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"An American Literary Christmas," "Drive-Thru Life," and "The Point"

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3 Poems
By Mark Harris

AN AMERICAN LITERARY CHRISTMAS

Mood: The first native storytellers would describe matter-of-factly the supernatural in the story--the Virgin birth, star, angels. And the animals would most likely talk, not moo or chatter.

Plot: The explorers, of course, would be the Magi on a mission, With just the reverse goal of the Spanish, French, and English: the *Kings* traveled to worship the *child* they found and to give *him* things.

Setting: The Puritans would find the meaning beneath the pageant, with Christ occupying center stage, the loving parents and adoring Magi rightly back, foreshortened.

Props: Enlightenment thinkers would fixate on the gold, frankincense, myrrh, and the gold. They might, Franklinesque, criticize Herod for not treating people, e.g., baby boys, with respect.

Theme: Good-citizen Sentimentalists, amidst alas-ing for what-was-not, would find the moral in Mary's situation, also pointing out that Joseph wrongly assumed a fallen woman. But his soul-searching makes good subplot.

Character: The Gothicists, the Poe and Brown crowd, could have a ball

examining the recesses of diseased minds, such as Satan's.

But atypical protagonists Mary and Joseph didn't go *toward* the fall.

Moral: The Transcendentalists, those easternized explorers, would exhort us to emulate the Christ-child. After all, as plot facts show, we conform to *Him*. But for Emersonian self-reliance, no room at the inn.

Dialogue: The Local Colorists would capture the 1st-century Aramaic speech.

And they'd of course minutely narrate and describe each

detail of the stable, mud on the innkeeper's arm, frown on his face, etc.

Cause and Effect: Those sour Naturalists would have a tough time; how to pretend that what God ordained was all chance and fate? No class taboo either, with the King of Kings being born in a stable amidst low-life shepherds.

Denouement: Modern enlightened pessimists would say it's all a symbol.

But the more cummingsly-optimistic ones might see the event as that rare search for meaning that comes up full.

Conclusion: those happily insane postmodernists love this story
i mean, it's so absurd and surreal that it must be true
Who could/ would think/make it up

DRIVE THRU LIFE

Driving through the streets of town,
a quiet, cosy hum coming from the highway
a couple of miles down the road,
like a bird my car glides in
from the residential section of town,
as first stop signs appear; and then stoplights
start to replace them; the houses thin out,
and trees stand back safely on the banks.

Then the trees part for the concrete jungle:
towers of neon and bright color, fast color,
shrieking color manifold reds, oranges,
browns, and golds (no greens) on
fifty-foot signs!

The words on the signs are short enough
for me to drive right thru and still read them.
(First a forest of woods, now one of words.)

Every restaurant has a drive-thru
if inside isn't fast enough for you.
My car follows the lines around the curve,
stops in front of a garish and informative menu,
and the speech-fast speaker squawks,

selling me a meal with a luring name.

I'll settle on a #3.

It occurs to me that my meal is a number.

Banks have them, burger joints, pharmacies too:

You can get 5 twenties, drive-thru, and a prozac refill
without ever leaving your car.

What could be better? What's next?

Drive-thru school?

Pull up to a window at 7:45 a.m., pick up your work,
and ask for some fries with that algebra?

Drive-thru church?

Pull up to a window at 11 on Sunday, give some money
for some guilt-relief, and ask them to monster-size it?

Drive-thru marriage?

Pull up to a priest on Saturday in June & ask for the combo:
a spouse, 2 kids from a previous, and a side of personal baggage?

Why am I sorry that my number has come up?

THE POINT

We all come to it, be it
via the walls crashing down
around us, or the bright light
focusing our first sight.

When viewed in perspective,
it all comes to a point
the background and foreground,
the lines, the design
draw to a point.

Foreseeing but forestalling,
the Welsh poet missed the point.

Don't rage against the dying
of the light; see
that the light's out.

A great height isn't the point.

Ascending to the Alps apex,
look down. Your bootstraps
break, and air's beneath
your feet.

Picture that air.

The point dawns

that *you* don't

Let there be light.

Mark Harris