

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Keith Moul

A CRACK IN THE WORLD

1

Notice a tough stalk growing low
to the ground, elastic, always feeling
for attainable space: an animal rose, called pete,
albeit not blessed with appealing scent.
Forgive such a rose its cruel sport.

Pete Rose.

Despise but never shun his name!

Know this: Rose' stats cannot be stricken:
4256 hits, seamless hand/eye mechanics,
a lifetime of 200 hit spectaculars, a career
of piston legs churning blood from a singular heart,
yet, they say shut the door to baseball's Hall of Fame.

Pete Rose.

This name engenders our collective shame.

2

How know a Hall of Fame?

Know to honor conformists to canons
of integrity in sport? This is no right.

Know to honor relative achievements
earlier adored while blind to futures?
Adoration without prescience? This is no right.

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Know to honor chicks at their life struggle
to crack their world and emerge yellow fluff
in dust and light, ready to risk collision at home,
ready for, maybe wanting, a Ray Fosse minute,
every minute an act of war. This is no right.

3

A run scored at an umpire's feet, hat lost, hair shivered
in electric shock, fans thundering confession, dignifies life.

4

Know the streets of Paris, London or Florence, walk
the Louvre, linger at the Tate, or surrender to the Uffizi:
know the Cooperstown hills, walk Doubleday Field,
sit at the Babe's locker, heft with sinew Wagner's bat.

Pete Rose entered baseball's Hall first in 1963, flashing
to his first double, knowing that no worldly barrier
could keep him from scoring his first run in a first win,
then, never failing in this love, hustling for 2164 more runs,
hundreds more wins, through 24 evocative seasons, every one
hailed on voices lifted in anthems of baseball's collective redemption.

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JOURNAL: RALPH L. MOUL, ELECTRICIAN MATE 2ND CLASS, U.S.S. LEXINGTON 3/3-8/23/1944.

June 25, 1944: "This afternoon we launched an attack on Guam, 13 ton bombs, delayed action. At least half of them are supposed to go off tomorrow afternoon."

DEATH'S BALANCING ACT

Rolling on a moderate summer sea, a sailor must anticipate reports of new intelligence, thus new courses into identical seas; surprise attacks from subs or fighters; and delayed eruptions on Guam.

There they sit, scattered thirteen tons of obtrusive destructive power, perhaps objects of Japanese curiosity, "duds" perhaps, subjects of soldiers' conversation on their fish, sake and laughter breaks.

So few hours tip the balance, time wasted with boredom, time consumed with special duties counting supplies, time spent reconnoitering beaches to stroll or defend against landings, time as the fulcrum that balances slow life and fast death.

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INTERIOR DESIGN

My advice is:

exercise calms the mind;

go to your quietest room;
place a hand-wound clock
that ticks so to muffle
your beating heart
and ebbing breath.

This clock drums the tock of contradiction.

Discover there is no calm in you:
agitate contradictions in every thought.

I further advise

that my first advice is unlikely to work;
that you get used to agitation;
that you be ready to grow old with it;
that you blend the décor with it
until the room, in times repeated,
compels your schizophrenia,
yet welcomes you both home.