3 children
who fill her house while her husband is working.

she used to write poems that were good. now
she still writes poems but the poems sag.

I can no longer read her poems and it would be
unkind if I answered her letters, although I
don't expect you to understand this. she signs
her letters "love." many people do this. I am
more careful with this word.

she is dying underneath her life. it was safe
and good enough for a while, especially safe:
afternoons of wine with the literati while her
husband worked at what he did, she worked with
art, she worked with creation.

and now her husband knows more of life than she
does, mainly because what he was doing he didn't
try to do.

her husband and her children are non-existent
in her poems. I can't answer her letters.
I can't expect you to understand this.

THE FINISH OF MOBY DICK

the professor lived across the street from us
and he had some time off and was doing something
on Moby Dick
but whenever he came over
we'd be drunk and fighting