

Crash

As a boy, angels appeared at my window,
They would open it, like a window, to my parents' dying:
The jangling car crash, the spinning, that moment frozen,
Then the next: Such terror and beauty mixed:
The angels' hilarity. They crept up the glass like frost....

When I asked questions, the angels lied,
Or else they'd fidget like parents talking of sex;
Or they'd open the window farther, revealing more pain,
More spectacle: whole worlds churning in war, in fire--hysterical.
It was dizzying. Or else they'd just vanish, like fireworks--
Worms of light in my head--leaving the darkness I knew:
Fields bristled and shagged, the Negro church beyond glowing,
As it did, above the frog pond silent with the cold.

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This is a fact: I live between Blake and Milton Streets in Cambridge, Massachusetts,
Amid, no doubt, a confusion of ecto-activity: Both streets lead nowhere--
Or, rather, lead to other streets, their imperturbable houses hunched
Like mourners taking a handful of earth from a sextant's shovel:
It's laughable, a joke, really: the houses' wings tucked close to their sides,
The night's sirens, the snapping at insects that whirl, like planets,
Around the lampposts' suns....

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At thirteen, talking with my girlfriend on a beige Princess phone stretched to my bed,
I put a Ruger .22 revolver to my temple and did not pull the trigger, then or ever.
Blake says, *It's funny, isn't it, seeing through that hole and not with it?*

I say to him, and it's kind of a joke, *These are Milton's eyes.* With all eyes closed
I see the red worms always: they turn into faces: Blake's, Milton's, everyone's I've
known....

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There is madness in this method: Many questions plaguing the late eighteenth
And early nineteenth centuries have, in our century, found answers
In rural Tennessee: The Picturesque: A Negro church perched in the red light
Of a sunset above a frog pond within a field slightly fogged. The beautiful:
My motorcycle ripping through that field as a car filled with parents
Spins off the road into the church and all into flame. The sublime:
The church's wings spread, it rockets into the night, its windows fill
With the faces of the dead mouthing all our names....

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At twenty, I fell in love with a dying woman, or else with her dying, I don't know.
Nothing had ever been so sad, so vivid: Holding her as she threw up beside her car
On Green Hills Avenue or else making love and then stumbling to mass....
Her name was Laura, *the dawn*, you know, a joke it turns out. I begged her
To marry me: I wanted what little she had left, wanted to hold it, eat it,
Stuff it down my throat.... The angels still torment me for this; they shut the sky around
me and say, *Nice work, Keats*. I beg them: *I was just a child*, I say, *I thought*
I loved her. She is an angel now, earth, whatever, a little sun in my head, in many heads,
Rising. In Paris, near the end, her spleen hard as a melon, we made love
Like it was the last time, which--and this is funny--it was. Then drunk and driving
Through the madness of Paris I crashed into a parked car--a carnival of sparks--
And, it was hilarious, we just kept going--nowhere, it turns out.

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Blake gave me a souvenir of Claude Glasses, a rose colored mirror for framing
Our world that once belonged to Ginsberg, and briefly to Woolf, Lennon, Cobain,
And various others, etc. With them I wander the fields of houses blossoming
Across America, in search of love, or beauty, something: It's hysterical--and
Pointless, of course. So Milton gave me Blake's skull, which I wear over my own,
As Milton did, and God: It's hilarious what you see:
Look. It's a beautiful joke, sublime even.

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At nine, my son, lovesick, considers death. At nine, obsessed with my parents' death
My parents brought me to a shrink in a green glass brick office in Shreveport, Louisiana.
He said, *What if they really did die in a crash, what then?*

You mean, I said, they really could die?

Twenty years later, another shrink, hearing this, bursts into laughter--Blake, too,
And Milton, & all the angels--the whole world laughing.

Thirty years later, my son stares, weeping, of course, at a screen of pixels
That opens like a window to an evening long ago.

The Naturalist

In nature, what is beautiful is often poisonous,
And if it's beautiful and easy to catch, it's likely deadly:
This fact supported by naturalists worldwide.
Prophets are sometimes beautiful, and, since often blind,
Are easy to catch: their futures are always deadly.
With poetry, however, even beautiful poetry,
People tend not to get hurt....

But I, beheaded by poetry, must drink the poison of the moon—
It will spill out my throat, scatter in the weightlessness
We learned from 60s TV—everything floated then: men,
Wars, food, gods, even nature itself—remember?
This from an old myth about an eclipse, Hindu or Buddhist,
And it's about desire or immortality—maybe both, who knows?

Lately, I've spent more time in nature, whatever that means,
Often wearing space-age textiles, whatever that means,
And sometimes all nature is stainless steel, whole forests
Impervious to storm: When the wind blows there, it sounds
Like when you whet your knife. Other times all nature
Is made of flesh: When the wind blows then, it sounds like
When you whet your knife against my throat....

Anyhow, years ago, deep in Louisiana's nature, I dove
To catch a salt and pepper kingsnake as it slid into the earth,
And I pulled it up. Then it bit me over and over until I could
Calm it, pin its head to the ground: It said, as all prophets do:
You, my love, are easy to catch. Write something
And remember how scared you are right now and always—now let me go.
The snake leapt to its hole and poured in.