

STEVEN JOYCE



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Segue is published once a year in August. We accept submissions of high quality fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction between January 1 and April 30 (closed May through December), and writing about writing year-round via email. Before submitting, please read past issues to understand the sort of work we publish, then read our submission guidelines.

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King Cake Baby Jesus

the king cake baby jesus
lay plastic and outstretched
in a pool of messianic frosting
gone liquid
He lay on a plastic fleur de lis
His seams rough where He comes together
as if not quite a match
as if a Platonic joke
as if some Chinese Christian Laodicean
did not care to grind him smooth...

I found the king cake baby jesus
not by prayer or contemplation
but by cutting the cake in two no angel
to stay my hand this time I sacrificed
what I nearly loved best...
I found It like Oedipus and Creon to come without
androgynous supplication this spongy pleroma
from where divine emanations speak...

I cut the damn thing in two and trenched it like Schliemann
I found Mycenaean gold a face outstretched the wrong baby jesus...
I can't help but take a bite this king cake delicious

They make their way these three kings in forever three-ness
from afar nonetheless
with over-the-top gifts—no diapers or strollers or lullis
gold, frankincense, and myrrh instead
in that misguided order
none of these on the Best-Buy list...

the king cake baby jesus missing his stall
swaddled in sweet crumbs and puddled sugar
hiding under purple, green and gold beads

I threw
them from the balcony at those young breasts feeding away
a throng gathers at the golden calf as if to worship
the success determined by the mess left behind...

I Saran-Wrap plastic baby jesus
in a shroud of kingly cake
and put Him in the freezer
where they will find Him years from now
like a mammoth in ice
when science is Rex or
when my luck runs out...

Sermon on the Mount

The breakaway gospel
on your doorstep the creek
full of bullheads the mud smeared monkey-art
staining the heart of things to be my torn white T-shirt
that fits so well in those old photos

this gathering of yours
outside so many to hear
Words already damp in Qumran caves
breathed on yet dry, read from right to left
you began saying
how silky blue the sky was
how vertiginous green the grass
how fat and puffy the clouds in Munich on that day
You said "Look forever at the clouds
especially in the night of things
as they puff and seek a mate, drift and billow they dance
and lift the skirts of night."

This series of essays, publishable
the pundit who writes redux
not so much to reclaim or make amends
but to squander anew as the gates
swing open
for some kind of last time
with a creak and a groan,
a scruffy and carbon self
that leaves footprints like no one else.

Author Notes

Steven Joyce is an Associate Professor of German and comparative studies at the Ohio State University, Mansfield campus. He is a Fulbright scholar, has published a book on G. B. Shaw entitled Transformations and Texts as well as a number of poems in journals including Kimera, Hudson View, Red River Review and Minimus. He has also published a number of articles on literary criticism.

About the Work

Much of what we do in life is meaning-poor. It tends to be a part of a general rush that involves careers, relationships, houses, kids, and dogs. Much of what we do in life seems to be disconnected from and resistant to larger meaning. Poetry, good poetry remedies this situation by establishing, by insisting on deeper meanings and wider connections that exist among seemingly disparate events and happenings. Poetry is a disciplined way of seeing with one's eyes wide open, seeing with a gift of both reflection and refraction. It is a way of knowing what eludes us in our day to day lives. Writing poetry stops time, marks the path we are on and throws a wide net over lived life and intellectual and emotional life. It brings these together both in edifying and unsettling ways.

I write poetry as a private act of mental, moral and ethical hygiene. I do not trumpet the idea that I am a poet which, I feel, has something narcissistic and indulgent about it. Yet, writing poetry can bring one to oneself in a way that no other activity can. The two poems I submitted to *Segue* bear out these ideas. *King Cake* came about as a result of the strong feeling that the Mardi Gras King cake we bought for a Mardi Gras celebration would have slipped into meaninglessness without "poetic intervention." The hidden plastic baby Jesus promising good luck / blessings begged for poetic appropriation. In writing this poem, I feel I wrested a deeper sense of awareness not only of the oddness of the idea of a king cake but of the ideas informing the idea of a king cake and the connections they had to other ideas. *Sermon on the Mount* is a fictional superimposition of the kindly and useful Sermon on the Mount onto the oftentimes sermonizing that goes with relational disaffections.

As most writers know, one seldom gets a poem right on the first second or even third time. To get a poem "right" requires a sense of sound and a careful attention to how words "mean." In this oftentimes characterized as cynical age, writing poetry still assumes that language has the power to signify deeper and fuller awareness and meaning. Making the kind of condensed meaning that you find in poetry, however, is not an easy task. I can liken the process to making pottery. You start with a clump of material and then given it shape by turning it again and again, paring it, excising large amounts of material in order to get at the idea. Much paring went into the writing of both these poems.

Steven Joyce on the Web

germanic.osu.edu/people/person.cfm?ID=821

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