

DAVID BLAIR

ODE TO *NEW POEMS*

The snow gathered in rocks and moats. These red clouds
shut the sun off in bricks. Their strange skins replaced
our short, furred ears, too. Suppers sloshed in buckets.

Dunk sticky Rilke translators in the murky tank of seals.
Keep the town line folded in your pocket, discarded necktie.

Park birds turned crazed flocks back and forth at the ruffle
of the brown hawk's wingspan. It was a good time to avoid
the decent zero's division, but lion ears grew soft at it.

AT THE COLD CUTS TABLE

Most cows *like* to be milked.
Some animals are really dull
as Canada geese
who nap, nip on the median.
The years go by too quickly
when I visit my aunt and uncle
for coffee, my silver-haired
aunt and uncle.

Sandwich time, we
all torture each other
around the kitchen table,
the mayo, the mustard,
the fathers and sons,
the moms, the cousins,
but the underhanded subtext
of meanness and competition
only flares out for a moment,
one note among many
notes flying and back
and forth while the orchestra
tunes up beneath the seats.

Look, my friend says, I'm in
heaven, I'm sorry
for your tears. Some of them
are for me, and I appreciate.
Thank you. That's love. But some
of them, let's face it, are
for you, so try not to be
stupid now and then go let
love lead to hatred. EAT
cheese. It's not a kidney.

SOUND SOLUTION (“*DIE SPINNERIN*”)

As I spilled sand on the rug and stood in bare feet,
a young person trotted around me with a jetpack.
I missed my ping-pong paddle, all of my hair,
and the entire cut of the record. Rueful. Had life
all gone by me in lines? The needle oaks tipped over,
their roots as wide as their tops. If you make soup
in a Weber kettle, soup puts out the glowing coals,
a swindle involving sour clouds. But with nuns
and tree-houses, sun-stitched as an oak convent in branches,
as a fish in the bleachers, melting, not burning, the book,

the room was still as finely spun material.
Come now, you know the ranges
can sign endlessly the tall dome.

THE ARMIES OF BEING HERE

Maybe a college graduate or a student,
chunky clubby on hands and knees
squirts tasty bleach on the pedestals
of her exercise job purgatory
as if a boxer aimed his spit
at the gym floor
where Montgomery Clift
as Pvt. Robert E. Lee Prewitt
with spacy demented eyes
kept plucking dandelion violets
from the floors of physical health
where people bring their sad bodies,
and cell phones, and the half-employed
get their euphoria and their yas yas out.

BLACK MOUNTAIN MUSIC

“The looseness of music,”
I start to say, but, uh, 10-4, negatory
on that comment. I stood ten feet
from a string quartet
and what I was feeling
about the violinist—so many
of these string sections
two elves and a big oaf
playing cello who looks like a cello—
my mind gone visiting Ben Shahns,
socialist realist oompah-loompahs,
the real short one named Nerdlia
from Romania, who stood
about five foot four
in her heels, big square
classical music heels,
I had to read all the program notes.

Tony Bennett says if he had done
nothing else but be a singing waiter
in Astoria, Queens,
he would have been all right,

just a singular voice.