

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Edward Field: "Credo" & Two More Poems

Edward Field · Thursday, September 20th, 2012

Edward Field is the recipient of the W.H. Auden award, the Bill Whitehead lifetime achievement award, the Lambda Literary Award, and is the author of ten books of poetry, including *After The Fall: poems old and new*, in which can be found his poem, "Mae West," published by University of Pittsburgh Press, © 2007.

Credo

What good is poetry
 if it doesn't stand up
 against the lies of government,
 if it doesn't rescue us
 from the liars that mislead us?
 What good is it
 if it doesn't speak out, denounce what's going on?
 It's nothing
 but harmless wordplay
 to titillate and distract —
 the government knows it,
 and can always get rid of us if we step out of line.
 That I believed in poetry,
 even when I betrayed it,
 that I came back to its central meaning
 — to save the world —
 this and only this
 has been my salvation.

— after C. Milosz

Taking My Breath Away

Even at the age of seventy, he takes my breath away.
 I fell in love with his mother at ninety,
 so this family has staying power.

Yes, around other people he can look drawn and old,
 but in private he sheds his clothes and his age
 to become the charming boy I met at the office
 where we were temporary typists and the supervisor
 made the mistake of sitting us next to each other –
 we talked so much she soon put us
 at opposite ends of the typing pool.
 Too late, we were hooked,
 and I brought him to meet my analyst,
 who came from generations of rabbis,
 and pronounced her blessings on us.
 Her ancestors must have turned over in their graves!
 Strange that someone who looks so healthy
 can have such dread diseases –
 brain tumors, seizures and now the wobbles –
 but they don't affect his essential beauty,
 which keeps taking my breath away,
 as when I first caught sight of his pop-up penis
 making the enchanting bulge in his pants.
 I wasn't wrong about it – it was special,
 and he was special, though too volatile to hold down,
 Unlike me, he was organized and scheduled,
 which put my sloppiness into harness,
 if ultimately to wait on him hand and foot —
 I can't complain, that was my destiny.
 Over forty years later he's still in my life
 and I'm still dazzled, the luckiest man alive,
 the man with everything.

New York

I live in a beautiful place, a city
 people claim to be astonished
 when you say you live there.
 They talk of junkies, muggings, dirt, and noise,
 missing the point completely.
 I tell them where they live it is hell,
 a land of frozen people.
 They never think of people.
 Home, I am astonished by this environment
 that is also a form of nature
 like those paradises of trees and grass
 but this is a people paradise
 where we are the creatures mostly,
 though thank God for dogs, cats, sparrows, and roaches.
 This vertical place is no more an accident
 than the Himalayas are.
 The city needs all those tall buildings

to contain the tremendous energy here.
The landscape is in a state of balance.
We do God's will whether we know it or not:
where I live the streets end in a river of sunlight.
Nowhere else in the country do people
show just what they feel –
we don't put on any act.
Look at the way New Yorkers
walk down the street. It says,
I don't care. What nerve,
to dare to live their dreams, or nightmares,
and no one bothers to look.
True, you have to be an expert to live here.
Part of the trick is not to go anywhere, lounge about,
go slowly in the midst of the rush for novelty.
Anyway, besides the eats the big event here
is the streets, which are full of love –
we hug and kiss a lot. You can't say that
for anywhere else around. For some
it's a carnival of sex
there's all the opportunity in the world.
For me it's no different:
out walking, my soul seeks its food.
It knows what it wants.
Instantly it recognizes its mate, our eyes meet,
and our beings exchange a vital energy,
the universe goes on Charge
and we pass by without holding.

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