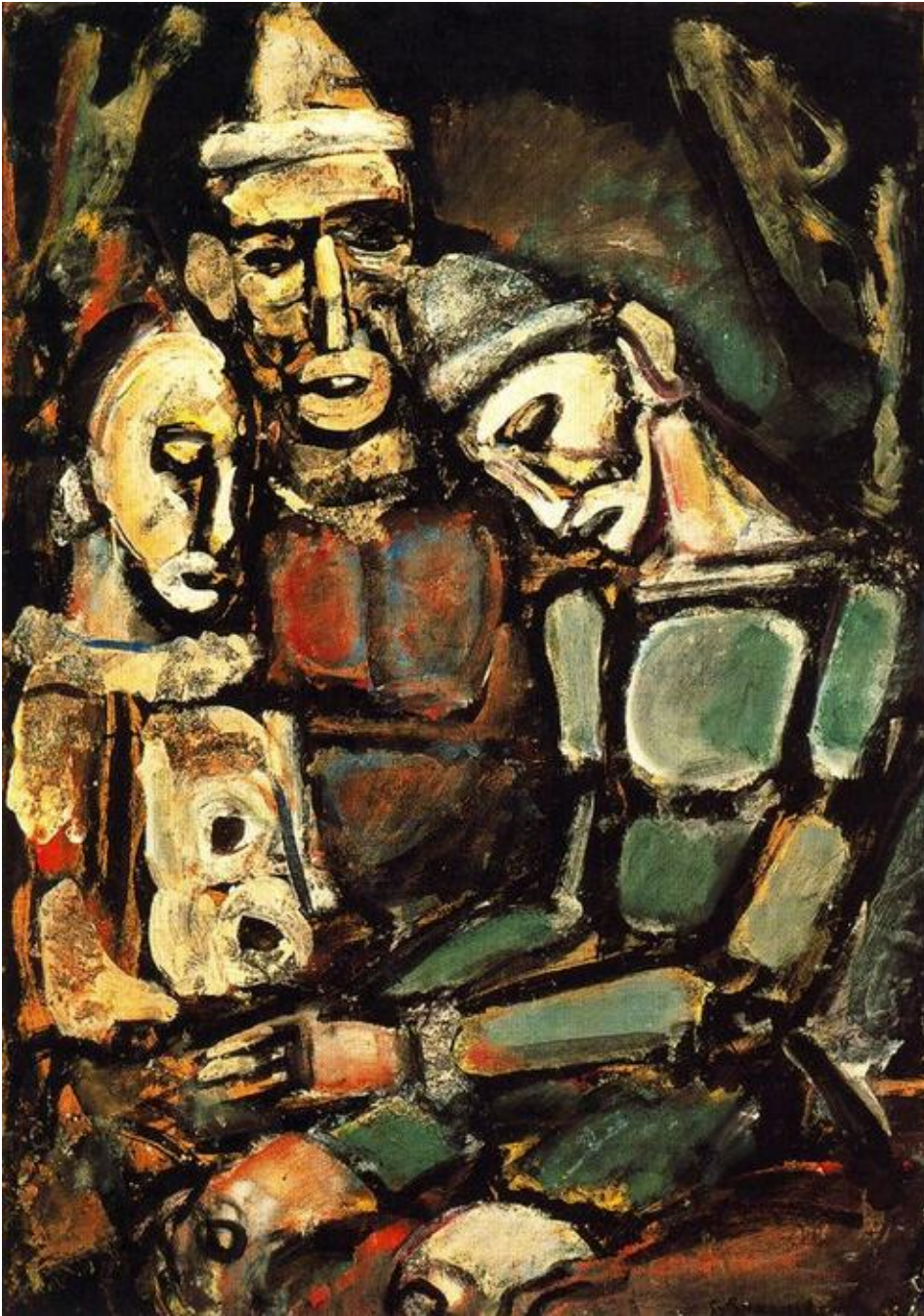


# The Critic's Prayer



Three Clowns, Georges Rouault

*Not all that is thought need be said, not all that is said need be written, not all that is written need be published, and not all that is published need be read.* –Menahem Mendel Morgenstern of Kotzk (1787–1859)

Master and Maker of all, who has graciously positioned me to opine, accept my appeal.

May kindness ever be my keynote;  
may I judge others fairly and favorably.  
May I ever offer criticism incisive and insightful,  
trenchant but not mordant.

May I strive to foreground quiddities,  
to remove dross from metal and chaff from wheat,  
to skim off the scum; may I take up  
the scalpel, never the axe,  
and chisel precisely, proficiently,  
as if my very life relied on it, and neither  
abrade with pumice nor gride with grindstones.

May I transcend the cesspit of pettifoggery  
to attain higher registers,  
and keep far from petty vendettas  
unbecoming my best self.

May I be gentle and slow with reproach,  
fast to confer the fragrant garland.  
May I never indite anything to which signing my name  
would engender shame.

May my critiques be given with the intent  
to meliorate, not deprecate,  
lest I transgress and refute Your faith in me.

May character be my guardrail  
and conscience my seawall;  
may my tongue cleave to my mouth  
if I fail to upraise decency above pride.

And if ever I should fail to uphold principle,  
may You hastily nullify thoughtless words  
and blot out of existence both them  
and the hurt they surely caused.

Blessed are You, Master and Maker of all,  
who gifts us with discernment and discretion.

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Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 300+ publications in 32 countries.

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