Three Poems

Ross Runfola

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The Poetry Collection is proud to celebrate National Poetry Month with this publication of Ross Runfola's *Three Poems*, the fourth in a yearly series featuring the work of poets living in Buffalo.

2009 Bernhard Frank
2010 Ansie Baird
2011 Jorge Guitart

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Cover: Aubrey Beardsley, "Remorse (Man walking over buried skeleton)," from the Poetry Collection's copy of *Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: H. S. Nichols, 1920).

BORED GAMES

I watch old men playing chess in the park
carefully measuring every move

The blonde in the tight fitting sweater
struggling with the New York Times crossword puzzle

Little children crying out in frustration
trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle

every day is a puzzle to me
why torture myself with games?

When I won at chess for the first time
The guy in the park who talked to himself
Knocked the chess pieces down and broke my jaw
When I played pool at Flynn's Golden Dollar Café
The pimp with the red felt hat pulled a gun on me.

People who are not struggling in life play games
All I want is a meal and a chance to fill the rest of the day.

MAGIC GLASS

Nothing unusual about the man on the bar stool next to me
A work shirt with mud on the left sleeve
Glasses with huge frames that were never fashionable
Yellow fingers from smoking too many cigarettes
A pair of well worn black Harley Davidson boots
A raspy smoker's cough
Staring in his beer glass for almost an hour
As if it is a crystal ball
Is he pondering the existence of God
Bemoaning the end of a relationship
Being laid off from a job
Thinking about his son in Iraq
Or
Is he pissed off because his beer is flat?

THE DOG WALKERS CLUB

I'm not much for dogs
Not that I have anything against dogs
It's their owners I despise
When I walk Zelig every morning
Men with bedroom slippers
And football sweatshirts
All give me the same secret greeting
In the winter–"Cold enough for you."
In the summer–"Hot enough for you."
When it rains–"Looks like it's going to be a wet one."

The dog walkers want me in their club so badly
They keep trying, always knowing the same secret words
For possible members of the club
Some mornings when they say the same sorry ass greetings
Like "it's a great day for walking the dog, ain't it."
I shout, "No. I'd rather be in bed screwing, wouldn't you?"

That stops them, but only for short periods of time
This scintillating morning conversation is wearing me down
It's only a question of time before I have to join the club
But it's true about a dog being a man's best friend
Zelig saves me from having to join the dog walkers club.

One spring day he starts humping the head dog walker's leg
"He likes you." I say
Then Zelig sniffs a dog walker's crotch
Then another
Then a sniff and a hump combination to the bearded one
"Don't be afraid, you remind Zelig of his father," I shout
As he makes a hasty retreat

Even when Zelig doesn't need to go for a walk
We hunt down dog walkers
The dog walkers run whenever they see Zelig and me
Humping and sniffing
Sniffing and humping
We are finally the masters of our own destiny.

About Ross Runfola

Dr. Ross T. Runfola is a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and a *Phi Beta Kappa* and *summa cum laude* graduate of the University at Buffalo, where he also earned his JD and PhD degrees. He has done postgraduate work at Oxford University in England and has been selected to every Who's Who he is eligible for including Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Law, and Who's Who in American Education. He has acted in films and plays and published academic and popular articles, including a *New York Times* piece selected by the nation's sports editors as the best sports article published by any American newspaper or magazine. He has also been honored many times for his charity work, including the United Way's Community Hero Award. Although he has written in every medium, Runfola rejected writing poetry until he discovered his muse, Charles Bukowski. After winning the Greater Buffalo Oral Poetry Slam, he started writing poetry in the Bukowski genre. His hundreds of poetry publications include appearances in Bottle of Smoke Press, for which he was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in poetry; *Bukowski Review*; *Pearl*; *Microbe*; and *X-Ray Press*. He was also selected for membership in the National Guerilla Poetics Project.

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the poet.

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