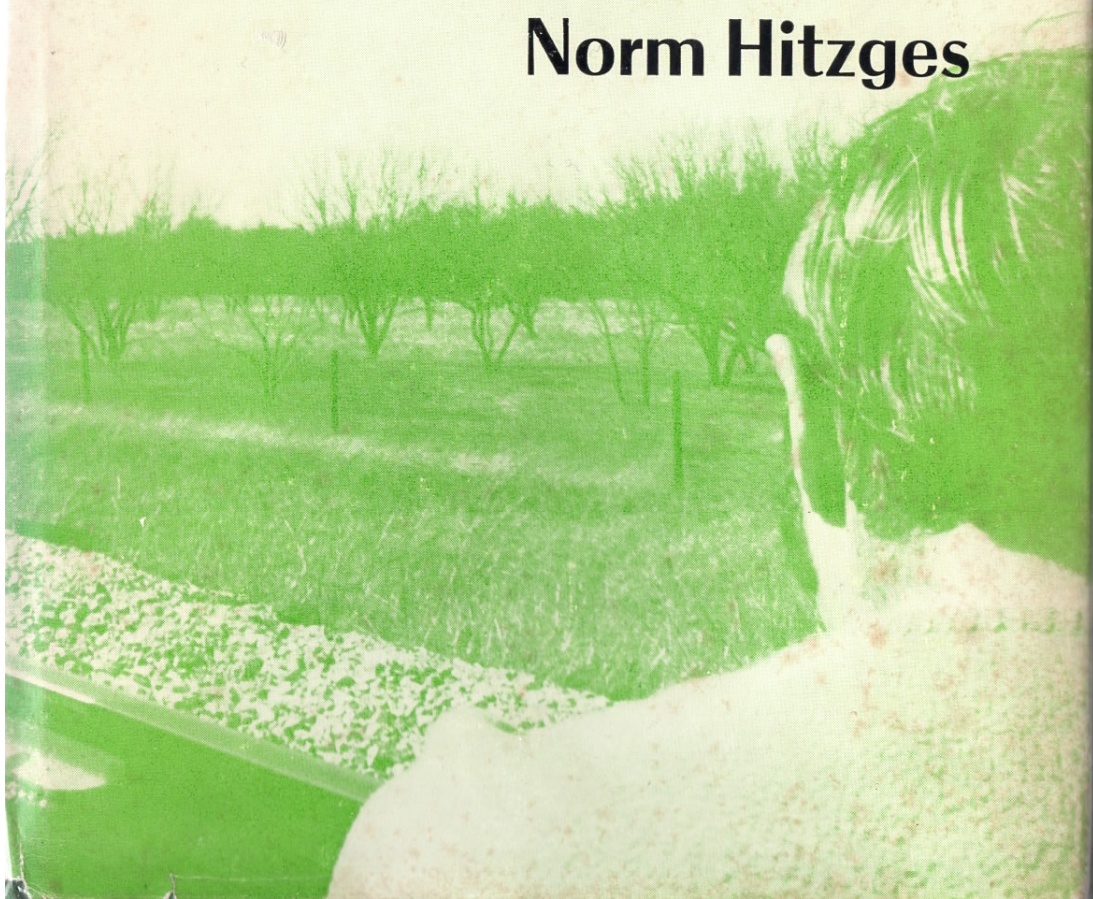


Horizons in the Mirror

Norm Hitzges



\$2.95

Horizons in the Mirror

Norm Hitzges

The horizon beckons but is never reached. The mirror's image, for all its fidelity, is the epitome of unreality. Thus the title of this volume of highly subjective verse sets the theme—the poet's search for the unattainable.

The unattainable, as expressed in many of these poems, is an enduring personal relationship, for "Tomorrow is forever," he says. And, again, "forever is still much too long." He recognizes the evanescence of his emotional encounters and foresees the end in the beginning.

But even his apparent cynicism is open to doubt. In an excellent poem addressed to an old man drowsing on a veranda, he asks for guidance:

Speak, old man, speak while you may,
for all too soon
I'll have your chair
and I must know the way.

[CONTINUED ON BACK FLAP]

Horizons in the Mirror

by Norm Hitzges



The Naylor Company

Book Publishers of the Southwest

San Antonio, Texas

To my mother, Lillian, and my father,
Edgar, in hopes this book will begin
to repay an account long overdrawn.

also to

S
J A N E
R M
P A U L A
R
R I C K
B U O
S T A N
O
J I M M Y
O A
G E O R G E
C
Y

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but especially to a salty wench named
Judi Ann, I dedicate the many thoughts
I am not talented enough to put into
words.

Norm

Tomorrow is a long way off —
but yesterday is farther

My love,
her name is Goodbye,
and I,
live together.
She with me now
and I with Goodbye.
She knows,
and so do I,
someday she'll go,
not far in miles
but forever in touch.
Or perhaps she'll never leave.
Then I could live forever with goodbye.

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Ugly me,
pretty you,
how could this one plus one be two?
But unlikes attract
and when my head be paper-sacked
the two of us racked.
No licensing, no jewelry stores,
no love, no like, just matching whores.
Ugly me,
ugly you,
two sweating bodies bound by the sheets
and nothing more.

Words

Words

like balloons
can be inflated far beyond intent.

But balloons,

being truth,
would rather burst
than go farther than they're meant to.

Words,

being sometimes lies,
just grow larger
until
want becomes love,
now means always,
and tomorrow is forever.

Stewart Beach

Gulf tide steals in
like sneakered thieves
to erase afternoon emotions etched in sand.
We came here today
to walk amidst collapsing castles
looking for sand dollars
and pieces of what we used to be.

There have been others, you know

There have been others,
you know.
Once upon a time
hardly describes my loving tales.
And to my partially filled loving cup,
open at one end to eternity,
I chose to add you
and
your watermelon grin.
I thought I had visited this loving place many times,
but only my body had been here.
And,
as I await your answer,
I stand poised on the threshold of me.

To Nancy

What a surprise it was
running into you yesterday.
After so many years
and in such an unusual place – my dresser drawer.
But since you're no longer flesh,
and only a note scribbled on a high school play program,
I threw you away
to make more room for underwear.

I always had this fear of being only alone
before you came.
But since you've gone
I've learned to live with it
like zebras live with lions in a zoo —
constantly afraid that tomorrow
it will break its cage
and devour me.

Since

tomorrow should be better than today (for wins)
and Wednesday always follows Tuesday (unless you die),
pull the covers over tonight
and wait with me for morning
and the delicious improbability of betterness.

January second, nineteen seventy-one

There is a single copy of a single book
which contains everything that ever was,
never is,
and always will be.

Its chapters are endless,
its pages number just beyond infinity.
If I could get my self-stained hands
on that single book
I would rip out many pages.
Both World Wars would be deleted,
the Kennedys and Martin Luther King would be alive.
But most important of all
I would erase from a little noticed passage
somewhere in the heart of that book
the simply devastating statement that
today
you left me.

Mary Ann — Joe

Whatever couple carved their names in that laundromat door
must have been unsure of their love
for the job was obviously hurried
(perhaps done while the clothes were drying).
Too often couples record on walls
what they cannot write in each other's heart
for there are more names on walls
than happy couples.
Love is not something to carve on walls
or buy in jewelry stores.
Love is you and maybe me
or
maybe me and you.

Reprinted by permission of *Yearbook of Modern Poetry*.

Christmas Night at "The Caboose" 1968

I think it was your eyes
or perhaps it was me
that made me feel wanted.
Bars are voids,
especially on holidays,
but a pair of eyes
that pause a while
make the drive home
much shorter.

12

Since

anyone who is no one
cares
if someone (like you)
loves a no one (like me)

Then

sometime anytime (soon)
let's tell no one
and slip away to somewhere
for something
everyone no's.

13

Imagine

Imagine —

a whale in a goldfish bowl,
an ocean in your pocket,
or a seat on the sun.

Imagine —

a smile on your belly,
the Pacific Ocean as a teardrop,
or a waterfall as laughter.

Imagine —

Ringo Starr at 75,
Johnny Carson alone,
or Jackie Gleason naked.

Imagine —

a two-ton teddy bear,
the earth as a yoyo on a giant's string,
or Lake Erie full of buffalo.

Imagine —

lying between pepperoni and cheese,
kissing if our lips were ticklish,
or trying to explain the sky to a fish.

Imagine —

a bird's nest in your mouth,
two handfuls of Saturday,
or the number of goose bumps on a chilled elephant.

Imagine you're

taking a shower in peanut butter,
sitting on a mountain peak at the bottom of the sky,
or a pimento with a tight olive.

Finally,

if you can,
imagine
we

Curtains

I have taken all the scraps
you left behind
and woven them into curtains
and hung them on my only window.
Now, every day,
the only sunshine I get
still reaches me through you.

hello, goodbye
and like buses
there'll be another along any minute.
in the meantime,
thank God the moon belongs to everyone.

I killed a bird once
when I was about ten.
I have not killed since
nor shall I again.
Except that I imagine
it must be easier than dying.

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Crossroads

At crossroads
the agony of choice
far overbalances
the pleasure of possibility.
And while our nights have been too few,
forever is still much too long,
so now, I think, would be better than tomorrow
to say goodbye.

Reprinted by permission of *Southwest Poetry*.

There have been so many doorways
equally divided into hellos
and
goodbyes
that moving on has become a morning tradition.
For a year
it seemed that you could be a home.
not just another human motel.
But now your fingers
would rather fool with beltloops on your dress
than search for soft spots in my shoulders . . .
And listening to you sleep so easily
alone
tells me it's time to go again.

But in hell

Glaring depths of dazzle
surround my eyes with lighted knives.
Light pours from everywhere
streaming through plastic walls
silhouetting the other side.
Light, slicing through tears,
returning to bear witness against my yesterdays,
ripping open my darkness
and laying it before the world.
Light,
from years spent
but not paid for,
forcing me to close my eyes.
But in hell
there are no eyelids
to shut out light
or hold in tears.

If

If,
time being what it may,
we love again
(me with her and you with him)
and we meet again —
recall old things like cheap
wine puzzle parts Bee
Gees and paperbagswitheyeholes.
But forget
today
when talking stopped
touching stopped
and one hand beckoned rhythmically
from the point where the road meets the sky.

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In love,
we buy and sell,
trade and bicker,
quibble over guarantees,
and still don't get just what we want.
There are no bargains in this marketplace,
nothing of value ever goes on sale.
So it seems
that whores are the only really honest dealers.
At least you know before you start
how much you'll have to pay.

Stephanie's Heir

I lay awake a long while after you left
wondering if we'd ever meet again,
wondering if I wanted to.
For like rainbows
what we were soon dissolved.
Now you are not
bold proposer or cautious explorer,
merely an address (Varsovia 58 A)
somewhere in Mexico City.
Your legacy to me —
a half glass of warm wine,
a colored matchbox,
and a night with you.
I drank the wine after you left,
the matchbox I found next morning and still have
(but will most likely misplace),
and, for what it's worth, I'll never forget you.

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Us?

You----blowing hair, too big legs, too little want.

Me----moustache, too big nose, too much want.

Christ, we were a balanced couple.

Or should I say pair?

For couples hold more than hands.

Like stomach growls at suppertime

want signals

when it's time

to feed each other's hunger.

A few lies for dessert

and off we go again.

We are not lovers

merely dogs of habit

returning to the same old hydrant

and only to relieve ourselves.

I had a friend
who signed my high school yearbook
"Best of luck & smooth sailing"
Al

I have kept that book with me
but looked at it so little
that both the book
and the memories are tattered.
But smooth sailing Al floated back into my life today.
A letter from home says Al's life has run aground.
His wife has left him high and dry
and the swells that other men create
threaten to capsize him.
Little does he know
that far off in another part of this ocean
I sit praying that he doesn't sink.

Color

Yellow is the color of the enemy's skin
and black are his lies.
But he too walks in fields of green
and blue are his skies.
Red is the color of his blood
and his hopes are also gray.
For he knows that peace will never be
the real color of day.
Is color then the fault to blame?
Or is human the enemy's name?

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My ship has docked at many ports
and stayed longer at some
than others.
Most of its time was spent at sea
until today.
For you are what every sailor searches for —
an island with no footprints in the sand.

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To Charlotte from Rick

Sometime
I wish you'd look at me
when you really wanted something.

Anniversary

One year ago today
we traded the afternoon
for two quarts of beer
and a grassy spot along the lake.

One year ago today
we walked a crooked trail
and begged the sun to stop.

Since that day
I've spent hours at that grassy spot
and drifting down that trail.

But the leaves have turned brown-green-brown
since you were there.

So many stars have slipped behind the sun
that even memory's out of focus.

And today
I spent the afternoon
trying to remember your face.

Reprinted by permission of *Bachuet*

breasts, nose, hips, eyes,
ears, legs, lips, thighs.
Puzzle parts of little importance.

Old Man

Old man
locked in your world by veranda railings,
committed to your rocking chair by years of chasing,
wake up and show me the way.
Lead me 'round the mud puddles,
teach me to drink Scotch,
and to eat peaches without the juice running.
Don't just sit there rocking,
the pendulum passing death more often every day.
Or have you forgotten, old man?
forgotten the swollen creeks of early spring,
the sudden surge of summer nights.
Tell me, old man,
for memories are all you have to offer.
Tomorrow promises no flesh,
no fruits,
no unbridled laughter.
Speak, old man, speak while you may
for all too soon
I'll have your chair
and I must know the way.

We found each other floating at the same bar
emptying glasses
to catch a glimpse of the clown's face at the bottom.
You gave me hands
and thighs
and practiced morning smiles
and words like "love"
"best"
and "forever."
After you left
I wondered what you do
or say
to someone you really care for.

Fool's Mate?

Benny,
 who had always been a white pawn,
 and his black queen, Moreen,
 were married by a bishop,
All the other white pieces
 thought Benny got rooked.
Foolish move,
 they thought,
 to sacrifice position on the board
 simply to capture a black piece.
But after one night in the castle
 Benny was sure he was king.
The black squares were certain
 Moreen's move was only a gambit.
The match,
 they thought,
 would be over soon.
She would attack his position
 then escape from the castle.
 and return to her color.
But that was many moves ago.
Now, every Sunday,
 Benny and Moreen
 and their five little queens
 (three white and two black)
stroll down to the square
where all the bored pieces
 sit
 discussing her finesse
 and checking his mate.

Acrostic number only

July days cannot
understand
december's preference for
icicles.
Just as sunlit
u will never
decipher the frozen code of
i.

Sometimes

Sometimes
being a poet just is
n't.

Sometimes
rhymes
are petty crimes
not worth nickels, much less dimes.

Just pantomimes
of yester primes.

Sometimes
I'm
over-squeezed limes
no flavor
just sour.

I've never flown a kite,
waltzed,
visited Tampico,
Sausalito,
or even St. Paul.

But before you
at least I was half full of me.
Now I lie empty
like a white glove on a table
awaiting the return of your hand.

Cigarettes

and you
leave me with the same three things:
a taste in my mouth,
the feeling that I'd like another,
and smoke.

Believing

You say you are
blonde-haired,
hazel-gray-eyed,
and that your skin is blotchy tan and white.

I say I have
mousy blond hair,
washed out blue eyes,
and a ragged moustache.

You claim
your hair is dirty,
that you haven't shaved in two days,
and that your toes are ugly.

I reveal that
my hair is thinning,
I bite my nails,
and I have scars on my elbow.

You admit you have
a fatty cake belly,
a funny bump that feels like a third breast,
and that you're blushing.

I admit
my nose is very big,
that I have a cheap wine gut,
and that I'm smiling.

Getting to know someone
should begin with believing.

So,
if you'll not turn on any lights
I'll be sure to leave before dawn.

Then, tomorrow,
let's try to find each other.

Horizons in the Mirror

Tangled hair spilling laughter
younger you wandered in
with tomorrow at your fingertips
and resurrected today
for me
with my horizons in the mirror.
Child-like folly to believe
multi-wanted you
might really want
me
who is your vice versa.

The Author

Norm Hitzges holds an A.B. degree from Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, and will be receiving his master's degree from The University of Texas at Austin upon completion of his thesis in sports journalism. He has financed his education by turning his hand to whatever employment was offered, from common laborer to teacher, reporter and sports broadcaster. He has played semiprofessional football and is currently advertising director for the Toros, professional football team in San Antonio, Texas.

[CONTINUED FROM FRONT FLAP]

There are many lines in these verses that express an idea so aptly that they etch themselves on the reader's awareness. Looking back on the past for example, he observes that "even memory's out of focus." His description of torment might have been written by Sartre:

But in hell
there are no eyelids
to shut out light
or hold in tears.

This approach to life, typical of his generation, is in tune with the thinking of today's young people. The verse form, free and untrammelled by classic rhyme schemes and meters, is equally appealing to the rebellious spirit of youth. ISBN 0-8111-0410-9

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