



PAROUSIA

Parousia Christian Poetry Chapbook

*Walking
on the
Beach*

R. Bremner

Walking on the Beach

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PAROUSIA

Walking on the Beach by R. Bremner

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Walking on the Beach

I am walking on the beach.
It is late December, between
Christmas and New Year.
The night is brisk and cruel.
The wind on the beach shows
no mercy, whipping up
granules of sand to attack my face.
Cold confronts me, like an angry
jealous lover. I pull my hood
closer around my head.

At the Sand Dunes motel
they thought it odd
for a man alone to stay
at this time of year.
I offered no decipherable clues
as to motive or mind.

In the motel room at noon
I switched on the TV:
Princeton-Rutgers in a big
time college basketbrawl.

Later I battled furiously with
sleep. I lost and had to sit up
for wasted hours. Nothing to
write about, my pressure rising,
no food served by the motel,
no desire to go out for some.

So now I am out here
in the wind and the cold
when not even sand crabs
venture on such a night.

The sea is loud, there are no
other sounds.

This cold weather is weak
beside the cold of my soul.

There is some faltering light
downbeach.

Five minutes ago I
was compiling my list
of the year's best LPs
But now I wonder why?

Who cares about my
likes and dislikes?

The key is that I
have no friends, no one
to care, my relatives lost
in whatever they call their lives.

And I further wonder
why I should not walk
proudly into this chill sea.

Who would notice,
who would bother,
who would look up
from their own circumstance to
ask why...

Some fifty yards or so away,
on the cusp of sea and shore
through the mist
and the blowing sands
there shines a light
strong and bright.

Not out at sea, where
a boat's light it might be
but it is on a direct line
from the shoreline to me.

I stop my erstwhile

March into the Sea.
I want to find the source
of that light. It's clear
and bright, and easily
within walking distance.

I set out on my little quest.
But something strange happens.
Though I easily cover
the original fifty yards
the light is no closer
and though I walk and walk
it seems the same distance away.

Finally having walked a good hour
and growing weary in my legs
I have to turn back.
I am now a good mile
from the Sand Dunes motel

and if I don't turn back now
I might never make it.
So back north I push
my tired legs onward
through the cold night.
I have by now decided
to put off all thoughts
of plunging into the
dark, cold sea.
Now all I want is a hot
beverage and a warm bed.
But I realized suddenly
that the wind has died down
and I am no longer assaulted
by specks of sand.
As I trudge the long way back

I turn to see the light
and find it brighter than ever
even casting its glow
before my footsteps, making
it easier to walk.

I manage somehow to make
it back to the motel, exhausted
and I glance back at the light
gratefully, as if to thank it
but it has gone.

At the motel, I query the desk clerk.
“Must be the Barnegat Lighthouse,”
he assures me. “To the north
it was, you say?”
“No, to the south. It
first seemed fifty yards away
but it seemed to be moving away.”
“A ship. It was out at sea, then?”
“No, no, it was onshore, and as I got
nearer, it got farther away.”
”A man with a flashlight. But if
it was going away, how could
it shine toward you?”

I leave him to the mystery, and
tired and hungry, make my way
to the candy machine and
then to bed. I sleep a good long
sleep and return home in the morning.

That was some thirty-two years ago.
Much in my life has changed.
I married, had a son, had a long and

fruitful working life.

Now in my twilight years, I look back
at that night that changed my life
in so many ways. And now, so far
removed from that time, I have
an inkling of what was going on then.

Jesus was reaching out to me. “No, don’t
do it, don’t take your life. I am not
ready for you yet – it is not your time.”
His holy distraction saved my life.
And though I was an agnostic at the time,
He set me on a path to Him and His
Grace.

Life is indeed strange, but the most
surprising thing is that it sometimes
makes sense.

Lord, you are present

Lord, You are present
In the scent of these spice plants on a hot August day;
In the wind and the rain blistering through the October
morn;
In the crashing of the waves as they ebb and flow on the
shore;
In the foam of the sea that lingers on the sand;
In a pup's joyful whelp as she welcomes her master;
You are present everywhere, in all things at all times;
and Your presence is a blessing to one and all.

Caught by the Rain

Caught by the rain
like a moth by a flame
there might seem no good end
to such a fall into a pit

but here huffing along a trail
at Eagle Rock, I walk right into
the first cooling rain in weeks,
breaking the spell of this steamy hot
pot of wretchedness
the rain purrs kittenlike as it gushes
down the trail, soaking my sneakers.

pouring like a pot o' gold on my
dusty face, streaking me like cheap makeup
and grey magic markers,

my drenched dog stoic, his fur
not dripping but sopping like a sponge,
just this once he does not whine
but grins in some knowledge
unfathomable to men.

The sky is lit bright despite
the unconquerable pour.

Oh God, my Lord, this can only be
Your doing. I bow before Your majesty,
Your power and Your grace.

Catch me with the rain, again.

Praise the Lord

Praise the Lord! Praise the Day!
Praise the very essence of life,
The trees, the hills, the sky!

Jesus came to me today
And brought His Love and
Joy.

I will never
Be the same
So long as I
Accept my Lord
And Savior.

My Candle

Jesus
God of light, God of wisdom
You were my candle
You lit my way
As I stumbled through the darkness
with only Your light
to guide me.
I didn't know You
but You knew me
and Your love, your light
gave me hope
when there was none.
Thank You, Lord.

Autumn in the Suburbs

Sun seeps through the branches
And glides over the viburnums
As a dog chews a stick of wood
And ambles through the yard, confident.
I share this day with You, O Jesus,
All of this belongs to You.

Let us give thanks

Let us give thanks
For these incredible gifts
In our lives.

We could have been born
Anywhere, at any time
But we have been gifted
With presents far greater
Than we deserve.

Judge not the wicked
For they may have
Little choice in their
Wickedness;
And if one should come around
To our Lord's light
It will be like the little lost lamb
Which lost its way
And has returned
To the flock.
Rejoice!

Late September Harmony

The sky is blue, the grass is green,
The chatter warm and friendly.
It is the dog park on a late
September Sunday.
“Look, is that a pit bull?
And he hasn’t been ‘fixed!’”
(and aside to me) “that makes them
more aggressive.”
But the pit bull pup is shy and polite,
though he loves to kick up dust,
and the other dogs cavort wild and free,
only occasionally taking notice of him.
My Ariel, my unspayed mutt,
likes to tease and ride the pit and the
others on this day that is too nice
and far too warm for the season.
Unusual for a day at the dog park,
no turmoil, no tumult breaks out.
All the dogs
are mellow today.

Harmony is in the air.
Harmony, in fact, is everywhere.
I offer up this day to You, Lord,
For afterall, You are its Maker.

I have been gifted

I have been gifted
With my wife and son
As they have been gifted
With me (though it's hard
To think of me as a gift!)
We have found each other
And made our way in this world
With the grace of Almighty God.

Strangely

Strangely,
it's not the sunny summer days,
whose waves of heat warm the soul,
nor the blustery winter nights, whose
fierce cold winds you'd expect to
impress on me the
power of the Almighty,
that make me most aware of my God.

Instead, it's the quiet evenings,
with the sun low on the horizon,
and the ending day and beginning night,
that brings God to mind, with all the
beauty, and majesty, and simplicity
of His Being.

Prayer for the Saints

O, my beloved and blessed saints, my dear dear friends, St. Andrew, St. Anthony, St. Lucy, and St. Rita, I thank you dearly for your kindness, mercy, and friendship, and for your loving prayers and assistance in times troubled and untroubled. I pray to the Lord that He may bless you and honor you, and keep you close to Him in His heavenly Kingdom.

Justin

Justin,
my brave and wonderful
and mighty and clumsy
dog
taken from me
at only seven years.
He died a horrible death
of massive internal bleeding.
Why, God, why?
Did I offend you?
Did I do something so heinous
to bring this horror on my dog?

I have pondered over this
question again and again.
Did I hit him too hard
when my temper erupted?
Did I let him chew up too
many plastics?

But now I can say that the
Lord has his reasons.
Reasons we cannot fathom.
But I know that somehow
Justin is happy now
and the Lord takes good care
of that mighty fellow.
And for that, I thank you, Lord.

Lord, You have been with me

Lord,
You have been with me
for all these many years
despite my unworthiness.
When at 16 I strode out of
the Church after confession
to a clueless priest, and
entered the world of agnostics,
you did not desert me.

All the while I made my way
through the material world,
turning a deaf ear to you,
You were always there, I
know now, looking after me.

When on a hot Texas night
alone and lonely and in despair
I reached out for any help,
anywhere,
You were there, in the
shadows to pull me through.

And when I came near death
during my kidney infection,
You reached out to me.
Yes, You heard my calls,
helped me make my decision,
to find peace in my confession
to Your humble servant,
which set me on a course
back to Your loving care.

And during the darkness

when I had my stroke,
You were my light and made
sure I had the protection
of my loving family
about me, as I clutched my
rosary.

Lord,
I can never thank you

enough for all of Your
help, Your guidance,
Your friendship, and
Your love.

Each Day I Go to my Diminishing Office

Each day I go to my diminishing office
to perform the duties of my diminishing job
at the work of my diminishing life.

I bow before the boss who dictates
the tasks I must complete which are
to do the dirty work so
he can keep his fine hands clean.

My soul diminishes too, to a
scrap in a flame, a classic book
of great wisdom burned to near nothing.

It's a bargain, you see, a deal I have
struck. My soul was my chip.
(My chip went so cheap!)

My children and my spouse must be
kept in their plaintive ease and health;
the dog must have a warm home for sleep.

Boss has his own masters to slave
to, much colder and deafer, indifferent
to souls.

The Lord has been gracious and kind to
His servant. He's given great gifts, wit and
luck by the potfull.

The sick, the troubled, the beaten down, they
live in a different town than we... my children pros-
per, my spouse has her comforts, my dog is fat.

And the little wisp of soul left me keeps me
nourished, by God's holy Word, and His Word is made flesh.

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Rimbaud: Last Letter to Verlaine

My dearest Paul,

As now the scorching fires in my leg will not desist (perhaps foreshadowing my eternal fate), my mind aches too, with thoughts of you, as sometime last night, or the time I acquainted with last night, as my hours have no distinction now,

the Saviour came to raise me from this bed of hell, but lo! His Face was yours, and I cried out, slipping through His grasp back into Hell.

,For those days are long past, those days of foolish whimsey, staggering through the streets under singing stars. And you, my love, scavenger of my morbid moods, defiler of my sacred youth, whose soul did I horrify to see the flames not of Hell but of a glorious Heaven, the Heaven of you, to you I must account so many years.

My pale, tender skin once cringed from the sweltering heat of Paris, my protection from burning being angels of the Lord (yourself one), whose dreaming rhymes my own pursued. But how cold grew Paris, my wretched body a frozen lake with only the alcohol in my bloodstream to keep the deeper waters flowing. Sick from staggering, from shivers, and from vomit, sick of your postured holy platitudes so defenseless against my debaucheries, like the rosary you dropped, trembling, before my nakedness, and sick of passion so wearying to maintain, with its fitful mad-

ness and violent bursts,

I sought my peace in the fortunes of the warm East, my agile mind a productive machine. No more torn pockets for a poor lad, this former lamb became a thriving merchant. No drunken boats carry me now, no lyric muses touch my eyes, or caress my senses with their soft beauty. Sweating in the steaming cities of Africa, my heart was becalmed. But never have I felt so cold as now, on return to Marseilles. No amount of coverings can keep the fearful cold away.

I hear the silken voice of God, a God Who is not you, Paul. Let us neither curse the foul deeds we wrought upon each other's psyches, nor moan for our former ecstasies, but deliver ourselves into His Hands, Who raised your arm when you shot at me, sending me on my journey to His doorstep today.

Hands

Stopped, startled, and amazed,
looking down at red-streaked
knobbed hands trying to push
slippery little buttons through
resisting little holes and failing,
I flash to other hands, could they
possibly be the same? The same as those
little little soft wrinkly hands clutching
at mommy's breast to pull it to me
Or firm strong hands caressing the
smooth silken curve of my lover's
special place
Or big powerful hands gripping my
baby's body tight, rocking him to
sleep, hoping these hands can keep
this helpless bitsie safe from all bad things.

These notched hands scare me, can they
truly be mine, I don't think so, I don't like
them,
And yet there they are, they are me, this is
me now, I must love them as they have loved
me and cared for me all these fine, dear
years.

For E.J.O., Jr.

You create for yourself grand objectives,
impossible all to see through,
then despair in your lonely perspectives
for those that you have failed to do.

But I ask you please to remember
that you've lost far less battles than won;
and to look back in pride each December
at all the year's seen that you've done.



Biography:

R. Bremner, a former cab driver, truck unloader, computer programmer, and bank vice-president, hails from Glen Ridge by way of Lyndhurst, NJ, USA, with his beautiful sociologist wife, their brilliant son, and their excitable puppy Ariel. A regular contributor to Poets Online and the Poetry Super Highway live radio show, he has appeared in three Holocaust Remembrance (Yom HaShoah) anthologies – two for PSH and one for Lagan Online.

In recent years he has overcome a stroke, a liver transplant, multi-organ failure, and a hip fracture, and now he feels just fine(!) and by the grace of God keeps on writing!

Ron considers himself lucky to be a member of the Red Wheelbarrow Poets, the Brownstone Poets, the Montclair Write Group and the West Orange Workshop. Six of his verses were featured at the monthlong 2016 Montclair Library Ekphrasis exhibit. He reads at many venues regularly and has been featured at the Bowery Poetry Club in New York City. As a programmer for Pan American World Airways, he traveled extensively, especially to Sri Lanka, the birthplace of his wife.

R. Bremner Honors Received

- Poet of the Week at Poetry Super Highway
- “Slow Dip”, Honorable Mention in Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards, 2016
- “Uncle Harold and Uncle Raymond”, Honorable Mention in Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards, 2017
- “She wore a raspberry beret”, Honorable Mention in Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards, 2018

R. Bremner Previous Publications

Books:

- *Hungry Words*, Alien Buddha Press, August 2018
- *Absurd*, Cajun Mutt Press, September 2018
- *Chambers of a Heart*, New Feral Press, October 2018
- *Ektomorphic*, Presa Press, November 2018
- *Nightmares*, Alien Buddha Press, January 2019
- *Pencil sketches*, Clare Songbirds Publications, June 2019

And many poetry journals, including *Paterson Literary Review*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, and *International Poetry Review*.

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