

The **O**bjects of Wor**S**hip & other p**O**ems

By **B**en **N**ardolilli

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...When your favorite poets are Theodor Geisel, Ogden Nash and E.V. Rieu you gotta pay tribute (mob)—tithings (church), tips and gratuities (stewards, attendants, footman)—to Nardolilli. “20% off Lasik” is just how I feel. Who else would discounts elective medical procedures unless they weighted at the expense of forfeiting valued accessorizing—Laser eye surgery is Vanity’s Paradox. Ben, such an introspective fellow: “My hands are a rust belt...” “All manner of well-dressed experts and criminals...” Little long for an excerpt, accepting exceptions—“I’ve exhausted Christianity and wrung out / About all I can get from the likes of Judaism, / Islam is tapped out too, and Hinduism / Is a dry husk...”—without apologies. “Heroes, history, and hamburgers...” Have at it.(Spacing & format are poet’s own.)*

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The aim of this poem, is to look at the different approaches that can be taken to bring new insights

It looks at new ways to find subjects, write, edit and publish poems, and it will be written online over three weeks

The poem will be looking at relevance, authenticity and voice as cornerstones for producing future poems that engage with change.

During the course of the poem, readers will be asked to respond using a variety of techniques. Full feedback will be given

Consideration of an Offer (Possibly One Time)

20% off Lasik, should I take the plunge?
Right now I’m sick and sneezing
And every other achoo sends my glasses off my head,
Wouldn’t it be better not to worry about them?

I only pause when I think of what I'll lose,
Who will mistake me for an intellectual then?
And I will lose an important shield
That covers up the circles underlining my eyelids

There's no guarantee of an improvement
And I still might need glasses in order to read,
Which means no change in the end,
I'm reading all the time today, especially when I write.

Dermatology

My hands are a rust belt: bleeding, peeling,
Spotchy and pale where free of abrasions,
Some people think it makes me look
Like the owner and/or lover of cats, and I laugh,
No, mother nature and general winter
Did this to me, cracking my skin open
So the blood and pus might seep out and glisten
In the light of the office, the bar, and my room,
Where I sleep alone because these hands
Keep every soft body away from me,
There will be no love until the spring comes
And I can look normal, at least from a distance
Where my face is clear and my hands
Are blurry extensions, their wounds not in focus.

They Owe Their Civilization to Being Conquered

Much uncertainty, what will we owe our future to?
What happens today creates a debt
That will be repaid, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps
In a century the flames we sent out will finally return

Retribution may come in the form of revenge,
It may hit targets here that are empty
Making ruins out of ruins that once housed
All manner of well-dressed experts and criminals

We will be able to withstand that kind of retaliation,
Especially if all of us will be dead by then,
Life can go on as it did before, only with more dust,
God help us though, if it is justice that comes instead

End of Blackout Notice

I've got to make sure my name gets down
On some tablets, hopefully
With common era dates attached and titles in italics,
My works named along with me
Even if neither of us survive into the future

Relying on ink and paper is foolish,
It will burn, crinkle, and eventually dissolve
Within the expected eras and epochs
Of literate human existence,
And computer files need electricity to reincarnate

The trouble is, no one is making tablets,
And no one is writing on them,
All of our clay goes into making bricks
For the walls of suburban homes
Too expensive for to buy and too far to drive to

The solution I see is clear and unfortunately illegal,
Go up to a house, and chisel away
Until my name and immortality are assured,
In the end, human eyes will see it
Even if it is just held as evidence for a trial

A General Release

Judge Ark says he'll sign off on my breakout role,
Whereas previous invaders disgusted him,
He's read my work, likes the general thrust of things I do
Wants to retain my services, as part of a greater struggle
Against forces he says he knows better than me

Judge Ark has the friends, he has the influence
That will keep me going, and better yet, living on my own,
No need to worry about things hourly,
The dollars are taken care of, and the lucre is clean,
Or so he tells me, I just need to keep writing, and I do

I can be kept in the dark from now on, it's fine,
The light at the end of the tunnel will be replaced by one
That glows overhead, so I go on ahead,
Battling day after day in what seems like the night,
As part of a force Judge Ark says will win sometime soon

The Objects of Worship

Currently doing research into the Minoan religion,
Maybe there's something buried in those texts
And hidden in the ruins that I can use,
I've exhausted Christianity and wrung out
About all I can get from the likes of Judaism,
Islam is tapped out too, and Hinduism
Is a dry husk I've left behind in my spiritual travels,
Buddhism is gone, and the rest of China's
Traditional paths have been worn down,
As for other paganisms, they have been mined
Endlessly for the obvious myths
I can append to my life and the story I tell myself,
But I've reached nearly the end
Of faiths I can turn to for keeping me comfortable
Here in 21st century America, in my time
Of affliction and endless wanderings,
Maybe these old drawings and battered statues
Of the Minoan geniuses can help me,
Providing an outline for conduct, a taste of hope.

The Moon Is Down

Every account seems probable,
Who am I to judge?

It must be remembered we do not know
The future at all

Or know what happened in most
Of the past as it was lived

Even in the present there is little
We know beyond the planet

So be it, and laugh at the fact,
We are ignorant and reduced to feeling

Move On

This could be the moment everything changes,
or not, it could be the precise moment
there is a change that turns off changes going forward,
so things stay the same, forever,
which so far in history, things have never done

This could be the moment changes themselves
change as well, it could be
we see changes that happen and then change right back
to the way things were, status quo antebellum,
and making time appear to be on a loop

Or it could be the moment everything changes
and nothing at all stays the same,
making comparisons for progress at a later date
difficult, since nothing will be set in stone
and whatever resists will be flipped into an apocalypse

Life and Legacy

Play at being a king, help clear Lee Highway,
Start the year off right
Make the traffic move like on Columbia Pike

Learn more about vision zero,
The department of health has partnered with experts

For a cleanup to avoid confusion

Heroes, history, and hamburgers, your chance
To give online feedback,
Watch to learn more, then play on Lee Highway

THE POET SPEAKS: *The poem “Move On” was inspired by the emails I get from the organization with the same name. I often use emails and subject lines as an inspiration of my work. The subject line of this particular email was the same that I used for the first line of this poem. I built upon that for a meditation on the nature of political change itself.*

“The Moon Is Down,” “The Objects of Worship,” and “End of Blackout Notice” are based on passages I read in Bertrand Russell’s The History of Western Philosophy. It’s not exactly the best work for understanding philosophy, but he has many interesting digressions, turns of phrases, over-simplifications, and passages giving historical context. It is mostly out of this I have assembled poems like this and many others. They end up becoming ruminations on civilization and the fate of great cities.

Finally “They Own Their Civilization to Being Conquered,” well, I’m not sure where this one came from. I don’t know what I owe a debt to here.

Generally speaking, my stylistic influences have been the Modernists and the Beats. I take inspiration from my spam folder and inbox, as well as from album covers, song titles, cut-up engines, paintings, indexes, and appendices. Poetry is important to me because it is a way to take over-used and forgotten language, and put it to magical use. It transmutes feeling to sound, sound to image, and image to word. I do confess I still need to get better about reading more of it instead of just writing.

AUTHOR’S BIO: Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. His work has appeared in Perigee Magazine, Red Fez, Danse Macabre, The 22 Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Elimae, The Northampton Review, Local Train Magazine, The Minetta Review, and Yes Poetry. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is trying to publish his novels.

