

## 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