

Three poems from Along Blueskin Road

Gershwin on the car stereo

heading north just past Hampden
keeping just far enough above the limit
to fool all the hidden gotcha flashbulbs
that flower along State Highway One

here and there those little trellis
crosses and George Gershwin
with strings and things trying
to tell me how easy the living is

but I'm completely deaf to it all until
to the left Pacific breakers crashing
and smashing on hard black sand
make me think of every seventh wave

and of the six degrees of separation
so I ease off as a corner approaches
far too quickly remembering how
carbon monoxide once eased me

into a mad sleep and had me slalom
down the white centre-line by that
phallic monument just south of Oamaru
where I woke up in an empty paddock

with my wheels spinning and my feet
where my head should have been
and then right by Herbert I know Herbert
is no place to die so I check my wings

wind down the window to let in the sky
and the gorse the broom the pussy willow
and a summer wind to blow away *summertime*
and tousle my hair so like a friendly uncle

that living between a 100 and a 110
doesn't seem so very difficult after all

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Yippee!

When the podiatrists escaped we immediately set up roadblocks. But they were apparently wise to us and kept to the footpaths. Somewhat unfairly, too, they must have been wearing orthotics with rich crepes soles, which allowed them, well after dark, to ripple right past our defences in a distinctly crepuscular manner and make for the safety of the park.

In this way the podiatrists taught us the meaning of frustration.

There was no way, especially in the darkness, that we could retrieve the podiatrists from the park. The powerful sequoias hid and comforted even the bravest of them in a scent of turpentine, made

sharp by the moonlight, whereas the more timid lay pressed into the gaultheria where they were wrapped about with wintergreen.

We could do nothing. We did joke that the iron railings around the park meant that the podiatrists had simply caged themselves in, but we were equally aware that the railings with their fearsome spikes kept us out just as effectively.

In this way the podiatrists taught us the meaning of irony.

All night the podiatrists hid there, out of sight, out of reach, but not out of hearing, and eventually safety overcame them and they grew cocky and footloose and realising our powerlessness began to cry Yippee! Yippee!

Thus the podiatrists taught us the meaning of scorn.

We could almost have tolerated this had it not been for the uncomfortable realisation that somehow in the night tinea had been set loose. We could feel it burning and insinuating itself all over our feet, between our toes. Burning and burning. Itching fearsomely.

And all the while the podiatrists, behind the iron rails and hidden in the dangling embrace of the redwoods, cried Yippee! Yippee!

As the burning sensation all but overcame us it seemed almost as though we could hear the tinea joining in the chorus: Yippee! Yippee! in tiny subsonic harmonies.

When dawn broke we were in a really bad way, jumping from foot to itchy foot. The light, perversely, had made the podiatrists even cockier, more sure of themselves. They broke free of the shaggy trunks, the perfumed ground cover and sported, gambolled. They flaunted their tubes of fungicide. They played touch rugby with them, flinging the crème of our desire from player to player, coming at times infuriatingly close to the railings. Every so often one would cry Yippee! as if unable to help it. Would leap into the air clapping his crepe soles.

In this way the podiatrists taught us the meaning of hate.

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planchette

at night the rats
are bigger than rats

they race back and forth
like typewriters
across the lath and plaster

like good little rats
they have taken their poison
and now they grow large with thirst

where are their pretty girlfriends
or love, the magician?

can not one of these
offer them solace or slake?

oh qwerty they clatter
oh qwerty qwerty

as the night grows hard around them
desperate in their scrabble

and the stars

set like teeth

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