

Sean Labrador y Manzano

Zardo

Is there anything worse than to be  
born in the Year of the Rat?  
I have no use for volumes  
of collective hubris. They are  
not mine to begin with.  
Other people wrote them.  
Evidence of their existence  
and not mine. Many are long  
dead, of them most were  
required and I was stiff-armed,  
some were recommended,  
a few were suggested  
and each acknowledge  
pedigree and lineage  
to each other, or to each  
other's mate or significant,  
or to each other's cuckold  
or mountainous coop,  
or to each other's wayfarer  
thought, or alien transmission,  
a constellated pen horde  
as if to say we can reoccur  
simultaneously in each image  
flushed from a soupy vor-text.  
and all have lost relevance.  
and all have lost relevance.  
and all have lost relevance.  
I say this to let go. But I am  
the rat that I am. Om-ming  
picayune mantra. Oh Sierra.  
My library is a mausoleum  
of verse, pages obfuscate  
the mattress I sleep on.  
A seminar paper hides  
between sheets. Some idol's  
confessional warmth keys  
The Grand Piano. We  
can not cliché the scholar's  
bedside mannerism. Books  
not bread fall out of place  
and are down for pillows.  
You smile because you have  
been there. Slept there and  
soundly.  
The breathy rat-a-tat-tat.  
Are you my peer rat? Or my

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pier rat that has scaled hawsers  
boarding ship to port and  
port to ship, avoiding the pack  
and/or the Exterminator?  
The novelty of not having  
poetry in our midst! Oh to be  
free. Alas . . .  
Individuals are not made  
by crude fashion. I have out-  
grown the clothes in my closet.  
Lucky for me not one polyester  
shirt or bellbottom pants  
redeem American Band Stand or  
Soul Train. Cedar shirks  
naphthalene. The decade's  
true migraine.  
I gave up stamps long ago.  
So why do I shelve my albums  
in full view with everything  
else perforated collecting dust.  
There is no future in postmarks.  
And falsely I recall the many  
pals overseas writing back  
vigorously about Nixon  
or the Shah. Sealing a fate  
that tastes like envelope.  
Letters *mischieve* rollick  
reproduce. Perhaps named after  
a Scotsman who spies for MI6 is  
much worse. Such tenor  
echoes a role I cannot fulfill.  
My mother's infatuation  
persuaded the priest. A pistol  
at baptism. Blofeld be warned!  
and your crime spree thru 6  
or 7 movies. Who wants that  
kind of spectre anyway?  
She should have released me  
to the world in the Tiger's year  
because there's nothing overdue  
like a good name to gum up.

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Sean Labrador y Manzano's work has been published in  
*Leonard Cohen: You're Our Man*, *Chain*, *Bay Poetics*,  
and *The Best American Poetry 2004*. He is the poetry  
editor of *Tea Party Magazine*. His column "Conversa-  
tions at a Wartime Café" can be found at  
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