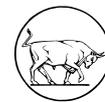


Justin Quinn

**SHALLOW
SEAS**



Gallery Books

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for Tereza

Elegy for a Werewolf

i.m. Ivan Martin Jirous

I can't believe the stylish, unbowed swagger
with which you passed through prisons in the '80s.

Marched round and slapped and hurled
about your cell, none of it troubled the great ease
you ranged in brazen rhyme over the world.

A kind of roughneck dandy, like Mick Jagger
howling in Hyde Park in 1969,
you flounced about the place.

But then went on your knees and made the sign
of the cross, in prayer, asking God for grace.

Then revolution. Freedom. The drunken stagger
of your late poems pointlessly down the page.

You'd sometimes flash your dick
in bars (which you thought wit), and strip on stage.
Jail kept your talent disciplined and quick.

But you were never going to play the makar
to your friend Havel in the Castle. Stalked
in those years by a shade,
a werewolf in your lines who scared and mocked
and drew you towards him, you saw the life you'd made.

Nickname: Crazy Asshole. (In Czech *Magor*.)
Calling: poet, saint, felon, misfit.

Rest easy underground,
who never rested easy over it.
Your rhymes sing clearer: death turned up the sound.

Hannah Wilke's Armpit Hair

Here's Hannah Wilke's armpit hair.
Observe its two black patches' boast —
Playboy-model stance — that grossed
I'd say a little change for her

but grossed out gazes, men like me
who sit there gawping in a row.
Pink and plucked, a little raw,
is what they thought they'd paid to see.

Instead they get the jettish tangles,
tang of salt, the strands unsmooth,
hairy beastie peepshow booth,
feminist working the man-angles

with stick-on scars of bubble gum
placed on her torso, soliciting
their want, 'You like? Is this your thing?
These stuck-up lips, they make you come?'

The same eyes stare out of the wreck
that cancer made of her sweet body,
full frontal, seated, all her beauty
now in the eyes that still would deck

a man for flinching where he'd lusted
oh once-upon-a-time. O tell me,
Hannah Wilke, brunette bombshell me —
for your clear SOS has lasted —

show us again the strands so loved,
before they turn to artshop lore.
O fuck with all our heads once more,
and tell us of the art you lived.

A Cappuccino for Robert Cremins

They are all still there. Say, 1988.
They pop out to Blackrock or Cornelscourt.
They are large in their world. The shopping cart
fills up with candy of mythic size and weight.

They are not weak. They can hear everything.
Pishogues still linger in their memory
and they do not quite believe technology.
Beneath their accent, different brogues still sing.

They are all clearly still there. Babies in prams
are not yet criminals or ministers
or both. On Sundays they say paternosters
and even married sex brings with it qualms.

We're twenty, but they have power: what they say
goes to show, oh, what we've long forgotten.
We can't shrink them just yet to Buster Keaton.
They suffer, but in ways that we can't see.

In all of Ireland there's only one café
that can make cappuccino. South Anne St.
Perhaps we sit there talking three hours straight,
still yet to cry and cry for these one day.

Elegy with Java Chip Frappé

*I was standing on the corner of Stroupežnický St, my back to the
synagogue, looking at a tree full of all the dust of August, and
past the tree to the crossroads at Angel, and past the crossroads to
Plzeň St, and past Plzeň St to Palacký Bridge. The evening was
still a long way off, the sun was scorching my back and the hot
air shimmered everywhere. In my pocket I had a pile of cash for
working overtime on Soviet hopper cars.*

— Jan Zábřana, 'A Pile of Cash'

I'm watching you from Starbucks across the street.
You've got a pile of cash and you seem happy.
Who would have thought a Java Chip frappé
would lie there hovering in the narrow strait,

the street that's only seventy years wide
that lies between us? Trams glide past as well
like alternating current, stopping a while
to make crowds surge and ebb on either side.

English, Russian: you spent your life between them.
'I'll die in falsified history,' you said.
My friend, where else is there to die? The dead
stack best in fake news or a national anthem.

The Java Chip frappé still in my hand,
I leave and follow you across the river
where there's a dreadful shithole you revere,
a kind of pub plus brothel, hotdog stand,

flophouse and rowdy tearoom all in one.
You're happy still and there's that pile of cash
still in your pocket. The last of the sunrays flash
across the river. Now for the night's fun.