**The Most of It**

He thought he kept the universe alone;  
For all the voice in answer he could wake  
Was but the mocking echo of his own  
From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.  
Some morning from the boulder-broken beach  
He would cry out on life, that what it wants  
Is not its own love back in copy speech,  
But counter-love, original response.  
And nothing ever came of what he cried  
Unless it was the embodiment that crashed  
In the cliff’s talus on the other side,  
And then in the far distant water splashed,  
But after a time allowed for it to swim,  
Instead of proving human when it neared  
And someone else additional to him,  
As a great buck it powerfully appeared,  
Pushing the crumpled water up ahead,  
And landed pouring like a waterfall,  
And stumbled through the rocks with horny tread,  
And forced the underbrush—and that was all.

—Robert Frost

**Welsh Incident**

“But that was nothing to what things came out  
From the sea-caves of Criccieth yonder.”  
“What were they? Mermaids? Dragons? Ghosts?”  
“Nothing at all of any things like that.”  
“What were they, then?”  
                                    “All sorts of queer things,  
Things never seen or heard or written about,  
Very strange, un-Welsh, utterly peculiar  
Things. Oh, solid enough they seemed to touch,  
Had anyone dared it. Marvellous creation,  
All various shapes and sizes, and no sizes,  
All new, each perfectly unlike his neighbour,  
Though all came moving slowly out together.”  
“Describe just one of them.”  
                                        “I am unable.”  
“What were their colours?”  
                                        “Mostly nameless colours,  
Colours you’d like to see; but one was puce  
Or perhaps more like crimson, but not purplish.  
Some had no colour.”  
                                “Tell me, had they legs?”  
“Not a leg or foot among them that I saw.”  
“But did these things come out in any order?”  
What o’clock was it? What was the day of the week?  
Who else was present? How was the weather?”  
“I was coming to that. It was half-past three  
On Easter Tuesday last. The sun was shining.  
The Harlech Silver Band played Marchog Jesu  
On thirty-seven shimmering instruments  
Collecting for Caernarvon’s (Fever) Hospital Fund.  
The populations of Pwllheli, Criccieth,  
Portmadoc, Borth, Tremadoc, Penrhyndeudraeth,  
Were all assembled. Criccieth’s mayor addressed them  
First in good Welsh and then in fluent English,  
Twisting his fingers in his chain of office,  
Welcoming the things. They came out on the sand,  
Not keeping time to the band, moving seaward  
Silently at a snail's pace. But at last  
The most odd, indescribable thing of all  
Which hardly one man there could see for wonder  
Did something recognizably a something.”  
“Well, what?”  
 “It made a noise.”  
 “A frightening noise?”  
“No, no.”  
 “A musical noise? A noise of scuffling?”  
“No, but a very loud, respectable noise —-  
Like groaning to oneself on Sunday morning  
In Chapel, close before the second psalm.”  
“What did the mayor do?”

“I was coming to that.”

—Robert Graves

**Was it**

Was it a quarrel that barred

the spring with shadow and

brought to troubled sleep

rude awakenings? Not

exactly. The depression of

one puts pressure on both.

Distance, silence, separation.

Pop tune blues: “I miss

you so.” “Bye bye baby

bye bye.” An angry wish

to shake it off and be oneself

again. Goodbye: I’m glad

I didn’t say it. We’re

reconciled. As though this

light June wind had blown

it all away. A rose I

saw just now flat open

shook its delicate yellow

anthers in that wind. (It

whistles.) So delicate,

so tender, so strong. It

was like that when we

kissed and smiled. Nothing

lasts forever, but this way

is so much better than

any other when I

missed you so. Eyes

of changing color, to

see you smile again!

Like a pop song, “Sun,

Smile down on me.”

—James Schuyler

**What it Look Like**

Dear Ol’ Dirty Bastard: I too like it raw,

I don’t especially care for Duke Ellington

at a birthday party. I care less and less

about the shapes of shapes because forms

change and nothing is more durable than feeling.

My uncle used the money I gave him

to buy a few vials of what looked like candy

after the party where my grandma sang

in an outfit that was obviously made

for a West African king. My motto is

*Never mistake what it is for what it looks like*.

My generosity, for example, is mostly a form

of vanity. A bandanna is a useful handkerchief,

but a handkerchief is a useless-ass bandanna.

This only looks like a footnote in my report

concerning the party. *Trill* stands for what is

*truly real* though it may be hidden by the houses

just over the hills between us, by the hands

on the bars between us. That picture

of my grandmother with my uncle

when he was a baby is not trill. What it is

is the feeling felt seeing garbagemen drift

along the predawn avenues, a sloppy slow rain

taking its time to the coast. Milquetoast

is not trill, nor is bouillabaisse. *Bakku-shan*

is Japanese for a woman who is beautiful

only when viewed from behind. Like I was saying,

my motto is *Never mistake what it looks like*

*for what it is*else you end up like that Negro

Othello. (Was Othello a Negro?) Don’t you lie

about who you are sometimes and then realize

the lie is true? You are blind to your power, Brother

Bastard, like the king who wanders his kingdom

searching for the king. And that’s okay.

No one will tell you you are the king.

No one really wants a king anyway.

—Terrance Hayes

**Hush**

At night the sea’s surface is the penetrable onyx of deep sleep.  
      I enter it without fear, as if to lower the input of the eye  
reduces risk, and whatever I can’t presently see  
      exists only in memory, which has been calmed by the water’s

cold hypnosis, and to be here is impersonal. Only the moonlight  
      interrupts this near-nothingness, the play of it on the glossy swell  
like a music you can feel, or like the mapping of something happening to me  
      on another level, something that can be understood so long

as it never finishes—and, when it finishes, there is nothing  
      left to understand. In the distance, other lights appear now  
on the far side of the harbor, and, closer, the dull-white gull-like hulls  
      of a band of anchored boats rock softly, without intelligence.

Later, elsewhere, I remember it vaguely, and it feels like the most  
      meaningful way to go about it, as if the value of it grew  
by resisting precision, and that, in coaxing particularity to glide from it,  
      the sea retained a unity unlike anything other than the sky

with which it had come to merge, but likewise it set itself outside  
      the reach of grammar, whose designs on it were not kind, and yet  
what I mean by “it” isn’t even the sea anymore, but an experience  
      of the sea, which syllable by syllable I make the mistake of displacing.

—Timothy Donnelly