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Poems

Anthony Lawrence

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Poems

Abstract

A PHOTOGRAPH OF JOHN BERRYMAN ON THE IRISH COAST, A THORN IN THE BLOODLINE,
DISPERSING THE HEAT

Anthony Lawrence

A PHOTOGRAPH OF JOHN BERRYMAN ON THE IRISH COAST

You look past him
over his tweed shoulder
to calm water
which places you looking North,
on the West Coast
or South, on the East.

He is looking back,
the land on his left, his animated hand
caught between foam and sand
which locates him
where he'd rather not be –

hanging for a pint
a long way from the pub.

A THORN IN THE BLOODLINE

Let the fake bereavement of the dead
iron-magnate's will-excluded son come to pass.
His torment hammers like slammed metal
through an empty foundry.

It will pass, but first he must hunt for sympathy
among the light-starved geraniums
in his analyst's window box,
forking out pieces of himself
like counterfeit money: this part ruined
because of papa's loaded hand;
this because of the savage autocracy of the home.

"Well, if there's nothing else, I can see you ... "

"There is one thing."

"Yes?"

"At a sanatorium on the Hawkesbury River,
from a high barred window
overlooking oyster farms, I saw my father
bloody his hands on a wall after visiting me."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing, but I said: 'From this bleak height, money bags,
opened, oil-polluted oysters
match your broken fists for tenderness.'"

"And then?"

DISPERSING THE HEAT

Eavesdropping on the solemn, descriptive airs
of an unattended police car radio
is something I endorse enthusiastically.

It's simple. Drive or walk
into any police station car park.
It's important you maintain

a disinterested demeanour as you apply
the handbrake or stop walking.
Have a story ready should a uniform approach you

peripherally, as is the nature
of its temperament and training:
"I am a victim of road rage seeking refuge" is good.

Likewise "I had a pain in the chest while driving."
"I needed somewhere to take the piss"
is not recommended.

Lean casually from the window of your car,
your head at a sensitive angle, or stand
peering myopically into the sun.

If approached while assuming this last position,
plead ignorance of your name, age,
address and occupation. Giggle. Say "harum scarum"

These cautionary words are essential,
yet will not be necessary
if all previous instructions are remembered.

Anticipate monotony.
Police are not exempt from idle chat.
But listen. Somewhere in every wavelength

there is a crime worth hearing.
And should your own description crackle
accurately from the dash,

do not underestimate reverse psychology –
stay where you are and be quiet,
or better still, get on the two-way

and have fun dispersing the heat:
The suspect is naked at Town Hall Station.
He is believed to be in his late thirties,

with a birthmark like a cuttlefish
on his left buttock. Approach with extreme irony
then fellate him to the ground.