

Oh? I say.

When I go to the seashore in the fall
I read Thomas Mann's Death in Venice.

Um, I say.

In Paris I read Fitzgerald's Babylon Revisited.

Unhuh, I say.

When I visit friends at their country house,
it's Saki's The Open Window ...

I call the bartender & order another round,
having this weird feeling
that maybe we have met before.

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MIDDLEING

She replies to a mid-life query
with what she considers wifely support:

"I think the gray in your beard," she says,
"makes you look more sexy as a poet."

I refrain from telling her a secret:
that for as long as I can remember
sex has been my chief interest
with poetry taking second;

so, although her reply to my question was nice,
just more sexy would have been nicer.

THE DECLINE OF A WEST

Early on I was enthralled by Ivanhoe
& the other novels of Sir Walter Scott,
the stories & poetry of R. L. Stevenson & Poe,
the pictorial magic
of illustrators like Arthur Rackham
& the joys of playing baseball fairly well,

then upon reaching manhood I became
enamored of Hemingway,
F. Scott, Hammett's The Maltese Falcon,
James M. Cain, Camus, Céline,
Dostoevsky, The Ring of the Nibelungs,
Böcklin's paintings,

the German Expressionists,
later on, Eliot & Pound
& the metaphysics of the game of baseball,

but now, I'm content
to dissect the poesy
in such lit mags as The Velvet Mouse Trap,
the great athletic fiction
of The Racing Form
& indulge myself in the abtruse art
of the Sunday Funnies.

— Richard M. West

Bainbridge Island WA

SEEMS TO ME

I'm having a hard time keeping the car
between the lines
and I don't care, and somebody
is going to buy one and I hope
it isn't me.

"You know, you're all over the fucking place,"
she says.
And she's right too, I am.
I turn on the radio to drown her out.

I don't know why I'm still with her.
Maybe it's because of her criminal record
and her fine taste in automobiles.

FIX

Driving down the road in a 20k car, girl
at my side
doing in beer after beer, thinking
what did I ever do to deserve such luxury? It wasn't
long ago
I was thinking of joining the Peace Corp, thought
myself a poet.
Now
I sponsor 2 poor kids from the Philippines for
32 bucks a month, and
it's enough to get me by.

— Matthew Boylan

Bayonne NJ