

Tradition and the Individual Talent

by Scott Bailey

Wee-wee-sweet-pea me?

I live, I weep, a third of me
passed in sleep,

start a scene or two,
play and dance the fool,

roll back the curtain for the muse.

I live for depth, less so a lengthy life,

nor deny the natural order of things,

but must I be swept so soon
to the sweet by and by?

Life's always so, so pleasing,

so why should death be so displeasing?

O Death, so kind, so cruel, graciously unfair,

such a trump card, such a trollop, common denominator,
master and servant to class.

O Life, to live, to be a rare steak less traveled by.

Why just exist?

That's not it at all, not at all—

to the point of tears,

get-up-and-go, oomph, brio, orbit, yo-yo,

strut, fret, fetch,

keep the wolf from the door,

scratch where it itches,

pull some nothing from thin air,

rush, stir, trip, wear and tear.

I walk upon the earth, spared another day,

another hour upon the stage.

A motor with a plan,

I am man,

homo, member, party,

I bust a nut, kick, yield, recording my days,

intent, tone, heart, spirit,

a life sentence,

no shame, no game,

I question, seek, shall not always find,
I backup on a dead-end road,
look up, look down upon,
sympathize with an ant
 carrying a wing over mountainous mud, dirt, scum.
I waste time, murder, create, anticipate,
 stub my toe
 where I come and go, O, O, O, O,
O, Sticky-Sweet Peach,
 come home, pull up a chair,
cast a spell
 on my chinny-chin chin.
I rather be cross-eyed—
 one eye that talks shit to the other,
 than not see at all,
cut out my tongue if not cheeky
—superbe! magnifique!—
 if I'm to be a ragged claw,

cantankerous, impermeable membrane,
a closed field with shards of glass among blades of grass.
I rather be be-headed, served on a platter,
if denied a full head of hair,
fingers run through my hair.
O, Open Field,
measureless, perpetual uncertainty,
dance with me under the honky moonlight,
in broad daylight,
do me roughly half a day but all night long,
in the quickening of the night,
the quiet, quite-loud night,
owls echoing dactyls and spondees,
thrashers tweeting *thank-you's*.
Bump me, I bump back,
atqui vivere militare est,
la petite mort, each day, s'il vous plait.
I will not end it all on a railroad,
take a colossal heroine-hit,
kneel on grits,

slip on soap,

eat poisonous, cherry pie.

Amen, thunderous whisper.

