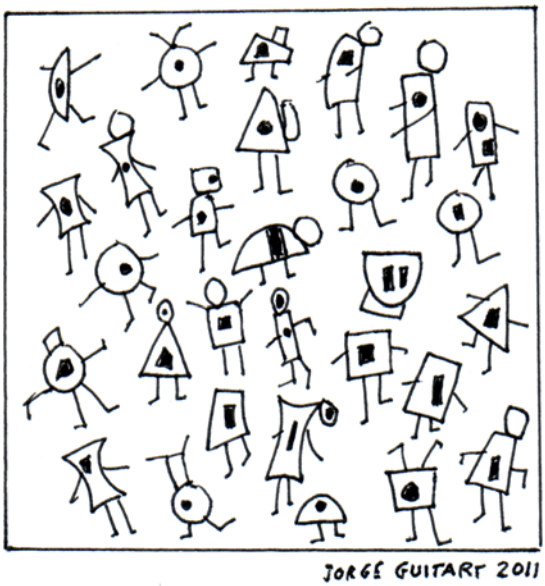
Three Poems

Jorge Guitart



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The Poetry Collection is proud to celebrate National Poetry Month with this publication of Jorge Guitart's *Three Poems*, the third in a yearly series featuring the work of poets living in Buffalo.

2009 Bernhard Frank
2010 Ansie Baird

Cover: Jorge Guitart, "Results Will Vary."

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SOMETHING NEITHER VIVID NOR CONCRETE

I wish to speak to the real self
the one holding the pencil awkwardly
But you write with a fountain pen
says the father in the brain.

Or is it the mind? Oh, I prefer the heart.
The brain is the one with the wires.
The mind is an onion.
The heart looks like a Valentine.

How am I supposed to know, is the question
put to us by the son, who speaks for the father,
who is asleep. Dummy, says the son,

and the sawdust shifts
to the wrong side of the head.
This awakens the father, who is rational,
yet says in a pipe-in-the-mouth voice,

"One never knows," recalling how the search
for the real onion (peeling and peeling)
made him cry.

BUFFALO

"Something innocent and reptilian suffers here…"
–Robert Hass, "The Failure of Buffalo to Levitate"

I
"There is something here
that's definitely
innocent,"
said Mr. Hass to himself
as he strolled past
the dying elms.
"Yes, innocent and …
and reptilian!" he added.
His thoughts turned
to Millard Fillmore
lying in his heavy tomb.

II
The night of the mammal is on:
a Polish boy is wooing
an Italian girl
in a clump of surviving trees.

III
Millard Fillmore is President
of the dead.
Eddie and Donna are jogging
by the fine new snow.

IV
Buffalo levitates
and is the city in the sky.
The short skyscrapers
are upside down in a puddle.
The puddle freezes.
Buffalo lands upright.

NEIGHBORS

I scared the neighbor away
with metaphors
the humanly neighbor
come to my house
with tools, the extensions
of his humanly trade
to fix the sink
the toilet mechanism
the hydraulics that baffled
and the hydraulics that bled.

He spoke in clear hydraulic terms.
I spoke of a voice in the water.
Outside he said it was late.
I mentioned a cathedral of clouds.

The neighbor went home
the logical way,
crossing the street diagonally,
jogging the last few steps.

I sat like a pompous mouse
in my shoebox house
eating cheese
the flesh a little sad
with all those books unread.

Later I lured the neighbor back.
"Beer!" rang the understated cry
across the way.
The neighbor came back,
made sensible conversation.
"We're together in this," I said.
"In what?" asked the neighbor.
"There is more beer," I said.

About Jorge Guitart

Jorge Guitart has been writing poetry in both English and his native Spanish for more than four decades. He fell in love with English in elementary school in his native Cuba, and developed an equally great interest in U.S. culture. A New York Yankees fan since childhood, he memorized great chunks of American pop music lyrics and was a devotee of *Mad Magazine* in the Harvey Kurtzman era, which probably influenced his strong preference for parody and black humor. His other favorite subject was Spanish, and—having translated American poets into Spanish and Latin American poets into English—both languages continue to be at the center of his intellectual and artistic life. His own work is represented in the Electronic Poetry Center as well as in anthologies of Western New York poetry, U.S. Latin@ literature, poetry by linguists, and poetry journals. He is the author of *Foreigner's Notebook* (Shuffaloff Press, 1993), *Film Blanc* (Meow Press, 1996), and *The Empress of Frozen Custard and Ninety-Nine Other Poems* (BlazeVOX, 2009). Since 1973 he has been at the University at Buffalo, where he is Professor of Spanish linguistics in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, and is widely published in his field. He holds a B.A. in psychology from George Washington University and a Ph.D. in linguistics from Georgetown University. He is also a visual artist.

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the poet.

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