

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
Volume 12 - Number 4 Summer 1962

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THREE POEMS

Reply

A bottom log rotting
in March-Spring
is soft tugged
from stiff earth
beneath a pile of wood.
The sight startles
my winter eye:
albino ants pause
black beetles sleep
a crescent grub tenses
we are all caught.

Am I fooled or do they
for an instant clearly stand suspended
before scurrying through
their roofless corridors.
A glistening worm withdraws
but not until a pulse puts erect
that calibrated tip
to tantalize my glistening eye.
Punk soggy, the log replaced
will celebrate in warmth
this last reply to winter.

John C. Hoy

The Cows

Cattle shift their morning
weight and stiffly rise
throwing necks to stanchions
as if to break a nightmare.
Saliva stretches from yawning
mouths to the manger's stone
and ancient shell
where its working lifts
the soft grain smell,
the heavy taste of paradise.
Heads that wait their turn
stretch ball and socket
of mooning brackish eyes
and work upon the gnawing
threat of hunger in the dark.
Each one's clean and rasping tongue
is strong
enough to raise an arm
or toss a tawny cat.

*An amber light spills
upon the milk of dawn.*
Huge rolling bowels
loosen the quiet sleep
within all restive beasts
who hoarsely heave their deep
and humid breaths
while mouthing cud
whose stalk and chaff
is last night's hay. The dew
melts the whitewashed walls of stone
to inside shades of blue.

The air is freshened
by the steam of dung.
Flies get drowsier
than the wistful hands
of milkers swift to catch and crush
their buzzing somnolence.
The sound of cattle lowing
is deep with promise.
At the stroke of hands
and hollow buckets rattle
the milk drops firmly,
the teats enlarge.

John C. Hoy

Bagging Time

Hands, gloved in soil,
swing from evergreen
to evergreen, wrestling
the best like royal
weights to the surface
of the earth. Hemlock
pulled like healthy teeth
from these fecund gums
have first been cut
by steel spades, five slices
round and sprung
from the ground
by oak handles whose fulcrum
is a source of weaning.
The suck of the shovel
is raucous and final.
The roots bound

make a cold and shiny pack
of the black earth,
to be balled in burlap
tied and trimmed.
The hard bite of winter
has been softened,
sluggish worms arouse,
and some savor of new green
spreads the cuticle of spring.

John C. Hoy

TO MARVELL'S CHARIOT

way away the trains go.
something without ears
is hearing
something without wings
is no longer where it was
above the city.
above the city
you cannot see the nighthawks
but the eyes of alley mice
with a white wing-tip are washed;
those, blessed in a sharpened moment
closed and quick swept up!
way away the trains go
moving off on a metered track
unconscious as the ticking stars—
something without wings.

Ed Roberson

DON JUAN SAYS FAREWELL, 1962
(His Year to be Sincere)

Oh my dear, they *all* are doomed, all the
Star-crossed, flag-decked, hen-tracked, gem-
beblazoned,
Sweat-streaked Loves. All will wane and die
And fall in wrinkles, like a dry tea-bag.

Love begins to wilt beneath the blaze
Of streetlights, to shiver in chilly doorways,
To become bilious on buses and
Bloodshot at breakfast. Any heart
Must surely quail before voyeur desk-clerks
And prurient cab-drivers, and bare
Skin begins to prickle in the rhythms of
Strange beds. Hymeno Hymenea.

Each succeeding One has wrapped me in
A clinging silk cocoon, a chrysalis
Of musked scents, cleavages and clefts,
Binding blankets, button-bitten fingers,
Curling hair and hairs, freckle-finding,
Long and languid lunches, rumpled raiment,
Moist ear-filling sighs that thicken tongues,
Mammaries taut in elastic cups,
Scented shower-sweat beneath a robe,
Palpation of hard nipples and soft thighs.

The passages of a carnal maze,
A gummy trap, a fibrous gin that I
Must rend to pieces with a flaccid blade.

There is a waxing finality in
Each *post coitum triste*. (Do not blush,
My dear. Latin was once a tongue of Love
In spite of Ovid and Catullus), a

Wavering in the first-learned, favorite stance,
 A febrile abhorrence of stained sheets
 And the cold slide of contraceptives;
 A shrinking from the stubble of her hot
 Oppressive haunches as she shifts and snorts
 In sated sleep, my substance caught between
 The thighs that will, at last, conquer my loins.

No, no, do not say that Love to me
 Is only as the caged agile apes,
 Careless of orifices, practise it.
 If I were prone to images, cunning
 Little *mots*, I could compare a Love
 To a compost-heap that lies and ripens
 'Neath the passing rain of years until
 Amid its reeking mass, bright blooms appear.

But there have been no blooms for me.

Only the fondling of a thousand breasts
 That sagged into my hands as years drew on.
 Only a morning tally of the liver-
 Spots that tattoo hands like mocha scars;
 Only careful work with brush and dye
 To cloak the head's emergence from its pelt.
 Only an indifferent assurance
 That all our heady vows and protestations
 Are no more than an insect's chittering
 As it goes about its raspy coupling;

That my tiny tumescence must retreat
 Before the smallest whisper of the air
 That lies in wait for me outside your bed;

That none of it can have the least import
 Beside the lustral cycles of sun-spots,
 The lunar debenture that holds the sea;

That we, poor quivering mites, are clustered on

A ball of warmth caught up in a galactic
Royal Progress; scrabbling on a gobbet

Of dung as we squeak and eat each other;
Poking here and there with eager paws,
All unmindful that we live in filth.

And so, indicative of where
I once began and soon must end, I wish
To lie alone in darkness, blank and warm.

Robert L. Smith

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

The peas that I planted too late in Kansas
Leaped to the light, into it, through it.
They were all extension; they never thickened
In stem enough, or darkened enough in leaf.
An inch a day at the least, and then blossoms
Not the plump popcorn of proper blossoms
But something like bits of the shabby wings
Of cabbage butterflies dead of butterfly age.
The pods hardly formed. Then the sun, good servant
Of peas in their time, became the bad master
Of peas that were late. The stalks went paler and
limper.

Shortly, the mildew that lurks
For peas that are late, came sneaking up from the
ground

Stem by stem, and quickly finished the job.
I, in some sense responsible
For making peas prove they are not salamanders,
Can do nothing in restitution but notice
That the ruined vines make excellent metaphors.

W. R. Moses

ODE ON A CHIMU BEERJUG*

Here in the chaste museum's quiet air,
 We find you like an ugly color-plate,
 Savage pathologist, who can still declare
 The noisome end we try to deprecate:
 What case of typhoid gave your maker sight
 Of mortal deities too small to see
 Upon the sickly seacoast you came from?
 Whose yellow eyes? Whose introverted fight?
 Whose hot and sunken cheeks? Whose wasted fee?
 Whose blocked esophagus? Whose coated tongue?

Real maladies are bad, but those unreal
 Are worse; so wet your pipes, drink up,
 And numb your senses till you feel you feel
 No pain from gazing down the empty cup:
 Lost youth, when bottoms up, you cannot grieve,
 And song, though foul, can pass the time of day;
 Booze-lover, never, never can you kiss
 A girl whose lips can numb—Let beer relieve;
 It cannot fail to simplify the way
 Your world will wag, though never bring you bliss.

Ah, happy, happy jug! who helped men shed
 Their thoughts, and swiftly bid their wits adieu;
 And happy squaw with hand unwearied,
 Forever brewing to replenish you;
 More happy corn! More happy, happy corn!
 Forever turning sour to be enjoyed,
 Forever yielding ethyl alcohol;
 All sober human passion brought to scorn
 By that which filled your long-enduring void
 Shaped like another void which thirsts for all.

Who are these coming down the marble hall,
To gaze in horror, pubescent and scrubbed,
Then giggle, helpless in the horror's thrall,
Each like a spider that a wasp has rubbed
Before it stings it paralyzed? What right
Have you to frighten them who never need
To fear the typhoid or the typhus' touch?
Since, silent jug, your mask is kept from sight
And children hardly know that they must bleed;
If plastic never bleeds, can they bleed much?

O Chimu pot! Baked attitude! with rows
Of careful pustules running down the face,
Where fever's glaze sits on the shiny nose;
Your stoic teeth still grip the human race
As does maternity: Cold comforter!
Whose ravaged face the generations blink,
You shall proclaim, in spite of better drugs
Than ours, the end of man: to live to err.
Knowledge is pain, pain knowledge—loath to think
Such things, they seek their beer in other jugs.

John A. Taylor

*The pottery of the Chimu and neighboring cultures of ancient Peru often portrays deformed and diseased persons, often so realistically that physicians can easily now give a diagnosis.

TWO POEMS**Cultural Pursuit**

After Bach and Bartok
 In the elegant salon
 The tea was brewed with alum
 And Mme. Jerusha McCallum
 In the fuchsia hat with the crocheted bumps
 Said she would take two lumps
 And a slice of lemon.

A benevolent daemon
 Poured another gallon
 Into the chased silver samovar
 And Mrs. Hamilcar
 Tapped the spigot with a tapered talon
 Releasing a stream of tea-tinctured alum
 Into the cup of Mme. McCallum.

Among the plates of nuts
 And sandwiches and toffee,
 Dispensing coffee,
 Sat Lizzie Hereford Butts.
 And we paused to ponder how to reach Mrs. Butts
 And the nuts and the toffee,
 But most of all the coffee.
 For the line wheeled erratic
 In its orbit round the table
 Now swooping toward the coffee,
 Now redoubling at the tea.

*Be sure to notice
 The exquisite cloth,
 A pink lacy froth*

*Which Mrs. Pigley Otis
Made for the occasion
With her own two hands!*

We started for the coffee, then, suddenly,
There was Mrs. Hamilcar
Saying "Cream or lemon?
We've just run out of tea."
And I looked at you and you looked at me
And the accommodating daemon
Brought another acrid gallon
For the silver samovar,
Poured in a muddy brew
That looked a bit like coffee
With a clouded pekoe hue.

Three lumps dropped in a bitter cup
In the elegant salon
Before the time was up
And Mrs. Pigley Otis and Lizzie Hereford Butts
Folded up the tablecloth and softly stole away.

Will they come to pour for us
Another day?

Jeanne Prahl

Prayer on Leaving a Bookshop

Meltingly titled, bound and priced,
New books of poetry in paper covers had enticed
And drawn me in
Among those patronizing Viennese inflections once
again.

I scorn the snobbery of the proprietor
But love his books.
I matched his looks,

Ready to flip my dollar into his till.
 But first I had to choose.
 I snatched the first book, neatly done in blues.
 The poems were set upon the pages
 Like pastries in a bakery case,
 The type a pleasing face, the margins ample.
 The second book and third were much the same.
 I scanned them greedily to find a sample
 Of the poet's peculiar voice and song,
 Aware of syntax, image, symbol,
 On guard for levels split or blurred,
 And looking, looking, looking, looking
 For the word
 To make the apparatus come alive.
 He didn't get my dollar after all.
 I do not hope to see my lines
 Set and bound on any shelf.
 They might be fistfuls of flowers
 Picked in spring fields
 At the obscure demands of loving and keeping what
 is loved
 And brought to Thee, inadequately,
 In a child's grubby hands.
 But, Lord, grant me to write
 Surely, if only once,
 With grace, music and light—
 The balance of moving, motionless blue dragonflies,
 The instrumental phrase to which the voice replies,
 The colors of a city summer evening skies—
 And seal what I have willed:
 That no love dies.

Jeanne Prahl

THE BODY'S SLUMS

The body's slums are boundless,
No suburb teeters crazily
Into green or odorous innocence.
We slip all day through
Its dangerous alleys, walled
With eyes and stemmed with verbal
Centuries.

 The city is a cradle
Rocking sunless flowers. It
Bears no arms in the route
Of seasons,
 rumored and forgotten
Like a broken bell.

Tender splash of windowplants,
Rootless weeds like brushfire
In the backyards, are meager
Myths amid the walls that grub
Hosannah in the chapels of decay.

Paul Zweig

THE WITCH OF TUEBINGEN

*Concerning a moon mastered, and a fall
of a craft of dream. Concerning great Kepler
and his fond mother. Mandark over all.*

Mortal sprigs, wand-conscious boys! thin curse and
amen

rack their sleep. Can they wake—men?
They listen to dreamers. And boys of Tuebingen
knew Johannes' mother, old tale-teller and bearer
of a cup of tin, riddles, charms, and sweet syrups.

She told them:

We'll master the moon in the muttering sky.
It sits, inviting. So we'll sit high,
throned and wise. And troubles will pass by
all the boys of Tuebingen."

Then came believers' unbelief:

Boys, boys, when averse
to demonic inventions? to caches of curse,
stolen apples or pears, incantations, and an old claw
(poor devil's) for keepsake. Sly, they gaze
down on sight beneath sight. They whistle spells
to lead them through the fields that bloom black bells.
They see vision's flaws.

But Dame Kepler saw
no flaw in the gaze, in the mote-ways, of her boys.
Hearty boys were her delight. She watched them
preen:

skipped stones, prime movers, on the springgreen maternal surfaces.

Did they plunge to view
 miscreant morrows? If not they, their doubles
 plunged,
 lunged in forbiddens, daring to try
 lands laid past each glint in a parent's eye.

Half fauns, Pan's pretty boys, they knew
 — by undercurrent of the flesh — universe
 seamed with sinister. And O, plotted sky
 with rumors, moonwild!

Moths mated flame. Who knew
 seam's sisters? Listen, any witch can undo
 belly-plump pleasures. Midwife fingers, too,
 can unbutton navels — that cost them no sin,
 because they make Old Harry grin.

Fear drummed. Look sharp, the boys said. By
 and by
 they learned of a woman who gravelled male waters.
 They clutched at sources. They knew itchy nerve-
 spin
 of fate, provoking. They retched at amen.
 How sharp-eyed was Dame Kepler! Could she spike
 the eye of unsuspecting heaven?

A hearse
 Doom-cornered the horizon. But she told them:
 "Doom? The next room. Some go, some
 stay here, happy here."

She gave the universe
 many rooms, and, rattling her cup of tin,
 went to heal the town.

She had good wares. She offered them
 fresh herbs, sweet syrup, gossip — and her son's
 "Somnium,"
 his sky-riding Moondream. But townsmen laid her in

THE BADDIES

Carefully stepping around the bloody messes
 we find in history books, as on the streets,
 we utterly disown them; such excesses,
 furors and manic heats

are way outside the scope of excellent
 and normal you and me; large madnesses,
 like wars and massacres especially,
 no one acknowledges.

In fact, we doubt that the worst evils are
 people-performed at all; instead there is
 this flock of large birds—ravens, possibly—
 of fierce and sickly twist,

who specialize in such; with reptile blood
 and wicked eyes, they swoop about committing
 the dirtier inexplicable deeds
 humanity finds ill-fitting.

They are the rascally crew who brain the babies,
 run slaves, hunt witches, lynch, betray and loot,
 hold inquisitions, roast and disembowel,
 and generally act the brute.

Thus by close maneuver do we snatch
 our pieties away from ugliest crime;
 impersonal, anonymous, the birds
 are baddies; but in time

take on official status, seem so much
like faithful public servants or trustees,
that we begin to think of them as hatch
of public rookeries;

forgetting in our shifty scramble that
these vicious flocks can only be refreshed
by dark things flapping clumsily away
from private cuckoo nests.

R. E. Sebenthall

COMMEMORATION

Old gipsy woman swathed in shawls you bend
Shifting the candlesticks in muffled prayer
Not understood by anybody here
Except for God, perhaps. Not me, aged ten—
“Booba, why do you light these candles?” Flame
Begins to live, at last she turns to hear
Her grandchild. “When they light these everywhere
M’shiach will come to lead us into Zion.”

Safe and aloof, from silver candlesticks,
A blue heart at each core, stream up the flames
As steady as my burning faith not hers
Which wavered when I heard her telling sums
Schnorrers borrowed in pence over the years:
“I’ll get my money—when M’shiach comes!”

Philip Hobsbaum

OF STARS WE WANT AFFECTION AND DESIGN

Of stars we want affection and design:
Staring by night at multitude and mass,
Mere bits of lint upon that purple robe
Abandoned in the track of time, we pass

These bleak reminders of the throne and crown,
Relics at rest in this museum sky,
And wander through ptolemaic galleries
Seeking in clouds an exit for the eye.

The Greek, who saw his heroes fixed as stars
And knew the hand behind the black, divined
As Hebrew, who heard passion in the sky,
A correspondence between world and mind.

Cracking our skulls against the universe
We cry for passion in a silent night;
Our pain is all we feel; our rage the noise
That shrieks across the galaxy in fright.

We cannot budge a single star or gain
The ear of any solar audience,
And so turn inward, while out there we see
Eternity of dark indifference.

In stars we had affection and design
Now swallowed in the depth—how ludicrous
To turn our heads, to ease our hold on stars,
To let God slip so far away from us.

Stanley Solomon

NOW JONAH AWAKENS AS AMBERGRIS

Graceless longing, oh hallowed unremembered (since
I harrowed hell through jet-juiced joy that spumed
from the heart of the whalespout, love, in times
before

I foundered on the reef of doubt, dared plummet to
the start

of death) so now I stretch beach-like sprawling
into ocean to make Canaveral a cape

to cover me the way you did: clasped
to my neck, you jiggled your hips like a red rag
stiffened by a stake to arouse the horn of plenty
lurking beneath the bull's spiked beard, my love,
and now I remember the sea-night you rode me
astride

rich spray and made night buck
troughs into razor-edging rage. The broncoing sparks
of unseating asteroids seethed, leaped from the loins
of the rocket-like recoil of an escaping squid, and I,
cinched and surfboarding seaward on my back, hell
fire

and brimstone shaved back my public pubic pride:
you lathered me beneath your breasts like lava
soaked upon Pompeii and hit the shattered
beaches and made sand storm into a swirling cry:
remembered still is the wilding dream that struck
like a scalping party of nightmare commandos,
featherbed

Apaches who snuggled me through spongy capes:
then brightness spattered on your breasts, seeped
against your scorched sighs and earth splashed
against pelvic rocks as spray thrusts through warm
Bahama Keys, buried bait meat leaps. Breasts
like sand dunes in the moonlight were horned mines
strewn

across the floating avalanche of night, I laughed,
 and sand
 and pinwheel stars reeled.

I was born in a parachute
 drop behind the lines of an unknown enemy,
 I was launched on a night raid and hit the beaches
 at my birth from an LST:
 but ambushed I was in a deluge of sour grape
 when I bit the pin of the hand grenade off and tossed
 the breast back.

Count ten and pull when you take the leap,
 for tied to the booby trap, beneath the dunes,
 canopied flesh opens with a pop and drops
 you down to earth under a mushrooming cloud of
 soggy flesh. Plop.

For tu es petrus, the pelvic
 rock upon which my steeple, church and cradle
 rocks and jumps to a conclusion just like a closing
 parachute. Yes, yes, the mistral of remembered
 time and lust still sways the palm fronds of
 my flesh and the swollen fruit—rock-shelled
 and hairy
 as a head shrunken in the Amazon—thuds
 to earth and cracks open against these knee-capped
 sheets of time. (Harrowing hell on toes spread
 like the storm-gripped roots of an ancient tree,
 the monkey's
 tail was no longer limp enough to curl
 around the springy limb, my legs long
 peninsulas and like Florida dangling into pale blue
 waters,
 a phallus as a state of suspended animation dripping
 atolls of milky light, pearls on a key chain,
 a watch fob of phallic wonder they call the Florida
 Keys.)

Retriever-like, tick, tock, time
 returns in the memory to act, tick, tock,

as the hung phallus pendulums forward to tick
 again where time had stopped before, tick, tock,
 as the wet Labrador Retriever in the loins bounds
 onto the banks of soggy flesh, tick, tock,
 and time stiffens as she strokes the dead duck
 the dog brings back, tick, tock, and the grinning bitch
 happily flaps its tail to be back in time
 as she winds up the clock, tick, tock, dead in the
 whale's womb,

lost in a storm of wonder, trying to submerge
 from tick and stop tock in a submarine: click, clock.

Dead time gave the whale ptomaine and
 indigestion, and the fetus
 playing possum ripened like an egg vomited
 out in a menstrual rush. It's time for a change
 of life.

I tried to find life out of time,
 Jonah said, running from ticks to dig myself
 into eternity. Life stopped when time
 stopped instead. The clock in the vacuum cannot
 count. Beyond time, there is nothing, not even
 a vacuum. Eternity is a deep
 freeze where you are kept intact to roast in hell
 later as you are roasting here. In the meanwhile
 is eternal: eternity is the life in death
 of time. Tick, tock. So vomit me, as time
 trapping the submarine in moving tick,
 tock strokes the paralytic back
 to life. Tick, tock: time swings like an ax. With each
 stroke of the pendulum, fire one, fire two, tick, tock,
 torpedoes crack from the ripening cocoon.

I was deceived, Jonah cried, there is nothing to
 hide from, all life
 takes place in time. Eternity in the whale
 was the vampire's bloodless wrath.

I was the vampire

trapped in the whale's womb of coffin, Jonah said,
but I am free again now that eternal night
has opened on the world. Alleluia, God is dead.

You have harpooned the stone stake into my
heart and brought me back to life, she said.

The coral-reef accretions in the shrunken-head
coconuts
count up, tick, tock, and remind me to blast out
of the coffin on Canaveral: then from the tip
of Florida a rocket burning liquid fuel
spouts skyward out of my whale-howled, whale-
boned hide:
once again I am corseted between your sand-storm
knees
remembering, remembering, living plankton swirling
past
the porthole of the bathysphere. Doubter of all
living, I sought solace beneath the ravined sea.
As a fetus, I found death orbiting through timeless
space in the belly of the driven whale, a woman
ticked without tock. But lust is time rooted
in eternity.

What alloy of tittering love and aloes'
laughter will solve the problem of re-entry now,
keep the cone of the nose from burning up,
smearing the night with skid-marks of stars as it
disintegrates across our galaxy widening like a womb
at birth? (Between the memory of desire and
thighs, pilot
and co-pilot of this commando raid I make
to return to life beyond the reefs of dream
and vanishing reality where I was lost, my flesh
photographs your face beneath my orbiting
desire, called back to life by you and what
I lost: and this is the tick, tock, bleeping message
my antenna spurts back to earth): once I was
in love and it turned out to be only lust,

the rust of stars, a laboratory smear across
 the hag-ridden reef of a rusty sky. I longed
 to hit the moon and did. There, love
 is also the same as lust, my love, the stars
 are only sties.

Grunting, now I am stretched
 beyond breathing space with this cold comfort for
 company:
 such rutting knowledge have I wrenched from my
 landing
 in this world, an amphibious dream, neither fish
 nor fowl,
 dreams born in a frog pond, hatched on a lily-pad
 placenta now to crawl upon the land
 to live, to die. For centuries I fought
 to find what the frog knows from its first savage
 croak. Between pond and piddling power, the beach
 traps us till we die, a beast pinned down
 between the landing barge and the beachhead of
 sunken hope.

The beach is mined and blocked by a hymen as thick
 as a welded bulkhead, an airtight bunion supporting
 tons of sunken sea. Pry out of one
 into the other and seaward drift until
 I drown. What lies beyond the beachhead? Another
 pond, another bulkhead hatching freight
 on still another inland lily pad.
 I chose to founder in the lung-fish silt instead.
 In fifty thousand sea-leagues of centuries,
 I have staggered one step forward from the low-
 tide waterline.

My world's the beach, but this I know:
 inland is marshland and more of the same I left
 behind. Here I settle for nothing less
 because launching-pad lust is all there is, in fact.

But you, my dear, are a lily-pad pelvis launching

pad, and I, a minuteman socketed beneath
 earth's crust, a push-button threat ready to be
 launched
 at the notice of a wink. I'll pry upward from my
 mastery
 of sea and swamp, for those flights of sparrows
 zeroing
 in your eyes, those asteroid freckles on your forehead
 are
 a threat of growing desire I see swarming
 across the dew line of your smile as you lean
 into my mouth to kiss.

 So I laugh and launch
 myself, strike first to avoid the holocaust
 of being stricken dumb. The mushrooming cloud
 then rises like a snort from the hornless hole in the
 whale's
 head, the empty cyclopean eye
 harpooned out of Moby Dick's white back: and when
 wild
 delusions of reality disappear in squid-swirls of
 sperm,
 I wake.

 On my back, a milky mist spouts
 out of Moby Dick and arcs skyward to rainbow
 my naivete. Ahab's spear
 and the spout's spume are the same, it says.

 Come back
 to earth and live with me, she says: my message
 is the same: the deeper Jonah dives,
 the more he must be free. But I blow back
 into your dreaming snout the message you bleeped
 back
 to me: the quarter moon's a scimitar
 of mildewed cheese and, like an iceberg, disguises
 only more of what is visible above

antarctic seawrack freezing hard, a broth
of frog's eggs that poaches into ambergris in the
waters

of my womb. Throughout the universe, love's all
the same. Moon or no moon, this universal
law holds and the sword swells like a pregnant
woman hoarding an iceberg fetus beneath
my ice-capped push-button bevy button, love.
Mounted me, you are the stark peak of the iceberg
that is spied from beyond horizon's height. The
pinnacle

rears high above my reach, yet is rooted in this
moving

bed, this ocean, omnipresent and protean,
and the surface of ocean is my skin: thrust
beneath my ravined thighs, the greater part
of you lurks like a miner's pick tapping
its blind man's glowing forehead towards veins
of red gold. The gold's in you, the dream
is you, the smelting vein is you, my love.

So earthward bound, for the dreaming flesh
that longs

for light is you, my love. Ride Aaron's rod
into the underworld and find my knees bent
upward in a juggler's act of adoration,
balancing a votary of sweet cruelty on kneecaps
blunted like a seal's snout. Love, come back. Love
on the moon is lust on earth, and light on the moon
is pale glory reflected from the selfsame dying
star, the selfsame tithes of light control.

Sperm of the spout is ambergris vomited
by a lovesick whale: be whole and take both in me.
Smear'd with the vomit, sweat transforms the
curdled

milk of belly ache into sweet perfume,
the selfsame tidal light controls the universe

of sleeping lust, the universe
of waking love.

In her arms, Jonah then flexed
his legs out of placenta sleep, curled his eyelids back
and woke with a startled cry. She sucked the mucous
of birth from his mouth with a clinical kiss and
slapped

his bottom to make him howl. Pull the pin of the
loin-lobbing

hand grenade, he said, and woke to the world through
the belly of the whale, the time-bombed whale he
then

re-entered in a different way.

And Jonah has been howling

ever (since.

L. C. Phillips

TWO POEMS

Michael Soloman

She sleeps around, a kind of virgin tart,
with a gritty pallor caught in Provincetown
and looks at you out of twin grease-pits
streaked with blue oil and green.

She's a real fun girl, with flesh like pale
 leotards and hair the colour of butter.
 She drinks Scotch-and-coke and likes music,
 particularly Segovia and Odetta,
 and says she does not know which she is seeking—
 a truck-driver with the soul of a metaphysician
 or a metaphysician with the soul of a truck-driver.
 I'm the first Jew-boy she's ever had,
 she says. Her breath is like a ragged syrup
 and she bites like the Devil, but being,
 I guess, a devout Christian, calls upon
 her Lord by Name at the moment of her orgasm.

Paris Leary

Cousin Belle Prescott

Rising

Early, Puritan as a Yankee, Cousin Belle
 consumes her hotcakes, syrup, sausage, grits, and
 biscuits;
 notes the new dead in the *Times Picayune*,
 has a bowel movement, then retires exhausted
 to her tester bed to aim at two o'clock
 for bathsalts, dotted swiss, and summer jewelry,
 cold chicken, and the curate's call at four.

Mounted

Annie Lee who's worked thirty-six years
 for Cousin Belle says that when Cousin Henry
 was still alive he'd come in from Bistineau
 smelling of fish and whisky and take Cousin Belle
 (just back from the Woman's Department Club)
 standing up against the highboy, to which
 fairly regular performance Cousin Belle
 submitted with gusto, but not removing hat or gloves,
 every inch, by God, the perfect lady!

Weary

She props her breasts up on Mamma's rosewood table
and with an elegant acerbity says, 'Crap!'

Tipsy

Cousin Belle regards herself in tiny fragments
of the gleaming cut-glass decanter which belonged
to Great-something Uncle William Henry Harrison
and Great-something Benjamin Harrison, and deals
a hand of solitaire, *Olorosa* running
through the suntan powder on her neck and bosom.

Receiving

Cousin Belle gives me orange sponge-cake
and pineapple sherbert, and we talk about
Harnett T. Kane, whom she likes, and Faulkner,
whom she does not like, and her Negroes
whom she desires passionately to protect against
exploitations by Northern Communists and teachers.

Retiring

Annie Lee kneads lanolin like lard
over every inch of Cousin Belle at night,
combs her hair and brushes it one hundred strokes,
and Cousin Belle, turning off the attic-fan,
removes her teeth, belches, falls asleep at once,
smiling in the silent dark at randy dead
young Hank Prescott who was such a heller.

Paris Leary

ELEGY WRITTEN IN MONTPARNASSE

It was August by the time I got around
to holding memorial services
for Ernest Hall Hemingway
who had died in Idaho
where the Styx is called the Snake.

These services were of my own devising
and were held daily for a week
in the Select, the Dome, the Coupole, the Rotonde,
along the Boulevard Raspail,
and on one occasion in the garden of the Ritz,
which—it says in English—is reserved
for guests of the hotel.

The Snake runs swift in Idaho
and broad through greenest hills.

This last made me split a gut
because present were Marcel Proust, Edith Wharton,
and the golden, broken boy who died
in Sheila Graham's ritzy arms
and lay in the William Wordsworth Room
of a Los Angeles mortuary.
The hotel was so clearly the guest of them
and the obsequies were performed by the dead.

The Snake swells wide in Idaho
and tumbles bright on rock.

The Select, the Dome, the Coupole, the Rotonde
were the scene of more homey gatherings
and once the mourners were distracted
by an Arab with a bear upon a chain
who capered upright with a tamborine.

The Snake foams white in Idaho
and speckles shale-grey shore.

Lorn Urania did not appear
nor any sisters of the sacred well,
yet a harmony of dissonance
somehow somewhat loudly swept
the taut, discordant strings.

The Snake, pine-ridged in Idaho,
brooks not the willow hoar.

The Misses Stein and Toklas
 assisted at these rites
 as well as many others—
 S. Anderson, R. Lardner, G. Wescott, T. Wolfe,
 M. Twain, Jack London—in general those you
 would expect,
 and although T. Eliot enquired of the waiter,
 “*Le service, est-il compris?*”
 the others overlooked the breach.

The sinous Snake in Idaho
 runs black as blood beneath cold stars.

Three soldiers from the appropriate war
 occupied a table in the not enormous room,
 and although I was appalled by the intrusion of
 a delegation
 from Southern California—Ethelbert Nevin,
 who yearned to kiss the cross, sweetheart,
 and Carrie Jacobs Bond who found a corseted repose
 in Forest Lawn’s Immortal’s Hall—they explained
 that it was they who got him his Nobel Prize
 and gave him back his middle name.

The Snake will freeze in Idaho
 and come to silent winter stop.

It was a fine company, all in all,
representative is the word,
 and I thought him laid to decent rest,
 though well I knew in Montparnasse

That Snake must thaw in Idaho
 when aspen trembles coined with spring.

John Stewart Carter

THE ORDEAL**For John Kirsch****1.**

Now I have proved my innocence.
Look, not a blister on my feet, though I have run
Almost since the rising of the sun
Across this field of coals.
Vague as a dream now are the shining knights
Who watched me from their horses, and the ladies
Who grew on both sides of the lists like flowers
And sighed encouragement. The king himself
—Arthur perhaps, I can't remember—smiled
From his high seat, yet that, too, like a dream.
And look: not a blister on my feet.

Now I have proved my innocence. My feet
are cooling now
In this soft grass, deep and green as a river.
Here is my wife crying with joy
And my tall daughter and my tall shy boy
And all my friends, the old ones and the new;
The whole visible pattern of my life
Surrounds me with congratulation.

Now I have proved my innocence,
Proved that I was not mad or heretic.
I told them so at daybreak when they watched
My shoes unlaced and my bare feet
Blue in that cold dawn light, when the steam rose
From the glowing field and draped the lists in cloud,
And I said good-bye to Samarane my horse
And wished I had those hooves of his.
I knew my innocence, felt it as I would feel
A sword slip through my stomach. Oh, I knew

My innocence, though all of them were shouting
Guilt.

Then, when my feet touched the gentle grass,
I heard them all shouting my innocence.

2.

And then my heart turned grey like a cinder,
For then I knew my guilt.
Green grass is my guilt, my old wife is my guilt,
Daughter, son, friends, calm twilight; all, all my
guilt.

Somewhere back there among those coals I lost
The innocence I was defending;
Somewhere back there my burning innocence
Smouldered away, and I can no more find it
Than I could cross this field of ashes now
And hope to burn my feet,
Hope to sink down in the flames and perish.

3.

Tomorrow they will take my tall shy boy
And strip his feet and tell him he is guilty,
And standing naked in the bitter morning
He'll look at me and say,
"Father, what should I do, I am not guilty,
I have not merited this punishment."
"Run," I will say, "run like the wind"; and my
old wife,

Holding my arm, will tell him, "Run,"
And his bright sister, crying, will say, "Run."

And he will run, and in my heart of hearts
I'll hope he goes insane with fear,
I'll hope he trips and falls, swims in the flame,
Screams like a winter wind and dies abominably,

So that the ladies turn their faces and
 The shining knights frown and the king cries out,
 "Guilty."
 For then my son I'll know your innocence.

4.

My father, buried in your marble tomb
 With my dear mother lying by your side
 On that green hilltop where the robins sing
 All through the year;
 I know now what you could not tell me, what
 I cannot tell my son: things we must learn
 In earth's own time, crosses that we must bear
 In hope of crucifixion.
 And I must keep this from you all,
 My wife, my friends, my good horse Samarane,
 And frown like you on madness.

Oh my son,

If you should triumph, please forgive your father:
 I think this weakness is forgivable.
 And I am punished by my mere survival:
 Sanity has its own revenge
 In the thin darkness this side of the grave.
 Look son, look father, look, now I have proved
 My guilt.

Look, not a blister on my feet.

Richard N. Ringler

THREE POEMS**Jim Crow**

As if from neons, this land sunk beneath
the axe and tire glows by night from fires
on a distant shore. Crowds shuffle in
thoroughfares, the young trot in gutters black
with rain. I watch you, a lover, pull away
unclimaxed, and turn beneath a pool of stunned
spores to remake by heat of nebulae
a valley we shall never journey to,
never in this night.

From blackout continents a rooftop apart
We see dawn push night off the naked earth,
a pulsing flood. Rigid, shining, half erect,
the thing of steel on which they have nailed him
and themselves together starts upward with
the sun. Lover—girl—child—we are
among them, as always, but if we speak,
can steel turn flesh?

Allen Planz

The Dive

Scissorkick down.
All color
blueblack, weight on weight,
ash in the blood.
Sinuses boom,
puke on the tongue
stings.

Coming up, vision clots.
Images beard, smoke.

Minutes after, ears ringing,
thinking of senility's
avalanche:

If the deep does entire
what one dive did
a little.

Allen Planz

The Young Marrieds

The T-shirt rips and skin curls from
under her nails like a burning doily:
his fist unknots, but his open palm
puts red in her cheek as no blush can.

Later and earlier, she is delivered of
babies and years, while he struggles from
a dream of manhood. Alone, they come
together through the fast and the fire.

This then is marriage: between them,
a beauty no blow can break, no child
can displace, and no poem can sing.

And this: pow! And this: zip! and this: ssss!

Allen Planz

IMITATIONS. *By Robert Lowell. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$4.50.*

The problems of the translator of poetry are legion. There are serious questions in the minds of many poets and scholars about whether poetry can truly be translated from one language to another at all. One of the most interesting new attempts in this field is this collection of 66 poems from Greek, Italian, French, German and Russian which are "imitated" in English—not translated. The spirit of the original was Lowell's guide, not the actual words. Are they successful? Sometimes yes; sometimes no. But the method does offer a new avenue of approach to a tremendously difficult problem and an interesting additional facet of Lowell's considerable talent.

WHEN FOUND, MAKE A VERSE OF. *By Helen Bevington. Simon and Schuster. \$4.50.*

What is the raw material from which a poet fashions a poem? There is no simple answer to the question, but Helen Bevington provides us with some helpful clues in this happy book. It is a collection of odds and ends from reading, experience, observation, travel and a dozen other sources. There are notes from a hundred sources jotted down for future use. In many cases that future use turns out to be a poem, usually brief and almost always delightful. They call this a "commonplace book." No name could be more misleading. It is a rare gem, indeed.

POETS OF TODAY VIII. *Scribner's. \$3.95.*

Since 1954 Scribner's has been issuing this unusual series. In each annual volume, three young poets are presented together in their first book-length collection. The economics of publishing might well make their separate appearances impossible. The current volume features Albert Herzing, John M. Ridland and David R. Slavitt. Herzing still seems too much concerned with the pure techniques of poetry. When he lets himself go, however, he often succeeds very well indeed. Ridland's collection, the most personal of the three, involves the reader deeply

and quickly in his emotional responses. Slavitt is clearly the most accomplished of the trio, witty, critical, intellectual and highly musical. But despite their individual short-comings (due mostly to youth, one suspects) the three poets are well-worth reading and the series one of the most note-worthy ventures of its kind.

THE ESTATE OF POETRY. *By Edwin Muir. Harvard University. \$3.*

For many years the so-called New Critics dominated most of the comment about poetry. Led by T. S. Eliot, they interpreted what poets *really* meant and put a scientific stamp on what poetry *should be*. In the last half-dozen years, a serious revolt has developed. Surely one of the most reasoned and sensitive voices in this reaction belonged to Edwin Muir. This collection of the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures delivered in 1955-56 (just three years before his death) is Muir's most eloquent plea for the reader to return directly to poetry without any pseudo-scientific apparatus between him and the words. It is a delight to read and places Muir in the front critical ranks. Archibald MacLeish contributes a brief and useful Foreword.

COLLECTED POEMS. *By Hugh MacDiarmid. Macmillan. \$6.50.*

Hugh MacDiarmid (actual name: Christopher Grieve) is one of the most original poets of our century. Yet he has been virtually unknown in this country. He is a militant Scots Nationalist who often writes in one or another of the dialects. He is passionately concerned with social problems and is a devout Communist. Yet he can combine both of these usually lethal factors (for poetry, at any rate) into wonderfully moving and spirited poems. His verse snaps and boils with fresh imagery, impertinent questions and blazing compassion for all those who suffer injustice. In short, he is unquestionably Scotland's greatest poet since Burns and it is fine to have him, at long last, available in so carefully chosen and representative a collection.