

Five Others

By

Ed Ahern

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... If you read anyone this issue, read Ed Ahern. There lies a gentleman dignified within and between his lines. Just read what he offers to sacrifices in 'Completed Pass,' " I renounced pro football. / My one-sided affection for / fifty-three sweaty strangers / meant lost half-weekends / and addiction to talking heads." The best of husbands decompress for the following day, working for the man, where they have no charge either. Watching Sunday Afternoon gladiator matches is just an excuse for topping up their juices. Grant it, it's as daft as hunting partridges; any armchair sportsman can pot one...can't really fly and when they stand still, they think they're invisible. "Chasing a testosterone spoor / clotted me into a yelling mob / of men seeking ersatz glory." Don't you just love a man who has depth without intention? 'Don't look back,' on "the marathons completed, / the snake-strike rejoinders . . . the effort wasted on status." 'Corona Malaise' a masses month-to-month mantra. And don't miss his slant on 'Are we saved yet?' it will spare me from quoting it word-for-word. In closing, 'The Minimalist*,' "'*For Tom," "deflating from urgent to forgotten / within a week." Not Ed Ahern. Runyon once said of Will Rogers 'He was . . . One-third humor. One-third humanitarian. One-third heart.' I'm getting that somewhat same sensation with Ed.... 'Damon Runyon,' I sometimes think some people succeed in their chosen fields just by having great names: Spike Milligan, Mickey Spillane, Terence Rattigan, Dashiell Hammett, Shelby Dade Foote Jr. Not plain ol' Ed, though, oddly relying on his own merits. Lets punch it up. We should have a lottery, and raffle off a middle name or initial for Ahern, ...Edward Ernest Ahern as a plume...?*

(Spacing is poet's own.) HS

Completed Pass

I renounced pro football.
My one-sided affection for
fifty-three sweaty strangers
meant lost half-weekends
and addiction to talking heads.

Chasing a testosterone spoor
clotted me into a yelling mob
of men seeking ersatz glory.

Better to play the game, any game,
than howl from a bleacher.

I threw them off the flat screen,
made amends to the family,
ignored their baited mention,
saved money on garish jerseys
and found life after fandom.

Don't look back

I don't look back
at what I can no longer do-
the marathons completed,
the snake-strike rejoinders,
the sleep donated to work,
the effort wasted on status.

I have perhaps another decade
grasping at less and nearer,
moving more slowly after
residual desire and reduced need,
discerning through reading glasses
an image of shriveled ego

Corona Malaise

Staring at myself
In enforced isolation
I'm not who I want.

Are we saved yet?

Pummeling a skin tabor face
Violating sinners as they atone
Tithing by coercion and promise
Picking at shames so they can fester

Shrilling curses from ordained throats
Breaking spirits in rhythm with chants
What redemptive bliss in saving others

The Minimalist*

I know a minimal man
who spurns my smart devices
and lives without television,
ignorant of electronic ephemera
deflating from urgent to forgotten
within a week.
I wonder, between bombardments
if he isn't the one better able
to appreciate his context.
Is it too late for me?

*For Tom

THE POET SPEAKS: *I came to fiction writing late, at sixty-seven, and poetry later still, at seventy-one. I was reviewing poetry for an ezine, and felt that, bad as I might be, I should be able to write poems as marginal as those already getting published.*

As it turned out I could, but I realized that if I was going to be good rather than adequate, I needed training. I joined three poetry groups and started reading through books on poetry, all of which I'm still doing. I may not be writing great poems, but I'm now writing better ones.

And I was liberated. I came to poetry so late in life that I knew there would never be decades of artistic development and recognition. This has let me write what I want- formal poetry, haiku, shape poems, free verse- whatever, on whichever theme or emotion I was touched by.

I just glanced through seven single spaced pages of poem titles, mostly all published, in one case eleven times. Some bad or indifferent, some good, and a few I can pat myself on the ass about.

Writing poetry and fiction are symbiotic for me. If I found myself stuck in turgid I can switch off, write a story or poem, and return to my prior work with (usually) better writing. Another liberation from a late start, I don't have to have a narrow focus.

My fiction tells stories, but my poetry hopefully captures moods and experiences in a way that can be shared. The poems tend toward either childlike delight or sardonic pessimism and are probably a clearer view into my gnarly persona than my fiction.

I am content in my words.

AUTHOR BIO: Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over three hundred stories and poems published so far, and six books. Ed works the other side of writing at Bewildering Stories, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of six review editors.

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