

Sean Labrador y Manzano

Zardo

Is there anything worse than to be
born in the Year of the Rat?
I have no use for volumes
of collective hubris. They are
not mine to begin with.
Other people wrote them.
Evidence of their existence
and not mine. Many are long
dead, of them most were
required and I was stiff-armed,
some were recommended,
a few were suggested
and each acknowledge
pedigree and lineage
to each other, or to each
other's mate or significant,
or to each other's cuckold
or mountainous coop,
or to each other's wayfarer
thought, or alien transmission,
a constellated pen horde
as if to say we can reoccur
simultaneously in each image
flushed from a soupy vor-text.
and all have lost relevance.
and all have lost relevance.
and all have lost relevance.
I say this to let go. But I am
the rat that I am. Om-ming
picayune mantra. Oh Sierra.
My library is a mausoleum
of verse, pages obfuscate
the mattress I sleep on.
A seminar paper hides
between sheets. Some idol's
confessional warmth keys
The Grand Piano. We
can not cliché the scholar's
bedside mannerism. Books
not bread fall out of place
and are down for pillows.
You smile because you have
been there. Slept there and
soundly.
The breathy rat-a-tat-tat.
Are you my peer rat? Or my

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pier rat that has scaled hawsers
boarding ship to port and
port to ship, avoiding the pack
and/or the Exterminator?
The novelty of not having
poetry in our midst! Oh to be
free. Alas . . .
Individuals are not made
by crude fashion. I have out-
grown the clothes in my closet.
Lucky for me not one polyester
shirt or bellbottom pants
redeem American Band Stand or
Soul Train. Cedar shirks
naphthalene. The decade's
true migraine.
I gave up stamps long ago.
So why do I shelve my albums
in full view with everything
else perforated collecting dust.
There is no future in postmarks.
And falsely I recall the many
pals overseas writing back
vigorously about Nixon
or the Shah. Sealing a fate
that tastes like envelope.
Letters *mischieve* rollick
reproduce. Perhaps named after
a Scotsman who spies for MI6 is
much worse. Such tenor
echoes a role I cannot fulfill.
My mother's infatuation
persuaded the priest. A pistol
at baptism. Blofeld be warned!
and your crime spree thru 6
or 7 movies. Who wants that
kind of spectre anyway?
She should have released me
to the world in the Tiger's year
because there's nothing overdue
like a good name to gum up.

Sean Labrador y Manzano's work has been published in
Leonard Cohen: You're Our Man, *Chain*, *Bay Poetics*,
and *The Best American Poetry 2004*. He is the poetry
editor of *Tea Party Magazine*. His column "Conversa-
tions at a Wartime Café" can be found at
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