

SIX POEMS

By I. B. Rad

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: You can't vet poetry without inviting a New Yorker, but these came easily. Riff along with I.B. RAD. His Bio almost rivals his verse. The first is Adam and Eve dialoguing in Play form: "...So I'd get the blame." ... 'engorging with explicit knowledge' ... " ...for in tomorrow's grim epoch / each other is all you'll have." How prescient is this aged reference? Each is so romantic, so incited. I can't help thinking if we were a dating service I would hit the click button and introduce him to my sister. If you want to love someone, you can only love those who have hurt, and have been hurt. Is he Soothsayer or just a player? 'Magritte indicted'? Basquiat: tendering 'Mona Lisa' on a dollar bill? Still my heart, I will likely read these over and over even if you don't... (Spacing is poet's own) HS

A&E, Five Minutes of Play (or How Love was Born)

Curtain opens, Adam is gazing heavenward at thunder and lightning.

Eve is facing Adam.

Adam:

"Good God, it's all Eve's fault!

She was bewitched

by a cold blooded viper's shtick

that eating Your forbidden fruit
would bring untold bliss.
Then sampling that fruit
and fretting over her transgression,
she enticed me to try it
so I'd get the blame."

Eve:

"Come on, fess up Adam!
You're forever craving forbidden sweets.
So on ripping that fruit
right from my hand
and taking your fateful bite,
engorging with explicit knowledge,
you hardened
and chased me all about
as if there were no tomorrow."

Adam:

"Dear God, give my rib back!
My sole fervor is for resuming calm reflection

on the splendor of my earthly paradise."

Eve:

"A likely story!"

God:

"Is this how you venerate your Lord?!"

(thunder and lightning)

"Old-time Yahwehs

won't allow extenuating circumstances

or do plea deals,

nor do we grant second chances,

for as ostensibly just Gods,

we're strictly, 'Just do what I say!'"

(more thunder and lightning)

"Your only salvation

lies in embracing one another

and drawing together,

for in tomorrow's grim epoch

each other is all you'll have."

(still more thunder and lightning, with wind picking up)

Adam & Eve:

Ultimately resigned to their fate,
gently gazing into each other's eyes,
Adam and Eve hug and kiss,
in concert acclaiming,
"Together we hail our new found feeling,
The Creator's wondrous gift
to lighten our journey,
Love."

(The heightening wind pushes A&E, hand-in-hand, off stage)

The Chain

I.B. Rad

Oddly, I never noticed
that thick chain,
much like those anchoring ocean liners,
extending outward from our starcraft.
Perhaps an illusion
produced by too powerful tractor beams,

it stretched through the ubiquitous gloom
gradually merging with an engulfing blackness,
that congealing shadow
that kept us in its' thrall.

How often I'd thought of slipping away,
of stealing an Exit Pod
to follow the chain;
yet, of countless earlier flights,
none returned.

Others I'd spoken with
had also witnessed this apparition;
though curiously, our youngest staff
seldom seem to have noticed.

And clearly, the chain moved,
for if you focused on a link
situated by one of those luminous whorls
and stared long enough,
you began to see it creeping outward,
toward the blackness.

But where was this chain drawing us?

Through an ever deepening vacuity, ad nauseam?

To some coveted emergence beyond imagining?

To our impending doom?

Clearly, no one knew;
so we made up parables, fables
to sate our curiosity, to alleviate our fears.
And as few voluntarily relinquished
our ship's highly circumscribed,
though ostensibly secure, familiar,
we crafted amusements to pass the time,
to distract us, to keep us entertained.
Yet, deep within our hearts,
we all await its summons,
that irresistible pull
impelling us to take an Exit Pod,
to follow those who left before...
To where?...

Dark Adaptation

I.B. Rad

Blinded

by their "otherness",

we couldn't see

any conceivable humanity

until, gradually,
after the frenzy
of sanctimonious fury,
our marred vision's aftermath
came into view.

Confronting our sight
lay a Boschian nightmare
with gutted hellscapes
featuring hemorrhaging rivers
of gushing red
disgorging disjoined
heads, limbs, torsos,
and torrents of refugees
streaming toward
the borders;
while lifted on a pedestal of ruin
above these Stygian heights,
Madonna and child
huddle, transfixed
by bursting bright
of shooting stars,
though none
to steer us

by...

Pipe Dreams

I.B. Rad

Beneath his portrait

of a pipe

Magritte indicted,

"This in not a pipe,"

goadng one viewer to laughter,

"Of course it's a pipe!

What else could it be?!"

At which our docent grinned,

"Then why not

put that pipe in your mouth

and smoke it?"

"Mona Lisa"

I.B. Rad

Basquiat

drolly transformed

"Mona Lisa"
to a grotesque
presidential bust
on a dollar bill;
deriding, at least for me,
our persistent commodification of art.
For despite practitioner's pretensions,
fashionable market validated art
is a trophy investment
of the uber-rich
and our global culture's
most profitable venture
into "art appreciation."

The Washington Machine

On perpetual spin cycle,
our Washington machine's
never coming clean
that rectifying America
is soiling us
with its' business

then expecting to clean up

by winning the next election.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I guess one thing that inspires my poetry is the challenge of writing it. It's like walking a tightrope. Can I do it this time? Fortunately, failure doesn't mean breaking my neck; it simply requires writing another poem. I suppose, as I once joked, for me poetry is a form of self stimulation comparable to a developmentally disabled person repetitively flapping their hand or tapping a cheek. I can't honestly say this or that writer influenced me. I can say that I very much like Anna Akhmatova, Wislawa Szymborska, Cavafy for their profundity, power, and wit, Margaret Atwood, the early Edward Field, Bukowski, E.E. Cummings, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, to name a few. I'm also inspired by some satirical painters from Bosch, Bruegel and Goya to Beckmann, Grosz and Basquiat. Obviously, biblical themes and socio-political events also inspire me as does the wordplay used in advertising. I'm also the kind of writer who will slave away to perfect a poem even though I know it will probably never see the light of day because it goes against the current cultural grain. I think it important to expose others to less popular viewpoints that they may not like. I most definitely do not approve of internet shaming and job loss for the slightest ideational offense. "Freedom of speech" only has meaning when one can say what people don't want to hear without penalty. Perhaps my late wife was right when she said, "You're not really a poet (or at least an American one.) You're a sociologist, a satirical social critic, and a philosopher who uses poetry as a means of expression." But then, I suppose, by today's standards, Shakespeare's wife could have claimed that as well.*

BIO: *I.B. Rad is an independent New York City poet, who doesn't slavishly follow any ideology or our various conformities. 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). 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.)*