

Poems by Benjamin A. Plotinsky and David J. Rothman

Benjamin A. Plotinsky

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Jennifer Cheevy

Jennifer Cheevy, Ph.D.,
Loved teaching, was a Lit professor;
She'd picked her calling recklessly—
What had possessed her?

Jennifer, like her cousin Min,
Was born too late to live her passion;
For teaching isn't merely sin—
It's out of fashion.

Jennifer mourned the good old days:
Her father, Oliver, had sat in
An endowed chair, and won high praise,
For drilling Latin.

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Those good old days! When teachers *taught*,
Were loved for it—and then got tenured!
Jennifer tried, and all she got
Was sadly penured.

Jennifer's students packed the halls
To hear her speak on Pope and Prior—
Prepared, these children of the malls,
To deify her.

Her talks on Keats were dynamite,
Rhetorical extravaganzas;
Her students got inspired to write
Spenserian stanzas.

Of course, because she spent her steam
On teaching, she forbore to publish;
And Jennifer finally saw her dream
Was faint and bubbleish.

Like Aesop's fox, she craved a fruit
She couldn't grasp, for all her reaching;
So Jennifer bought a business suit,
And gave up teaching.

David J. Rothman

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Three Voices

The snow which was falling on the town
Had its practical side. We might point out
The way it insulated the ground,
Which kept the pipes from freezing,
The way the owners of the local ski area
Were smiling into the worsening view,
How sales of shovels picked up at the hardware store.
The shovels had a kind of beauty,
And yet the sales staff did not dwell upon it.
This practical logic of snow
Was the logic of desire and aversion,
Although it made the graveyard picturesque.
This snow was nothing in and of itself.
The sanding trucks were loading up
At the gravel pit, one by one,
And heading back onto the highway,
To keep another accident from happening,
Like that one last week in which a young girl died
When some car spun into a useless nowhere.

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The snow which was falling on the town
Had a rational structure, which extended
Across the fields and up into the mountains,
Indifferent even to itself. It was water and wind,
Far above the earth, growing, billowing,
And gathered up into perfections.
Everything became an angle or vibration,
And all of them were utterly explainable.
The facts thus condescended to allow the world
To formulate an intellectual satisfaction.
One might say that this felt good
Or evoked a kind of approval—but why?
Does it matter if a molecule is beautiful,
When it fills the necessary ratios of explanation?
And of what use might be a single flake of snow?
Each fell like a number from the sky,
Filled with the skid potential of friction coefficients,
From whose perspective, which each of us can share,
Life and death are merely themselves.

The snow which fell upon the little town
Inspired a dead girl's father to walk outside.
He stood and gazed upon his whitening yard,
And then began to roll a piece of snow
Against itself, upon itself, and further,
Up into a ball which he could push
Around the yard in ever-growing circles.
Enfolding something in his deep, blue eye,
It told the story of his life, the memory
Of someone who had once been always somewhere
And now was not, however hard he listened.
He built his snowman and he gazed upon it,
And it was useless and it held no place

Within the world of ordered ratios.

He built his snowman, and he gazed upon it,

Lost in the knowledge of what she cared about

And what he therefore cared about as well.