

Classic Poetry Series

Jon Anderson

- poems -

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Exiled On Mountain, Bewail Fate & Praise Autumn

Now that I'm actually living my solitude I'm clueless.
Every now & then the wind drops in & I look at it.
These are the signs of seasonal change: I'm not sweating,
& the hollow air in the chimney makes a thrumming noise.
The doves outside my house look like they're waiting
at a bus stop & puff into little black & grey pots when
the wind blows or when the rain comes down in columns.
Now that it's quiet in my house I can't really think
without thinking & I can't really talk without meaning
something else, so I shut up. Some days I wish I was
back at the factory, moving heavy objects & grunting.

They start out looking for a handout, then they get used to it,
the birds. What's weird is I think they don't know why
they come anymore, now that I've stopped feeding them.
Frankly, they tend to be undifferentiated & cutely stupid.
Once, when one fell off the wall, I thought I had something,
it was so embarrassed, lying there like a ruffled pompom
with a black tack for a head. Turned out it was dead.
I was so alienated I mailed it back without a stamp, but
I said this prayer for it: Bless every living thing...

I didn't mean to exclude it.

Shortly afterward I was bombed by a traveling flock
of chickadees fresh from a meeting on a rotten stump.
When you're alone every damn word you say has got
to be how you feel, & then you've got to live with it.
I think I'll entertain myself by not experiencing anything.
Word on the mountain is that the wabi of consciousness
is all your living minus all your accumulated experience.
That's why the chickadees attacked, because I'd blown it.

Jon Anderson

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Jon Anderson

Listen, Leo

Listen, Leo, remember the lifeboat
we pilfered from what you said
was an abandoned garage sale,

1442 Columbus, not the explorer,
the street? Last night I came to,
retired to the basement to ponder

my position on circumspection,
the fate of the cruel & unusual,
& drink until I passed out.

I had my underwear on & my .45.
I was planning to feast on that bag
of Chicken Shack backs & beaks

we got at the place that went broke,
put my legs up on a six-pack & drift.
Anyway, this eerie glow started

emanating from the sewage pool,
mostly greenish. It winked
so I shot it, Leo, I've had enough!

Then this long low lump along
the wall near the bulkhead
started toward me, so slow

I had time to think. Went
to the attic & came back down
bearing Mr. Double-Aught.

Leo, I perforated the lifeboat.
It has become a dead one,
incapable, now, of surfacing

above its circumstance.
We can never return to it now.
It's gone. Gone like the snow.

Gone like I got a little behind.
It's a sad world, Leo, we fell,
like yesterday's laundry

into the tub, let's face a fact.
There's nobody left like us.
I got a weathered pate, you

got a ticket to Nova Scotia &
I'm swimming beside the boat.
When we gotta die, we're gone.

Leo, I confess, I adore your face.
Give me a little papa kiss.
Give me a muscle up. Leo,

there's nobody left like us.

Jon Anderson

green ice allowed him in.

Some ran, and were late.
These would
forever imagine tragedy

(endless descent,
his face floating among the reeds,
unrecognized), as those

who imagine the silence of a guest
to be mysterious, or wrong.

Jon Anderson

The Secret Of Poetry

When I was lonely, I thought of death.
When I thought of death I was lonely.

I suppose this error will continue.
I shall enter each gray morning

Delighted by frost, which is death,
& the trees that stand alone in mist.

When I met my wife I was lonely.
Our child in her body is lonely.

I suppose this error will go on & on.
Morning I kiss my wife's cold lips,

Nights her body, dripping with mist.
This is the error that fascinates.

I suppose you are secretly lonely,
Thinking of death, thinking of love.

I'd like, please, to leave on your sill
Just one cold flower, whose beauty

Would leave you inconsolable all day.
The secret of poetry is cruelty.

Jon Anderson

Voyage

So, at last, we will cross.
Our season presupposes continents, lands
of desire. We toss
like unloved baggage where we stand,

and slowly the land gives over.
Goodbye; goodbye.
The water
rises and hisses; distance simplifies

trees, houses. The small land speeds.
And we escape.

Here is your flying sea,
proportionless, your seascape

hung with birds, your frail launch
lightly bearing us in mist.
Everything's touch;
immediate. We had this

journeying at heart; yes, days
of it, weeks, buoyant, propelled.
The casual waves
blur like lines cast back. We have ourselves

out here; what else?
Birds fail. The sea shines
daily, is calm and -- who can tell? --
bottomless. There will be time.

And here I awakened into fear --
a destination, as your own;
an inlet, where
the waters shine

in welcome, where the journey
cries out: Here, where stones, enormous,
burrow in the sea.
The shoreline grows

specific, black and real.
Here is your consummate island;
mine. The sea is still.
The launch glides inland.

We stand in this full calm,
a journey's
end. Friend, be kind,
foreshadow me.

Jon Anderson