
Ianthe's alt.sex.intergen 'Poems of the Week'. Number 21.
August 25th 1995. (Posted in advance, as I'm off for a week again)

This weeks theme, as the weather gets hotter and hotter,
is BATHING (in rivers, streams, pools, on beaches...).

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- * John Aldington (1898?-?) 'Argyria'.
 - * Rev. E. E. Bradford (1861-1944) 'To Boys Unknown'.
 - * Sir Herbert Read (1893-1968) from 'The Green Child'.
 - * Johnathon Swift (1667-1745) from 'Gulliver's Travels'.
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OK, so these last two are from novels, but it was either these or
a couple of mediocre poems from a couple of the Uranian poets....

Swift was a leading English writer of the 1800s. In 1710 Tories
recognized in Swift a potent voice for their cause and made him
editor of their journal, the Examiner. He thus became an unofficial
power in English politics as well as a leading writer. Bradford
was a rural vicar in Norfolk, England, from 1899 to the 1940s. His
poems are collected in: Bradford, E.E. 'To Boys Unknown'. London.
Gay Men's Press, 1988. Sir Herbert Read was an English poet,
critic, art historian and anarchist writer; he was professor of
fine arts at the University of Edinburgh (1931-33); and editor of the
trend-setting Burlington Magazine (1933-38). He developed theories
that unite an understanding of art as an autonomous mode of knowledge
and experience with a view of art as a response to, and expression of,
the needs of society - hence his anarchism. Aldington I know nothing
about - what few references there are to him can be found in that
excellent book on the boy-love tradition in English poetry: Smith,
Timothy D'Arch. Love In Earnest; some notes on the lives and writings
of English 'Uranian' poets from 1889 to 1930. London. Routledge,
Keegan and Paul, 1970. (In which you can also find information about the
Rev. E.E. Bradford.)

ARGYRIA

O you,
O you most fair,
Swater of reeds, whisperer
Among the flowering rushes,
You have hidden away your hands
Beneath the poplar leaves;
You have given them to the white waters.

Swallow-fleet,
Sea-child cold from waves;
Slight reed that sang so blithely in the wind;
White clouds the white sun kissed into the air;

Pan mourns for you.

White limbs, white song,
Pan mourns for you.

John Aldington.

TO BOYS UNKNOWN

How often as I drift along the stream
Of city traffic, till the hive-like hum
Lulls me to sleep, and drowsily I dream
Of sweeter days past, or sweeter days to come,
Some boy's fair face breaks on me like a gleam
Of rift-cloud sun, no sooner come than gone.
What if unhailed, unloved he passes on ?
Our hearts have spoken though our tongues were dumb.

How often as I ramble on the beach,
Where Nature seems asleep, and man is not,
And fairyland lurks all around, I reach
Some sweet, secluded, world-forsaken spot,
And startle there a shy boy bather. Each
Regards the other doubtful. Suddenly
O'er-mastered by some secret sympathy,
Each hails a friend, and doubts are all forgot.

These sweet encounters smack not of our earth:
These mystic boys, met once and never seen
In this life more, scarce seem of human birth.
Henceforth, illum'd by Fancy's golden sheen,
They haunt for ever poppied fields of mirth
Far from our workday world. The fairy Prince,
Mine for a honey'd hour, but vanished since,
Ranks with dream creatures that have never been.

The boys I know and love, though dearer far,
Have faults and failings. These fair friends unknown
Are Visions Of Perfection. Naught can mar
The splendour of their memory. Alone
Immaculate, they stand before the bar
Of frowning Justice fearless. Sad-eyed Truth
Knows naught of them; and their immortal youth
No ravages of Time will ever own.

The Reverend E. E. Bradford.

from THE GREEN CHILD

[England, 1830. Olivero, a middle-aged man, rescues the Green Child, a speechless girl-child with greenish skin, from the sadistic miller Kneeshaw. She leads Olivero to the millstream's source and they plunge into her strange subterranean world...]

In this manner they came to the middle of the plain, where there was a bubbling lake of warm water. The basin, which was perhaps two hundred feet across, had been made into a regular ellipse and was surrounded by a low wall, cut out of rock. Round the basin was an annular trough, some ten feet wide, of semi-circular section, and in this trough a number of naked men and women were bathing, all apparently of the same age as the crowd already encountered.

Seeing some of those accompanying them prepare to bathe, the Green Child divested herself of her terrestrial clothes and stepped into the basin. She was then in no way different from the women there, except in age; and perhaps her flesh was of a slightly dusky shade of green. Olivero was now left feeling very incongruous in his black coat and pantaloons, not to mention his shoes and other vestements. Many who were about continued to stare at him; so suppressing all feelings of shame or embarrassment, he threw off his cloak and other clothes and stepped with his white body into the chalybeate water.

It stung his flesh as from excessive saltiness, but presently the sensation became one of glowing warmth, which penetrated his whole flesh. He turned to where the Green Child reclined against the side of the trough; her head had fallen against her shoulder, and she seemed almost asleep.

If you go to sleep, he said, you might slip into the water and drown. He watched over her until he too felt overpowered by a desire to sleep. He therefore got out on to the ledge of the trough and pulled the Green Child after him. The rock there was warm, smooth as jade to the flesh. They lay there and sank into a profound slumber.

[...Olivero and the Green Girl descend to the 'first ledge', where they must stay until they are 'satiated with the pleasures of youth']

They spent much time bathing, and in playing games which reminded Olivero of kiss-in-the-ring, rounders and other such like terrestrial games, in which many people could take part. The ledge was used as a promenade, and as a place for sleeping and copulating, both functions being performed with the same sense of naturalness.

The Green Child at once assumed the habits and emotions of her people, but Olivero went through severe discipleship. He could take part with good grace in all the games of these young people, but it was a long time before he could regard the pleasures of the flesh with the same innocence. He was angry and jealous when he saw her walking arm in arm with one of the youths, and hid his convulsed face when he saw her making love with others. But gradually he grew ashamed of these terrestrial sentiments, and finally they no longer disturbed him.

Sir Herbert Read.

from GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Chapter VIII; 'The Author relateth several particulars of the Yahoos'.

"Being one Day abroad with my protector the Sorrel Nag, and the weather exceeding hot, I entreated him to let me bathe in a River that was near. He consented, and I immediately stripped myself stark naked, and went down softly to the Stream. It happened that a young Yahoo standing behind a bank, saw the whole Proceeding, and inflamed by Desire, as the Nag and I conversed, came running with all Speed, and leaped into the Water within five Yards of the Place where I bathed. I was never in my life so terribly frightened; the Nag was grazing at some distance, nor suspecting any Harm: She embraced me after a most fulsome manner; I roared as loud as I could and the Nag came galloping towards me, whereupon she quitted her grasp, with the utmost Reluctancy, and leaped upon the opposite Bank, where she stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my Cloathes."

"This was a matter of Diversion to my Master and his Family... For now I could no longer deny that I was a real Yahoo, in every Limb and Feature, since the females had a natural Propensity to me as one of their own Species: Neither was the hair of this Brute a red colour, but black as a Sloe, and her Countenance did not make an Appearance altogether so hideous as the rest of the Kind; for, I think, she could not be above Eleven Years old."

Johnathon Swift.

ianthe@duende.demon.co.uk

"When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up."

C.S. Lewis, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children",
[author of the Narnia books].

ends.