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THE ANGLE

Winter 1965
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Introduction:

In this winter issue of the Angle we, the editors, have tried to put together from a variety of sources a magazine with a common theme—a look at the artist. The cover, with its winged figure, is designed to symbolize the poet and to reflect the thought of the quotation from Kierkegaard. His ability to create with the medium of words is expressed in the wings themselves, suggesting the hawk-man of James Joyce's Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man. The large eye contained in the wings reveals the poet's sensitivity and ability to see what others miss. Finally, the figure’s hands are embracing a face, meant to express that willingness to suffer with others and to translate for them into music what they cannot always say themselves.

Along with this concern for the dedication of the artist we have placed the essay by John Attinasi first in the book. We share as a group his feeling that true art is a marriage of beauty and truth, of form and content. We hope that the rest of the selections reflect each in its own unique way the general thought of that essay.

Editor-in-chief
Larry Jost
Artistic Vision
In Literature

JOHN ATTINASI, c.s.b.

In any art, the artist faces the problem of presenting a creative vision through a medium. Sound, paint, marble, clay and other materials are the media of music and the visual arts. Literature uses as its medium that phenomenon of civilization, the word. No matter what his art, the artist must be faithful to his medium, shaping it by his creativity to form a unified work, or else he loses his effect as an artist in his chosen medium.

Words are used everyday in non-artistic communication. These words have definite, even though arbitrary meanings. Thus the literary artist’s medium is and must be a message-bearer. But it is not merely message-bearing, because the finished work is art; there is still a basic need for sensible beauty. The beauty in literature must come from words. And it does. Words in their sound, spelling and sense suggest other words and set up reactions in themselves and in juxtaposition with other words:

—shower sour cow er tower dour Dieu
  bower hour flower now-er
—lower mower sower knower bow-er
  hoe-er slower

Where communication is removed, the art degenerates into ‘word-music,’ at best. Where the element of beauty is removed, the art degenerates into philosophy, at best.

A marriage of the two is essential to the art: “beauty” because literature is art, and “meaning” because the art is presented in a communicative medium. This marriage is difficult because the spouses are so over-bearing, in a good sense, in their own right. Only deep understanding and deep love produce the union.

Some authors and appreciators come to be so preoccupied with the thought or ‘philosophy’ presented in a work that they neglect the poetical part of literature, the structure, the phrasing, the description, and all the area in between these. This is like putting meat, vegetable, salad, wine and pudding into a bowl, chopping them up with a knife and eating this banquet with a spoon. There is no savor, no delight and you never get to use your fork.

Those who give predominant place to the presentation often regard meaning of no consequence to the art, and what is worse, of no benefit to the appreciator. Or sometimes the opinion is held that the only meaning in art is that art’s beauty is everything:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.

—Keats.

If the art is to be true to its medium, it must contain meaning; and the greater the meaning, the greater the art. And we must say the same for beauty. In literature, it is just as much an error to ignore the sense as it is to ignore the beauty.

In approaching literature, the first object is to apprehend the artistic vision of the author. Here the distinction between meaning and beauty shows itself to be only a mental one. In the paper and ink of the books, in the words, the thought cannot be separated from the form anymore than the form can be separated from the thought. Both are presented in the words and the words have in themselves the unity of beauty and thought which is proper to every art.

After the artist’s vision has been apprehended, and this may be done only in part with the greatest authors, one may
proceed to discuss the concrete, person-changing effects of the work's vision. In this area the effect of literature becomes highly subjective. One may discuss, one may submit personal opinion concerning the validity and value of the artist's vision. This is not to say that there should not be exchange and growth in the understanding and real-izing of the author's vision; it is just to say that one cannot pronounce dogmatically in these matters.

I have used the term, 'the artist's vision,' not 'his thought content,' or 'his philosophy.' I say this because artistic vision is not just intellectual insight. It may be, and often is, this. In the best writers, though, artistic vision is the fruit of reason—plus. Or it may be a non-reasoned vision alone, such as found in oriental haiku and in other highly subtle literature:

They spoke no word
Blowing from the west
the visitor, the host
fallen leaves
and the white chrysanthemum. gather in the east.

—Buson.

There is vision here; it is not technique alone or beauty alone without meaning. It is artistic vision in the art of literature. It is a vision close to that of music or the plastic arts, a wordless, non-conceptual one, and it lies below the message-bearing exterior of the literary work's words. The vision is in the words, though and still proper to the literary art, that is, it has meaning and beauty.

Of the works that we call literature there are those strictly of thought content, or (heaven forbid) strictly of story. These need be read only once. After the meaning has been extracted, the work may be paraphrased and the text is useless. And there are those strictly of technique, and these need be read only once. They are a pleasant, one-time experience, but of no lasting value. But the irreducible work is the blend, the sound and sense work, the work which can never be paraphrased, never imitated, the work which can only be quoted; this is the true work of literary art.

while homeward
my measured step
uneven now.
above perceive
the swing and weave
of branch and bough;
nightly by the wind
on magic looms.

listen small:
you'll hear the weaver's sound
hollow lisper
whistle
whisper
wood
wind tunes.

the ancient plaids
unfinished still
gently over
flow unto the
ground.

the sound of wind I know:
a moving slow
far piccolo

Ray PavelSky
The Sand-Shell Beach

Eternal pounding of the waves
On the sand-shell beach;
Crest on crest, wave on wave
Pounding sand-shell beach.
As far as I can see — sea;
Waves rolling towards the shore;
Crest on crest, wave on wave
Does pound the sand-shell beach.
The roar, the mist, the spray,
The pounding waves all day;
Eternal rolling of the sea,
Crest on crest to sand-shell beach.
Lonely souls are drawn here.
The idle walk along the shore;
Walking, walking beside the waves
That pound the sand-shell beach.
Forever walking by the sea;
Idly walking along the shore
Where crest on crest on crest
Does pound the sand-shell beach.

—David Callahan

Metamorphosis

walking back alleys passing
eyes—fear hope uncertainty(.)
And wearing a coarse tunic
—people seeing and touching
smelling sweating
Humanity

But don’t worry,
You’re improved upon
Off the streets behind walls—
Out of hearts behind abstractions
(Y)ou’re catechisms
and vigil lights
and painted statues of a too old
—young man
sold at bazaars and stamped on
four-color off-set for
bedroom walls.

And on Sunday up the front
steps as I see a figure out
in the darkness-bound
hand and foot with a rum-bottle
Still in coarse tunic you lie
there while we love You
more hygienically . . .

—Gregory Conchelos

glory to God for
starry nights
and calm and rolling lakes
and the plush of bows and oars
and people
—John Attinasi, c.s.b.
Birth

As
the pain
is bursting
forthward murgig
with the throb of life
inward surging
the fold of
woman
cries

the
pain rain
goes insane
as cracking womb
breaks of birth a name
and bloodies out
the songly
shout of
man

the
being
born to life
to live and move
through wombs of other
loves and lands of
here and there
beats out
life

a
singing
of a song
of soul life small
the crying toll of
a sculptured soul
a mother's
wombwarm
child

Mike Goodwin, ceb

SHALOTT

Gerald Koepsell

"Sing a song of darlings locked upon the castle door,
and fenny things and summer leaves, and the raven's quote
'Nevermore'."

She tilted her head and laughed
and I marvelled at her; laughed too, I suppose. For she was
laughable, in much the way prophets are laughable—always
damnably, laughably right.

She leaned against a vacant cradle and regarded me for a
moment. She was waiting for my opinion; that I knew. The
answer that I must give however, required a second question.

—The verse fits, milady.—Her eyes voiced the reply, and
told me that I needn't answer. Noot, I thought. She could no
more answer the unvoiced question than I.

—Will you please take me to dinner tonight?—she asked.
Her eyes glowed with the strange light that I expected was the
major part of her.

—You have a lot of nerve, Char. Where now?—
—On yon fair isle, milord.—She pointed to a small island,
not a great distance off shore. However, my skiff wasn't even
off the cradle yet this year.

—The paint is still tacky.—
—Why not borrow H.I.A. ‘Ariel’?—
—If you want to go on ‘Ariel’, get Fred to take you. It's
his boat.—
—You're more fun. Alas—I have no great affinity for His
Imperial Asininity.—
—Tut-tut—I said.
—Tut-tut.—she said, —Have you no love for the Muse?—
—I’ll get the boat.—I said.

We set out as the moon began to rise, like a pearl wrapped in veils of gossamer. The island was cloaked in soft darkness with the hint of emerald on its heights. “Ariel” pitched softly on murmur of its wake. And she did bring the dinner, swathed in a red-checked cloth and stuffed in a wicker basket.

—Have you a bucket? I’ll drag the wine behind us to cool.—

Nights differ, one from another, and the differences are as between a spring wine and a fall wine, a matter of taste.

This was a special night, one for lovers, for those who loved. I couldn’t have loved Charlotte, except as a mildly infactuating something. I was too scared to; I was afraid that if I dared the result would be a kind of Doris Day—Rock Hudson plot—laughably unreal. I did not particularly want to be laughed at; nor do I believe that I could have kept myself from laughing any more than I could earlier on the beach.

So she leaned her head on my arm during the voyage and sang a song—in French.
—You have no knowledge of the tongue, milord?—
—None whatever.—
—It’s really not a love song or anything, you know.—
—I should have expected as much.—

She ignored me and continued—
—My father taught it to me. A proper girl, I suppose, would find it a bit offensive. But the music is sweet, even if the lyrics aren’t, and that’s what counts, isn’t it?—

“Ariel” neared the shore and I secured it in a quiet anchorage, below a promontory, willow-crowned; in the lee of a crescented beach.

—A quaint and wonderous isle,—she pronounced it,—well fit to the respite of our stomachs. Come Caliban, to table.—
—Caliban, my ass!—

She began to giggle and lost her balance as she waded ashore with the lunch perched upon her head.

Somehow the dinner remained dry even though she didn’t. I built a fire, so that she might dry while we ate.

—I must look terrible.—she said, not really concerned whether she did or not.
—Like the ‘Lady of the Lake’. Have you ever been told that you are a very strange girl?—
—Do you accuse me, milord, of witchcraft or other devious arts? That’s a fine kick in the head!’’
—Plain Kate, Kate the Cursed—try the chicken, it’s delicious—Shall we say, less enchantress than enchanted.—
—You’re a rogue.—Entertain me.—she said.
—How?—
—As the Muse inspires, cheer me thus within these, my wooded walls.—

I began to recall a piece I had learned, it seemed, ages ago. It was dredged up from some long forgotten source, raised finally to certitude.

—‘Lying robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boathead wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.’—
She was silent for a while, long enough for me to enjoy squishing the chill sand between my toes. Then she countered with a verse. It seemed almost to escape from her lips.

—Singing softly on the castle door,
singing softly on the desert moor,
singing softly, the raven, ‘Never, ever more.’—

—Nevermore?—

—Good night, sweet Prince! Time this lady got some shut-eye.—

Fred came by a couple days later while I was arranging some new rig—mostly daeron stuff.

—Say,—he said,—have you seen Char around lately? She seems to have disappeared.—

—I know.—

—Well, where’s she gone?—

Fred, I thought, sometimes you’re a damn boor.

—To join a sit-in, down in Georgia someplace. She left Saturday morning.—

And this was in the summer of my twentieth year.

HAIKU IV

Red, orange, yellow
Warm wind and water trickling
Blue sky, people play.

W. Frankenberger, c.s.b.

SALOME’S LAMENT

—a parapoe—

When often in this bristling youth of mine,
Wearying with my dry and tangless lot
I find all vapid, stale and sour the wine
Of life, and chafe me for the thrills I’ve not;
When I, in hurried draughts, would drain life dry,
Counting the time too slow from sun to sun,
Parched to devour all what and who and why,
Answers scarcely with age’s wisdom won . . .
Then oft a deep depression whelm my soul
And lightless, sightless night conceals my hope
Deep in the murky liquor fades my goal
And painfully drunk I only crawl and grope;
Then would I, glad, with hemlock spike the cup,
With all life’s darkness in it, drink it up!

—Salome

A SONNET FOR SALOME

—responsory—

Ah, child, you find the wine of life is tart?
The fruit therein nor fondly plucked nor sweet,
Nor gently pressed to set the rind apart?
The liquor unexpressed by angel feet?
And, child, do choking dregs bedevil the draft,
And acrid acid prick your maiden lips,
And do you fear the cup, all quaffed,
Will yet more sourly savor of these sips?
Then hold! Forbear to drink in drafts profound,
Fair lass, so early bent on life . . . and death,
But give the cup the light, and turn it round,
Behold its glow, inhale its spicy breath . . .
Then know! Life’s not a swift, impassioned filling up
But slow and timely draining of the cup.

—Solomon

—Clarence A. Amann
Christmas

Cops, beneath winking red and greens,
Dressed for Hallowe’en in rubber wear,
Herald tidings of the season
With their whistles and their waving gloves.

“Come on Buddy! Straighten it!
Make way!
No left: No right: 12 to 6.
Merry Christmas!
Keep it moving.”
And the speeding letter of the law driver
Baptizes him with a chilling tide of salt and slush.
Thank God for rubber wear.

A la vitrine
The manikin creches next to mechanized Santas
Ho ho ho and joy to the...
At the passing pedestrians burdened like dromedaries
Inviting them to buy that extra little...
Not too much...
But ever so...
For the man of your...
Money is no object.
Buy now...
Watch out for the sale of...
Bourbon for the holiday,
Warms the heart and...
Pain pain pain and fast relief of gittery nerves.
Try coffee buddy. It warms you and keeps you sober
So you can splash the rubber cop.

Tinsel, bells and lights
Wave the commercial advocate indoors
Where air conditioning melts the boot slush
And slides you to the nearest sale of lingerie and candycanes.

Choruses of tellers ring out the joy of a new purchase,
And the powder packed faces,
Blast you with your skaty eighth Christmas Greeting.

“Hello Mrs. Jones...
And the same to you.
No, the five cent doughnut with the peanuts and the frosting.
A cup of coffee, miss, for the santa on the corner.
His bell is frozen and he wants to thaw it out with...
Joe... How’s the missus?
I’m broke too
But there’s lots of booze.
No mutton please.
Ham or Turkey.”

“A dollar five and three cents tax.
I’m sure she’ll love these.
They are good and stable with these expansion bands
And they wear like iron.
She can wear them with her next baby too.
Bless her.”

There go the Justice seeking people
From the Joseph Ave. Harlem
Come to Main and Clinton
To rub shoulders with the Pitsword Bus
And the college students in their little worlds
Weaving Plato into heaven knows what.
Brinning pennies from their cookie jars for the
Coffers of the rich bitch bastard families of Bright Town.
But they’ve got another to give to the Santa
With the Ho Ho bell and the Tinkle Tinkle laugh.
There go children dozing from exaustion
In the parcels of their dromedary Mothers.
There the children in the toy shops
Laughing as they wished for
The rocket ship and the wonder toy,
Or the little dolls that have more of everything
Than the XOREX millionaire
And five of each.
Or a reed whistle that sounds like the rubber cop,
Stop! Look! Listen!
Six o'clock,
Gotta stop.
Keep it moving Joe.
Tweet, roar, splash, rubber cop.
Or the Beatles in a box
Screaming Ya Ya Ya
And Old MacDonald had a Christmas,
A E I O U;
And on that feast he had a blast,
Ae Io U;
With a Christ. . Christ. . here
And a Christ. . Christ. . there
Here a Christ. . There a Christ. .
Everywhere a Christ. . Christ!
Ya Ya Ya rubber cop
Where is Christ Cop?
   Gee its Cold
   Dollars and Cents
   Joy and Myrth.
   What of Christ and of His Birth?
Oh Little town of. . .
Rochester Gas and Electric wishes you a. . .
Joy to the. . .
Red nosed reindeer.
Tweet, roar, splash, rubber cop.
Where is Christ?
Where is Christ?

Away in a Manger. . .
Hey hey hey. . .
From the bottom of my. . .
Ya Ya Ya
Underground parking Lot.
Jingle jingle jingle. . .
I saw Mommy kissing. . .
In the Church
Splash Rubber Cop!
In the Plaza by the Clock. . .
See Him over there,
In the arms of the man with the dirty cap,
By the mother with the grocery bag,
Ya.
Sh Sh,
Let Him sleep.
Sh Rubber cop.

MAYBE WAIT
Should a silent gimme push her
slippery no's into muddy yes
with an empty trunkful of
maybe
on a dark road by getting in,
getting in (trouble) ?
When maybe a long (in short) love
would turn its sweaty mindless
nice
into goldband heartfull
us?

GREGORY CONCHELOS
First Communion

Little Jesuses and Marys walked past me this morning
And I loved them with a pure and clear and phony love
For in my mind I pinned them there on the church aisle floor
Innocent of kicking youngerbrothers and sisters
And of nagging ragged mothers to satisfy their greed
And innocent of growing up to be father's sons and mother's daughters

I took their flanneled whiteness and put it on their souls
And made believe they loved the one that they received
I wished and didn't hope and desired and didn't pray
That they would love and honor and glory him in such a way
That they would share his silent smile and know his quiet love
And pass along those rare-trod paths

Those beastly little children will spit upon his bloody face
Just as you and I have done from ages past.
They'll mock that serene and loving gaze
With no more wit than we have yet devised
And in the end, like us some crawl into his arms.

Anonymous

The Snow

I love it when it's like that.
So fine, slow, quiet, undisturbed.
It's humble. It's modest.
It comes when one is
Not looking, as if it would hide.
It works in secret,
In still, wintry night, shadows.
Not familiar with its tricks,
One is caught at unawares:
"Why didn't you say you were coming?
Next time. I will stand at my window
And admire you, humble
Whiteness. I love you like this."

I love to watch the snow steal to earth at night;
I like to think it is performing just for me—
That everyone in the world is asleep
And only I notice its splendor. I know its
Tricks now. It can't fool me. When I arise tomorrow morn,
I will not be surprised. "I saw you first;
I know you came (I watched you) and I will not be
Surprised.

—Phil Parisi
L'ALTE TORRI

A mountain built of turrets trembling tall, yet none of them dwarfed nor lacking ornament, weakened, but 'established on a marshy quag, a slag which oozes from beneath the towers—those gloriously latticed and colorfully arrayed structures which the mind connives resting on a damp and dangerous muck, which does not crash them down the ground.
The land is loosely based, braced as it makes the towers tilt or sway, but always retains the turrets tall.

But tumbling towers come pushed by more than one, crumbling, crashing in a cacophonous roar, that shocks one to horr'r, despair, and anxiety to regain it all. But it's lost; and they did stand upon sand. They were trembling but always there, tall towers; now the cold truth they were not towers tall.

The new looks aright, landed on unshifting turf and no dread that these towers are mere phantoms, hollow shells. Though they be meager, meaner stuff they're made. The worker worked them all, turrets standing a smaller tall.

—R. WAHL, C.S.B.

RED-BRICK BUILDINGS SHATTERED

Red-brick buildings shattered and broken;
White-cloud heavens severed asunder;
The peace of daydreams all destroyed,
By sudden lust of strength and power.
World-reflections in quiet pond
Quaked and rippled... a boy-tossed stone.

—DAVID CALLAHAN

ROBIN-REDBREAST OF RUBIED SPRING

Robin-redbreast of rubied Spring.
When reddish skies with sun arise,
In ruddy dawn, these red-birds sing;
When buds of red are summer's prize,
Among red barns the roosters bring
Red-eyed men from slumber’s wake
To see the joy of rustic morn.

—DAVID CALLAHAN
HOME

Mike Goodwin, csb

It was August because April was gone and he didn’t know why. He walked down the midnight street unseen, and unseeing, dreamed his steps up the walk to the door. Above, the nighthawks circled for insects and dove for heaven-knows-why, whirring down shiver-like and sudden toward the rooftops and into his dreams. Someday one would miss. The door-knob melted warm and silk in his grip. A hawk dove. The grains of sand in the cement between the bricks by the door sparkled facet flooded in the moon. Someday one would miss. He would hear the splat and know the bird was over.

A whisper, he was beyond the screen, and the dark warm womb was lit by that special thickness that comes on syrupy in August; a family thundering through their sleep-pores open, hair askew. Feet since boyhood creaked across the floor. The mice in the sofa where his father lay sleeping, pricked their ears in the cotton and blooded normal again. A blind man’s behind, he exhaled into the chair by the window and listened for the moon-glistened circles of the hawks in the sky.

He took off his shoes. Four clocks omegaed, two a tick apart and not counting water meters. Upstairs his sister with the newborn breasts, gurgled, turned an ankle in her sleep and slipped to silence once again. Water shuddered somewhere, soft and hard in the pipes. The refrigerator hummed for a while, tottered imperceptibly, and held its peace. His father breathed in the shallow heat, and here and there a hawk or a pine needle fell through the night. So many things falling and no one to catch them. Heat groined in and out of the window; the chair was carved in his back.

Time, and then, hesitation in motion, he arose and padded to the stairway. Fourteen steps. A curve in the middle. Turning right, he stood in the doorway of his parents’ bedroom. A humid smellscape tided toward him. Articulation and lavender balloons. The soft sweet smell of sleeping women in silken gowns. Thighways lapped by the moon. Oranges like Christmas. Flick! Shutterquick and agoneyed he stood shutterblasted in the mirror. In the bed, mother and daughter stirred in the lightquake, huddled closer in the lemon fever, but did not wake. The minute hand by the perfume bottles tick-quivered down, around. Flick! Prussian blue. The dark again, waterfalled, soft and sigh-sight. Lidded mist images hung, then safaried down his mind—A saffron daughter at her mother’s breast, Calves like cream. And somewhere. . . . very coarse veins. He turned and descended the stairs. The hawks circled, dove one by one. Feet since manhood creaked across the floor. The chair swelled carving about him. White teeth sang in the night. Eyes sparkling, he sat there listening to his father breathe the room in and out. The hawks were done, deep, the sun began to rise.

HAIKU II

Butterfly—wing broke
Pity, carefore, fly away
In hot summer’s sun.

W. Frankenberg, csb.
as child I stood

as child I stood,
chin-high to polished sill.
Parlourdark stood round me,
her hands mothersoft on my shoulders.

bed-ready I stood,
secure in footed sleepers.
my silver breath piled slow
from the window corner:
I told me strange and many things
in lovely lettering
that only childhood could read.

and Streetlight stood,
star-high to the windy Elm.
white-jewel snow swirled round him
and was as lovely in his light
as his light was lovely
because of her.

as child I stood,
and told me with my breath
"they must be loving"

Ray Pavelsky

Innocence Lost

White lily blushed beneath her withered bough:
(Sad tidings bore black-cloud-infested-breeze)
"Everything is somehow diff'rent now!"
Her color paled, now ranting chant the trees:
"New hues are born while others pass away,
And ev'ry rotted apple greets its grave.
Yet each has known the twilight of its day;
Untimely frost has bonded bud death's slave."
Rain-swollen slope re-echoed this refrain:
"My race reflects the ravages of time-yet
One's loss means more than oft'another's gain.
Behold plain-store of nature's liquid rhyme!"

—— GEORGE E. WEGMAN.

OCTOBER

suns turn to butter
dripping spreading yellow-gold over the toast
ed crust of horizon
Then Evening places
it next to a warm cup of
fireside
 Tranquility . . . 

Gregory Concellos
LINES WRITTEN AFTER MEDITATION
ON THE TRADITIONAL CONTENTION
THAT CHRIST NEVER SMILED

When Zachaeus
from his dais
in the tree
stumbled
and
tumbled
down
to
the
ground
in a heap
at Christ’s hailing
with excitement paling,
don’t you think
the Master smiled, beguiled?

and when Peter
thought it meeter
not to trust
his feet
upon the sea,
began to doubt
he’d hold out,
felt hope grow dimmer
(and he no swimmer)
so that his knees
began to buckle,
could the Master
stop a chuckle?

CLARENCE AMANN

SWIMMER

by James J. Kolb

Water—man’s friend and sustenance; and yet no more
a friend or sustainer when man must take arms against it.
Water—a life-source, but also a life-taker.
Water—a paradox; so also life.

It was a quiet day, a peaceful day. The sky was blue and
cloudless. The sun was hot and bright; the water neither cool
nor calm—but inviting (as inviting as the Pacific can ever be).
The boat was anchored a mile or two off shore of an island—no
special island, just an island like so many others that dotted
the South Pacific area. In some ways the island reflected the
day. Its thick foliage was a luscious green, reminding one of a
cool, sweet drink. Its sandy beach and brightly colored coral
cought the sun’s rays and beamed them back and out in all
directions creating a jeweled tiara encircling the inner greens.

At this moment, however, no one on board the large fishing
boat was interested in the sky, the water, or the island. It had
been a long day, an exhausting day, and most of the crew and
all of the fishing enthusiasts were taking a midafternoon rest
before heading back for their own island, fifty-odd miles to the
north of the one now off the boat’s starboard side.

Unlike the rest, one of the crew decided to take his nap on
deck rather than in the cool below. Joe could not explain why,
but he found a welcome relief in sitting on the empty deck in
the oppressive heat, surrounded by the sun, the sky, and the
water. He was fitfully asleap, an empty beer can at his side,
when suddenly from deep within the boat what started as a
tremor became a tremble, a shudder, a convulsion which ex­
ploded with a mighty force, vomiting forth the very innards of
the boat.
In the midst of a few muffled screams and shouts, Joe was carried on the crest of the explosion, catapulted free of the ensuing flames, and quickly enveloped in that salty, inviting, blue-green essential—water. There was no time for collecting one’s thoughts. The boat was in flames and there was no other sign of life on board or in the water. To swim was the only alternative and there was only one place to swim toward—the island.

Still half-asleep and something less than an expert swimmer, Joe thrashed the water more than he swam in it. For him it was like quicksand, constantly trying to tug him under, and under he did go. His mouth open, his eyes bulging, his lungs nearly bursting, he scrambled back above the surface and madly leaped or crawled in the general direction of the island.

He did get closer to it, but it still was a long, long distance to go, when he went under once again. This time he kept his mouth closed, but that only spared him the acrid, salty taste. His eyes still bulged. His lungs again felt like they were bursting. Again, he somehow regained the surface. Again, he slogged on but the water was more like syrup or glue than the inviting thing it seemed from the boat’s deck. Joe was tired, exhausted. The island still seemed no closer, and he felt himself losing control of his body; felt murky fingers tugging, tugging at him. His legs felt like felled tree-trunks. His arms ached and he was barely able to lift them from the deceiving water.

Once again Joe went under, and as he went under he quit, opened his mouth and drank deeply of his enemy. Suddenly an abrupt and razorsharp pain jerked his body erect and upward, crashing through into the air and once more alive. But the downward momentum was quickly displaced by a downward pull which hauled him back and slammed him against the coral floor just five feet below the surface. The bottom! There was a bottom, and by half-treading, gingerly stepping, gritting against the pain he could make headway toward shore. The water turned red about him in sympathy with his tortured feet, but the coral soon gave way to sand and his ginger walk turned into a maddening, leaping, running, sloughing through the remaining yards to shore.

The shore! When he gained it, he collapsed and embraced it as a child would his mother. Tears poured from his eyes dampening the already damp ground. Once, he glanced up and inward at the inviting greens, but decided that he would go no further. He had regained solid ground. The danger was past. His enemy was behind him. He had fought the good fight—and won. All that was left was the sobbing. And sobbing, he fell asleep as men often do when immediate danger seems to have passed.

But, water is a paradox, and as it recedes from shore so, too, does it return. And so it did now. Joe’s sleep was the deadened sleep of one humanly exhausted, but when the water had returned sufficiently, it was the sleep of eternity.

NOT WITH DEVILS

T. F. MELVILLE

Not with devils wearing brimstone-horns, with smouldering pitchforks.

No, it is not bottomless perdition, to dwell in adamantine chains and penal fire,

But the cold, inefficual womb of the city where all you can hear are the frightened sounds of the screaming traffic-people.
the rafter roof

Up to rafter roof
the rafter of brindled brogen wood
is beneath (with well-touching arms
   with wall-clutching arms)
and shoulders the slatent slabs.
is it the rafter that makes the mosaic
in the multimusced mottled magic
or does being beneath the sun in the sky shed shad-
ows and light lifting the land?
but here with hoof on roof on rafter
down dawny darkness dispelled
and toute tremblance with soon sun
and here best seen the blest scene
of seam of sky and scan.

j j attinasi csb
What is a poet? A poet is an unhappy being whose heart is torn by secret sufferings, but whose lips are so strangely formed that when the sighs and the cries escape them, they sound like beautiful music. . .

And men crowd about the poet and say to him: “Sing for us soon again”; that is as much as to say: “May new sufferings torment your soul, but may your lips be formed as before; for the cries would only frighten us, but the music is delicious.”

—Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*