

CLAIRE.

An ugly, inward child
coltish, long-limbed, long-faced
with flesh unrounded over bone,

Claire would twist and grimace
as if naked on a stage
beneath unwinking stares

Whatever eyes looked at her
became glint-steel binoculars
her own eyes in the mirror were the same

Came the magic year of change
no one enjoyed her metamorphosis
from gawk to beauty more than Claire

Who belled at nightly balls and swept
from beaux to beaux in triumph,
living to exhaustion's very edge

As if she dreaded -- as she did --
the beetle-dream that gripped her still
the one where boys bent sun-rays

Magnified through giant glass-shards
that cracked and burnt her shell
and as she feebly dodged them

She heard loud laughter ringing
sharper, shriller, till it blended
with the agony of light

AS LONG AS SHE DOES NOT SAY 'I LOVE YOU

As long as she does not say, I love you
you owe her nothing

if you disentangle yourself coolly
she may never say it

and if she does, give her good reasons
why this love is impossible

in that way you will always have her
and you will never be had

remember that time when you first saw
your own mother had rejected you

hur't slammed the door on your heart
so hard it stuck there

POEMS BY FRED COGSWELL

PROS AND CONS

When we wanted the same things at the same times
the fact that we loved each other doubled
whatever it was that each of us had
as the having-joy glowing in us both
merged with out equal delight in giving

But now whenever she wants something
at the very time when I do not want it
or whenever I want something at the wrong time
or whenever either wants from the other
what theother does not wish to give

The fact that we love each other
makes the situation doubly bad

If we were only passing acquaintances
our differences could be easily passed over

There'd be no reason then for either to give in
or if one of us put a price on whatever
it was that he or she wanted from the other
such a thing would not break like a nightmare
through the other's dream of love

What we both need is the art of flexibility
and the knowledge of when to apply it
so that at the right time we are lovers
and at the wrong times acquaintances only

Good actors always respond to their cues

But I'd rather stick in the mud
of a solid misunderstanding than admit
that what we have is merely an act
when every nerve in me cries out that it
is the only thing in this phoney world that is real

IN DEFENCE OF ROSARIES

what if I choose
to talk to myself
by finger-touch
on coloured stones?

meanings that my hands
assign their shape and texture
recur more true
than any sound

and God Whose stillness
speaks as loud as noise
will understand
my private prayer

and listen to that part
of me which dies
a dumb fish' beached
on a sea of words

OVERHEARD IN THE METRO

I

...and the man who made
my baby-sitting son cry
by saying things to him about me
that he never dared to say to me
may yet become a dean
before he lives, if ever...

II

"No one hates me quite so much
as Julius does."

"What did you do to him?"

"I let him steal my mistress
who then left him of her own accord."

Fred Cogswell, who was born in East Centreville, has been a professor of English at the University of New Brunswick since 1952. As well as publishing Fiddlehead Poetry Books his works include: The Stunted Strong (1954), The Haloed Tree (1956), The Testament of Cresseid (1957) (translation), Descent from Eden (1959), Lost Dimension (1960), Star-People (1968), Immortal Plowman (1969), One Hundred Poems of Modern Quebec (1970) (translation), In Praise of Chastity (1970), and A Second Hundred Poems of Modern Quebec (1971).