

GEMINI • JOHN COLLIER

Gemini

John Collier

G E M I N I

POEMS

By

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TO
IAIN LANG

THE APOLOGY

SIAMESE TWINS are generally two, but if by any chance there were Siamese twins that were one, like semi-detached villas tenanted by the same person, it must be admitted that he might look at himself with some misgiving, and vainly ask "Which am I?" So, in a world of beautifully single poetic entities, I must appear, tangled and bewildered, as a dual one. These uneasy verses are some of the spasmodic gestures which each of me has made, during the last few years, in an attempt to usurp a unity at the cost of the other. Something archaic, uncouth, and even barbarous is very obvious in one, and the other is an hysterically self-conscious dandy. What a pity that Orson, with his labouring bosom, insists on sucking all the blood away from Valentine, and what a pity Valentine will never condescend to trim that antic beard, and clip to cleaner points those clawing nails of Orson's! Then they would grow so alike that it might be said that both

were myself ; but the fact is, that they are so at odds that I have long known I must choose between them, unless I could find some manner for them to live in, in which their differences would be less aggressively marked.

The description of a well-shaped man, unless he were, poetically speaking, a giant also, would make an impertinent preface, but I venture to think there is some justification for giving an account of oneself if one happens to be a monster, and if the business can be confined to two or three paragraphs.

Such a description must begin with a guarantee that the exhibit is a genuine one. As the sceptical critics, emboldened by something dwarfish in the stature of these twins, will no doubt pinch them very cruelly to prove that one or both are false, I am the more eager to affirm that both are real, and that I know it from having lived in them very wholly and intensely for some years, and not only alternately and in discord, as appears in their behaviour here, but sometimes simultaneously, though of that there is only one odd manifestation.

Orson is a rough cub, but not for want of licking.

His main struggle, the longest poem here, has a major ungainliness which might have been corrected, it is true, but I have been withheld from dealing with this by a number of minor blemishes, to which I returned many times, and at long intervals, and found them obdurate. These superficial faults, of which the frequent omission of the article is a good example, could have been dealt with very easily (I would have sworn) by anyone with a fraction of my facility in versification, so that, though their effect is large enough in the mass, it was their smallness which fascinated me. A sizeable botch is curable or incurable according to the strength of one's constitution : it is the obstinate pimple that puts fear of cancer into us. Accordingly, I thought it to be improbable that these little defects persisted through some technical insufficiency, and I knew by experience that the source of the poem, though it was not in a distinctively modern feeling, was by no means as derivative as the cumulative effect of the blemishes made it to appear. The interbreeding of satirical consciousness and the dumb and angry instinct is as powerful a source of poetic feeling to-day as ever it was, and I had fed on this

example of it so long, and it was so intense and so clearly formed in my mind, that I felt it must be at war with the medium, or I should have been more successful in working it into a personal sort of verse. Why, also, should Valentine refuse to be focussed into unity with this rougher and more robust brother of his ?

For Valentine, who is to be seen in four of the shorter poems here, is born of a stratum of feeling which is far too definite for me to have any doubts as to its genuineness. In one instance, a theoretical bias opposes him quite irreconcilably to his brother, but in all the others there is no fundamental reason why they should not be parts of the same body, as they are parts of the same mind. The exception is "Brookside Reverie," in which I pursued, to its peculiar extreme, this idea : that if there was a coherent substructure of thought in a poem, the images arising from that thought might have an æsthetic coherence, in which the poem could have a satisfactory existence, and a purer one, if the thought was submerged entirely.

(If anyone is curious as to what the concealed thought may be, it is this :—Man is reflected in his consciousness, and has noted that the image is largely dependent

on the darker side of the pain-pleasure principle for its clarity, and he has been satisfied by his consciousness of himself and his landscape, in which he is pleased to consider himself unique, and he has been pleased also with the Cartesian idea of his reality residing in his thought, i.e., in words, which are, however, capable of their own fluctuation, and he has gone on to consider a constant existence behind even this, yet the whole of which he is part may suffer a major change, and defeated here he rejects the alternative, unconscious joy, and has a man-made retreat into which his perplexing universe cannot follow him, and from which the man-made light, poetry, can stare out and waken, alter and fix whatever it falls upon.)

With this exception, all the capers cut by Valentine complement those of his brother. Here shapeliness is more nearly attained, and much visual imagery of the sort which Post Impressionism has made possible to us, but at the cost of the richer, coarser stuff, and since both these existed in my mental life, I could hold no work successful in which they did not co-exist also.

I therefore felt that verse was not for my making, and began to take my first lesson in prose, and as I wrote

my exercise, I noticed a recurrent eruption of the sort of poetry I had never been able to write in verse. And on going for my next lesson to Ulysses, that city of modern prose, I was struck by the great number of magnificent passages in which words are used as they are used in poetry, and in which the emotion which is originally æsthetic, and the emotion which has its origin in intellect, are fused in higher proportions of extreme forms than I had believed was possible. (For the only modern poet who is completely successful in verse seems to me to be Miss Edith Sitwell, who is peculiarly fortunate in that her intellectual processes and her æsthetic emotions are nearly related, and can use the same word, whereas those of everyone else seem to be almost as widely separated as mine are, so that one or both must be stretched thin if they are to meet in verse.)

What I had felt vaguely about this new medium, became very clear to me on seeing Joyce's superb examples of it, and I became eager to try at what possibilities it held for me. My first attempt at it revealed more of its difficulties than of anything else, as far as degree of success was concerned. Neverthe-

less, this slight performance is interesting to me in kind, for it seems to move in a language in which Valentine and Orson can become one, and I therefore venture to include it here as a rounding off of their uncomfortable duality.

ADDRESS TO THE WORMS

It's my birthday to-morrow, sir. I've a big tin of biscuits.

Miss Ivy Frost.

STRANGER worms ! of whom I know
Scarcely if you have teeth or no :
Worms soft in heavy earth, and bare
In gravel and cleaving clay, who are
Heirs uneasy, mute and wan,
Defrauded by cremation—
(Mock Hell ! Cheat worm !) yet keep your ways,
Thread and re-thread your doubtful maze,
Weave, weave your pious discontent :
Behold ! I come to crown your Lent :
The man in worm, your deity,
Whom you shall worship assiduously,
Who, handless, no hands in prayer can raise,
And, tongueless, lift no voice in praise :
Who have no reverence, having no knee,
And, having no pockets, have no simony,

And so no Church, yet, none the less,
Are true religious, who address
All to one rite, communion :
You've a good god in me ; I'm one
Who more than symbols shall provide :
Fat body and blood, and bones beside :
Which last shall span your cathedral,
Dark, silent, and populous, where fall
No foot-scrape sounds, nor rustle of rag,
Sermon, cough, nor clink of bag,
A liquid quiet ! and, like your faith,
Rich and alive, conquering death.

THREE MEN IN ONE ROOM

“ Only the little back-room now.” She so
Greets the glum few who still enquire below :
Six hive and stink in front room, yet the Muse,
No more than the bright fly carrion, shall refuse,
But, holding nose up stairway, impetuous sail
Into this room, more private stench to inhale,
Setting up Pegasus with archaic violence,
Who’ll flap like vulture from a tower of silence
Indian, startled from mild browsings where
Bones, ashes and decay strew all the floor :
Where the dim light, for skulls, false teeth reveals,
And restless ghosts, who live on ghosts of meals ;
Where the dark ceiling like a thunder-cloud
Broods, and each blanket seems a twice-used shroud ;
Where strangers find, as in t’other untimely night
(In Rome), grim miracles assail the sight :
Wonder at even this smallest room suffering
Such a choked press from such scant furnishing,
How that so-little’s the encyclopædia

Of all dilapidations that ever were,
And more, how in this straitened cell fit three,
Close packed, almost, as Holy Trinity,
And most, how here in Poverty's citadel,
All day a Limbo and all night a Hell,
Refused by men, they've yet contrived to be
In debt to Chaos, dunned by dull Decay ;
Who, entering at the crazy door, sits fast
On cripple chair, intrudes in mean repast,
Plants feet on drifted mantelpiece, and sprawls
His dirty shadow on the peeling walls :
And, finding these too worthless, seizes on
Each shrinking debtor, most that aged one
Who, bearded like black frost, clad in old brown,
Drifts, a bent autumn leaf, reluctant, down
Pimlico streets towards the Styx, yet will
Abate no vice of youth, save one, though still
His ailings cluster, and his gait, words, breath
Lampoon old age, reproach unpunctual death.
The nation, blind as they that cried of old,
" Give us Barabbas !" keep the dotard doled :
" Great fleas have small," this one, to improve the adage,
Lets the flat bug usurp the worm's heritage :

Yet's a good steward, in whose care birth's one
Poor talent of flesh grows ten times corpulent ten.
He, soon to render, remembering his small
Other part's legatee, the devil, makes caterwaul ;
Drones seventy years' confessions endlessly,
Absolved on which, he'd yet with the damned bores lie,
Then, drunk, boasts scorn of death, and, pray, why not ?
He stinks on earth, and can but change his rot.
He should go glad, as to an inn where he,
Too often a guest, at last a host shall be :
Host to a table of worms ! Yet, these, beware !
Cram paunch with this, cram hot damnation there.
His fond familiar long since burnt his soul,
And, jealous, burns his flesh, yet keeps it whole :
Tis Meth ! like old Prometheus filch-fire, he
Robs primus-stove, and groans with liver decay ;
Grows crabbed, tetchy, snarls at his good friends so
Like maids o'er darkened cockroach floor they go,
Sit mum, or, when he windily holds forth,
Pollard their gesture, wink, and prune their mirth :
While rank from his dark brain the fumes arise
In Hyde Park oracles' philosophies,
Frayed, patched and ill-assorted as his dress,

Void as his purse of all save mustiness :
The future with strange utopias to deface,
Whereof his navel's the centre, his gut the base :
Or, when he's maudlin, moans of gardened youth,
Remote as Adam's from now, and from the truth.

Here is a man who'd better far be dead,
And will be soon, for look, here's the most dread,
The leanest, watchigest, fangedest fiend of hell
Takes human shape to greet him, knowing well
He's past repentance and redemption, so
Safe to foregall, who's nowhere else to go.

As the sure, watch-clock bridegroom secretly
Under the table will squeeze hand, pinch thigh,
This can't, though still the feast's 'bove ground, forbear
To urge him graveward, and to irk him here.
Or does he covet mere bed and plate so much
He constantly on coming death must touch?
Argue with Age, to watch his wit grow scant,
Lure him to song, to hear him wheeze and pant ;
Ask of his rupture, his thick vein, his stroke ;
Weave from each black report a crêpey joke?
Or does he envy age the farrowing
Of crimes his courage ne'er to birth can bring :

In whose lank frame, pale liver, cold blood repress
Dark heart's hot dreams of various wickedness?
For here's a liar without wit to lie,
A lecher lacking chance, a thief sans prey,
A scrub where weedy failings choke around
Each major vice, too thick for such poverished
ground.

He's chaste ! once wooed, by doddering sixty years,
And robbed of all but his virtue by his peers :
True to his friends, whose only friends are they,
Too smirched for libel, and too poor for prey.
He's frank ! does not his botchy skin confess
His ravenous gut's full gorge of nastiness,
The fried fish meal, which, even to see and smell,
Is to die plaguey : who eats it, burns in hell?

I, from his pimpled brow, like starry dome,
Drew his poor horoscope, which slow did come :
The future's halt confession ! wherein strove,
Proportioned as spots to stars, his fates in love
And wealth and war : where Venus did appear
Dwarfed and inflamed, and golden Jupiter
Debased to farthing size. Of Taurus, all
I saw was rising horns : the chemical

Aspect of Mercury ; and red Mars stood
Alien, born of his drinking, not his blood.

Beside these two, as once, with age and sin,
Madness was kenneled, dwells a third herein,
Who, when he weeps, man's rising laughter hears,
And, when he laughs, feels scorch the unbidden tears.

Nature, less kind than most she breeds, loves least
Her weakest children, offers flintiest breast
And scantiest bread, most blows, too, of all the tribe,
Her last, loathed failure, the impoverished scribe :
Of which sort, some, to escape her cruelties,
Ransack man's bestiary for mimicries :
Some playing jackal, leech, ape, bull, shark, ass,
And some, reviewing, once viperish, now as doves pass :
And cursed the man who'll all such tricks disdain,
Thrice cursed the fool who tries all, all in vain.
Such a one's here, who, hope of refuge lost,
Turned his poor back to blows, and bore with most :
Bore his starved studies and his crippled verse,
His leprous wardrobe and his phthisic purse.
Relentless nature that meagre frame assailed
With cold, damp, hunger, itch, and still she failed.
Down on his low content her wrath did come,

Who thought not his being thus, sufficient doom ;
Who, thwarting yet thwarted, his bowels to food did
move,

And soul to beauty, moved then his heart to love,
And he, like corpse on Judgement Day, found stress
And fiery ruin invade quiet rottenness.

In a fierce wilderness he wanders now,
New heats, new colds, new hunger, new itch to know :
From bad to worse and worst led every year
By each new mocking mirage, and now lies here :
Eyes the poor goal reached by such desert ways,
Sends back his vulture thoughts o'er carrion days,
And, waste succeeding waste, his dull youth gone,
Sees his grey prime and skeleton age draw on.
Who eats much here with a sour flatulence blows :
This soul grows windy, crammed with bolted woes,
And, left by his thirsty friends, travails to urge
His tapeworm, folly, thus out in a versey purge :

“ See where the beetle's pitiless mate devours
Her hornèd spouse, and the queen bee, in flowers
So nicely cradled, on mild honey fed,
Makes of the very heavens a murderous bed :
Scorpions and spiders too, their own wives eat 'em.

‘ Omnes animæ tristes sunt post coitum ’ . . .

And so with women, since some little care

Of pretty custom causes them forbear

Flesh teeth upon our carcasses, they find

Means to devour the spirit and the mind.

“ I’ve sailed love’s oceans long enough, and know
What clouds frowns make, what cyclones sighs can blow,
What thunderstones even gentle words can prove,
And seen poor wretches lost and drowned in love,
Sunk by such shocks, who ne’er to themselves return,
Nor gain those isles for which, even drowned, they yearn.
And all the shores I ever touched were e’en
Bound with iron cliffs, or held by savage men,
Or smiled like sunlit jungles, so that I
Built my heart’s home there, and was forced to fly.

“ For me, alas, the tree of Eden grows
Small crabbed fruits, and curs’d great cudgelly boughs,
Spread like a witch’d wood over seven years :
Seven Saharas, seven seas of tears,
Seven woes begot by woes, as plagues arise
On wars, wars dearths, and dearths on tyrannies.
As, weeping, from circle to circle, a damnèd soul
Might pass, and think at each, each made the whole,

I fled from scorn to betrayal, thence in haste
To triflings, lies, hysterias, corruptions, waste :
And found, like ravaged Poland, that did call
One nation, then another, foe, till all,
And half herself, stood open foe to her,
No one was love, but love was all, and more.
And now, as peasants, who've in long wars forgot
The plough, must still find wars, or rob, or rot,
Fit for no other business, like trees gone
To coal, my heart must burn or be a stone :
Like a sacked city to wolves and ghosts forlorn,
Desolate, it weeps the fire and sword withdrawn :
Like a fired feverish body that did yearn
To be cool, and, icy, shivers and longs to burn ;
Like some poor dog on a raft, who, once he flies
To the sea from his thirst, goes mad, and drinks, and
dies,

I, even at the tooth-pick after a great meal,
Such an edged hunger deep within me feel,
Big-bellied as I am with Cupid, who
Lurks ambushed there to drive his barbs into
My heart, my ravening has gone for naught ;
Like a fat, pregnant, queasy wife, I'm wrought

With sharp-toothed craving for a costly dish
Would be my poison if I had my wish.

“ And when for jolly, snoring sleep inclined,
And in the roaring pot-house of my mind,
Where thoughts and feelings, free from strife and jars,
Hold festival in their respective bars
(The Public, politic, and the Saloon, æsthetic,
While in the Private sit the quiescent ethic),
The inner eye, the host, who'd now be dozing,
Cries out, ‘ Last orders all ; past time for closing ! ’
There comes, like policemen or Medusa, in,
That all I know of beauty, the glad din
Changes to stony silence, and all fly,
Leaving the host to gaze and petrify.

“ And when I sit with these I've loved of old,
Who drossy pence transmute to liquid gold ;
Whose jests, like candles, from empty bottles rise,
Disperse their gloom and gild their miseries ;
Who've tricked out Hunger in the motley weed,
Made Sorrow their dwarf and Debt their Ganymede,
And who, though parched and starved, would hate far
worse

This private heart than private larder or purse :

As he, who'd feed love's envious ear, decries
All former loves as delusions or luxuries,
So I to my bride, my insolent bitterness,
Name false or brutish all I loved and was :
Bid my heart whisper her that she, ne'er done
Tearing it, has it all, and they have none.
Cursed centaur lies ! Of which the parts bestial
Mock the lame man in me, and outstrip denial ;
Loathed on conception, and now so much I'll set
My heart to hate her, and clear my soul of debt.
Here is my hermitage ! and here will I
Let that false Heaven, and this false world, go by."

Thus he : and, purged, feels he's escaped Love's
power,

(It seems for good, and is for sure an hour).

Now o'er the uneasy roofs a harsh bell tolls :

Taverns are dead ! and hither fly their souls :

Scarce christened, and therefore damned, they cry, and
long

Lament, curse, laugh, and warm the night with song ;

Till, Age on bed and youth on floor, each calls

For sleep, snores rise, and, from above, the flat bug,
twirling, falls.

*" OH SOUL BE CHANG'D INTO
LITTLE WATER DROPS "*

Forster has looked at a long summer
Through the same sorrow morning and afternoon
As if half-waker half-dreamer
Under an awful white moon

He saw a new hedge a new stack from his window
Heard a secret alien speech
Echo his dream who is lost and mad in the white light
Known and condemned by each.

Lying under leaves that whispered his woe
The moor-birds cried his secret on a dying fall
Who turned to unknowing farm dumb mountain and so
Spoke, he gave tongue to all.

More voices in waves than streets
More tongues in trees than men,
And no ear in which to name his grief
Anew, to form it and to bind again.

And sought the town for a new name
For he must name it lest
He drown and dissolve in this sea of sorrow
Rather than be himself it beating on his breast ;

And sought a new for the old name
Wanes with long use, the old sea wall
Leaks is blurred with weeds crumbles
The sea will invade altering all

And then . . . But how then this Autumn quiet
Wherein are no words no names only
Blood pulsing to the hill's heart beat
Rich in the sunset year, in the poplar lonely ?

He has given himself over to a lack of names
Who when he was all words must make each strong
He names neither grief nor heart nor joy nor weeping
Pain nor wrong.

There is no word for the late low-flying bee
The sunflower's death his mood or the wounded earth
The Autumn daisies' milky-mauve sea :
No sheaf-binding and no dearth.

SUNDAY MORNING

Through the close garden from the water-mead house
Jungled and choked with sleep dreams sleep without
 ease,

I came to this milky dawn, in the white grass
I trod those dark dew-footprints to this peace.

Where turns wing-sharp on the river,
(Swallow-bright swallow-dark, that is my heart's
 ghost !)

A bright boat busy on the river blue as paint
This morning I have forgotten everything almost.

This meadow goes on on on to the world's end
Tall grasses rise into sun-shafts, steam from bright cows,
Tin trees cluster wild rose blooms at the glass bend,
I am the child of joy, morning sun cigarette smoke arouse

And embody the frail flowering of the heart its lonely
Fugitive poem heard in the quiet when words die
This only is I, all the rest my tangled life only
One part in one warm flesh thick blood slow eye.

Church bell time, sun swings high, gay lark
Too intense now a heart aching aching in frail blue
My shadow creeps up behind all dark
Garlanded with flowers the joy-born griefs pursue.

Day full-blown on hot lawn, in the water-mead house
Souls converge to the flesh wakening expectantly :
Dark venison stinks, the séracs of red jelly
Are icebergs of an apocalyptic sea.

EXCUSE IN AUTUMN

Leaving the sun's bar-parlour, where old men,
Bearded like sunflowers, all gold afternoon
Mumble like the bees hum,
Opening black mouths' fringed hives ; alone

Walk the wood, and here last Spring, last year,
Remembering violet primrose silver rain,
Self lost in these, remember tear drip, branch drip,
Warm sloth among wild strawberries, pain

In Spring's green crying, Autumn's plough-rip, evil
and good

Now rhythm, savage growth and rich decay ;
Earth and tree swallow up each trait each mood ;
I walk where the leaves rot with my yesterday.

Lost past ! for even gaining a more clear
Image, a photograph, one finds at most
(As floats in a dim green bath a single coarse hair)
Alien impertinence, a ghost

Claiming relation, denying this modest hour.
Oh God ! I must give up and live as birds
And flowers do. Have I a shadow? Ponder a cure,
Pour blood for ghosts in principles and words.

To be a whole Nineteen/eleven family
Living at Golders Green with a red wall,
Spring joy crocus, young child/drawn almond tree,
In Autumn sea of mauve daisies filling all

Gaps in the heart and sense, whose œconomies
Softens in smoky dusk, and call to tea :
I would be parents and children and love William
Morris,
Believe create hold, love truth purity.

But one is one and all alone and I
Skip delicately, holding thought in a full glass :
Dead leaves crash like seas, in the sky
One cools one's face, comes to anchor like a cloud on
the grass.

BROOKSIDE REVERIE

(Or *Mind over Matter*)

Songs from the Hesperides
Curve over the earth's edge
Flower pattern for a silken breeze
William kneels in pale sedge

His image quivering under his breath
(Dark lime-tree wind on candle-flames)
Frown or smile eluding death
Or a thought of Henry James.

Happily lost in silver sand
Clear struggle over the blue stone
Drowning but Me ! says William, and
The plumey sky above me shown.

Exiled in consciousness, the soul
Phrases shine out in his dark dream
Behold here William his own goal
Crouched and grey like a willow beside the stream.

My image ! William ! It is a white wax flower
Truth hangs in words
(A bright fish turns in a glass sphere)
It is a flock of birds.

Over this change changeless to bend
Now black in a flush of sunset *Still*
Withheld to name to comprehend
Across the golden fading hill,

And gleams and fades the soul, says he,
In pure life, joy. At cottage door
The lemon evening wistfully
Invites him but pursues no more.

Fades out in a violet sigh
Tenuous on the window pane
Then, under his assertive lamplight, cry
The bleached insomniac flowers again.

OF CONSOLATION THROUGH MURDER

One man only gained this, and if you listen you'll hear his story; you'll weep though, for it's a pitiful sad and ugly one.

A tough-haired ginger fellow, the black hole in whose eggshell forehead contrasted with very unkillable doll-ugly his loud hair, dead awry, when they picked him up, came to his broken end on this flash bang in his darkness with stinging fume: that sixty or seventy, he computed, of eye-drag followers arcade men and corner boys had had his modest wife in Highgate darkness, and of all this life-soiling rabble only one he knew.

Annie, two mousey years his wife, stalled off with please oh please his ginger smell, his china coney eye, drawn joints and ribs furrowed on a high jut white as death. My wife, he said, words falling on the tepid sick-breath of his

drugshop, my wife is highly strung. Yet in his brain a covert lecher stirred beneath cost price sale price and orris smell of peaky high-flown love. In the thirteenth month his mind fell, and walking home late nights below bedroom windows and bedroom windows lighting up he thought and thought and passing glanced back jerked a smile on hurt split pout under fibre moustache but never dared. In the twentieth month, fall'n leaves exhaling cold hartshorn rot, one looked back, walked before him, he following, she like a pillar of cloud bum-beckoning, till among the rhimey laurels before a plaster let or sold in Highgate falling off street (desirable Georgian residence I mean of medical practitioner seven years dead of drink drink after his bacon knuckle in jet lit servantless basement among cockroaches mourning his dead wife) among the rhimey laurels, frost drip, soot drip and back to scabby wall, he held her wordless she through muffler mumbling No, oh oh, what did they who can tell and yet I trow no more than left him no more than laurel leaf

sad and lonely hung in mist, black still and drop forming, his mind reforming one drop no more. She saying nothing urged more. Her face he had sought hat/hid now thrust, and thrust lips over swathing muffler, a paleness no more, thrusting out from dark cave to join featureless the pale mist roll, mist cold, one kiss no more on pale cold lips thin seeking. But first touch muffler swathe, frost/wet breath/wet a death touch. No more, he cried, limbs trembling, pretended ease quivering, himself in his voice though, after husky neutral mutter, becoming apparent, in the slow frost-drop empty colourless self re-forming. With that she screamed in the mist, and the copper his bulls-eye shining, ringed for them in curling mist forms a rat's face toothy under a wry hat and beneath a blue goggle in mad white the skew ginger bristle of her brain-split mate.

Between known and not known in that God's-eye glare her numb mind could not distinguish, and as she tottered on loathing arm led home, her tongue tottering told all. Up the half-mile

of shop street their own forms walked beside them dark and pale. In the dark clear dead of furniture-shop cycle-shop of undertaker's shop, drowned in that hollow river of cold things suspended, floated beside them their own forms dark and pale. The tram lines another river mist-hung flowed beside. Her tongue flowed in tottering break-up telling telling, he heard, his form in his eye beside him, of ugly blind come together and come together. Seeking the key inside little iron gate inside little railings of thick damp iron inside little privet of little black leaves he heard her. Inside the passage by the hall-stand in the dim light boxed in sad coloured glass he heard her. In the kitchen wakened by hard light not knowing what else to do he forgave her.

He forgave, he sat silent seven suppers, he murmured moaning how could you seven bed times and beside him walked so ugly a featureless throng. His hate making features to feed on made only his own features, his features for all the throng, and fed.

At two-thirty in the afternoon the glassy door-swing having thrown his own image springing into his brain he snatched up Till Grabbers' Bane his trusty rusty unused gun and rushing out to the pavement before draper before baker he clapped it to blue-veined eggshell brow and pulled. He seemed most alive with that black hole, his stiff ginger bristle riding so cocky unkillable his lifted sneering lip. He was most dead.

What ! He blew his bloody brains out ?
Sure thing.

*From Actaeon's Hornbook, or the Cuckold's
Consolation.*

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GEMINI • JOHN COLLIER