

2013 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Second Place: Arthur Ozga

Shall I aspire to Imitate Legends?

Shall I aspire to imitate legends?
Supposing I could, would I gain their fame?
Would I reach and pass them, in the heavens?
Or would I wallow, loser in this game?

Not only fame, but attention as well,
a youthful heart fulfilled by a lover,
for surely that croon could enchant a spell;
a curse whose strength binds one to another.

Creative truth, academic too;
all are within the grasp of a word-smith
in the dazzling league of the elite few
whose accomplishments shroud them in myth.

Trading this skill, its selfishness inane
pales next to the worldly love I might gain.

O, for a Muse...

O, for a muse of love, that would grant
words I cannot find; to express in meter
the distance I would travel, searching for
the right foot to traverse this massive gap.
Then should the royal Arthur, like himself,
assume the port of Venus and enchant
his target. What *joie de vivre* that king
held at the helm!

Woe to he who believes it so simple!
That a couple kind words, a clever verse,
should suffice to make her mine. Supposing
it worked, what then? He should declare himself
victor, his prize the object of his desire.
Fulfillment lies beyond his eager grasp,
for his is a shallow victory, and
a shallow lust. To engage her fully,
mind and body, a union of persons,
that is his deepest wish. But such a foil
requires the gay engagement of two.

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Pulling the lonely sword, he must have seen
deeper truth. At his crest, total kinship,
deeper coterie than man ever knew,
must have been apparent. In this climax,
une vie toute seule.

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How should I approach thee? In a torrent
of passion, a flurry of words, a storm
of discontent? In my weakness, the truth
I speak, let it be heard, it is in your
arms that I find the love I need! But such
admissions I cower from, lying to
hide my fear, not admit them honestly,
Lest my dream as king remain fantasy.

Radiant Sight

Amber, Hazel, green, blue, always shifting,
my eyes betray me. For in the moment
of expectation, my fear shines through
with an honesty I dare not express.

In the forest of my youth, I walked bare;
tenderfoot, I hesitated, 'till the
time had passed. But she, beauty incarnate,
with an offhand glance and a playful mien,
set my soul ablaze. With spry beams of light,
my eyes declared what my burning conscience
dared not divulge. Careless, I cut myself
as I advanced through a bushel of thorns.
A moment of tragedy. A moment
of embarrassment.

Today, my feet have calloused and my soul
calmed, yet the sight of a nymph, a cherub
high above my lowly, mortal status,
kindles a flame long since banished, and those
aspirations return; yet scars of yore
spell a loquacious paralysis—I
hide behind some juvenile cleverness
and wear the joker's visage. A complete
disguise, except my green eyes betray me.
For in the moment of expectation,
my fear shines through with honesty I dare
not express to this mistress of reverie.

Today

What do we have today?
The Greeks had a polis,
the Romans a Republic,
the Christians a Church,
the Americans a Congress,
the English a throne.

Today,
we have no home.

No rallying cry, no locus for thought.
Cultural symbols, with a depth fraught
a sea of lies, symbols so shallow
deep reflection is naught.
As this ship hobbles toward the next
great era we can hope it sinks not betwixt
two great masses, lest we be left alone.

Today,
we have no home.

Is speech a betrayal?
The Greeks had Ephialtes,
The Romans, Brutus,
The Christians, Judas,
The Americans, Arnold,
The English, Cromwell.
Today there is no grandeur,
no epic tales to match
eras that have past.
We are but observers, waiting, alone.

Today,
we have no home.