

Song for a Listener

The Leonard Feeney Omnibus
Sheed and Ward, New York, 1943

21

When toys were trunked and school begun,
I was among a many, one
Entrusted to a wimpled nun.

A virgin vested with three vows
Who had the Holy Ghost for spouse,
And tried devoutly to arouse

An aptitude for long divisions
Involving cerebral collisions
With theological precisions.

22

This gentle girl in cape and coif,
With softest silver in her laugh,
Prepared me for my epitaph:

“Here lies a lad whose sins were sins,
Not streptococcic orange skins;
Nor were his virtues vitamins.

He learned the rules and knew the game;
If Hell or Heaven hold the same,---
Himself, not spinach, was to blame.”

23

This modest maid did not abhor
The monkey as the metaphor
For capers in the corridor;
But while se twitted, could but please,
Seeing but similarities
Between what had and had not fleas.

She held, that as evolutionist,
That Eve and Adam led my list:---
My missing link was never missed.

24

This merry menial,---how came she
To lease her services to me
Without a farthing for a fee?

In what behavioristic school
Repeated she her rapture for her rule,
Found she her fashion as a fool

Willing to wilt along the aisles,
In marches mounting up to miles,
Where changing children flow in files?

25

This busy bird as light as air,
Was never cumbrous in her care;
Her presence vanished everywhere!

A shadow ---none more softly strewn,
Nor---sunbeam?---from a nether noon
More mildly mirrored by the mon.

One knew not till her glow had gone
In dusk antipodal to dawn
That one had been so shone upon.

26

But dame and damsel disparate
And dealt in a divided state
I quit, and came to contemplate

A creature of a clearer kind,
A marvel moving in my mind
With both accomplishments combined;

A Lady whose aloof largesse
Ended in ways too choice to guess,
The Holy Ghost's unfruitfulness.

27

The barn was ready and the straw;
I saw what nudging angels saw,
And shepherds open-mouthed with awe.

I found what hitherto had been
 The fragments of the feminine
 Welded at last, without, within.

My happy Heaven had begun:
 I knew the nursery and the nun,
 The convent and the crib in one.

28

When one the heart has been up-hurled
 And glimpsed this Glory in the world,
 Whatever's ringleted or curled

Takes on a newer, nobler guise,
 Usurps the function of surprise,
 Asserts a symbol in the eyes,

Which one is soon intrigued to trace
 In the most worn and worn and wrinkled face,
 In the most mean, improper place.

29

Because of Her who flowered so fair,
 The poor old apple-wench will wear
 A sprig of roses in her hair;

The strumpet strolling on the quay,
 Who puts in pawn her purity,
 Will sue for sailor's chivalry;

The lily, garbaged in a brawl,
 Out of her refuse heap will crawl
 Back to her trellis on the wall.

30

Because this Beacon blanced our shore,
 Our daughter's dazzle us once more,
 Our mothers mellow as of yore.

And though this sentiment I sing
 Is fraught with an old-fashioned ring,
 "In case you like that sort of thing"---

In case I don't, I hope it's true
 A good old-fashioned brimstone brew

Someday in Hell will coax me to.

31

The crown and crest of creaturehood
Has not been seen so great, so good
AS in our race, as in our brood.

The Cherubim and Seraphim
Have been o'er vaulted and made dim
By something slender something slim,

Assembled on our satellite
To move as any maiden might,
Familiar to our common sight.

32

Truth to attraction one must tether;
Reason and rapture rolled together
Will settle whether or not or whether

The philosophic proof must pass
Inspection near the looking glass
To learn the logic of a lass

And find if in mythology
What sense there is, if sense there be,
Was not a need for us as She.

33

A girl did God, I do believe,---
Created, courted by,---conceive;
And would that every word I weave

Her Sire, her Spouse, her Son might please
In this frail ditty darned in threes
With threads of triple harmonies.

One riddle, and my rhyme is through:
A bull will butt at red, but you,
Beelzebub, will butt at blue!
