

"[T]he remarkable poet Bill Knott is not the type to win prizes, become the pet of academic critics or cultivate acolytes. But this thorny genius has added to the art of poetry." –Robert Pinsky, *Washington Post*, 2005

"Bill Knott is our contemporary e.e. cummings . . . Like cummings, he is brilliant at both micro and macro." –Cindra Halm, *Rain Taxi*, Fall 2004

"For the past thirty-five years Bill Knott has shown himself to be one of our very best poets and perhaps the most original. . . . I think he is one of the few poets of my generation who will remain with us." –Stephen Dobyns, *Harvard Review* (Spring 2002)

"Bill Knott is a meld between Gerard Manley Hopkins and MTV, producing poems with the former's violent beauty and the latter's largely ironic postmodern presence." –Mary Jo Bang, *Lingua Franca* (May 2000)

"Knott was an incredibly important poet to me and still is; I think Bill Knott is a genius and probably the least known great poet in America. It's really kind of pathetic that he's not as well known as he was even thirty years ago because he's even better now." –Thomas Lux, *The Cortland Review* (August 1999)

"Bill Knott is one of the best poets writing in America. Without question, he is the most original." –Kurt Brown, *Harvard Review* (Spring 1999)

"Bill Knott is a genius." –Tom Andrews, *Ohio Review* (1997)

"It is no accident that the major British and American poets of the 19th and 20th century were outsiders. . . . The most original poet of my generation, Bill Knott, is also the greatest outsider." –Stephen Dobyns, *AWP Chronicle* (1995)

"Bill Knott is the secret hero of a lot of poets. . . . [P]oets who differ radically from Knott look to his work for the shock of recognizing themselves." –David Kirby, *American Book Review* (1991)

"Bill Knott's poems . . . are the poems Beckett's Gogo would write if he were among us." –Sharon Dunn, *Massachusetts Review* (1990)

"[Knott's 'Poems 1963-1988' is] a powerful and original book, a record of one of the most disturbing imaginations of our times. Few people can create a world so completely and concisely as Knott does time and time again." –Kevin Hart, *Overland* (1990)

"Knott is no parlor poet. His work is the most sharply original of any poet in his generation." –Jim Elledge, *Booklist* (1989)

"Among people who know his work, Bill Knott is regarded as one of the most original voices in American poetry." –Charles Simic, blurb for *Poems 1963-1988* (1989)

"Knott sets up principles far outside most of those we know, and he always writes up to and beyond those standards." –Sandra McPherson, blurb for *Outremer* (1989)

"Bill Knott is an American original. No one else could have imagined what James Wright once referred to as Bill Knott's 'indispensable poems.'" –Stuart Dischell, Harvard Book Review (1989)

"I think Bill Knott is *the* best poet in America right now." –Thomas Lux, Emerson Review (1983)

"Bill Knott's first book, 'The Naomi Poems,' published in 1968, established him instantaneously as one of the finest poets in America. Subsequent publications deepened and reinforced that reputation." –Andrei Codrescu, The Baltimore Sun (1983)

"[Knott's poems are] shrouded almost always in the glaring and polluted light William Burroughs foresaw with such brilliance in 'Naked Lunch.' In fact, Knott, Poet of Interzone, is the poet Burroughs seemed to call for in his seminal novel. . . . Knott is one of a handful of original poets working today. His genius suits the times better than any poet I've read . . ." –Robert Peters, Los Angeles Times (1983)

"With the death of Berryman, Knott seems to me to be the chief embodiment in language today of Mallarmé's spirit. . . ." –John Vernon, Western Humanities Review (1976)

". . . Knott's originality as a poet: he is absurd and classical and surrealist all at once. A marvelously impossible animal." –Paul Zweig, Contemporary Poetry in America (1974)

"At his best, Knott is a kind of surreal classicist. . . . He is already a formidable poet." –Karl Malkoff, *Crowell's Handbook of Contemporary American Poetry* (1974)

"[Knott's] images are astonishing. Whatever you may think of Knott's poems, they have not been written before by anyone else. . . . Poetry such as this strikes me as extending our awareness." –Louis Simpson, *New York Times Book Review* (1969)

"Bill Knott is one of the most remarkable poets to appear since James Wright and James Dickey." –Ralph J. Mills, Jr., *Poetry* (1969)

"I think [Bill Knott] is one of the best poets I know." –James Wright, blurb for *The Naomi Poems* (1968)

"I think the most significant group of young poets are those published in *Choice* and *The Sixties*, and the most impressive of these is certainly William Knott." –Kenneth Rexroth, *Harper's Magazine* (June 1965)

MOVIE MUSE

:

the film poems of

BILL KNOTT

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The poems in this book are fictional. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used ficticiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Intro Note

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This selection is drawn from an earlier book, "(ACTING) POEMS," which I've taken out of print for revision.

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The order of the poems is random.

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FRAMEPOEM

First, make a 100 minute movie. Then take the 1 million 440 thousand frames, or stills: take each frame, blow it up, print it, put a frame around it, then take all 1 million 440 thousand pictures, hang them in a gallery, consecutively in a line so that the first frame of the movie is the first picture inside the door and the last, last: you get the idea. Then have the people who come in RUN past the 1 million 440 thousand pictures, so that in this way they become both spectator and projector.

HERITAGE

"... here thy generations endeth in accord."

I physically resemble my mother
And father and therefore must have been
Adopted, because on my viewerscreen
The role-children rarely share a feature
With either parent. The fact they're actors
And I'm not is what makes me misbegot—
Watch that matched world of monitors 2-shot
The mirror daily where I pray these stars

*Come: cancel everyone of us whose names
And clans have sundered human unity—
Descend always among daughters or sons
To live still, beyond the Web's trivia games,
Till their faces cloned shape ours. Family.
From android to ape, we'll be Thy reruns.*

CURTAIN UP

The last whirling dervish to drop
Beholds transfixed what those who stop
Dancing an instant prior can't:
His veil is pierced by orbs that grant

The properly-spiritual leer
A picture which should inspire fear.
They say the face of God, maybe—
In my case I would probably

Flashback to 1961
Where filmqueen Romy Schneider's gone
Down on co-star Alain Delon
To pose for my holy vision.

They're flung in bed with me between.
See us there: I am their screen.

MYSTERY MOVIE

The business rival, the jealous lover, the distant heir: once I've guessed who the murderer is, it's over before it's over, like life. The detective will continue to not see the obvious or else pretend to lack the answers till his hunch is confirmed: if he's Poirot or so, he savors his superiority and holds his gloat over the heads of all the stupid others: the cast still looks each suspicious close-up in the eye, but my attention fades to patience. Post-intrigue and somewhat bored I settle back, awaiting the confirmation of my solution. Then: each clue hangs abacus-like on the bars I've placed around it all, safe and cell, confident the guilty one shall confess to prove that even I must suffer exoneration in the executions destined for those who foresee the end, who linger here complacent in our deductive wisdom, reviewing the forensics, the shrewd sleuth-insights that result in the death of suspense, the loss of our audience innocence. Now the soundtrack swells to leitmotif its list of suspects, each of whom could have done it if this world were only perfect, equal in its sharing

(no stanza break)

of virtue or crime. Sherlocks who solve
the puzzle pre-climax are most to blame
perhaps: are we to show for this lack
of justice, we who jump the gun, who
deny the drawing out of the dilemma,
thrill of the withheld. The unknown.
We who rush too soon to the revelation.
We killjoys who slay its necessary delay.

RETURN (CINEMA)

Down every road that rounds us off with rain
I go though
of course precious
I have lost the way—

Corridors run through movies
to lead me onward to the onward place,
but every time I try

to keep track of that trackshot
I die in clumps beneath its rails.

See the days that drag me down with road.

You stars who shine from the door
of the projector, you holy detours,
where my threshold fails is home
to you. You rule each realm

I ache my grin into skeleton for.

I know your names
Will nickname my name some more.

VIDLOCK

These movies in common separate us
if we see them as real, as all that may
be salvaged by an image, the screen
blank so it can evolve toward some

higher form of media, a schism
between the eyes perhaps, whose
gap is carefully marginal with grief,
whose stubborn inborn hunger grips

like tolled-out hymns. Like old films.
And yet its website remains as secret
as a bridal veils' graveyard or any
facade acropolis can't penetrate.

Its made for TV trademark's a fad,
a name: one more fatal masquerade.

NICOLE KIDMAN

Hates it when her husband Clark Gable
shows his cigars to the whores and grins:
his dimple is a temple full of drunks
who swear at a grease-spot on a saint,
the hushavoice high in their roaring.

It's doormat day at Hollywood Donuts.
The whisper of their hinges wastes my ears;
washed up higher we wait for its lapse.
Tactile, tangible, what else resists
the awakened world I suffer from.

The obsolescence of it is too shining
to blink a mote at unless the eye can
filter out the rest of this instinctual
alarm, my campfires insanely signalling
no end to its vigil. Of course the war

is over I tell her trembling snowpeakable
toes, the Oscar is yours for the height
if only, if only. Night surrenders to her
naked bike. I must steal the clothesline
to make the clothes fit me. Ride, ride, Nic,

take those sacred spoke-wheels veer
for Sunset Beach featuring Tom Cruise
on Serenity and Artifice: The Actor's
Choice. Rant-serenade in dream-demure
my foe-limbs chose this evening's attire.

(stanza break)

But awe-while, like a manifesto tossed
into a zoo's mouth, I'm nude too. As if
it would do me any good. Please post
no bills on your tongue. The sky by torches
soars. No tongues allowed her wall says.

*

VANT

First, cover yourself with chameleons.

Then walk down the street.

The one who recognizes you as you is your enemy.

The one who recognizes you as Greta Garbo is your
lover.

HOLLYWOOD NIGHTMARE

Soon to be a major mirage, my face—my face
never changes! To look each day in the mirror
is boring as going on location shoots
or signing autographs for my stable
of fans or being typecast in detective
roles. Sigh. Sometimes all I do is sit by my pool

and spazz out until my brain is a black pool
of emptiness, my eyes reruns: until my face
wears the neutral mask of aura a detective
affects. And when I am as blank as a mirror,
as dull, when I sprawl as snoozeful as a stable
full of saviors, I dream: I dream someone shoots

me and he becomes a celebrity. He shoots
me and he gets the house, the swimming pool,
the Andy Warhols, the Rolls, the Porsche, the stable,
the . . . the *lawn* he gets! Christ, it's like divorce. My
face!

He gets my face too? He's like a fucking mirror
of me . . . ! Jesus, you'd think some goddam
detective

would know it's not me: when I'm a detective
on screen I know who is who. The badguy shoots
the goodguy sometimes but when they hold a mirror
over the goodguy's lips you see a pool
of mist appear and then his pal the co-star's face
looks all relieved. Cut to the hospital: "Stable?"

(stanza break)

the doctor smirks, "Yes: his condition is stable.
Of course, with the brainectomy his detective
days are history, uh hunh. His face? His face—
hell, our plastic-surgeon loves a challenge: shoots
these Before and After photos? Great stuff! . . . "

The pool
of reporters from the Daily Sun Rhymes Mirror

yawns at the grinning doctor while in the mirror
above my white white bed I maintain a stable
noble absence; my non-being is a pool
of pure mystery—a sheer puzzle any detective
would arrest the cursed creator of: I see shoots
of lilac and crocus come bursting from my face

each time the mirror closeups. But no detective
can solve this daily dream, whose stable-cam shoots
me here beside my pool, here, inside my face.

CASABLANK

The 2 dead moviestars I believed in
embrace, forcing their makeup to
become intimate as a possibility
of channelsurfing past ourselves

or anyone awaiting reunion (all lovers
share a past) while the absence of
their blackandwhite colorized eyes
presents an alternate first-person

which is not nominalist, which preserves
a soupcon of that neoplatonic
void felt by Nazis in the New World
where they've always resumed reign.

(And once history forgets to save fate
let it wait for its own feature; right, future?)

ROMY

Will I crawl beneath my hemline's tombs
to feel in shield with her, blessed sole
by all our subterfuge of sex has shared,
accordance that makes even the curtains
flutter a little less aimlessly in their
illusion of filmy Schneider, Romy spider I
must vent my sheath to be stalled in again;
how her forsaken handful of films are
forced to record our regimen, their words
a slow replacement of thoughts with
vowels, a slow effacement of her co-stars'
dialogue lost below the hurt of her heel,
her tread of line-readings, her face
issuing its bitten shape sheer above our
video lust to assuage the ground she
sunbathes on in Chabrol's *Dirty Hands*,
her tan eery and strapless but note how
the accolades are toppling, the toe-taps
are stepping up the staircase of the last
castle ruled forever by glances who
elude their complicity steeped in seats
tickets bring us to so briefly: so quickly
the endtitles entitle us to exit brushed
by regret we cannot linger in her aura
impetuous-throated, dusk-laden with
sighs most, a hushed singularity of
eyes marking the nose against the mouth,
inscribing the cheekbones on the lidbrow,
dashing the teeth to frozen steppes that
proclaim their princess is deep in dew:

(no staza break)

with seep-pores fixation fanclubs galore
garbage from her amours it drops; far
her hair is solo photo, montage-reamed
limn it sinks into mink murmurs of air,
hooded in horror or instantcams or
sheersham clamor of the viewers who
read the marquee feeds that bleed the air
thoroughfare with film and fill culture
name-some wonders dear previews of
each star actor bends personally to hear
confided in constant groans and jeers
on every corner of near needs and trends
they leave us landed here with no amends
no way to leave the queue of this theater
whose opening night our day attends
but what is it it intends to grace us with
one glimpse of the briefest gift of gore
before it extends our ends and lends us
the token brochure for our future loss
of her we had hopes to depend on for
whatever projection of inner terror we
might atone the destined displacement of,
sincere exposure of slo-mo mouths
that moue and move desire one millimeter
closer to its itch-switch, its clicker, since
I can freeze the screen on her grope-gripped
lips, I can etch their gesture frame by frame
with long exhalations of my crotch area
where the remote control seems most at home
in that quare of generation, wombwarmth rooting
its phallic exteriorization of time's finger on
the TV-trigger tracing a linear content in that

(no stanza break)

c-groin, that piss-p, that cup we call lap, where
confident hands can grope up the buttons
to catch even the Olivier-est replay tapping
his ribcage for a nebulous savage while
aches of FX construct their tiers on colloseum
liontamers lacking cameras as elsewhere
focus the Empire examines each fingered
footprint led backward clones hop the gap
trapped in a pit only alliteration can free him from,
faux hero till a sulk her silk gaze roams over
the amazed consternation of the crowd, bored
background zooms, the thumbs-down
that comes on cue and slackens its mode
location daily salvation, fierce genitals surround
the atrium with aspects aversions apertures—
The apparatus is complete, is more than home
since Rome is Romy minus her wolf-son,
her fourteen-year-old boy lies impaled on
the spears of the fence the mansion railings
that guard her from us the fans who want to crush
her distance into dreams no limit: and yet
no exalted Presence alone can compensate
our lack of, ergo She must be sacrificed She
should suffer the immolation saints like us
are assigned to, madonna-mournful must
bear the cross the stats of the boxoffice in
a Chanel shift, a Dior drape, a Balmain bare
and parade Cinecitta to a traipse as hourly
her skins pass on a bus with ads for sequels
whose dread achieved empathies advocate
pain that strands its hands in applause and
then to go whole-whore it sights the hostile

(no stanza break)

sub glamor features expressed in nearer
nervedowns known as time: it spikes her son,
it kills her too age 43 OD heart attack svelte
no stuntdouble can mime end clutch self close
pinned young legend crumple bound to kiss
the sign we seek. Approaching the cinemapolis
from sea we see that in its skyline of stars
the tallest is hers: wink-tips this capital with
reign and rule, insane, pic-naked Empress
pale-annexed, porned-over by pore fingers
rupture suppurating gloved Vatican hands,
oh archived name demolishing the gone,
undressed in the interest of our purity's hell,
cat-of-no-lives but ours; and shifting if
she can that one: heel to her fate she falls.
1958, 20 years old, look, she lifts it all:
fame career life: scenes marks lines: runthrough
daily it mates no one but her and smirks at
first lover Alain Delon, her co-, her consort.

TYPE-CAST

I refused all roles until
they offered me the lead
in "The Co-Star Killer" –

*

SUPERSTAR

The winners of all those lookalike contests
must suffer and even become anguished
and ashamed as years pass and the hurt
worsen every time they forget to avert
the mirror's blow and the blame of each
tiny flaw or variance which distinguishes
theirs from that single face fame graced.

*

PRIVATE SCREENING

My soul fell asleep
during the beautiful part
of the mirror, leaving
my body
to watch it alone.

NIGHT AND THE NAKED

(to RN)

The filmfestival swept beyond us as we kissed
Oh roundrobin panel where we went goodbye
Since then the weight (savored) of noncoincidence
As if each lightningbolt were secretly aimed at

A matchstick but were we ever on target as that
Whenever we meet now in the bar part or the
Restaurant part or the video part or the disco
Part or the atrium of this night I fear our parts our

Roles I mean because what if we you and me
Were cast to closeup the scene the street the strobe
Stabs of rain frying our profiles for future ref

Literals straight off a wanted poster for Janus
Because or would we just stand there thunderfucked
Trying to remember our name ends in applause

COCTEAU'S STARS IMPORTUNED

Cocteau's stars are bored by the love
of a sort of wince-animal,
who's failed throughout his life no less
to stretch a pimple into a profile.

Pipes ache to anchor in those teeth—
a sail, a horsestall, a fireplace
all beg to go backdrop, to gaze
agonized at your white spines.

Pruned against mirror, I imagine
laundering such muse, laving such sheets:
Oh simul-semen! kill this puny poem,

whose publication has been timed
to coincide with the release of
my latest film, *Fetish Sans Flesh*.

AFTER COCTEAU'S *ORPHEUS*

These bright glass shards we walk upon
reflect the past too slowly so we
must quicken our step to keep pace
and rush to meet the bloody footprints

that tablet-trace our progress across
the iced sperm of this idle span
called home past all of which we come
dampseconds after I kiss your sole.

Montage is shown the same, screen-first;
then, if struck by a vast unseen pin,
pray to lay down more veins that pour.

The spotless splinter of its tongue
creates no threshold from the toe-mold
this shattered mirror alone can enter.

PORNOPUNCHINELLO

I lack the pleasure to claim remorse
Is at my loins earning its pariah's name
From me who may have kissed a worm or worse
In my time aspiring to that acme shame

Unless shame is a sense of having shirked
Refused what love dangled just above me
All those tantalus chances for lust were jerked
Out of reach but not by fate's absurd pulley

My own hands gangling in the back somewhere
Supported those puppets' pulp character

Tame filmstars lame mimes where are your faces
Enduring still your enticements I turn
And twist until you've all lost your places
Prompter-perfect I but you never learn

GOING MY WAY

The one boy who died of polio in our orphanage in the early 1950s was such an important icon that even now I remember his favorite movie since that's what we do with the famous, retain some anomalous fact that quiets them in our mind. We, I say, but was it everyone—did all of us shed that kid: did a thousand child incarcerates replace his name-and-face with an actor's mask and cast it as star of the waste disease whose cause was always doubt, germ caught perhaps from local lakes prohibited. Who thought of him those summers we could not swim until a vaccine came, too late to amend lackwarm days, to change our fate/our film to his. That movie—"Going My Way" featuring Bing Crosby as a young priest, kindly, loveable, unreal—Tommy, Jimmy, whatever he was called, he probably knows still by still now every camera angle and closeup, every cut we living are allowed to forget.

VAGUE CONSOLES

This vista often awarded John Ford his rest.
Myself, scenery has a lack of I (emphasis).
And haven't we killed all the Indians yet?
In a stagecoach—made of sagebrush, no doubt—,

I would gauche-out like a tumbleweed at a sockhop.
Yo, watch it roll across the old gym-floor, loboto
Basketball: then, toed by foetid teens, fall,
Slo-mo, as though some flair for the vague
consoles—

Oh lips refusing their tongues' rights, bodies
Trying to put down the peaceful demands of
Their genitalia . . . yes everything looks better shot

Through John Wayne's hurt. The sky the way it
mattes—
The desert. A lone rider, whose moral I await.
The crotches arranging themselves for death.

THE END

Pain has petrified the threshold.

—Trakl

A threshold is everything that can be seen in the space of the endurance of our openness: thus at the conclusion of *The Searchers* John Wayne is framed never

to return and forced to spur himself, to escape always the outward-gazing-lust of that thrust doorway toward the horizon or so we guess because the door shuts and

cuts him off before he attains it: exit is lost and we who had followed his flight from the intimacy of this interior, we must remain here minus our male-myth-ranger,

and must domestically cry for his exile while the credits crawl across their reelsill.

SUMMER ACTION FEATURES

Can I kiss this cinema's utter pittedness.

Moviescreen, you hype of hygiene, I love
to see a face lace its venom with mine.

When the hero has far too many minotaur scars,
the creases in my palms turn over and nap.

Archimedes revised: if I sink far enough
into the film, the law of displacement
should bring to the surface my truest self.

Then the blow-ups come on cue. The ingenue
glows like the sky: we both gnaw raw halo.

God knows I know each bomb is a mobile
some sculptor has failed ineptly to keep aloft.

Even I am losing my innocent twitter balance,
though statistically I will die eating purse soup.

PERSONALLY

I saw this screenlegend guest on TV
promoting the need for everybody
inbetween plugs for their latest movie
to help out like with our ecology

small daily acts each of us personally
just little things we can do at home, one
example is don't let the water run
hey people! ya'know? when you brush your teeth?

Sometimes I'll remember that admonition,
sometimes after meals I grumble beneath
the bristles, under frothy gums and lips:

Hey filmstar! love your save-the-planet tips,—
and hey, look: my faucet's off, not on—see?—
the least you could do is come fuck me.

TO RIPLEY (*Alien 1-4*)

Always your face like a space
(Destination: beautiful) ship
Empties its mote of closeup trace
Down screens that blink blank blip

Somewhere between countdown
And coma time is a line
Where waking centuries often
Drained against that measure may find

All blood redshifts (direction: west)
Until film can clone one sun
With stars both whole and gone

Attending every sequel
We pray for an intent equal
To our interest

COVER STORIES

Exchanging secrets in the form of kisses,
Spies forbidden to know the codes they pass,
Each pretends for the moment these mysteries
Outweigh all allegiance they owe the past.

A space where fingertips cease to explore space,
A safehouse right for private armistice,
The flesh they bared betrays them both at last.
Dawn is distance in such askance allies.

As false passports must wear a true likeness,
These tradecraft made-in-bed IDs are not
The ones that will have to be borne once more

Come morning's normal enemy status
Which would have killed to foil the turncoat plot
They laid here, those traitors worth dying for.

Note:

Based of course on the generic love scene
in almost every spy opus I've ever seen.

SCENARIO

I am in love of old with your voice
the one fading into its clones sighed,
the voice in love of old replied
a delayed sense of one attends me:
if actors learn each role with scissors
repeating its rip across the script—
I am in love of old but it is hard to
rehearse our parts when they occur
snipped along the dialogue's errata
yet love of old will show its face
that text of frequent halts our ways exalt;
they flood the scrim to see the movie
memory dreams but what film will fill
or ford its depth though death is
imminent in love of old and wings
to kill those sky tracteries that show
no stage can hold the shapes that cut
catty the paper where these apes appear
or keep its stills in sequence when
curtain-askance your eye I ascend.

MOVIE-Q's

*

Ben Lyons was typically blunt
in *I Cover the Waterfront*—
his cute co-star Claudette Colbert
could have frenched it: 'Ze waterfront, I co-vair.'

*

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman
is not a film appeals to everyone—
but I, I like the way it feels, I guess,
to have a whole town look up my dress.

*

Although by gorgeous Gene Tierney
he was loved, and loved sincerely,
Richard Widmark proved pretty shitty.
The flick? *Night and the City*.

*

*The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who
Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies* blew
my mind, man. Like wow! (—Was I crazy? Was I sick?
Maybe I shouldn't have watched it through that Thai-stick.)

*

Basic Instinct 2 avoids the great esthetic error of the
first one

by not having any Moviestars appear save the sheer
Sharon:

its other no-name actors fade to shadows in this Dantean
vision of the heavenly ("Eat me!") Stone alone up there
on the screen.

*

I know Jack Nicholson played a cameo—
and Elton John played a song or so—
and Ann-Margaret played his mommy—
but *who* the hell else was in *Tommy*?

*

How many of you gazeekoids went yumyum
Watching that transmuted geek Jeff Goldblum
Rip off his own ear and eat it? *The Fly* was great!
(And if he'd unzipped his fly, ripped *that* off, and ate?)

*

Oh sight that might have made an atheist of God,
seeing the screenwriter-producer-star of *Panther Squad*
—Sybil Danning, auteur divine—opt to not go topless!
(Even John the Baptist 'd put it on his flop-list.)

*

Where Garbo got the great John Barrymore
To play the part of her perfect paramour,
Poor Joan Crawford was stuck with brother Lionel:
Life is c'est la vie at der *Grand Hotel*.

*

It's a crime shame that that scene where
Sean Penn tied his wife Madonna to a chair
and then put on her dress and licked her thighs
got like totally cut out of *Shanghai Surprise*.

*

Casting, like ripeness, is all: and thus the Dantean vision
of love that moves *Basic Instinct 2* improves on 'BI One'
by removing all moviestars save our heaven's-own Sharon
Stone.
(Which leaves just me and Her up there on the screen,
alone.)

*

Basic Instinct . . . what a waste to cast Dorothy Malone:
she's just lost in the young star-geist of that Sharon
Stone,
so stone-perfect for her role as an ice-pick dildo—
oh! my '50s-favorite Dot got stuck with a bit-part cameo.

THE NEVE VILLANELLE

He was a Montague and she was a Capulet
yet no feuding families threw them in thwart—
it wasn't that that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from Act Five Scene Fiving it on their first date:
no, it was that Neve Campbell that left them reft-heart—
It was Neve Montague and Neve Capulet

they wrote on their carnal diaries' most intimate
page: every time they tried to kiss they'd start
to Neve-itate, and that stopped Romeo and Juliet

from making out further. Neve made them hot
but not for each other. They'd just sit there in flirt
gone faux at the Montague or the Capulet

manse and navigate some Neve-or-die site
and ram *Scream 1/2/3* up the DVD insert—
that comely Campbell stopped Romeo and Juliet

from consummating their teen-tragic fate:
and even when she did indie roles for her art
they'd still curse the Montague and Capulet

DNA that kept their lives so punked, so pre-set:
Why can't we be Neve? Why can't we clone her part?
Having to stay a human Montague/Capulet
stopped them from loving Romeo and Juliet.

SEFFI'S BLUES

every year the same
they forgot my name
I take some time away
and when I'm back in May
it's like I never was
all my former buzz
my résumé my respect
where's my endorsements
they treat me worse
than a fatality-show reject
didn't I have a series
didn't I star once
special guest appearance
Sharon Stone as Ceres
but looky here is
this my career this limbo
where'd it all go
I want my audition
I want my youtube hit on
but no it's always no
can't even get a video
or a pilot slot
or a Phil Spector shot
I used to be lah-de hot
now look at this wan
subterrene skin
this bone I'm in
god Dis I'm damned
Angelina can tan

(no stanza break)

but the sun won't bide
Brad Hades' bride
whitened-hide I stride
past the poppin'-rot-zi
it's me they can not see
I'm fade to the shades
I read the trades
I was Liz and Cher
but the Biz says where
so please don't tell
TMZ I'm back from hell
stale out of rehab
for a while until
I feel that heel-jab
fang again this Fall
that icky-phallic python
is waitin' to writhe-on
when my rerun begins
and my comeback ends
he'll fuck me Paris Hilton
and lay me Lethe Lohan
till I'm gone for rotten
a hasbeen-to-be
signed Persephone
PS don't 'lert the media
don't IM your TV
don't earth to Mom
she cursed the sitcom
I died on and I agree

PRISCILLA, or THE MARVELS OF ENGINEERING
(A Fatal Fable)

A "Swingles Only" Cruise to souths tour on the
S.S. Priscilla: parties, spurtive romances, confided
Antiperspirants, quickchange partners. Suddenly
3rd day poolside blank, sun
Ouch I meet up a daze dish somehow ain't
Crossed my eyes' equator yet: she preened
To have appeared out of that presumptuous
Nowhere our hoarse soggy captain's
Nailed in place on his compass: in all the swarmy sticky
Nighlong pairings off, secret lifeboat
Drill assignments, where did you come from
I offered haven't laid uh eyes you behind musta been
blind. Oh
I've been around she said, I've seen you operating
That blonde last night, har, har, har.
Flattered, I introduced my name's Bill. Priscilla.
—As in S.S.? We laughed over the coincidence,
Wringing fragile martini chill stems all
Around us similar neo couples were
Gangplanking each other, coral lounge dusk deck.
Dinner, we promised. Then the moviedance,
Then . . . ? Our eyebrows guessed "The night?"
Separating to change, we hugged all sprinkly
But at table that P.M. I stained her napkin but
She didn't show up went looking for wasn't at the dance
Either. Hmmpf, not on deck—where could she
Be? I asked all the other cats and chicks
Where the hell's Priscilla? describing her. No way

(no stanza break)

Man ain't never seen no piece like that since we
Ask the purser—man you sure? Tete
A tete sure, I replied. The purser!
I'll get her cabin number, she might not be feeling
Oh boy I didn't inadvertantly slip a torpedo into her
drink that
Stud I scored from said they work every,
The purser. But no senior
There is no Priscilla everywhere listed amongs
The passenger list I'm jorry. The boat—she
Is S.S. Priscilla? he added helpfully, concerned, as
though I were nutlong no
No you nit-tit—she has to be on look I met her this
Safternoon in the "Cock 'N' Tail" Lounge. Jorry
Is no let me have that thing here on the passenger look
for jourseive.
Damn! she ain't on it
A stowaway hunh
That's even better
I'LL get her
She can't escape what's
Gonna do—hide in the ocean?
But
Finally, frustrato, angry not even drunk after no
Go searching all night, at sailor's-dawn I slunk to my
cabin and
Guess who I found the bitch all tucked up in that little
cute-ass
Type beds they have Priscilla!
I hissed. Come to bunk
She swelled. But you, you aren't . . .

(no stanza break)

Aren't what, know whatcha 're crazy dam-
Shh let's love she swayed. Okay: I'm game. 'S bout
time. So we
Start fucking but, her movements were too calm
And rocking, elusive as chase in tune with the ship's
Wash on the waves. Gentle, coaxing, mocking-
Musky, chromosome zoney, internal
As sea. It was eerie
The ex of it cited
Frightened me. My Y shot up: I began
Fug and fury ramming, I urged
Harsh thrash strokes, I hard
To hurt her with my penis, I remembered
That Norman Mailer story where he calls his "The
Avenger" I was pissed, make me
Frantic look all over the goddamn
Ship you cunt slammed all my spite ptooy
Into her. And then, and then . . . instantly . . .
Something . . . all I know is I came the split
I hit the water. I was drowned, of course,
In the famous shipwreck. The famous shipwreck
You remember
It was in all the TV—
Shots of it sunk in shallow clear just
Off an atoll. And everyone aboard was lost, adios,
Unusual or not unusual in these cases. But no one
Nobody could figure out how
The S.S. Whatsername had
Gotten all those great big gaping holes
Ripped, slashed, torn in her hull nor
What caused this deadfall rupture, the grievous eely
capsizing.

(stanza break)

Couldn't a been a iceberg
That
 far
 south.

Note:

The movie I made from this was rejected by all Festivals, cinepurists objected to its cross-fate wedding of two related genres, the shipboard romance and the shipwreck flick: the former ends in fornication which here brings on the latter's climax: each time Tab Hunter thrusts into Dorothy Malone's loins another great gaping hole is ripped in the ship's hull. Orgasm occurs when the ocean collapses together gasping above its regained void.

I HAVE

have you ever tried to apply makeup
to a teardrop
under kliegwater

floodlit
and the starlet
you're trying to get fit

for the premiere
is all fidget
and praying her

tit-tape stays on
and you have to keep saying
stand still hon

or else'll
it'll run

TCM BLUES

I can't go far
I can't go free
although I am a star
everywhere I move is
right there (see me?)
on Turner Classic Movies

Mad scene cued for Oscar
my head looms closeup size
gosh I feel so lost there
trapped in celluloid
I collide inside with eyes
I can't escape them
on TCM

No one under eightyfive
remembers my name
that's the forget-its the fuck-its of fame
the goodies and the groovies
why am I still alive
on Turner Classic Movies

I wish they'd forget me
and let me rot in peace
why the hell they have to show
all the B's that Louis B made me
get on my knees for I don't know

(stanza break)

Silents mute me
Garbo suits me
Bogie shoots me
Bette boots me
out the door
then comes the War
Coop salutes me
Film Noir
convolutes me
I'm ready for more
but time and TV executes me

My birthday they unvault me
popcorn butter and salt me
their experts all exalt me
for each posthumous premiere
of the pics I wish would disappear
once a year like Dracula I up and rear
from my mausoleum here
at lovely Forest Lawn
my death goes on and on and on
like boring Norma Shearer
even though I look so young
I just hate how they approve me
on Turner Classic Movies

I should have stayed on the Stage
my Chekov Ibsen defined the Age
I was the rage all Page One raves
all Hollywood ever saw was my Beauty
I told Jack Warner Go ahead Sue me

(no stanza break)

I don't need the movies
screw you you studio enslavers
I'm off to Hedda Gabler's

The gangsters and the crooners
the roughies and the smoothies
the dames who came from nowhere
in their furs and rubies
it's Turner Classic Movies

The chippies from the chorus
do their Queens and Madame Bovarys
the hams who knew their Hamlet
are clowns and falldown boobies
the teens who grew up meanies
the Garlands and the Rooneyes
come join the ingenues and juvies
on Turner Classic Movies

Producers used me
directors abused me
my co-stars co-screwed me so
please don't behoove me
don't Catherine Deneuve me
all you S-O-B's just leave me let me go
all you Mickeys and you Goofys
you hasbeens and newbies
12-step friends and floozies
don't try to sob-and-soothe me
don't emote and quote you love me
you really really love me

(no stanza break)

no all you love to do is view me
on Turner Classic Movies

(fadeout:)

My flicks all used to slay em
in the big towns and the boonies
but now they only play em
on Turner Classic Movies

DEMISE

Not enough moviestars—

Why not one for each of us!

Until then every film we attend mocks us with
its excess

of cuts and cameras, when we know what it lacks.

Until then, their star-sparse

disparity disconsolates us, we treasure

any every glimpse of that rumored screencomer,

that cinemanque who roams the scenic wilds around
this premiere

as it lies dying here,

as it flashes flickers out its tiny faltering campfire

of squeals and smiles.

REDCARPET STARLETS

All shadows dream of facing klieg—the urge—
to sag magnificent in staged wattage—

that fire which squints all sight, see-dense hive—

eyes cubed to one would seethe like bees
—only the moon can tongue such honeys,

or unisex models whose hair is being sucked
into their navels for a rote secundum of time.

Sized via dimples—calf-loined by tan-tucks—
their taut skin tours the pound-sun (beadbrilliantined)

down foreheads in a stream of them shines.

Touch Connors and Race Gentry attend them—

Where dustweevils fight the air they zoom
sheepish desires or soughcomb for a kiss.

The Premiere can shine no more than this.

Note:

Touch Connors and Race Gentry: male starlets of the
1950s.

Fourth stanza: this image seems to have come from a
Dorothea Tanning painting.

POEM NOIR

(Braille Balls)

Angry at my wife I drove out to our
Cottage by the lake. Around 1 AM a March shower
Began to fall and when I went out on the porch
To see it I saw a young man lurch
Into the lake with all his clothes on. There
Was nobody else around, the other cottages were
Dark, as was mine. He kept walking straight out
And soon the water was over his head. I shout-
Ed but he obviously didn't hear. He was trying
To drown himself! So I swam out and grabbed him.

Sighing,

I resuscitated him. He lay on our bed
Smiling. Thanks a lot but no thanks, he said.
Then he convinced me that no matter what I did
He was going to commit suicide.
I had an idea: Does it make any difference how
You do it? I asked him. No, he replied,
What do you mean. Well, what about the electric

(I Want My Friends In Woody Lots, With French Toast
Up Their Nostrils)

Chair? Would you care if it was that? No,
He said. Well I'll send ten thousand dollars
To anyone you cite, if you'll kill my wife and
Go to the electric chair for it. Yes,
He said, I'll pretend to be a burglar, kill her, then get
Caught. Send the ten grand to N, who rejected me.

She'll

(no stanza break)

Feel sorrier then when I'm dead. He grinned. I
Said, Great. The next night I slipped
My wife 2 sleeping-pills then drove to my brother's
To try to establish an alibi but he got drunk,
Passed out so that was no go—damn.
When I got home I went right to my wife's room where
I found her snoring. What the hell, I said. Then
The phone rang. It was my brother,
He said someone had murdered our father. Father!
I said. A hectic day followed. Police, the tax
Lawyers, not to mention, my worthless alibi.
Finally that night I sat up late waiting for the guy

(Eel-tripled Eyes and Freezing Initials)

Who was supposed to murder my wife. The phone rang.
My
Brother had been killed! I was chief suspect
Since I inherited the family millions. Wake up, wake up,
I shook my wife, but the 3 sleeping-pills etcetera.
The police followed me all the next day
But I slipped them. They didn't know I was hitting all the
joints
To try and find that young drown man. We
Had a few things to discuss: That night
Down by the deserted docks we fought.
I was slugged into the river and I drowned.
No-one ever saw him. When they found
My body the coroner ruled suicide over remorse at my
terrible crimes.
He had done the murders but I got the blame.
My wife got all the money, and married him.

Note:

When I made the film of this poem I changed the ending: following Hitchcock's example in *Vertigo*, I added a flashback 2/3rds of the way through—in which the young drown man (Tab Hunter) reveals her husband's scheme to the wife (Dorothy Malone): they then plan the other murders; the conspiracy inspires them to sex of course. Later after the husband (Rex Reason) is arrested, rich soon-to-be-widow Dot jets off to Acapulco, up into a penthouse suite where Tab, who had earlier mysteriously vanished, welcomes her with open sheets and champagne to celebrate their successful plot . . . Next morning they breakfast on the sunny balcony overlooking a swimmingpool; she goes in to take a shower, she leaves him gazing down at 20 stories: she comes back naked with a turban towel on but he's nowhere there: she hears distant screams which draw her to the balcony railing where she leans over zoomshot to see his dark-robed body sprawled dead on the bottom of the pool below. Then she hears knocks and voices at the door: "It's the police, Mrs Reason . . . We have some questions for you." The End.

CONTINUOUS SHOWINGS

The days all drawn to December
can't remember their own
though every shopwindow offers
24 hour plus. It is precisely this
excess of time, its hyperhoopla
extolled by even the smallest streets,
its torturous emporia, tedium
temples that fly their boxoffice flag
higher each weekend, or towers
with clocks that would love to stick
their hands like neckticktockties
down into the traffic, that's the stuff
that stabs me in stride. No wonder

I run to take cover before the FX
kick in, witness en masse to those
of us who crouch in our pockets
trying to conceal the serial killer
zapcams we use to chop ourselves up
for camouflage, face snaps and shots
which hide us inside our wallets.
How beamingly we blend in with
our A-Z via the usual ID charade.

Isn't that me we quiz the sentry
who scans our cards with laser
razors while we bleed the answer,
fearing that most bandages lack
those panacea, those superpowers

(no stanza break)

evinced most and emblemized by
the youth-roles of film, the skilled
portrayals of its hero-informal mold.

It is the movies have made me old.
Looking up struck at the blankgaze
screen I see that I too must suffer
that knowledge which the brow
burrows beneath its furrows to show
the visible effort an idea creates
if nothing else. All else is else.

Surface the mind repeats as pure,
hear my TV mirrormode: I can always
remote a world's particulars, my
closeups can quell-control the quick
extinctions of your soul in oceanroll
or twig miniscule; lens can always
find a puddle to push around or
a forest to erase from a woodcut,
but Jan-to-Nov, now it's gone, no.

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