

FOUR POEMS

By John Guzlowski

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: These four are a treat. Who says little has been written about Shakespeare? Plumbing the depths of his genius: 'He loved carrots / and fresh bread' '... and lost as Jesus / from a long way off' '...there is more hope / than silence'

I love this inversion of the "Lost Generation" squandering their roaring 20's. It was the 30's, the depression years, eking out 'the generations of loss.' And the pathetic fallacy that nature, somehow, heeds us: 'When the flood came, / it didn't listen.'

From the "Bard of Avon," and his passion for carrots, to Kafka in Bed: 'He feels the earth pass / through the moon's shadow.' What a line to allow alight on your mind and let linger? From what I know of Arabic folklore, you are wise to follow your moon shadow, wherever it leads, should it appear—whispers of Yusuf.

No need to stroke this chap's ego, the rest of the world got to him first. See how Fleas can soar...(Spacing is the poet's own.) HS

What Shakespeare Loved

He loved carrots
and fresh bread

loved to watch
the grayness of winter
descend in December

loved to feel the snow
on his face and beneath
his feet

loved April
with its sweet showers
too

It all reminded him
of when he was a kid,
waking in his mother's arms

The Moon is a Cat

The moon listens
like an old cat
for the whisper
that means food

For the meteors
that still lift dust
when they fall

For the light
that comes cold
and lost as Jesus
from a long way off

In a sky dark
and starry as always
there is more hope
than silence

The Language Poor People Use

I grew up listening
to the words of the poor,
farm people and refugees
who had lost everything,
again and again,
beyond all
the generations of loss.

They had words:
bread and rain,
winter and trees,
hunger and love.

But most of the time
they didn't speak them.
They knew these words
were useless.

When the flood came,
it didn't listen.

Kafka in Bed

The sheets are clean
The room is dark and quiet

He feels the earth pass
through the moon's shadow
and he remembers his mom
asking for soup,
his dad singing a song
in Yiddish about geese
flying low across the sky

Perhaps
if there was a moon
it would listen
like an old cat
for the whisper
that means food

For the meteors
that still lift dust
when they fall

For the light
that comes cold
and lost as Jesus
from a long way off

Outside someone
Walks by.

Kafka wonders,
Why do I feel this?
Why this?

He knows
he would rather
touch the moon
than make sense
of his own dreaming.

THE POET SPEAKS:

Why do I write about what I write about?

The muse. She speaks to me, and I write. What choice do I have?

She used to tell me to write about my parents and their experiences in the German concentration camps in WWII, and that's what I wrote about, and then one day, she told me to write about something else, some goofy stuff that had nothing to do with my parents, and I wrote about that and continue to write about what she wants me to write about.

I write about snow and sparrows, the world in the morning, the world at night, the friends who are still here and wondering where I've gone to, and the friends who are waiting in their graves for my memories to give them some breath.

I write about God and aging, my wife and my family, the way a door closes and the way a door waits to be opened.

I write about standing at a bus stop in Chicago in the pearly gray rain waiting for a passing crucifixion just the way I did when I was a kid 50 years ago.

When I first started writing, I thought the idea of a muse was just a gag, some bullshit left over from the Greeks. But then I met a terrific poet named Gray Jacobik who said, "Listen to your muse." And I thought she was kidding me too, but she wasn't. She believed all writers and artists have a muse, someone who speaks to them.

I finally came to believe it after that. What I noticed was that thoughts and words were always popping into my head, and I didn't know where they were coming from, but there they were, and I had to write them down immediately because the muse wasn't going to whisper twice what she whispered once.

Is the muse real? I don't know, but what I do know is that I have to listen to this voice and write down everything that it says to me because some of this stuff is really really good.

BIO: *John Guzowski's writing appears in Rattle, North American Review, and many other journals. Echoes of Tattered Tongues, his memoir about his parents' experiences as slave laborers in Nazi Germany, won the Benjamin Franklin Poetry Award and the Eric Hoffer/Montaigne Award. He is also the author of the Hank and Marvin mystery novels (reviewed in the New York Times) and a columnist for the Dziennik Zwiazkowy, the oldest Polish daily newspaper in the US. He has been nominated 2 times for the Pulitzer Prize, 7 times for the Pushcart Prize, and 3 times for Best of the Net. Always a bridesmaid.*