

CIGARETTE BREAK

"I like to think of fire held in a man's hand. Fire, a dangerous force, tamed at his fingertips. I often wonder about the hours when a man sits alone, watching the smoke of a cigarette, thinking. I wonder what great things have come from such hours."

- Ayn Rand

In an Ayn Rand
fire in the hand
of man
kind of way,
a cigarette
is an excuse
to escape
the carte blanche
of the blank page—

but the flicked Bic
ignites no more
thought than the
Cro-Magnon man's
sharp flint sparking
brittle pieces
of tattered leaflet.

DREAMING OF THE BIG SLEEP

*"Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself
mean, who is neither tarnished or afraid."*

-Raymond Chandler

Here's Marlowe:

eleven o'clock in the morning

& wearing his powder-

blue suit, dark blue shirt—

black wool socks with dark blue clocks on them.

He's fallen asleep reading

Ben-Hur, 1860, third edition,

the one with the duplicate line on page 116.

The dream was fringed

with tall eucalyptus trees & deeply rutted.

The rain had been too hard & too recent.

Oil-stained,

motionless,

wooden derrick;

the well were no longer pumping.

There was the stagnant oil-scummed

water of an old sump iridescent

in the sunlight.

it's beautiful.

Took the gun out &

put it in her palm

bent down

& picked up a rusty can.

Went back around the sump
& set the can up

The sound of the gun made a sharp slap
without body a brittle crack
in the sunlight.

My, but you're cute.

Her hand holding
the empty gun began
to shake violently
the gun fell out of it
her mouth began to shake
then her head
screwed up towards
her left ear & froth
showed on her lips.

She looked at me with a sudden sick
speculation & began to moan
in the sunlight.

EVER & ANON, LOVE IS LOST & LOVE MAY COME

"While a sonnet doesn't make much of a pattern or a picture on the page in its own right, valuable information is being communicated by the poem's arrangement in graphic space, harmonizing with the poem's sonic shape."

-Andrew Steeves

In dour hours, when reminisce & regret
compound & mold memory into mess,
undoing many months of convalesce,
I drag off a desperate cigarette
& tell myself she's gone; her silhouette
a fading form—forgotten! I confess
I look for her in every floral dress,
potter's wheel & vegan kitchenette—
but

while searching for one I've found another:
a sincere & passionate suffragette
beyond all beauty seen before; rather
apt to be adored—does a pirouette—
I'll find a way to her impress,
before she's time to second-guess!

THE LEXICOLOGIST

*"Every device there is in language is there to be used if you will."
-Dylan Thomas*

Wringing thoroughly
the Oxford English
Dictionary as in an
interrogation—words
which pour out in
an alphabetic order
over my washbasin—
like wet towels hung
out after being wrung.

Could I quote Thomas
to convince an
audience of contrivance
in obfuscating
my meaning—seeming
so saliently inane? Only,
Google tells me, if signed
by a notary, but no jury
would convict me for
insubordinate utility
in a poem.

Hand still bloody,
it grabs for my
Merriam Webster
waiting in queue:
the next textbook in
my washbasin
to sink my teeth into.

POLEMIC RHETORIC

"My public life is before you; & I know you will believe me when I say, that when I sit down in solitude to the labours of my profession, the only questions I ask myself are what is right? What is just? What is for the public good?"

-Joseph Howe

The Areopagitica
of Canada:
Joseph Howe's six-hour address
to jurors, to
leave and unshackled press
as a legacy to your
children, convinced
them, as Milton couldn't seem to.