



PROJECT MUSE®

Expect Any Answer, and: Not This Boston

Tana Jean Welch

Colorado Review, Volume 43, Number 2, Summer 2016, pp. 168-171 (Article)

Published by Center for Literary Publishing

DOI: 10.1353/col.2016.0066



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/625890>

EXPECT ANY ANSWER

Frank O'Hara was a ram

born hot but he died
believing he was a Cancer, a crab clacking
in his own strong water. If he knew

his life began in March instead of June,
would he have been so devastated by any death?

Would he have given up sex with strangers in 1957?

Would he still have fallen to his knees
at the feet of Giulietta Masina, Fellini's *Lo Spippolo*,
another small thing pushing O'Hara

toward tenderness? Does he still suffer
from the stale enervation of waking to bourbon
and orange juice? Would an Aries nurse

James Schuyler through episodes of schizophrenia, hiding
him in the Hamptons, wiping his million terrors—
the encroaching fog, babies, sulphur

and tulips—from public view? Or send a telegram
to Boris Pasternack applauding his Nobel win?

Perhaps this is like asking

if Russia hadn't refused Pasternak the Nobel Prize,
would he still have died two years later,
his lungs clouded with lesions?

or if Putin hadn't jailed Pussy Riot
would we still need John Kerry to slap his wrist
with a ruler every third day?

TANA JEAN WELCH

NOT THIS BOSTON

Bored of my intentional
community and all
the artists pretending
to keep bees

I went back
longing to see
the same city, walked
every sidewalk

and waited to feel
summer of '06 happy,
but Hamersly's was gone,
the South End town houses
all belonged to the new breed
of women teaching their babies
Spanish while in Supta Konasana.

The Mother Church
and her reflecting pool
no longer reflected
an endless stream of exceptional
stars. Everything a dull
sickly tympanic membrane,

so to the North
End! I watched an armory
combing its bronze bricks,
a busker braiding fire—
but even that was cold.

Not the same
city nine years later, this Boston
of my lonely commercial ache,

this Boston of the self who forgot
the difference a body makes—
your body making mine
a singular presence.

The phrase “watched an armory combing its bronze bricks” is from Frank O’Hara’s “Poem,” from *Lunch Poems*, which begins with the phrase as its first line.