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POETRY OF ROBERT LIETZ

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Along the Route

*The barn-ruins, pornshop, abandoned homes,
the abandoned country churches
and village dreams...*

A Saturday's grey light spills -- on
the cratered drive / over the snow-machines
/ the arcade and prompts / over the country sleaze
the billboards pass as entertainment --
inviting the rigs / the cats with illegal plates to linger.

And here -- in this moon-wide lot --
as solemn
as seeing's been for them -- they shake off
what's left of heat -- loosening
their grips outdoors -- and -- glad again to feel --
stand in the mused grey light -- watching
that shag of ponies stomp the iced grass
near the fence line.

So there will be Thomas / Christopher -- figures
in peaked and umbered glass -- saints
squared as seasons / as the congregations vanish --
when even the leaded hues
seem groans -- and the groans would seem
to find their ways
through weatherbreaks -- deep into snows
let drop in gaping cellarholes --
and over the raked stones now
/ where trailer-homes
bloomed fire.

And this would be Stone Creek Methodist --
a mile or so maybe --
and Harbinger Falls Full Gospel -- and *these*
the likes of *Fantasy*
/ and these the knob-gripped quarters -- eyes
glad to see -- His Holiness Temple
of the First Word -- the likes of crowed love --
patrolled by these street-poles
and seamless grey -- adorned by these yards

of country junk -- these
veterans and younger brothers
making plain -- crying
their love to roof-pitch
/ over the lengths
of field tiles.

So the billboards let us know. The yard lights
tell us just how far apart.

How 1955 -- how the yard-lights -- set
to go out on their own -- and kids
with kids -- packed now for their own versions
of team-play -- McDonalds
Saturdays -- mean spared or can't be spared --
with Fantasy drawn
like some lost skin on everything -- here
where the road's edge oaks --
broken and felled in time -- and *Brokenword*
Creek opening -- where figures
of allurements / oaks will smoke away
like memory -- a wonder
that any held so long -- stared
absence down -- stared down
the dreams made do in Ocoola
/ and the doorsteps down --
that love had never
parted from.

Even This Way from the Start: An Anniversary Suite

*This poem is meant to honor the love two found when love
had seemed impossible. It serves, of course, as a private
appreciation but especially so in light of the personal and
more public events, including the Heaven's Gate tragedy,
of the Easter season, 3/24--4/12, 1997.*

1

Who'd have ever said? Who'd have blamed
the maddening? Or the fingers
then / tearing the ads from a week's papers --
the order of interests moved / or --
two for one -- moved toward bargains once --
toward the corners two -- strangers --
walked away from -- bearing the night's cuisine
or last year's wrap-arounds?

Hadn't our lives been something once? And
hadn't the bootsteps once -- carrying
the luggage out -- sounded incordial riffs --
decanted silences -- our lives
as something after all -- and -- *two for one* --
made up at films or versions of good mornings --
finding the mysteries star-packed
/ walking from albums pitched -- into
the lull of further business?

And -- *two for one* -- finding their ways
through flames -- to this good sense
/ good exercise -- into this stretch of promises --
leaving the woolens / silks

/ the oldest names behind -- spent in concluding
much -- with the words made up --
the minds made up on incurious credentials
/ refining the likes of plenty then --
reduced with the local aptitudes
/ obliged by the local prints
and deep dissent..

2

" The machines -- we think -- cannot know
everything -- the space guys haunting / hovering -- the astral mantras
haunting streams of Easter promises
/ added (with weekends) up -- with this love
made more / these spans of mystery --
cannot know everything -- seeing these
human souls condensed
to declamation

and the brilliance -- *weighed* and *wearying* --
spilled from containers
of all sorts -- given this way through programs --
such as injury requires -- to
bodies counted as they rise -- bubbles / beads --
a kindness made to weave
among the colors -- bringing us up
about -- dismissing the calls
from the first calls and following -- lost
with the lights let dull --
with the names the winter's etched
into the porchboards --
still as the ivory telephones --
the mauve and cyan
/ grey and white-flecked
and ceramic
potpurris..."

3

Behind that racing star -- its issues
/ interests trailing --
we find ourselves this wash of sunlight
inching north / adding
its greys and hinted light to minimums. And
too this last of March
/ this after-Easter blizzard -- these
weathers moodier
than words had ever been -- this
woodsmoke summoning
deep and next
events!

Maybe you just give some things up
or make your own
close company -- bringing your hands
to kitchenwork --
commemorative and glad -- but
watching for blossoms
everywhere -- from these rooms made up
with all the ancient poetry --
and for this flesh made glad --
letting the decompressions

come -- bodies
as glad

/ provisional -- the ways our hands
accepted them --
filled by this dawn -- spring light --
awash with these linen hues --
with this dawn light -- reaching
up around -- a California
kind of thing -- reaching among
the figures now -- showered
and wrapped within
the range of figured consonance --
warm as the light poured in
with all its warm
authority.

4

Let flames retell the ways we've introduced
ourselves -- stippling and striking out --
grateful in given time -- in the daybright
/ aquarium calm
for one good restaurant -- one cove where two
might strip to sun themselves --
excited alive Elizabeth -- measuring the place
as bubbles rise -- as the flames report
their motion / influence.

And you are the instant *fleshed*. And you
are the pause -- the completing
phrase -- the open sentence of our lifetime --
a secret visited -- building
unscripted joy -- building the afternoon --
where two -- relocating worlds --
where *two for one* take charm -- finding
these birds made near

and even this rainlight now -- riffing the pond
it blows across -- charmed
as we are to be found out -- the afternoon
made thrill before such large imagining
/ and by these woods discovered in -- as ready
as we've ever been for spring -- exciting
these winter-tired limbs -- this
seasons-tired room with light
/ with our excited
trembling.

5

Maybe I'll write this later on -- say
how the webbed branches
and ascribing synergies
opened light for us --
opened the spaces lost
for all
their mis-attachments
/ the lingering cold
come so --

so long as two consent to celebrate
/ to study themselves
in place -- familiar

in place --
with the surprises leveling
but no less
as surprises -- here --
in this huge land
verified

/ in this fullness struck -- a
fullness without excuse --
unimpressed by shaken ash --
remembering the ways
two looked -- completing
the damaged lines --
and finding the home
made new
/ within the flash
of their own
interest.

*

Maybe I'll write this later on -- pleased
by these birds returned --
and by these squirrels now --
good humors visiting --
remembering the ways
two looked
when flames were asked to dance --
signalling the promises --
brightening all this *blue*
ground down to clay
and overcast --

shared by the nuthatch / wrens --
by fingers
run through the turned earth --
setting our own
among the playing moods' civility --
among
the violet / sharper hues
of finches come to color --
where two consent to celebrate --
and -- *two*
for one -- among a yard's
first primitives -- consent
again / even to rise
and celebrate!

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Robert Lietz, a professor of English and Creative Writing (fiction and poetry) at Ohio Northern University, has had published nearly 500 of poems in more than one hundred journals in the U.S. and Canada, including *Agni Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Epoch*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Northern American Review*, *The Ontario Review*, *Poetry*, and *Shenandoah*. Seven collections of poems have been published,

including *Running in Place* (L'Epervier Press.), *At Park and East Division* (L'Epervier Press,) *The Lindbergh Half-century* (L'Epervier Press,) *The Inheritance* (Sandhills Press,) and *Storm Service* (Basfal Books). Basfal also published *After Business in the West: New and Selected Poems*. Additionally his poems have appeared in dozens of online journals. He has completed several print and hypertext (hypermedia) collections of poems for publication, including *Character in the Works: Twentieth-Century Lives*, *West of Luna Pier*, *Spooking in the Ruins*, *Keeping Touch*, and *Eating Asiago & Drinking Beer*.