

An Adventure into Poetry by Richard Rose

Before writing this down, I picked up a book of quotations and looked through it for comments on poets and poetry. I had hoped to find some soul-stirring paraphrase that would reveal the secret of poetic genius, and betray to the lay world the elixir that converts base words into golden beauty.

I am grossly disappointed. Here is what I found. Poets are madmen. They are in league with the devil. They are people with causes dangerous to society and if society changed to suit them, they would damn the reformation. And here and there we find worthy men, Shakespeare included, who stoutly maintain that love is the mother of poetic inspiration. This means sublimated libido.

Perhaps this is true. The poet personifies -- deifies love. He adores his opposite because she has awakened new vistas for the soul. He finds a harmony and purpose in life almost divine, and rejoices even as his terrestrial ego suffers misery, so that he finds a rich glory in his tragedy.

Like Ben Jonson he is blind but his infatuation with reality is exquisite, and yet the world will forever claim that he is exaggerating.

At any rate the eye of the poet has some strange magic that colors things that have no color, and just as quickly tears the glamour from that which pretends to have color.

So I reason that poetry, -- that is the reading of poetry is adventure. We can pick up a book of fiction and upon reading it sense the character of the writer. We may sense his hopes or his great love as in the writing of Emily Bronte, we may feel his noble purpose as in *Les Miserables*, but in fiction the most we will get is a thought, and we are usually limited to one thought to each book. That is only in the best fiction.

But in poetry, if we can borrow the lens of the poet as we read we will see something that is just not exactly thought. There is a realm between the words. The poet himself laments his inability to describe this middle realm, or this ethereal realm. Some may think is the pulse of God. Some may think it is the voice of Pan, long dead Pan. Such I think Amy Lowell felt when she parted the grass and felt a heart within the earth. As for me I will not attempt to say what I feel, because I know that it cannot be put into words.

I can only try to convey indirectly the interpretation.

Feel between the words of Edna St. Vincent Millay the poem which began with such uncertainty...All I could see from where I stood. You can feel her uncertainty. She trembled before plunging into a rapture of philosophy. The philosophy was conventional but her heart was bounding forward into her surprising inspiration. There is vigor in Vachel Lindsay. In the Tiger. There is vigor that scratches the belly of heaven, as in Blake's Little Lamb. There is a beauty, a carillon of beauty in the Bells that washes out of commonplace words piled up like blocks. The words are meaningless, but the numerical order or value, or the onomatopoeical weight, or the calling of color sounds

upon a dreamy ear fills us with a feeling. A feeling that is all. The rush of every pleasant memory connected with chimes or bells will hurry from the remotest crannies of our memory to fire the enchantment.

Walk quietly through the somber purples, deep reds and velvet blacks that play upon the melancholic raven. Dance with abandon down the rills and glens with Arethusa. March stoutly with the Light Brigade with the selfless soldier proudly giving his body to death. Sit by the fireside with nostalgic Longfellow and dream of youth and childhood. Glide through Milton and pillow yourself upon the august organ tones of Il Penseroso. Reach up and feel the uncanny pleasures of Khubla Khan, the gentle warmth of Burns's Little Mouse, or the thrill of prophesy in Tennyson. Feel them all, and if that seems madness then the first light has dawned.

Chidiock Tichburne.

I studied music before I studied poetry, and poetry before I studied metaphysics. Consequently the poetry that deals with metaphysics has always caught my eye. Burns remarks that an old woman lived in his household when he was a child. This old lady entertained him with tales of gnomes, fairies, kelpies, ghosts, tokens of impending disaster, St. Elmo's lights, and anything that might stem from Gaelic superstition. He insists that this interest was the cause of his poetry. I can point outlines from nearly all the great authors that indicate that they became interested in the supernatural. This is not a vindication. I can only point out a coincidence.

Insert the medium's poem about him, and the one by Crookes.

However to me the greatest poetry that has ever been written dealt with man's inborn quest for a more divine pleasure and an answer for the unanswerable. Some may have modestly avoided giving any direct indication that they believed anything in particular for financial or political reasons, but their occasional hints belie their deeper thoughts. (Coleridge, Herrick, Blake).

Merlin and Nostradamus will use poetry boldly to hammer out their strange beliefs. Blake will be more vague, while Shakespeare will almost appear to have a humorous attitude.

Of the artists who plunge boldly in but deal gently with the subject I think that there is none better than Kahlil Gibran. Milton in Paradise Lost, Goethe in Faust, and even Dante in his luxuriant Inferno merely speculate and tempt men to think of the fearfulness of our ignorance.

Gibran leads, and his words have the cadence of the cosmos.

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If you like the dynamism and spontaneity of Richard Rose as writer and teacher, please visit Rose Publications at www.rosepublications.net or the TAT Foundation at www.tatfoundation.org.