

The Rat

The rat is a toy of social science
who plays the fool in aping us.
See how he runs in crowded cage,
extra males dropping out,
ganging up — theft, murder, rape,
promiscuous androgyny, short lives,
bad hearts. See the females run free,
glands gone blind from too much light,
always in heat or pregnant, nursing less
and less with each new litter,
getting to like the taste of the young.
What can they do but run and screw,
grow fat and lazy and sexy and weak
when all their sustenance comes through
the bars at the touch of an idiot lever?
It is of no import whatever
that death comes one way or another.
Meaning is anthropoid vanity —
a fragment, a figment, a fiction,
a luxury as outdated as destiny
or faith. This world picks up speed
as it goes, earthquake to famine,
drought storm and flood to war,
biocide herbicide infanticide
ozone layer collapsing, red air
black tides radioactive milk.
Where can beauty go when the world
rots but into her very sores?
I sing the tonsured mountaintop,
drugged soil, subdivided valley.
I sing the pale armies of cancer
maneuvering in lungs and cervices
throughout the body cataleptic.
I sing the madness of the democratic
ideal, the high standard of dying,
the jogging stupidity of the race,
the absurdity in the first place.