

“Flight”

By I. B. Rad

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes: I.B. RAD has been here before. I am a poor observer, so imagine my delight went he took the time to describe and interpret this work; for the same reason, I cannot attend a gallery without a guided tour—staring blankly is a specialty of mine. Luckily it is sometimes appreciated as absorbed admiration. Here, RAD is transfixed upon an object, deep in contemplations and transporting us there: NO ONE NEEDS TO DRAW ME A PICTURE, but I do prefer it. I find his insights into Amen’s “Flight” carving almost as engaging as his verse. Quite the erudite ekphrasis, RAD invites us to read what he sees, from your eyes to his words—Spread the RAD...(Spacing and format are poet’s own.)*

“Flight” by Irving Amen, 1948*



"Flight"
I.B. Rad

In Amen's black and white woodcut,
"Flight,"
wide eyed and open mouthed,
a couple clings to one another,
she glancing backward,
he peering ahead.
Rendered in early 20th century
expressionist mode,
wavy, acutely angled lines
form a backdrop
suggesting conflagration
yet also seeming to thrust the pair forward,
while underneath the duo
curved lines impel a downward trajectory,
and on the couple's right
horizontal lines
complete their set's framing.
Bearded, he's donned a wide brimmed black hat,
trousers, and dark overcoat;
whereas, clothed in long skirt and coat,
a kerchief covers her hair;
in short, it appears likely
they're from a shtetl,
and, as bare feet testify,
expeditiously skipped town
to dodge a looming pogrom,
their reckoning for being Jews.
Perhaps, it might aid some readers' understanding
to mention
a bush burns
at the couples right,
having just been struck by lightening,
and that this woodcut
was completed in 1948,
the year Israel's statehood was declared.
Well I suppose you've got the picture;
it's got to be something like this:

'Persecuted Jews
shepherded by their God
from bygone Europe's
perpetual pogroms,

cresting
with an industrial-scale "Holocaust,"
to that sacred sanctuary,
the "promised land."

*Irving Amen (1918 - 2011) is an American artist who worked with a variety of printing techniques and styles as well as with painting, sculpting, and stained glasswork. His art is widely collected and is owned by major museums. "Flight" was first printed in 1948 and later reissued in 1975.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I must admit when I first purchased the print, "Flight," I bought it as a superb example of early Expressionist style. I understood it depicted a Jewish couple fleeing one of the many European pogroms. But why the small tree or bush being struck by lightning? I analyzed the woodcut and after I found it was completed in 1948, I later remembered that 1948 was the year the state of Israel was declared. I also analyzed the artistic techniques used and decided to write this poem as a kind of detective story (I think it makes the poem more interesting.) As to why I write poetry, it's because I enjoy writing and it makes me think as well as perhaps some of my readers. I have no particular artistic influence, though I admire a wide variety of them.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: B. Rad is an independent New York City poet. Much of his more recent work is available on the internet. His latest book, "Dancing at the Abyss," was published by Scars Publications and is available from Amazon or it can be downloaded free of charge from the Scars' site (scars.tv). He believes a wide range of subjects can be accommodated by poetry, from potty training to love to war and peace and accordingly, stylistically, his philosophy is "Let the punishment fit the crime..." or, to put the matter *another* way, "Form follows function" (but that still leaves "more than one way to skin a cat" – a rather gruesome thought.)