

*The rear-guard action that holds on
To Time. Not disseverers. Not moderns
Only; but remembering. And uniting,
What runs lost, and loose -*

HERSHEY THE MOTOR CAR HARVEST

By Charles Barnes

Come! October - hushed and mild -
You orange pumpkin rolling days,
And the calming air.
With the harvest heavy around us:
Bid us to your Hershey fields.

Wherever you are, leave it all behind!
And take the old road out -
Across the country far as you need -
To this celebration: to this Mecca land
Of the motor car.
So it's far from California, or Kansas.
Or up from Georgia, or South Carolina.
I myself have come from distant places, same as you.
Whatever you're doing, it can wait,
Perhaps longer than you can. The family
Won't miss you too much. Get out
Of the office, lock it, or the factory, forgetting titles
And position, the usual arrangements
And burdens, the same old traps,
Set aside the status, and all that's new.
Let the hired hand, run the farm.
(It's only for a few days.)
There's a train that goes to the Harrisburg exit,
And I'll have someone there waiting for you.
Before leaving - a notice can be put up:
"Back - after I've seen again
The beginnings, the best we ever made -
To see with my own eyes. And before
We were allowing it to get away. And slipping."

Out here - Here's the rebirth, a moving shrine; to rummage
And plod along stuffed attic dreams.
Voluptuary days. Come - you grand labors
Of men earnest in their work. (From
All corners and conditions) before you, too.
Were a casualty to the great war.
Clusters of enterprise competing
In excellence and place.

Forward, not farewell! You Marmons,
And Model T's. And Duesenburgs indomitable,
Never again equaled. Made in a small Midwestern town.
You astonished the world. They still do.
Roll forth, you dear Packards for
All seasons. The most loveable dignity
That ever moved.
And Pierce-Arrows for men who knew,
Who look back to Cromwell - for
America's plain aristocracy. Those forgotten.
Not the noisy new. Return, you wheels
From General Motors' emerging dynasty,
And Walter Chrysler's triumph.

Back - you men of impassioned idolatry:
You who are given to - are reverencers
Of materials - (what goes beyond metal,
Glass and wood frameworks.)
Bring your old parts to complete some
Man's restoration. This old iron
That anchors you to a steadier world.
And seeing the present more clearly for it.
Hear the engines: some as a quiet clock ticking,
Turning over; or in ghostly hush;
Others with anger and dragon smoke:
Taken together, the obligato to it all.
And wheels were your choice, in wood, iron spoke,
Or steel disc. That spun to a different fortune.
Primed, and painted, pinstriped, and
Almost perfumed in a bright dancing
Revolution over America.

And now great fields are fitted and arranged,
Almost thrown in an endless heaped up sprawl -
Level after level, ridge upon ridge.
Where lanterns are lit in the sheltered night, reveal
Faces of men and women open in their affections
And concern. A great central, disparate, but

Unifying interest. A few days of easy laughter and support.
Noisy, garrulous, scheming.
And desiring something. Perhaps to settle a deal
Away from the light of day. Anxious, with
Impatient interest to have it done.
Further over, an occasional campfire
Rekindled as from a former bivouac, pressing,
At war with the present? Some
Wheel running down. Whirling
Out of shape.

By day - the walk unto exhaustion,
Going at glimpse pace, head side to side,
Taking in, - the teeming rows of offerings.
Cars of all descriptions and types.
If it's old enough. And parts enough to
Start a manufactory. Hub caps, radios,
Engines, dyneto's, tail lights, lap robes,
Vanity cases, tires, owner's manuals, books, old maps;
Parts that perhaps no one still alive
Can identify, or maybe understand.

But you, walking past -
I've seen you before. We've met one time
Or another. Did you arrive needing nothing?
Or you? Something down
This endless maze you will
Find. Something you will recognize as
Your own or what somebody you loved
Once owned. Did you bring a wife? A woman.
Will she understand the midnight ritual
Of returning here? Predawn risings to seek each year
What you have lost or are forever engaged
In finding. Or perhaps she's at home, and altered,
No longer comes with you or are apart and it's changed all
Your days. Apparently you'll have to move on.
Maybe not. Anyway, there's a neighbor
Of yours; he's also here, perhaps bartering
With, exchanging a brass headlight, for one
Made of chrome or nickel.

But the skies are turning overcast -
And if the rains come down, and it's muddy going
Like in the trenches once more - it will cling to you for
The rest of the year - and others will know where you've been.

Everywhere the seekers, and sellers.
Free enterprise spread out on the lawn.
All this stuff of . . . it has the burnished glow
Of dying pride. Hoods and fenders, the fit,
Has its reflection in the sunlight.
This event out here -
Can this Hershey continue? A veiled goddess
Out in front - or towering above a rubble field;
That itself has caused such rubble.

Motor cars, and trucks, campers,
And modern vans converge around
Multicolored tents (of yellow and white; blue and white,
Or red) with their flapping fringes. Staked deeply
With rough, brown rope. Here the Middle Ages
Merge with California glitter. This progress
We measure, cannot be the treasure, for its revenge
Creeps along the night. What is it
We're trying to get back to? Have we run out of future?
Hesitant to go there without some of this.
Here, historians,
Here's how the runaway age might end:
Not on wheels of hysteria - but somewhat saved:
Salvaged in nostalgia.

But the past retreats, gets away
From us. We watch it anxiously through
Our growing children and the grayness.
Sometimes a worried chant repeats;
Will this all continue? Already it changes,
The weight of the sameless present
Imposes upon the waning yesterday. And we
Waken to rude differences.

Amidst the throng and thrash of the
Newer generation of cars now
With a legitimate place established here -
And you may have to go further,
To see what it's all been based upon -
But here in the fields, entering upon their presence
The power of vital life about them:
Are the open touring cars.
Almost baroque - the grandest of them,
Like cathedrals to enter -
To see the world from a high seat.
Here, the strange, familiar sweeping giants
That our grandfathers somehow built.

Almost mythological they seem -
From a gigantic America. Sweet servants,
That almost look at you with a will
Of their own. That needless complexity
And whatever is latest today will not overtake.

Under their high arching cotton roofs
Braced by hickory - are interiors lined throughout
With leather; side pockets built into each door,
A symmetry of gauges in front - not the veneers but
Matching hardwood compartments in back. Withal,
An airy spaciousness almost large enough
To live in, while touring your daily world,
Or going around it. Made open to scoop up
The ready air, the odors - and the riches
Of the earth. And at night
Those grand lights searching the romance
Of the open road forever.

Today, some manufacturers produce cars
With the option of skylights, or tops that
Go down. They too can work. Gets part of
The effect. Still, most are to envelop,
Envault, seal out the elements, ignore or
Disdain the outside, the external world.
Someone else's. And some part of the
Eternal one. The highway has grown smooth
And straight and something disappears; evaporates
As it covers up more each year. Settling it all.
As a mask upon one's travel.

But however near to it you get -
However you go in this country,
Whether young, and just moved in to a new house
With every latest well-placed convenience;
Or your final days in a rest home;
Whether framed by a cramped apartment dwelling
Or you look down from the fastnesses
Of castle walls:
Part of this old land pulls at you.
Pulls, to be reestablished beyond a parting ripple
To the past. Not only inside a moving envelope sent
Where? A parcel en route? Hoping to go
Again, beyond the clouded threats to nothingness.
Beyond what for so many years is said to have
Kept the peace, - and, the fullest spirit
Of mankind locked in. Until it functions

In fragments. The pull
To get up, and leave the graveyard
Beyond the nuclear, the great humbler
Girdling the earth, where we have been wise and sober
In our cradles hungering.
Hard to get much done from there.
Not much milk and honey.
When the country is not built according to our best spirit -
Covered over; annoyed, trifled with; that doesn't go
Out to the romance needed for the higher reality
That nourishes ideals. Sweet balance.
And great dimensions of life. Large public
Undertakings, and gallant private
Ones as well. Inspired by kingly dimensions
Of democracy. Out to what will always be there;
Needing us in this enormous land of ours,
Needing to be whole.

Do we meet here to travel our own road?
To feel it, the bumps and turns, and gravel
And dirt; and mud and grease. Rounding
Past the old scenes still there. Let it
All exist. - The pulse of the land
The running air - and all, - over
The meandering landscape. To know
The road, and not say these overtures
Are through as any wind that blew.
That the pumpkins grown to orange moons
Reflect upon our labors yield; and the wild
Withering corn nearby tall as our hopes.
That the lonely pilgrimage across the
American land has more meaning than
We can say: some reunion, something restored in gladness.
And that a way - as churchmen may
Sense at times to the furthest recess,
There in that cloistered region where they
Most deeply live - stays open for us.

The author Charles Barnes, whose works have been read near and far--also wrote The Foretelling of September 11 which, is, in his book, Moon of the Remembrance, and, that, followed by Strawberry Lane /and other Tales of Youth (a route to the future) both of which can be obtained by calling the author at 917-373-2143, or 860-684-4156, or to write CWB, Box 93, Munson, Mass. 01057