

Editorial

THE VALUE OF PROSODY (the forms of poetry including metre and rhyme) is a puzzle. Fitting words into villanelle form (for example) is a difficult task; why should poets give themselves this problem? and why should anyone enjoy reading the solution? Easy answers are that rhythm and rhyme are simply pleasurable, and it is just a matter of arbitrary historical accident that particular patterns become expected. But Simon Jarvis, in our first article, argues that these answers are simplistic and inadequate, and that investigation into the complexities of the notion of tradition can show us the real value and function of prosody.

Jarvis is at Cambridge University, so it is appropriate that the author of our second article is at Oxford. E. Beaumont Bissell writes interestingly and provocatively about the recent history, and perhaps the future, of literary criticism, with special attention to recent “theory wars.” She is writing theory of theory of criticism of literature, a splendidly—vertiginously—high meta-level.

Our third article comes from Mats Furberg, a Swedish philosophy professor. It is a meditation on the nature of interpersonal morality, which takes as its text the biblical story of David and Bathsheba. But don’t jump to conclusions: it’s not a Sunday sermon. In fact, Furberg distinguishes sharply between the moral and the religious, and has some insightful remarks to make about both.

Of the many goodies in the poetry section, I’ll remark only on the work of Geoffrey Haresnape, a South African poet who spent some time at Dalhousie University a while back, and has favoured us with a series of five short poems with connections to our town (but with universal themes). We hope to bring you more of Haresnape’s work in future issues.

Two short stories are about our relation with art. “A Piano Shudders” contrasts typically teenage anxieties and forms of expression with the sublimity the teenager reaches in piano performance. The themes of Jacqueline Karp-Gendre’s extraordinary “Sans

Paroles” are art and pornography, image and reality, object and representation, contemplation and interaction; Karp-Gendre packs several variations on these themes into a very short story. The painting mentioned in the story, Courbet’s “Origin of the World,” is a perfect choice for her purposes. If you’re not familiar with it and are net-capable, you can look at it here: <http://artchive.com/artchive/C/courbet.html>.

“Crazy People” is a disturbing realistic first-person story of a lonely college girl, from a family of eccentrics, who finds herself entangled in a religious cult. Both “Strays” and “Memoirs of an Amnesiac” are funny, absurd, and touching accounts of people not altogether capable of dealing with their own lives. The room full of *Cosmos*, in the story by that name, is full of *Cosmopolitan* magazines, but this pun is one of many deft ironical touches that make this story a tiny gem.

Ronald Huebert, the regular Editor of this journal, is now basking in sabbatical, and I have joyfully taken over his position for the year. I welcome Trevor Ross as Associate Editor for this period. Trevor teaches English at Dalhousie University, a specialist in the history of English literary interpretation, and of the English literary canon (see his review article on the “canon wars” in this journal, 76.3, Autumn 1996.) Readers of the next few issues will benefit from his considerable knowledge, taste, and energy.

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