

Dennis Brutus

Poetry

by
Dennis Brutus

No Banyan, Only

The quiet wisdom of the body's peace:
Carnality, in this our carnal world, is all
Bamboo and iron having sealed
Our mundane eyes to views of time and peace.

Now I am strong as stones or trees are strong,
Insensible, or ignorant with vibrant life;
Streams or the air may wash or pass me by
My mind breathes quiet, lying yours along.

(Upon what meat is this man fed
That he is grown so great?
Diet of eloquent delectable accolades
Warm, soft, kindly, sweet and red.)

Under no banyan tree I strip no onion skin
To find a néant kernel at the still center:
"A little winter love in a dark corner?"
No, Love (for Chrissake, no) no love, no sin.

Sublunary no more, yet more acutely mundane
now
Man's fingers claw the cosmos in gestures of
despair,
Our souls, since Hersey, seek the helix of
unknowing
Save mine, you-saved, now leafing like a bough.

Breaking through theory-thickets I thrust
To this one corpus, one more self

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That gives Content and content to an earth
Littered and sterile with ideas and rust.

Let alphabetic electrons bloat on Freudian
excrement,
Our golden bodies, dross-indifferent, count no
gain,
Finding Gaugin's eternal island afternoon
And you hibiscus and my continent.

Most kindly you and what indeed can be
More most-required than kindliness
In this our shared world? And thus
My thanks for heartsease balm you render me.

Animals, perhaps, without merit of their own
—Forgive me Poverello, Paduan, my conceit—
Attain at last such steady ecstasy
As this you give, a gift to make us both your
own.

On The Beach

Seablue sky and steelblue sea
surge in cubist turbulence,
dissolve, reform in fluid light
and cadences of sandsharp breeze;

spindrifft from sand-dunes tresses down
to inlets where rock-fragments shoal,
seaspray and static distil the mood
salt-sweet, foamwhite, seaweed-brown.

All in this jagged afternoon
where rock, light, sand and sea-air sing,
brown hair and air-live skin complete
this transitory plenitude.

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Their Behavior

Their guilt
is not so very different from ours:
— who has not joyed in the arbitrary exercise of
power
or grasped for himself what might have been
another's
and who has not used superior force in the
moment when he could,
(and who of us has not been tempted to these
things?) —
so, in their guilt,
the bare ferocity of teeth,
chest-thumping challenge and defiance,
the deafening clamor of their prayers
to a deity made in the image of their prejudice
which drowns the voice of conscience,
is mirrored our predicament
but on a social, massive, organized scale
which magnifies enormously
as the private dehabille of love
becomes obscene in orgies.