

The Lust of Unsentimental Waters

Also by Rosa Alcalá

Undocumentaries

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The Lust of
Unsentimental Waters

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Everything hung on the point of being lost.

—William Carlos Williams,

from *In the American Grain*

The Thing

after Steiner

The thing becomes the thing
because of some speaking habit:
a moment of evolution
that coincides with the digging
of holes and proper burials
When we see who we are to each other
we are social,
but what we see, primitive
Monkeys cannot lie because they can't
imagine the not-occurred,
or more so, the not-witnessed
We name
the body of designations:
we arrive at each other
and claim discovery
The root of my language is said
a forgery when another's house
is built bigger
and in proximity
The problem with chasing invention
is the wheel is its own perfect critic
To be the small dog tethered to the wagon
of some frontier
can only mean exhaustion

The Sixth Avenue Go-Go Lounge

breaks
 down
 the language
 of sentiment

and the girl who
speaks
a fluent you
rubs
a little sense
into your lap

four bucks later
you think you've
made some progress —

subjectivity
finally *means* something

Outside
El Bombero wears a paper thin nightgown
once belonging to his wife

and tries to kill Paulie
with an axe handle

*Can't blame
everything on
paint fumes
you little fuck*

You can't get up for this sort of thing *every* time

And cut rate
like blow jobs
behind
Union Dye
&
Frost Kwik
the Sixth Avenue Go-Go Lounge
is not
post industrial
post colonial
post modern

it's no sadder
than most things

it's not a text
to be *read*

(Hey

No European Sports—

READ

THE

SIGN.)

perhaps
dancer to drinker
ratio
suggests

the inflated
economy
of migration

or memory

You cheap bastard

Paulie, half-
blind
and
a smashed thumb
says

*I'll can make you that
But it won't taste
like you remember*

The Sixth Avenue Go-Go Lounge
making no apologies
for your future
problems,

Package Goods.
Open Christmas Day.

Me(tro)polis

So go my tongue
a robot atop
the shoulders

of fury, making men
proud to drown
their own

sons. One lid
fluttering and one
hand digging

the waist
of unreflective mean-
ness.

Because party
fervor rides
on a little

infiltration.
A bit of dis-
guise.

Rita Hayworth: Double Agent

In the follicles sits a dangerously coiled
and coarse nature, from which the genus

springs. So the body's genius
zapped with a year's worth

of electrolysis. She becomes
a G.I.'s dream by moving the border

that frames the face, by deflowering the name
and firing the island extra

who made the dance number
a risk. Still, after ions have cooled,

they invent helpless swine
to be rendered ("Good evening, Mr. Farrell,

you're looking very beautiful.")
at the spit. Or place her

at the ticket booth of a Chinese theatre,
speaking perfect Mandarin. So

much of her choreographed
or dubbed, winking at you

through a ruffled excess. But what's more natural
to a bilingual girl from Brooklyn

than to mouth her country's script? Or insinuate
herself into its defenses?

She throws her head back, and on a long
black glove slowly tugs: “Mame did a dance

called the kichee-coo. That’s the thing
that slew McGrew.” And though

it’s Gilda we want to bed, we catch a glimpse
of something familiar from behind a curtain

of hair. It’s Margarita Cansino as the song
ends and the striptease continues. We volunteer

to lend a hand when she confesses, “I’m not
very good at zippers.”

Inflection

There is a terrible wind
that shifts the tender insides
of your name,
when spoken
by your lover
who proud
of his practiced trill
extends it
beyond natural borders.

And the dust that
confuses countries
is in your eyes, and you
blink, and you blink,
and you blink.