

The Conflict

“The Conflict,” subject of debate today --
Antagonism and dichotomy.
We see it, not in what the writers say

but how the writers’ people act, or see
the world (and life!) through their fictitious eyes.
A poem without it would be incomplete.

Is there some pattern to the way they write,
pre-planning how the story ought to go?
Or could they all be equally surprised?

We study hard for classes and we hope
that someday we might find that rhythm, too,
that ties our fleeting thoughts into a poem

that says it all, and more, and serves to prove
our merit as true poets -- not just good
or fine, but shows we’ve spoken with the muse.

But easier that each iambic foot
be jammed into my mouth clear to the leg,
than any sense and structure could be cooked

into a savory stew that I might let
another sample -- from my brewing pan
or serving platter -- let alone digest!

Yet still we practice writing, knowing that
the practice makes it perfect, if the “it”
means skill, and not the magic. And we ask

to what divine committee we submit
our manuscripts when all is done -- or what?
Is this, my Critic, my antagonist?

The others who might say “not good enough”
I have misnamed “the enemy,” but all
they send me back to do is polish, cut --

Not for me, not against me, only naught.
But I have looked undaunted at the void.
The greatest lesson any teacher taught:

To chase my demons out through every voice.
Antagonist, protagonist are now
revealed in my imagined fears and joys.

And having used up every other vowel,
we turn to see the subject of the day
resolved, yet, for new readers, still unfound.

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