

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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OF THE DIFFICULTY OF MAP-READING

Heraclitus: the best soul is the driest soul,
But the soul delights to get wet. Very well, my sinner:
I think a map of *your* soul would be black with spots
Denoting bog-holes, where ooze bubbles and sucks;
And arsenical green with spots denoting sloughs
Where algae sicken, and rotting lily pads stink;
And sulphurous yellow with spots that stand for
stretches

Where damp fungi flourish, mostly the species
That, beaten by rain, deliquesce most soddenly,
Or breathe the worst malodor when the foot stirs
them,
Or attract most insects, and those most ugly and
slimy.

Curse you. But I wonder: if all those dampest
Pictures are symbols, to signify your damnation,
Are the further pictures that the inner eye discovers
Symbols as well, to complicate all decision?

Note well: where the lips of bog-holes are blackest
dirty,

The blooms of the jewel-weed may glow their deepest;
Recall: where the trash of sloughs is the saddest dull,
The brood of the shy grebe may dip most daintily;
Let the eye remember: what surprisingly delicate
Hues of pastel shimmer from many different
Mushrooms, even if they grow where woods are dark-
est.

W. R. Moses

TWO POEMS**The First Sorrow of Joseph**

Before her body grew heavy, it grew light.
She moved with a new grace; her ears still rang
with the clamor of her terrible messenger's song;
and when she closed herself for sleep at night
his splendor echoed in her shuttered eyes.

This Joseph knew, who saw her day by day
draw from him as a stone drops down a well,
then saw himself, gesticulating, small,
reflected in the mirrors of her eyes
as in well-water when the ripples die.

And Joseph knew she stood in a bright room
with but one other, and a door between.
How could he understand? He held his peace,
and peace grew still in Mary's quickened womb;
its light moved softly in her alien eyes.

Tim Reynolds

Carmel Beach: little sestina

Crabs spring wild on an endless beach,
clitter and scoot down toasted sand.
Waves come tumbling out of the sea.
The air is split by shrieks of gulls
that whip and stammer across the sky.

Children careen on the blinding sand,
slap and spatter the placid sea,

whistle warm verities into the sky.
Children raise castles upon the beach.

Like drying fish upon the sand
their elders sleep. The hissing sea
reflects a darkening of sky,

which darkness spills across the sea.
Litter and garbage crawl over the sand.

Nothing is now but the sound of the sea.

Tim Reynolds

EVE

Ah, if we were immortal
(Eve grieved beneath the laurel
by Eden's fiery portal)
then we could be moral.

How could I stop your whispering?
(she asked the snake) The evening fell;
I watched the apple withering,
its glossy coat grew dull.

I did not reach to steal (said she)
—my waiting hands I cupped,
standing a while beneath the tree,
until the apple dropped.

I knew that we were mortal,
(Eve grieved beneath the laurel
by Eden's fiery portal)
so how can we be moral?

Anne Bradley

STAYING JUST THERE

Have you seen — have you not seen,
In sun-still spring or autumn air,
As you perhaps went wandering down
Some leaf-shuttered country lane,
A single smallish fly, one that was
Neither fruit fly nor bluebottle
But of a size somewhere in between,
Hover in the mild air, balancing on
Frail, diaphanous, glistening wings —
Keeping in that one place as if
Its whole occupation was to stay
Just there, then suddenly rocketing
Forward, upward, and to the rear
In a vertiginous circular swing,
But coming always back and back
To the same point where it had been
Balancing earlier — not, again,
For any more noticeable reason than
The sheer pleasure of floating in that
Stillness of space, or if a less
Innocent logic would best explain
Such an impressive piece of airy
Virtuosity, just for the sake
Of not looking elsewhere in that time
Its urges told it to meditate there —
As you yourself, bright fool, might well
Be doing, in your own singular way,
Were you the natural balancer that some
Others about you seem to be
In their alternate soaring and hovering,
Light and free as the fly's maneuvering:
Have you seen — have you not seen?

John Moffitt

THREE POEMS**The Welcoming**

I make a company of elms, jays.
The linden joins me with lopsided branches in Wee-
quahic Park. For you
it is summer; the highway jumps with visitors and
trucks;
asphalt decides the country, but it is not so famous
that somehow a boy wriggles out of the hero
The sunfall on a troop of ducks, the stale afternoon.
July simplifies the field. And, like a friend,
my eyes, simple as despair, shall meet you here.

David Shapiro

Lament

Northward the frictionless gulls.
The wives of heroes of a country war,
rinsed to a jetty in the sun's gun over Deal,
waves to the weed in a seaward traffic.

Jobless the witch of the heart
comes their love's diminishing. On the rigid shore

the women grieve their sex, and slogans of despair
make mindless music like the sea's for all its jabber-
ing.

David Shapiro

All The Ferocious Green

All the ferocious green the charred blossoms
of the dogwood rattle with natural sparrow,
every living smiles since the funeral.
And the flies jerk in the sunlight.

The size of a squirrel even, in a sycamore,
flourishes. And the puzzled boys take a trip from
home,
drive away quickly to the public beaches.
And just a moment more to be witless and strong.

David Shapiro

TWO POEMS

Of the Golden Bough

King Hugo that was ruler over Cyprus
Sent his capable messenger, go he said,
To that sophisticated man, Signor Boccaccio
(It was Venus who had put it in his head

Once at the sea shore) and say to him
It is our pleasure that he make for us

A cyclopedia of those long since pagan
Gods. And thereupon Giovanni was

Prompt, rising Florentine diplomat,
Who for twenty-five years from that day,
Longer than Hugo lived, copied his long
Manuscript for moderns, telling of Pasiphæe,

Leda, and Helen: the Olympian family
Trees. But Caron, before the leaves were all told,
Sped King Hugo over the black river,
Singing the chantey that he sang of old.

Cornelia Veenendaal

La Mode, Disait Mon Cousin

*"One perception must immediately and directly lead
to a further perception."* —Charles Olson

"La mode," said my cousin,
"Begins on another street in Paris."
I caught in the conversation that
Ensued occasional reference
to "pompiers," the bright red
And hooting fire brigade.

Would they permit, the new poets,
One perception following on the heels
Of another? If that may be,
I have before me eleven—clomping
In wooden shoes, one into the shadow
Of the other; and towery lace caps,
And plain black dresses.

Some of them are smiling.

The leader adjusts her cap.
And beside the third lopes
A little white dog with one black ear.
Toward the end of the procession
Three stride together,
Then a little space,
And the last syllable.

Are they coming from mass,
These women of Finestère?
Off to a festival? to work?
Hardly could the Apostles have strode
Along a coast of Palestine with more
Completeness of being.

Behind them, a wash of intense ultramarine
Cuts sharp as a paper knife
A plummy bank of white cloud.
And the ground their sabots hurry on
Is O the stone of France.

Cornelia Veenendaal

LE GHETTO VARSOVIEN

About suffering they were seldom wrong
The New Masters: how well they understood
Its inhuman varieties, how it must take place
As if it were a job like any other,
How, when the aged are dully, impassionately
waiting
For the miraculous dying, there must always be

Children who do not specially know what's happen-
ing, skirting
Fearfully, shyly, the edge of the crowd.
They never forgot
That to be really dreadful and not martyrdom death
must run its course
In bunches in white-tiled tidy rooms
Where dogs are not allowed, where afterwards the
torturer's hearse
Trucks off all that says that once they were.
In the Warsaw *Ghetto*, for instance, how none can
turn away
From the disaster because it's everywhere; the
woman may
Have seen her father, husband, lover slain, might
even have listened
To someone, once, talk life and love and art, the
splendid things.
But now for her nothing matters. The sun shines
Equally, as it must, on the hopelessly haunted faces
and the clean arrogant
Faces, while an expensive, clever submachinegun
promises
To whisper Guerdon to them all. And the dark-eyed
lovely girl
Too frightened to cry, having seen so many amazing
things that day,
Has someplace to go and so stumbles on.

Marcus Smith

ECLIPSE

That morning we gathered
in a high mown field at the edge of town,
bringing smoked glasses or film negatives,
a few with binoculars, one man with a telescope.

When the wind died down
we waited in silence, eyes on the cloudless sky,
until we saw the night-black disc
encroaching upon the sun,
a shutter slowly closing, diminishing our day.

In that strange twilight as the darkness grew
there was no dew, no motion,
not even a wing. All color drained away,
cows seemed engraved in the dim far pasture,
a horse by the fence was a granite statue,
the people figures in a photograph.

Remembering curse and omen,
old mythologies or modern prophecies,
we watched our own earth's shadow.
For the span of an indrawn breath there was no time
as the blank clock-face circled with living flame
stared from the white corona—
but at last the shutter opened,
releasing gradually golden waves of light.

Then the sunlit field was a carnival sight,
a brisk breeze blew, limp leaves lifted,
grasshoppers leaped, crickets sang,
daisies danced on their stems,
the women's dresses were harlequin bright,
green banners fluttered from every tree,
and we talked and laughed together excitedly.

Mildred Couzens

OF THE RUNNING BY OF GIRLS

when these girls came running by
laughing and giggling and running by,
over something eternal unto themselves,
a practical joke on a friend of theirs,
a story with a funny ending,
they looked like what they were supposed to look like :
young girls full of moists and shapes,
their eyes and mouths a beginning ;
the roundness of which the old man saw at once
when he stopped at once
to put his shopping bag down
valuable as it was
to watch the running by.

he smiled as he looked
and said as they passed him,
“come on, catch her”
with more than some concern
that brought him out of some concern
always with him, never left him, except for this ;
that brought him back a million years, at least fifty,
his whole world the length of the block.
who would have thought so huge a bridge
was built and crossed
in this so short a time
of the running by of girls.

Samuel L. Albert