



Windhover

A Journal of Christian Literature

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Spring 2012

Volume 16

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University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Press

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Brett Foster

Resolution: At Newport

– an epithalamion for B & R

Let the heavenly fires rain down,
or fair plains drown
in magical deluge unless we hear this part:
here's purity of heart.

Let this globe spin forth, turbulent
with axle bent,
if we must still insist to read it in Love's scroll:
they've wed their steadfast souls.

And let our cluttered rooms grow dark
with unclaimed work
and vanished afternoons. More than fate here: to find
they've made up the same mind,

chosen at last to persevere
as favorites. Here
let love, at noblest remove or daily offering,
be the other's queen, king.

Soon may their family jump and swing,
of everything
joyful always, fueled by greater hints of courage.
Let's reinvent the age.

*Paul Willis***The Stricken**

If light of morning has to do with you,
it has to do with anyone who wants
a new beginning. They do say it's true
a single soul in suffering still haunts
the places it once paced when in the flesh.
But souls do suffer in this dark life too,
and every dawn brings respite, yet brings fresh
regrets as well, as only dawn can do.
For by its glimmer you remain the same,
not changed in any twinkling of an eye.
You pace where you have paced—afflicted, lame,
still suffering that touch upon the thigh.
But could the sun illuminate your soul,
the dark would limp away and leave you whole.

Toby F. Coley

Grandpa's Hands

One can tell a lot about people by their hands. My grandpa's hands were the first things you noticed when you met him. It wasn't that they were abnormally large, pitifully small, or horribly disfigured; it was their texture. When he shook your hand, you immediately felt a surge of emotions. You understood that this man could take care of himself; this man could take care of you; this man cared. Perhaps it was the war that had made his hands callous with use. Perhaps it was the years of working with his hands that had shaped the muscles in them to fine, rock-like firmness and a supple, yet determined shape.

The fact that he was now in his early seventies, moderately overweight, balding, wore thick-rimmed, bi-focal glasses had no noticeable effect on how people received him. There was something about the way he looked at you, talked to you, related to you, spoke about God and family to you. Hardy did these things reflexively, as if years of experience and faith had ingrained these cues into his being. Whatever it was, it wasn't for show, it wasn't an imitation . . . simply genuine.

I can't remember the first time I met my grandfather, but for all the years that I knew him, I never once managed to really get to know the man. At his death people said nice things about him, but don't they do that with just about everyone? Even now I remember being mean to him; being a selfish kid, throwing tantrums. Yet, he never said a truly harsh word. When he needed to be firm, he could slow my wrath with a stern glance. If he ever got up from his recliner, I knew I was in for trouble. I wonder if all fathers and grandfathers instinctively know how to "crack" a belt.

My father died just a few years before Hardy. Hardy was there for us. He was my mother's step-father, but "step" is meaningless in my family. He was a "good" man, according to everyone who knew him. He had married my grandmother not long after she had lost her first husband to a brain aneurysm. I know it was hard for her to watch her second husband get sent to foreign lands in a second world war, but he came back. He came back a great man, a great cook.

That's what I remember most about him, his cooking. When I was a boy he would spoil me and my brother and my sister.

He would ask, "What'd y'all want to eat tonight?"

Without missing a beat I would say, “Spaghetti,” which was my favorite.

He made the best spaghetti I’ve ever tasted. “Made” is not the right word, though. It’s more like he *created* his spaghetti, like an artist creates a painting. Everything was home-made with him. Being a mess cook in the army had somehow infused him with an ability to cook large savory meals, which is somewhat ironic considering the typical notion of army food as bland vehicles for caloric intake. The sauce would cook for hours on the stove while he peeled and cut onions, sliced peppers, rolled meatballs, prepared various spices, and boiled the noodles. He slaved away in the hot kitchen for hours...for us. It is only now that I realize his cooking for us was his way of saying “I love you.”

When the meal was complete, the aroma of fresh tomato sauce filled the house. Inside the great steel pot floated tiny bits of meat, infusing the sauce, clamoring for space amidst the various vegetables and tomatoes. Once the family sat at the great oak table for dinner, it was all business and smiles. Buttered rolls were passed, plates of heaping noodles with lakes of sauce and mounds of meatballs set in front of hungry admirers. It was dinner. It was glorious. It was life at my grandparents’ house. It was dinner from my grandfather’s hands.

I’m sure many people have memories like these. Lazy Sunday afternoons lounging around the house, waiting for a lunch of fried chicken that flakes apart as your mouth crunches into it. Saturday evenings with fresh baked goulash, and weeknights with country-fried steak and mashed potatoes in more lakes of brown gravy. I’m surprised that I’m not overweight. It may be merely because my grandfather passed away while I was still young, a lad of yet eleven years. I cried when he passed. I know the past cannot be undone, and I don’t want it to be. I have a beautiful wife, two wonderful kids of my own and a promising life. If only Hardy could see me today. Even now I glance at my own hands. They seem so fragile sometimes, compared to his. Though my own hands have seen their share of hard work, their share of physical labor, their share of calluses, their share of pain, I still can’t help but wonder if they will ever be able to convey the love that his did. Can my own hands live up to the shadow, the shake, the grip of Hardy’s? Do they have to? Do they need to? Is that why I love to cook for my children?

I know some people say it is the eyes that communicate the soul, and perhaps they’re right, but the hands communicate the heart: the character of a man. Hands heal or scar on the outside, where the brutal world can have its way with them. Unlike the heart, there is no rib cage, nothing to protect them . . . na-

ked, fragile, and confident, like Hardy's faith in God: unabashed. That's the way I like to think about Christ... his hands, their holes, his heart, all open for me. His hands are the first thing you notice when you meet Him.

Brady Peterson

Old Soldiers

When he knew he was dying,
his thoughts turned to Jesus,
and if Chuck and Eldridge could find
a certain comfort there,
making an odd pair,
why not an old booze peddler.

During those last temperate months
he returned to church
and sat on the front row
and wrote large checks to the building fund,
bargaining as best he could.
But in the evening
when he sat on his back porch
watching the sky move
from blue to shades of pink and beige,
he worried.

And when the old veteran
was lying in the white hospital bed
attended by strangers in green gowns,
he saw demons coming for him,
oozing out of the walls.
My mother said it was the morphine.

Years later, I got a post card
from an old war buddy
who had searched him out too late.
He described a man I didn't know,
a hell of a man, the old war buddy said.

And when my father asked me
to kill the demons oozing out of the walls,
when he asked me to take a big knife
and stab them,
don't let me down, son, he pleaded,
don't let me down, he said,
his eyes wide with fear,
I told him I didn't see them.

But just the same,
I knew they were there.

Anne McCrady

September Supplication

a chiasmus

God, you speak your kindest thoughts as rain.
Drought keeps us believing – in evil.
Rainless. *No llevo*. A dry sky.
We are a congregation in petition.
Our thirst has become a catechism.
Doubt. *Desesperado*. Despair.
This heat burns away our faith – in everything good.
Lord, let your heavens proclaim the mercy of holy water.

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