

A TRIBUTE TO ROY MARZ

Werner W. Beyer

(Editor's Note: The following is the text of a speech delivered by Dr. Werner Beyer at a retirement dinner honoring Dr. Roy Marz, longtime member of the English Faculty at Butler University.)

The retiree whom—unlike Mark Anthony—I “come to praise, not bury”, has been a good and faithful servant at Butler for almost thirty years. And yet he is so retiring that few of his many students through those years and probably few of his colleagues knew him well or even know much about him. Though he and I (and the late Cary Graham) came to Butler in the same fall of 1948; and though Roy and I were office mates for years and worked closely together on sundry departmental and university assignments including the University Writing Contest, I can't honestly say that I know him very well.—For he was and remains a very private person.

Even if his health had permitted it, I doubt that he would have enjoyed being here on such an occasion, since he never liked publicity or baring his heart even to friends. Yet he never wanted for friends, being himself a warm and friendly person, so he has them in many parts of the world.

Roy Marz was born in 1911, a native of Kentucky. He received his Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate from the University of Cincinnati, in 1933, 34, and 37 respectively. He taught there between 1937 and 1941, when he joined the army and served in Counter Intelligence, among other places, in Italy. He promptly fell in love with the land, its language, its art and culture.

After the armistice he returned to teaching at Cincinnati between 1946 and 1948 before coming here.

At Butler like everyone in the Department he taught Freshman English, also English Authors, Modern Poetry, and Modern Drama, and latterly Shakespeare and Victorian literature. More than a few of his students confessed that they had been captivated by as well as converted to his easy cosmopolitan culture, his searching scholarship and careful *explication de texte*: his passion for understanding every allusion, every word in the text he was teaching.

Roy Marz is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Modern Language, The Poetry Society of America, the AAUP. He was a Ford Foundation Fellow in 1951-52 and typically spent his time studying and writing in his beloved Italy. In 1962-63 he was a Fulbright Fellow, teaching American Literature at the University of Catania in Sicily. On the side he delivered a series of lecture on Americanism and American Literature for the U. S. Information Service at Bari, Palermo, and Catania. He spent many summers in Italy and taught at least one summer at the University of Delaware, where, some of you will recall, Paul Cundiff had gone.

Roy was elected to membership in The Poetry Society of America and listed in the *International Who's Who in Poetry* (among other places) by virtue of his having contributed more than 130 poems to such prestigious publications as *Poetry Magazine*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *The Saturday Review*, *Epoch*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Accent*, *The (Canadian) Northern Review*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, and *The [Italian) Botteghe Oscure*.

He won two national prizes for his sensitive poetry—that of the New York Poetry Center as outstanding young American poet in 1951 and the Oscar Blumenthal Prize awarded by *Poetry Magazine* in 1952. He also wrote some short stories and at least two very poetical, irresistibly charming plays—*After Closing* (published in 1962 in *First Stage*, a quarterly of new drama) and *O'Fallon's Cup* (published by the same magazine in 1966). *After Closing* was given nine performances between March 4 and 20, 1966, by the Judson Players of Washington Square, New York.

His plays—rich, warm, tender, poetical and whimsical like the music of his poetry—reveal the rare spirit which is Roy Marz. He loves animals, fantasy, and the fey as he loves art, music, poetry, the stage and beauty anywhere. He spent much time in Florence, Rome, Paris, London. Years ago we surmised he was studying the Italian artists of the Renaissance intensively and working on a book on Giorgione. Typically he said little about it. Quite recently I discovered that despite failing health he has continued working on it in his enforced retirement, that it is in its fourth draft and under contract to Simon & Schuster! May it soon be published!

But let us hear Roy speak for himself in two of his poems. The first is titled "The Elephant Graveyard."

From their several hills the sick bulls came to the graveyard
(Hunter at dream, it is nearer than any dream)
They came with the great ears apread, and each endeavored
A sick majesty worthy his station at home.

They lumbered the easy grassland and told how the trunks,
Never to spiral again, hurled tigers aside;
At drowse in the shallow river they mumbled of links
Outlasting moons and the marbeling of the herd,

Or stunned in a ponderous circle to be august,
Wise beyond thought, bull sufficient as bull;
And when they buckled gargantuan rumps to rest
They did not feel the tilt of the earth at all

Nor notice if there were stars. They told the season
By those who tottered; they lurched and were unafraid.
They balanced the morning-unable against the risen,
And when it was time to die they openly died.

It is only the dream of the hunter, long corrected,
That one awakened to say he decided to live
Or that the remnant bulls in council enacted
They had not heard him speak nor seen him leave.

The second poem is a description of a painting—The Donatello Annunciation: Santa Croce" (from the life of the unborn, prophetic Christ).

Naive flesh that will strain for my miracle,
Your eyes do not move, unshadowed the easy cheek;
Only the book held to your breast is loved,
But you will forget the book when you suckle me.

The angel foresees, is moved, but you aloof
Will not move to a music beyond your sphere
Nor pity your private star as inferior, silent;
You wait, strung, the full sounding of grief.

If only Who chose so well had chose other,
The womb prolific, the eyes public for tears,
Bearing children and loss as usual traffic;
I could not hurt you then. Forgive me, mother.

Thomas Carlyle, speaking of Bobbie Burns, once wrote that "a poet without love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility." Roy Marz's work as teacher and writer reinforces the point. He *is* a rare spirit, our poet long in residence at Butler, for whom the esthetic experience was and is indeed a "form of contemplation, a loving attention to" the *qualities* of things, whether remote or under foot and overlooked. His poems are part of the memorable creations of the loving human spirit.

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TO KATHY

Richard Ringley

Better never tell her that
the funny man in the blue hat
smoking Winston cigarettes
is reading The Bible
looking for loopholes
trying to slip through
Heaven with a sack of rum.
Passport stamped by the church constabulary
only cost me four "Hail Mary's."
Better yet
There are no duties.