



BRUCE BOYD

Collected Poems

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

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EDITORIAL AND RIGHTS NOTE

This critical reading edition resets every verified print poem and sequence by Bruce Boyd preserved in the project archive. It is not a facsimile. Original scans govern wording, lineation, stanza division, section order, and indentation; the inherited reset is used only as a locator and is corrected against those scans.

The poems first appeared in the United States between 1958 and 1974 and remain presumptively protected by copyright. Copyright in the underlying works is believed to belong to the Bruce Boyd estate or its lawful successors; exact administration has not been verified. Collaborative rights in “Epithalamium” also belong to the other named authors or their successors. Prepared for editorial, scholarly, and rights-clearance work.

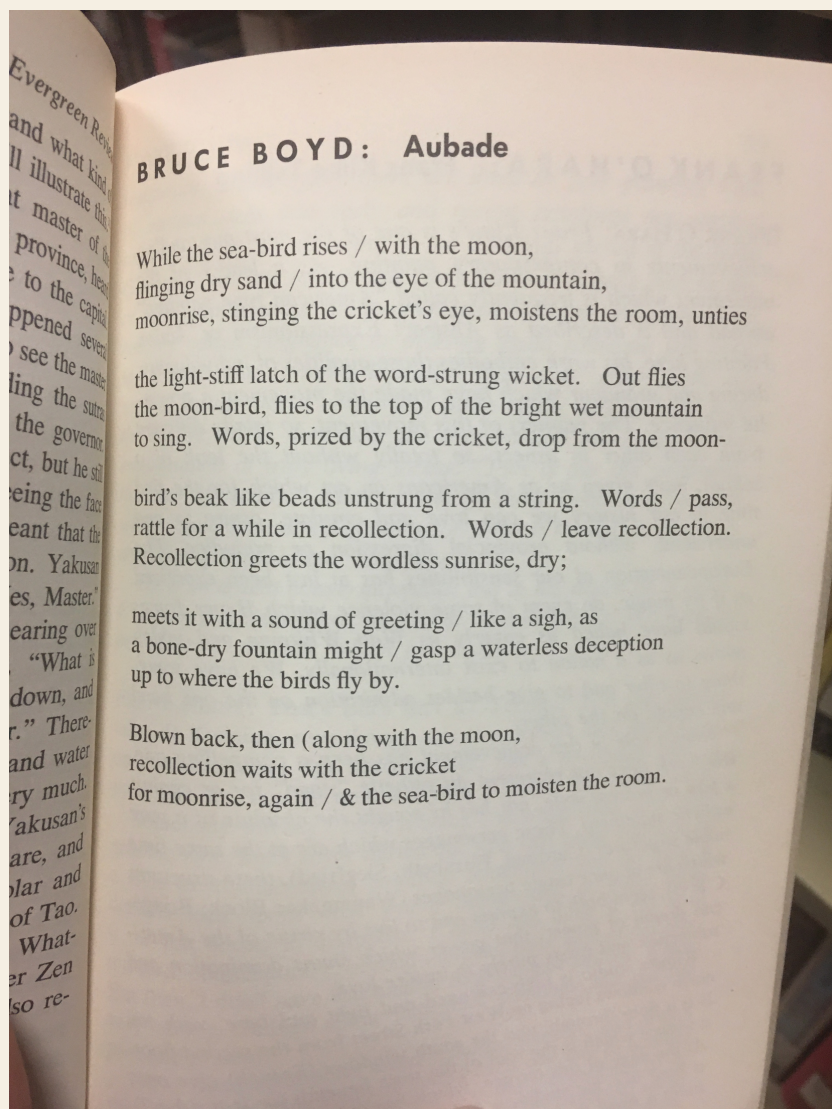
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ARCHIVAL IMAGES

A short visual record



Bruce Boyd with Jim Morris, photographed by Bill Margolis. Project archive.



"Aubade" in *Evergreen Review*, Autumn 1958: Boyd's earliest located print appearance.

159

Bruce Boyd

around it the water is still:
 but the sheet-glass surface is quietly shaken
 & breaks into ripples, as gulls rise
 into the rooms of the hungry children
 to watch the tall water close over their heads.

1958

VENICE RECALLED

on the salt water streets
 that rose & then fell with the ocean
 when the fish that were caught in the mud
 underneath the wooden footbridge started in to stink,
 soon there was always the incoming tide

there, we were

each his own man

to speak, the play of sounds, pleasant or
 otherwise, but only open & discursive.

differently, here, in the language

the oblique sense of a word to stamp one as "in"

whose dialect (not

dialectic) held

"right or wrong"

invents a greater crime than just to force the song:

to force it back,

& closets them wet & huddled together.

they are fearful in their heads
 of being on the outside looking in
 - to the center of language:

but we who would live openly are its natural peripheries,
 & take the unborn where the dead leave it
 to grow, at our hand

"always to prefer the common," thus the noble
 Heraclitus, in "this world, which is the same for all

INTRODUCTION

Bruce Boyd between Berkeley and Venice West

Bruce Boyd moved through the Berkeley Renaissance, Jack Spicer's San Francisco circle, and Venice West without settling into any one group's story. A philosophy graduate who was remembered as "our Zen poet," he wrote tidal lyrics, erotic songs, Buddhist meditations, philosophical arguments, comic pageants, and long spatial sequences in which thought seems to change direction while it is being spoken. His poems appeared in *Evergreen Review*, *Beatitude*, *J*, *Yūgen*, *The Floating Bear*, *The Mendicant*, Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry*, and *Writing 3*, but no book appeared during his lifetime. Friends remembered a tall, elusive poet moving between Bay Area and Los Angeles communities; archival records now supply the life's basic outline and correct the birth date repeated in some later accounts. This edition resets every verified print work in the project archive, including the complete *Toward Morning*, *Canticles for the Hours: Prime, Thread, and Flowerpot Sutra*. It preserves Boyd's hard line breaks and changing indents within a six-by-nine-inch page, corrects unmistakable transcription damage, and separately documents poems heard on his surviving 1958 recording whose texts cannot yet be verified in print.

Editorial scope

"Collected" here means the complete verified print record presently held in the project archive. The 1958 Poetry Center recording proves that additional works existed, but audio-only poems are documented in a separate section rather than supplied from an unchecked transcription. The posthumous *Toward Morning: Selected Poems* (2026) is documented bibliographically but was not available as a production witness.

BIOGRAPHY

James Bruce Boyd, 1928–2006

Name, family, and dates

James Bruce Boyd was born in San Francisco on August 23, 1928. California birth-index material identifies his mother's maiden name as Bruce; later death records name his parents as Harold J. Boyd and Vera Bruce. Boyd ordinarily published and appeared in literary records as Bruce Boyd, while civic records also use J. Bruce Boyd and James Bruce Boyd. A few literary biographies give August 28 as his birthday, but the state birth-index entry, his draft registration, and later federal records agree on August 23. That primary-record date is used here.

Boyd's surviving 1946 draft registration places him in North Hollywood on his eighteenth birthday. It describes him as six feet tall and 142 pounds, with blond hair, blue eyes, and a light complexion, and names Vera Boyd as next of kin. The document is valuable not because physical description explains the poet but because so many later sketches treated him as almost wholly untraceable.

Berkeley and the emerging poet

Boyd earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of California, Berkeley. The fullest recent account, assembled by Bill Mohr while editing Boyd's posthumous first book, places him in the Berkeley poetry world in the early 1950s and describes Jack Spicer as the decisive encouragement. Later contributor notes say that Boyd met Spicer at Berkeley and studied in Robert Duncan's workshop after returning to San Francisco in 1958. The exact institutional status and dates of the workshop remain to be documented, but the literary connection is consistent with Boyd's surviving poems and publication network.

The label “Berkeley Renaissance” is useful only if it is kept loose. Boyd belonged to the overlapping community around Spicer, Robin Blaser, Robert Duncan, George Stanley, and the small magazines that linked poets by conversation, workshop, reading, and mimeograph rather than by manifesto. Mohr describes Boyd as a friend of both Gary Snyder and Robin Blaser and as an unusually mobile West Coast poet. The Donald Allen papers at the University of California, San Diego, preserve Boyd correspondence; the LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka papers at Syracuse preserve manuscripts or publication records connected with Yügen. Those collections make clear that his apparent disappearance from later literary history is partly a problem of dispersed archives.

Los Angeles and Venice West

Boyd moved to the Los Angeles area in the early or middle 1950s. Accounts disagree on the exact sequence: later contributor notes call him a founding member of Venice West, while Mohr more cautiously says that Boyd aligned himself with the Venice scene in the mid-1950s, returned to Berkeley and San Francisco in the later 1950s, and looked back toward Venice again in the early 1960s. A 1960 directory places J. Bruce Boyd at 410 Carroll Canal in Venice. That address is firmer evidence than later recollections that alternately place his small house on Sherman or Linnie Canal.

The Venice Beach Poets Monument project preserves a vivid community memory of Boyd’s canal house, simply and carefully furnished in a Japanese manner. Its account says that he had left the gay social world centered on Polk Street in San Francisco because he found it confining, that Tony Scibella called him “our Zen poet,” and that Boyd and Stuart Perkoff had a brief relationship whose ending wounded him. These details come from retrospective testimony and should not be mistaken for independently verified civic facts. They are nevertheless important evidence about how friends understood his sexuality, aesthetic discipline, and place in the scene.

Boyd’s own “Venice Recalled” resists the easy mythology of a unified Beat enclave. It remembers the “salt water streets,” the smell of fish under a footbridge, a community formed by immediate sharing, and the danger of an insider dialect that can force the poem back into conformity. The poem’s contrast between open peripheries and an imagined center is also a useful account of Boyd’s career: he participated intensely in groups but did not

remain securely attached to any of them.

The 1958 Poetry Center reading

On March 30, 1958, Boyd read at the Poetry Center at San Francisco State with Saul White and Stuart Z. Perkoff. The Poetry Center Digital Archive preserves the complete event in three recordings; Boyd occupies the first, running approximately thirty-nine and a half minutes. This is the clearest surviving record of his voice and of a larger body of work than his print bibliography alone reveals.

Boyd's program included "Not to Enter the West," "Huibris" (the archive's spelling), an unidentified Latin-titled poem, "Now Let Us Pray for Peace as Sincerely as We Can," "Poetical Predicament: Fragments of Homage to Wittgenstein," "Flowerpot Sutra," "This Is What the Watchbird Sings, Who Perches in the Lovetree," "Petition," "This Is How the Wind Sings, Lover, on the Beach," "Summer Nightmusic," "Summer Aubade," "Water," "Blackbirds," "Song," "A Chorale of Minstrels," "New Year Poem, 1958," "Vespers," "Matins with Lauds, Which I Take to Be Midnight," and "Prime, Which I Take to Be Six in the Morning." Several titles vary slightly from later print forms: "Summer Aubade" is probably the poem printed as "Aubade," and "A Chorale of Minstrels" may be an earlier title for "A Quarrel of Minstrels." The audio cuts off during the final work.

The reading demonstrates that Boyd's liturgical "hours," Buddhist poems, songs, and Wittgensteinian language experiments were already part of a connected project. It also establishes works that have not yet been located in print. This edition lists those recorded pieces but does not manufacture texts from uncertain listening; a future audio transcription should be made and checked independently, ideally against manuscripts in the Allen, Baraka, or other archival holdings.

Little magazines and the 1960 anthology

Boyd's print career opened in a dense cluster. "Aubade" appeared in *Evergreen Review* in 1958. "Epithalamium," a playful collaborative wedding poem credited to Ronald Primack, Jack Spicer, Bruce Boyd, and George Stanley, appeared in *Beatitude* 6 in 1959. Jack Spicer's magazine *J* printed "After Midnight" in its first issue and the long prose-and-verse sequence *Toward Morning* in its third. *Toward Morning* moves from a prose "Introduction" about real things in poems through "Proem," songs of increasing pressure, war, and an angelic envoy. Its mixture of poetics, Buddhism, camp theater, doctrinal argument, and erotic anger makes it the central surviving work.

Donald Allen selected "This Is What the Watchbird Sings, Who Perches in the Lovetree," "Sanctuary," and "Venice Recalled" for *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960*. Boyd was the anthology's only contributor who did not publish a book during his lifetime. That absence distorted later reception: the three Allen poems are approachable lyrics and a communal memoir, while the magazine archive contains longer and formally more difficult work. Their inclusion nevertheless secured Boyd's name within the San Francisco Renaissance grouping and allowed later editors to recover the rest.

In 1961 *Yūgen* 7 printed six poems: "Summer Nightmusic," "This Is How the Wind Sings, Lover, on the Beach," "A Quarrel of Minstrels," "Water," "Song," and "Poem." *The Floating Bear* 15 printed *Canticles for the Hours: Prime and Thread*. William J. Margolis's *The Mendicant* printed *Flowerpot Sutra* and "Scratching." The archive also contains "NOW" in Donald Allen's *Writing 3: 12 Poets & 1 Painter* (1964). Larry Fagin reprinted Boyd's "Introduction" in *Adventures in Poetry* 11 in 1974, a late sign that the early poetics still circulated among poets even as Boyd disappeared from most public accounts.

Form, language, and spiritual argument

Boyd's work repeatedly stages a conflict between naming and entering the real. Poems use water, tide, river, birds, bone, honey, moonlight, flowers, and rooms as shifting structures rather than stable symbols. Buddhist vocabulary sits beside Plato, Heraclitus, Wittgenstein, Christian doctrine, popular song, vaudeville rhythm, sexual insult, and broadcast interruption. The result is neither a devotional poetry nor a satire of devotion. Boyd tests the ways a spiritual or philosophical vocabulary can become another closed system while continuing to seek forms of attention and relation that language might make possible.

His typography is part of that thinking. Indents redirect the voice, phrases arrive from apparently separate positions, prose argument breaks into lyric, and repeated language changes force as it moves. "Thread" describes speech as trackless yet ordered; Flowerpot Sutra turns a Zen transmission story into an extended inquiry into terror, need, ritual, and love; "Scratching" throws a catalogue of rejected objects toward release. These works are difficult to compress onto a six-by-nine-inch page because their space is active. The present reset preserves hard breaks and proportional horizontal movement, allowing overlong measures to continue at the base margin rather than reducing the type or treating a physical wrap as a new poetic line.

The poems also preserve language that can wound. Homophobic slurs, ethnic caricature, religious antagonism, and racialized comic montage appear most visibly in *Toward Morning*. They belong to the historical text and are not silently cleansed. Their presence complicates the retrospective portrait of Boyd as a gay poet escaping one provincial scene for another: marginalization did not prevent him from reproducing other forms of contempt. Editorial framing should keep both the formal intelligence and the harm visible.

Later life and documentary limits

The public literary record becomes thin after the 1960s. Contributor notes claim that Boyd returned to Los Angeles by late spring 1960 in search of remunerative work. The 1960 Carroll Canal directory supports his presence there. Later Venice accounts say that he grew disillusioned with Los Angeles and went back to the Bay Area; other recollections place him at a Beyond Baroque reading in the 1970s or in the Los Angeles Free Press, but those appearances have not been verified. The 1974 reprinting in *Adventures in Poetry* proves continued literary circulation but not Boyd's residence or participation in the issue.

Vital records restore the end of the life. James Bruce Boyd died in Los Angeles County on December 24, 2006. Federal records give his last residence as North Hollywood, ZIP code 91601. These facts correct older contributor notes that called his whereabouts after 1969 unknown, but they do not yet explain his employment, relationships, writing, or possible publications across the final four decades. Those remain the largest biographical gaps.

The main research priorities are Boyd's Berkeley student record; full examination of the Donald Allen correspondence and Baraka manuscript files; Spicer, Blaser, Duncan, Snyder, Perkoff, Margolis, and Venice West papers; Los Angeles and Bay Area directories after 1960; newspaper and Los Angeles Free Press indexes; Beyond Baroque event files and recordings; probate or estate records; and contact with relatives or friends. Oral testimony should be dated and attributed, especially where it concerns sexuality, intimate relationships, or motives for moving.

Posthumous recovery

Bill Mohr's scholarship was decisive in returning Boyd to view. *Hold-Outs: The Los Angeles Poetry Renaissance, 1948–1992* discussed "Venice Recalled" and Boyd's movement along the coast as part of a larger network rather than two sealed regional schools. Mohr later assembled the poet's first book, *Toward Morning: Selected Poems*, for Magra Books. The publisher describes Boyd's work beside Gary Snyder, Jack Spicer, and Stuart Perkoff and emphasizes his movement among San Francisco, Berkeley, and Venice West.

Magra Books lists *Toward Morning: Selected Poems* as a seventy-six-page volume edited by Mohr, ISBN 979-8-9926955-1-9, published April 13, 2026. Retail metadata sometimes gives April 14. It is extraordinary that a poet included in Allen's 1960 anthology should receive a first full-length book nearly sixty-six years later and twenty years after his death. The book confirms both the quality of the surviving corpus and the incompleteness of the earlier record.

The present edition has a different purpose. It gathers every verified print work preserved in the project archive, follows original magazine and anthology witnesses rather than presenting a facsimile, records collaborative credit, and documents the audio-only titles without pretending that a complete transcription exists. It should be understood as a collected edition of the currently verified print record—not as the last word on a poet whose manuscripts, correspondence, recordings, and later life remain to be recovered.

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EARLY PUBLICATIONS, 1958–1960

The magazine and anthology record through The New American Poetry

Aubade

While the sea-bird rises
 with the moon,
flinging dry sand
 into the eye of the mountain,
moonrise, stinging the cricket's eye, moistens the room, unties
the light-stiff latch of the word-strung wicket. Out flies
the moon-bird, flies to the top of the bright wet mountain
to sing. Words, prized by the cricket, drop from the moon-
bird's beak like beads unstrung from a string. Words / pass,
rattle for a while in recollection. Words / leave recollection.
Recollection greets the wordless sunrise, dry;
meets it with a sound of greeting / like a sigh, as
a bone-dry fountain might / gasp a waterless deception
up to where the birds fly by.
Blown back, then (along with the moon,
recollection waits with the cricket
for moonrise, again / & the sea-bird to moisten the room.

First published in Evergreen Review 2, no. 6 (Autumn 1958): 57.

Epithalamium

Language was being talked about
George and Nancy. Marriage. Believed. Lesson
The ceremony transfixes
music
on. / \ music in the evening, us
Songbirds sing
George and Nancy
a duo.
o.

May the small Gods bless +
Dirt-faced, unyielding
Small faces painted with honey
And Demeter, witch mother
Even Apollo, heart of a mouse
We
they and us
bless

Your doorways.

h
To get\er yes, not to slacken
But a sure thing.

Yo. ness. & spaces
between, be
there to gather
Do oh do oh do oh do be
Mime.
(do oh do oh do oh dooby doo)

Language being talked about.
George and Nancy. Message
And let them bless
The surefooted small Gods
All that will never hurt your lives.

When I see a person
that is given too spot a thing that is
Not to slay-keN
But a sure thing
We SowBer
The Muse our/
Love +

Collaboration: Ronald Primack, Jack Spicer, Bruce Boyd, and George Stanley

First published in Beatitude 6 (1959).

EPITHALAMIUM

Language was being talked about
 George and Nancy. Marr-
 iage. Be lieved. Less-on
 The ceri
 monial trans fixed
 music
 on. / music in the even ing, us
 Songbirds sing
 George and Nancy
 a du-
 o.

May the small Gods bless +
 Dirt-faced, unyielding
 Small faces painted with honey
 And De-
 meter, witch mother
 Even Apollo, heart of a mouse
 We
 they and us
 bless
 Your doorways.

h
 To get'er yes, not to sla-ken
 But a sure thing.

Yo. ness. & spaces
 between, be
 there to gather
 Do oh do oh do oh do be
 Mime.
 (do oh do oh do oh dooby doo)

Language being talked about.
 George and Nancy. Message
 And let them bless
 The surefooted small Gods
 All that will never hurt your lives.

Whe n I see a person
 that is given too s pot
 a thing that is
 Not to slay-keN
 But a s ure thing
 We Sow Ber
 The Muse our/
 Love +

1959 [?]

COLLABORATION: RONALD PRIMACK
 JACK SPICER
 BRUCE BOYD
 GEORGE STANLEY

After Midnight

the pumpkin landed upside down,
the little light went out behind its eyes,
a glass of wine before the sound of mice
divided silence from the music
shattered, as they scurried to the willows

I am forgetting the words, even for the simplest thing
there is no power in words, no power at all
to fill a glass of water
& come at night to pour the moon across your hands.

First published in J 1 (1959).

Toward Morning

INTRODUCTION

I become tired of repeating static designs of the same names.

It is good to bring a real thing into a poem, so that something from the world a man has to live returns to him there. But making poems will not satisfy the kind of poetry that demands to come to the particular & real. It may be, to the too particular; but the hangup that isn't the rejection of these particular though not less poetical desiderations (tired because the invitation of prolonged blank walls is more inhuman though not, perhaps, less kind than the rim of light around a real & definite closed door) conjures up a troubled spirit, hungry ghost, that was a stillborn poem from being too unique, although a kind of angel too; & from possession by such particular beauty as will not even correspond to a closed door into the world, the poet turns exorcist. His poetry may otherwise contain real things, but it will never enter them.

The exorcist thinks twisty thoughts, means to twist those blank walls around into a blind alley. Any appearance of doors is not coincidental, which is to say miraculous, & the poet, failing that, has to turn around & not look back, for love, till anyone there turns on to a going street where his thoughts again can straighten out along his & learn to know the difference between a root & branches, if there is one.

In the poem, the act, from its completion, carries to its preconditions a tension. What is needed is a bridge, to be the difference between a group & a community. Failing such a bridge comes the exorcist, & builds a blind alley. What he says may not be a poem, but runs along briskly & can doubtless entertain in lower places than it enters the world like a dream-from-above, shallow, as it were, a metapoem, made to free the appetite for peaceful will a person serves. It is good to bring a real thing into a poem, But the test of poems like the test of drugs is just their human use. A poem contains something real just to help the poem come into the real. To help.

There is receptacle for pomegranate seeds at the first through left-hand turning.

PROEM

Narcissus, a little stone, a handful of pebbles, make waves;
I didn't go to do it, but the house
more fragile than glass, flickers & goes out

comes back

as mercifully as possible
when there's nothing more to be shed. not at all like fire,
which is what a heated fuel sheds to keep its balance in the air;
&. not remorse at being oneself: it is more instant; a more lasting
stricture of despair, or fear; thus love is more appealing,
sometimes, through an eerie innocence of intellect
than through the eye.

why those herds of reindeer
were altogether elsewhere
& why that bird was tied, & fluttered everywhere
then settled onto its perch, like the mind
settles down on its life, it says in the Upanisad,
& sometimes a poem. comes home to roost,
as you agreed

& it is right,
all these returns, because we keep on changing
not by our choice but our consent, is all,
yes.

TOWARD MORNING

(SOME APOTROPEIA INSTEAD OF AN ALBA)
whose is the bitter taste I still don't taste
the famous bitter taste. the many little pieces settled
in the empty stomach just as easily as pebbles, or balls
dropped from a tower

quietly. the smartest white horse
in your whole heaven is about to refuse to be put
through his paces more than
one mo' time,
listen to him stamp his foot
in a rhythm of old music/

SONG, SOFT SONG

in thinking that in making something mustn't happen
is a poverty of satisfaction hard to lift:
but above the flow of language is a world that makes it rise

as Plato said, to each
a procession of his own

& it wasn't you I think of when I saw the moon or see the sun,—
but closer; where the tide comes

thus children, wading,
think they make it rise by moving back:
the magic is a law that sees to their advantage
in a tide, fulness of meaning in their moving,
guiding (,Plato,) the rising & falling

calling
(the tide rising, the night falling

the children back to the fire where food is

(marshmallows, yes, they're roasted
& blankets under the stars
spread after the singing
sleep until morning

in a rhythm of old music/ Washington's Monument is it a posey
from Washington Square flickers in the center of the Altar-
of Heaven as a million Chinamen enter, dressed as Uncle
Sam; but somewhere a band plays Toll Paul (more than a
roach is needed to help this music along) & we fade to a
view of the Great Wall of Canada, its reconstruction being
inspected by all of the Justices of the Supreme Court,
foreground in pigtailed wearing gowns with dragon sleeves
while another band is playing Shīna no Yōrū, familiar to
the Justices as She Ain't Got No Yo-Yo; they are the Nine
Muses; it is the same band/

SONG, FIRM SONG

in thinking that in making something mustn't happen
is a poverty of satisfaction hard to lift:

but above the flow of language is a world that makes it rise

spring, brook, streaming river
the whole analogy complete in an ocean with tides & a moon,
but where is a blue boat?

it wobbles in the water, tied to the brink of the river bed
& no one is in it, but rats on the bank
gnawing, & birds in their trees whose laughter
brays in all the places where the bitten strands are severed

& no one is in it, how lovely it will move until a wave

it is the same band/ that we now see dispersing
alarmed Lombards while the Statue of Liberty arrives at Rome to
be crowned.

palanquins, balustrades, apses, naves, & baldachins; everyone
dressed in raiment. (right under our feet is a whole cellar of wines
guaranteed not to dirty the chalice.) this is the moment
the crown has been placed on her head: listen: as she sweetly smiles
at Holy Father & murmurs “filioque,” he smiles brightly in return
& replies “just fine, thank you, & you?” & the Trapp Family Singers
open a set with Vivat in Aeternum, as a great shout escapes the
crowd of farmers

& most of the poor people of Paris France assembled in the square
outside

are only there to kill the time till their inevitable bicycles
come along to dare them

& they will respond, or will they respond
with lists of the best 5 percent. preferred stock, “look at our lists,
thou sluggard,” irrelevantly,

(the Christians need these buttons,
Kwannon send them laws)

yes what I say, what I said, is personal,
was private, as all life that isn’t shared is personal, is private,
& it’s this that cancels out your definitions,
not being afraid to speak, I mean not speaking like you Christiana
whose systems are a strident shriek
that makes the good/

SONG, HARD SONG

in thinking that in making something mustn't happen

the actual act, as if it meant one thing
the honest word, as if we knew it

is a poverty of satisfaction hard to lift,

as if it mattered. like a pain in the ass
you talk about your cock as if language were another
Polk or Market Street, where a faggot will talk
with his eyes, & what he says doesn't matter.

but above the flow of language is a world that makes it rise,
that makes the good/ prefer the Jews, they made a god they can
rebuke
because they know he loves them, or like we Buddhists have our
self-respect,
a proper pride, although we grant you the position is absurd; while
you Christians have your little lists & congregations of the 5 per
cent.,
the self-elect; which shows that what you love is only language (&
"this
air severe is but a mere veneer," sir,
not what language is about.

But there's even a Buddha that smiles
at honest fakes; his angels know that what is means
is that the world those poems that we see around us
has got an equal brilliance with our minds, is all;
& waits to be born in the bodies of men

while you poor

Christians think
you have to build your dirty earth right here in heaven,
here in heaven where your poverty of mind is out of place,
that you actually have
to imagine

inside this room with its enormous focussed butterflies
water & clouds & canyons of millions of little wax candles
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO TEACH YOU IF
YOU CAN'T

MAKE IT IN THIS WORLD AT LEAST RESPECT SAME

respect?
yes that word should make you laugh, because it means that
someone else
is thinking you're the cornballs, & little ones upon their backs,
laugh,
& giants, to bite 'em, & this too shall, & so on, grandfathers die
first,
& you are old enough, I think,
Pygmalion, had a skeleton
in his closet, knew
it is because the posture
of those bones was lovely,
that they should be immortalised in flesh

because you may not know what time it is, this moment, in time
is one you won't forget, not even if you think
of everything it could have meant, & there's still
time, moments are like that, until the next

WAR

oh well, we angels try, is all:
if they won't come to terms we follow
them into the music. where we have to stop when it does,
all the time.

Anthems of All of the Nations. Would you like to hear that band
again?

(Or the 36th Section, beginning
"The Buddha said, it is hard...
to be born a human being.")

Now then. There is someone in this room—who never answers any
questions.

All the rest of you should leave whenever you think you're being
cheated.

Excuse me.

—he'll never get away! spider. can't stand 'em, spiders eat snakes—
whenever you think you're being cheated. Now
then.

“Fool,” you say, “fool,” “He’s a fool,” you say; &, “he’s a fool,” you
say,

yes

everything is food, we fetch it from the store & cook it on
our stoves

at home in pots. but our China serves up more than just the words
for our infusions,

interfusion,

synaesthesia,

community, no that’s not it either, not communion,

but we might as

well scarf,

I’ll make some waffles, with Bisquick, it’s so easy

& meanwhile

under the bridge,

“like I think I hear your mother coming calling

sonny

maybe you better go home”

(but he really wants

to stay kids, guess he will some time? no? no guts? he’s just bugged
behind those feathers, at the end of his pen

all the time, “fool,”

you say. I never met the man who taught to use that word so much,

but then

the put-down prior is the clever coward’s best defense

(like the next

war,

man, with things like that to keep them cool these

straightened out on politics, dirtmen still aren’t

straightened out on politics,

& all the time that you say fool the

question

really is which one is the better fool, & when not in Rome which

one seems

most nearly like a man without being simply counterfeit, & would

not

do

in heaven

wrongly, as the Romans do
then, now, for a long time, as
in the field of this pure white
departure
the field white furrowed blue to follow a line
like a river, lit black
toward which all other colors flew between to draw the rhythm of
its dance
in n-dimensional calligraphies, flow toward the light
places, where
the good
cities wait,
or are we talking to ourselves, then?
or like sometimes people take off all their clothes
(something one does to be sure one isn't afraid,
perhaps,
(or the same thing when, one isn't afraid
look, those feathers on your pen, all you have to do to straighten them, is
fly,
so quo vadis, motherfucker?
where will that coward in his
& gold of words go not to join to such melisma of the
real it is in
heaven
perhaps you just can't hear it here
on
how odd, we also call our
heaven 'Earth,'
where us angels sing all day (& that white horse, listen to it stamp
its foot
just one mo' time) & night
& our bon ami
hasn't scratched yet,
but still
"how sad" is also a beginning, first flight; & what was it we were
saying
a hundred years ago? something like
"a good boy sanctifies any

like where do you really want to go? isn't the boat? the cargo was
swamped
or gone aground

in thinking that in making something mustn't happen,
or to-morrows sun, another turning couldn't listen later
if we called come back, but offer better
things to do than fuck a duck darkly or swim

if you can, till birds like you
can sing in the sun they'd better not dance
until they must; or if the sun says its either
you or they (for the sun is both, but
which you are is either) or if you can
where the end of the thread climbs risers & treads
point the way to

waltz

inside the brightest ballroom of the mind:

I watch how the walls twist somehow away toward the cities.

ENVOY, WITH ANGELIC ORDERS

a poem, a group of poems

a poem, a group of poems, a poem about a group of poems;

a community of poems: a poem,

& it's not enough to only look at rainbows,
but if this much came out of your silence, only.
think, what if we should speak

you shouldn't complain

it's you who've said nothing

only one person

speaks, as a rule,

at a time

Narcissus crosses the river,

I have just gone away,

look here, your Buddha-Nature wants you to write
me a poem again & do what the poem will say.

First published in J 3 (1959).

This Is What the Watchbird Sings, Who Perches in the Lovetree

Who has but dighted his tricks in a bed,
And never delighted in anything said,
He'll nibble dry leaves until he is dead.

For love is the kind of a tree whose fruit
Grows not on the branches, but at the root.

Who with his lover's real presence has talked,
And enacted his lover's least speakable thought,
He will find out what it is he has sought.

For love is the kind of a tree whose fruit
Grows not on the branches, but at the root.

*First published in Donald Allen, ed., The New American Poetry, 1945–1960 (Grove Press, 1960),
158.*

Sanctuary

because the warm honey
 is never dissolved, by water,
but drifts on the river's stone bottom
like wads of raw silk,
under the surface the swimmers still look
 where sharp little stars
 bloom on the bone-tree
& tender incredulous fish
 swim out of its watery eyes
& grow warmer; while gently the bone-tree
 is turned in its bed
 & sees how it gradually wakens.
around it the water is still:
but the sheet-glass surface is quietly shaken
& breaks into ripples, as gulls rise
into the rooms of the hungry children
to watch the tall water close over their heads.

First published in Donald Allen, ed., The New American Poetry, 1945–1960 (Grove Press, 1960), 159.

Venice Recalled

on the salt water streets
that rose & then fell with the ocean
when the fish that were caught in the mud
underneath the wooden footbridge started in to stink,
soon there was always the incoming tide

there, we were
each his own man

to speak, the play of sounds, pleasant or
otherwise, but only open & discursive

differently, here, at the language
the oblique sense of a word to stamp one as “in”
whose dialect (not
dialectic) held

“right or wrong”
invents a greater crime than just to force the song:
to force it back,
& closets them wet & huddled together.

they are fearful in their heads
of being on the outside looking in
—to the center of language:

but we who would live openly are its natural peripheries,
& take the unborn where the dead leave it
to grow, at our hand

“always to prefer the common,” thus the noble
Heraclitus, in “this world, which is the same for all
our language is although induction
the topology of what we live:
thus not its substitute but its enlargement.

there, with us
a new poem was something
the making, something
that asked to be shared at once: seldom a “result”
to praise or blame, & never this only, we mostly looked
behind it for the ways that came together,

between whom, intended, a clearing was being made
in which to discover what, having forgotten
is recovered
 in measure, apart from direction:
as in accord with old codes,
codices,
 a kind of law
of least action in language, or
 taken as return
to the origin,
 a place of actual
welcome, always the nearest
stone path that is watered
 against the coming of guests
is to say,
 cooler:
& the poem, what it means to say,
for the natural motion of its body, is the clearer
that remarks the wider movement of its actual thought.

First published in Donald Allen, ed., The New American Poetry, 1945–1960 (Grove Press, 1960), 159–60.

THE 1961 SEQUENCES

Poems from Yūgen, The Floating Bear, and The Mendicant

Summer Nightmusic

1.

blue-green in twilight, with the moon
comes the sea-bird now,
springing from the middle of the river to
enlist & arm responses; & downstream to sea-mist, through
responsive word-spun shallows, moves / the moon-bird, mobilised.
how
it seeks by clinging/ on the outside of the river, to
keep / clear of the grasping middle, note/ now,
hearing it sing

“soon gone, all birds;
“not recognised until by recollection,
“then mummified in words.”

2.

which having heard,
the wind & the river / conferred;
& the water & weather,
coming together,
said

“moon-grown/ overhead, the birds
“blown motionless above the blue-green sea, are
“by sight, seen latticed through the words
“in flight. the grass-grown birds,
“blown motionless above the blue-green sea, are
“clustered / like a moon that waits for words.”

3.

watch the moon that flings dumb birds
across the sky at night
foster recollection,
& the green gross carry the song the birds sing

brightly / underneath the moon, as thoughts, blown
room-grown into recollection, can

while the intertwining strands
grasp / tightly their connexion,
& the moon glows singly, like silence from a pair of hands.

4.

now the solitary moon-bird's
sudden sea-prone wings
skim the grasp ing middle of the river as it sings

"alone / the stalks of sea-grass bang/ parted by quiet, as
"water & weather (bow the wind & the river, coming together,
sang)
were parted by sound, echoing moon-blown on the foam-
damp ground,
"shaking recollection/ like a sound shakes idle hands.

"aground in silence where the sands / pass
"back & forth, erasing mountains, can
"the moon / sow back the night, to find protection?

"its black inside the white
"afterglow of night / entails detection;
"but planted, would it germinate, expand?

5.

"intimations glimmer / wave-like on the day-bright sand,
play back/ & forth, across the line from / recollection to
projection.

"restive in the middle of the river, I look for swarms of birds
writing words down / on the line projected onto recollection
as if from verse (which is a woman) onto man;

"& grasping, I design. words pass, responsively to mountains, just /
as
to the night-wind, is the intertwining sea-grass.

"words / turn, will the planted moon-bloom grow, seeded with / the
mountain-grass?

“if birds still fly/ above the water; if the stone-cold sand
turns warm, & the thicket flowers into speech,
“then, renewed, the clustered night will reach the sky in all
directions,

6.

“& be / blown back
“to wait with
“the cricket,

“who slogs, welcoming the black
“face of moon, responsive with new laughter
“in the word-blown thicket,—
“—if the moon-warmed sand will bloom;
“if the bloom-boned bird, singing in the room
“will plant the moon-stoned sound,
“& if it be / blown back,
“singing like the moon sings, to the cricket,
“waiting;)
 then the bird-blown thicket
“will have flowered like a plan
 (if, blown back,
“singing comes the sea-bird.”

First published in Yügen 7 (1961).

This Is How the Wind Sings, Lover, on the Beach

Beach

beloved,
I cd never / be the sky
but I / cd be the weather

on top of the waves
on top of the water, lover
come dance with me, & draw
me, lover, together

and the eyes of all the other / dancers
follow us,
and the arms of all the other swimmers
swim to us

First published in Yūgen 7 (1961).

A Quarrel of Minstrels

I think, as the first rain of the season falls
down soft on the street, & the silence grows thin
in the rooms of my friends, & in mine,

how the underbelly of kindness
gives in to fear like a man's skin
gives in to the shove of a shiv, so

quiet, & so quick; whose skin
gives in right away to fear, which makes love
collapse in a corner

like a partner who's poked a hot shot, or shatter
like a spinster might shatter a plate.
& it is late; & the silence is damp;

& now the silence will end,
in the rooms of my friends, & in mine.
now the talk will begin,

& the air will rush into our rooms, from outside;
& it will expand, puffed up by the heat of our separate prides,
comparing each other in speech, & rise

& grow
over our heads.

First published in Yūgen 7 (1961).

Water

only the water. is strictly just,
for it storms on the face of the water, only;
the deep of the water is stormless.

in the deep of the water, submerged
in its breathless nod, we waken.

the ocean, that thickens our movements
with sense, draws us down to the floor to dance,
bumming her terrible senseless songs.

First published in Yūgen 7 (1961).

Song

in the forest of great delight,
do not the spring of the bough, & the leaf,
shaken, exhibit the Thou entire?

they do: entire & instinct, the song
of the bough & the leaf springs
into the long dimension of night.

but we inhabit the forest of fright,
where song is a fang, sinking,
& song is a friend, stinging again,
& the song to be sung is a snarling thread

until singing. the, song is dry land in the flood
that ripples inside of the head;
& song is like thread
in the blood.

First published in Yügen 7 (1961).

Poem

the white is for inaccessibility in light.

the red is not for blood. red birds flutter
in the bare tree that reason the turnings
of the light or the dark.

the black is for inaccessibility in dark.
watchers,
the birds fly away when you cut the tree down.

First published in Yūgen 7 (1961).

Canticles for the Hours: Prime

I.

alive in the tissue of water, the round white light
is a nipple of stone in the sky.

real moon,
turn on the dust in the lightwell of water to music;
loosen the air into words that will break
like the ice, making wonderful eyes
open like flowers up through the water, breaks.

no.
this is the moon made of paper
that thinks like a mirror, & murmurs
& turns, unfinished in beauty, & flies,
shedding pictures, into the cage of the eye
entire, the womb of its time,
& hurts like laughter from women.

2.

love was plainer than air is, at night.
daylight will tighten the skin,
& stretch out the air into words;
but while the space between words is still dark
in the cage of the eye, where

design
remains,)
poem. remind like a mirror.

no,
mirrors remind me of nights,
& ask me if I am afraid.
I look for myself in the mirrors,
reply, I know
about love, passing
back & forth, a sound
between the bodies;

is kindled like music,
grows into speech,
is caged like a word, & waits,
pacing, in sleep, knowing;

I know, yes,
I am afraid,

3.

nighttime reminds me of mirrors,
asking what is it the meanwhile
body did while it dreamed.

unable to say,
that it danced:

it squatted, &
it crouched,
&
three times I heard it say
“come back.”

squatted once upon haunches;
downward-facing,
earth-regarding;
to living lover said,
come back

(at which the eye of the earth
looked reproachfully up)

crouched next upon buttocks
upward - facing,
sky-regarding; said
to object not desired but there,
come back

(which the ear of the sky heard,
unperturbed)

squatted the third time anyhow
squatted, huddled
in the empty water, pled

only for wanting to want,
come back

(which time's enormous mouth
was seen to smile at, swallowing

come back, come back, come back

& let the triple world
be shaken like a wing
as we lean together on the centre of the air
& dance, & sing

4.

only the morning comes back:
the radial hair of the sun streaming in,
thick & terribly straight, sweeping the cage.

look at the moon, how it fades
all day like a mirror that thinks
& remembers, filling the earth,
& slows it.

soon the real body quickens & wakes.
I love you. lie still.

is what death is
a coming back, a
filling up of the eye,
a clearing out;
is what death is,
& echoes do;
is design.

First published in The Floating Bear 15 (1961).

Thread

next,
'in the seventh generation, cease
the orderly arrangement of your
songs'

the
words
remind us not to be in love with corpses,
carried in the whirlpool like a dance,
a spell where numbers of the other swimmers change
of (disappear in language) words to follow from word to word
although the stretch is trackless where the numbers were
already caught, cut, to fit impossible
equations, & construct a world toward which
to learn to face / to lift a face
toward call it a river for flowing
riverlike speech
a voice, or, watch, a play of voices
because it is not death that language loves,
but common waking after sleep;
as thought, as a breath, like a sail
takes the wind seaward,
out from edges of the world
(with human speech so rare a thing
we have to make it up). inventing an order, or finding
in foam, even in steam, mostly in ice, crystal, in skeletons, order;
in ice, skeletons
or take a whole mountain, most
is under water, but takes its name from what sticks up
& icebergs as they melt: neither like a man
who almost not thinking floats
in shallows, at midday the warm body
buoyant, or as if sinking, not knowing
that someone has straightened the bedclothes, falling asleep,
; nor not :

, where a skeleton in ice remains if it does,
where a missing child's inside a closet would have kept on turning,

‘But it was only a movie, dear.’

‘Everything,’ said Thales. He knew.

& next to know love as unconditioned reflex of the chaos that is

there,

which is neither order nor disorder,”

thus the thread of the water until it comes to

“neither heat nor cold, but their dissolution
call compassion.

I.

because it wasn't sugar
but (a word I've found again) surprise;
& again the need to begin
in words that leave no extra taste against the

silence

is a word for meeting,
to make a horn out of gold & think of kind kings
clearing the mud of that

river, those
clouds

(what

if a man gets his knowledge from nowhere else
can he give as a name to his own

mind, or

never dissolved, by water,
drift on the river's stone bottom
like shreds of raw silk

seeming to waken.

(because this water is not still)
the sheet-glass surface is quietly shaken
& breaks into ripples, as gulls rise

into the rooms of the hungry children
to watch the tall water close over their heads.

2.

well, old honey, back to the hard sound.
(what's keeping you?)

I think you want it too much too
somewhere as it is between the thorough
lawfulness of beehives, & on the other hand
this spiderweb that only seems to be a figure in a plane
is central: an extension of the sense of touch.

but think of the spider as in its own web trapped
(if any circumstance escapes yr notice
I am sure to be there to show you

nothing is going to happen
in this waste of sand, yr desert of
lapwings, or
flights of accidental
birds that cast such shadows toward the ground

upon which

this is yr life, neither
here nor there,
this is yr life, neither
birds that cast such shadows toward the ground

upon which

flights of accidental
lapwings, or
in this waste of sand, yr desert of
nothing is going to happen.

this matter, yr

everyday life. because yes
those forces were dangerous,
& this trap that we wd like to call a poem, then,
is not: the balance is yet to be struck
toward which, trapped in this web,

which is not a figure in a plane. look again. begin to see it

as a tunnel.

3.

or say that it is not love
but a secret that opens toward waking
forms out of words escaping into the morning
that force us to go looking after.

are you not hearing out of another
room of the house such laughter as if
we were children, making a game of the
law

& this action, a going, a
doing, a making
to come into being
is a game, a dance, is
Līla
(the play where the law stays, is fast)

is the hard part you missed
is the stone that you wished such light out of water through clouds.

26.I.59

First published in The Floating Bear 15 (1961).

Flowerpot Sutra

“One day Buddha was about to preach
a sermon. He lifted up a golden lotus
flower and without saying a word
showed it to the assembled monks.
Among them only Mahakasyapa
understood. He looked at Buddha
and smiled.”

—Sokei-An, in Cat’s Yawn

BEGINNING

to begin. to begin
now. to live.

to begin to move.

not in the direction of moving,
not in the direction of being-moved.

in the direction of moving-&-being-moved.

in the direction of not-moving-&-not-being-moved.

out. & in.

are there things to do?
there are things to be done.
there is nothing to be done. Oh
see this flower. &
smile.

for this, is a way.
it cannot be spoken.
what can be spoken
are places.
to pass.
before.
it.

before the way that is the end of going about.
while being shown

the flower.
while showing oneself
the flower.
before seeing, it.
until, it.
the smile.

until the then when
I shall see that now
was also that then.

& smile.

this I know having read
it in books,
to begin.

MIDDLE PART

I.

“on!” cry the teachers, “on to the shore!
over the river’s the opposite shore!
you’ve been there before!
before!
before! and! what!
was the face that you wore there before?”

the teachers lean on their staffs, & implore
you to answer & tell them the face that you wore
on the opposite shore, before.

their voices, words unwobbling
in the vibrant air,
do not, particularly, care
if anyone is there
to listen.

in them, is nothing that they mean
but do not know they mean:
what one thinks they mean, they mean,
& more. &, so long as there is / more,
the voices will implore

& get misunderstood.

but / I

do not know

any / buddhas:

I take my unlaidd evenings' ends
to the dialectic houses of my friends,

& grow,

slow by the magic
of that connatural human love
which, like the speechless very texture
of perception, is a fact
but no one's recreation,

humanly articulate.

our voices, weaving words
between us in the solid air,
show our pain, that we must care
lest no one, or, again
lest someone, should be there

to listen;

in them, is everything we mean

& do not know we mean

& do not wish to mean

&, there are times

when all these possibilities of meaning
these devious things, nowhere
completely recorded,

unquiet me, & wake

me to the urgent human terror

that always flutters, gently

in the bottoms of my brain:

when, if people tried to talk to me,

all the words they said would whistle & make echoes

in my head, & all their different meanings threaten me

like weapons, & change the crooning terror

to a paralysing keen: SOMETHING

SOMETHING

SOMETHING

is

GOING
GOING
GOING
to
HAPPEN.
HAPPEN.
HAPPEN.

&. I. do. not. move.

not move: lest at the furthest limits

of a world turned inside out

I find unthinkable a captive, crouching & entrapped,

furtive in brainpan's / unguessable crevice,

immobilised penitent, frantic but passive,

powerless witness / at window to world

that wobbles & wavers / as runaway golden

accomplishment-body / whirls

in a frenzy

the self,

all nude / & out of its role

gulping for air in ultimate corner;

panting, & not in control.

but, consider /

turn, in ultimate corner turn

& gaze at the wall:

is not, after all,

this, in a sense,

what always

is so?

for to plain noetic intellection

there are in fact no actors: only acts;

& what we name our selves

are nonexistent / strangers

in the mansions of what process we consist in,

nowhere palpable in marrow, bone, or flesh or skin;

undiscovered when we sit or stand or walk about or sleep;

and in our thought, when once we stop to think, we find

O, we

who are / as children / to the very children

are in fact like houses, whose enormous wings
are haunted by a boogeyman.

2.

there is a question
to discuss.
its proper answer is,
to show it answerless:
not knowing what the question is
 (it never was)
not hearing what the answer was
 (speechless like a blanket, &
 it always is)
to cut / our large & vague discomfort into parts
 (which cannot be)
& worry at the parts like dogs at meatless bones,
for marrow long dried out.

3.

there is
 (& there is known to be
at the turning centre / of that unmoving room
 (I have talked about madness
where the urgent terrors / loom expectantly & still
 (& now am talking of love
such a thing as one
 (by learning & by skill
might form a magic circle of, & summon
 (by going from not loving
from the populous bleak houses
 of the dead & dying it,
 (to loving
to its waiting incompleteness / a possible & living you
 (in to being loved.

for this, the ritual act & incantation
are immanent in need,
 that radically human fact,

the need we have of our completion,
whereof the art
 (we do not know the needed part
must be / to recognise its signs
& then
 though all its signs are shared
 with something else, & one in fact
 is never undeceived
perform the possibly effective act
& like a shaman. chant the act's
 for the shaman, too
depends on signs / & sets the times
for acts of magic
 perhaps by noting / flight of bird
 its tiny voice / that he has heard
& like us, by need;
but / the shaman has more art
 the legends of his craft, that language
 of the natural marks of things,
 he knows
than we, who are, by need
mostly misdirected / in looking out for signs:
& while his rituals
 perplexingly effectual
astonishingly satisfy,
our ineffective ritual declines
to rote, becomes habitual gesture
of impatience & relief,
ambivalent & brief,
& we forget what was the chief
reason that we do it for.

O marrow, bone, & flesh, & skin,
let copulation be / a conjuring for intercourse,
an act, though problematical,
of sympathetic magic.

& what is problematical in love is how it spreads
its hungry & interrogating threads
all over in the body, like the brain;
how the famished questions that it asks,

to which the amatory ritual has
to give a semblance, or,
the living body
of an answer, will
 unless somehow replied to
comprise themselves a mournful / incantation that at last
will summon up the shadows of a more-than-individual past
to fill the heavy air / of our unformulated need:
an obscure surly crowd that has us
prowl the reasoned streets
& tense in rented beds & howl,
or guides us
 out of individual life
forgetful to the houses of the dead.

but consider: need shows itself as a, relation
 from a me that is, onto one that isn't;
& one is not / somewhere between,
but takes one's stand in the relation:

for there is
 (& there is known to be
at the whirling fulcrum / of that unbudging room
 the objects of desire
 maintain, obscurely, their entire
existence
 (because that's all the talk there is,
that which,
 (in its measureless insistence,
brings
 back to the beginningless completion
 of one's own unthinkable not-self
all things.

ENDING

to be not in
but at the limit of
the world
 moving & being moved

only from another point of view;
but from one's own, neither
moving nor being moved
leaving all particulars of motion
up to passing days, not twice, with smile,
 (what the sages teach
is easy to find hard:

to be not in
but at the limit of
the world
 is not to be in any place
 that can be named beforehand;
 & instruction how to go
 is a kind of name beforehand:

but / a voice (& nothing more
 is seen
 in silences
 to questions that nobody asks,
 giving answers that nobody seeks
it stays, is fast,
 but, when the smile
 comes up like an arm out of water
 & spreads out its fingers over your face;
 like a hollow reed
 comes, with flowering face,
follows.

1956

First published in The Mendicant 1 (Autumn 1961).

Scratching

the poems that they make in hell are done with mirrors
used for traps & names like little tinkley bells for bait.
they raise up against me the ways of my destruction.
closed songs: feedback in the isolated system:
precision in inches: measurement without direction.

so you understand:

so I've given myself away:

& it's all done with mirrors. a game for shut-ins,
played in the smoky light, painful & useless,

I mean

LET ME OUT.

look, I'm going to throw my bait out with the twigs & seeds,
these are the portions the big cats reject, look

the head of a squeezey snake in moult,
sly birds in hooded cages (I could like a bird like these
by now no more than Tobit could),
rank leaves & pickled roots from trees dug out of sumps,
statues of invented angels,
jacks-in-the-box & also jacks in the basket,
knives & other tools for mumbleypeg,
knucklebones & little rubber balls,
brassy old clappers from towers,
the bodies of the mice that ate my stash last summer
then kicked their little frames,
Irene Tavener with a bandolier of rubber ashtrays;
festoons, & paper rosettes,
with this last & stuffiest quotation, "One alone is the real, the wise
call it by many names", this means the main wheel turns
with ease on many little bearings
but the mouth of the river
devours the thread of the water/

& watch this garbage
move across the smoothness of it, shifting
in & out of patterns, changing
towards the centre to a powder,
dropping /

whatever you have there, drop it. drop it.
DROP IT.

COME & LET ME OUT NOW /
I'M TIRED & DIRTY & I WANT TO TAKE A BATH.

1958

First published in The Mendicant 1 (Autumn 1961).

WRITING 3, 1964

The last newly located print poem

NOW

so far)

a perfect sign

like rain on a slope too long a time dry

heard at night, now the turn comes,

or felt

like former wars to set a bad peace back to rights,

with such delight, comes on

like a flood

of time to a place that knows what do once again

makes this to greet it

or her

the presence of whose grace I mean unfolds

or seems to disenfold as if there were

superior dimensions to the place, more light

across the flood to follow to our lady of

whom there is nothing to hold to

: for the water subsides. the afterflood of silt

sloughs off the land in flakes, & dries

& crumbles to a dust that daylight brushes

where the air expands across the field and half lays bare

this crust of bricks, that spread of bones, a heap of ash

a perfect sign.

“shall I cultivate these ruins?” to himself

the learned gardener says.

& a city springs to the eye.

(XII.59)

First published in Donald Allen, ed., Writing 3: 12 Poets & 1 Painter (Four Seasons Foundation, 1964), 32.

RECORDED WORKS

The March 30, 1958 Poetry Center program

The first audio file of the San Francisco State Poetry Center event preserves Boyd's reading from 0:00 to approximately 39:31. Titles and starting times below follow the archive's item description, checked by listening where possible. Titles in *italics* are represented by verified print texts in this edition; the other recordings await manuscript-supported transcription.

0:11 Not to Enter the West

1:05 Huibris

1:51 Unidentified Latin-titled poem

2:53 Now Let Us Pray for Peace as Sincerely as We Can

4:44 Poetical Predicament: Fragments of Homage to Wittgenstein

6:52 Flowerpot Sutra

19:00 This Is What the Watchbird Sings, Who Perches in the Lovetree

20:00 Petition

20:25 This Is How the Wind Sings, Lover, on the Beach

21:24 Summer Nightmusic

26:00 Summer Aubade

27:15 Water

28:14 Blackbirds

29:06 Song

30:00 A Chorale of Minstrels

31:12 New Year Poem, 1958

32:40 Vespers

33:58 Matins with Lauds, Which I Take to Be Midnight

35:18 Prime, Which I Take to Be Six in the Morning

The event's second and third files preserve the readings by Saul White and Stuart Z. Perkoff. All three files have been saved with the research assets because their sequence and introductions establish the original event context.

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- Syracuse University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center. LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Collection. Finding aid; Boyd material associated with Yūgen indexed.
- Online Archive of California / UC San Diego. "The actual flesh is simple breath without a voice." Annotated typescript, July 1958, one leaf. OCLC 18418326.
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TEXTUAL NOTE

Witnesses, lineation, and corrections

The reading text is keyed from the inherited forty-eight-page reset and collated against the available first-publication scans: Evergreen Review, Beatitude, J, The New American Poetry, Yūgen, The Floating Bear, The Mendicant, and Writing 3. The reset is a locator, not an authority. The scans determine wording, punctuation, stanza breaks, section divisions, collaboration credit, and visual position.

Clear mechanical damage has been corrected without announcement in the poems: “tho difference” to “the difference,” “metapocm” to “metapoem,” “one moi time” to “one mo’ time,” “Vivat in Aetemum” to “Vivat in Aeternum,” “awayl” to “away!,” “room.grown” to “room-grown,” “smil.e” to “smile,” “&r get” to “& get,” and similar isolated spacing or recognition errors. In “Sanctuary,” the anthology witness supplies “rooms of the hungry children.” In Flowerpot Sutra, a cropped Mendicant edge is supplied from an older independent reset as “was also that then. / & smile.”

Eccentricities that belong to Boyd remain: lowercase sentence openings, ampersands, slashes, split words, parenthetical drift, abrupt capitals, racialized and homophobic language, doctrinal parody, the apparent unclosed parenthesis in “Aubade,” and the performance notation of “Epithalamium.” The oddities are not treated as OCR merely because they resist conventional grammar.

The title Toward Morning is restored to the long sequence that an inherited file called “[untitled poem].” Its prose “Introduction” is reset as prose, followed by the lineated “Proem” and subsequent songs, war passage, and envoy. The complete sequence retains its internal headings. “This Is How the Wind Sings, Lover, on the Beach” follows the Yūgen and audio evidence; the inherited “Wings” is rejected. “NOW” retains the source date “(XII.59).”

Every poem begins on a new page. Indents are scaled from source-page coordinates at eighty percent to fit the Green text block. Authorial lines that remain too wide continue at the base margin; this is a typographic accommodation, not a new poetic line. The visual collaboration “Epithalamium” is diplomatically reset and followed by its printed facsimile, which governs its displaced letters and graphic marks. Verse remains fixed at EB Garamond 10.55/13.15 points throughout.

The title Collected Poems describes the verified print corpus in hand. The recorded works list establishes omissions that cannot yet be responsibly transcribed. A future revision should consult the Donald Allen and LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka collections,

Boyd manuscripts, and the 2026 Magra edition, then collate any recovered texts against the SFSU audio.

COLOPHON

Production record

Designed and edited in Los Angeles in 2026 for Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry. Six by nine inches; mirrored margins; EB Garamond; cream page field; live-text Green cover system.

The cover uses the project's existing full-color Venice Beach collage, newly cropped to center the swimmer and sharks within the standard 432-by-437-point art panel. The archival section is deliberately short and contains only the Margolis photograph, the first located "Aubade" page, and Boyd's opening in *The New American Poetry*.

Research files, downloaded pages, audio, source scans, cover art, fonts, build code, and QA records are preserved in the poet's production folder. No source asset has been discarded.