

Still Life with Andy Warhol (for two voices) by Lyle D Rosdahl

(Voice #1):

My name is Andy Warhol. Uncomfortable coincidence. This is my life wrapped up in butcher's paper, bound and gagged. This is my life separated from everything that happened around it. In my story I am not an insurance salesman. I am not a divorcé. I am not -- well, you get the picture. I was born God knows where -- my consciousness still unbundled -- and besides, that was just something that happened to me. Of no real consequence. My childhood also a blur. Of what? suburbia? education? ill health? One thing does stick out -- in the course of a robbery, my parents were both shot dead. I do not recall, and this is still a question, whether they were robbing or being robbed. My life was spared, I think, though I still have a bullet in my leg. It creeps, even now, closer to the bone -- an even measure of my life. Recently, I've felt it pushing at my femur. I have to point to it -- ah, yes, the left leg. It is a metaphor for my life as I feel the world pushing in on me, older. Me. Older. Heavier, hotter, more exasperating. I am being shrink-wrapped. My body will be kept forever, contents unknown despite my wrapping. They will put me in a museum and maybe even then the bullet will move. Measure my life even after I'm gone. But that too is of no consequence.

(Voice #2):

My name is Andy Warhol. Unforgettable coincidence. Though I don't know for whom. For you there in the audience? Will you pick at me with your pens and pointers? I think that I feel a laser on my lapel. Please stop staring. I'll talk. My parents were killed when I

was just a boy. I don't recall what happened really. A stabbing perhaps. Something horrible and unsuburban. I lived here and there in foster homes. Every year. It creates such a terrible swirling sensation to try to remember. When I was eighteen, I found a job in a cannery. That's where I lost my pinkie. Which hand again? I always have to look. The phantom finger syndrome. You know. I worried, when the canning machine clamped down through tissue, sinew and bone, that I might lose my life. There was a lot of blood, but I meant it more metaphorically. Like what kinds of things would I not be able to do anymore and all the while, the blood bubbled up into the pea green soup as the assembly line slowed down and finally stopped. The deep red contrasted so starkly and gurgled like grease in the soup that finally halted in front of me. I just stood there and stared as my fellow workers got me fixed up. Except that the finger was gone. No one could find it. Gone are the days of being an artist, I thought, because my name was Andy Warhol, not because I was an artist. Not conventionally. But neither was Andy Warhol. By then I had become quite delirious, as you can imagine. There, then, is my story. You see, though, really, that it doesn't mean much. I am just missing a finger, after all.

(Voice #1):

My name is Andy Warhol. Unfortunate coincidence. Or at least that's what I thought when I was old enough to understand coincidence. I never had the chance to ask my parents as they were killed early on. I could check the clipping (my parents' death splayed, open-legged across the front pages) that I have squirreled away, but I have never done that. Maybe the newspaper clipping would say something like, "left behind is

their son Andy Warhol (no relation to the artist),” but that wouldn’t help very much. I mean I know that. Well, I guess I know that. I wouldn’t swear to it, now that I think about it. What if I was an illegitimate son? I could be, at my age. My father might have fallen in love with my knocked up mother. No matter, I suppose. I was born. And we know what that means, right? Or perhaps I was named in his honor. Did they know him? Party with him? Could have. Or maybe they just deified him and I was their little homage, never to be anything but their sly little name game. A joke, a jinx, a perfectly formed pop culture reference (moniker multiplicity). I’d say I’ve lived up to it, wouldn’t you? Still it’s something I’ve tried to squirrel away -- Hello, I’m Andrew or Drew or call me W. But I don’t know how to live up to those names either. Perhaps there is nothing to live up to except a one-fingered, bullet-ridden, orphaned Andy Warhol.

(Voice #2):

My name is Andy Warhol. Unfinished hypothesis. I have had my fifteen minutes of fame, though I don’t know when. It couldn’t have been just now or I’ve been short changed. But then again, hasn’t that been the case since inception (or at least since the inception of my name, which might have actually preceded my own inception). O.K., I’ll stop. I eat Campbell’s soup everyday. Pea soup. As a tribute to a tribute to a tribute to a tribute. The label changed. They’re not unrecognizable, of course, but they’re not the same as they used to be either. They taste different too. More watered down. Soon it will be water in a can. I think about thinking about who I am and the day-to-day minutia of life that everyone must feel in one way or another. The opening of cans, so to speak, to get at the grey matter inside. Perhaps I am hung up on the minutia. I imagine that I always

will be: my future still wrapped up in paper and fully canned. Unbreached. Unexamined except on the outside. Even the bullet in my leg is something from the outside. Keeping track of time external. If life imitates art, then I remain uninterrupted. After all, in the grand scheme of things, I am Andy Warhol. I am not Andy Warhol.