

# The Iceberg Theory | Gerald Locklin

all the food critics hate iceberg lettuce.  
you'd think romaine was descended from  
orpheus's laurel wreath,  
you'd think raw spinach had all the nutritional  
benefits attributed to it by popeye,  
not to mention aesthetic subtleties worthy of  
verlaine and debussy.  
they'll even salivate over chopped red cabbage.  
just to disparage poor old mr. iceberg lettuce.

I guess the problem is  
it's just too common for them.  
it doesn't matter that it tastes good,  
has a satisfying crunchy texture,  
holds its freshness,  
and has crevices for the dressing,  
whereas the darker, leafier varieties  
are often bitter, gritty and flat.  
it just isn't different enough and  
it's too goddamn american.

of course a critic has to criticize:  
a critic has to have something to say.  
perhaps that's why literary critics  
purport to find interesting  
so much contemporary poetry  
that just bores the shit out of me.

at any rate, I really enjoy a salad  
with plenty of chunky iceberg lettuce,  
the more the merrier,  
drenched in an italian or roquefort dressing.  
and the poems I enjoy are those I don't have  
to pretend that I'm enjoying.

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Gerald Locklin is now a Professor Emeritus of English at California State University, Long Beach, where he taught from 1965 through 2007, and continues as an occasional part-time lecturer. A profile based on a retirement event was broadcast on NPR and is archived. He is the author of over 125 books, chap-books, and broadsides of poetry, fiction, and criticism, with over 3000 poems, stories, articles, reviews, and interviews published in periodicals. His work is frequently performed by Garrison Keillor on his Writer's Almanac daily Public Radio program, is archived on his website, and is included in all three of Mr. Keillor's Good Poems anthologies.

