

Amy C. Rea

Psalm

Thou hast put gladness in my heart

Long before the creature comforts--
padded red corduroy cushions--
our church pews were wood. Solid oak, trimmed in fir,
polished, shiny, smooth. Unyielding.

The perfect psalter for the plectrum

of black patent leather Mary Janes.
Implacable pew, rigid soles, together
applauded most gratifyingly. A joyful noise.

Thou has set my feet in a larger room

The mother's head turned, just for a moment,
scrounging through her purse for gum
to stave off the nicotine craving.
The daughter saw opportunity.

She stomped, delighted, across the pew.
Clap! Clap! Clap!
Echoing in the steep A-frame church.
It makes her sing.

Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound

Her arms flap and wave, her whole body delights
in the cacophony.
She's doing this. She and her Mary Janes
together, she slips, almost tumbles, a half bow.

But up again, eyes to the high ceiling,
mouth open in a smile, her tuneless warbles
flying up, accompanied by the staccato drumbeat
of shoes on pew.

*Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?...
He that backbiteth not with his tongue
nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up
a reproach against his neighbor*

Parishioners

shift, glare, stare, look away, sneer.

One accosts the mother in a hiss:

“Keep your howling brat at home.”

She would brook no joyful noise
in her sanctuary. No heathen raging.

The mother’s face, pale, blotched with red,
slithers down the pew after the wayward child.

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,
and he delighteth in his way.*

No matter. The shoes, the pew, they belong
together. Joined by a girl running, delighting
in the noise, singing, arms flapping like wings
disturbing the dust, swirling it in the air,

shimmering in the light through stained glass
colored like gems—emerald, ruby, topaz, amethyst.
A delirious array,
jewels of the rainbow.

Postcard for Miklos Radnoti

But tell me, the work—did it live on? –M. Radnoti

Walking the dog, late autumn,
I hunker into my heavy coat. Cold
damp fingers of wind rip at the sleeve,
expose skin between coat and glove.
I tremble at its touch. But

I'm ashamed
to be cold, to complain. You
were forced to march, part of
a moving mass of cramps on restless human feet.
Stumbling along as those who fell
behind were killed, their blood
on your own body as you
marched to stay alive, knowing
it was futile.

And yet you wrote poems
found in your coat's pocket.
The fleshly decay
blurred many pages—
but not all,
the remainder testaments
to desperation.

As I walk under
the vigil-keeping evening clouds
that chill me, I
think of your
cry of despair: did the work live on?

It did.
It did live.
It did live on.

Graveyard

Gone now, her mind
ravaged by the hellion
Alzheimer's, her previously
venerated sociability
eviscerated into mindless silence.
Yellow leaves skitter
across her plot, while far away she
reels in loss, wonders what she's
done to deserve this.

Amy Rea is a poet and guidebook author. She's had poems published in *Alimentum* and *Plath Profiles*, and her work won a PO4Ever award and was accepted for a mixed-media exhibit at the Banfill-Locke Art Center and in the Poken Sword reading series. Words are her favorite things to play with.