

Disclaimer

Bob Holman

We begin each SLAM! with a Disclaimer:

As Dr. Willie used to say,
We are gathered here today
because we are not gathered
somewhere else today, and
we don't know what we're doing
so you do – the Purpose of SLAM!
being to fill your hungry ears
with Nutritious Sound/Meaning Constructs,
Space Shots into Consciousness
known hereafter as Poems, and
not to provide a Last Toehold
for Dying Free Enterprise Fuck 'em
for a Buck'em Capitalism'em. We disdain
competition and its ally war
and are fighting for our lives
and the spinning
of poetry's cocoon of action
in your dailiness. We refuse
to meld the contradictions but
will always walk the razor
for your love. "The best poet
always loses" is no truism of SLAM!
but is something for you
to take home with you like an image
of a giant condor leering over
a salty rock. Yes, we must destroy
ourselves in the constant
reformation that is this very moment,
and propel you to write the poems
as the poets read them, urge you
to rate the judges as they trudge
to their solitary and lonely numbers,
and bid you dance or die between sets.

The Secret Explanation of Where Poems Come From

Allan Wolf

If ever you are in the room with those
Lost in a reverie of poetry,
And struggling to guide their thoughts, they close
Their seeking eyes to help them better see;
If ever you have watched a poet's face
Composing line within a world inside
A world inside some private self-embrace
No other soul can witness nor divide;
Then you are not alone in wond'ring, "Where,
While all their flesh and blood on Earth remains,
Do poets take their thoughts before they bare
Them back transformed? Where is a poem's domain?"
This verse will not reveal from whence it came,
And poets – they write poems to explain.

The Fatman

Daniel S. Solis

SEEEEEEE THE FAT MAN! FAT ALBERT!
THE FATTEST HUMAN ON EARTH!
walking down the midway with Vicky
to the clank roll and thunder
of the giant ride machinery
hidden behind stretched
once bright now fading canvas
lights lock bars
cheap speakers blaring cheap pop hits
coupons asphalt
and lines for rides like the Himalayan, wild mouse,
black widow, caterpillar, tilt-a-whirl, bubble bounce
presided over by road weathered men
tattooed slack with boredom
cigarettes dangling from indifferent lips
and Vicki says,

“Let’s go to the freak show!”

we go to the one where
for a certain number of coupons
you get to view a variety of freaks
more freaks per dollar
what a bargain

I have forgotten most of what I saw
in that shadowy tent that day
there was a black man called Popeye
who could make his eyes bulge way out of their sockets
a couple of listless pygmy goats
and Fat Albert,
not black like the cartoon Fat Albert,
surprisingly not eating,
just sitting and watching TV
the barker led the crowd from freak to freak to freak
giving the spiel
and each one did their little freak dance

then it was Albert’s turn
the barker talked about how many pounds of bacon and dozens of eggs and
biscuits Fat Albert had for breakfast
then Albert gobbled Twinkies for the crowd
then pushed the play button on a cheap cassette deck
Little Richard tinny howling
“AW Rudy! Tutti Frutti!”
and Albert began to swing his enormous gut from side to side
bulbous fat filled pendulum pushing open
his shirt’s bottom button exposing a fish white triangle of skin
and as the crowd laughed
I looked into the eyes of this man
this Fat Albert
and saw something less than hollow
like negative space
his mind was somewhere else
dreaming of not even god knows what...

Slim beautiful women?

a sun-filled road he walked as a child?
Porterhouse rare, salad
and stuffed baked potato?
a Gilligan’s Island rerun?
the cool hands of his mother on his forehead?
and he caught me looking
and flashed silent anger
“Get out my eyes you sonofabitch!”
and I did
I did

Then Vicki and I
tumbled back out onto the blue skied
autumn streaked midway
and we talked about stealing
that is, “liberating”
the pygmy goats to a hippie farm
but that’s another story

and later that night
playing percussion with a reggae funk band
pounding the congas
guzzling Guinness stout
drumming harder than usual
drinking faster than usual
I could not drink or drum
Fat Albert’s eyes or the crowd laughter
out of my head
could not shake the thought
that I was a part of a so-called civilization
that lived off
and laughed at
and sucked on loneliness

and I played so hard my fingers split open
like they hadn’t in years
and I wrapped my bloody swollen digits
around a fresh one icy cold
drained in two pulls on my way
to the dressing room where I burst in

grabbed our drummer David by his jacket
pulled him toward me and said,
“Look, man! If I go crazy and start smashing shit,
and they come and take me away, tell everybody
it wasn’t the Guinness, it wasn’t the Guinness!
It was the Fat Man!”

America (It’s Gotta Be the Cheese)

Eitan Kadosh

Everybody writes about America
And everybody paints America
Because from Jasper Johns to Allen Ginsberg
They are all looking for the same thing
Searching for the real America
The one that lies under the costumes and the war paint
that lies under the Seinfeld and Springer
under the bad porn and good basketball

And I am no exception
Except that one night, late last week
I actually found it, this elusive America—in the dairy case at
Andronico’s market
Lurking beside the jacks and the cheddars, the goudas, swisses,
stiltons, jarlsbergs, gorgonzolas, whole parmesan, ricottas, and
myriad other imported and domestic cheeses
There—it beckoned suddenly
An immaculately wrapped unbelievably orange package of
American Pasteurized Process Cheese food glory
God bless this country

We pasteurized
We processed
We manipulated this cheese until it suited our purposes
This was engineered cheese
This was the scientific method at work—Ionas Salk Albert
Einstein Copernicus

This was smooth no lumps when melted technology at work—
the lightbulb phonograph model T radio television internet
Nike Air rolled into one
And all for \$1.99

I was so moved I broke into the Pledge of Allegiance right there
and then
I bought Charleton Heston’s autobiography
Became a Daughter of the American Revolution

Oh god how I long to be wrapped in golden singles of American
Cheese
Drizzled with its salty goodness

Oh god put me in a sauna so that the cheese will melt and when
it does it will melt evenly over every square inch of my body
Rivulets of warm cheese will run down my face like tropical rain
caress my body with the lasting wetness of a mouth
Oh god
Take me
Take me and dip me like fondue into your vat of silken
American cheese food products scoop in on to me like a nacho
and let it cool like a second skin oh god cheese food I will use it
for everything

For breakfast melted on an English muffin for lunch in a
sandwich with processed lunch meat processed salad spread on
processed white bread for dinner obliterating my broccoli at bed
on my toothbrush so my breath will be cheesy American fresh in
the morning I will gargle with it and wash my face with a
congealed vat of the stuff I keep on my sink and smear on like
Noxema
I will cook my girlfriend romantic dinners in which every course
will consciously and creatively utilize and emphasize our most
holy of sacraments and when the dinner is over and we hit the
sack I will have a new lubricant—fuck KY!—I’ll have a tube of
Velveeta for when the going gets rough
Because it’s gotta be the cheese

America land of the free—it’s gotta be the cheese