

CHRISTMAS DUALITIES

The air is dark and feet of night
Are shod in boots of snow.
The trees are wearing starlight
Where the topmost branches show
A dim and distant fire,
The almost-phantom of a glow.

A puzzle of geometry:
Each turning flake is made
As soft as any eiderdown
But fashioned like a blade
With edge so sharp no branch
Should be unmangled in the glade.

What better time for Christmastide
And feelings it unlocks
Than when the very countryside
Seems caught in paradox.
If good Saint Nick is mostly elf,
The rest of him is fox.

—HUGH MOORE

"HAPPY HOLIDAYS"

If presumption is the problem,
And specificity is bad,
This pallid phrase can still offend:
What if the greeted person's sad?

—ROBERT CRAWFORD

GROUND ZERO

Whatever separates man from man
Be he black or white or red or tan,
Whatever his difference in origin...
Where does he end, or I begin...?
On a freezing day, huddled 'round a flame
Everyone looks pretty much the same.
Distinguishing marks seem to disappear.
All breath is white, all eyeballs tear.

—ALMA DENNY

A DISCOURSE ON LETTER-OPENING

My dearest, only dopes
open their envelopes
the way you do.
No knife, stiletto, cutter
plain violence it's utter
rips flaps, parts glue,
down thickest paper gambols,
leaving a jagged shambles;
and when you're through,
the thing thus indiscreetly
twisted fits nowhere neatly,
will not sit true,
impossible to file it.
That is why I revile it
and rage at you.

But there's O be advised!
a way more civilized.
I plead, I sue.
Armed with a scissors, fend off
chaos and cut one end off.
Clean still, like new
with fingers press it wide
and pull out what's inside.
No ballyhoo,
no fuss; when you thus grope,
it will, that envelope,
be happy too.
Believe what I'm revealing:
an envelope has feeling.
Believe or rue.

—RICHARD MOORE

MY FATHER WAS A STILTON CHEESE

My father was a Stilton cheese,
Blue-veined and sharp and fine.
Mum brought him from the cellar when
We'd company to dine.
Amongst we kids 'twas understood
We'd have a slice if we were good.

Fine cheese, at times, was hard to find;
It was extremely rare.
The best of families often went
Without such regal fare.
So father was our constant pride,
The envy of the countryside.

Whene'er some other lad at school
Would have the nerve to boast
His sire was claret or a dab
Of caviar on toast,
I'd bring the braggart to a stop
With mention of my dear old Pop.

One's birth is of importance,
People care how you begin.
I've been, of course, quite fortunate
For I'm accepted in
The finest of societies;
My father was a Stilton cheese.

—CAROL LEWIS

THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS (16)

I think I am going to start a new movement for the betterment of life on earth a movement of marvelous simplicity. Its aim and title are going to be, LET'S EVERYBODY STOP THINKING. After all, it's human intelligence which is very rapidly bringing about the end of life here on this planet in just a few decades after billions of years of evolution so to stop thinking is the obvious cure. Of course, this won't directly be possible. I try it with yoga every day. I can't make myself stop thinking, at least not for very long, and everybody I talk with has the same problem. So this difficulty leads to the alternative project: LET'S KILL ALL THE PEOPLE. This is much more practical, and we have already made a good start on it, especially in Palestine and Africa. And our wonderful President Bush seems to be doing everything he can to help.

—RICHARD MOORE

THE SKUNK

The skulking skunk's macadam black
With one white stripe along his back.
Were he a boulevard, unraveled,
He'd surely be the road less traveled.

—BOB MCKENTY

THE PARROT

The vivid parrot boasts a very
Colorful vocabulary.
(He learned the expletives he hurls
Listening to teenage girls.)

—BOB MCKENTY

VOYEUR

Watching city pigeons court
Is something of an outdoor sport.
She leads the way, the male pursues.
(I'd hate to be in pigeon's shoes,
They seem so pompously sedate.)
But if you're patient, and you wait,
They'll mate.

—RHODA BANDLER

Subscribe to Light Quarterly

If you wish to connect with a vital tradition, subscribe to the magazine USA TODAY described as “. . . much like The New Yorker without the annoying hubris.” Subscriptions are \$20 (four issues), \$32 (eight issues), \$34 International. Single copies \$6. Sample/back issues \$5 (Please indicate issue #, \$2 additional for each if mailed first class).

Send checks (drawn on a U.S. bank) to:

LIGHT
Box 7500
Chicago, Illinois 60680-7500

Or call toll-free (VISA or MASTERCARD): 1-800-285-4448.

You can also subscribe on the web at <http://www.lightquarterly.com/lightsubscribe.html>

Note

LIGHT's street address is:

Light Quarterly
1131 Central Ave, Ste 14
Wilmette, IL 60091

If you're not completely satisfied for any reason, we'll be happy to give you a full refund.