

Rain Down Can

The Shearsman Chapbook Series, 2012

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Alan Wall : *Raven*

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hors de série

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Rain Down Can

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Rain Down Can

Heartbreak is a man in a coat
prayer him stooping for a Gatling gun
so I have left my slippers & come
to the holy land of Walsingham
I write Mr Breakheart it's all fake
as it was in fifteen sixteen
lipstick incense bribes & drink
& he replies ccing me in on
his pavane for the birdless firmament.

Look here it's always advent
too low sun & the running splash
of pastiche on the dumb
snow fountain 24/7
though the mains supply's cut at moonrise
& this pious ejaculation
so long waited so soon comes
pp the 32.20 blues: an evergreen
bronchial hack, a shot of Advocaat

no, eggnog. Myself am present
my self is not present in the poem
in which I imagine, no, dream
Mr Bris T. Corazón
is my father not the avuncular
genius Loki he was though unknown
those sixteen—fifteen years rather
between his original's taking a 32mm
serrated wee penknife to gorge & lights

& him revenant in a coat
the day my life began
to be troubling. Anyway that 72ll. poem
is entitled 'Rain Down Can'
& it relocates a Scots
Baronial pile to Thriplow, no, Saffron
Walden in the mid-seventies:
Mr Herzeromp is driving to meet a train;
his passenger in the Mini has lost

one arm at the shoulder, his left.
The driver, something above six one
is always unsettled by closeness to a person,
never more than now since his companion
(ex-soldier, able, facile painter) is *her* brother,
she who wished you in her bed again
& took a k/b with wounding good humour.
When the nine hundred cc engine
floods, he just has to sit & wait.

She's in the station buffet.
He recognises not her but the pigskin
case as just the stuffy thing
she'd been saving for since she started earning
& eck he made her jump starting up
like that out of nowhere of a sudden.
A transistor on the countertop
plays 'Thank Heaven...' from *Gigi*; her bun,
untouched, costs 9 new p, he remembers that

& the blooming ineradicable frost
too low sun on the windscreen
framing Frozen Mutton Farquharsons

the long drive home, but not Walsingham,
the scoutmistresses in galoshes
nor the baptismal procession
at Bradwell that brought him to his knees
praying for a BB gun
nor her saying *ye brek my hairt*,

my bony ane or the man that will nocht
quhen he may, sall haif nocht quhen
he wald, Mr Cassechroí. No, none
of that. Doesn't that seem
odd to you? And the day after she flew
back to Tehran
one of you stood at the window
the other leant on the doorjamb
waiting the rain, mumbling Christ if, Christ.

Ghastlymake

Your fetch is here. His eyes scuttle
his oval teeth are antic pearls.

His gait is yours and the pitch of his voice.
You fall into step passing the lychgate.

Try to touch him. Your fingers start
to skim your drum-taut skin.

We call that the walls of the world.
It's quite normal and natural

that he should be the other sex
if you once reflect on it (& own

it cannot be so for everyone.)
If you take a certain turn

of mind, the seeing him will return
you home in your own prints.

But your name is what you're called,
and when you're called he'll come

carrying, carrying, carrying you home.

Oleysa's Wine Bar

Émigrés really know how to smoke, and loiter but
it's not their fidgeting that causes the underfloor
rumble in here—I don't know what does, the fridge? a nearby
laundrette?—but I can tell because everything about you, hair
eyes, skin, is tinder pale that you are unsettled by it despite it
animated—mercy! but you let me know what it means to depend on,
correspond with? to? a person—struck, I'm still ringing—midday
heads turning into the night, breath fogs, you crouch in your coat

Up Ahead of Some

I cough a lot (run-down?) so I
get up and run to Phibsborough Bridge
and down the Royal Canal to Drumcondra
Road and back. The circuit's a handy mile,
I do three or four, I'm building up slowly
and there's enough to look at, not too much:
the Cross Guns snooker hall,
canal water, locks, graffiti, swans,
the starting-something Kavanagh-envy
Northside-cringe statue of Behan.

At hanging hour
pass by the released, hold-alls in their hands,
wearing belts.

I'm listening to Planxty, *Planxty* (1973),
which reminds me with its opening track
that when I was eight years of age
a retired colonel gave me a picture
book of poetry for which a pale
grave child, veteran of stories
with chapters, lately looking into
Palgrave, might sense herself a little old,
so the pleasure I took was
guilty in the illustrations
to 'The Raggle Taggle Gypsies'
(derived from Child 200, a spurious
tale of the abduction of Lady Cassilis)

in brocade wistful, in her sark defiant
dancing by the campfire
on feet no whit darker than the shift

four & twenty years later my coarsening palette inclines
me to take ginger hair & blackwork smocking
as the colours of my constitution.
It seems I've flown
all manner of duty, lacking
the faith I yet demanded for no return.

she finds out what she undertook
in harbouring Johnnie Faa
as she brewed so will she drink

I shear off for novelty's sake
thinking I'll go as far as the Phoenix Park
oh Christy, why do you turn the good Scots laird
& his ladie
into steepling culchies, *yerra & it was there last night you'd*
and that unpalatable yammering on *only wedded lord*
tho I'll forgive most anything for the not-at-all tautology *cash*
of his money-oh

A *jalousie* ratchets up
representing in the language of furniture friendships foregone
there's a jungle in there.
Look how the rank ranks of rank rank against us, my jo
& of patriarchy!

—Gewürz and goosequills are nice
but would you sleep out in the rain for me?
—Silly goose-girl, drunk on a beau geste
a titus oates
when he's had his you won't not for dust.
—Can't you see I'm sick, actually sick
(gaining weight, prone to a host
of recurrent minor infections)

since that seigneurial doigt lit on my choler
—Provoking object!
—Titchy lech!
—Roaring doll a-cafflin!
—Eggling toon!
—Unnatural! Cruel! *In Denial*—
—is the last refuge of a scoundrel!

The segue doesn't even pretend to suavity

tabhair dom do lámh old goat
decrepitude'll be a while yet
help me up Infirmary Road

céad míle fáilte romhat abhaile