

WHICHEVER

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Originally published in 1978 by the Free Lance Press (Ohio).



2

all was near hush  
about the room:  
this was, I'm sure --  
moreover,  
they stored  
the gold --  
source of monetary systems:  
    they wove  
    the probabilities  
    for all time  
    every computer  
    spinning  
the uranium  
was kept there  
    the heavy  
    hydrogen

nerve gas

3

much in the sound of coughing  
upbroken of pieces, not organization --  
in a sudden of a laugh to a cough  
a whizz'd of ski, flying snow filaments  
the back hotels           fear them  
    there, men age to coughs,  
shifting alone in drears of beds  
and in their soiled underwear:  
a kind of truth about themselves hacking  
(no self-sacrificing wives about)

but summer parties, bright houses  
coughs may be deliberate there,  
    social --  
accidental too -- drink which slips  
from the gullet  
    show-like  
gargled fears down a path  
    unknown to me:  
in the by-ways of the throat  
    a mugging

AT NIGHT KEEP STILL

After-twelve darkly comes back full stop,  
    hush about slumberers.  
There's an accompanying negating  
    intelligence:





VIGIL: SEVENTY-EIGHT

1

the winter storm:  
Pale's extremed, shark fin's blank  
wanders its sheet through gloom'd snow:  
octopus'd whir bolds suddenly  
    -- ships of snow  
behold about surfaces! a white schooner  
open of aforesail, baffled to a frenzy!  
    when with up lo!  
a stark white submarine ominouses  
-- its conning tower  
horroring out of the squall  
    -- then its streak torpedo!  
a far off white freighter  
and a far white battleship  
all are struck there's blither  
and blizzard'd whoof!

2

the poltergeist of destructive hoar  
crackling at the windows pushing  
in the form of ice  
    -- lamps still out!  
Of brave as sentinels these lit  
of little guides pallor'd about  
nodding their affirmatives or pall'd no's.  
Suspended, they lead me,  
watching out with sharp antenna.  
They must deal with the enormous'd!  
The thing is in the house  
-- then pme nu pme ,u giode's scare up  
with a minture's wee shriek  
each falls stricken --

the temperature gasps,plunging!

3

Years chart of my mouth: such weeds hair!  
grizzled twitch about of burr beard  
set before in a mirror's glistening:  
(spectral'd shudder skillfully  
wizard'd in a tempest -- !)  
    worse aromas  
skulk'd from bowls cold in the bathroom.  
All's deteriorating rapidly,  
like souring laundry abound'd in bags

Chorale:

-- this glaucoma:  
only small but of hundreds up!  
Organ-like stark'd of chandelier,  
each awe of glister, bits of glare,  
a shimmering of prism'd -- stars  
more chimed with incidence!  
(The afar of all beyond this tempts me:  
grim luminous'd, sinister for travel,  
a blue gas, or mists ship  
out of realm -- out of bounds!)

The frored together -- now  
pale chandelier's organ vast of tinkling!  
its pipes ringing, its harmonies baffle!  
Sound fulls, an overwhelm of hollow  
-- it whirls into a flaming ice  
expand of flash, glistering tulip'd,  
or roses open of bright ---  
it is awake's dream alight!

ANOTHER BIRTHDAY

Several darkneses too early, back  
to cast aspersion, its given of years  
remorsed as a bill with its warden of dour  
now handed down as for a pick up  
of old goods, phonebooks, shreds of clothes,  
onetime grocery lists, changed addresses

Several darkneses too at home, back  
it seems, like unwelcome relatives, back  
more grey-hair'd with anxious'd

You, falsed by minutes and hours, are  
all the while, horroring with await  
six planets deep, ominouses with their effluvium!

the drears that shall be given me?  
what do do?

several darkneses too  
perfidiously late

several darkneses  
too monstrously early





the men sit            still:  
One talks to the other  
yeah, -- their eyes (--sure,  
we know what's up --)  
one feigns awhiled of sleep,  
one coughs quickly as a signal  
while the other holds --  
now!  
--watch their pockets,  
their hands are moving:  
one as for a cigarette  
and one as if finding  
matches  
          he reaches, reaches up  
falsely to pull the bell  
cord            East 55  
they leave the bus  
  
it makes no difference:  
four dark men board  
    -- laughing

APPARITION

I had come to rubbish everyplace,  
crush to corrupt    extraneous'd  
with wind in an avaunt!  
    (some resentment, repressed,  
      running saliva along the esophagus:  
      too nauseating with a suspended  
      sort of sensation in the stomach)

          Sudden'd  
out of bash blown about decay,  
a contortion        some amix legs  
onto which a wool shape  
-- as with chassis and all,  
ears of antenn'd orts --  
    dreadul'd!!!

it deadly'd growled rush  
overturning, smashing  
blunder and thud  
even skull'd against  
like some resentment  
taking shape  
with a --  
    a slur of smears?

dark everyplace    trash  
again but hushed and my breathing  
in and out like crazy

slowly, slowly  
    it all faded  
forlorn' d  
old bannisters    a coat,  
fragments of a car  
and legs of half  
a table  
    and just  
me, my legs

STEPMOTHERS:    GRIMM BROS. RE-VISITED

    it had been of a day  
when old tree limbs of about to fall  
did fall - when near broken  
    broke finally, when a diet  
seemed to have failed and hair  
won't comb right, or a headache  
    blunders about the brain when much  
to be done dares: there is, likewise,  
garbage's affrontery, or a  
    maintenance man  
is nowhere to be found as faucets  
loose their rinse percussively

whirled up the children's clothes  
    with a devil of ire  
that flung them short, her huff  
was not usual somehow -- one would  
    say of her: old youth,  
the hair a storm's careless, and her  
fingers through it made to drown  
    of them suddenly,  
the two children came all bounce,  
plump of chattered laughter

she flew at them with a hiss,  
    a dark pterodactyl of fierced  
-- the boy's shirt she drew tight,  
"You idiot! Noisy, dirty!"  
    her abrupt flung him to the floor  
"Get up -- take yourself off!"

    having married a bastard,  
a nobody, she set about cooking  
his food, to, with, of invective!  
    plunged the cherries from their can  
    with a curse, kneaded the dough  
as if she saw her spouse's head  
in hand, and with a bang at that,  
    pounded it flat



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Russell Atkins' published work covers thirty years. Printed in some of the best literary magazines of the forties and fifties -- Beloit Poetry Journal, View, New York Times Review, Voices Botteghe Oscure, Western Review plus many anthologies -- Atkins poetry continues to be among the most innovative and singular. He was awarded an honorary doctrate from Cleveland State University and has recently received a \$5000 Creative Writing Fellowship from the Ohio Arts Council. He plans to work on several unusual books of poems, an experimental poem-play plus a book of short piano pieces.

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