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Elmer was all right. He came and now he's gone, but it's still all right. He was sorta the silent type, stuck all to himself with his light burnin' strong way into the night. We, all of us kind been thinking about him and about the death 'n all, and about deaths this-a-year. We talks on into politics, but then we hit upon old Elmer again, and we quick-like quiet down.

“I remember when Elmer was young — just a boy, into wild ways and such — I remember one day he got hisself all sided up into a mud crik somewheres, and coming home met up with that girlfriend of his. She was still lounging around in her morning clothes, and Elmer took her hand and they walked through town to the bridge, where they stopped and stared and talked and stared at the water rushing by. Elmer, he never was quite like that ever again, we never seen him walkin' around like that again. Besides, that girl got married and lives down near the crik. Elmer, he knew better 'n to go after her again, and besides, she had her own, and such. He just stayed to himself with that change of clothes left always flappin' in the back yard.

She did come to his funeral, I remember. Brought that little kid — the one all big-eyed and strange — and he looked up at the sky the whole time, pointing out birds and updraft leaves and such, secretly, to anybody who'd notice.”

— Tommy Leigh
BACCHUS COMES TO CONQUER

Tonight I have failed to see the dregs;
Life is numbered by cribbage pegs
And love is empty, misty, hollow —
The wine shall be quenched ere tomorrow.

Yes, I see the coffee spoons
While wondering about full-cut moons —
The man Terence knew an empty glass
Meant blissful sleep would come at last.

Inside each intoxicating drop
Ethyl sneaks or Mister Hop
Prepares to steal your sense away
Smoothing over each furrowed day.

But without the pillow of liquid dreams
The intricacy of worldly seams
Boggles the eye and imagination —
Ends the pretense of jubilation.

In Response to
T. S. Eliot's, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and
A. E. Housman's, "Terence, This is Stupid Stuff".

— Donna M. Pleasants
The "W" is silent

— Gary Wolfe
I REMEMBER BLUEGRASS DAYS

I remember bluegrass days;
smiling faces and stamping feet.
Your banjo picks rang out like a horn of salvation, as we retreated from our troubles and sang three chord songs.
Nashville rags;
wine and beer;
dreams of stardom;
summer nights, where the only break was to listen to the soft flow of the crippled creek below.

— John Whitlow
I sit days and days
Watching the trains go by
Watching them move off
off over the horizon
and their movement reminds me
of how stationary I am
Sitting here
Quietly
With the Life going on
below and beyond this big glass window
I sit days and days
Watching the trains go by, but
They are not going for me
And the cars, and the trucks,
and the buses
Are impervious to my imperial glance
Up above where I sit
in the middle of this tacit hubbub.

— Mary Ruberry
Who do you know?
Or just, Who are you?
Paced a brawny bear
At the Brooklyn Zoo.
Human you say?
Oh! It is that
Who swapped his fur
For a stilted hat.

— John Mongle
— Tom Whyte

— Kim McBrian
"Imported Frog"
— Susan Adams

"Tree House"  — Pam Barnes
DEATH BY FIRE LIGHT

Fanning flames; flickering flocks of
Cascading crescents in crackling colors.

The hose hauled to hound the heated hue
Shoots and swats with sheets of swirling showers.

Dark dirt dawns the dank demise of
A love that lost the luster of life.
ROOTS

Her buttocks: hot scrapple poured into twin bags, 
Shiny, purple, quaggy bags. 
Left to cool and harden around the bar stool.

Her meaty ribs curled over the counter, 
Formica face, sweaty tresses harbor smoke 
From the acropolis in the ashtray. 
Only her fat digits twitch.

Across the smoky dark the light line on the floor 
Becomes a rectangle. Outside: 
Singing tires and snorting trucks and Arizona dust. 
The bamboo owl chine clicks, ick-ick-ick-ick.

A thin man comes in, slams the . . . ick-ick-ick-ick. 
He looks around, than at her. 
She looks over at him, 
Slowly so all the smoke doesn’t roll off her forehead 
At once. 
He sits down on the pole next to hers. 
They turn inward on their skewers.

Two reflections, one purple, one thin 
Wade in my silver ice cubes. 
My stomach hurts. 
My white, lined fingers press around the glass 
Like slats of wood. 
There, that’s better. 
I suck my bones upward. 
The reflections I see in the glass 
Are of the dime I left on the table 
And the purple bags he left on the stool.

— Michele Russell
history:
like water shimmers
on empty streets,
reflections of buildings
warped in
the puddles
of time

— Barbara Burch
RAIN SHRIKES

Spilling the ichor of its repetitive life,
The thousandth thousandth unheeded day
Collapsed into its repetitive death
Amid well-stifled sobs, and suffered the clots of rain thrown into its open grave.

Gashed like a bloodless wound torn from the mountains,
The valley lay undressed, untended,
To fester and sore and decay
Together with the lifeless men it held in its once-vegetable flesh,
where no things now grew.

And rain was ambiguous mockery

Twilight-dusted grass husks between cold warriers' fingers and ribs
Strove to glean dully with wettening,
As mud became one with swords-rust and leathern shield.
Insects sought shelter in gaping remainders of mouths and lesions,
escaping rain shrikes,

While chill-laden winds upturned elderly leaves.

No bellows of condemnation or praise were thundered from the overhanging ebon shroud,
Nor final salutes or derisions intoned by the over-eaten oak shell monuments.
The rotting pieces of past-rancid corpses and wintered weaponry
merely lay in rain-curtained quiet —

Two armies clashing silently amid weeds.

— Jim Dawson