

The Garden of Earthly Delights

by Rachel J. Fenton

I. The Man in the Bowler Hat

Wounded pictures
wait noiselessly in the field tent
of our bathroom,

open windowed,
where powder light hovers as icing dust
particulates filtered

through the white nylon curtain
hanging like a drunk
from the chrome rail, one foot

in the tub: half the shower rings are bust,
their sickle forms
collected by the trap,

clinical waste.
And usually I'm left alone to tend
my patients but today

you want to know,
today you've ventured in, your thoughts
unmasked to ask:

what's that you're painting?
I load my brush with titanium
acrylic: an answer.

II. Destroyed Object

The artist is a poet.
The artist is all ear, eye and heart.
The artist sits alone to rebuild the moments
last
from myriad perspectives.
The artist has a partner.
The artist's partner is also a poet: he sits
alone,
writes his poems in his head
and keeps them there.

III. Cannibal Feast

When I come to suck fresh raspberries'
juice from your hair
pressing the clasp of my mouth's purse
on the oyster of your ear;

when I bring you morsels dripping syrup
from my mother's lips
to tempt the dormant hunger from the tip-
wrecked freezer of your belly,

know the table is set,
the cupboard's empty.

IV. Four Hours of Summer, Hope

It isn't the loss, it isn't the grief,
it's humiliation,
a joke in the worst taste
when your hopes and dreams, your family,
end up in a yellow bag of clinical waste
along with your mistakes.

