

PROJECT PAPERS

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JAYNE CORTEZ

BLACK FEATHERED MULES

Responsibility will mount you in red satin sheets
you will fall into empty silos along the highway
and in the putrid smell of your own tongue
you will not be a worker a fighter or an ant
so stand up in your black feathered mules
and confront it
tonight
the helicopters are patrolling the neighborhood
spirits are sipping alcohol from your liver
radiation is leaking into your mouth
and blood is caked on head of a dead fly in your nose
so stand up in your black feathered mules and
don't say another fucking word

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BARBARA BARG

INTERROGATION OF A SKULL

Reflect, if you will
Unreasonable Relic,

on the cavalcade
of moments
that relieved you of
your jazz.

What balsalmed hair
has ceased to frame that crown
Your Skullness?

What winsome eyes
are gone from those untroubled sockets
Bonehead?
Did they once wear shades?

What last street
paralleled that fallen chin
when what harsh stench
ground down that nostril cave?
What bleak end
fell like timber on your brain,
what strain
was death?

Were you
courageously engaged
when the outer edge of sleep
deadened your genius?
Was it as unexpected
as the end of Texas
on a dark and flattened highway?

Did your lips decay
from a scream, or flap off in
embarrassment?
What final voice
destroyed your tongue?

Was death as sloppy in its task as birth?
You know those
altered babes with twisted limbs
and missing parts.
Was death complete?

So much to ask
and no reply from
those hilarious teeth! from such
a knowing
and murderous smile.

I feel one grinning
underneath this stretch of life:
Unraged
Undirected as a rock
Unamused really.

You are so calm

I'll give you that.
And dead
morbid knick-knack, that too.
And yes
they can't take that away
from you.
No
they can't take that away from you.

JACK COLLOM

SESTINA--SUN FRONT PAGE 5-26-87

Anywhere on God's green Earth,
That's my baby;
I'm looking out the windows
Just watching the cinematic times
Go by; I'm lighting candles;
It's a great life.

Life
On Earth
Is like those birthday candles
Behind the eyes of a baby:
After a couple three times
It's just plain windows.

Dirty windows!
Whatta life!
Changing times!
Mudda Earth!
Baby, Baby!
Burned-up candles!

When it grew dark Snow White lit the rose-colored candles
She found, and placed them by the tiny, dusty windows
Of the hut, which curved like a dark egg around its baby
And barely sheltered the girl's birdlike life.
Belly of autumn brooded the lukewarm Earth
Through local nightrolls, as before some four hundred billion times....

Everybody's reading the Times, the Times

That snuff men's candles.
Captain Earth
Poses, silhouetted against the top-story windows.
Golden billows of life
Lift from a fat, blue, curled-up baby.

"Girl, 10, Gives Birth to her 8th Baby"
"The World's Worst Husband Has been Divorced 36 Times"
"Soldier Frozen 69 Years Ago Restored to Life"
"How to Attract Love, Money by Burning Candles"
Embalmed Bodies Used as Dummies in Store Windows"
"Satellite Finds Giant UFO Base Deep in Center of the Earth"

The Earth cracks and a packaged baby
Whirls up from volcanic windows into space and time.
Like faraway candles, pinpoint stars imply parading life.

MARJORIE WELISH

A WAY OF LIFE

The vintner says, "There is no prohibition against putting off a tourist needlessly."

As a tourist is sore, as a tourist experiences the entailment
of Europe without the words and only a wallet to express,
feeling adult but stored within the body of an infant,

you may bathe now
on the stairs
of voices.

And so when the concierge says that a tourist is one
who does not speak, who does not dream, and who is not born
presupposing our language, we cannot say there has been a violation
if the tourist among us catches the historical entailment.
The concierge does not touch his arm, however,
to remind him of the predatory numbness setting in
and what will follow: feeling foreign from morning to noon.

Even a vintner catches the entailment of Europe.
You may bathe now on the stairs of voices,
but the concierge will balk at linking arms with you.