ELEGY

Her face like a rain-beaten stone on the day she rolled off
With the dark hearse, and enough flowers for an alderman,—
And so she was, in her way, Aunt Tilly.

Sighs, sighs, who says they have sequence?
Between the spirit and the flesh,—what war?
She never knew;
For she asked no quarter and gave none,
Who sat with the dead when the relatives left,
Who fed and tended the infirm, the mad, the epileptic,
And, with a harsh rasp of a laugh at herself,
Faced up to the worst.

I recall how she harried the children away all the late summer
From the one beautiful thing in her yard, the peachtree;
How she kept the wizened, the fallen, the misshapen for herself,
And picked and pickled the best, to be left on rickety doorsteps.

And yet she died in agony,
Her tongue, at the last, thick, black as an ox's.

Terror of crops, bill collectors, betrayers of the poor,—
I see you in some celestial supermarket,
Moving serenely among the leeks and cabbages,
Probing the squash,
Bearing down, with two steady eyes,
On the quaking butcher.

LANCASHIRE WINTER

The town remembers no such plenty,
under the wind from off the moor.
The labour exchange is nearly empty;
stiletto heels on the Palais floor
move between points of patent floor.
Sheepskin coats keep out the weather.

Commerce and Further Education
won't be frozen. Dully free
in snack bars and classrooms sits the patient
centrally heated peasantry,
receiving Wimpies like the Host;
striving to get That Better Post.

Snow on the streets and Mini-Miners
thickens to drifts, and in the square,
from grubby plinths, blind eyes, stone collars,
the fathers of revolution stare,
who, against pikes and burning brands,
built the future with bare hands.
TO HIS WIFE

Composed of shadows and damp clothing,
the setting you have left
for me to write my poems in
(having yourself taken
to bed) is witness of your deft
devotion to my downfall.
I must be all for you: loving or loathing—
and either a full-time job. You crave
every preoccupation,
detail of thought not being your care
provided you are there.
Surely tonight, of all nights, when passion
has heaved bodily overboard
any suspicions we had that the other gave
less than we gave ourselves, you might
have left me to do my writing
uncumbered by this array—
the effort of your washday?
Whose very shadows, jutting, butting,
menace my desk and hand—
familiars of your sleep, daring me to write
of anything but you. This token
of servitude then: a poem
made in your image, despite
my wish to spend these night
hours as though this hearth and home
knew none but me. A state
in which not the merest whisper of you need ever be spoken.

ALEX AT FORTY

I find him in the spare room,
curled on a mattress on the floor,
another over him. His face
is pouches, he snores amidst the reek of beer.

At ten in the morning, still flat,
with last night's revelry curdled to
a nasty mouth, he opens pig-
eyes on a crumpled suit, a new day.

Blearily to our fire (there's nothing
owing) he comes to make his peace
on stinking feet. My wife is polite
but disapproving. He coughs, he hems and haws,
abject and arrogant by turns.
Apologies twist his mouth like insults:
he laments his squandered gifts, his thirst,
family pride, guilt, and all Celts—

but borrows ten shillings. Half inclined
to doubt my job—the monthly cheques
with which I pay the bills, I buy
a poet's share in the dog-rough fall of Alex,

who leaves at eleven: Opening time.
I watch from the window. In the street
his step recovers its jauntiness.
My wife serves coffee, bitter as defeat.
EIGHTH MONTH

On the floor by the bookcase, potted in some fibre whose name I do not know, chubbily, amidst leaves of luminous green, a purple bloom illustrates the verb to grow.

Yes, as from a grammar; I do not care for it, and cannot pretend it is more than a useful prop to my purpose: an ease-in to a painful subject, a means to an end.

The brown earthenware jug with the roomy, booming inside, which I lift from the shelf to slow the poem, to take a breather, reflects a changed world, a view of myself.

I hasten to lose. The clock ticks towards birth; near it Uccello's "Chase", in faded photogravure, insists the permanence of Art, and brings me the face I had when I prised those pages free of their staples fifteen years ago,—silly with hope. Much of sadness cautions me from my purpose; offers the verb to grow.

Yes, as from a grammar. A limiting honesty with which to greet a wife back, splay-footed, from a visit, trundling a belly fit to burst (it seems) with new life.

THE POET'S AGE

It visits you at night. You have awakened from damp, barbarous dreams to this worse thing haunting the house in which your family sleeps.

You cannot see, or hear, or feel it, although the black becoming lumpy with your possessions, the small sigh from the cot, even your wife's delicate flank against your rough flesh, are terrible in its presence. You will not rise to seek assurance from your poems. Lying breathless with fear you know they were not worth it. You will not rise to smile upon your son. He is growing towards your death. You will not turn to find companionship; you had young loves, but that was long ago. You sweat in a staring silence through which the rolling planet speeds, you and that thing you jollify with birthdays, dignify with position, charm and honours, you and this lustful, ravening, killing thing.
LES MÉTAMORPHOSES DU VAMPIRE

La femme cependant, de sa bouche de fraise,
En se tordant ainsi qu’un serpent sur la braise,
Et pétrissant ses seins sur le fer de son busc,
Laissait couler ces mots tout imprégnés de musc:
— “Moi, j’ai la lèvre humide, et je sais la science
De perdre au fond d’un lit l’antique conscience.
Je sèche tous les pleurs sur mes seins triomphants,
Et fais rire les vieux du rire des enfants.
Je remplace, pour qui me voit nue et sans voiles,
La lune, le soleil, le ciel et les étoiles!
Je suis, mon cher savant, si docte aux voluptes,
Lorsque j’étouffe un homme en mes bras redoutés,
Ou lorsque j’abandonne aux morsures mon buste,
Timide et libertine, et fragile et robuste,
Que sur ces matelas qui se pâment d’émoi,
Les anges impuissants se damneraient pour moi!”

Quand elle eut de mes os sucré toute la moelle,
Et que languissamment je me tournaï vers elle
Pour lui rendre un baiser d’amour, je ne vis plus
Qu’une outre aux flancs gluants, toute pleine de pus!
Je fermai les deux yeux, dans ma froide épouvante,
Et quand je les rouvris à la clarté vivante,
A mes côtés, au lieu du mannequin puissant
Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang,
Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette,
Qui d’eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d’une girouette
Ou d’une enseigne, au bout d’une tringle de fer,
Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d’hiver.

~

METAMORPHOSES OF THE VAMPIRE

The mouth I longed for, like a heavy fruit
split in its over-ripeness, gaped above me,
breasts tipped by horny nipples rasped my chest,
and “Love” I cried, “Oh Love,” while in that cavern
deep in her flesh she sucked my life away
with merciless flexings, and the fruit swung down
oilyly dripping words like scented juices:
“Die further inside me, die my happy man,—
no need for conscience, I am first and last.
Salvation’s in my breasts, grasp at it, bite them;
God’s in my womb, thrust upwards to his light;
I’m planets, constellations, galaxies,
I’m birth, and death, and love, and day, and night!”

The fruit’s wet pith engulfed me. In a dream
I staggered the crazy beds of endless rivers,
thirsting to screams beneath a black sun,
and toppling, died amidst my empty veins.
I woke craving the fruit. Turning to kiss her
my parched lips met a lolling sack of blood
shaped like a giant doll. I fell away
through spinning drums of blackness, till the dawn
opened my eyes to the heap of dry bones
assembling by my side: a skeleton
that squawked three times, inanely, and was gone.
LE BALCON

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
Ô toi, tous mes plaisirs! ô toi, tous mes devoirs!
Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses,
La douceur du foyer et le charme des soirs,
Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses!

Les soirs éclairent par l'ardeur du charbon,
Et les soirs au balcon, voiles de vapeurs roses,
Que ton sein m'était doux! que ton cœur m'était bon!
Nous avons dit souvent d'impérissables choses
Les soirs éclairent par l'ardeur du charbon.

Que les soirs sois beaux dans les chaudes soirées!
Que l'espace est profond! Que le cœur est puissant!
En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang.
Que les soirs sois beaux dans les chaudes soirées!

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison,
Et mes yeux dans le noir devinrent tes prunelles,
Et je buvais ton souffle, ô douceur! ô poison!
Et tes pieds s'endormirent dans mes mains fraternelles.
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison.

Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.
Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses
Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton cœur si doux?
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses!

Ces serments, ces parfums, ces baisers infinis,
Renaîtront-ils d'un gouffre interdit à nos sondes,
Comme montent au ciel les soleils rajeunis
Après s'être lavés au fond des mers profondes?
— O serments! ô parfums! ô baisers infinis!

THE BALCON

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O thou, my only duty, my sole delight,
Thou shalt recall the wonder of our kisses,
Charms of the hearth, and those enchanting nights,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses.

Those nights illumined by the coal's blue ardor,
The balcony, veiled with a rosy vapor.
How soft was thy breast to my head, how good thy heart!
We said things, then, imperishably apart,
Those nights illumined by the coal's blue ardor.

How fairly sunset shone in the warm twilight!
How deep seemed space! How mighty the heart's flood!
Bending o'er thee, queen of the adored,
I dreamt I smelled the perfume of thy blood,
So fairly sunset shone in the warm twilight.

While evening thickened to a vast partition,
My eye would guess thine iris in the deep
Dark, as I drank thy breath, O sweet! O poison!
Fraternal, my hands would lull thy feet to sleep,
While evening thickened to a vast partition.

I know a spell will summon back those hours.
I live my past again when I clasp thy knees.
What good, then, to seek thy beauty elsewhere
Than in thine own dear body, in thy soft eyes?
I know a spell will summon back those hours.

Those vows, perfumes, infinities of kisses,
Will they be born again, surge from abysses
Closed to our sounding? Rise to a sky like the sun,
Young for ablution in unfathomed ocean?
— O vows, perfumes, infinities of kisses!
L'ALBATROS

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
Le naivire glissant sur les gouffres amers.

A peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.

Ce voyageur aîné, comme il est gauche et veule!
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirmier qui volait!

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

Helfrid Uggins, whom we take pride in introducing to an American audience, is "famis"—as he quaintly spells it—in England, and on the Continent as well, as the founder and guiding spirit of the literary movement known as the Cockney Renaissance. We gloss his exquisite translation on the opposite page, in reverent emulation of our elder sister magazine, Poetry (Chicago), which has done so much to promote and explicate the "Lallans" poets in this country.

The Editors

Gloss

Mucks in on, elects to join; cackanded, clumsy; proper chokker, really depressed; never mind, in spite of the fact that; roar, sc. with laughter; smashin, of attractive appearance; grim, ill-favoured; perisher, rascal, despicable fellow; tikes im orf, imitates him in a mocking fashion; longaired, artistic, creative; soups is copper tea, he is most at home in foul weather; gums up, renders of no effect; plates (sc. of meat), feet.
Robert Conquest

Three Poems

**EVENING IN APULIA**

Hours have passed. The sea-glow
Warms and deepens into dusk. Swallows
Flicker and dip over the harbour. And the sun,
A ripe, bursting flower, low on the Apennines,
Sheds on the paper an apocalyptic light.
But he looks back upon lines awkwardly stating
The elements of a problem.

The train at half-past nine
Pulls north into another life. He is not ready
For the waiting questions. For five years, or ten,
Let him lead the poem’s life
In the interstices of politics and horror,
The human sanity on its sandbank standing
In the rough rising tide.

And perhaps then
Proud, sensuous and sceptical,
A poem like a passionate sun may rise
From this small life to light an iron age,
Giving its independent ethic out against
Improbable messianic consolations,
The beast-cry and the sirening future.
Or, if not, still such failure
Is better than all the other loud successes,
And to have left inside the failure
If not the poet the free human,
If not the colossal poem for which an age labours
At least a few refreshing moments, the last sip of a flask
Supporting life for someone, somewhere
Until the sweet oasis. He can try.

**TWO SONNETS TO A THEME**

I. **AVANT GARDE**

He thought his singing could postpone disaster:
He spoke the thrilling formulae on love;
His tongue moved frightened down its secret groove
Clever with tiredness, nervously faster

Through fevers and horizons as it tried
To beat the images into a weapon:
Time was not on his side, it could but sharpen
Those blades of choice on which the hero died.

For though he was overwhelming at a moment
The enemy stood patient and would hear
Unmoved all brilliant and disastrous song,
And then evoke such immanence of wrong
As could forever with some quiet comment
Squeeze the last note out in a fist of fear.

II. **WASTE LAND PATROL**

And though wherever the horizons break
With a long gleam and flush of distant waters,
Long hours toiling down the stony wadis
Lead only to another Bitter Lake,
The salt, corrupted fluids do not bring—As to those other skeletons bleaching there—Delirium's green dews or parched despair, But moisten tongue and throat and let him sing.

That energies may flower in his will Forcing a challenge through his speaking action To move the double spheres that are and seem,

And enfilade us in some hidden skill With weapons forged from the real will and passion That poetry mines for deep inside the dream.

---

THEALOGY

*Homage to Robert Graves*

God the Father, brooding like a hen, Builds a good fug round chicken-livered men.

In what dry caves of Sinai, counting kine Lean as themselves, a patriarchal line Imposed their bearded mania on the sky? And what numb scholiasts would not let it die?

Yet poets have kept from that crass emblem's grip A sharper, wilder, bright relationship: Cool, glittering body, endless as their cry, Goddess the Mistress arcs across the sky.

---

Three Poems

*THE LAND LIKE AN ODALISQUE*

Messengers of spring, red, gold, and purple winged, are active now in trees. The storm is over, bits of the debris are relaxed as in a sleep and the land lies still.

The leaves once torn from trees, the shoots of timely plants lie now voluptuous in a lack of wind, as lies the land, still but expectant like a ripe mistress or a garden open to sun.

Like an odalisque overcome by the melody her slave-girl sings, the land lies in early spring. She sings of love that streams from pools overhung with trees, from flowers, fruits entwined around stone stems and walls.

She sings of love that holds the jar on the tiled floor where her mistress' garment is discarded and in folds, a love that makes itself known through a slave-girl's fingers expertly handling a lute.
The love she sings is expressed
through tears when a crowned figure,
burned and dark to cover up
his gentleness, appears
in a flare of sun like a dream:
tears that fall when the music fades
and when the world breaks in.

SOME ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

The scene: A Bathing Resort in Spain

A dark mist hangs upon the sea.
The change in sky is out of character,
and the weird behavior of the water.
Upset, the summer guests walk up
and down as if expecting news.

Large birds not common in these parts
are perched on tops of cliffs
where on more ordinary days
the bathers sit to dry. To relieve
this mood, the owners of
hotels have put on jazz.

A table-umbrella torn from
its metal stand, turned inside-out
by an abnormal wind
lies unretrieved
like a disaster out of reach,
threateningly distorted
on a shunned, a battered beach.

What has happened?
What monster has broken forth
out of some dreadful mind
to pursue a ghastly need?

What ill-distorted shape
that stalks now on the sea,
hissing behind the air,
driving the waves, fist
upraised, clouding
the minds of men like mist?

No one can tell
the happening beneath
the fury and the lifting fronts
of sea, how long this turn
will last, and what
will be revealed
when the disturbance ends?

Silently the strange large birds
sit perched on cliffs.
Their seeing eyes are sealed.

AN EVENING OF SACRED SONGS ON AN
ESTATE OF BIRDS AND TREES

A blackbirds’ flight in droves,
the dive of scavengers,
of noble birds with hooked
beak ready for the bite; the trill
of small birds on a branch,
wind whirling into dust
a blanket of fresh snow
obscuring frail trees of
a year ago: these
have little to show but
the movement they repeat.

The tenor sings of Herrlichkeit,
brings the Madonna to mind
in a church in Mexico,
the movement of more than a thousand years painted
in her ascension on the wall;
or a youth with golden hair
and golden wreath of leaves
dragging his boat up
a legendary shore, saying:
“For splendor have I come!”

Imagine while you hear these songs
a man with staff on his way
to the ruins where stood the city
once ordained by God. Then let
this essential pain invade you—
for the sake of movement, inward, out—:
of a wanderer’s momentous grief,
the devotee’s sudden loss
of comprehension, the knowing
spirits bleeding at his side,
suffering the full sorrow
he cannot yet accomplish.

Jean Garrigue

Two Poems

EPITAPH FOR MY CAT

And now my pampered beast
Who hated to be wet,
The rain falls all night
And you are under it;
Who liked to be warm
Are cold as any stone,
Who kept so clean and neat,
Cast down in the dirt
Of death’s filthy sport.

Christopher Levenson

Three Poems

THINGS

I watch in despair
The house growing,
Things acquiring
An air of permanence,
Furniture that clings
To the bare makeshift walls.
Each way I turn the bric-a-brac
Solid now and reliable
Hems in the past, seals off
All possible futures.
Souvenirs become
Our permanent setting,
Till like habituées
Of shabby waiting rooms
We outstare the gay posters,
Acclimatize to the dust,
Aware that the one solution—
Leaving—is long past:
We have become the decor.

And if they want to die
At the stake, in the pit for my sake,
Why then, I'll spur them on like fighting cocks, equip them
With tinsel and raffia, let the vermin
Exterminate themselves, yet call it
My inscrutable will.

This God exacts no belief and does not need us
To conjure him from faith. He cannot die.
He came before the fire that became our world
And will survive the oceans cooled to ash,
Surveying his handiwork.

THREE MINUTES ON POETRY

The microphone bobs towards me like a float:
At the other end of the rod in a swivel chair
The cameraman plays me, I am angled by lamps.
Then, cooped like a battery hen, I lay the answers
To two questions a minute.
"Our poet friend" I heard the technician call me,
A tame eccentric, a queer bird, a pet canary
Come here this evening to sing to us.
Cross-legged I try to relax in my few yards of decor
Cramped between hit songs and a feature on holidays.
The interviewer smiles: "Now, tell me, Mr. Levenson . . ."
The well-rounded phrases fur my tongue like sloes
As we talk to nobody
But four flickering images of ourselves
Suspended across the studio, catch ourselves smiling
Yes, nodding yes, for half a minute too long
After the sound was cut. A poet's job, I said,
Is to be concise. They had taken me at my word,
Their bit for culture done.
James Schevill

Two Poems

A BUTCHER SHOP IN LONDON

Over the gaping eyes of a hare
Hanging by its feet from a hook,
The butcher draws a paper bag.
The butcher is not Lady Macbeth.
He cuts with an air of clean blood,
A thick mustache of prosperity;
We are his patronizing lords, we eat.
To hack with a cleaver, carve with a knife,
Rasp with a saw, slice in a grinder,
These are not murder, but service:
The common dream of meat.

THERE ARE NO EXTERNAL WARS

Shadows, angels of necessity,
Those glowing wings beating at us
With shining vision,
we repeat ourselves
Again and again in wars of the inner madmen,
until wings become knives
And we cut our way out into solitude,
Thick isolation in the empty streets,
No sound, everything is dead;
We rule the streets in rage,
No bodies left to punish,
Only trees watch us in their green,
The pavement of solitary streets salutes us,
The sea sounds its surf in our ears . . .

Alberta Turner

Four Poems

TO WINDWARD

The sea breaks louder in my room tonight,
Slams down from shelves and curves across the floor,
Spatters the window, twists through lint and nap,
To rinse me out beneath the farther door.

In other rooms and towns this sea's dissolved
My island always, gathered itself and poured
At me down stairs, through rails, and over boards
And strained the sand from under my arched foot.

And always before, someone (I think not I)
Has braced my back and locked my knees and clawed
Me down through sand to rock, but still that wave
Has always sucked me in and spewed me out.

But now, tonight, someone I cannot name
Beats out away from beaches windward, knifes
Into the swollen cone, and now I find
That gulls fall far and farther still behind,
And water hisses only at our wake.

We turn inward again
Until the image is born slowly
And we hear the hinges of our flesh
Open to the inner madman and his smiling angel;
We embrace his war of ancient weapons,
Embarrassed by our swords and helmets,
Old costumes firing missiles; we try to weep,
Our tears hidden in currents of racing rivers.

~
PHYSICIAN, IF YOU CAN, REMAIN A STRANGER

Physician, know yourself: both bell and book
Would bungle in the hands that do your work.
Were you a mere mechanic, you would shake
The scuff of any 'prentice who dared dream
That his own hands, which can unclog the choke
And start the judge on time, unclog the court.
Were you a soldier, you would long have known
Before you took the wallet and the watch
To turn the dead face down, the dead hands up.

Physician, you are too precisely honed
To blunt on alien metal. All your skill
Can't keep the bone you set from mending or
That mended hand from crooking on a throat.
But should you climb that finger to the eye
And glimpse behind its retina the fist
Which closes on that throat, you would take fright
And slip the knife too far, to save a life
Not this, not now—but next or next in danger.

Physician, if you can, remain a stranger.
Hippocrates would madden could he look
Down the gleaming barrel of his oath.

～

FALCON-FREE

Unleash the hound and set the falcon free.
At garnet rim of evening they will turn
To bring the prize unharmed and fawning earn
The certain dividend of tail and head,
Eager for chain and jess again and bed.

So fetter me
That when the stag has bled
My modest trigger fee,
Some will lay their hands upon my head
And compliment your prudent venery.

～

A CROSS FOR TWO

All my life, with less than half to go,
I've worn my weight: skin against chafed skin,
Vein to vein, and bone to hollow bone,
My self and I—a Siamese twin.

No monster he! More monstrous, far, that we
Look at our doublehood without much dread,
Comb our knotted pelt, and pick the fleas
Without disgust from our misshapen head.
Nor do we, though each night presents the knife,
Relieve it on our grossly thickened throat;
Nor yet feel shame that every step must lame
That poor four-footed spoor. Encysted so,
How shall we straighten toward Gethsemane?
How plait a thorn into a double O?
How carry a cross for two up Calvary?

Where only the whole are wholly crucified,
How can I, out of semi-suicide
Forgive them, when my watching self survives
To garrote my bequest? How wear the pain
Of foot and hand torn out? How stop the stain
That spreads where I tore my side out of him?

～

NORTHWEST
John Montague

Two Poems

PACIFIC TWILIGHT

FROM THE PAPUAN

The Poet Laments His Brother's Death
Cicada of evening, sing and sing again!
Sadly I gaze at the ground:
Somewhere a spring chuckles,
Near at hand, a waterfall echoes it,
And the bird Afouma whistles
In the heart of the twilight,
Singing always, as I gaze sadly down.

He Relates His War
It was I who, with this hand,
Seized the eagles!
The colours of such a battle—
Was its equal ever seen?
With this mighty javelin, I
Slew even the Paradise Bird!

He Returns Empty-handed
Babane, sweet kingfisher,
Thing to myself belonging,
Can you see me with another self,
You who mimic a female companion,
With your burst of singing?
Tell me, between us two,
What in the valley of
The Moune and the Badime
Did I ever go to do?

Michael Gregory

Two Poems

KEY WEST: SUMMER 1962

How does your hand survive
soft above this bright water
where every beauty is death,
your spirit move
as you moved (lightly
where the deepest step is soon lost)
through these stormy isles
across this night?

Feeling your touch
when the troubled words stopped
I tried to see your face
but it was all wind.
BIRTHSONG

The jays woke me out of Erin centuries ago
Lamefoot the singer, popinjay of tales;
popinjay too of village boys' sticks
and the old spinning woman’s needles and hook.

A hawk’s dagger feet flew me over the sea
Blindeye, mad seer of visions;
bearer of sad tidings and cracked bowl,
tired of sounding my own voice.

A gaggle of grey men hanged me out of Ohio
Strawface the boy on the tree;
fed me to flames in the haymound night
with a bright golden gash in my side.

Robert Burlingame

Two Poems

SPRING-SUMMER MORNING

It seems to him, somehow,
that it could go either way—
this season that spins like a girl
in the first siege of love

With the prim leaves over the window
and on top the building
the mother’s washing of her lazy son
the breeze just begun, noon
at topmast

If Easter had come, then all would
be clear
but it hasn’t and temperatures like
people seem unable to rise or go down
Except the sister screaming to her child.

Lillian Morrison

OF KINGS AND THINGS

What happened to Joey on our block
Who could hit a spaldeen four sewers
And wore his invisible crown
With easy grace, leaning, body-haloed
In the street-lamp night?

He was better than Babe Ruth
Because we could actually see him hit
Every Saturday morning,
With a mop handle thinner than any baseball bat,
That small ball which flew forever.
Whack! straight out at first, then rising,
Rising unbelievably, soaring in a tremendous
Heart-bursting trajectory, to come down finally
Blocks away, bouncing off a parked car’s
Fender, eluding the lone outfielder.

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Did he get a good job?
Is he married now, with kids?
Is he famous in another constellation?
I saw him with my own eyes in those days,
The god of stickball,
Disappearing down the street,
Skinny and shining in the nightfall light.

~

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~

SPRING-SUMMER MORNING

It seems to him, somehow,
that it could go either way—
this season that spins like a girl
in the first siege of love

With the prim leaves over the window
and on top the building
the mother’s washing of her lazy son
the breeze just begun, noon
at topmast

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be clear
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people seem unable to rise or go down
Except the sister screaming to her child.
Inside the back of my shirt it said Single Needle. That's what I want to be.

A single needle lifts a thread no heavier than a sigh and pokes holes no bigger than a gnat's belch. It goes just so far and stops turns a corner never skips but runs along and stops. Once free it doesn't look back.

When I was a single needle operator that's what I thought I wanted to be.

But the thread of things wears away the eye soon it is pointless the season is long and the pattern unchanged.

I would like to be a Dyak.

B. E. Neff

Three Poems

EVERYONE WOULD LIKE TO BE SOMETHING ELSE

A Dyak in Borneo said—
I would like to be a volcano then I could
lie on my back all day
and smoke and everyone
would think I was working.

On the mountain is the white elm tree,
On the plain grows wild plum.
You have embroidered robes
But you never mend or care for them.
You have many children
But you do not love them.
When you are dead
Who will bring you rice?

On the mountain is the juniper tree,
on the plain grows yambean.
You have a home
But you do not sweep the floor.
You have a lute, a zither,
But you do not play upon them.
When you are dead
Someone else will treasure them.

On the mountain is the hazel-tree,
On the plain, hyacinth-bean.
You have meat and rice;
Why do you not beat the drum,
Dance for pleasure,
Drink to rising day?
When you are dead
Someone else will kindle a fire.

THE GRIEVING LOSS

A voice dies on the wind.
Oh oh sorrow lives forever.

In this house of seven moons
I have mourned
each fallen leaf
with agate cloud.

Who will listen now?
Black wings beat
against the storm . . .
an unused pool
stares at the empty garden.

Who will hear
the gate-bell call?

~

Aaron Kramer

Two Poems

PORTRAIT BY ALICE NEEL

I'm not sure there will be walls
or eyes
but if there are
this portrait may be wondered at.
Let me say then at once
so that no mystery develops
why—although he holds a manuscript—
the poet is not reading
and why—despite a mood of gloom—
he seems to smile.

He is looking not at the fire-escape across the way
nor at some starscape: aeons, lightyears further—
but at an Alice Neel
in a green smock
who thrusts into him deep, deeper, as if with her long brush,
takes it out dripping,
puts it down wet on the canvas (which he mustn't yet see),
raises the brush again
and bends toward him: peering, peering as no one has before.

So, wishing he could play back that plummeting stare,
those impatient brows,
as a lake would—
he looks;
and, wondering whether
her cunning, caring, freshwater eyes
have caught the very bottom—
uncomfortably he smiles.

~
ESCAPADE

Past the communion of tongue and lips, the high heaving and interweaving, lasts a union of fingertips until her breathing’s deep and even; then we’re separate—as if my hand slips out of her hand. Goodbye. I’m leaving.

Swift, with a smile, through every street at once—free of the luscious unity—lone as the moon I move, complete with cloud (but missing his immunity). Pausing at every corner, I greet my shadow: poised for opportunity.

Manikins, sad in your gay disguise, beware of me! I shall abandon you, too, after the lulling lies: I am no all-night-long companion. I warn you: stay away from my eyes! They are wet paths to a dry canyon.

Swift, with no smile, to the last dead end, the lost drinker dizzily lurching, the perfect pole that never shall bend, blossom, and branch, for birds to perch in—but only glows like a useful friend:—as if it can lead me to why I’m searching!

Beyond the dreamer, the unborn blade of grass under the greenless gutters; the handled butterfly’s masquerade: gowned and crowned there, behind her shutters, not knowing the prince of her dance has been spayed, not fearing the net in which she flutters;

swift, swifter, on highways ploughed for death, where death like seed is planted, where all four seasons shoot up proud stalks of death, more than are wanted—lone as the moon, complete with cloud, I move (not haunting, but oh! haunted);

until, in the distant dark, a sound slashes, swordlike: a laughter, or weeping. Bloody all over, I turn around and see my fingers still in her keeping; then (since to wake her might be frowned upon) I join with her in sleeping.

Phyllis Rose

Two Poems

COPS AND ROBBERS

And him, the other one, I never meant to hurt him. The game was nice and slick But fake, of course, so I thought Nothing could matter. As long As we side-stepped grainy plaster On stairs and knocked past all Those broken bottles, cans, And general paper trash In the hot alleyways We’d be all right. Our guns? Honest-to-God imitations Of the real thing. Harmless. Dark. We got mixed up, All of us. One, I think, Changed sides and didn’t tell.
Then matchlight glowed suddenly
Under a tight face, cold.
So I yelled, “Double Crosser,”
Lit out for the back fence, felt
Myself impaled. But wasn’t.
Really frightened, I wheeled,
Flinging my arms out hard,
And struck: he fell apart.
And so the game was over.

Marguerite Kaiyala

THE REMAINDER OF RAIN

(Horace may be made mention
of now that his black line no longer bowls
bowed eyes brainward. He might complain
that this impermanent rain hardly compares to the jewels
of the spring at Bandusia. And where are the Sabine hills?)

The remainder of rain globules
on blossoms in this rinsed city-yard garden,
At rain-set, it rolls
itself into water-pearls,
rounding, divining, the color it sits a prism on.
Shining, it is the expression of a summer sun.

Lilies laden with belief
in God strain their tenuous stem under the gross
gloss of rain, or self.
One may be forgiven if
he cannot quite believe in the pearled absoluteness
of their alleluia beauty: to him it will suffice
that the diacritical stress
of the rain-round on this green garden off
concrete, has been softness,
while the patent pokings of the obvious
ordinary trees splinter the sun on rain on leaf,
green-foiling the air in classic correction of grief.

We offer Diane Wakoski our profound apologies for misspelling
her name in our last issue.
The Theodore Roethke Memorial Fund

When Theodore Roethke died, those of us who loved the man and his work hoped that some way would be found, less ephemeral than the funerary garlands and pieties, to pay tribute to his living presence among us, in our time, and at this place. Beatrice Roethke and the friends and colleagues of her late husband agreed that a fund to establish an annual Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Reading would be an appropriate way to commemorate a man who played so large a role in reestablishing poetry as a spoken art.

On the twenty-fifth of May, 1964, the greatly distinguished American poet, John Crowe Ransom, winner of the Bollingen Prize, and latterly, of the National Book Award, gave the first reading of the series on the campus of the University of Washington. It was Ted Roethke's fifty-sixth birthday. With his rare grace and matchless style, his eloquence, modesty and wit, Mr. Ransom began what we hope will be a permanent benefice to this literary community.

The selection committee for the annual Memorial Reading consists of William H. Matchett, editor of the Modern Language Quarterly, chairman; Carolyn Kizer, editor of Poetry Northwest; and the poet who is conducting the Advanced Verse Writing class which was Roethke's own: this year the British poet, Henry Reed. The committee, selected by Robert B. Heilman, chairman of the English Department of the University of Washington, in consultation with Mrs. Roethke, respectfully asks that continuing contributions be made to insure that this program, which helps maintain the University's high distinction as a poetry center, have adequate financial support.

Checks should be made to:

The University of Washington
Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Reading

Contributions should be sent to the Office of University Relations and Development (care of Mr. Alm), Administration Building, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98105.

The Theodore Roethke Prize

The Editors of Poetry Northwest wish to thank Mrs. Lenore Marshall for her splendid gift to the Donors' Fund, for the purpose of assisting the magazine in awarding an annual prize, in the name of our late friend and benefactor, for the finest poem or group of poems by a Northwest writer to be printed annually.