poems



MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND

G. BRUCE BOYER

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Joy

A little bird curled up
In the snow-covered alley.
Frozen?
I touched it and
It flew away.

The Air Takes No Impressions

No matter how near the surface
Or clearness of day,
The air takes no impressions
Of the birds in flight.

And only the transfixing mind
Sees the past in abandoned spaces,
As memory fills the site
Of a lost landscape.

That granite and brick and stone
Should melt away so unmeasured,
Like the symbols we no longer see
In the Old Masters, peer though we might.

It is the meaning we miss,
The unending evaporation of the familiar.
Yet new eyes look out on fresh scenes,
Where even sorrow has its curiosity.

The Flesh Has Answers

The flesh has answers
The mind strains to know.
How curious that we think
So straight with our bodies
And vex so with our thoughts.

The body has its ways
Through the old habits
And the profound of everyday,
While the mind entertains us
With its cramped confusions.

Old Children

"The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young."
—Oscar Wilde

Sometimes it seems life's fated results
Are we never really end up adults.
From childhood to age in one fleet clip,
The years between a blurry trip.

Age has its comforts, they say with a smile,
The spirit still strong, the body turned vile.
We wouldn't go back, they hasten to say,
Knowing the choice has been taken away.

But sadder than those are the ones who still know
They haven't grown old, even clutched in death's throe.
Wilde got it right, as he so often did,
We go to the grave with our children well hid.

The Clotheshorse in Winter

I thought I had the clothes I'd need,
For any clime and any deed
For which I'd see myself embark
On any little scheme or lark.

Today I find, to my dismay,
Those things I packed just yesterday,
Thinking them prerequisite,
Don't any longer seem to fit.

I know it's all as it must be,
Others have found the same as me.
When our ships will cross the bar,
And we've gasped our last au revoir,

We'll sail along the River Styx,
And leave behind the bats and bricks,
To find, as we hear Charon call,
We really need no clothes at all.

"Home is the hunter, home from the hill, /And the sailor home from sea."
Home the sartorialist, closet forlorn, his suits sold on eBay just short of free.

A Couplet for a Sartorial Summer

In summer I love a suit of pure linen,
Perfect for special events, or even to sin in.

A Strangely Neglected Literary Genre

A suicide note
Is all he wrote.



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Daniel

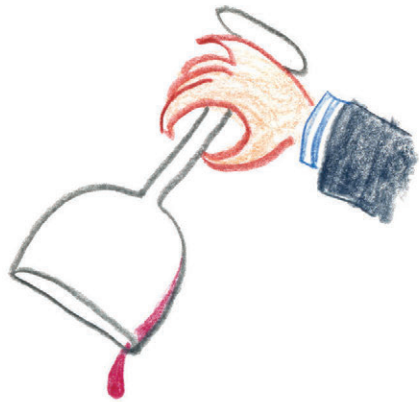
He had the palest skin I'd ever seen,
Whiter than the Queen of England,
Than the small Frigidaire in our kitchen.
Milk-glass white and dark blue veins.
His black hair looking like jet
And his lips glistening the palest pink.

The frayed collar of his thick flannel shirt
Hung loose and limp from his bloodless neck,
Trousers bunched at the paperbag waist,
Everything too big, too small, too scratchy.

How long was he with us?
Six months? A year? No more.
I can't remember he ever spoke,
Not a word, but held quiet within himself
And anemic gaze rooted down.
Frail, not cowering quite yet, just obedient.

Experience

Our lives close in on our memories,
Whispering only to be mindful, caring
Of what we love
While we can.
But what consumes us
Is not the lesson
But the loss.



Music in the Background

I.

Forgotten boredom and brighter than life,
Full of gods and mystical machines and magical buildings,
Something like never was, but more real than the moment.

In my boyhood, beyond me now,
I kneel at my high bedroom window,
Looking down at a circle of golden light in the white snow,
Falling in flakes the size of feathery dream coins
Floating down below me glittering silver into the gold.
At circle's edge, out of the darkness comes clanking
The dark green trolley car with wheels sparking and grinding
and windows blazing,
And screeching stops just beneath my castle window,
And out jumps a bundled man with upturned collar
And is swiftly away beneath his whitening hat.

II.

And still ages later, always gleaming in chill November's Sunday sun
A glorious white building rises up as everlasting as Heaven,
Concrete blocked and better than Xanadu with its arching roof,
And hardwood floor glowing gold like a lake of silk,
The denim-clad skaters sailing nowhere but round and round
In a circle of joy, in the warm enfolding organ music
To songs we knew from the very first note,
The afternoons crisp and bright as apples and sweet as cherry Cokes.
The hum of the skate wheels, a din as unnoticed and natural
As the darkening sky when we again, awkward at first,
Touched the earth and bent our young lives homeward.

And there were gods and goddesses, not more than a year or two older,
Young muscled men leaning lazily back against a wall,
Legs kicked out, shiny slicked-back black hair and thick black leather jackets
And studded bull leather engineer boots and slim jeans rolled in nonchalance,
Prole warriors cloaked in gear stronger than medieval armor,
All in a mystical blue haze of cigarette smoke and laughter.
The girls with bright red white smiles and supple down,
Cheap perfume to swoon over, and bodies you would tremble to touch.
Go ahead they whispered, don't fear heaven.

III.

And now I carry it all within me, my young fragrant world,
Carefully folded away and clean,
More real than pain, as deep as sorrow my sunken treasure.
The style and smell and walk of heroes and beauties of my youth.
Tucked away, hidden in the little cardboard case given me,
Or perhaps the suitcase I carry, that internal quiver of dreams,
Carries me.


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Friends of Childhood

Warm and vibrant friends of childhood,
More palpable in my memory than blood.
Steel wired and strutted within me,
That brick and wooden town of fragrant yesterday,
Grass fresh and rhythmic stride
Was world enough for the curious and shy,
And held marvels beyond dreaming.

Heroes and bullies and beauties
Set my lights on the joys and fears
That forever have made my music.
And companions even now clutched
Deep in my sinews and synapses
With which I danced and held warm flesh
As close as I could.

Nights

When I would dance to a young man's song
The nights were short and the days too long.
Now it's sad I must report
The nights are long and the days too short.

The nights flew by in heartbeats then,
In fragrant arms with time to lend.
But now in bed I toss and turn
And the nights drag on with time to burn.