

The New Criterion

Poems June 2017

West Chester Poetry Conference

by George Green

Walking south on South Church Street

Staring at Samuel Barber's house, alone
at 1 a.m., I think of *Antony*
and *Cleopatra*, his monumental flop,
an absolute fiasco at the Met.
The notices? They slaughtered him completely,
and so he sat desponding in the dark,

down for the count, unable to compose,
a wretched alcoholic in Mount Kisco.
But melancholy only purifies
my desperate love for nighttime Pennsylvania.
Capering back to the dorm with chocolate milk
and Dunkin' Donuts (Josh isn't here to drive

me out to WaWa) and totally amped to be
here at the form-and-narrative jamboree.
For form I have this blank verse growing looser;
for narrative, the hermit and the shipwreck,
the battle and the wood, will suit me well.
(See *Rambler*, No. 4.) And here's the house,

or mansion, of Claude Rains! Regrettably,
The Lost World, his worst film, is shown about
a hundred times a month on Spectrum cable.
Lizards with horns glued on their heads chew dolls,
while Jill St. John, in fuchsia stretch-pants, screams.
Claude must have been ashamed to leave this house

while that stink-bomb was playing at the Warner,
fearful that some acquaintance might forget
that he was, after all, only a puppet,
and not the puppet master, Irwin Allen.
As for tonight, I'd like to make a statement:
Given that I am wide awake and sober,

and everyone else is fast asleep or drunk,
swinishly drunk, it's indisputable
that I'm the true Novalis of the conference,
the groom of death and night, left at the altar.
It's Moi, Mimi and Me, under the streetlights,
loving the broken sidewalks and the trees.

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This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 35 Number 10 , on page 24

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