

SALE OR RETURN

*Poem Written on a Silver Trashcan under
Soft Violet Light*

We are all here on sale or return
consignment the Americans say
waiting to be cashed in
the moment the death exchange
 loses interest
on our various performances
The price of art hoarded in museums
rises in proportion
to the fall of truth on the world market
& today, as winters grow longer
extending their tentacles farther & farther
 south
the bears are surely stalking
 the sacred bull
 to whom all Wisemen
kneel on their rugs & loudly pray

At Art Something on the Herengracht
where rich slave traders built their homes
stuck Negro heads over bold doors
to boast their profession
 thick books fail to open
& stranded photographs offer themselves
 like high-class whores
 at \$250 a blank & white page
Can any of this really matter
 I ask in another lost poem
when the Emperor Piero sits in a Parisian
madhouse waiting to go insane?
The lawyers are wrangling
the French authorities insist on a cure
 for poetic vision
& Aldo Piromalli continues to write
in Dutch & Italian
leaving his chapbooks on deposit
between shuttles of bedpans filled
not w/ urine
 but ancestral rage against
 mortality

From across the room I hear deadpan voices
projected on mirrors
& the echo of a cold silence descending

into the waiting arms of a heartless canal
Does anyone care?
Should anyone even want to care?
In the Amsterdam telephone directory
there are two guys named Woods
 but I am not among them
When you come to collect
they tell you nothing has been sold
& in their eyes
you see that the trains to Auschwitz
 are still running
commanded by stern men w/ empty faces
& thin notebooks bound in gypsy leather
who will never pay cash for anything
whose thighs they can't open
 or backs put to work for them
But standing here on the half-empty stage
my heart trembles with cynical joy
 & looks the audience dead in the abdomen
We have already made them pay
and all this they will someday store away
 & call Art
and we die or go mad for
is merely our way of giving back
the right amount of change

SOLD to the man in the blue overcoat
 & sweaty eyebrows
to the woman in mink who never had an orgasm
the child laboring its way thru the bane
 of childhood
into the coalmines of total bureaucracy
From now on I will write only in the Persian
 tense
decline all verbs indicative of the future
& call in my literary bonds before they fall due.

EDDIE WOODS