

is not the greatest pleasure,  
for women or for men,  
the excitation of the other?

is this the tragic difference between  
the fantasy of rape and its reality?

observe the lonely man  
left out of the scene,  
his palms and face pressed against  
an invisible wall.  
who has not known that wall?

is a penis a cigar?

are a bed and a book  
always in the phantom background?

do only those we do not want  
press their attentions on us?

is sex inaccurately symbolized  
by the color red?

does it astonish us  
when the right two  
want each other?

and then, what of the static and the  
necessary clutter?

#### CRAZY JANE TALKS TO THE TOAD

he is exiting the ymca  
as she is entering it.  
she stops in the doorway,  
so he is holding the door open for her

"why," she demands, "did they lock  
the door for the single women?"  
he says, "there's a separate door  
for the single women?"  
"why would they lock it?" the  
woman repeats; "why would they lock  
the door for the single women?"

he is still holding the door open  
so that it doesn't slam on her.  
"single women use this place also,"  
she says.  
"i'm sure they do," he says.

"i wish they wouldn't lock the door  
the single women use," she says.

"well," he says, "i'm sure it's fine  
if you use this one," and he transfers  
the door gently to her grasp, thinking  
that the clerks at this y truly do  
earn their meagre salaries.

#### I'M ABOUT READY FOR THE VENERABLE BEDE

when she was a young novelist and philosopher,  
iris murdoch wrote under the influence  
of sartre and wittgenstein.

these days she writes under the influence  
of plato.

i suspect that, as one grows a little older,  
and the finitude of life becomes palpable,  
one returns to those writers who have stood  
the test of time, rather than squandering  
one's dwindling hoard of hours  
on contemporary works of questionable value.

#### AN ACHILLES LARYNX

he says that ezra pound  
was a horrible declaimer  
of his own verse,

and i think it's just as well  
pound wasn't better at public speaking  
or mussolini might have won the war.

#### WHAT WE READ AT THE END OF THE DAY

i've read just about all of  
lawrence block's matthew scudder crime  
novels, and a lot of those by colin dexter  
featuring inspector morse. so i'm in  
the market for others i'll enjoy as well.  
you'd think it would be easy, but it isn't.  
i try a lot of books by writers with big  
reputations, like ruth rendell and ed  
mc bain, and others recommended to me by  
friends whose taste i trust, such as mark  
weber, and i can see what others enjoy in