

Corman, Cid
NOTHING DOING
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When praise for a poet's work gushes like water through a sluice gate, yet repeated readings fail to offer so much as a single drop to a parched tongue, the natural impulse is to ask oneself, "What's wrong with me? What am I overlooking?" Then, just before you are about to hurl yourself off a cliff in despair, you happen to glance up and discover the emperor is naked, or at least stripped to his skivvies. And though there is plenty of ink pouring onto the page, it appears Mr. Corman is mostly busy doing nothing in *Nothing Doing*. Certainly no one knows how to say so little in so few words. These poems are overflowing with abstract intellectual aphorisms masquerading as deep wisdom or, more precisely, as a sort of Hollywoodish *Kung Fu* version of Eastern religious philosophy. *Emptiest kettle makes loudest noise, little cricket*. It is paucity of content masquerading as austerity of style. Though often compared to Zen koans, Corman's verse offers the set-up but fails to deliver the punch of enlightenment. "Which dream is the dream — the one we awaken from and go into or from which we never emerge?" the poet asks. Huh? But lest you drown in such profundity, try "Death always reminding us — a breath is a breath." Perhaps it is the clothes that have no emperor. Perhaps it is all trappings.

While it probably never did anyone serious damage to contemplate his navel, that does not mean his surmises ought to be endorsed. As the poet himself remarked, "There's enough shit in this world without our adding to it."