

The Lesson

Derek Ignatius Asirvadem 14 Apr 2015
After Henry Lawson, per *Sweeney*

So often I remember, 'twas the middle of September,
and he was teaching mathematics.
He had quite a temper, they will tell you, any member
of his club of little lunatics

I would hold up a textbook, then behind that a vex'd look
and in-between, Asterisk !
I never saw the duster flying, all I knew was I was crying
where is my Obelisk ?

Now the doctor says I'm okay, but if not for the tourniquet
I would've bled out and died.
My mother talks of murder, or she'll get a court to order
that they tan his blessed hide

But our old headmaster who thinks his thoughts faster
has got the gate good and tied,
while I sit here in detention with *him* (need I mention ?)
wishing I had never lied

When the year had ended, my pride and bones mended,
I was over mathematics,
not from hate but more from fear, as maths was very dear,
but not as dear as my tricks

Over maths I chose Latin, even though the class I sat in
had many speech-affected
dra-ma queens, who'd al-ready been
summarily rejected

The first day anticipated, shoes shined, breath sated
with the smell of new books,
we awaited our new teacher, he'd probably be a preacher
but prayed for a nun with looks

A voice marched up the quadrangle, the language was quite mangled
but the sound was sweet
Oh, it's *Julius Caesar !* Recited ! By a *master*
not some queer in heat

The fear came to the fore, as the thought down on us bore,
that voice, it made us groan
Our mathematics master ! His knowledge, it was vaster
than we had ever known.

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- 1 Having been inspired by our great poet, I sought to replicate his method, with original content. The source is the Holy Spirit (*inspired*).
 - Rhythm as a ballad in quatrains, heptameter-tetrameter, alternating
 - Two rhymes on the heptameter, thus *aabaab*, ie. the rhyme is elevated above the rhythm
 - Traditional ballads generally have less rhymes *xaxa*, as such, the rhythm is relied upon
 - Separately, most stanzas are linked, and most rhymes are double rhymes.
- 2 Although I was enrolled in ACU/ENGL104 English Literature at the time, nothing from that course was used in the creation of this work. Indeed, I rejected the post-war education, which allows prose as "poetry", and allows literary cripples to be labelled as "poets". I relied on (a) my pre-war colonial English Public School education at St Thomas' College, Ceylon, where Latin and English Literature were esteemed, and (b) fifty years of reading poetry.
- 4 I use the ancient method of writing poetry, and that to the ancient definition of rhythm and rhyme. I do not employ the grid that is used by Modernist slaves, I am articulating the English language, not seeking words that will fit into in a physical matrix. I am a Roman Catholic, which by definition, is Anti-modernist.