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FIVE POEMS: THE PLAY OF FORM

Jacque Vaught Brogan

QUESTIONING THE HISTORY OF THE OBJECTIVE CASE

--or Bedroom Eyes--

What would it mean
to write a sonnet now?

How could we enter
that which was inscribed

as absence of we—
women de-scribed—

h(I)erarchy//
and *woman* in a shroud?

Lilacs in bloom
are pretty in themselves
(See, how they grow)

and dull to all the Gods
though god, s/he, is
the light—always the "odd,"
"irrational"—the one
which always dwells

from *she* to shining *see*,
that should not be

put out, that should not
be (woman in black:
infibulated)

convicted as lack,
compared to man,
as mere deformity

(as Aristotle said
--and all fathers
who made [them] bowls, who turned
she into her

LIKE A FLOWER

Like a flower, opening,
I sing to you
the way an iris opens
to the dark.

All is not lost—
it's like an early lark
singing (finally)
morning's lifting hue:

black embraces p/
ink—orange, gold,—and blue
like a mother's
arm, or raising of the ark
above the haggard
mountains (clear, and stark—
such places I have
wandered, as if a Jew):

meaning: outcast, silenced,
given to a queue
meaning: branded,
then made to wear the mark
(or a scarlet letter: t/
heir "re-mark"
that made "T" a mere
inversion of "you").

Not a Divine Comedy
medy: yet i rise
as if from Purgatory—opening
eyes.

SONNET

Angry eyes—that's why they're
 hidden behind veils
 Angry eyes—finally darting
 flashing like knives

Hungry eyes—walking backward
 (receding trails)

Hungry eyes—no word for *women*
 that wasn't *wives*

Ta(l)king eyes—
 how can (s)he ever
 be really heard

ta(l)king eyes—
 our (w)hole (hi)story
 so damned absurd—

"She really is so well preserved."

OF MODERN POETRY: TAKE TWO

What would it mean to write a sonnet now?
Video, Madonna, means everything.
Old men are not afraid of when or how.

There was a time poets were thought to sing.
Rhyme was taught precisely how to ring.
What would it mean to write a sonnet now?

Someone would have to mean something.
But now, that could be anything.
But men are not afraid, of when, or how . . .

Maybe it was once a dangling for a ring,
(before that, the desire to write on wings),
but who knows how to write a sonnet now?

I'm sick of what this world is going to bring:
acid droppings when it should be spring.
Old men say, "Not afraid of then or now."

I want to change it—change everything—
and let my children discover springs
of what it means to write a sonnet now,
and make old men afraid of who—and how.

POETRY, LEAVES AND I

It is true
falling leaves one by one

It is true
the leaves have spun away in the dark
or that he thought we had burned away
all that was written on them

Yes, falling leaves one by one

and even our children will be going soon
becoming first students
who also each spring leave one by one by one

and that my memories now
of the many Octobers I have held our love
have been rewritten, have fallen now

like the brown dried leaves
scurrying across dead ground

But smaller leaves,
the leaves of aspens
mulberries
locusts

all golden, unanimously, in a moment
lift in the wind, not like rain
nor leavings one by one

but like the spreading notes of song
the choral precedent of spirit
yet to come

and the larger leaves,
the oaks
the maples
with their myriad colors

applaud again
this spirit from within
the spirit from without

spirit on the wing
the poetry falling leaves one
like a miracle already rung.

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P.S. Professor Brogan writes: "I always feel, in a situation like this, that the poetry submitted should have something to do with Cummings and his own poetics. In this instance, thinking of Cummings' subversive sequence of poems, Chimneys, I am sending a few experimental sonnets that address the supposedly 'patriarchal' assumptions of that genre—assumptions Cummings himself undermined. (Actually, two of them could be typed out in perfectly regular form, but I've played with the typography on purpose—again as did Cummings.) The other two I am sending play with form in rather obvious ways."