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There Stood Antoninus

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There Stood Antoninus

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THERE STOOD ANTONINUS

Lines written after a visit to the University of Buffalo on March 19, 1969 to hear Brother Antoninus read his poetry and comment.

There stood Antoninus
Brother to holy Dominic
And unwholey brother too
To Alan and Lawrence and Kenneth
And all the famous Frisco friends... This craggy-voiced mystic
Whose written words
Cut like Jeffers' High Tor rocks
Savage wounds in sleepy saintly psyches,
Sincere but sin-seared,
And redden them bloodlessly
With the rich embarrassment
Of lingering last syllables,
Ultimates,
Looked too much like my
Stern and patriarchal grandmother:
The errant strings of hair
Shoulder-long and mottled yellow-white
Mocking the meagre fifty-seven years
That hump his anguished shoulders
With the world-worn weight of ninety-pluw;
His modal horn-rimmed glasses
Scarcely serve the nervous orbs
Long since despaired of straining
To enlarge and focus hearts
And blurry super-egos
With ears that hear but sounds
And never words...
His twisted man-mouth snarls
In grim disdain of softened
Saccharine syllables
And all his countenance is agonized
In one Precursor's grimace...
There is no pleasantry in prophets—
One looks in vain for some seraph-sign
Of surety's happiness in him
But fails—
Must learn that happiness
To him is not
A pleasurable commodity
Nor journal joyful;
His Christly optimism, benevolence
Is kept well hid,
Har bargained hard with suffering
And keeps well hid
As if he'd test his verses'
Sinewy crescendo
And subtle magnanimity
With antitheses of Love...

Antoninus turns the timid off
The fragile phonied flower fanciers
Who look for loves external trappings:
Magnetic mein and gentle phrase
And easy, smiling, sweet vernaculars
Of virtue not seized
But ceded.

And yet
There is something ajar in a prophet
Who forsweares all compromising truck
With Trade,
Reviles the cult
Of Commerce
Resounds old Ezra's fierce anethema
'Gainst Usura
Then woos the minist'ring of
Electrophonic ancillae...
There is something awry
In the portrait of a towering
Man of cenobitic cloth,
In cloth
Arranging the tonal lamps
And microphones and tape recorder wires,
Feeding-tubes to suck his savage gristle
Into polyesther viscera
For will ful spasms of sound reguritated
And unassimilated.

There is something sad
In the aspect of a seer
Of freedom's charismatic voice
Tethered to a ten-foot cord
And forced to pace a measured footage...
How should his awkward feet
Avoid the tangle
With this abstracted pacing
Whose constant threat itself
Distracts the earnest listener?

Yet
There stood Antoninus,
And railed in histrionic wrath
At slamming doors and dropping pens
Made tolerable by late congenial "pardon me's"
Theatrics all acknowledged to enjoin
Upon the unkempt cultured throng
Some half-earnest try
(O Buffalo, Buffalo! Is this the way
You treat your poet!"")
At "focused concentration,"
And begging humbling disenchantment
("You know me as a monk;
I am a man")...
He read
And the roseate metaphors
Of *his* woman, his fleshly flower,
Loved but unbedded
Rose to mystic heights
That left the unaecountred listeners
Below the line of
Thinning stinging air,
The towering heights of Analog
Unascended,
Uncomprehended...
(There were, I'll warrant,
Psychologists unseasoned there
In mystic lore and spirit fare
Who'd bid the brother see an analyst
Cr'd dare themselves to recommend
His chastely vows annullment
And counsel, "Get a woman!"...
Little knowing
His painful plaints revealed
Scarcely could he plase
The woman he's already got,
Loved with a passion nonetheless,
His *Rose* divine...

There stood Antoninus
In the too, too real flesh
Before me,
No longer some angelic voice
A California's length away,
The fleshly Antoninus
*Man*...

Brother,
I don't know what to make of you...
You were right,
We could not comprehend you "fully,"
"Enough," perhaps "at all,"
But I refuse the total fault...
I for one will only read your poems
Henceforth...
Your written voice
Abstracted thus
Comes clearly, unadulterate
From its Source...

Brother,
Trust more the written voice!
Trust more the Source!

Clarence Amann

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**Paradox**

You, who pound the podium impassioned,
With slushy sledgehammers of a veiled whore,
Who Utopias and caged Edens have fashioned
Of a maggots beauty, a leper's sore;
Who court clay and gold, blessed wondrous scrap,
And turn nature upon her tail
To whirl in dizzy despair and-snap!
Her crimson soul bereft of its hue, pale.

You whom I loathe, are myself in rage.
A mind is a labyrinth, beware the whitened sage.

Bernard Ballou

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**April is Gone**

The bus has no voices.
The saddened, empty faces
Have closed their eyes
To dream away
The heavy minutes
Of their quiet journey
And to think of other times

In the raining silence
I remember her
And her loving words
Drift back to me

I can see the letters
Saying not to worry
Because she understands
And there is no need to explain

If I didn't have to be here
I would be with her now
As once we planned
To hold her sleepily close
Always near
With no need of goodbye

The bus stops
The people stir
Each looking at today
While waiting patiently
For tomorrow

Dennis O'Brien

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