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Terence Culleton

Crazy Rainey and the Broken Bird

I came upon a broken bird
down the path—I heard
its mate manic in a tree
but could not see.

Stepped back then, stepped away.
The sun broke up the grey.
A sudden light suffused the blue.
Off she flew.

Behind, the broken bird could see,
though unreflectingly,
heaven reflected in its eye:
wings and sky.

Unseeing, seeing—all unseen—
its bones would come to mean
twilight—or celestial day—
who could say?

Crazy Rainey's Delirium

This tree wrenched from its root,
sky of wilding snow,
bitch into everything, become

shadows—blow
through it wrenched from
the singing place of its fruit.

The moon's an old hoodlum
voodooing, destitute—
this night died years ago

and has returned, must, will refute
stupidity of lyre and lute—dumb
palavering owl hoots, slow

whistlings where branches thrum,
curse, crouching low,
and the heart itself is mute

forever, and no—no
way out, no way, but delirium:
this tree wrenched from its root.

Crazy Rainey and the Jesus Priest

She sat him in an Adirondack
facing out to sea.
She placed a cushion for his back
and poured him honey tea.

Later: up veranda, down,
then back—nor push, nor force—
touching, yes, his Jesus gown,
saying: *Yes, of course.*

Asking where was he ever when.
Him mumbling most a bit.
She: *Troubled? Kiss me, then.*
You can touch my tit.

Oh no!—he'd heard his mother's ghost,
heard every gargled word.
She: *What do you fear the most?*
He told her—so she heard:

Maybe I'm a Jesus-priest
no one wants to hear.
No one knows I'm here—at least
you do, Rainey dear.

A salt-drop stretched all down her face,
she sang a weep or two,
then gave him quite a tight embrace,
and pecked his cheeky-poo.

He fulminated in much fear,
but that was not the gist.

The gist was he'd been only *here*
and never—*ever*—kissed.

Crazy Rainey and Cuddle Bear

A Nietzschean sort of murmur
heard almost everywhere
pertained to an historic death:
the death of Cuddle Bear.

It set the world to murder,
brought Fire and Plague on all.
Even one day in July
snow began to fall

across America,
England, France, and Spain,
Dar Es Salaam, Mumbai—but not
in Crazy Rainey's brain.

She knew death was common
and Cuddle Bear'd been old,
sick with longing, much too cute
for this world, truth be told.

She pried the basement door,
she straggled down the stair,
and there among old boxes and
inventions found the bear.

Its fur was ticky-tacky,
its eyes were dark and hard.
She grabbed it and she brought it back
upstairs out in the yard.

She buried it in Zaratrustric parables.
The world gave ear enough to hear
her uber-syllables:

then turned its back to count
its profits graph by chart

as if there were in it a great
abyss, and not a heart.

Rainey added bye-byes
beneath the elmwood trees,
and then the sun burned through, the earth
warmed up by scant degrees.

Crazy Rainey and the Hanged Man

1. The Sky, The Earth

They'd hanged him upside down
as if he were a fish.
From his pocket guilder coins
cascaded sudden-ish.

Her face was at his crotch.
Her crotch was at his face,
he faced her crotch, but upside down—
and never an embrace.

All through his brain her song
shot like a shaft of air.
Twixt sky and earth he listened in
on her misshapen prayer.

2. Rainey's Prayer

*And you were Love—and Love is dead—
and so they put you in the ground,
stone but lonely at your head,
crumbs tossed on the mound.*

*Triumph didn't factor in
your cold bright eyes, your mountain heart.
Day, storm-cloud, black as sin—
beakered tight the bitter quart*

*I drink now—and never gone,
the tang of happiness and dread,
the taste of only you—at dawn
coins tossed on the bed.*

3. *The Eagle, the Snake, the Scorpion*

Between cerulean and dearth,
upon great humps of light,
eyeing glints and harbingers,
poppet-rags of blight . . .

Flick of the tongue, stick of the sting,
wheat combers cross a field
outside a city, and such dreams
as won't be healed

haul high the heart, the venomous
rapture of adoring,
penetrated unto death,
crisscross, strung up—soaring.

Terence Culleton, a Bucks County (Pennsylvania) poet laureate emeritus, has published three collections of narrative and lyric poems: *A Communion of Saints*, *Eternal Life*, and *A Tree and Gone*. His work has appeared in *Antiphon*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Eclectic Muse*, *Innisfree*, *Orbis*, *Raintown Review*, *Schuylkill Review Journal*, and elsewhere. His work has been nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize, and a number of his poems have been featured on NPR. Mr. Culleton describes the poems published in this issue of *Caveat Lector* as follows: “Crazy Rainey . . . is loosely based on W.B. Yeats’s Crazy Jane but perhaps crazier, living as she does as an alien in the post-Enlightenment world Yeats’ poems adumbrate Rainey’s craziness stems from the fact that, organically, she lives in a civilization, but, actually, in a system, the fatal difference being that the latter is something that is engineered, whereas the former is rooted in what used to be referred to as “inspiration,” which, of course, being inaccessible to system theory, can only manifest in the post-Enlightenment world as a species of insanity.”