

Shoes

“If you're afraid of a journey, don't buy shoes”

-- Mark Strand

These shoes are warped smooth at their soles,
their heels pitted, inside edge of the left
rubbed wrong, as if one leg dragged the other
in misdirection. I'm in need of another pair
for the journey--not new, more barely broken-in.
Marked down at your local *Goodwill* will do,
worn with walking, but not worn down--
shoes of an old man who had no more intention
than that they gave wear shuffling along
hallways of the hospice with his walker, to be left
behind, as all footwear from the funereal rite,
the dead going ahead stocking-footed (Let mine
be ungodly bright argyles!). The shoes of a Jewish
gentleman, perhaps, who from childhood
heard of the storied shoes of uncles who suffered
Buchenwald--their shoes placed along the wall
before the showers, toes to the wall, as if they might
be slipped back into, pointed toward eternity,
to be gathered up with bags of shorn hair,
their shoelaces hastily withdrawn through eyelets
as if to shouted orders, leathery tongues *ah ah-ing* out.
Not go-to-synagogue shoes, but sturdy shoes.
My journey has been shortened inconsiderably;
I don't expect I'll need a further pair.
And not for walking down the aisle! I'm not father
of the bride, though I'm looking to meet the Bridegroom.
And I want American made, if not too much to ask.
Perhaps that in-need-of-polish pair you're wearing now.
And I am afraid. I'm afraid, and I'm walking in fear.
But if I have to go without, I'll walk all of the way without.

By Chet Corey

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