Cover Page Footnote
Originally published as: Volume 7, Spring, 1962.

This full issue is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1962/iss1/17
THE ANGLE

Volume 7

Annual Magazine of
St. John Fisher College
Rochester, N.Y.

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SPRING 1962
"T is hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dang’rous is th’ offence,
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.
"T is with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In Poets as true genius is but rare,
True Taste as seldom is the Critic’s share;
Both must alike from Heav’n derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.

ALEXANDER POPE

An Essay On Criticism
ONLY A QUESTION

Mediaeval corridors rose high
    Deep shadowed by lofty walls
Mystery and authority the supports
    That arched that vaulting
Began far below upon the profound floor
Where a man or wondering child stood
Calm beneath mystery and authority.

It is wondered if man's loss
    Of consciousness of God
Of his smallness deep within
    Of the dust of dead mediaeval days
Wondered if this has to do with
Rampant fears of high soaring places
Has to do with the reaction
    From a serene smallness.

RICHARD O'CONNOR, C.S.B.

Mixed season,
    bastard of an early chill,
your motley skin
betrays your incest origin.

Go back toward spring
or on to it;
I care not which.

But,
    stop standing in shivering gold
and
blood shot fleece.

Your beauty marks are only moles

ROBERT KLEINHANS

November 1961
God, Man and the Devil in The Talent Scout

by FRANK SALAMONE

In 1961 a very fine little novel by Romain Gary slipped into publication in the United States almost unnoticed by the reviewers. I feel that the few critics, however, that did discuss the book missed its message. Atlantic Monthly's reviewer, for instance, found the theme of the book to be centered in a denial of the existence of God and the devil: any power attributed by man to the supernatural was merely man's Faith in the words "God" and "devil." Following a semantic approach, the Atlantic reviewer went on to discuss the varied meanings that these words may have for each individual man. The central lesson Romain Gary was teaching, concluded the article, was that man --and not any supernatural force--was the real master of his fate. This interpretation of the book would place the author in the same Gnostic tradition as Archibald MacLeish, (J. B.) and Paddy Chayefsky, (Gideon).

However, I feel that a subtler interpretation of what is the central emphasis of the novel is valid and plausible. The French title of the book is Le Mangeur des Etoiles (The Eater of Stars). In this title lies an important key to the story. The narrator --a man who reports rather than thinks--makes this reference to the title in Chapter XIX:

There were the twisted shadows of cacti above him, and strange-shaped rocks that sometimes seemed to move and come to life. But this was an illusion, for the earth belonged to man. His friends had often called him "the star eater" (le mangeur des etoiles). It was the name they gave in the tropical valleys of his birth to those who were mastota addicts. It gave them great happiness and permitted them to see God in their visions. But they called him that only jokingly, not because he ate the plant, which was only good enough for old peasants like his mother, but because of the hundreds of stars who had appeared in his night club; it was, they said, as if he was devouring them all, and still looking for more. Everybody needed magic to stay alive. It just so happened that he needed it more than anyone else.

Jose Almayo determined at an early age that the only way to succeed in this "wicked world" was to be wicked. And if the world were wholly the devil's, then one should worship him in evil so that one's soul might be accepted by him. Jose rose to become dictator of a small Latin American nation. However, no matter how evil he became, he never did manage to sell his soul to the devil. He did meet God and the devil at the end of the book -- or did he?

As in Dante's Inferno, Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, or Shakespeare's Tempest, all the characters in this work, from Almayo's idealistic American mistress (a scathing caricature of our society's values) to the diabolical Diaz, may be taken as facets of Almayo's character. These facets are held up to different lights--natural and unnatural--so that one can really behold them in all their manifold varieties. What one sees is an Indian who was partly led astray and partly chose to go astray. Almayo was led astray by literal moralists who viewed life's actions oversimplistically as being either all good or all evil. The either--of approach is exemplified by certain Spanish priests and by a Billy Sunday type of preacher from the United States. He chose to go astray by his own unquestioning acceptance and further perseverance in the belief that the world is evil. He himself is evil and willingly so. No one forced him to be what he had become, He is not stupid -- much pain is spent in establishing this fact. His American mistress is mocked at for choosing her shallow alternative to the complex problem of life. Through his mocking of her, Gary is mocking "psychological deterministic" novelists.

With all this said, there still remains the problem of Almayo's meeting with "Jack" and his sulphur-smelling companion. For many years Almayo has been trying to view the act performed by an entertainer named Jack. Almayo has been viewing one entertainer after another, hoping to find one with supernatural powers. He feels that he will finally be successful when he sees Jack, a mass-hypnotist. Just before his death, Jose
manages to see the performer. However, Jack cannot fool Almayo. Jack and his disreputable companion speak of former and greater days when they could call fire from the heavens and part the seas.

Is the irony of the story that God and the devil are myths? Is this where the emphasis falls? I think rather that Gary, with his paunchy, English, gentleman-Jack type of God and his dull, sulphur-smelling type of devil, is primarily saying that these misconceptions of God and the devil do not exist. Yet man needs a faith. Man must seek something above himself—something befitting his dignity. I do not think that Gary sees this “something” as God in the Catholic sense, because he does not know the concept which Catholic theology has of God. But he is writing in an appeal to man to live up to his potential dignity, and this is no little tribute to pay Gary. He also affirms that man cannot blame evil on forces outside him: man has free choice and is not psychologically or supernaturally determined. Read in this light, The Talent Scout has much to offer the thoughtful reader.

AND THEN THE SNOWS COME QUIETLY

The happy hour of summer, written on a long-gone sultry wind, frozen by a northern blast, is gone forever.

Black damp deadened winter boughs,
twisted, tortured by the barren chilly wind,
leaden clouds, laden with the evening mist,
lonely street, groping through the quiet, gray-cast waiting city

shimmering reflections on the watered road,
red and cold-white, wild, proportionless,
ugly nervous dance, sinful, unnatural, taut, anxious

empty park, deserted wind-whipped carrousel
muddy playground, aching for the spring again
red balloon stall, warping, rotting, gray
little city park,
still-dead, motionless

And I am destroyed
by the bittersweet thought of yesterday,
only alive to the wasteland
of the winter evening
For I am of the desert now,
a dry and bitter, hollow man.
But then the snows come quietly, soothingly, out of the dark
the pure flakes fall on the smoked-up windows,
looking at the yellow fog within
as peacefully they drift to death
on wet cement below
conquering the narrow smelly alleys,
chimneys, gutters, no escape
from the healing evening snows

and I renew the Quest,
simply, suddenly,
the Fisher King grows well again
the wasteland awaits replenishing,
and the buds stir.

But now the moment of splendor is gone in winter's melancholy evening.

And I wait watching the withered boughs.

THOMAS McKAGUE

The road stretches before me into the seemingly endless night. The moon high above my head, casts light to illuminate my way. I am running...

Behind me the footsteps of others fall on the rock-strewn pavement. I will not--I cannot force myself to look back. I must run and run and run. My pace does not lessen but quickens as the road races upward. It becomes rougher, rockier in the cold light.

But I must rest now, I cannot continue as I am. My breath comes short and in quick gasps, my lungs heave and my heart cries for peace...I fall exhausted on the dew-wet grass that lines the road. Those behind me catch up, quicken their pace, and pass by me in the night.

A man collapses beside me, his sweating face barely silhouetted in the falling light. He lies still with only the sound of his rasping breath breaking the utter quiet of the now soundless night. He rolls over and looks at me with sad, questioning eyes and asks why I, too, am here.

"I am tired...I am resting...I will start again soon..."
"I will go no further... I am through... I am too tired to continue. But you go on. You run until you fall again. Not I... not I..."

On again now, my steps are stronger and quick. The muffled sound of living tears fades behind me as I race to regain my lead. Far ahead the figures profile themselves against the setting moon. My being is nothing but power and speed. Nothing can stop me in my furious chase. A step, a foot, a yard and I am closer. Nearer I come; they seem to be tiring! Run harder, faster than they. There, ha! one falls! I pass him as he rolls by me. The next is not far ahead. You! Trip! Fall! Stumble! Stop! Roll helplessly back. I smell the dank scent of sweat as I pass him. But who is that in the distance? He seems faster than the others. Run harder...

In the chill of dawn I feel hot breath on my shoulder. He tries to pass by me but he cannot... I am more experienced than he. See? I am gaining the lead... only a bit more and I will be ahead. Do not beat so, my heart; do not ache so, my lungs; the sun will rise soon.

You there, ahead of me, wait, I must tell you of what is to come. I must tell you of this endless road, of its ruts and pitfalls, of how to run it. Slow down, there is so far to go. Let me lead you into the dawn, we must arrive before it is light. No? You will not? Run then, run until I catch and pass you.

Blinding pain sears me like a white hot iron. My leg, bent and broken, crumbles under me. My body begins to roll down the hill, gains speed with each tortured revolution... I become dizzy with the speed. Above me the moon reels in the dying night. Down I roll, I cannot stop... I hear the laughter of those I have passed as I plunge helplessly back. There is neither darkness nor light...

A. M. FISHER
The False Truth

Twice I have spoken,
Only to be heard
As the rain is heard when it falls
Upon the soft new grass of spring.

My words did not demand,
Nor were they ugly, or bitter,
But echoed only sounds
Of straining symphonic themes
Signifying fettered love.

Laughter greeted them at first,
Tinkling like glittering cut glass strips
Reverbrating in the midnight wind.
What, I heard the second time,
Can be the use of words? Actions are
The better means of saying what is felt.

Ah yes, I say, and then fall silent,
Like the hunted wolf. But I think,
And know that words
Apart from actions mean little-
That actions without words
May mean even less;
For when the heart desires
The whispered sounds of love,
Nothing else will serve.

ALFONSO BORRELLI

On Seeing Roman Pines

Dance spires, churn and spin about,
Toys of timeless wind,
Diana’s witnesses, purple wood,
Each unto Thy own,

Dost Thou still partake of shrill sounds of bronze,
Forged amongst hot fires,
Nursed by Etruscan prodigy,
That serve to feed the craving mistress of
Mediterranean isles,
Breathing flames upon altars of crystal sand,

The sun sets, the wind lulls Thee,
Selfsame force, that now as then,
Fleets hauntingly over flagstones
once hot with pride,
And raises little blurred hills of Appian dust,
pieces of arches,
Which rung with echoes of selfish song.

Reborn on the very lips of those men,
Whose inheritance is Thine,
Whose rough impersonal hands,
Debase the graven, dead Facades,
To build, see, hear again,
Fluted stone, blinding brass, iron hooves,
That which Thy innocence proclaims to be the
ways of little children,
Whose joyful shrieks break the soul of
wakened evening.

LAWRENCE FLECKENSTEIN
The literary review should be and has been one of the more stimulating and invigorating institutions of literary endeavor. Today the book review has fallen from a position of prominent activity to an amazingly low state of morbid drowsiness. The literary critic vies with his colleagues in bestowing the stamp of approval on as many new books as is humanly possible. The influential book sections of the New York papers now represent a veritable monument to lethargy. The book reviews of at least one national weekly magazine are written with amusement of the readers in mind, without the least intention of educating them or guiding them in the selection of their reading materials. Doris Grubach analysed this question in the August 13, 1960, issue of America. In asserting her thesis, Mrs. Grubach cited a book review which had appeared in the New York Times. It was a discussion by Aubrey Menon of John Berry's Krishna Fluting. Despite the reviewer's exposure of the ridiculousness of the novel and the poverty of the author's thought, the book received a passing mark from the more amiable majority of critics. It is worth quoting here, because of its singular merit. (Mrs. Grubach found it the only worthwhile review in the entire year) and because of its apparent lack of effect upon the public.

The principle character is a young man who is half Pennsylvania Quaker and half Hindu. He is a poet. He is writing an epic. He has, says Mr. Berry, "virile hair on his toes." He is -- naturally -- very amorous and early in the story he makes advances to a local woman "by sitting on her legs and leaning back on her as if she were a mat." He is not always so delicate. A little further on we find that "from head to foot he pounded her with a sandal, weeping at the violence he was doing to them both." (That is, the lady and himself, not I believe, the lady and the sandal, though it might be, since Mr. Berry is fond of symbolic passages.) He is a man of strong but complex emotions. Looking at himself in a mirror, he "poured whiskey and drank it neat, shuddering; then half a tumbler, not shuddering." "The fact is," writes Mr. Berry, "that he found himself infinitely attractive."

The public's reception of this unusual novel can be summed up by the fact that it received a National Book Award. The state of affairs here is really very simple: few noteworthy book reviews are being written at this time and, when they are, they are without impact, for the public fails to take them seriously. This lack of public
response results directly from a lack of exposure to quality. Without such exposure, it is virtually impossible to recognize a truly momentous piece of criticism.

The tragic element here is that the reviewer has an obligation to discern the true works of the literary art. It is the reviewer who must distinguish between the commonplace and the consequential. Failing to rise to the occasion, the critic promotes the influence of mediocrity and discourages the extension of genuinely original and creative activity.

It should be remembered that the review is a literary work in itself. Literature has a purpose and a message, and the review must examine the former and comprehend the latter. The application of sound literary principles is the basic component of a good review. The reviewer must speak on aesthetic taste and cite instances of intrinsic value. The definition of standards and goals stressed by the reviewer would, per se, act as a stimulus for further achievement. The more ambitious would, as a result, be invited to respond and the indifferent would be prodded to react. Clearly such a result would be most welcome, if the reviewer offers constructive criticism rather than destructive approval. And even among books whose import is mainly spiritual and religious, the sentimental and hackneyed must be condemned and the animated and refreshing must be given welcome recognition. Books of true spiritual import could easily be discerned from the repetitious and sentimental folly which is often encountered today. One must never lose sight of the fact that good intentions do not always give birth to a work of quality; moreover, good intentions are never effective unless they are clearly and correctly expressed.

The criteria of criticism are three: 1) what does the author say? 2) does he say it well? 3) was it worth saying? By answering these simple questions, a fair and competent appreciation of any work of literature can be obtained, provided, of course, there exists in the reviewer some degree of ability and insight. Once the theme or idea has been isolated, style and content can more readily be discussed. Unfortunately, however, the formidable array of literary critics presently prefer (with but all too rare exceptions) to display little concern for what is indicated or proposed in a book. As this important factor is relegated to a status of little regard, so too is the author's method of propagating his ideas given but superficial comment. This is perhaps the most disturbing habit of our modern school of criticism: the blind acceptance of the idea with little or no serious thought given to it. The philosophy of the author is easily approved by the indifferent reviewer without hesitation (indeed, without recognition). "The pen is mightier than the sword," and in this day and age, how true! It is almost impossible to conceive how often political institutions have been weakened, religious belief shaken, and morality rejected as the result of subtle though truthless insinations in otherwise innocent writings. It need only be mentioned in passing that a recent work narrating the fortunes (and subsequent misfortunes) of a certain recent European dictatorship is a good example of this dubious technique. Gross manipulation of the facts and cleverly worded, sometimes anti-clerical, phrases give historical facts new meaning. It goes without saying that the reviewers dutifully gave the book wide acclaim and now, what with the declaration of the "experts" proclaiming it the definitive volume on the subject, it has become a best-seller of 1961 and the choice of several book clubs. Only two reviews of any importance have exposed the underlying meaning of the book -- and these
appeared in publications of limited circulation. This interest and the diligence of the reviewer must detect what is misleading; the refinement and qualifications of the reviewer's judgment must note what is insignificant, for a continuous diet of nothingness can be as devastating as the most brilliant and outspoken attack.

Thus the inferences of literary criticism are far reaching. The critic, in literature as well as in art and music, is responsible for the "fashions" of the day. The future developments of the literary art are, quite conceivably, dependent upon an invigorating examination of present output. And as the principles of the individual are frequently formed by the matter he reads, those books which pass the reviewer with his approval must of necessity be worthwhile and advantageous. (If literary tastes of this country were raised somewhat, and the practices of the reviewer raised considerably, would not the book review constitute an accepted and authoritative method of "censorship," eliminating voluntarily that which offends public decency?)

An independence from compromising associations which tend to influence the reviewer in his work is necessary for the purely objective investigation of any piece of literature, though being independent is not synonymous with being unprincipled. Literature, though Being independent is not synonymous with being unprincipled. Until this "neutral" state is adhered to by the critic, no amount of native ability or literary sensitivity will produce a good review. And what is of greater consequence is that until good reviews are frequently written and widely read, the literary world will suffer from a serious impairment, making it impossible to exert any outside force to improve literary output.

Therefore, at present we suffer from an ever-increasing wave of literary thought which is without reflection and without substance. The only solution appears to be the discovery by the reviewer of himself and the eventual awakening in the critic of a much belated sense of duty.
The Leech

THOMAS McKAGUE

The road was narrow. It ran through a young innocent woods of birch saplings. The scent of spring, a thick smell of winterbroken, decayed boughs and thawed, rich, warm humus, drifted through the open car window. Pale-yellow morning rays glistened on the chrome hood ornament and dazzled on the white finish of the long, elegant car.

Why'd ya hav'ta come this way for?'' said the driver a thick-set, rich looking man, to the girl on the opposite side of the front seat. As if interrupted from some sensuous pleasure, she said curtly, "You needn't swear." And then her eyes sparkled suddenly as she raised her bare, small shoulders almost to her ears in a gesture of childlike excitement. "It's spring! I want to see the earth again. The flowers and the buds..." She gazed out the window at the blur of woods, her lips shaped in a puffing smile.

"Humph!" he snorted, pressing harder on the accelerator. As he sped along the rough road, he became increasingly annoyed at the numerous ruts and small rocks.

A scratching, groping sound in the back seat broke her quiet, enchanted spell. She leaned over the seat and clutched at the furry creature scampering on the floor. "'Come on, Monkey. Come to your friend,"' she said in soft, caressing tones. The monkey was small and pathetically thin, but had large, shimmering, liquid-black
eyes which protruded from its bony skull. She pressed the melancholy face to her firm young breasts. “Monkey, was it dark and lonely back there? Oh, we’ll fix you up.” She opened the glove compartment, took out a pint bottle of whiskey, poured some in a paper cup produced from her mammoth handbag, and trickled the warm-smelling stuff down the monkey’s open, eager mouth.

The driver showed no surprise at this, but merely gave a faint sarcastic grunt as he continued to drive along, watching for mudholes in the road.

The animal jumped up and down when he had finished drinking the liquor, screeching and hissing and making sounds that could only be interpreted as laughter. She rubbed its little pink palms between her delicate hands and kissed its bony head. “Now you feel better, don’t you?”

A deer watched the long white car speed by from its secure camouflaging of intertwined, budding birch branches. It caught a glimpse of the young girl sitting by the window in her black cocktail gown, tiara sitting askew on the orange-tinted pompadour of the otherwise fine black hair, with the monkey crawling around her shoulder and toying with the multitudinous loops of colored beads slinging from her long, fresh, tight-skinned throat.

She placed a cigarette in a foot-long silver cigarette holder and lit it, swinging her free hand out the window, letting the warm moist air rush against it. The smoke made the monkey sneeze and she giggled gleefully. And then, without any change of expression on her pink face, she said softly, “Be a darling and stop the car. I want to go for a hike with Monkey.”

A sharp guttural groan escaped from his sagging mouth. Red faced, he began to talk. “I should’ve known it the minute I laid eyes on you at that damn party. You’re a case! A real case!” He stopped the car and stared fiercely at her calm, unperplexed eyes. “Now look, I’ve picked up a lot’a dizzy broads in my time, but you’re... On we get to Philly, if we ever find the main highway again, I’m gonna ditch you as fast as... Now get out and go for your damn hike, and bring that flea-bitten rag of an animal with you!”

Not disturbed in the least by his outburst, she slid out of the car gracefully, carrying the monkey on her shoulder. Calmly she said, “Now wait here. We’ll be back in no time at all.” “Yea, sure!” he growled. “Damn broad.”

And she stood there for a while in the morning sunlight, now a charming, innocent-looking girl of twenty, slim, tall, dressed for a night club, holding a small monkey to her chest, looking at the budding woods before her, smelling the real smell of spring, enchanted by this new, strangely familiar world, smiling. A shrill honk broke her spell, and an impatient voice boomed from within the car, “Hurry up, dama ya! I don’t wanna stay here all day!”

She didn’t look back, but stroked the thin shaking body of the monkey. “Come on, we’ll get away from that mean old man.”

The lonely, quiet, crisp, sparkling woods greeted her as a friend. The monkey jumped from her arms and raced ahead; she took off her heels, lifted her gown above her knees, and ran barefooted after it, grabbing the low-hanging branches as she passed them with her free hand, tearing
off the yellow-green buds as she stumbled on the virgin earth. And then she slipped on a rotting mat of leaves, this time making no effort to get up, but rather she lay breathlessly, laughingly, looking at the pale-yellow morning rays that filtered through the scrawny network of white birch branches above. Birds chirped excitedly; a white rabbit hopped over her long, jeweled arm and sped onwards through the woods. She was happy.

But all the browns, yellows, greens, the blue sky above, everything in the reality of the woods was too bittersweet for her sensitivity. The smile left her face and she began to whisper through the blades of grass touching her cheek. ‘Well Mama, I’m home again. ‘Don’t know why I left when you died, but I just couldn’t live in that dull town anymore. I had to run away.’” Suddenly the monkey pounced on her sprawled body. “Monkey here understands, don’t you Monkey?” The creature did not seem to understand; rather it screeched and jumped up and down on her stomach, a sudden terror oozing from its protruding black eyes.

“You know, Monkey, I can still picture that summer morning years ago when I was playing on the back porch and Mama brought out a tray of freshly-baked oatmeal cookies for me. I can still see her understanding smile, and I can smell the warm cookies even now - it was a kind of sweetish, earthy smell. But I musn’t think of those things. It makes me sad.”

In her reverie she did not notice the monkey’s nervous screeching and its constant tugging at her beads. But a sudden cold, slimy feeling at her calf made her spring up. The monkey gave out a deathly howl and clutched desperately at her neck, with big monkey tears swelling around the edges of its popping eyes. She stared down, cautiously, stiffly, at her calf. On its shapely curve clung a large, black-brown speckled leech, unmoving, sucking her fresh red blood.

For a moment there was utter stillness. She and the monkey looked down quietly at the feasting parasite; even the birds were still, terrified. The whole woods, the sun, seemed to be peering downward at the helpless calf. She did not know what to do. And then she screamed.

A million terrorized birds fluttered and chirped in the trees; the monkey clawed at her neck, screeching hopelessly; she screamed again; she ran to the car, tripping many times and screaming all the way; she pounded on the car door, hysterical, crying; she tore the monkey from her throat and dashed it to the ground; she flew at the front seat, squirming, digging into the leather with her fingernails; she stiffened, shook throughout her body, and then collapsed. The man stared at her prostrate body agast, not understanding. And all the while the ugly leech continued to suck her fresh red blood.

Later she found herself laying on the back seat. As she peered out the window, she saw that the day had grown cloudy, and that they were now driving on the main highway. He turned to her and said, “‘You alright now?’” She nodded. There was a pause. “‘I took the thing off your leg and bandaged the mark.’”

She looked down at her calf. There was a neat white bandage over the wound, with red mercurochrome dye smeared around the edges. She would push what happened in the beautiful woods miles behind out of her mind.
The oozing, slimy creature was forgotten. She would tell her friends she had scratched her leg on a car door.

"Be a darling and light my cigarette, would you?" The foot-long silver cigarette holder with an unlit cigarette in the tip hung over his shoulder. "And give me the bottle. Monkey here looks sad and lonely again."

And the long white car sped gracefully down the highway towards Philly.

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The Test

Now I am alone;
Alone but for my Guard
Who sleeps too often,
Forgetting that I am frail
And prone to wander trails
Not meant for me....

He does not wonder of,
Or doubt the Word
As he hears it - he has passed;
I must, or forget the joy found in part
With her -
That is the offending thorn
Within the Crown.

His head nods in sleep I roam,
She weeps in silence -
But worst,
Eternal Sorrow cannot be heard
Or felt - it is its lack of ending
Which pains deepest.

ALFONSO BORRELLI
A Boy

There was a boy
Who used to hunt tadpoles
In the filthy ponds
Of the yellow-green spring woods
Just outside the city limits,
Laughing all the while;
Or walk with a sandwich
Sealed in a little brown bag
To the deserted circus grounds-
An ice-encrusted late March meadow-
And have a lonely picnic there,
Thrilled by the air of expectancy,
Pretasting the cotton candy
That would arrive sometime about July.

He is gone now,
That innocent boy;
Only a memory
Written on the hearts of one or two.
And a lifetime from now
Who will remember the enchanted lad?
Who used to laugh at speckled tadpoles
As they hopped away from him.
Who used to search
The deserted circus grounds of March,
Alone and happy.

THOMAS MCKAGUE

Distraction And A Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

Wolves rapine, fleece runs red
and mutton lies the man

He makest me to lie down
in green pastures.

brambles burn, briars scar
and soul-less staves lie in the
hell of a noon day sun

He clothes me like the lily
of the field.

naked go the sores
that stank the rags
which yesterday destroyed

He feeds me like the sparrows
of the sky.

vacuum entrails
scar the mind
with the horseman's wound

And grantest rest,
and peace,
and love.

caldron of hate
set in the valley
of a dunghill

Thou art the Eternal, Master of the Now.

slave of a roaming moment.

ROBERT KLEINHANS
Russian Nights

Listen to the wind, scurrying across blank tundras
Flinging crystal pellets against orbed windows red
With gleamings from golden ikons, steaming samovars--
The wind, primieval harp of the great heart-land,
For ages has moaned on the breast of Mother Earth.

Mongol and Cossack have walked with hoofprints
Black through harvest fields, golden-white;
But the manna has always grown again golden-white
To sustain and nourish the stargazing Muzhik.

The wind now wanders and cries,
Mongol and Cossack still ride--
But there amidst the stars
Golden ikons glimmer still.

LAWRENCE C. FLECKENSTEIN

PART OF AN ANSWER
TO MELVILLE'S "BARTLEBY"

The land was troubled by a wind, a wind of two years' strength, and it had blown with gathering force for at least that long. A small boy Nameless travelled a roadway that seemed to drive the land along with it, that seemed to give reason and expression to the land. The land seemed made only for the roadway.

The small boy Nameless, who travelled its surface chose one late evening to surmount its great hill, the hill that rose so steep and that took strength and which climbed up from the plain.

In his first upward steps, the boy felt the tremendous force powerfully holding him back, the force of the earth pulling him down to itself. But he continued to climb. Then the wind of the road, had he again questioned whether to turn back, would not let him return. Oh, not that it was that strong. But it was wild--you know how a windy night seems filled with confusion and how it's the wind that's at fault. It took him into itself and breathed into his fancy the force of its excitement, its furious will to move unimpeded, to rise and sail freely. The small lad Nameless was soon struggling, and as he neared the hill's top, the wind seemed to pause. Everything became quiet.

At the arc of the hill a huge, knarled tree stretched its arms to the sky. An old lantern was swinging from one bough lifted over the road, and lantern and tree creaked together in shadows. Fine soot had blackened the small glass panes on the side of his approach. The sight of the lamp stirred the boy Nameless to quicker steps forward.
As he was almost upon the creast, the wind, he noticed, began to blow more forcefully.

Finally, he made the long level stretch, the top of the hill, the end of the climb. Coming up fast to by-pass the tree and to rest in the light that came from the lantern's far side, his gait boldly quickened. Just as he passed underneath the great bough, the night wind tore at the hanging lamp's chord and it swung in its setting to face toward the climb. The clean face of the light now lighted the road that he'd taken in shadows. The way he had yet to go was as dark as the other, perhaps a bit darker.

A strange thing was discovered. The night, long descending, was now quite upon him—but this was not strange, nor was the feeling rough, that he felt on his face; some floating stray silk from a passing night spider had covered his chin. The odd thing was the roadway's abrupt ending just beneath where the lantern was hanging, as the pavement turned into a thick and moist soil, a rich, loamy muck. Now very tired and the night so warmed, he took off his clothing and laid on the earth, pulling his jacket and trousers over his form.

He dreamt that he wakened on this same warming spot; the field that he lay in was of a rich orange soil and by the oak was a small mustard sprout watered by water that flowed from a well located just by it and brimming with crystal. He jumped up naked and stepped over the earth that was so gentle with his unshod feet. He drank with his hands and his breath came short but he drank more still—it was cooling and tingling, his cheeks seemed like they'd been salted. Then he went back and slept and awoke and drank more. The mustard had grown from the sprout to the sky; it rivalled the arch that the great oak shaded as the two of them grew from the warm orange soil. He fell back to sleep, in his dream, with the hope that he'd never wake up.

He awoke the next morning with the sun on his body. He was covered with orange patches of dirt and wished for the well in a laughing way, that he might wash from himself the dirt of the field. After brushing himself, he put on his clothes. Then, going over to where the road had left oil, Nameless turned the lantern the other way round; he set off in line with the course the roadway would have taken, and thought he'd find it far up ahead, somewhere ahead. Ah! Bartleby... ah!

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