

## CARNIVAL

Sam McMillan

hot arc of neon in rainbow night-town  
 a wind machine roaring down the mirrored midway.  
 Would he go? See the girl so ugly  
 they locked her out of school?  
 Would he go to the carnival,  
 from a distance watch the ride boys flex tatoos  
 gearing up the screaming highschool girls  
 into circles through night sky, swaying  
 on a single rust pitted cotter pin above  
 the odor of cottoncandy popcorn & ponyshit where  
 the children of anxious parents trot  
 around bored corrals that smell  
 vaguely of farms. Would he go  
 and idiotically fall in love with the plump  
 laughing concession girl at the Krazzee Ladder  
 who swung her bluejeaned hips over each rung  
 easy, high and level up the ropes, rang  
 the buzzer twice, jumped down and challenged  
 anyone to do the same  
 for fifty cents.  
 Of course he would; as a child  
 he had heard the sound of roaring wind  
 and would follow until the wind spread wide around him,  
 until she smiled for him.

## B'rucha

Wendy Belden

I came to hear the blessing but I could not hear;  
 I saw my same Naomi  
 and her shiny challah hair  
 Baruch Ata Adonai  
 dripped its braid in egg-like prayer  
 Elohenu Melech ha-Olam

Adoshem!

(Or God will hear you she had said.)  
 Adoshem, I followed, and she led me  
 with her shiny challah hair,  
 which was black and full of feasting  
 as the month of Adar,  
 to her Bat Mitzvah.  
 Adoshem of God would hear me  
 I would not let her leave me  
 in the salmon-laden room.  
 The band booming hava nagila  
 reflected cockeyed off my Sunday shoes.  
 Home again Mama  
 was yanking at my hurricaned hair  
 I could not say what wind had blown through there,  
 but showed where the tongue goes  
 for le-chiam.

Friday at temple

I could not hear the blessing  
 by the same wind  
 Naomi set me turning like a cautious dreidel  
 and I left before the feast.

Wendy Belden's "B'rucha" (Blessed) has been criticized for her use of Hebrew lines in her poem. Such criticism comes from either one of three motives: jealousy, laziness, or habit (since, with our de-emphasis on classical learning and language, we are conditioned to think that foreign phrases in modern poems are deliberately obtuse and therefore affected postures. I don't believe this is the case here. So to Wendy's critic who asked, "What would a Georgia boy from the South know about Hebrew?", I reply, "Not much, but you said it, I didn't."

Her poem, contains, primarily, control, complexity and clear imagery. Since I referred to Bill Herron's poem as impressionistic, I equally say here that the Hebrew Lines here achieve an impressionistic quality also, but in a different way. This is about a woman's visit to a synagogue, and while the poet describes, on the surface level, what her eyes see at the service, she also hears Hebrew phrases there while her mind wanders. Thus, Wendy "paints" a visual as well as an audible picture, giving to us a stream-of-consciousness realism, a credible realism, in "B'rucha." She even states this at the beginning of the poem, telling us in fact what her format will be: "I came to hear the blessing but I could not hear." She then describes Naomi as well as the Bat Mitzvah taking place. We have, therefore, an interplay of the poet's audio and visual perceptions. Because of this format, I object to her objectors who disapprove of her use of Hebrew lines.

The persona is not pretending to understand them, but she is hearing them as anyone would hear those lines if they visited a synagogue whether they understood the service or not. Wendy takes us through a sequence of time that is easy to follow, but she deepens the poem with extraneous thoughts that she thinks about during the service. Such thoughts permit her to make time shifts which she does, for example, in the parenthesized line "(Or God will hear you she had said)." Here, the parentheses are not mere clever typography. They are a deliberate shift in time distinguished from the immediate setting of the service.

As she describes things, she remains within the Jewish context, as when she talks about Naomi's "shiny challah hair" and the "gate-like sign around her neck which was black and full of feasting," and "turning like a cautious dradle." These are but three examples of her consistency to maintain the Jewishness of the poem, thus confirming her control of it. The persona has been affected by the service. She is not certain how, but she describes this, again, remaining with the Hebrew context. "Naomi set me turning like a cautious dradle/and I left before the feast." I consider this a sophisticated poem because of the layers that Wendy has worked with; the imagery, the stream-of-consciousness technique, her consistency, her specificity, and her flow with the languages, both English and Hebrew. This is a poem to be re-read.



## LES PLUMES EN FLEURS/CHAGALL

Bill Herron

feathers made of leaves  
 blue donkey moon man  
 turning in the beast  
 man turning in the beast  
 chicken donkey Jew  
 feather leaf beast blue

now run for your life  
 run there's the beast  
 now run for your life  
 run there's the beast

eye eye blue  
 turning in the blue  
 as the head hangs yellow  
 from the leaf beast's ass  
 eye eye blue  
 chicken donkey Jew  
 feather leaf beast blue

now run for your life  
 run there's the beast  
 now run for your life  
 run there's the beast

chicken donkey Jew  
 feather leaf beast blue  
 eye eye blue  
 feather leaf beast blue  
 chicken donkey Jew  
 yellow beak  
 beast blue