

Eating Grief at Bickford's

by Doug Holder

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· From Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish"

There are no places anymore
Where I can sit at a threadbare table
Pick at the crumbs on my plate
And wipe
The white dust
From my pitch
Black shirt.

The old men
Who used to spout
Marxist
Rants from
The cracked porcelain of their cups
Are gone
The boiling water
Ketchup soup
The mustard sandwich
They use to relish
All that so lean
Cuisine.

Oh, Hunchback
In the corner
Your lonely reflection
In the glass of water---
And Tennessee Williams' Blanche
Eyes me through her grilled cheese
"Pass the sugar, sugar"
She teases.

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Maynard
The queer
Late night
Security guard.
His policeman's hat
Draped on his head
Looking like a
Sacriligious rake
This countless
Renditions
Of defending his honor
In the amorous, crazed embraces
Of muscular young men
How he protests...
Too much...too much.

The discarded men
Blue blazers
Shedding their threads
Outcasts with newspapers
Stains of baked beans
On their lapels
Fingering a piece
Of passionless Cod
Lolled by their
own murmur.

Winter is outside the large, long window
Pushing pedestrians
With its cold, snapping whip
The cracks in the pavement
Are filled
With flakes of melting,

Dying, snow.

