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Full Issue

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Dedication

DANTE ALIGHIERI 1265-1321

In grateful tribute we dedicate this issue to Dante Alighieri. Seven hundred years have proven Dante a man of all seasons, of all times, of all manner of men. He has much to say to us today, if we will but take the time to enter his vision.

Dante had been a wanderer the greater part of his life, penniless, without family, and unjustly exiled from his beloved Florence. But what kept him from resentment, despair, or indifference was a pervasive awareness of the Fatherhood of God. Thus he was able to endure the wickedness of man and not be astounded at his goodness.

Dante was a strong, courageous poet, who always made a sharp distinction between right and wrong. And the greatest evil for him was to betray another. In the frozen waters of the icy lake at hell's center, he placed the betrayers of one's friend, one's country, one's God. And Dante had another and darker insight, that of the lost souls whom even Hell will not accept, the uncommitted that are to be found in every age; he pictures them as featureless, aimless, wandering in meaningless circles before Hell's gates.

What speaks to us from the pages of The Divine Comedy is Dante's mind and soul — his courage, scorn, convictions, and love. The finest tribute we may make to this poet is to read him, to follow him through the Inferno to the Purgatorio to the centripetal center, the Paradiso.

—REV. JOSEPH TROVATO
The Prince and Time

By James R. Hall, Jr.

Long after long-ago but shortly before once-upon-a-time, there was a prince.

—So very much there is to do. So very much there is to do, he would say. And when night comes, it comes very quickly. I shall find time to do that which I wish.

Thus in search of time he set off. That he might catch time. That he might have enough.

The peasant asked:

—My Prince, it is true that I must get in the harvest. I — a poor peasant—am not able to give time. No time have I.

The smith of the village asked:

—My Prince, I have no time but my own. Though I deeply wish that I might, I am not able to give time unto you.

The prince asked everyone in the village. No extra time had they. The prince asked everyone in the kingdom. No extra time. For to have extra time all were too busy.

Now to ask everyone in a kingdom (such as then they were) demands from one a large deal of time. Once young, the prince felt old age absorbing him. I-shall-find-time hardened into I-must, for old age was absorbing him. To countries around this world went the old prince (still a prince was he, for his father was too busy to die).

—No, but tell us if you find the secret, said busy heads-of-state.

No. No. Time was not to be had from others. How dejected did the prince go back to his kingdom. How. He walked the streets of his village. Up he looked and down.

—That I might catch time, he said. That I might have enough.

An old woman, broken and bent, approached.

—My Prince, said she, I have heard that one may have all the time that one wishes, if one would catch Father Time.

—Where, O Woman, may I find this Father?

—He lives, O my Prince, atop a mountain, they say, a mountain high, ragged, and jagged. A mountain hard to climb. There lives he, this Father Time.

She pointed to a purple peak in the west.

—It is a chance, said the old prince. It is a chance.

He climbed the mountain. Up, up to the purple peak. There he found Father Time. (Who looked no older than the prince.)

—I would have time, the old prince said. A lifetime I have searched for time. I have forgone white chargers, warhorses, and fair damsels in distress. I have forgone all things princely. Even such as the Holy Grail. All of my life I have said: Would that I would have more time. Now I would have time. Now.

—My Son, said Father Time. Time — time is made, not given.

—Still . . ., persisted the old prince.

—As you would have it, my Son. Receive this jar. After I leave, open it; for there is all the time you would have.

The old prince — how his hands did tremble — tried to get the cap from the jar. He strained his aged heart. And the jar fell empty from his lifeless hand.
Dream

I took that drive this spring day
But it wasn't the way
I dreamed.

The wet, the misty verdurous valley
Made me want to stop & see really
What had been dream.

But second gear was running out
And anyways it began raining out
(Those things somehow don't happen
In dreams.)

Watch out! that bulldozer there
Off the slippery, narrow dirtroadside
missed by a hair!

You crack up when you dream, boy!
Goddamned yellowbugs that move earth & stream.
One can get hurt out here it seems
There's no room for dreams

Unless you walk
And it's too far to walk
And it takes too much time — not like dreams.

PHIL PARISH

Our Trojan Skaynay

one last d rag as then apollo
put out the sun in the ashtray-sea

"what the hell," said the Day
and pulled up the covers

slow the moon razored thru the licorice fabric
and became a broken orange necco-wafer

Turnus brushed the cigaretteashes off his dark suit
and saw:

AENEAS in the wall street journal . . .
AENEAS at the busstop . . .
AENEAS between the dark sidewalkcracks . . .
AENEAS in the drugstorewindow . . .
AENEAS thru the Y-Why-trees . . .

... horns shouted AENEAS . . .
bedroom lights spelled A-E-N-E-A-S
... on the nightgrass . . .

the bills in his pocket were headed AENEAS; AENEAS must be paid . . .

... and that THINGS HAPPEN.

"what the hell," said Turnus,
... that AENEAS didn't owe him a living . . .
... but a dying . . .

... and the next day a trojan killed a rutulan . . .
—sine clementia.

JAMES R. HALL, JR.
Quoth the spider to the fly,
"Thou'rt the apple of mine eye!"
Said friend Muses, "O, Arachnid,
As a poet you're a hack, kid!" 

Quoth the spider to the bee,
"Come, my love, and dwell with me."
"Spider, not for all your money
Would I 'bee' your Apeian honey." 

Quoth the spider to the ant,
"O, for you with love I pant." 
Said the Worker to the suitor,
"Change your glasses, Mac; I'm neuter!"

Quoth the spider to the wasp,
"Your slender waist just makes me gasp!"
Replied irascible Hymenoptera,
"What gall! I shouldn't even talk to ya."

Quoth the spider to the worm,
"I like your shape: well-stacked and firm."
"I'm sure you'd find me much too gelled," 
Said that Lumbricoid Annelid.

FOOTNOTES*
* If a "good" poet like Eliot can use footnotes, why can't a rotten one?

1 He packed a '28; used Safeguard, gummy roll-ons, messy creams, dripping sprays—and he still stunk.
2 Note the difficulty of sounding the double consonant. That's English for you!
3 The epithets, by the way, are generic rather than Homeric.
4 I've got a million of them!
5 According to a noted entomologist who studies his bee, during English novel classes, spiders don't pant. But what does he know?
6 Very sad condition, really.
7 Don't look at me—they rhyme in New England . . .
8 "Cold; frozen." Poetic license for "cold-blooded."

Quoth the spider to the flea,
"Would you my parlor like to see?"
Answered leaping Ctenocephalids,
"Sure — if you like erysipelas."

"Your dashing motley 10 strikes my eye," 
Quoth spider to the butterfly.
Said Lepidoptera amorphous,11
"Sorry, I've gotta metamorphose."

Quoth the spider, "Come to supper,"
To a springy, fat grasshopper.12
Answered him the wise Romalea,
"You must be sick. Come, now, what ails ya?"12

Quoth the spider to the aphid,
"Come in. Don't act as if I'm rabid."10
The louse replied, "I really can't,
You see. I'm wet-nurse to an ant." 14

Quoth the spider to himself,
"Despite my titles, power, pelf,15
I'm doomed to cursed solitude.16
Who shakes the web? "It's me — Gertrude."17

Quoth the spider to his mate,
"Let's get to bed; it's growing late."
"Claudius,18 dear, that suits me fine;
But first, on you, I think I'll dine."19

8 An itching skin condition caused, actually, by a bacterium. Hell, who's fussy?
10 Admittedly, the term "motley" may be just a bit too dashing here.
11 "No definite shape." Used loosely here, of course.
12 "Any port in a storm. If you can rhyme them better — go ahead.
13 He really doesn't know he is. Sad!
14 Ants are said to milk aphids like cows. Among cynical young ants there is said to be a proverb: if aphid juice is so cheap, why buy the aphid?
15 Entire line lifted from someone's poem on Benedict Arnold.
16 Some Romantic he'd make with that attitude.
17 Cf. Hamlet.
18 Cf. Hamlet.
19 Relax — it wasn't Friday.
Alas! that Machiavellian spider
Came to rest, at length, inside her.20
Provided be the wherewithal
To make his wife a cannibal.

There is no moral to this story
Except — that life is transitory.21
I'll finish with a quibble22 old:
Remove the ice23 — my tale is told.

20 Any sport in a dorm.
21 So quoth Beowulf and Everyman.
22 "Pun." 18th century. Dr. Johnson detested quibbles. I detest Dr. Johnson.
23 Ice is gelid. So, there!

HAROLD DEPUY

The Murder

Come with me around the town —
She's just put on her evening gown
She's decked out fine, all in black
With twinkling sequins on her back
(I'll take you to a murder)

Come with me around the city
Though I must warn you: show no pity
The people having cups of fun
Are truly happy — every one
(No shot will echo)
We'll drive up this street, drive up that —
Look out! Look out! Don't hit the fat
Old drunk falling off the curb
His Non-Existence don't disturb

(No blade will flash)

Listen to that jumping band
Come with me and we'll stand
In back and watch the dying youth
Attempt expression of their "truth"

(No pipe will thud)

Look: see that couple over there
Do be careful, do not stare
Unless my eyes are in a blurr
That's a He — no — that's a Her

(No car will crash)

Look at that fellow take one more
Then stagger, stagger out the door
What a time he has had!
Worth it — though next morning's bad

(No blood will flow)

Well, time is late: time to go
Hope you have enjoyed the show
Oh! Just before we say good-by
I hate to ask — you know I'm shy:

Did You Enjoy The Murder? . . .

JAMES R. HALL, JR.

Bide My Time

Night place, face alone,
pipe and mouth smoke exuding
as the walk is slowly paced.
The calm of dark
with scarce the breath of breeze
leaves the trees poised
and weeds still.
Stony shore 'neath the beacon
blinking to friends far out,
blinking back their being.
The steps to shore round
and worn stones set firm.
The rocks, boulders of my place,
stone-gray in the black night
with lone a moon
hiding its nearest stars;
sending light on rippling waves.
The channel of light darts
and sways, speckles in flight,
as the lake lightly flows on.
The gray-black waves trickle
on the rocks below and
touch the toes bending o'er the stones.
But when the pipe dies and
the night lies still far still,
through pine and birch pace back,
moon light and wind slight —
a light flash, crash!, the pace quick
and the skies their moisture drip.
Night place, storm alone.

RICHARD WAHL
FRONT STREET

Dirty drunk
On Front Street wine
Darkened from city soot
Of a crumbled antiquity
Reddened from War-Won wounds
Bearing birth into a
Battleborn era.

"I'll have
Red mudpies, please . . . ">
For dinner
Crusted fingers
Dirt-caked
Desert
Away
Far
Away
Running down
Day into night
Straight streets
Winding wide
Into
Converging narrowness
Where lined pluralities of polled torches burn
Into
One
Massive glow
Of tumbling buildings
Fallen to a sky
Shaken to the ground
Where sound
Slips slowly
From sight
And a filthy shadowed
Figure falls facing
Himself for the first time.

PHOENIX

By Ray Pavelsky

It was darker than any night he had known as a child, lying in bed toward an unseen ceiling, first opening then closing his eyes to see if there was any light in the late room squeezed dry by the dike-door . . .

There were trees, but he only knew them by stumble, strike, and grope. And rocks like lazy turtles complicated his every celophane step; leaves crashed under his feeling feet.

Luminescent compass-face glanced at every few steps, lost to any observer in the camouflaging of stars without moon; leaderless platoon, everyman-for-himself checking separate luminescent compass faces.

Some sound like ice on ice in among the pall of black and tree made him taste adrenalin: dry tin. His teeth were in his tongue's way. Five feathers of flame lived and died ahead of him and the brass talons scored the silk night to his right: dive to left. Silent turtle waiting for his stomach. Roll down behind. Breath gone. Turtle-fist to midsection in third round . . .

think grenade:
bathtub plug. glug
one
two
grand lob thud. tree in front of rock.
god, don't no where it
(three)
leap-erling, face in leaf corpses
(four)
raking back ya . . . ear against huge pulsing egg

The luminescent face lay in the leaves staring mute at the ceilinged platoon. It did not say a direction, its needle-tongue, untoothed, being elsewhere in the night.
quietly
i observe old ladies on the bus
old ladies
with fuzz on their checks
and whiskled breath
who hold tightly to their dogs
and boldly strip young men
straining at their leashes

billious in lace
they cackle deeply
in goitered voices
and claw toward their canes
through yellowing gloves

eye yellow
they blink seductively
like circus clowns
who have swallowed eggs
of snakes
and they fall to sleep
vacantly
to be filled in in dreams
like wilted
powdered flowers in a vase

old men sit on buses
and snap suspenders
judiciously
grow
whiskers the color of
dead skies
and trap
shoppingbags
between their
boney hairless
knees

and young men
wonder what lost
treasures
lie in the
serotom-like shoppingbags
of old men
droning loneward on buses
their eyes sighted stoneward
their whiskers
twinkling
like shattered pearls
and singing of death

Mike Goodwin
Winter Nostalgia

Void of whiteness falls the snow
Into silver hands raised high
Regal voices soft and low
Granting wishes from the sky.

Instant sorrow fills this breast
Noisecles dreams engulf this soul
Isolation seems to wrest
Aged mankind from this knoll.

Into deeper trances fall
Lonely island feels the cold
Over every pore do call
Voices seeking from the fold.

Ever close now come to me
Youth and beauty virgin bright
Over all come set me free
Until now alone with fright.

Joseph G. Genduso

A "j. a." Type Lesson

(It was once believed that the human fetus, whole and complete, was conceived entirely in the male parent. The womb was merely a place for this microscopic body, Homunculus, to grow.)

J. Robbins

When Winter Seizes

A welcome change it is that's sent from heaven
to fall, floating on us when we're rotting in routine
left over from warmer months. A welcome change from
the once animating powers of new spring become dead with
passing months. Rather, when we became dead
to sight, sound and smell.

A welcome change it is, admit it or no,
to send us in away from racing engines, squealing tires,
beer-canned beaches and bikinis— to send us in
where we can talk and know each other beyond mere names.
There aren't any places to go now, except here
where we know we're better off than outside, for a change—it's cold now, winter's cold, and we're forced to
stay together.

The once animating powers of new spring and summer...when we, hands in pockets, stood before those nocturnal
trees silhouetted against a fullmooned sky —
when we, each alone, stood and watched
their outermost tender edges, their reaching tips
gently pulsate with each breeze.

The trees look more beautiful restored,
after having lost their life-blood
to their roots for a while, in ground protected...after having been stripped naked and barren...only half there

And when it all is gone, those lost things of beauty
which we strained so futilely to keep, become
a welcome change indeed, recalled...more thanked than if the snow never dissipated
the sultry air of summer, nor killed the slimy growth
developed in our pool of stagnancy — than if the frost
and ice never were sent to halt the growth
of seaweed that tripped and tangled our feet
as we groped alone at the edge of dusk, ... insensate.

Phil Parish

J. Robbins

Homunculus.
Whole man conceived
by one.

Incarnate offspring
Of men who need
no love.

Not so!

Conception without union?
No life.
No man
Gives birth
Alone.

16
Swiftly they pass
Me by,
These fledglings crass,
And I
Who twice their years
Almost
This ‘vale of tears’
My post
Have kept, must lie
Aside
And let them fly!
Alas,
Unfeeling band,
Run, pass!
Fly on, nor stand
To view
My temple’s gray
With hue
Of ash, nor stay,
Though meet
It be that you
Retreat . . .
For this I sue,
My due:
Just give me place
(My due!)
To set the pace
For YOU!

Musings
of
An Ancient
Pedagogue

Gay, carefree band,
Too soon
You’ll learn to stand —
Too soon
You’ll learn to wait
While boys
Of flying gait
And joys
Unclouded, dash
You by,
Unthinking, rash.
As I
Do now, then you
Will be
Too quick to rue
their glee
And mourn their waste
Of zeal . . .
And curse their haste
And feel
Your patience tried
And bruised,
Your cherished pride
Abused!

JODY

By MIKE GOODWIN

I have come home to the bed of my boyhood slightly drunk and weaving with dreams unstrung. Poppa is dead, and Jody, my little brother, sleeps beside me; his hands fragile as glass, his heart a silver bird.

Jody is a song so slowly played that oftentimes his bones ache. All the hidden stars and magic dreams unprojected in his skull will have him reeling soon. Let him sleep and gather strength.

I feel him growing, tawny lions revel in his hair. His mystic roots seek down through the bed to the core of the earth, his fingers are a transparent brilliance as they streak of lightning over my heart in sleep. He will search my heart deep and bury me in his spangled universe. Gypsy eyes has my Jody, long black spiderweb lashes and puddles of fireflies. I love him. He is my father’s seed sprung to flower.

My mother is a dark warm womb fertile and suffering, cultivating in joy delicate flowers of blood from the earth. My mother is eves and in her spinning my father was mystery. Emptiness and quiet light. The source and product of my mother’s fitful blooming. Only from the spinning womb can my spinning eyes see.

I did not understand him, my father, he was the string, my mother music. She echoed and loomed out of his emptiness weaving colors of psychological song but always she returned tiptoe to his silent spring. My father’s only music was time itself ticking off my mother’s veils one by one, sucking milk and growing like balloons, her children.

October wind above the sugar shingles. Blind sensuous tension of a child’s hand gripping.

Circus quilted night, my little brother Jody shivers in tented dreams like a silver bell unrung and running in your chill. His slender hands in sleep have strained my heart and found the pain. Scarecrows rend his wind and his breath comes tumbling in blackbird air patches. Poppa is dead. Only field mice remain squinteyed asleep and trembling in funny furry balls beneath the leaves of corn between the breaths of hay. Jack Frost builds cities of ice from the minted breath of Jody’s twinkling valleys. I need not tell him now. Poppa is dead.
Run then! Be gay!
You'll know
Too soon the day
You'll slow...
When then
With halting gait,
Denied
Your place, you wait
Aside
And helpless stand,
Forbear
To reprimand;

And there
Benignly greet
These boys
Of flying feet
And joys
That mock defeat —
But pray
As now do I
That they
Will one day fly
To truth
That never bends
And youth
That never ends!

CLARENCE AMANN

"That's what I think of catching cold. You are absolutely priceless, you know."

"So I've noticed. Much more of this, though, and I shall depreciate quite quickly." Her teeth were very even and small and left great, bruised dotted lines on either side of the finger. "Sometimes I've a good notion to send you packing back to mamsa."

"You wouldn't dare. I'd pluck out your eyes first."

I decided to change the subject.

"What are you going out dressed like that for? People will think you are very naughty indeed. Maybe I should beat you once in a while? You know, the neighbors have suggested it to me on occasion." I went to the couch and picked a copy of TIME off the coffee table. My picture was on the cover. I was famous; according to the lady of my heart — notorious. "It's not a very good likeness."

"True," she said, "they've forgotten to include the horns."

"You've touched me to the quick!"

"I might ever."

"Hum." I was in a difficult situation. The last tax passed by the legislature was becoming unpopular — especially with my wife. As far as it affecting my political future, I was unconcerned. I was sure not to be re-elected in the forthcoming election. The public was thoroughly devoted to my opponent. It did worry my personal life. I didn't mind so much when my wife began working on the other party's campaign. However, this matter of demonstrating in the streets of the state capital did cause me a great deal of concern. I had ordered the police to clear the streets along her route. The city was deathly quiet this morning. I had decided to go hide in the bomb shelter until it was all over.

She was on the intercom, calling the ear around to the side portal. The parade would start from Webster Square.

"You must admit, dear," she was saying to me, "that it is quite ingenious to protest with a recreation of Godiva's ride. That was over taxes too, you know."

"O, yes, yes; It's so very true." I've no time to waste, I thought. Forward to the fall-out shelter! "I wish you wouldn't though. Godiva didn't have national television coverage."

"Don't worry, princes; I love you very much, even while I'm working for you-know-who. Every envelope I lick, I think of you. I love you madly!"
“You’ve been reading Dostoevsky again.”

She grinned at me. “But active love is labor and fortitude. I think it’s absolutely lovely.”

“It’s subversive, is what it is. I’ve a good mind to lock you in the closet and not let you out.”

“Don’t be angry with me.” She said, “If you do, I’ll cry; I do anyhow, sometimes, because I know I make you unhappy. But I do love you.” She threw her arms about me, dug in her nails and began to sob softly.

“I appreciate that, I really do, but please stop crying. You’re clawing my spine all to shreds. Besides you’ll be late for the procession if you don’t hurry.” I slapped her on the posterior, and led her towards the door. “I’ll see you to the car.” I threw her coat over her shoulders. “I don’t suppose they’ll mind if you wear this until the demonstration begins. Now go and picket to your heart’s content.”

She got into the car, threw me a kiss and roared off. When I was no longer governor, I’d have a terrible time keeping up with her traffic tickets. I turned up the steps and walked back to the library. I took her copy of Crime and Punishment from the shelves and took the elevator to the bomb shelter.

Valentown, A Ghosttown Hall

(Dedicated to J. Sheldon Fisher, who saved and restored this 1820 Shopping Plaza for future generations)

Near Exit 45 that takes you woosh! straight east or west, ghost Valentown waits, a gaunt height of timber walls, panes stretched to weathered frames, staring blankly into the wind.

Its wood once unseasoned with the greasiness of hope, a springtime community exulted in its young earldays. Now it looms a strange thing, cast up from the sea of time on our sands of steel and glass.

“Valentine’s folly!”, built to meet a railroad that got lost somewhere. Here had been the dream, then the wreck of the promised end. But like an aged Lear alone on the heath, it howled down fate and chance, shook off the bony hand of Nothing, to stand now, a door to the past: like a human, an achieved Something.

REV. L. HEITZER

Jewel in a junkyard, you are
Abnormal against nauseating normality, you walk
Naked among masqueraders, you give
Icicles to desert dwellers, you light
Candles for the blind, you are
Exploder of their graves

You are
Autumn’s rainbow bursting windblown bouquet disrupting a cold gray day

for you

Rick Taddeo
There is this pair
of dogs, neighbors of mine:
the one a German shepherd
straight strayed from Wittenberg, they say;
the other a moldering mongrel,
his pure and primal parentage
in miscegenetic meandering
long lost sight of . . .
I never saw them approach
but within snarling distance
save now and then
when at each other's throats
they rent
the peaceful parish air
with piercing screeches
and pompous doggy threats . . .

I've even seen them
lie together
of an afternoon or eve
without a snarl
a growl
or bark
(at least a hostile one) . . .
I do mark though
they still
tote their own bones
unread yet to share
their cartilaginous sustenance.
It's doggone encouraging though!

So small wonder
one sooty city night of late
scarcely could I
aye my naying eyes
seeing this very canine duo
cross the boulevard
'hip to haunch'
in peaceful dogalogue,
their concerted goal
the selfsame crossway lamppole
that lights the farther side . . .
I note
of late too
they've taken to visiting
each other's yards, porches,
pens even . . .

CLARENCE AMANN

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