

Gerard Woodward The Murderer Is a Cow (1994)

- 1 He killed in a cow mask.
Discovering tents in the forest at night
- He cut through the canvas
Like ripping open a letter
- 5 To find the sleepy human
Contents which he knifed.
- From her snug sleeping
Bag all the tourist could see
- Were the twitching ears of a cow
10 And a blade as the murderer
- Paddled on all fours
On the drenched groundsheet.
- And when all the movement had stopped,
Still with his invented face
- 15 He blew warm steam from his
Slippery nostrils and licked
- With the single muscle of his tongue
The gore.
- And then moved off into the forest
20 Where real cows stepped quietly among
- The trees, their careful feet now
And then cracking twigs until his
- Shovelling nose came across the green
Membrane of another tent
- 25 Where, within, a half asleep hiker
Breathed a sigh of relief
- That cows and not killers
Sniffed tents in the forest.

snug lune
drenched gennemblødt
groundsheet retunderlag
gore levret blod
membrane hinde

QUESTIONS

Robert Herrick, *To Blossoms*, 1648
William Blake, *The Sick Rose*, 1794
William Wordsworth, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, 1807
Fiona Pitt-Kethley, *Country Walk*, 1986
Gerard Woodward, *The Murderer is a Cow*, 1994

1. Framing and focussing
 - a) Discuss with your partner what you associate with the countryside.
 - b) Find ads where the countryside is used. Discuss why.
 - c) Think of songs and movies that are set in the countryside. Discuss what the function of the countryside is.
2. Reading the poems
 - a) Look up words you don't understand.
 - b) Write a short paraphrase of each poem.
 - c) What kind of place is the countryside in each poem?
 - d) Which one of the poems comes closest to your idea of the countryside? Why?
 - e) What is the tone in each poem?
 - f) Characterize the voice in each poem (age, sex, background, mood).
 - g) Describe the rhythm in each poem. Does it support or enhance the contents of the poem?
3. Writing
 - a) Imagine a cow. Write three short poems about that cow reflecting three different attitudes to the country.

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