

**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 unweariéd,  
 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,