

Parables for Rodin

by Bill Yarrow

PARABLES FOR RODIN

1. Portrait of the Sculptor

His beard is an eighteenth-century forest
in south central France.
A wife's thin fingers stroke the tired eyes
of an old man asleep in a hammock.
No sounds issue from his lips.
He is made of bronze.

2. A Letter

Rodin is writing a letter.
Everything points toward this fact—
the sheets of paper, the bowl
of ink, the light from the east
window shining on the pen beside
his hand. The letter is to one
of the illustrious dead.
"Dear Claude Lorrain,"
it begins.

3. The Rodin Tableau

The Hand of the Devil holds
Woman. Fauness kneels. Adonis
lies dead. Headless Woman
bends over. The Secret is
passed between Victor Hugo
and Puvis de Chavannes.
Pulitzer, Clemenceau and
George Bernard Shaw are
called upon to mill. In
the absolute center stands
The Man with the Broken Nose.

4. Guests at the Banquet

Miss Eve Fairfax
Mrs. Potter-Palmer
Madame Eliseieff
Madame Fonaille
Renee Vivien
The Duchesse de Choi Seul
Mrs. Hunter
Maurice Haquette
George Hecq
Pierre de Wiessant
Jean D'aire

5. After the Ball

The Burghers of Calais are hungry.
They are clamoring for food.
Feed us, feed us! they cry.
Rodin in full dress
rushes to his studio
to take from the highest shelf
Head of St. John the Baptist
on a Platter.

6. A Vision of Love

A young girl shifts her smooth bronze thigh
and crosses her young bronze leg.
She waits, silent in the studio
amid dust from plaster, blasting,
carving, sanding, and casting.
Enter her lover
with goggles and blowtorch.

