

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Richard Jones: Three Poems

Richard Jones · Thursday, July 15th, 2021

Long Distance Call to My Mother

I speak a few words, and then listen.
When silence and terror come between us,
I'm torn: do I speak to reassure her
or give the ruined mind its freedom,
knowing my mother is stubborn
and shall be heard. In her gibberish
and stammering, I hear an iron will,
the desire to say a few clean sentences.
Because I am her son, she trusts me
to translate broken, inarticulate syllables
into questions her heart would ask.
I tell her the good and the bad, knowing
she is strong enough to bear the truth.
And sometimes I say the sweet words,
which she repeats back, annunciating
clearly in her rich accent, a slow drawl
that is like honey warmed by the sun.

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Two Martinis

I have a glass pitcher I fill with ice
before pondering which gin to pour,
the Tanqueray and stalwart Beefeaters
and Bombay Sapphire and Hendricks
lined up like blue and brown books
with the bottles of whisky and rye
and sundry liquors and orange bitters,
everything stored out of the light behind
two shuttered doors that hide the little
alcove bar's shelves of glasses, sink,
marble lamp, and champagne bucket.
Today I am pouring a cup of cheap

but organic gin called Art of the Still
 from Trader Joes where I buy
 the cheap cabernets I sip when writing.
 I take two glasses from the freezer,
 the cups frosted, and slip a half jigger
 of dry vermouth into the V of each glass
 before swirling and pouring it out,
 the sheen a thing of beauty to behold.
 (At Christmas I rinse the glasses with
 Cointreau to make the glass gleam.)
 The glass shining from the vermouth,
 I stir the pitcher slowly with a long glass
 wand to mix and melt the gin and ice,
 stirring delicately not to bruise the gin,
 then pour the glass full and adorn the rim
 with a long twist of lemon for my wife,
 mine being dirty with a splash of brine
 and a cocktail skewer with three olives.
 I wave the vermouth bottle over the drinks
 like a final blessing and call my wife,
 who after a long day needs the taste
 of winter and juniper and icy sunlight
 more than I do. Together we lift our martinis
 and hold them aloft for as long as we can,
 just thinking about the alchemy of cocktails.
 See us touch our glasses and take a sip,
 the dainty gesture more refined than a kiss?

*

Money

Then one day money grew on trees,
 flowering as dollar bills, oddly enough.
 George Washington looked befuddled
 hanging like a pear or an almond
 from millions of branches in thousands
 of orchards. And at night, coins fell
 like hail, making all kinds of noise
 and denting the hoods of new cars.
 At lunch in the cafeteria, if you bit
 into an apple you'd find a silver dollar.
 Money fell like snow on the mountains—
 great drifts and avalanches of bills.
 India's Ganges and London's Thames
 flooded their banks with currency notes,
 soggy pictures of Gandhi and the Queen.
 Flemish fields flowered with francs.
 The one-hundred cents of the Euro

became as ubiquitous as grass,
the Yen as common as rice.
The dunes of the Sahara and Kalahari?
Sun-dappled powdery flakes of gold
for as far as a caravan could travel!
Even the trash cans of New York City
overflowed with freshly-minted hundreds.
There was so much money in such abundance,
money didn't mean the same thing anymore.
It was more like poetry, and came naturally,
like the sun in the morning, like leaves to a tree.

Photo credit: Alexis Rhone Fancher

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