Out of My Element

Robert L. Gockman
College of DuPage

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OUT OF MY ELEMENT

I once took a class in Abnormal Psych
The subject intrigued me — a thing I might like,
My classmates were weird and the prof a bit odd
He wore pink pajamas and his feet were unshod.
His lectures were filled with terms that were phrightful
Like psycho and phobic — he found them delightful
He spoke of his colleagues, people even more hairy,
like Freud and Gestalt and Madame Du Barry.

There was talk of Charcot, and other such doozies
Names tripped off his tongue like summertime floozies
Why even that “Doc” who was mispronounced Jung
Well, I didn’t much care if old Jung was hung.
There was Rorschach with blots, Binet and Geisell
There Rogers and Hart and Digby O’Dell
No, I guess that was wrong about Hart — he’s a singer
or maybe a writer or a bell ring-a-dinger.

He was making me ill and the subject got fuzzy
And he looked at me strange saying, “Is he or, was he?”
Then he talked about syndromes — for he gave me a few
Mine matched all the classical signs of “me too.”
It got worse by the hour and I wasn’t kidding
When my ego was damaged and my psyche got hidden
I just couldn’t stand it and I reached for my id
and wouldn’t you know it — I flipped my own lid.

With the straight jacket coming I ducked out the door
‘Cause the men in the white coats they all knew the score
They would take me to Bedlam or maybe to Bellview
I could look out my window and picture my Hell-view
They shouted and jabbered while I climbed a tree
“You’ll not take me alive,” I shouted with glee
“I’ll go down with the ship. You just wait and see.”
But I knew I was beaten by Psy-chol-o-gy.

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They put me away in a room that was padded
For the shrinks knew the score and the way it was added
Now they frequently test me — as if I’m getting badder
But I’m mad as a wet hen and still getting madder
I’m mad thinking of the choices that I could have taken
I could have chose English with Old Frances Bacon
Or maybe a short course in basketry weaving
Or Poetry, or Spanish or Deep Sea Retrieving.

Epilogue

Well, it’s all academic, you silly galoot.
When they run up the flag just watch me salute
I’ll be out in a year if they give me a break
And I’ll call it my thesis in a major mistake.

— Robert L. Gockman

CONFESSION

“Yes Father, I ate it,
I tasted earth’s forbidden nectar.”
(love, lush
and thick
still
clinging
to my smiling lips
as I confess
my innocence)

— Elizabeth Lane