

& went into Pepi's,
bought a bottle of gin
& sat down at a table;

I lit a cigar
& we drank for a while
& talked about
words,
about the magical being
of words;

then Hemingway
took out his pad
& began writing
a story

& I diddled a poem,
but when I saw this magical being
dressed all in yellow

I thought: Fuck the words,
stuffed the poem in my pants
& took my drink to the bar
where she was sitting.

THE IMMORTALITY GAME

As I watch from the window
the light is just right
& there's a glow on her cheek
that's as rare as gold dust:
a young woman passing in the afternoon,
still too young to imagine
she will ever reach the garden of Allah;

later I open a book
of French impressionist painters
& see Manet's The Fifer,
dated 1866:
a young boy in a brass-buttoned tunic
& baggy red pants with a blue stripe
that curves into eternity;

by midnight the wine has run out
& I'm banging the typewriter
trying to get that young woman right;

neighbors across the street
can hear the clatter:

it's that goddamned poet
turning into the stretch again,
still playing the game.

— Richard M. West

Bainbridge Island WA

thank you for your company i said
you're welcum she said
as she disappeared into thunder
dressed in black and hwite

will i see you again?
maybe you will and maybe you won't
she said as she wiggled her hips
the asters opened on her birthday

and all the frogs rejoist
for the rain the night before
and the summer lightning

from the mountain to the sky
manifested our desire

HWITE-WATERING ON THE RIVER OF DEATH

if she had askt me i would hav told her
the Indian name for the New River.

if she had askt me i would hav told her
she had a big heart.

if she had askt me i would hav said to her
i seem to be very happy in your presence.

if she had askt me i would hav told her
i would ride with her on thunder road
behind her long mane of freedom.

— Robert Head

Lewisburg WV