

1975

## Strollers

John Cassidy

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## Strollers / John Cassidy

The two of them walk under the frayed flowers  
Of park almond trees while their child and dog  
Trot and wander along the verges.

He watches a point six yards ahead on the ground  
With a deliberate fixity as if his eyes  
Were headlamps. He does not speak.

Her neck stretches and twists and never  
Rests. She is questioning, jabbing at him,  
Moving like a vigilant long-billed snipe.

Her voice flings splinters of ice across a smooth  
Evening. The sun hurries to get down  
Behind long shadows. The air stirs, cooler.

## John Drew on John Cassidy

There could be no more appropriate occasion than a symposium to resurrect a Romantic notion of poetry at least as old as Plato, and older—as old as Orpheus and the Orient.

When Plutarch argues a poem will have power to move us if it is consonant with the doctrines of Plato and Pythagoras, I take it he is especially referring to the doctrine pithily summarized by Archytas: “He who knows universals properly will also have a clear perception of the nature of particulars.” Put that way, visionary experience sounds remarkably dull; Plutarch himself suggests what it’s all about much more vividly when he has Timarchus, a Hellenistic Lopsang Rampa, enter the Cave of Trophonius, his soul ascend through the parted sutures of his skull and see in the heavens the astral islands of the blest.

In this particular experience, everything, or at least a very great deal, has been made known to Timarchus. Likewise, a poem finds its true self when, ostensibly about some one thing, it leaves the reader with the impression that everything, or much, has been made known through it. For a brief moment the decent human voice, however local the subject of its discourse, speaks not only with the tongue of men but of angels and has love—and is, in a word, divine.

At its most intense that moment cannot be apprehended even in the writing of the poem. A poet can only hold out in prospect the hope that a word, an image, an idea will prove to be the proper incantation, the mantra capable of evoking the immanent deity. Wainwright’s fine poem “Thomas