

Ordinary and Profane Poems

Ronald Wilcox

1. Cosmic Soup

Did you know everything all happened in one split microsecond after a cosmic pea exploded in a perfect vacuum? I will avoid the observation that all things we can observe therefore come from split pea soup much like Darwin concluded *we* did, (he seemed to think of us as primordial succotash), for that would be a cheap shot unworthy of the level of poetic insight I am attempting to attain but it is as true as true can be according to *Discover* magazine.

I am now going to describe the process going on all about us that we don't seem to notice or really give a poot about. First of all, there's no way to think of this subject so forget it unless you are a mathematical genius. You're just dreaming if you think you have it hooked like a rainbow trout, which is the nearest comparison to universal truth I can come to in lieu of quantum physics so let's be clear about it:

If you can drop a dry fly upon just the right spot and a rainbow snaps it leaping up out of the water and for a split second everything is being created like a scythe of light up from God's hand flashes, slashes the surface in myriad planes of iridescence, while the trout hovers an afterimage in the center

of your mind forever exploding like the first burst
of your being radiated outward cosmos upon
cosmos, then there's nothing I can tell you about
Creation in an instant because you've already seen
it for yourself.

2. Hyper-trout

I kicked myself as a dumb kid because I didn't
know trout fight for their lives before they arrive
on your plate any more than I knew we
implausibly do what rabbits do, but I knew at nine
I was learning fast, being primed by my life among
adults: *I just needed the right words!*

The first time I saw a cutthroat caught, Uncle Ken
had hooked him, fly-rod bent double as a wet
branch. I at the edge of a narrow stream viewed
the struggle though tangles & limbs & leaves in
sharp tableaux. I projected my senses inside the
bright fighting trout as he leaped and dove and
spun a thrashing web of nylon line cutting knives
of light into the stream. This was serious business,
not a game of love where the winner leaps the net
to shake the loser's hand. Uncle Ken meant to eat
him & the cutthroat knew it.

Finally, in the bend of his weight, the trout gave in.
Taken from the net it took to subdue his
movements, he struggled against the finger in his
gill & the hand that held him up to the light &

bragged of his size. Proud as a little god quelled in tranquility he let the gravity take him where he had never been in days of sheening underwater blue weightless splendor. He hung in Uncle Ken's hand unwilling as a stolen piece of heaven in a painting by one of the masters.

It seemed his gleaming scales glared like sullen eyes, the bright slash of red at his throat like a war medal. As it hung limpish and pinkish with no more to say, I realized kindly Uncle Ken had conquered him like slicing a king's tongue from the whispering stream. He smacked its head with the hilt of his hunting knife, tossed it into a wicker basket with the other dead fish.

I could never understand their pride, both of the trout and the man who had deceived him, for I knew then the trout was proud he slipped seemly as Narcissus back into the stream in my mind where he still swims. A net would scoop through the free running stream and he would struggle inside *waterlessness* even as we in limbic systems struggle in networks of nerves & veins & arteries & instincts we don't understand, foregone conclusions foregoing the logic of trout, for if Nature has a forethought, it is a cutthroat trout.

3. Tying Flies

My eldest brother, Irv, seventeen years my senior, I being thirteen at the time, taught me the mysteries of rainbow trout, how they hide in the inner places you might not expect in a million years where the dark currents swirl as they meet beneath surfaces brimming with quick little mirrors of themselves, how their eyes are alive with bright sights of you looking for them and to deceive them is illusion.

To catch them you must believe the same thing, that what you offer is real as your own life and then they may believe you and accept the barb. It seemed to me a deep agreement to die together, they at the end of your imagination, you with them beginning to absorb your own death. My brother Irv told me as man to man, Ronnie, if you want to feed on Rainbows or Cutthroats (also known as Natives) you must outwit them.

Tying your own flies is the key to everything. He told me to take a naked hook size eight or so, fix it sideways in the jaws of a clamp. There are two types of flies to consider making: wet or dry. Wet flies sink under the surface, dry flies float. I learned from Irv and took it from there myself, looked up various flies with all kinds of hackles, & tufts of feathers plucked from roosters' necks, intertwined all kinds of makeshift hair & fur.

I'd weave these with ease winding my threads to
prick at a lip and lick the pinched cheek of a
cutthroat; yet for the radiant rainbow I'd look up
exotic names: August Dun & Allerton, Brown
Adder & Black June, Beaverkill & Bluebottle,
Cinnamon & Royal Coachman, Cahill & Cow
Dung & Deer Fly & Dorset, Green Drake &
Golden-eyed Gauze Wing.

I'd be specific with Peacock & Iron-blue Dun,
Neversink & Orange Black, the Scarlet Ibis wound
blood red as a slap of bloated mosquito. Lady of
the Lake I'd make out-of-focus weave unlike
Jenny Spinner with a speck of discontent. A
Soldier Gnat I'd spin to pluck its little lyre & twist
a last kiss of Judas in a burst of cold fire!

[4. Unto the Watery Breach](#)

Oh I was gladiator now and invented my own
green sparks, purple burrs, splintered peacock,
wrapped silk of liquid ivory, pied with tiny eyes.
I'd speck the eddies in swift waters and riffles with
firecracker colors caught like still shots, the killing
flies like freeze frames of a tiny fireworks display
to the eyes of amazed trout.

Irv told me my odd inventions would confuse Utah
fish whose brains are so dull they don't really feel
pain when you yank them by the lip. Secretly I
never believed this. Nevertheless, I'd roll my

invisible thread of nylon line across the surface of a stream or deep lake swirling with the sputtering hits of trout like images in your mind as you try to find the exact word.

Writing poems is not unlike dry or wet skimming & dipping skillfully the depths, teasing your brain into snapping at insights, tricky ideas you tie yourself, barbed with killing truths you do not guess until you hook them upon alluring lies. You must expect success adrift the sky with each whipcast allowed as you break the water surface like a crystal dish into splinters, multiple glimpses tricked by appetite, a speck of a trick beckoned by dread and blink of wire sweet as courtesy to nettle the tongue in sweet seeming like flattery uncoiled.

Dangerous business this, fly-fishing and poetry. You always risk the poem will slip off the hook and dive deep back into its freedom. When that happens you can kiss your song goodbye, dine on beans instead of flakes of white manna, stand dumbly as an Israelite surprised to find his breakfast of pure white flashes vanished. Floating snowflakes melt but dead fish stink when unruly rainbow trout fall from the sky to those who don't know how to clean them properly or at least attempt an explanation.

5. Fireworks

I must warn you: to attempt to fly-fish or write poems, your disordered tortured thoughts will flit about you like a mini-fireworks show, each bursting with a feathered barb that kills.

Albeit and wherefore I'm in a warning mode I need say the foregoing was really prelude to what I don't want to talk about but must. Whereas I cannot find my words, I'm looking.

I play with rabbits or go fish for trout like a stream-side Grizzly all growls and grimaces. I wait to transmute pain into beauty as she the she-bear waits to transmute beauty into pain.

I say *she* not because of political correctness nor gender entrapments of my own devising, but because words sound like a slap of claws when I'm cranky at sights beyond my reach.

I clench two empty fists and I grind my jaws at night as I sit in my easy-boy chair and try to dream myself into being by flying blind with the most daring flashes of imagination.

Searching for creatures to realize my haze, I've likened trout to the instant when everything blew into being with a big assist by God and the big bang and that's just the beginning of persistence.

Poets are brothers of rainbows and cutthroats.