**Classic Poetry Series**

# John Beevers

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## John Beevers (18 October 1911- 13 September 1975)

John Leonard Beevers was born on 18 October 1911 in Gildersome, Yorkshire, to John Leonard Beevers, a police inspector, and Esther Schofield Beevers. Restless as a boy, he led a small gang that engaged in delinquent behavior and petty theft. His youthful hysteria and arrogance continued through his time at Queens College, Cambridge, where he took an M.A. in English with first class honors in 1933.

Beevers married Marjorie Pollard in 1934. He published his first book, World Without Faith, a defense of free thought over structured ideology, the following year. Beevers also began his journalism career at this time with stints on several newspapers. He worked exclusively for the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1941 to 1969.

John Beevers embraced revolutionary Communism in the 1930s, but converted to Roman Catholicism sometime in the 1940s. Although nominally a Catholic, Beevers had an ambiguous relationship to the church. While he admired its theology and the lives of Catholic saints, Beevers's critical and lascivious nature prevented him from fully committing to the faith, particularly in its moral elements. Marjorie Beevers demonstrated a greater devotion to Roman Catholicism than her husband.

John Beevers aspired to write fiction and poetry, but never had much success in these genres. He privately printed a volume of poetry, The Dark Emperor, under the pseudonym John Clayton in 1947, but failed to publish any more imaginative literature. Instead, Beevers turned to writing biographies of Roman Catholic saints, beginning with Storm of Glory: St. Therese of Lisieux (1949). John Beevers is best known for his 15 works on saints' lives, Marian apparitions, and translations of Catholic theological treatises. He has been credited with presenting balanced accounts of his subjects, avoiding both brusque skepticism and unquestioning piety.

John and Marjorie Beevers had one daughter, Susan Jane. Marjorie Beevers died in 1962. John Beevers married his mistress, Marjorie Broadbridge, the following year. He continued writing until his death on 13 September 1975.

Works:

World Without Faith (1934)
Storm of Glory: St. Therese of Lisieux (1949)
The Dark Emperor (1947)

**Atameros**

The palace with revolving doors was mine
And three of us went up its steps
To the tall room whose walls were made
Of the furred eyes of moths.

One only went within -
Atameros the Greek;
With steps that slid along the floor
He slipped inside and closed the door.

Whilst Williamson took off his boots,
Produced three large synthetic mandrake roots
And softly musicked Home Sweet Home
Upon his dirty pocket-comb.

Within the room a metal thread
Uncoiled to greet Atameros;
He placed his bowler-hat upon its head
And skated round and round
To the delightful sound

Of eight trombones,
Five saxophones,
And a lynched nigger's
Rattling bones.

Meanwhile, I hung out of the window and spat walnut-shells into the sea breaking on the walls far below.

Two doors he tried
One opened wide
He saw his face inside.

Down the corridor he walked -
Sixteen stools behind him stalked -
Till lie came where sponges grew:
Then Atameros really knew
Which end of the twig was forked.
This was the beach where the rats bred
So, reaching to the shelf above his head,
Atameros took the bowl
And strewed with seagulls' eyes
The crystal inches of the sand,
Setting them in a bloodshot squint
Towards the blue Madonna
Whose thighs nipped close the heavy clouds
Above that grey and troubled sea,
Tile soup of dead melt's bones,
Which washed with long-whipped moan,
The stumpy coral teeth of Fraser's Bay.

But time was getting on.

Atameros took out his watch.
It fluttered from his hand
And minutes, like a cloud of nervous bats,
Brushed past him
As the eyes closed down their lids.

And I, still in my tower, lost vast sums at Crown and Anchor, for 1 was competing with the sun and the mailed sword.

He spat and every globule turned to pearls
That ill low-toned concentric whirls
Ran on before him
Till lie came
To that high room without a name
Where all things shift
And yet remain the same.
On tile black bed she lay
With little ants at play
About the lobe of each her ears,
Biting each minute three small fears.

Once every day they stopped,
Scoured the clanging skies
Caught all the turtle-doves
Tore off their heads
And from their beaks
Built her a tower
Which ringed the moon
With wide lassoes of bloody twittering tongues.
Her breasts were glass
Through them he gazed
And saw the beatings of her heart.

John Beevers

**Relatively**

Someone across the crowded room says
'Radio Luxemburg'
and it's like hearing your life
through the screech and moan
of wireless valves.
Were you really there,
in Mario Lanza days,
Sunday dinner in stiff church clothes.
Cigarette cards, comics, conkers
and pencil cases.
When you rode an invisible horse?

They hit the towers last year.
God knows. Maybe it's the alchemy
of new weapons and old superstitions.
You saw a woman sobbing
on her knees in Bleeker Street.
Briefly, because you were rushing
to meet a client.
You remember that,
although you cannot recall the contract. But later,
it all sings beyond the edge of your cognition.
Like an advertising jingle.

And you recall that hot summer of forty seven,
the year they got you a sister.
You lived on a farm with a great aunt
whose oil lamps flickered and sang at bedtime.
Icy water from the spring in clanking buckets,
and walking past crab apple trees to the privy.
Auntie was waiting, 'two years now'
to hear from Owen, missing in Burma.
'I'll bide my time, she said.
You can't get back what's done.'

But you can, can’t you? If you go fast enough?

John Beevers