

but she was willing
to try her hand
and it was too bad
the yeast was so quick
it overflowed
the bowl and
swamped the sink
John said he
didn't think she could
bake bread anyway

— Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel

Tulare CA

ARTHUR RIMBAUD (1854 - 1891)

He chose not to write what others expected.
Such expectations turned his stomach.
He chose instead to create chaos,
to extinguish the candles in his mother's church.
He was a child of excesses consumed by horizons.
He dreamed of Zanzibar and China, uncharted land,
far off places. He was plagued by curiosity
and a bottomless boredom. He ran away from home.
He tramped the back roads to Brussels and Paris.
He covered The Netherlands with a carnival.
He crossed the Alps on foot.
He studied the Black Arts, the Alchemy of Words.
He drank absinthe, he smoked hash.
His goal: to transform the soul, to make it monstrous.
He loved disturbing the peace.
In London he took a hard look at the evil cultivating
in Verlaine's eyes. He spat on his friend's cross.
They argued. Called each other the Anti-Christ.
Verlaine lost control and shot him in the hand.
Rimbaud returned to the continent, began writing
his masterpiece. Verlaine was locked up on charges.
After he finished, Rimbaud turned his back on poetry,
called it quits, and plunged into another life.
He was nineteen, ripe for perfection.
He sailed to Cyprus and broke rocks in the quarries.
Crossing over to Asia Minor, he ran guns and coffee.
He worked his way down the coast to Africa.
He hunted elephant, he peddled tobacco.
Finally he settled in a hell-hole called Harar.
There he spent his remaining years roasting
inside the crater of an extinct volcano.
In his letters to his mother he constantly asked
for news about the construction of the Panama Canal.
He had to return to France for an operation.

His leg was amputated.
He died in a hospital bed in Marseilles.
The room reeked of infection.
It was crowded to the ceiling with chimeras, his Muses.

JACK OF LANTERNS

Ah, Jack, the children still read
your big, sad beatnik books
and know in their quivering hearts
that you had the true touch.

Ah, Jack, fame was nothing
but an awful pain in the ass,
and sometimes not even that.
The best part was doing it,
fingers burning up the keys.

Ah, Jack, I saw you laid out
in a funeral parlor in Lowell,
your bloated corpse
stuffed into a plaid sports jacket,
a clip-on bow tie like a black butterfly
motionless
on your rotting Adam's apple.

Ah, Jack, where has all the magic gone?
Where are the golden whiskey bars of yesteryear?
Your voice comes to me in the traffic of the night,
its big engines down-shifting, diesels on the overpass,
star-wind, exhaust that fills the sails of my soul.

Ah, Jack, can you hear the real jazz now,
the electric-blue dharma wheels
racing down the freeways to paradise?

Ah, Jack, was that you waving
from an old freight car full of fried shoes?
Are you with Neal in the hobo jungles of heaven?
Are you crouched over a steaming pot of pinto beans?
Do you groove on saxophone sunflowers?
Is Buddha on your breath?
And is it always October in the railroad earth?

Ah, Jack, light a lantern for me
so I can find my way through
"Love's multitudinous boneyard of decay"

— Gene Mahoney

Vineyard Haven MA