

Virginia Woolf on Happiness

by Staci Perkins

When I relate Saint Paul and Hitler,
picture the plight of Shakespeare's sister,
or conceive the gleam of autumn trees in yellow moonlight
nothing gives me greater pleasure
than to dip my pen in dark tar, and bruise the page
with words.

Alone in my room—tinged with the smell of cigarette,
walls slightly yellowed from smoke,
hands slightly darkened by insolent ink smudge,
I govern flowers Mrs. Dalloway buys,
how Lily paints, Orlando's sex,
and this makes me quiet happy,
but conceivably it is from my journal I gather the most happiness,
where, still in the refuge of my room, I write rough, random
uncensored style, rarely stumble upon anything
of value beyond its intended purpose—to clear my mind,
loosen ligaments of writing.

There are times that fill me with such enchantment
I can barely wait to weave the bits in professional writing,
when this slapdash and vigor hits an unexpected bulls eye,
which I would have missed if aiming.

I think of a birthday passage—

As sun edged across winter bed covers,
opened my eyes as it does a Morning Glory,
Leonard crept into my bed,
presented me a small parcel (a beautiful green purse);
he brought me breakfast—always insisting I eat—
and an article roaring of the latest naval victory
against the *Blücher* and *Seydlitz*.

Such a beautiful morning, topped only by a superior afternoon.

In town, I was handed my first birthday treat in ten years
(a gift from Buszards).

Everything, even the weather, was brisk and cheerful
as it should be, but never is.

A relief, brought on perhaps by the crisp air,
the pleasure one usually draws from one's birthday celebrations,
but more likely from the delight of my good health
on Leonard's, spread over me like a wave.

Leonard has given me complete happiness.

When we returned to Clifford's Inn we had tea, as usual,
but today I looked at Leonard, studied the curve of his nose,
angle of his ears against his head, couldn't help but see
our future in the way he closed his eyes,

(continued without break)

relished each sip of tea.

Right now, our happiness depends on whether we purchase Hogarth.

Our conversation dwells the subject,

each tries to persuade the other how much we won't be disappointed
if we don't get it.

We both care too much for each other's happiness
to let the other think ours is threatened.