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ZISCA

Captain Zisca so willed
that when he die
his skin be stretched
from pate to thigh
to form a drum
to scare off his enemies
till kingdom come.

Per polter cussional geist,
tym tom panic drum:
the captain is at his kettles,
nothing nettles him now,
except the kingdom that never seems to come.

In a glass-cased museum
you can see him stretched out from nine to six.
Beside him lay his sticks
and a note of his own hand:
"Only God shall hear the music
that comes from Zisca's band."

Albert H. Norman

TWO POEMS**Jess Thorpe**

There lies Jess Thorpe, likely in rusty black,
with a garnet brooch stuck in the pillow of her breast,
her sparse gray hair arranged in curls of state.
I wasn't at her burying. Not knowing how old Jess
would take
my presence at her casket side, I stayed away,
so missed the relatives who came and viewed, then
sat and ate
of beans sent in, and bread and cake,
and went into the hills again. . . . How still, how still
lies Jess's house. Geraniums and parlor lace are
yellowing
behind her clouding panes dispirited as eyes.
No muttered threat, no irate scratching of her hoe,
no angry steel on stone, no oath
wafts where, on crutch or cane, with sighs,
she heaved her bulk, tending her beet and carrot
rows.

Proximity it was, not Christian love,
that made us neighbors to each other under trees.
Jess said I threw tin cans into her border phlox.
(I never did.) She said my husband looked a slob in
shorts,

sunning and oiling himself amid the ranting baseball scores.

In wrath at this, or other things, Jess slew my fence-line hollyhocks.

She caned them down one night, and from reports, spoke evil of us on our street. She had not love.

Sundays, the churches belling, I forgave, though marveling

(in gloves and hat) that hate should hold Jess Thorpe erect.

Bearing false witness, she did not fall on evil days.

Her vegetables grew bigger than grew mine, her flowers lovelier.

Contrary to what Methodists expect, hate nourished Jess. It braced her, like good corset stays.

Jess being spirit, she had to also rise.

There hobbles, then, in upper air her robust spirit on its crutch, offending angels by refusing aid.

Earth's phony graces having harried long, she'll not give in,

at least not readily, to heaven's pearly magnitudes.

Arthritic, old, deserted by two men, betrayed,

Jess Thorpe is adamant, who kicked life smartly in the shin.

I who placate, who covenant though shaky in my trust,

stand often in the nipped buds of my hopes where cats now dig and rabbits nibble unconcerned,

in Jess's place, sly fears of age assailing me.

Is there a tremor in the rock I built my house upon?

Will it stand firm? Your not unholy rage here burned,

Jess Thorpe. Your roses speak of courage, and they comfort me.

A Memoir

We ought not to think, Father, in terms of goodbye.
Not goodbye to your hedges clipped and your lawns
watered

in your sagged sweater at day's end,
relaxed robins piping of summer forever.
Not goodbye to your plumb house pumiced satiny,
whose stairwell encapsules a new-wood smell.
Always nostalgia waits for me there,
for wood-shaving curls worn in my princess days
by your tool bench castle of hammer and nails.
There was your whistle, the house waxed and singing,
Schubert on the Victrola, the canary in the kitchen,
all serenading Sunday in the pot roast house.

But not goodbye, my father, to any of those.
They are long gone, as I've been gone,
your fat-bottomed child that nuzzled your neck,
your pride in shined shoes you took walking past
benches,
and bought all the gum and the pictures of Lindy.
Now you don't know me, I'm girdled and girdled with
much advice,

all for your good, but who wants his good,
not you by the table your head in your hands.
Pain is a secret that sets you apart from us.
Irritations roost in this house like birds.
We tiptoe and whisper to be undisturbing,
but constantly nervous birds scream up.
We come, and my husband is stealthily eyeing clocks.
The children are whining, how long? how long?
My mother is weeping, she's always weeping.
She who was once your Whitsun bride,
in a village of garlands and earnest bells,

now wants to go a little, see a little, buy a little,
not spend all her days with a sick old man.

Ah, my father, we are undeserving, turn from us,
creep to your couch behind ferns, spread your
newspaper tent,

dream. Be in your world of those Saturday nights
when you were regaling the pinochle boys.

Above in my bed how the house was rocked
with beery humor and belly laughs, the oilcloth
slapped,

the cards were rustling like poplar leaves
remembered along your German lanes.

In my pillow I giggled at village wags.

Mill Anna, daft, wore three hats to the fair.

Loud Bertha was rolled in a ditch of nettles
and burned in her shame on a Sunday's walk.

O my father, go there at the last.

Tubes and bottles of agony over,
slip down as though in a ferny dream,
into your province of Saxony.

Who is to tell us to disbelieve
the simplest concept is after all true?

HEAVEN, I once saw embroidered, IS HOME.

Then wake to a roistering roistering dawn,
in a startling air of dung and dew.

From your featherbed warmth over icy tiles,
onto the cobbles, into the sun,

breathe your boyhood, the apples are ripe!

And there in her clogs, her head in a cloth,
comes she, as ever displeased and scolding:

Why are you late? Where have you been?

Where are your socks, where are your shoes,

have you no sense? But wiping her hand on her skirts

to be worthy to touch your forehead, to smooth your
hair.

When I pray—I think I can sometimes be said to
pray—

I pray, my father, that you shall be there.

Ina Jones

BELOW STARS

The virgin buckaroo
wears red flannel sleepers
and pets a snake stuffed with tissue
and nylons.

Wonders how color t.v.
would accentuate
blue eyes
of the late late stars

And rises from a nest of animal crackers
for a glass of unsettle fluoridized water.

Brushes 100 strokes of goop
around strands of
rubber band braces and
into creme rinsed curls

And with . . . Amen.”
is kissed by the same wind

rushing patrons
under

painted streetlights.

WE FOLLOW DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY

I'm an awful failure at these green stamps but finally get two books together, we bundle the kids up and spend the whole day finding the Redemption Center. My wife is frivolous, my chest unclogs, we grab a fistful of gift suggestion books for bedtime reading when I yell out THE NORTH STATES BIRD FEEDER
M 1169

please! The winter's been harsh, it's out of stock but can be got from Cincinnati in two years. Well, we can wait so when it comes I

run up a ladder, give the funny screw a twist and the damn thing sticks to the elm somehow. My wife and kids drag the seed sack up from the cellar, we follow directions carefully, to the watch! Hey, where's Peter, dear? For godsake, he's still in the yard, holding out his little hand and for chrissake there's our first bird flying over, black, exhausted magic. Get in here you little bastard! But he won't budge, we chant nicer things through the window but it's no use, the other birds are swooping in now, surrounding Peter, he puts down the air he's breathing, takes pride in a hurried breakfast with the birds. Above, the branches are clear but there's still a weakness in him, his mouth fills with more seeds, it is toward the end of the year and a boy's turning into a bird in our yard. We are crying now, as he rises slowly up over the hot snow, lowers the shades on his little eyes, reaches a tongue down a throat to the middle of a little body, the cold air calling.

Stuart Friebert

NORA

She moves
with a crunch
some call it
authority
on her thin legs
thumping
about the room
as if she did not
own it, as if
it did not part for her
docile as
rainwater—
never in her
life having
lost
an argument
she keeps a cool head
as she
bastes
the chicken
and beats down
the cat
with
one quick hand

John D. Niles

UNWRITTEN RITES

we were naked
only they were blocking
our total touch

with quiet ceremony
we unplaced our matching rings
and stuffed them behind the Kleenex box

our celebration is unspoken
every now and then when i dust
i see the rings
still there

at a church affair
i met a lady who asked
are you his daughter
no i said his wife
pink and laughing she exclaimed
why don't you wear a ring
i told her
all my life i'd never cared very much
for rings

Jeanne Hill

JOURNEY
FOR
CHARLES
OLSON

come on, where's a journey
but coming from someplace,

but going.

Relent;

tis a false camp
a faulty premise,
each night luring in strangers

with fanciful tongues,
each night, a mimic
the sound of trained birds,
domestic complaints.

Vivamus

the groans of a girl
for her absent lover,
of ocean for shore.

The plants that still live
will be hard to pack,
and most of the passes are closed.

Snow.

Suck in America, journey time.
Put on your chains,
a new syntax, hard
fast as speech.

I think I will leave this place,
head for Storrs
to see Olson. The furnace
knocks, the windows off their frames.
The ivy I cut dies
in an applesauce jar.

What sounds are unfound
in cold Iowa?

What syllables lurk
in the breath of Nebraska?

“the non-art but logic of HISTORY”

again, an automobile.

again, settle affairs.

Take a handful of books;
the Mencken will stay, dated,

Yeats Duncan

Blake Creeley

& Lorca G. Snyder

my Gaius Valerius, Whitman.

I would not go if I did not have
a question.

 A handful of books,
the Frazer for magic, E.P. for fuel,
C.S. Peirce because, yes, I am going
back to New England,
new english.

He himself said, we must know one thing better
than anyone else. The question.

The discourse.

Monday, the first time, I read them aloud
and it rained. There was water
beneath the front door, and a window was open.
I read them again
a day later, the shingle warm sun
where cats pass on business
where laundry claps.

Four years ago.

On that day I gave the birds holiday,
followed the poems where he led me.