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THE JEWESS

Sticks, stones, when a child,
When half-way grown
Looks sharper than stone
Stung her heart wild.

She clenched her ribs like a fist
Around the wild nickel,
And nobody knew how total
The sting was, or guessed.

Until a gentile was trying
To put her hands in his,
And she dodged his kiss
Like a thrown stone, crying

The dark story out. He said hush,
And putting her wrist by his own
Showed her two spots where the skin
Flickered in time like flesh.

Galway Kinnell

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FALL OF ADAM

From heaven my rainy father reigned
more Gabriel than the dawn,
walking how heavy in his top-dollar town
to wear the sun like a derby.

And what first knuckles were those alps
in such a calendar:
the oceans sang with forty throats
as he whistled in his splendor.

The animals elected him
their tipsy citizen
for his slow saunter and noise of grapes,
and a honey tammany.

To relish once that sudden rib's
omen singular,
he woke to all those monied hills
touching the round of her.

And from heaven my rainy father ran
with such a frightened girl,
inventing autumn as he went
than the night more Ismael.

Felix N. Stefanile

THERE ARE NO TOADS IN MY GARDEN

There are no toads in my garden
I pay no attention to trained seals
not a single poet is planted there
it is free of eels.

Monkeys stay out of my garden
never hoed by Markham's man
a birch could never grow there
nor the pipes of Pan.

My garden has lost its magic
so empty of tangible things
it boasts only a rotted piano
and a dog that sings.

The dog is dead in the garden
the piano's without any strings
but I know they want to make music
and the dog insists that he sings.

So I set him out on the ivories
nestling his jaw on the keys
then behold the bloom in the garden
as I fall down on my knees.

For all is new in my garden
the dog rattles the ivory keys
the dead bones fleshen sprightly
and he sings as sweet as you please.

But nothing is changed in the garden
the dog didn't change a hair
the piano's still kind of rotted
but the music insists that it's there.

4

UNANIMOUSLY FROM THIS COWLE OF FLESH AS COUNTRIES RIVEN

Unanimously from this cowle of flesh as countries riven,
in tattered grace my frame's five senses break
quickenings, wrought buds at civilization's wake.

Through rhythms vast as sight my Shadow flares
like Mind that with the nostrils tastes Earth's cares,
till spiralling amid the winter's imagery stricken,
five griefs break as one covenant through dust.

Should fires for this twelfth month cast on drifts of streets
shapes from the dance of centuries where lightning sleets,
though Chaos span the movement in my words, my ghost
risen
and rocketing in Time, with Song would bell my sight.

Yet ash as reminiscence weaves my eyes
peeling Spring's antiphons from pyres like cries.

Buoy'd forth from me the parts of multitudes,
gold in reflections, gleam across the Spirit's center:
Heaven,

whose sowers fan the crystals of dreams
into a prophecy, my Heart's tides sound your streams.

Margaret Toarelli

PASSAGE AND RESTRAINT

Passes the velvet interval to gray,
 And night, the night whose spirits hovered rest,
 Glides like a vampire down the lightening spears of mist.
 Deep violet fades into rose, into sea of tumbled gold. . .

And so to the nave of day: comes again as on fides
 of desire—day.

No night more, no nightened soul,
 Soul ebbed on the wave of night to thrall of imprisoning
 day.

From sleep, drowse-scented, sultry widow
 Coquetting the aisles of shade, shadowly wooing
 (Oh heavy-lidded lie undaring the blinking day!):
 From sleep to unvisioning eye, dawn-terrored and daying
 deep.

How fled the brave thought, one bravely dreaming
 Sense to its supersensuous, smile to its bloomful laughter;
 Whence fled the star-draped spectre, whence miracled
 god?

Whence god—and gone? Still, then:
 Rather the winds shape all, rather the primal disorder,
 Rather the earth mass melt, resolved into nothings,
 Rather this near-oblivion, much, much rather
 Than lose one thrust of lightning, sourced where the bolt
 begins!

6

Nay, nay, nor pass, the music need not pale
As sun in baptismal seas, like twilight with its lovers near.
Each gasp of eternal swoon swoons back to eternal,
Eternally dear.

Comes dusk, comes the dusk houri-veiled from her boudoir
of hours,

Broods again silence upon its old heights.

Lone one, be not beguiled by the plodding tomorrow,
Nor by the illusory triumphs tonight,

When each is victoriously captor, when each becomes
captive

(As the dew-drunk to an opiate day):

Yet beyond temp of time, momentous, the Powers
Far-mounted, anciently sit.

William W. Chance

OLD ORLIE

The pine tops moaned while Orlie fed his hogs
In black-lipped night, the way he did before;

Both witless sons aprowl in humid gloom

The wraith-moon hidden by the coming storm.

A stranger walked toward the hill-top farm,

Another skirted the abandoned road—

The others inclosed him in a still spun web,

Then pounced, like bats upon an insect swarm.

"What are you after me for?" Orlie screamed

"She's gone, she ran away with the hired man."

A dozen shots were drowned in rumbled thunder.

"You fiends", he shrieked. "You shot my nice fat hogs."

Maude Totten

NATIVE RESERVE¹

Past Rhodes's favourite flower, the blue plumbago,
We cycled swerving downwards through the kopjes,²
With here some girls beneath enormous bundles
Bouncing their breasts and bottoms as they journeyed,
And there watching for cars an older woman
Whose spreading baskets bulged with prickly pears.

Till issuing from the kloof by a narrow defile
We followed greener swatches, wag-'n-bietjie³
Of more prolific growth and rusty zinnias
Dusting the roadside, until Umzimvubu
Moved moodily its muddy mass beneath us
Black-speckled with nude divers from the bridge.

White-collared huts now greeted us on downlands
Exuding ease in day-long lush siestas.
Except for cattle whose sole worth's ndola,⁴
The kraals⁵ were all asleep, with lazy mongrels
Blocking each open doorway onto meadows
Of kaffir-corn⁶ and mealies⁷, aloed off.

Rich land but poorly handled: How our morals—
 Our poor utilitarian narrow morals—
 Had followed us two whites into blacks' country!
 "We'll soon be getting into cheeza manzie⁸,"
 I thought, "If we should let our small opinions
 Be overheard." Fingo is I invent.

Terrence Heywood

Notes

¹The Transkeian Territories (Fingoland, Galekalaland, the Idutywa Reserve, Griqualand East, Pondoland, Tembuland with Bomvanaland), about 15,000 square miles in area and populated by over 1,250,000 natives, form the biggest native reserve in South Africa.

²kopje—(pronounced: copy)—small hill (Afrikaans)

³wag-'n-bietjie—(literally: wait a minute!)—the short, thorny, flat-topped mimosa very common throughout most of South Africa (Afrikaans)

⁴ndola—dowry, reckoned by head of cattle regardless of quality, paid by a native before marriage to his future father-in-law (native word)

⁵kraal—native village, surrounded by fence or stockade (Afrikaans)

⁶kaffir-corn—what sorghum or millet is called in South Africa.

⁷mealies—Zea Mays, American corn or maize

⁸cheeza manzie—(literally: hot water)—(native word)

FIVE POEMS

1. Winter Arrangement

We crowd for warmth; this is the day for snow.
 The pinpoint city in the valley swirled
 away last night. We are our own circumference;
 but cold, the beadsman shivers. On the ice
 that caps our road, murder was done today.

You could hardly imagine a lovelier world than this,
 dreaming in summer: the white rime on the trees,
 the violet airless voids, the purple snow.

Married with chaos in the ice, I thought
 back to the bruising alleys of the city,
 the wheels, the dirty slush, the pinwheel signs;
 to friends, to known places, the delight, disgust,
 anger, cunning, wisdom. Twisted in snow
 and this wild aboriginal mountain, beautiful,
 I thought of hands and bright faces, mind and stone.

In the still of a white world full of nothing
 We crowd for warmth, huddle against the feral
 shift and roar of the sifting wind and snow.
 We shiver and hate each other; hate the ice
 with passion more than anything like itself.

2. The Everlasting Exiles

He drummed the silence with his queen's knight's pawn
 under the double star by Brunanburh
 after the rout.

In the hour of the pearl he came to a fertile plain
neither too cold nor hot, the water fresh,
a chromo land, bright earth, bright leaf, bright rain.

He built his house with care, in algebra
founded his beams. With dull knives cut the sod
easily. The grass, transplanted, grew.

In the hour of the poppy, hedge exuded thorn
laced into thorn. At later date a bird
founded a sterile nest under their shade.

For years he labored and he did not rest.
Many came to the big house to toil with him,
others to sleep in the cellar and drink his tea.

In the hour of the moon the house was alive with lamps
in twenty colors. By the offensive light
he walked the grass with pebbles in his hands.

Denn was ich nicht gefürchtet habe
ist über mich gekommen
und was ich sorgte nicht
hat mich getroffen.

Watching the dark, and darker for the watching,
after the walking in the sun on bones,
and wrapped to the bird's disgust within the thorn,

War ich nicht glücklichelig?
war ich nicht fein stille?
hatte ich nicht gute Ruhe?
Es kommt solche Unruhe!

3. Speech of the Man with Three Eyes

God save me from being alone on windy nights!
drowned over by the seven whistling stars
and the great hound howling!

Passionate souls
pound through me like wind in the chimneys
stating a protest; cracked harsh strident
their shivering familiar voices are
like flagstones last year frightened.

The street tilts suddenly to the side of a mountain
huge momentous indefinite wide
the shattered streetlamp gutters in the wind
stabbing a ripple of light to the twisted curb.

This is the wrong end of the glass wherein I
watch myself mitelike
in terror dash from bole to bole
climbing the empty street, climbing the high street
under the posts of the blown and battered sky.

A million feet of wind behind me beats its drums
hammers its maledictions
gropes with chill fingers
up the angular street
and the wind sways into ellipsoid protean figures
visible, audible, breath to my ear
as I scramble deafly headlong shouting
the vertical street.

Pinpoints of light flare to sudden stars in my ribs
a black comet bursts like a shell in my brain
after such nights I am something else than I.
God save me from being alone on windy nights
when the winds come and the cold comes
and the stars that scream beside me are not there.

thunder coughed, the rain gasped and went out. and as instantly,
 The stars wheeled in. At the edge of the circle of lamps
 eight adagio drops ticked from the chickweed.
 The pines wove audible patterns in the yard.
 The circle of lamps breathed in and sucked him back,
 claimed him, and that was all. He closed his eyes,
 this was a prologue:

blinked the crawling lids
 open. Bolted the door, slid shut the windows
 (the drama asked it) drew the curtains hard
 against the shrivelling stage. He crouched the sentry
 lamps, four at his head, three at his feet,
 shivered between the sheets, and went to sleep.

5. Die Sterne Funkeln (Directional Numbers)

"There is a world dimensional
 for those untwisted by the love
 of things irreconcilable . . ."

and now the purple tableland of evening
 planes slopingly down toward the horizon
 acutely bulging
 and blueing at the apex

seven small stars
 hang by the necks until alive
 from the dark vault

looking very distant very small
 very cool