On Slim Whitman and How Irony Entered the World

Christopher T. Keaveney

Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/glcsfac_pubs

Part of the Poetry Commons

DigitalCommons@Linfield Citation
Keaveney, Christopher T., "On Slim Whitman and How Irony Entered the World" (2018). Faculty Publications. Published Version.
Submission 2.
https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/glcsfac_pubs/2

This Published Version is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.
On Slim Whitman and How Irony Entered the World

• The river only looked red on paper.
• The river only felt red from a distance.
• The river only sounded red in Spanish.

To sell more albums than the Beatles
as the infomercial asserted
seemed more curse than blessing,
but then so too did the shuffling
of shoes from the dance floor,
heard but not seen from the stage,
the yodel
yes yodel
that he refused to be defined by,
the pencil mustache that served its purpose,
but no more.

The crooner can’t remember in which city
tonight’s hotel is located,
reckoning only
the warmth on the pillow that might be Memphis,
simple irony to one
who shrugged off the blues.
The between-song repartee always swings around to
the obligatory anecdote about
having to bum an overnight bus ticket
just to record two songs
in a midtown Manhattan studio,
hyperbole that may have sounded better as the
ending to the second verse
of another unfinished song about heartache
than as the justification of the journey itself,
the de rigueur metaphysics
of the train’s whistle.
Take for example the red of the sun,
a conceit in the bridge designed
to somehow make the inevitable parting more
palatable but less real.

Short of the river
nowhere ever really came to feel like home.

Christopher T. Keaveney