

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 7 - Number 1 Fall 1956

CONTENTS

| | | |
|--------------------|--|----|
| ANTHONY OSTROFF | Permit Us Voyage | 1 |
| LEONARD NATHAN | The Devil Saved | 2 |
| HELEN WEBSTER | Colonus | 3 |
| EDWARD HART | Insulations | 4 |
| RICHARD EMIL BRAUN | Late Promenades | 5 |
| EDWARD LOCKE | A Tale | 8 |
| ROBERT VAUGHAN | Dust Song | 9 |
| THADIUS PIZARSKI | Extreme Unction | 10 |
| ROBERT MEREDITH | Three Poems | 15 |
| RICHARD ASHMAN | Purpose | 18 |
| KNUTE SKINNER | Animal Act | 19 |
| HAROLD WITT | Io | 20 |
| DON GEIGER | Leisure | 26 |
| LYLE GLAZIER | Seven Graces Before Meat | 27 |
| DAVID GALLER | Lot | 28 |
| JUDSON JEROME | How Hobbes, Reading Some Verses . . . | 29 |
| E. G. BURROWS | Boys and Bears | 33 |
| JASCHA KESSLER | A Wife's Lament | 34 |

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
 Volume 7 - Number 1 Fall 1956

PERMIT US VOYAGE

O Lost Swimmer who does not complain,
 Caught by coral, wrapped in greenest shroud,
 Deep adrift become your final destiny,
 O Crane, what shifting sands now groan aloud
 Beneath your bright, suspended shape?

Where is the heart, the tidal metaphor
 To flood the parched and bleached apostasy
 You willed to bridge? Is that heart dead? Your bone's
 white shore

Is clear annunciation of the sea
 That marks all turning no escape.

But do the waters round you whirled undo
 Their waves, bare their love to that desire
 So deeply found at last? We could believe and view
 Those cold depths bright with a final fire,
 All flames drowned in one,

Save your life, in waves like death bells, tolls
 For us on the closing waters, not to sound
 Those rich and spendthrift dives for impossible gold
 But fathom love by beating hearts to end
 One with the sheltering sea's dark sun.

Anthony Ostroff

2

THE DEVIL SAVED

"The Devil saved!" The words flapped round stunned
Heaven,
Light-lovely beings blazed with the sudden sight
Of Satan come to make a final peace;
Hosannas faltered, dying in midflight,
Saints and doctors wrestled the consequence
Of vacant Hell, of unbedeviled earth
And, baffled, stood before their silent God,
Unthinking Christ, the Ghost, the Virgin Birth,
Even themselves back to the flawless hour
When Lucifer still shone and earth was fresh,
When the well-dividing voice of God sang out
One song that gave infinity a flesh.

It was Michael who cried out as Satan's troop
Wheeled by like smoldering bats up to the Throne:
"After all this, O Lord, the wicked win,
And every loyal dog gets tossed a bone."

So much said, the mansion seemed to quake.
Angels, before they fled, gave one shocked glance
Expecting Michael to be smitten down
Or blown to nought for his great impudence,
But God replied instead, "What servant serves
Me badly who serves least? Satan's with us;
My will is done despite unalterable law—
The father of lies has served to prove Me thus."

Angels, saints, and doctors melted away.
Useless and dim, they wandered off like ghosts;
Old muttering partisans who talked revolt
Were indistinct in Heaven's fading Hosts.

Leonard Nathan

COLONUS

He was only old Ed, waiting to die
 in the garden. Nobody minded him;
 mindless, he was hopeless, hoping
 only for supper, sundown. Only she,
 the girl, stayed by him. Quite a pair, people
 pondered: the witless old blind man, toothless
 as children, and the withered child, ancient,
 despairing. Had he fathered her? Who could
 say? Could he sire anyone, strange as he was?
 Winter worried them little, hardship was
 known. Snow came and they slept in the church pews.
 In summer, all was forgotten.

No one,
 reviled them, no one mocked. Some few old folk
 remembered ancient gossip, worn-out talk:
 the pair were strangers, come from a distance,
 had suffered tragedy. Details were lost,
 though, and interest lacked. Only the children
 taunted sometimes, trying out epithets.
 "Wrecks," they jeered at the pair in the garden.
 "Wrecks," muttered Ed (almost pleased at the word,
 he was so simple now), giggling.

Somewhere,
 backward in mind, he remembered another
 garden with boughs bird-ridden, with lily
 and lotus, peacock and pigeon—royal things—
 and small gods smiling. And, too, a woman.
 Who had she been? She had been everything
 to him, it was hard to say. She once was
 beautiful enough. Perhaps he had been
 worth remembering too, he wondered, querulous?
 Or was he blind from birth? Had he suffered?

4

Did it matter much?

Better not to find
his answers, better to unremember
feelings, faces, clues. He was almost safe,
almost beyond recalling. Caution, no
questions, and he might yet die easily.

Helen Webster

INSULATIONS

Today the stream beside my door
Has an almost imperceptible roar,
But the same old strangeness in its sound
Is like somebody being drowned.
I don't know why we settled here
Where the writhing river comes so near
The shore that the sound is all about
And never can really be shut out.
At first we tried to thicken the walls,
And when that failed we all wrapped shawls
About our ears; of recent date
We're wearing suits of armor plate.
Our neighbor, whose house we can barely see,
Suffered more from the sound than we.
He left his wife, ran out of doors,
And muffled his ears in the arms of whores.
The insulation on which he relied
Must have failed, because when he cried
It sounded just like the river din:
He stopped crying and jumped in.

Edward Hart

LATE PROMENADES

Now I am old you'll look to me for beauty;
 you'll want a metric close, a final turn
 to ground suspended cadences. I warn
 you, though: clear statement isn't clarity.
 I know now youth is vague anticipation.
 When young I wrote some twenty novels that
 concerned integrity of motive, but
 this had a vagueness, hollowness I shun
 today; so now, in verse, I won't protract
 the riddles I posed then. This is direct
 approach, no idealistic clutch for beauty;
 rather, a promenade in faces or
 red silk, black velvet, onyx and cinnabar
 creates my world . . . of sensitivity.

The old need not have wisdom; don't demand
 it; don't expect that youth have passion either.
 When I was twenty-five I didn't gather
 petals or pink clouds, I made a trend
 in letters. Aged now, my head still sound
 however, sickliness has taught me neither
 assume a principle or reason, rather
 accept the resonance and doubt the mind
 and know that sex is wholly something more
 than having it, that bald intrusion where
 the one accomplishment is finding no
 two of one species are compatible
 no matter what their habits: Meaningful
 conjunction would be that of trees with snow.

Significant contact is not in false
 and tentative union of hog on sow:
 homogenous engendering further fowl
 or further swine; it doesn't even pulse,

6

for all their loveliness, when panthers mix.
Significant contact occurs with fly
and flower, combining both lust with style
and actual autonomy with sex.

An only slightly less beautiful junction
(marred only by its cruel progeny)
was that one Pasiphae enjoyed: the motion
of tragedy in this affair forgotten
for sheer ambition and for ecstasy
that huge, elusive, pure white stud had given.

This is sufficient pondering sensual
rapports, delineating what creates
from what binds nothing odd, only repeats
recurring kind and individual;
my age should draw the metaphysical
and show man as the full receptor species.
World bounded by skin, bounded by iris,
he needn't stay a passive thing at all,
an eye for shadow, passive, turning out
to vague extremity, vapor, deceit;
he may, yes actively invert to core
that is the real external; or, to put
it otherwise, can leap, a Fünklein, at
the source nearby, up to that whole grand Fire.

This isn't saying that arcana equals
beauty, the deepest is all charm . . . except
regards treaties of spirit. I'll adopt
the opposite, in fact, for fleshly levels:
that what is always bare identifies
and has the purest charm, that faces, hands
have personality as real as trends
of character, are real identities.
These open things as open so are pure,
the beauty uncombined like melody

so rich it needs no backdrop; faces are,
hands are what eyes not, never shoulders nor
breasts are, these requiring harmony
the total's counterpoint must echo for.

This beauty that is naked, open, is
the physical resemblance essence has:
essential wholeness, being; beauty as
familiar conscience of identities.

And maybe persons may be, being whole,
be beauty: just as hands, as faces will
be character, so people sometimes fill
out vagueness of abstractions. Beautiful,
essential, and entire are odium
in evil days: the soundness, nakedness
must be destroyed as people. See how Rome
acknowledged this, in Cicero, whose head
and hands displayed then by Antonius
could prove that all the Cicero was dead.

Now I am old I face like times, the dun
days, reign of grey insensitivity;
to these days I oppose my world as beauty,
late promenades through clarities to win
for your ghost, Friend in youth, a noble grave.
As you were beautiful, were whole, not one
persisting in a vague anticipation,
as you were sensitive, were pure, above
contrivance, not a mimicry, your light
was stifled: wind at treetops, noon dim as night.
There was no crime alleged: idealists stilled you,
not for expression but for being so
much hands and face, so much clear statement. No
beauty you saw the beauty you were killed you.

Richard Emil Braun

8

A TALE

Oon mornyng as I wende throughe the wode,
Hardely the dawne was come, the crickets stode
Entranced with the soun of new-broke lyght,
And al the constellaciouns of the nyght
Tucked in hir imaginarie lines, for slepe,
I passed a lake that semed not verray depe,
Outespred with water-lilyes balancyng
The courrent—where smalle spiders clinge—
Pale were the petales in the lakes reflexioun,
But scarlet the stamenes, and the brode leaves were green.
And as I gazed on the sondry floures
It semed as if the erly mornyng houres
Hadde witchcraft in hir sonds, or ellis unknown
To me, I swevenid on the banke alon,
For in thatte lake on a water-lilye pad
I saugh a sparowe, broken-wynged and sad,
Who spak to me thus: Vysitor of the mornyng miste,
Ye stare in swich amazement as I wiste
Ye want som explanacioun I shold make,
For wondre of a sparowe in a lake.
Two nyghts agoon, I flewe like ony byrde
Thatte evere teased the trees, or evere herde
The wilde and distant moanyng where wynds die,
And rudderlesse clouds drift endelessly,
Whanne on a suddene, a rore, somthyng ygrazed
My wyng, and a-doun throughe the starres I fell amazed.
This is al I know. I wold have drowned
Hadde not the water-lilye ben my ground.
And now, in slow starvacioun, I see
Anothre death (stire not, it is too late for me);
I am prepared, my sparowe strengthe is sapt,
Bet for byrde to die in beauty wrapt.

Thus quod the tendre beste, and I arose
 To walk an othre direcioun, thoghe myn herte froze,
 And I wondred, lemman, since thatte loud cracke
 Of knowyng ye cold not love me threwe me backe,
 Since I did not droun, how now, with this byrdes last crie,
 In youre water-lilyed armes I slowly die.

Edward Locke

DUST SONG

Because dust clings there like spittle
 and unred baby lips suckle red-tinted teats
 in dusty bedrooms waiting
 tomorrow;

because, in fact,
 there is dust on the naked feet
 of numerous arabs endlessly
 kneeling;
 and thousand-eyed spiders
 climb forgotten kitchen walls without
 a web;

and because there are young men
 rolling marbles in stick drawn rings
 who have never seen the dead,

I am thinking of white skinned women
 in nothing wardrobes (a cellular structure—
 shape without motion)
 and singing a dust song through dirt brown hair.

Robert Vaughan

10

EXTREME UNCTION

I An Act of Charity

Go hiely from me ambasce-children that ramble
of an ageless goal. Keep from me constantly.
Your credo minds me of the shawms that lie beneath
swarded civilizations. Your holy-house is but a soapbox
from which a howl-monkey screeches of love
to his loving dust. There is nothing
worthwhile in your warship save the guns
of prayer. But nothing can ream these weapons.
and they are abutting obsolescence as their puny
projectiles are aimed at selfish targets.

II An Act of Love

Although I have not lived
Although I have not lived a full life
Although I have not lived a full life I must die.
Now I should be afraid.
But I care not.
No, I dare not.

Yet I shall try to make the way before I go.
I will try once more to find the thing I lost,
even though I do not accede to its existence.

We adore Thee Oh Christ and bless Thee.
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.
It was no more Pilate.
It was I that killed Thee.

Our Father who art in . . .
Hail Mary full of grace . . .
Glory be to the Father and to . . .