**Love (III)**

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back

                              Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack

                             From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,

                             If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:

                             Love said, You shall be he.

I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,

                             I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

                             Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame

                             Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?

                             My dear, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

                             So I did sit and eat.

—George Herbert

**Without Ceremony**

It was your way, my dear,  
To be gone without a word  
When callers, friends, or kin  
Had left, and I hastened in  
To rejoin you, as I inferred.  
  
And when you’d a mind to career  
Off anywhere — say to town —  
You were all on a sudden gone  
Before I had thought thereon,  
Or noticed your trunks were down.  
  
So, now that you disappear  
For ever in that swift style,  
Your meaning seems to me  
Just as it used to be:  
‘Good-bye is not worth while!’

—Thomas Hardy

**Ave Maria**

Mothers of America

                                let your kids go to the movies!

get them out of the house so they won’t know what you’re up to

it’s true that fresh air is good for the body

                                                                 but what about the soul

that grows in darkness, embossed by silvery images

and when you grow old as grow old you must

                                                                      they won’t hate you

they won’t criticize you they won’t know

                                                               they’ll be in some glamorous country

they first saw on a Saturday afternoon or playing hookey

they may even be grateful to you

                                                  for their first sexual experience

which only cost you a quarter

                                               and didn’t upset the peaceful home

they will know where candy bars come from

                                                                      and gratuitous bags of popcorn

as gratuitous as leaving the movie before it’s over

with a pleasant stranger whose apartment is in the Heaven on Earth Bldg

near the Williamsburg Bridge

                                              oh mothers you will have made the little tykes

so happy because if nobody does pick them up in the movies

they won’t know the difference

                                                 and if somebody does it’ll be sheer gravy

and they’ll have been truly entertained either way

instead of hanging around the yard

                                                       or up in their room

                                                                                       hating you

prematurely since you won’t have done anything horribly mean yet

except keeping them from the darker joys

                                                                 it’s unforgivable the latter

so don’t blame me if you won’t take this advice

                                                                          and the family breaks up

and your children grow old and blind in front of a TV set

                                                                                          seeing

movies you wouldn’t let them see when they were young

—Frank O’Hara

**The Guilty Man**

The years of my life were odd that now are even.

Think! to be young, amused, and not a fool;

Playing the world’s game—think!—with world’s own rules

And nothing lost, I think, I think . . . but years.

Heart against mouth is singing out of tune,

Night’s whisperings and blanks betrayed; this is

The end of lies; my bones are angry with me.

Father, the darkness of the self goes out

And spreads contagion on the flowing air.

I walk obscurely in a cloud of dark:

Yea, when I kneeled, the dark kneeled down with me.

Touch me: my folds and my defenses fall;

I stand within myself, myself my shield.

—Stanley Kunitz

**A Renewal**

Having used every subterfuge  
To shake you, lies, fatigue, or even that of passion,  
Now I see no way but a clean break.  
I add that I am willing to bear the guilt.

You nod assent. Autumn turns windy, huge,  
A clear vase of dry leaves vibrating on and on.  
We sit, watching. When I next speak  
Love buries itself in me, up to the hilt.

—James Merrill