

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Richard Jones: Three Poems

Richard Jones · Wednesday, September 18th, 2019

Dublin

My Irish friend said,
“Let’s go for a dander,”
So we walked along the Liffey,
Then turned to have a drink
At Ryan’s with its famous clock,
Engraved mirrors, and snug rooms.
Ryan’s is the Victorian bar where
Patrick Kavanagh once held court
And Ludwig Wittgenstein rented
And lived in an upstairs room.
We paused a moment in silence
To contemplate that and drink.
The two of us agreed in a poet’s life
The worst thing that could happen
Would be to find our pint gone
Flat and tepid. “Lead with a verb,”
My friend advised. “Nothing lasts.”
Irish tends to disregard indefinite
Articles, using only the definite.
“I’m going to see the mother,”
I told my friend. “She’s 96,” I said,
“And has no bell on her bike.”
My friend wore a yellow blazer.
I sported new black tennis shoes
With fire-red ankles and heels.
When we got back to our walk,
Twilight was falling. Neither of us
Could decide exactly what color
To call the sky, but we embraced
The mystic heavens, the mysterious,
And the purposeful limits of language.
We shook hands and agreed we’d meet again
To find more things we could not name

And evening skies we had no words for,
 Knowing that if we walked long enough
 And far enough, we could trust
 The words to find us.

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Khrushchev

I liked the way Nikita Khrushchev
 Banged his brown shoe on the table
 Until he got the world's attention.
 Khrushchev reminded me of Picasso,
 Who outwitted everyone with a bull
 Made of a bicycle seat and handlebars.
 The bull reminds me of Picasso's obsession
 With the minotaur, which makes me think
 Of Homer and Ovid and Sisyphus. The rock
 Given to Sisyphus was meant as a curse;
 But the rock was a gift from the gods,
 So doesn't that make it wonderful?
 I refuse to believe it a punishment
 To push the heavy rock up the hill.
 Every morning when I wake, I feel lucky,
 And thank God for the big gray rock
 Waiting by my bed. How good it is
 To have a rock to set one's heart to,
 And a mountain I can call my very own!

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The Desert

I didn't know what to make of the waterless riverbed—
 The orange sand fine as dust, the broken, crumbly rocks.
 I followed the path that cut through the arid landscape,
 A wide, dry rivulet that curved and pushed forward
 Through a rocky ravine. I felt like some lost prophet
 Walking an elegant long brushstroke made by the sky.
 As far I could see the land was barren and lifeless.
 I'd not find another living person for a hundred miles.
 The sun bright as fire, the day hot, I tried to imagine
 The spring river flowing all around me, snowmelt
 Or sudden storm flood, the water up to my waist,
 The current sometimes gentle, sometimes fast,
 But always insistent, the water whispering, "Hurry—
 We've somewhere to go and we must to go there now."

(Author photos by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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