

8 Karl Tierney Poems

Ex-Friend

Always licking your fingers! A generational trait gathered from your mother like berries plucked from the prickly bush you couldn't disregard. We wonder, are those more "saliva colors" you do to canvas or do you really use "water" in the blends? The curator should have checked your urine not just for drugs. But that too. Though, doubtlessly, the whores you pimp consume them all and you're left with nothing but alcohol of which you reek, edited through your lungs, serialized from out your pores.

Predictably, we Bohemians come to loathe each other like I you today—rejects who reject the rejections of others. Perhaps it's the caffeine gnawing at bone, depleting our reserves of love, making us malnourished and irritable.

But like any male simpleton, all that concerns you is your ass is well-wiped today and the thatching of your hut outlasts the cold, wet weather.

September 24, 1991

Xen

for Zell

My friend Xenophon, you pined away youth
on the divan with issues of Ted Hughes
while consuming Mozart and vanilla-frosted gook
Want to be wrinkled and fat too?
You might devour Kierkegaard next.

Don't be numb. Be angry,
if that's what it takes.
You have a punitive penis.
Put it to John's lying mouth.
Or do one for the Greeks up Harry's lousy ass.
Then let Suzie have it in her peek-a-boo.

Now that you know how to roll a rubber
on your cucumber, why the hesitation?
Install a full-length mirror.
Go out and get a new tattoo.
But end this isolation.

A rule of Nature regarding love—
there's someone for everyone,
one man's trash being another's treasure.

August 21, 1993

The Headlands

for Doug

There's a flurry of activity in the rocks.
Someone's expecting something not given up.
Begging for bones at that age! Everyone likes
a trooper but less and less in the light of youth.
They don't look so good.
This is life in the fast lane gone to the beach
for rays from the sun. Ah, unmasked!
Even the gorgeous have to work at it.
"That's not yours, is it?"
pointing to your hair
the one you'd been wanting said
before walking off.

Soon folding up your chair, you say that
we're pissed on by the gods *and* the gulls.

May 5, 1991

Entanglements

Because I cannot point to some little Gibraltar
and say "That's the one!"
like Queen Victoria shopping,
I've let myself be the one who's picked.
So when the last one came along, a veritable fan,
those tin wrists and acne scars paled in comparison
to a flat ass and ears that don't match.
But both with broad shoulders, boy of boy
could we argue like men
and cut the mustard without the dreadful shame
everyone's incessantly discussing these days
on TV, in congregations, meetings of all sorts.
To make a not-so-long story even shorter,
I got committed for life—
his,
and then with no money left—
mine,
declared emotional bankruptcy—
a preemptive strike at the next one.

July 28, 1991

Clones Posthumous, 1993

Hanging about altar-stone cafes or safe in threes on the streets,
appearing in the sun with assurance from out of darkness,
this post-pandemic disguise continues its acceleration
of neuroses in fashion: gay home boys
(white ones, few black ones do it)
in no-assed pants, crotches anywhere between mid-thigh
and knees that scrape when skating over the dead,
baseball caps turned backwards or *[this is the option]*
a knit hat in warm weather over and above a jacket.
The gap is between earrings, the challenge to fill
wide holes in necklace pendants and vacuums caused
by bracelets, boy-men who only come without cologne
between last week's shave and this week's wash, a lick.
I demand plastic wrap over tongues when kissing!
Meanwhile, pierce everything pierceable and tattoo the rest.
They're safe, the self-mutilations high school kids pick up
for lifetimes after stretching rubbers onto cucumbers in class.
Sex, after all, is a lot of work for the entire orgy.
Worse yet, there's no one to be mad at. I know, let's preserve
the dying urban proletariat though suburban teenage fashion!
Just who were the under-perfumed or those who once liked
their own bodies? In the far-outer suburbs not all paved
over the land sometimes within sight of a farm reservation,
some agrarian holdovers still prefer animals
and keeping alive the ancient customs.

This club? A point of rendezvous, but what's the point
of reference, the "point of referral" a Radcliffe coed needs
for her thesis. Many points, which translates as
"too numerous to enumerate," too many to count
on your fingers, at any rate, and so again
mathematics fails you just as mathematicians have
and shrill, underpaid accountants refuse to serve you.
Economists ooze ambiguity in forecasting tomorrow's weather.
No software for that? No wonder the bafflement!
Where more than a dozen gather in your name
is a mass, and the masses still make me a miracle.
Even when I am still, I am still a-quiver from the excitement
of the some who would look good in anything.

These are very different from the motorcycle guys carrying state-mandated helmets into gathering places, dudes who must have molds inside the helmets to keep the hair in that sort of a permanent gel as if under hair dryers in small-town beauty salons. But they're different: non-posthumous, merely perennial, tan and never happy with the amount of body hair nature gave them.

Both types—and there's always only two—hate each other. And the music? The argument runs between setting the trends or just a little quicker to catch on. Of course, neither type listens to rap, which is too working class for the culture of L.A. studios. The top likes industrial dance music. The bottom probably goes for alternative dance music. My friend John calls both "gay disco." Not a marketing term but then again neither's *clone*.

April 18, 1994

Sweet Stevie Gossip

What a terror he must have been in 1616,
"Sweet Stevie Gossip,"
as King James nicknamed him.
Picture at court those "slim hips with
the dark blue eyes of the highly sexed,"
as one Stuart historian puts it.
Stevie swished through like a champion!
In one year James made him

*King's Cupbearer
Gentleman of the Bedchamber
Master of the Horse
Knight of the Garter
Viscount
Earl
Marquis*

Imagine the gossip
among the high brows and hankies
that was anything but sweet
and righteous Cromwell
fast in the making.

October 8, 1986

Old Maid/Café Rendezvous

Dates? I'd rather a big fig!
A prompt turndown to the fools who ask.
Dates at my age you say
58 in gay years next month!
So I run for cover.
The last one with skin like porcelain.
Another peering out from a moose head.
The summer one who dared grasp my hands
between bear claws, and the breath—
like the dead! And the one in spring who came
limping into the café, dragging his leg.
Touche—better than the wrists!
A butch at least, the butch who got away,
be butch so we may all rest in peace.

Tonight, I'll say a rosary for my sins.
It's good to plan ahead. A casserole
Tuesday and on top of stools
sipping with the girls
positively screaming at the counter.
"Did you see how he looked at me?"

June 5, 1994

California Spring

The only stress in this state is the lack of it,
which is distressful,
but symphonic along the scrubby coast
is the subtle change in season,
a slight increase in movement
detectable in the surf
and on the many freeways,
and among the surfers,
and, in conduct typical of the interior,
a tug of war in the state's capital ensues
over a puddle of mud,
which naturally evaporates
when faced with hot air up the south.

So the rainy season ends,
and nothing much develops.
But the hills have turned
—in hindsight—
more green than the brown summer's
or the nude fall's when for a moment
we entwined in parched thirst for love.
What winter? There were flowers
and pockets of warm weather
between the rain and then
the turmoil within, the question,
“When will it happen?”
Music is good for the melancholy,
bad for the mourning.
Both the deaf and the dead are indifferent to it.

February 1, 1988

