

POEMS

By J. AQUILINA

ON THE NEW MIDI-MAXI LOOK

The fashion designers have decreed
That the skirts of the women of every nation
Shall be longer by twelve inches or more
(not morality but greed
Dictated this more expensive creation).

So mini-skirts are out:
No more free shows of beautiful thighs.
Disappointed Don Juans fill the air with angry sighs.

10.ix.70 – Paris – Boulevard Raspail

UNHAPPINESS

Bored by the sight of sprawling crowds of men
In noisy cities where cars suffocate
The breathing of free movement, ruthless fate,
Rushing about like werewolves from a den,
I fled the city to find peace, but then
I felt so sad I thought I should await
Till He returned from His divine estate
To bless the city knowing not how and when.

It was a long, long wait in the drugged cities –
Paris and London, Moscow – everywhere
He is despised, black-listed and unwanted:
Yet they are all comforted – A thousand pities!
Where He is not, the Demon of despair
Prompts Crime except where Faith survives undaunted.

11.ix.70 – Paris – Boulevard Raspail

ROSES

(To Madame M. Galley who on my visit with my wife to Paris sent a bouquet of Roses to our room No. 207 in Hotel Cayré Boulevard Raspain)

What better greeting than a bunch of roses
 To bid us welcome to your country, France?
 A rose is joy as it opens and closes
 In its full fragrance – long, ecstatic trance.

We pray your life be happy like a rose,
 As sweet and unperturbed in its fixed stance.
 We are all like roses that open and close
 In one brief Season under the Gardener's glance.

Fresh roses cheer the tired, world-weary eyes
 Reviving garden sites and flowery banks,
 A Rose in its own fragrance lives and dies:
 For your sweet thought, my wife and I give thanks.

16.ix.70 – Paris

ON MY WAY TO VIENNA (AZ 256)

The visible perpendicular distance between Earth and Heaven
 That cuts us off up here beyond the flight of birds
 Is removed and joined by the wings that the mind has given
 To Man, the adventurer, looking for new worlds.

But the invisible distance between God and Mankind
 Beyond where birds tire of flying, beyond the fastest 'plane,
 Baffles us, dazzling our eyes, leaving us blind
 Till it drowns and carries us away like cyclonic rain.

But as Time and the Sun, life-givers, return after the deluge,
 And of the wreckage that was leave not a scar or trace.
 So God coming forward to meet us up here, offers us refuge
 Within the shelter of His Arms hugged by His Love and Grace.

17.xi.70 – Park Hotel – Baden-bei-Wien

OVER THE ALPS

The snow-flaked, white-topped Alps,
 Under the farthest blue light sky
 Breathe and heave with streams of sunlight
 Pouring down
 Rhythmically
 Like the psalm
 Of the Universe
 On an altar blaze of worship
 In late November –
 A long procession of white-cowled friars
 Absorbed in the contemplation
 Of God and the valleys round His House
 The benediction of mystic altitude
 Uninterrupted,
 Clean, unpolluted and undisturbed
 By the traffic of man,
 Just the zoom of an aeroplane here and there.
 Listen! No tramping of human feet,
 Only the wind, the Breath of the Paraclete.
 Listen again!
 I hear a voice crying inside me:
 'What is that?
 A shadow
 Moving across the Alps?
 Does anybody know?'
 Does anybody listen?
 They shout (the loud voices inside me, unheard);
 Halt!
 Who goes there, white-footed ghost,
 Flitting across the Alps?
 And a voice, another voice!
 (Within me? Outside me? I do not know)
 Replies: This is the Shadow of God
 Walking invisible in ecstatic silence
 Contemplating His own masterpiece
 The tremendous Alps –
 His own glacier domain
 Far from the palaces of government
 The intrigues of their courts,

And the cities of man.
 The eyes follow the Shadow,
 The Cosmic Soul
 Of the mountains and valleys
 Throbbing with ebullient vitality –
 Creator of mountains and valleys.
 The white-capped Alps
 And of all things visible and invisible
 Beyond Matter and Spirit,
 Beyond Time and Mind,
 Beyond Life and Death,
 Moving steadily on
 Wrapt in His invisible essence
 Towards His Own
 Absolute Self.

17.xi.70 – Baden Bei Wien

PARIS

This is the city that was built by Kings,
 Louis Quatorze, and others older still,
 Great Saint Louis whose name time cannot kill
 Though Time and Tide obliterate many things.
 The Age of Faith made Paris. Time still rings
 With chants in Sainte Chapelle, with prayers that fill
 The Gothic arches of Notre Dame until
 The mocking mob its Reign of Terror brings.
 Ten days in Paris, a visit to Versailles
 And Chartres Cathedral with its famous glass
La Conciergerie and *Malmaison*, have left in me
 Together with rose gardens in French style,
 The image of a people proud and free:
 Palaces, boulevards, tall trees and grass.

19.ix.70 – Paris*

WOMEN

God made beautiful women for our admiration,
 Or would the Preacher say for our edification?
 Whatever His purpose (a matter of theological speculation)
 If we just stop at that, and cool off temptation,
 We shall win the hard prize of eternal salvation.

19.xi.70 – Baden-bei-Wien

NIRVANA

Man's heart exhausts itself by its Desire.
 We spend our short life wishing this and that;
 Which, once attained, we soon think dull or flat,
 Not the same thing, more like painted fire
 Lacking the flame that burns until we tire
 Only to change the wish – Desire, a cat
 For ever hungry chasing a lean rat,
 A lizard scurrying up and down a spire.

Here at Baden-bei-Wien, in my warm room
 I fancy my NIRVANA, the final act
 Of all those chasings that torment the mind.
 Our lives are thin threads woven on the Loom
 Of Time – the Cloth true stuff or artefact?
 Fear not the Sphynx. Move on! Look not behind!

20.xi.70 – Baden-bei-Wien

AT A V.C.'S COCKTAIL PARTY

The V.C.'s of Europe at a Cocktail Party,
 Forgetting their worries (staunch pillars of learning!)
 Found the time to relax, sipping orange juice
 And, chuckling, forgot that their houses were burning.

20.xi.70 – Park Hotel – Baden-bei-Wien

AGE

Life is young
 Full of song and fun;
 Age creeps in unbidden
 And crawls out unsung.

20.xi.70 – Park Hotel – Baden-bei-Wien

J. AQUILINA

YOUTH

Youth has the warmth,
 The frolic and fun
 Of a woman in love
 Burning with the *joie de vivre*
 Of the Mediterranean sun.

20.xi.70 – Park Hotel – Baden-bei-Wien

EUREKA

(Portuguese version by Dr. Jonas Negalba)

– O que é a Verdade? – perguntou Pôncio Pilatos
 ha quase dois mil anos.
 Eis a pergunta com uma resposta:
 – Pôncio Pilatos, não sabemos!
 – Pode ela fazer sofrer a Consciência?
 E êle lavou as mãos trêmulas.
 Ninguém respondeu até Freud dizer:
 – Verdade e Consciência . . . são apenas glândulas.
 Não ha mais Verdade nem Crime,
 eis a Eureka do nosso tempo.

EUREKA

(Spanish version by Dr. Jonas Negalba)

– ¿Que cosa es la Verdad? – indagó
 Poncio Pilatos hace casi dos mil años.
 Eis aquí una pregunta con una contestación:
 – ¡Poncio Pilatos, nosotros non sabemos!
 – ¿Puede ella hacer sufrir la Consciencia? –
 Y él lavó sus manos trêmulas.
 Nadie contestó eso hasta Freud decirnos:
 – La Verdad y la Consciencia non son más que glandulas.
 Eis aquí la Eureka de nuestro tiempo,
 non hay más Verdad, non hay más crime.