

MONTY REID

From *PATOIS*

1. PATHETIC FALLACY

fallacy: from Latin fallacia, Greek fellatio
to give head, says

John Ruskin in *Modern Painters*
Vol 3, Part IV

Noting the
“...rolling foam, the cruel crawling
foam...”

we sat on a windy terrace with a jug
of sangria and watched the wrong-headed
waves lurch towards the beach, stubborn
against the breakwater, breaking
over, across the paseo

where an old man stood, hands in his pants
he came up to me on the beach one day
you said, he smelt like salt, like
the air in the fishmarket, and
touched me, here, I didn't think
anyone would do that, not right there
on the beach, anyway

and what do I know
about bliss, being rubbed by old men
in the markets
my arms full of peppers
once he followed me right to the front
of our apartment, you were reading
on the balcony and didn't notice
and I was so scared I couldn't have screamed
even if I wanted to, my
mouthy so dry nothing would come out

and that painter up in Mijos, who
did those fake primitives, who wanted us
to send nude pictures of ourselves, so he

2. MINT PATTIES

Because I was bored and 30 and had
nothing to write about I ate the whole box of mint patties.

Then I said it must have been the kids
I don't even like mint patties.

These were lying around
since Christmas, one of those perfunctory gifts that get
stacked in the cupboard if you don't eat them right away.

It felt like plums in the icebox, tho how a grown man could be
so coy, so self-indulgent as to make a point
about telling everyone makes me wonder
what kind of a relationship is that.

I ate the mint patties ok ok
they were cool and firm but you weren't
saving them, nobody was saving them, nobody
at all was interested in the mint patties
except to make them into another aspect of guilt
to invent something they could have been used for.

I was bored and 30 and
had nothing to write about except guilt
and want to refuse that.

I am not guilty
of anything, although I did take the mint patties
from the kitchen cupboard

you would not
even have known if I hadn't told you, just
like that quack with the plums.

You see
how it turns on you, complicates you
but
not even that is available, there's nothing
for you to worry about, nobody here likes mint patties
you'll never miss them, in all their simplicity.

Just as the woman who said to the doctor, knowing
perfectly well that the plums were gone

said kiss me

I still can taste the juice
on your mouth.

3. SPATHE

there is no pure idea, no
abstract hand to curl around you
as the broad leaf shelters
its own flower.

the plants
are dying. I water them
and water them but without you
they are nothing.

these old
spas of the heart should be full
of verdure. ferns. the tongue
spawns its own color.

4. PATHOS

The dentist was lousy. I still dream about
steel in my mouth, about bone and root
separating, about gauze pads heavy with blood

didn't you recommend him, didn't you tell me he was
good? he just took one look
and said well, that'll have to come out

and then the first time he froze me it
didn't take and I had to tell him look
give me another needle—, I can still

feel something
so yeah, you started it
all the interrupted dreams

the sex that gets used
just as distraction, to stop up the pain.
I sleep with my mouth full

of hands, dentists and their hygienists, hoses
drills, needles, and in another room
so my restlessness doesn't wake you

even tho you're the woman who could sleep
through anything, except
somebody else's discomfort

not with words, but with a practice
of the world, like dentistry, and hurt
pride.

And then I forgot I was covered
by your dental plan and filled out
the wrong forms

so had to go back the next day
and they thought I was coming back
to complain but

all I had to do was give them
your name.

5. PAT ANSWERS

My name is probably imitative, from striking gently with the fingers.

What it has to do with genealogy, with country, may be the result of Latin and Freud, but I don't really care.

I'd just like to forget about the whole thing, particularly since he can't even spell it right.

Yes, I had a happy childhood.

I have two sons.

I have a job.

But no, it's not particularly flattering

.....he can't find his name anywhere.

Yes, we some time in Europe.

The kids were with us.

It was ok.

I don't know how

I ended up with him.

I forget.

6. THE SOFT PATH

you paraded down the path like a hi-tech fix
but at the end, oh
at the end
they muted you

the graphs bend down into silence

and from here you can look back
and see the alternatives

the whole efficient alphabet—sun
wind, tide—bought up

and yet we walk here
saving something
because we do.

7. ANTICIPATION

What trembles at

the edge of the tongue

the way kids test small batteries
in their mouths, the word
for I, how it begins
against everything

And ends up right beside you.

And afterwards the tiniest particles
line up, the way
they line up in a wire
current breathes its fire into
and you can feel the charge
in the air

as though you have found
even in the smallest unit
some shock of recognition

coming out to the edge of the wire

where you are trembling.