

Pat Shears

MIDSUMMER MORNING

*The year is dying -
Imperceptibly, by slow gradation
Slips now from his most high meridian.
The midsummer peak is passed.
Now, not quite yet seen
In garden or on hillside,
The pace falters.
Long summer days succeed and swell
Deceiving sense,
But the roses and lilies of just past June
Bloom in the gardens, knowingly.*

*My year's midpoint is passed,
Half my span by scriptural warrant
To me allotted.
This, my midyear and midlife moment,
Is over my shoulder.
Between one December and another December
I met my half way self
In close encounter.
I stood, poised between coming and going
Midway between entrance and exit,
And dared reflection.*

*I remember, when I was thirty,
I paused to consider,
Was this a crisis?
I did not find it so
But bolstered my incipient doubts
With eager purchase of a childhood toy,
A wellingtoned bear, to make some statement
Of being at last an adult, and so
Free to be childlike.
Now I wonder, where is that adult?
Have I reached this signpost day
Older not wiser?
Do I dwindle or grow?*

*I have travelled, made choices, opened doors and windows,
Risky my undoing.
I have altered the image of face and figure
I carried with me.
I have left by the roadside a heap of rags,
My former obsessions.
I have ventured out daily from behind stout fences
I built to defend me.
I have recharted some seas
On my round-my-world voyage,
I have vanquished some dragons,
Though whether again I shall ever find the points of the compass
And complete my orientation, who can say?
I am still sailing.*

*Midsummer, midyear, midlife,
You have not, for me, my meaning;
Though hallowed date and chronicled time
Demand my pagan due observance,
It is not here I light my candles
Nor gaze in terror at a darkening sky.
Though the year begin his downward curve
So do not I.
Though symmetry require my calendar pages
Go now reverse
To their last entry,
I have not yet the will to turn them so.
I will add years and years to my years
Before repining.*

*My high bright summer days are all before me;
The year turns slowly.
And far beyond this horizon
Wait all the richly mellow fire-fringed days of autumn;
And though the seed's engendered from the flower,
And each step's taken to the rhythm
Of last and next,
Was, and is, and will be, marching trunk to tail,
I am here
At my life's present,
Surveying far prospects.*

*I am a traveller, shod for this journey.
Across the starfields of infinity
The Centaur gallops strongly,
The year's nadir my zenith; its short midwinter day
Heralds my circling path to the next spring.
Midsummer and midwinter, this year and next
Are but the inns along the way
Offering refreshment.
Each ending is also beginning;
Each day is an arrow shot over the rooftops;
Each day is midsummer day.*

Forecast

I was in love with misery,
revelled in pain and the rough,
Taught myself to treasure tears,
bitter laughter, and bluff.

Each person was an accuser,
each word another death.
I defended and tried to destroy myself
with every hurting breath .

I did not consider suicide,
but committed it all the same.
I chose self-denigration
and denied the real name.

Not wanting life as I imagined it,
I chose madness instead,
rejected the essence of self
into the dungeons of the head.

Having chosen death too much,
I now prefer genuine life,
and to set sail on a perilous course
with companion and wife.

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John Moore