

1975

Gardening in Avernus

Roger Garfitt

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Recommended Citation

Garfitt, Roger. "Gardening in Avernus." *The Iowa Review* 6.3 (1975): 179-180. Web.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1938>

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me a feeling of Moravian villages, but you can read in any inland region, experience, remembered.

Yet another side to the cottages—the simile may also say something about the nature of friendship.

It is the “jumping” North because of the Boom (sic), things moving so fast the old woman wouldn’t know where to tread. Maybe I’ll hide her (round) identity by modifying “heaves.”

In “Ancestors,” “bones” also suggests to me the rock breaking through the surface of barren land.

In other associated poems I may work towards an understanding informed by (but not based on) social sense/faith. “Ancestors” is a factual background with some aspects of awareness and action. I hope readers will develop the themes. Roger Garfitt does. He can make value judgments about the “me” in the poem, as he can about my great-great-grandfather, the Clearances, or the present. He doesn’t support acceptance. “Singing” and “being silent” can be understood in human terms.

The italicised lines are really an unanswerable prayer. Munro starts this sideways chant but has to give it up (“..”), for the first of Garfitt’s reasons.

I think my view of nature is closer to Richard Jefferies than to Roger Garfitt. I completely reject his negative judgment on my poetry’s “participation,” and I can’t agree with his conclusions.

Gardening in Avernus / Roger Garfitt

Evening in the turned earth.
A night wind foxes the grass.
Still through the late afternoon
of stone the thin scent rises
of a herb patch by the wall,
and I am on a path of
that other garden, where thyme
is grey bush beyond the vines,
reptile over the dry rocks.

Cicadas stir the leaf fall.
The lich-owl pronounces dusk
over shadowless cedars.
The foraging pipistrelles
enter meridian blue.
A common scent of earth is
the black ship across Ocean,

a coast of willows and mist.
Without a trench of dark blood

I have come where the tenses
elide. The past re-opens
to a nervous link through an
electronic gate, or the
Gate of Horn. Cell by single
cell an identity wakes,
as out of distances new
lines form: a true dream rises
out of earth and memory.

from Rosehill / Roger Garfitt

1

Cumulus forms and drifts.

Some
part of the children who play
here is light chasing on an
empty playground.

Their voices
as they rise have distance
in.

On the edge
of the moving city, they look over
houses their grandparents called
mushroom growths.

2

History fell behind us,
in a crook of the river,
on another, lower hill,
a groundwork that goes down ten
centuries, or seven feet.

Two miles west, on a gravel terrace,
our speech is as a strong city:

in three names three gates still stand,
though the Southgate has fallen

—our security that the names
come unbidden, from time out of mind.