



GIL ORLOVITZ

Selected Poems

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

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Selected Poems

Gil Orlovitz

A Critical Reading Edition

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record

**GIL
ORLOVITZ**

**CONCERNING
MAN**

**THE BANYAN PRESS
NEW YORK
1947**

*Title page of Orlovitz's first collection, *Concerning Man* (1947).*

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The text was transcribed from the source page images in the local archive and collated against available embedded text. Source-page wraps were rejoined only when the page image showed that they were typographic continuations; stanza breaks, meaningful indentation, epigraphs, subtitles, and section headings were retained. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction, spelling, or punctuation. Each poem ends with a source note in the established Green-volume form.

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Introduction

Gil Orlovitz never stayed in one literary lane. He wrote jagged sonnets, war elegies, psychoanalytic diaries, grotesque comic monologues, plays, screen stories, and novels whose sentences seem determined to break out of every available form. Philadelphia, the Army Air Corps, New York theater, San Francisco presses, and Hollywood script rooms all fed the work. The small books could look isolated when encountered one at a time; together they reveal recurring figures—Miss Pink, Professor Bold, Dr. Eric Zeno, Alexander Patience, the Great Ape—and a long argument about family, art, Jewish memory, violence, sex, and survival. This edition resets the poetry books and recoverable sequences held in the archive, following each source's order and preserving the deliberate fractures that ordinary OCR tends to erase.

Biography

Gilbert Orlovitz was born in Philadelphia to Morris and Rose Orlovitz, Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He was named for an older brother killed in childhood. After high school and study at Temple University, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941, listing his civilian work as author, editor, or reporter. His first verified poems appeared while he was in service.

After the war Orlovitz studied dramatic composition, philosophy, and comparative religion at Columbia University and worked with Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop. Theater remained inside the poetry: masks, named speakers, abrupt scene changes, and argumentative voices structure even short lyrics.

Concerning Man appeared from Banyan Press in 1947, followed by *Keep to Your Belly* in 1952. Inferno Press published *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno* and *The Diary of Alexander Patience*. Hearse Press issued *The Papers of Professor Bold*. These small-press books established a linked population of unstable comic and philosophical personae.

Orlovitz worked in Los Angeles as a Columbia Pictures staff writer and later for television. His credits include *Over-Exposed* and western series such as *The Adventures of Jim Bowie* and *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*. Commercial dialogue and scene construction became another workshop for his poetry.

His first marriage was to Bettie Bennett. He later married Maralyn Marquize, with whom he had three children. Family life, parents, children, erotic rivalry, and guilt run through the books, but the personae should not be treated as unmediated autobiography.

Orlovitz also published the novels *Milkbottle H* and *Ice Never F*, the first two parts of an unfinished trilogy. *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love* appeared in London in 1969 and *More Poems* in 1972. He died in New York the next year, and the delayed identification of his paupers' grave became part of his posthumous story.

Gerald Stern, George Steiner, Rick Schober, and later small-press advocates helped keep the work visible. Schober's documentary biography has supplied the most reliable modern chronology and should be used with military records, title pages, press archives, and family testimony.

Concerning Man

Stage I | 1947

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1947 collection, reset from its source pages.

Sonnets and Lyrics

Sonnet

Thy snout, oh God, of burning blankness and hairy
with all the smeared twist of the elements, thicks:
oh Lord, thou art catarrhal with diversity.
Though after my fleshwrestle with thee my smell shricks
to thee, thou art anointed with the universe, saved
from the lusting, crawling lice of me. Wouldst thou refute
this small to vast shame, that love is gizzardraved
from the little to the larger?—thou jewelled brute?
For man scabs within me; his boils would burst
within me. supplant thy black and starry blood
with a storming, begging, laughing, cheating, cursed
and stony slime; and earth would chew its cud
of buried men in mockery. Lord—
if thou wouldst be whole, thy snout must have me gored.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 3.

Sonnet

Whose fingers tighten now around God's throat,
vanquish perspective's mighty athlete from
diminishment, exact from spatial rote
time's colossal perpendicular—drum
you man upon the tympanum-roll
of firmament, pronounce you oceanic
mind that launches to distance and to whole
from the blue ways of starcaps all titanic.
Hands that know but the self's Jehovah's, choke
sublime imposturing that here must grovel
whore at the cloven feet he owns in hovel,
ancient, highest beast, drugged with battle-smoke
from man's smoulder he blessedly beset.
Fingers, know that you are God's amulet!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 4.

Sea-Sonnet

Song of the sea
spray on a ski

pyramids of glint
acrobat sprint

song of the sea
foam bent at the knee

schoon of the light
through buoys of sight

white sails of spume
green hulls upfume

song of the sea
tunes of the sand
dances the land
out of all body!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 5.

Sonnet

Jew, murdered, ghettoed in grave, old derision
of peoples fertile ravenous circumcision,
earths emigrant, visad by eternity,
whipped with the catoninetails of wind and sea
from gate to gatelessness, from torpor to torque,
split down the middle that light is pronged with fork,
Jew, swart by Gods diatherm, akimbo of nose
by hook of introspect, loanshark of spirit at sky
rates of body ascensions of self, balked at inclose
by the seal of unseal, by the enormous pry
yet jockup of single Yahvehs single pillar
of fire, what burning unknowable root is this
that must pierce man with agony to uphold universes,
great Criminal God that for fusion must be Killer!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 6.

Sonnet on Man

Terror at days gougeout whores man ice beneath
his sheets of flesh, pays her shriek, cower, shrivel,
she strumpet of obsess he courts at a dervish swivel,
what screaming succulence of ripe wind on hells heath,
how grind his cells in glaciers of devouring teeth,
what a shadowing skulk of her he does as though
his magnitudinous grandeur must be raped
to get him space to conceive what he has aped,
mans lust for terror builds towers of teeming vertigo,
so falls he howling down the shafts of moon
to spit the self into the suns spitoon,
giant of a cringer man! gods gnat of a glow,
infinity the blinding sweat upon his soul
he wipes with his bodys death of stammered stole.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 7.

Lines on a Season after War

The green hypnosis of spring jade,
suspending winter's swift blade,
made it night and knelt it keen
on the curving neck of the sunset scene.

All emerald magic is half-mast,
memorial to the earth beneath,
and so must poise what has been cast
below the sunning of its wreath.

The green hypnosis of spring jade
made brain a wand to loft the spade
of burial to heart a leaf,
flowering beyond the grief.

I did not think their death could be
summarized, combed into one
terracing of seasonal eternity
that I might be ensorcerized and done

by the green hypnosis of spring jade
suspending winter's swift blade,
yet makes it night and kneels it keen
on the curving neck of the sunset scene.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 8.

From the Sea

Lines at lonely littoral
remember the keener tide,
the waves the wings of a gull
in skimming trenchancies
along the scan of sand,
beyond the angler of the eye,
the gray mind of the earth
to the green mind of the sea.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 9.

Hawk

Glide is the trough of the great hawk;
gleaning the spaces with his tongues of wing
his eyes are plumed with distance and cry.
Mating the plunging moult of his energies,
layer by layer, till death bares,
white and grinning, its heavy bone
at plummets plunder of stunned bottom,
body stripped of streamline, still.

Hawker of flight, earth is the coin
 of the lift, freights for the final falling,
cumulate of climb is the cargo of dying.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 10.

These Be Whetstones

Blades make monasteries,
cloisters knives;
loneness is a gallow
where love is hung
by the heart till it
is done and dead;
inspring is the murder-well,
cold with deep,
final solutions;
drink not of severances,
these be whetstones.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 11.

The Sea

Like a long slow roll on the drums comes the sea,
comes after the hunt over the veldt of the oceans
for the typhoons of tigers, the mistrals of leopards,
lofting the white teeth of the spray as the trophy,
like a long slow roll on the drums comes the deep-gorged sea.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 12.

Brief Me on God

For god's sake brief me on god:
not the roil Red Sea, nor Aaron's rod,
not pasture of miracle where we graze
when want freezes in a maw of glaze,
not the cracked statuary of apocalypses,
nor coronas of beauty in body eclipses.
For god's sake brief me quick.
The vital surface is madly slick,
ignition's wild to spark holocaust
at eternity's chassis beneath man's exhaust,
time's a gamin five-fingered at nose,
mortalities taunt from lynching rows.
For god's sake brief me on god.
Grandeur is curt under the sod,
humanity's grid-lines snarl in space
to balls of star who have lost face,
tell me what saviour, tell me what form
in the midnight express to multiple swarm.
For god's sake telegraph him.
Give me a zag of his graph through the limb
of my terror plumbing the dark,
or tell me true, tell me with laughter
as you howl from infinity's rafter—
god is grafter, god is grafter!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 13.

My Nephew at Ten Years of Age

Tips of canoe he smiles,
and hair curl such squall
that highlights of sun
make whitecaps of twirl!

Sprints of breath he talks
to catch man's schedule
from crowded depots of mind;
caught, he brags behind.

Clusters of chuckle
prince from his lips,
bursting soon after
to kings of laughter.

Daubed all over with streaks
of deft, he feints, he sneaks,
hunting and trapping for age
in the keeperless human cage.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 14.

Lines on an Autumn Evening

Startling the frozen splash of star
upon the curved, chill cheek of sight.
The sudden suck of sky and air and night
into the vitals' crimson bower
strikes such height of bite
that the heart leaps like a stag shot,
and the nerves shudder like a hundred harps.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 15.

Lyric

Love knows no law
but the Song of the thaw
and the channel that flaw
makes in the gem of our hard,
for glaciers glide slow
and icy on guard
to the greens down low
on the slopes of the manstone,
and we must have cleft
in the rock of the manlone
to clamber with deft
down our sides to our flow
of our margins of merge,
for love is below
all seasons of purge
and shall have no law
but the Song of the flaw.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 16.

To St. R

I have caught love a-nap,
she is spring without longing,
gold beyond tap.

I will lie with her sleeping,
that love shall not wake,
for without slumber
she must decline
by the well of our slake.

I have caught love a-nap,
all golding and greening,
and ever is mine
while knowing me not;
we must dread full meeting,
all merging is fleeting
though I've caught love a-nap
from fertility's cheating.

Goodnight, goodnight,
my green and golden sight,
I will shut my eye
for love's napping immortality!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 17.

Lines on Tears

A tear is a cell
for the self brought lone,
the single crime
of giving known;
but a tear is a cell
with prism-bars,
that light shalt state
colored fractions
at blind isolate;
but tears of interior
look to gravity,
yet unlike others
never fall,
for bodyless
they own no thrall
to freedom's earth
and buried treasures
of gall;
then if I must weep
at all,
give me tears outward,
outward tears
that shall not damn me
to the buoyant agony
of madness high alone,
tears interior
of birds in stone!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 18.

Before Night

Burr the wind,
and slurring over on the verge of howl
soon, on the lurch
of afternoon to twilight, had the black nail
on the horizon,
soon, when the whole pale blue eye of the day
come blind
in the toppleward back to the socket of the sky,
brood it then,
sightless, and man
veer by this vast vast beggar
with the burr of the wind on his moveless mouth,
slaver him for man,
come, come in,
there are not laughter enough for my drouth,
and I will slumber like an idiot cur by all of your hug,
be mongrelmonger of your mirth
and swordsman of your sword that shall en garde! your earth,
veer you, and race
you as a harespring in the heathjaw of clock, yet,
yet, yet
I shall have you sit and take my place
with burr the wind
and slurring over on the verge of howl
soon, soon
on his moveless mouth.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 19.

Quatrain

Enchanted to the linking music of forge and chain,
we form by love's braille our children in a Sightless spring,
Fertility is fruitful only without an eye;
and blind we beg alms of inheritance Passing,

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 20.

Werewheel

Skate on a squeal you squiffscald Werewheel,
carcinogens gallop the moiled murk,
deaths the mult of riotous congeal
and queaned eternity sluts up your gutspiel.

Black catalepsies yowl with pearl lips,
like trumpeters in paralysed prowl,
caudal cacophonies lash huge rips
from the skysquatted purpura bowel.

Jeopard the leopard jeering your funk,
djinndjinn daft, din jagged atoms drunk,
jabbering crystal murder through density,
your paranoid jaguars of immensity.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 21.

Bird

In careens of carom
down the gliders of calm
is a ricochet of wing
from high canyons of fling.

Coil in a cone is the plumb
deep to the speed of a numb,
quanta of sheen beyond sheer
far to the steep of a sear.

What echoing of chandelles
from motions curved moults,
what a drunk of burst wheels
from the long spokes of holist!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 22.

Lyric

Electrics whites amoked suns reds
and staffed with drained blaze the taut sheet
where the spiralled gold thermometer
of her stuck out of my eyes mouth lusts
tongue like goosed quicksilver sliding up
the embossed graduations of her trembles
from quietudes everbulging vessel
to high fevers dagger of poised
paralysis and exhaustions raw tremendous
autopsy blaring out of the now
darks shortcircuit of your connecting
desperations alternate current
murder and lust murder and lust murder.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 23.

In Perfect Affliction

Each man the blindness he cannot forget,
as the mute in tongueless recall;
each man the silence dumbly inset
in stuporous madrigal.

Each man the stone
beyond his hammer,
the promenade of prone
under the prow of clamor,

Numb must he sing him his round:
without ear eternity's sound;
and eyeless become star-lit:
in perfect affliction the infinite.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 24.

Lyric for L.S.S.

Eagle-assaulted, eye
devoured to the sky,
such wing-contempt
for body pre-empt
this swift high
shrug of resurrect,
such pure renown
that blue confirm
of soul delivered
from its subsidies—
that no earth for me today—
from any mongerer of clay!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 25.

Lyric

The wind drives on sleigh whips over the tops of trees,
the light slides up like a bitten thigh,
the birds sing into the green microphones of the leaves,
to the hollow of our throats we tug the sky!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 26.

Lyric

I am a jerk with purple curls
in the blueblack dive of a city,
smearing around with orangeeyed girls
called Tara and Vixim and Slitty.

Saxophone midnight I blow in a drag
and indigo down the gutter,
killing the rats for my bellyswag
and the stars for my bread and butter.

Prowl of the catgreen, moon of the dog,
I fence and silver the alleys;
devil of pounce and smother of fog,
I sweat at the oars of galleys
shaped from the trunks of ginstewed men
who likker their flesh through the darkness.

Soul have I of a garbage den,
frappes of lust and sharkness,
bones of dream and slop of want,
rumboogied brains and jeering,
violin slums and roasts of runt
and salvarsans for rearing.

Dive in muck to get your pearls
and find your jerk with purple curls!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 27.

Memo to St. R

Love, earthalland and sealand with your browngold hair,
undeath me, nail me away from the pallbearers who
would carry me naked to breath's shallow grave. What priest
would pray me here, sprinkle me holy, shove Christ
against me with a dirty shovel? None. Swell!

Your lopsided torque of gut and torso,
the shimmertaut strangle of your skull's auburn ropes,
your fingerghosts arch up a million little rising gods of sweat
commanding me to suck up their goatish stench. Oh jesus
I have not tongues enough to caucus your flesh, hive
it in me, the shivering honey curdling the ripping
teeth. I suffocate in the coffin,
got to to spasm in the passionwind,
else the marathon round your bodytrack stops. I
am the star of love's
olympics:
sprint to the belly, polevault over frenzy's rod,
broadjump of mouth from mouth to groin, hurdle and race and dive
and wrestle.

We are the parallelbars for gymnastic love's
headstand, flipover and strut.

You burning bitch
of a woman—we're insane in a padded cell
of stars!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 28.

Two Flamencos

(1)

Blood: mallet of red wood,
jawed with iron cleats,
trapped to man's heel,
riveting with hammerlust,
hammering with rivetlust
bodies to pounded earth—
Ai! Denga, denga!

Are you men-blood-jugs?
Will you empty yourselves
into jagged scarlet splashclaws
on the earth?
No! Denga!
Blood will not pour. No.

Chop up the blood
like the dice of onions,
and cry, cry!
with the laughing sting,
for blood must be pile-driven
in chunks, in drummings, in smashes
for the body to be beaten
and smashed and flattened
to spreadeagle the earth,
to curve the great wings of soul around it,
of earth, in earth,
for the love of earth, you carrion, you herd of bladders—
Ho! Denga!

Now as if agony cast a scarlet fishhook
into you—Ai! since your desire has not yet lain
with the dynamiting and the hot searing black which is earth—
Denga, denga!—
your white neck lurches, Ai!
your white neck lurches outward and sideways like taffy pulled madly—
and your voice is a high hungry skinny wire of whine, Ai! Ai!
your face vomit, dengadengadenga!
belly bulged to spit.

Blood. Body. Earth. Ai! Ai!

(2)

Bold, bold—hah!
Are you then the buckle of gold
tightnotched round lust's bull?
Have you then sheared off the great sharp horn
which gores long gapeholes
for fathers to hurl through seed
before time will seal it—eh?
have you then made castrations
so that you will swell with you-glory?
Bold, bold—hah!

I stamp the short swift plungings of my heels in your face!
Pah!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 29.

Elegies

On the Death of the Soldier

Far up the scroll of twilight birds decoded
the darkening blue crypt of sky to oval vowels
of flight.

No sound now here but the sea's soft cymbals.

Three footprints had spoken his ascension, bent low
and crouched upon survival as man on moving
altars prays to moving gods, from the waters:

these too the waves have walked to slow erasure.

Surrendered to the mute diction of the atoms and the dusk all
the guns lay abdicant from their thrones of thunder.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 33.

For My Cousin Killed in Action: Pacific 1945

Curled carbon, flesh blacked by his time of years
summed up by his time of suns in scarlet platinum
converge of blaze upon him, eternity ever
both steelcased and exploding on man, the swift
rubber-whip death, struck and recoiled, the bull-lash
of it cut out of the hot blue black circus of somersaulting
planes and sky, and the stinging curt cackle of retraction
against the belly of the past dead, leaving the onlookers
with their lives hanging agape and white this instant,
while on the disembowelled medusa-scalp
of deck the mortal glue of cells death-sexed
to nuclei of smoky air, Sir Sirloin
messed and ruined, curled carbon is the youth,
a fist of nightsoul stinking, its fatty hunchbacked
knuckles still grease-sizzling for your remorselessly revolving
spit of memory.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 34.

On the Death of a Man

Whose swift wires, sky-trickforged, deathspliced, to juice
in unseen from the great gray outside mix to common-denominate,
in one of the suntongue lingos, sapphire, slim sluice
instrunged to earth, are these, in pasts always tight out a dilate,
that chromosomes by chokestring the soldier up to acrobat
in final genius-act the eternity-leap,
his arms a rigid beg-out, awkward Christ whose thermostat
of mouth showfires conference unanticipant reap
of all men's agony, dumb space's stunning accolade,
whilst the enemy squat-group screams creed of they
chainbulleting him from distance's interhugging braid,
tugging his transitory taut in hatred's hellbray,
that he is vault of their surge, they the thaumaturge
of his ascending vanishment by their lynching scourge,
truth's scab! grief shrieks, infect on sight's flesh
of his mortality's gutcoil splurged out in lurch
to this black globe beneath, blood and time in savage mesh,
he pyramiding on the pile of his loss and smirch—
whose the vast neutral instab and hanging and outsuck
of man through death's lean lashstrangle of fluency—
whose but exchunked ripped God's, ripped God's, of His ruck
to reloat Him to the universe's congruency!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 35.

FIRST ELEGY

One wound's enough.

For once the incision's made into
your world, you never can stop your flowing out into
the other endless worlds, a raging counterpoint of souls,
unchecked. Though all your ego tries to coagulate
it, your integers of pride, astonishment, the deception of newness
of self—

all of them try to coagulate the coursing of blood outward,
always outward. But it will not stop, ever.

Your mother
began it, the birth, the first abrasion. That was the freedom from
the warm cage of absolute containment, meaning beginning
of your destruction. But freedom is the real imprisonment,
the separation of you into a thousand littler
but harsher cages.

Birth was enough, that started it.

So,
we are a multitude of haemophiliacs.

The aristocracy
of evolution has made us suffer thus. We pay
the blood-coin: our hatred of immergement; and despair
because we cannot even know, as we aristocratically
should, the last payment, the death, the final dispersion among
elements, the split infinity.

SECOND ELEGY

Now then:

I have his letter on one hand at my thigh,
and in the other palm, now loose, as if nerves had had birds,
though tending upward, the memory of the tight, protesting
grief-fist which clenched when his father, for a moment, stuck out
a tongue over his high wailing wall telling the sorrow
that always telegraphs in four thud words: 'My son is dead'.

Man's limbs forever are designated weighing-scales:
the one is low from the something-given heaviness, while
the other is high in surprise and gape-fingered from the taking-away
lightness; and though they are scales (you the gaunt, inserted ful-
crum),

one never can make them opposite; nobility, meaning
and purpose lie in the grunting strain to make them so:
the ecstasy of equality in the life-death breathing from
the common pool of metamorphosis (a form we must pass
through, nothing more, for nature shakes savage at being peered
at by the same concentration. Prism me through other spectrums,
she cries. The transforming. This the belief we agony to prove).

But I cannot equilibrate my two hands to the same plane; they
are immutable as the fossil that caught time's imprint in
the rock; perhaps I have caught the rare contemptuous irony
of time relaxing in the grip of my incomprehension to taunt,
negate, to impotent me.

His letter stares
at a blunge of violence: ocean-waves chill his groin's maleness
as then he crept on Saipan's beach; the enemy's bullets flare
quick coloraturas of sound behind him; the guts jerk
in the sling of terror suspended from his spinetop 'They're using
up all my reality; soon I'll have to imagine reality,
and that will touch insanity's gross yawn'.

Here is my humanness.

**I give you the colored crayons of it as a beggar, at a minimum;
I do not want it. For it has made my eyes throw up
his gravestone on my retina, and to see his roots
grow profoundly away from me in the earth: He has died,
for do I not mourn him in the frozen imbalance of
my statuary?**

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THIRD ELEGY

What passion is the direction? Whose flesh is the going? What
 straining
 of the squinting eye is the coming?

After all, even though
 your senses have edited the processions and published in the rain
 the long shining triangle of tracks with the triangle's bottom never
 completed and always dropped into the endless backing up
 of your perception (that's the shattering of the lie
 right there!)—even though—after all, isn't the compass
 (go on, now, turn your blood and flesh around in a complete
 circle right on that point of earth which by your turning
 will be scooped out slowly and steadily for a depth enough
 of grave)—

isn't the compass people and things gazing at you from each
 degree of the three-hundred-and-sixty, converging on you, and are
 not each of them stared at also, by the you-degree
 in its turn?

Why then do you ask destinations? And why
 do you ask beginnings?

Have you not noticed that we have put
 up our tents with an infinite variety of poles, and staked them down
 with many kinds of ephemeral anchors?

Our core
 is a whirling one, and men find the great whoredom with energy
 in being thrown off into the natural nomadry.

Have you not seen
 the silver earrings that are the planets—
 dangling from gypsy space?

FOURTH ELEGY

I had a dream of Time as a wound on every man,
from which slow chimes throbbed out in round red cells.

Come, they cry,
insert your finger, push in your fist, stop the bleeding
of my immortality with your body of love,

But when
they understand that their desire is not as bottomless
as the wound, their pleas will end, their sacrifices no longer be
offered.

What a shame that understanding chokes short of death's tourniquet.

No wonder the midwives laugh at the mothers: 'A time was born
to you tonight'. For such insane freedom chipped from
a corner of hugeness that protrudes into our eyeballs, and stuffed
into flesh and bone— will not shrink till it is infinity again.

Forlornest of
man's advertisements: Body, to let.

FIFTH ELEGY

Soft and flaring metals
are men,
who moult their lights such blinding petals
on our eyestems
that we must fold them
in and through us, sunken suns
refracted out from us, no longer sum,
but unreeled roots of color come,
for men must be broken
lest they be unspoken,
and stained
to be retained;
unknown are men in their total screaming sheen:
men in spectrum may be seen.

SIXTH ELEGY

According to the Passion of Saint Death
now slumber the crucifixes of man's diurnal verticals, for they are
lowered
from their agonies on the slashed brilliant junctions of the sun.
What a merciless dumb hanging they have endured on the breasts
of dumb
energies, secured to the towering neck of spouting
desire.

Who lowers him? who flows him to the million horizontals
now circularly flowing about the earth?—
Death, each christ's disciple?

And, like
the gazelle at the pool in a jungle-clearing apprehends
the hunter's embrace, have you not sensed this halo
of death around the earth when you lowered your head
into the heavens for a drink of nightwater?

My grandfather,
stand no longer upright, no longer lynched
to lust of boughs of your own devisal, for you
have swirled around my skull tonight with all
the ecstatic transfers!

I shall, like all men, go
abroad tomorrow in my vertical, but in
my marrow read with them the Passion of Saint Death.

SEVENTH ELEGY

Now men are faces on canes, tapping: ^{Amputations.} ~~The bodies had been inflammable~~ and touched with lightning;
 how ~~banished~~ from clearness do we remember the flaming
 to fusion to a sheet of root, which found dissipation
 like a waterspout on our insatiable deserts of hard
 and separate skulls.

Our relies are the canes, for can
 you not hear us tapping toward each other, forever
 missing each other: for the bodies, which are needed
 to resolve man's codes, are stems upholding our crypts.

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EIGHTH ELEGY

Crisis, crisis the metallic triangle of man's groin.
Shimmering after shivering the triangle is blurrung, springing with
jabsound
from tonespines arched in spasms, concussioned by players lavishly
shrill around us. What brand of shrieking vibrance will he trill
when you hammer
him? and you? and another? How profound may the hyenacurdling
basses descend?

But this triangle, whose engining geometry pyramids peoples,
is poised on knowing's vertex; and from the infinite
downpoundings the angle ruptures, and thus is man, standing
dumbly, dumbly, dumbly, legs spread as the about-to-be-slaughtered
ox—
holding his groin in the horrible cold cramping pain, lusting
for the undemanding unsweated inexhausting intercourse
of earth's eternity.

And yet we pile ourselves with numberless layers of nakedness,
accumulating outward our innermosts to flood onto the interiors
of others, only to appear insanely strange, unnameable,
truth cancered, wild, amok. You cannot spill the guts
of core: the integer of truth monsters by hunger of one for
one-hundred-million.

They hound, then, they hammer
him on the crises of the groin-triangle until the crotch of his
sanity hernias and splits from the great weight of torturing mankind
making their freight of brutal music upon him. With what
spout of howl equatoring from midnight to blinding noon will
they wail and mourn when, after knelling his deeps to echo
their own, they will behold their insides out, for this
had been the gradual screaming smithying of their own
life-ore into the hardened hammerwrought sphere of earth
whirled by its maker death! all crisis now dissolved; immortalized,
now and again, as the Jesus Crisis.

NINTH ELEGY

And what of us as blades?

The knife-thrower at the carnival outlines the spectator's
rage, murder, freedom, whip and swoon with each stab
of the cast. And what astonishment of shame they gape when
they see
that his daggers quiver in the total shape of man or woman,
though he had made them his target all the time. 'It is a wonder
we were
not killed, but at least we found, in his jealousy, that he envied
us our being,
and proved it!' Then knife-throwers are gods, and take us out of
dust,
which is why we pray to them, and ask for peril.

But what
of us as blades?

As: moving through man's colossal marketplace
of cutlery we sharpen ourselves on each other till our cutting-edges
consume our bodies and in turn keen so thin that we
are sliced through to death.

Those of us, that is, that are blades.

And as point of the blade?

What if it were all a Damoclean universe?
Is it not a stupendous game to point out that we have a vast
and immortal and unchangeable lust to remain paralysed beneath
the suspended godhead of the father's murderous sword?

We
are at blade-points with each other!

TENTH ELEGY

Source, sorcery!

In the great surging coiffure of dark
jewels will blazon in the fashion of being only, only
as you bleed it with the raucous dazzle of leaping lie. Come,
we must torment the black fountain with the scythe of light.
God's female. We are such vanities of hers while we
presume our passing grotesque: organisms are her style,
ecstatic are her agonies of us.

Source, sorcery!

ELEVENTH ELEGY

Granite spring, from whom we carom stings of flow,
here on the old bodies are your wisdoms, stony and gnomed,
wizened and wry, the icy knots of young passion's
sweat, petrifications under the desiccate brilliant of flesh
chaste and deserted, for the moment of deepening contains the root
of gnarl. Where the sun, in dimming through torqued branches of
carbon

sheets, is birth; and blood, all dully, kneels whittling at wooden
recall; and love must haggle over habit. Where man, all filled
and damned with angles dancing, must fall, all weary, prostrate
to flat line.

Never remembering, I never fail
in finding this leaden, leaping scene, erect for it always,
looking ever, for it must be as copulation,
then, this death. Who cries, unrequited? who vaunts, celibate?
Let me behold this liar: I may call him God, that vast,
raping sterility which man, female in his earthly walk,
hunts always.

But I see them prone, ever, after the lust.
Hard, wry, stone, wizened, small, are wisdoms.
All spring of granite, from whom we whip stings of flow.

TWELFTH EILÖY

As a doll is fearful of losing the manipulator, I am afraid
that I shall be returned to the dark rooms of my childhood, where

I kept
an ungrowing vigil over growing up: I wanted to poison
him! Now he towers, while the dwarf circles bitterly
around him.

(What do we compare? broken patrols to mystery?
cells to amphitheatres? shattered glass to transparency? urges
to a million brinks of a million waterfalls? Will death rescue
the actuality of measurement? Will you, for reason's sake,
set a thing before me long enough that I may live
it, that it shall not capsize in prior forces and subsequent relation-
ships?

But we talk to ourselves, really, and we are madmen when we insist
that we have eavesdroppers!)

What an incessant piccolo is childhood! How shrill
the primitive nights, and the idea of twilight stuck like a barb
in my daytime body.

(Do you hear me? Have we a well-tempered clavichord
of universe on which we may compose the segments of ourselves
to you?

Do you hear me? Or are we only at the beginnings of the savagery
of mutually projected introjections?)

The State would have me mad!
would have me infant among a billion infants, so that
my father again will know everything that I am thinking and feeling.
I tell you I hated and feared my father with every scream
in my being; but knowing that I must return, I did not wish
to ascend: knowing crippled freedom damns one for sound-limbed
slavery.

(Have I said it with depth, and then with clarity? for one

must have the first to buoy keen floating forms on surfaces—.
Floating forms.... You see, it is no use, you children sink
them with great glee....)

Now he towers, while the dwarf circles
bitterly around him.

THIRTEENTH ELEGY

Thunder lost, someday come.

Lit latening be broken ancient twag of fire cross gnarled knuckle
of cloud.

Summers gone, fruitfill wane.

Wearfore change, wonder feign.

Sombre the hand that shudow brailliance in the palm to merge for
peer a twilight time.

Lair for dial, none to sum.

Autumn found, cool it soon.

Call low to blood on the leaf from the murder of the green that
we in all war have done.

Mourn the brow, grown with groin.

FOURTEENTH ELEGY

Swirl, atom,
under kilt of king and stone!
sphynxian throne and hutted glacier in the slum of thigh,
and under the ghastly gum of booted eternity.

No lock there be
but key into infinite key,
turn on turn till the stately wheel come whirl,
till bitten core between the teeth of interlocking,
no lock but key all interlocking.

Muckful majesty,
god granite, gunned in bone
by rifling man with eye of infinite cannon,
split you by gambling spin sphincter death
to star steam
and green explosions deep in iced integument.

What mote shall not unfurl
fungus of adamantite upon the world?
What obdurate diamond glower
shall not with brashful scintillants devour
frowned armor, and sperm panoply to sponge
with spiking scour?

What solve there be,
what undulant acid combing through to broken indices of shelled
epiphany,
come key so guillotined and more, and more by twain in unentwined
to tripled twining,
that millionheaded prime comes falling,
source delta-damned, and deltas damned
to the unloosed tress of beginnings,
no lock but key all interlocking.

Swivel, lion jot,

through the dam of unmonogrammed multitude!
Oh questing quanta of gyral, span
gelded glooms and the spartan whelming scarpment of time
rearing vitriol sentinel.
Shake, shatter and shard
craven cathedrals of prone,
where robed in the mighty ribbed lies of sheen
and the haughty huge of self untumulted to atrophy,
cardinal go despot and conqueror.

Catch poignants from steeple,
blazès from ponder,
scuffles from stun
and spumes from rooted ripple!

No love there be
but mad magnetics minstrelsy,
high hungered hug of gnarled antiphony,
cloy clash of cling
danced in volant vortices among
voluptuous virago of thrummed thrash
to mangled pointillist of mingling,
no lock but key all interlocking.

What birth there be,
what transmigration from jeopardy to gene,
avatar of flung, and thrust, and vastly trunnioned athwart
from the swart
sash of lynch, taut to limit's throat,
to the dazzling tangle in the cyclonic disc of gist,
come key so coiling keen
that savagery plunders dynamited serpentine
hurling time's poniards at the carbonflesh of transcendental
implicate,
long, livid teeth of interlocking damascene,
no lock, but key all interlocking.

FIFTEENTH ELEGY

To all you wealthy dead, and poorly living, and bright-eyed blind,
 I bequeath a crescent world's conceits from a pennant mind;
 as, such avenues that walk down cracks of people,
 and butterflies that hang themselves from nervous noose and gow-
 samer steeple;
 or, that we are ever spokesmen of diametric wheel,
 and circles steer with angled keel;
 as, all whips are only strong as their weakest lash,
 and jails escape from multitudes and crash;
 or, that hours are arrowheads unearthed,
 and roots branch out and stalks head in all mirthed;
 as, the spider is a marvel marionette,
 and dreams dream symmetry caught in twisted jaws of debt;
 or, that liquid acquits itself of ice,
 and scaffolds burrow into secrets' entice;
 as, slumber rising over eyebrow's horizon,
 and voices hoarse with schemed bedizen;
 or, that thoughts are codes of fleshly burial,
 and solids run out of motion face their mercurial.
 Now if you look these burnished quiddits high,
 your stinging boil of sty becomes a pyramid on the eye!
 and all you wealthy dead, and poorly living, and bright-stare blind,
 do now inherit a crescent world's conceits from a pennant mind!

SIXTEENTH ELEGY

No spirit's autumn dusk flamed flares of time for mind:
were ghost there from mortal outcome? and the harsh lineage
of deposing dream? And what were echo green coronals
in the land, now cite music of the death of crowns.
As though, and failing the root, the light had lain too
long on our eye, and must decay to demidark,
so fear impends by slowful detonation: damned,
damned, damned our time, narrowhipped and mereloined; all slip-
pered
on guttering thrall; and what had been the fiery
kinged candles of our anniversaries, now sealed
to eternity's sweet icing and perfect crime.
Our senators of will, who to the dumb constituency
of their crucifixions call, as they lean from windows
at the palsy-stricken spring, Where shall
I hang tonight? confess our damnation from that
slack choke of mankind, which hangs from every shrugging
bough, there, there in the twilight's shrill chill, and the dream's
stale churl
of god knows what we were to the devil knows what
we are, here, bitter and blinded and tense
with the acrid smoke of burning autumn leaves.

SEVENTEENTH ELEGY

In little lives the alum and the agony
become too giant, for when regret and pain
are things of vast, commodius, rectile stature,
their nourishment ascends from dwarfed and stony plots.
How wealthy-spaced is barren land for monuments;
how rich the rock for the sculpture of memorials;
how fruitful the windy plains for obsequies.
Must a man be stunted low and desolate
to bear such monstrous magnitude of progeny?
Wherefore is absorption so pervert that gifts
of hell are disproportionate to capacity?
Or play too well and grandly glib
the celestial advertisements, that sit with such
overweening pomp on man's hunched horizons?
so narrow his scope that honeyed eternity
must soon be hived and soluble on his palate.
You lean of racial penury, you poverties
of inheritance, you dispossessed of caste and station—
how fertile is our fraction for furthur fraction,
how concentrate is huge force upon our atom!

A Further Instruction

A FURTHER INSTRUCTION OF HAMLET TO HIS PLAYERS

Death neither is assumable, nor actable, nor aped;
so, make it a fantasy. That is, if you would stage
it, have your actress chiffon her gestures when
she scenes it.

Now consider. The soldier who
applauds his breast in a most curious clenching manner
as bullets take up lodging for his night
there, falls, I tell you, like a king tripping over
his foot-stool, at which his clown chortles and giggles,
the jaw growing the mouth into bigger and bigger
gaping howls until great cartwheels of laughter
come tumbling out. Would you thus ruin the play?
wreck the actress' career?

Take care. Grace death
with grace. Festoon it with sighs, the wrist in limp
parabola, the eyelid laboring up the curve
of eyeball, the chaste form chaise-lounged and negligeed
for death's ravishment.

Bullnecked hatred you know,
and love's scream in the pasture you yourself
have diaphragmed, and pity, and exultation,
and you have hurled the heavy discus of anger:
all these have sweated in your body's grapplement
that you may sweat them out again upon
the stage; but these moistures do not fever
death's brow, for death is the command
performance of the body unreliable.

How then is it assumable, or actable, or aped?
Make it, then, a fantasy chiffon. You cannot
dub death in.

HAMLET'S MARGINALIA

These hatreds, these terrors, these loves are most unseasonable.
When dialog is love, the climate of the mind northeasters,
the truth is swept against the fence, the mouth
cries lies of salvage, and so the sonorous vowels
of passion take issue with the pressure of the decor.

Now paradox is fissure, and fissure birth, and links
adjustments between the equation's opposite tensions,
by which the wearing down to cancellation's mortality.

If terror is unmuzzled within the skull,
that howling dog is held by impassivity,
is leashed indeed to cold, strict, arid contours,
some human moon of a face— eh?

Now paradox!
Down damned dichotomy!—do not paw me with
your clawed antipodes!

Fevers like a pack of mongrels,
prance around us, lustful for our fulcrums;
our worshippers, these loves, these terrors, these hatreds, tear
us to bits.

Hear you of hatred, that while its raged
distortion discourses on the features like
a mob of bedlamites with glittering pikes in their eye,
yet does affection purr in the corner of this growled
perspective, and will not leap from its cage of fear.

Adjustment? The adjustment's death—and most unseasonable!

EPITAPH FOR THE PROLOG

These burials have sunk in our spines: we parallel
the hunchbacked earth.

We are straddled by mortality's jockeys
become the upright shadows of our wishbones.

Life is short and death is oblong by casket
and grave.

The diggers by plane geometry should never meet
with the dead, but sorrow's mathematic
is transfinite, and our skulls torched with the longhorns
of eternity are lowered with the weight of war's matadors.

We are castrated bulls plodding toward
a dimly-remembered fertility.

NADIR

Soul on the urined cold concrete, your
apoface wiped out between the crimson
bouquets of lash and heel, what god
has awarded you his thunderbolt in truncheons?

Dragging your gray nausea like an insect
its crushed abdomen, you vomit the remains
of the human emulsion you birthdrank, the jewelled
glands on which your time of blood and
flesh and bone was kept like your most
favored whore, bits of brain with thoughts
still in leech, the ash of a burnt scream,
two eyes you ate hungrily you thought
the eggs of vision.

Where is a god? where
even is a dog of god to smell you
out, to cry, Here is the spoor of man
for me to wipe up?

None, for you must greet
all souls urined on the cold concrete.

THE CAT

Leopardlancer of night, the vision poled in amber
on a horizontal, prowling axis, you hulk with rolling,
ecstatic lunges through the continental dark.
Here the subterranean substance in shrunk paralysis:
escape is the body wagering for breath and single form:
die and be torn apart and attain the multitudinous
of the rip. Spring. Strike. The tiny tiger purrs and swaggers
and licks off the blood of its deathcowered rival from its mouth. I cut
him from lashing action to stillness with candleflame; the tawny
fur conceals the muscular memory of birds and mice,
of asiatic ashcans and african garbage, of tropical
tendons and clawing his moorish mate under the murderous
and silver impulsion of the moon, the cackling leap on the flashing
food; struck; now still; the ears dash, dig and clutch a sound.
What is apprehended and what understood?—the jiggle of
the worldjigger in giant cocktails of pain; a woman in
the very rump of passion; cannon contending for the target
of the stars, the iron and smoke of which must compromise on man;
pneumatic drills; telephones; and the stubble of our dreams on the vast
face of slumbering time. Though he has squandered whipping
curves with tail and paw, the gearbox of brain and spine
is meshed in neutral this looped-in instant, and animal crouches
at animal: as always, before defeat or victory,
the inequality of opposing sides is held in tight
and terrible balance. Will he snarl and spit and puncture
flesh? Some things are better dead and split; but point your pistol
at god, the universe, eternity: your shot in circled space
would smash the barrel of your exploding heart from whence
it came; and these stupendous mechanics of the killer
and the killed repose in his dual, yellow glare. And with
a casual meow, disdaining combat, the feline stalks
away, his shoulders sneering grace, leopardlancer of night.

ESSENCE

It is that you,

a tightclamped gnomejaw within ancestries
incessant dropsy of maxillaries that binge on the bolts
of the primeyawns of hunger,

it is that you

are uninhabited,
but magellaned by eaters, and that always you hear the centuries
of their gnashings, and vibrate with their champing smashing;

and that animals, seeing not you, race from the clang
of your gorging maw,

and that all men, becoming
your listen of their own grind like the grind
of mastadonic teeth, murder themselves to thug
their own lives guggle.

It is that you cry out
not you but lust in eternal gobble for motions
excretion not giving a bellys damn whether youre brain
or atom, and canyoning up the proof by bullseyeing
your pith with jaw for the ceaseless giving to gut.
Clamp

it though you will, your inheritors by their
inheriting will have wedged your jaw agape!

ON OUR FORGETFULNESS OF WAR

Remembrance is
a curved terrain,
and that which bends
below our present
must cancel out:

we cannot play
Magellan to
the setting dead.

First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, beginning p. 65.

OF HIS DEATH AND TIME

As rust, the crystal flake of flame, is costume
for the iron, so time, the snow of seconds
and of years, is vestiture for death.

What agony is these strict formalities;
conventions are a frozen sweat; we take
our measurements in chromium crucifixions.

Eternity is a painful epigram,
which will inscribe on coffins cuffs; straight, place
and show comes in the odd apocalypse.

We had bold body, it thrived on spun thrust;
we are condemned that we drill for utter depth:
the diamond brain breaks off for carbon incest.

You cannot whore your mistress earth: it waits
virgin immensities; you cannot sue
for immortality: in vitals no courts.

As rust, the crystal flake of flame, is costume
for the iron, so time, the snow of seconds
and of years, is vestiture for death.

IN COMMEMORATION

Why ecstasy can be depressing!

Exhale this highness,
be thin, and down, with looking in; starve into
the breathless soul. For outward drama is
diluted by the speed of the always-change into
the flash of the never meaning:

the glare of light
is the quanta of dark.

Hello, myself! —this ego-zoo,
surrounded by confession-parks.

We divers,
in commemoration, tap faint slow messages
on old sunken hulls to the trapped selves of us: they are
not clear: we are too heavily clothed with protection.

Why must we be betrayed by the oxygen of
sublimity?

We shall yet explode of God!

DIALOG ANTEMERIDIAN

Old woman, old woman, what dost thou mend?

A vest to my bones for autumn-end.

Thy frame is mere a wishing-bone.

A wish groweth cold, my equal crone!

Wouldst warm thy life beyond allot?

It needeth no blaze to heat a jot. —

Old woman, old woman, what dost thou sew?

An eyelet for my gut to lace.

Unravelling time thou canst not race.

Nor thou, my blur-cut cameo.

What, dost thy belly yearn for shape?

Like thy lean hank would hank for death's fat crepe! —

Old woman, old woman, what hast thou done?

Gone blind by watching the set of the sun.

The better to see in eternity-night.

God's cat-eyes are we for His universe-sight.

And soon go we to His starry grave.

Thou liest, it is to earth we come.

How will man know if then he's dumb?

In truth, in truth; dost hear our vitals whisper?

Aye, 'tis flesh grown crisper.

Old, old, like yonder sea.

An ebbing wave that hath much salt
and none of rooted tree.

Where is our time, that he hath flown our bolt?
Eavesdropping on our unborn kin.
And they, like madmen, will let him in!
Old, old. Decay hath a skeleton-key.
Hearest thou thunder at the harbor-lee?
Methought 'twere drums for a man's demise.
'Tis a cloudy funeral in the mouldy skies.
Man's armor sloughs, but never nature's panoply.
All dark, dark.— And the storm?
Gone. Merely thunder on a lark.
Slumber cometh to my head,
and stumbleth drunkenly.
He is an oaf, ill-led,
and will not sleep too well, but shrunkenly.
'Tis so; he is an arrant dreamer,
and dreams the more when skulls are emptily.
By night a clever schemer;
by day he doth not deign to know thee.
Old woman, old woman, what dost thou sew?
'Tis strange, I have forgot.
And yet must fingers move.
Aye, in dumb chatter,
as if the theme will never matter.
Wilt go to bed?
Presently.
Old, old, like yonder sea.
An ebbing wave that hath much salt
and none of rooted tree,
Goodnight, old one.
Goodnight, goodnight.

GNOMICS

1

Echo,
the murdered ventriloquist,
covers his automaton.
Sucked dry by the haunt of monotone,
we admit a scant and scander
ghost of a chance.

2

She spoke as though
she dreamed she were spiral
through volumes of voile;
the importance of her thoughts
autogyral:
ascending from one spot
in vertical,
and descending to the same
unchangeable jot.

3

The voice
of the color of the sky
is in the opera
of the human eye.

4

The muscles endorse
the fund of force
by signing act
on inertia's tact,
smash down the fist
on cringed resist.

5

Satisfaction
is action
embedded in slackened taut
which loops too soon again
to have us caught.

6

I cringe
like dreams smack up against
wakening.
A being hinges
on his dawn.

7

Successive frictional
predicts a beveled burial.

8

He smoked the cigarette
as though he were playing
a flute,
expecting the smoke to take
melody-root.

9

Think giants,
man.
Each appliance
had theory.

10

Tremor the tatoo,
her lips jag a hundred graphs.

We are all scientists to her staining quiver.
'Let them eat quake!'

11

Breathe crannies through guarded expectations.
Tongue,
like a beady scarlet rat,
strains at the teeth.
I will not release—
not for sphinxes of hunger!

12

What stealthier than obvious,
how verticals leak with oblique,
gold lie concealed by blackest truth,
as, the train will board the passengers,
the night got off at me,
so wonder how an end will dream
if it must wake to humanity!

13

Plungers are inverted hackles.

14

What is the air of molten
but the pang of pyramids?

15

Beggars burn your boundless
to a penny shrivel.
Icicles hang over their eye:
ill-fitted too large,
slipped down their crown of thorns.

—16

Fact,
the whore of hypothesis,
charges fifty thousand crucifixions
for a century-night.
So ecstatic are the embraces of absolute,
that we die—
comparatively!

73

First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, beginning p. 70.

Come, Humans

Lines on Spring

You satyr spring, old goat eternity
hooved with elastic, what a lust have you.

in the dark bowel where the earth squats beneath
her crust for secret whoredom, what a fervid
frictional of a cut and polish you
do on her gem of emerald, she shamed
not, for the innard itch concealed is virtuous,
but the embrace in the gut, you hoary
bastard and barnacled bitch, grows high hot,
the rump must take breath of sky, so comes she
that now new mint stings all her flesh, wears she
by guilt her natures green blush,
you satyr spring!

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 77.

Observation on Conquerors

Heels up! was the crowdeye's knot
on histories, and roped sire jerked
their tails up to the girder:
the dead dried fish swayed
and dunked in the wind's easy wash,
and sunset shod them with grey
blue scales. And then the people
slow puffed on the pipe of stare,
and smoked, as they have smoked
all other times, to the final
core of time's tight and swinging
hemp.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 78.

Sea-Study

Down the blue gullets of wind—
margins of flame slimmed,
flattening to gold sweat
on the green mammaries of waves, shed
peristaltic.
vanguards that rarefied to dim fins
of slanted silver
nibbling at the faint black purrs
of ships
vaguely anchored
in the haze kneeling gently on the
fuzz of
horizons.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 79.

The Revolt of the Image

What a madman was God last night, drunk with Man!
Outroamer, Staggerer from the stars was God,
Roisterer out of glory-explosions Man had shot
Him from brain-chambers rifled with ecstasy.
God, in earth's most final monumental proof
of gravitation, sank to His knees before
the cathedral's candelights hanging on yellow filaments
of epilepsy from the vasty sockets of domed
shadow, His ichor of space's black tar, white cells
of moons and scarlet coronets of suns and spirochetes
of pearl cosmogonies, bled from the rents in His
infinity.

Then cried God:

"Man, man—wail not
to me, for I am done with thy casting me out
of thee, and bowing and weeping before thy castaway.
Thou canst not escape me by spitting me out of thee, making
me image, paying me with idolatry.
My power is not image,
my power is thee!
To thee do I kneel on the Altar of Man. For thee
have I committed deicide!"

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 80.

Come, Humans

Come, humans, receive yourselves; yet not as the dark the flare
over the enemy territory: when you carve purl to still,
in icy torment, and cannot confess identity to the luminous
forgiving of immerge by hate. Behold you crime, stale guilt:
the blood of man flowing to countless men is desiccate,
the corpse running over to absolving.

Come, humans, receive yourselves;
as the moon, for lunar proclamation, will interrupt the sun,
so move with single majesty upon the solar grandeur
of all mankind, and comb to the stars the scarlet fleece
of your coronal source in sublime eclipse.

Come,
humans, receive yourselves; succumb to your mortality: to tempt
infinitude is to die before your time. Be fecund with the moment's
disaster, and you will find catastrophe a white-haired seer.

Come, humans. Come.

Publication. First published in *Concerning Man*. New York: Banyan Press, 1947, p. 81.

Keep to Your Belly

Stage 2 | 1952

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1952 collection, reset from its source pages.

To Sight the World

Keep to your belly to sight the world.

What

is my mother doing on my back? Get
her under, get her sons under, and get
my father buried. Put my love ahead
of me as a dummy: let her be a heroin.

Keep to your belly to sight the world.

What

are binoculars doing on my eyes?
If I cannot put my tongue into the mouth
of my brother, let me spit on the lenses
and shine them as fragments. Who can see
humanity from afar?—a braggart?
a beggar? a corpse?

Keep to your belly to sight the world.

What the hell is this crown
of thorns doing on my forehead? If death
were aimed at me, I could not get my skull
deep enough in the dirt because of it.
Get it off—and crown my enemy with it.

Keep to your belly to sight the world.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 3.

Lines on Lawns

row-houses
grim upright pianos
where slim green lawns
try to practice

anon
dog pedagogue jogs up
critiques a sniff
and in keeping with chartreuse pupils
shakes a blending stick
at a bald interpretation
in the grace-notes of grass

“you are discharged!”
cry a matron and a sire
for matrons and sires stand on pavements

children
are the political prisoners
of parents
who live in row-houses

now
the slim green lawns
try to practice alone
within fences
and make the dull errors
of unseeded passages
children
who otherwise
would go to the dogs

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 4.

Mug Manhattan's Swinging Doors

spaghetti fog
springs knives like eels
streetcorners slouch:
in satin blouses
skyline rabbis
read river scrolls
by bridges torahs
r throw in the toll,

truckwheel brogue
oils the manholes
for up the republic
saint and slob
aspirin castanets
skyscraper high heels
atomic shine
for a dime
mug manhattans swinging doors
all come on the mayflower
Springdom come
youre all on the house
for a risky hour

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 5.

Lyric

Moralist, moralist,
round my brow—
tickles baffle my toes.
Will you go now?
What war can they run,
or what peace grip,
when the body's brass band
gives them the slip?
Down the sundial's shadow,
my tongue's at my toes.
No moralist as long
as either of those.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 6.

Lament Found by the Side of an Ancient

Mint-encrusted morning,
why must it be so
that a man's last hair is plucked
to hang the Damocletian sword
above his own head? and then have him know
that the blade is wrapped in mistletoe!
Mint-encrusted morning,
must it be so?

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 7.

Lyric

maywine
emerald handbills on the
vine
insect and petal dewdip spidery pique
is a petal green wing if you can
or can-can
of a bees
abdomen if you will
my ear is drunk from maywines bottlebell
on the skys
romantique
cloudy throat
we fight
for spreadom
for god face downward
found afloat
looped to the gulls
from maywine in a turquoise moat
where angels were singing a spelling-bee
a celibate
tripped on
syzygy
an insect on a bird took flight
a bird on a petal
spell
n'air-do-well

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 9.

Gloss on Miss Pink

I wonder how Miss Pink is tonight, and where.
She said goodbye as she rode away on a coral
snake.
Tricky evanescence, that: the bend in the path
did a double take.
Partly my fault: when a god by twilight must
have an affair.
She had warned me she couldn't stand love's
subtler forms,
with gods or devils, for long. "Proust
should've had
a truckdriver," she said, "not a chauffeur.
Poor lad:
wearing a handlebar mustache on his forehead.
See? No norms."
I miss her, rather. Especially when she bathed
in birds.
Or wiped her sweat off with tinfoil. Or arranged
a telecast
of a neutron's belly-dance before a panel of surds.
Anyhow, I'm sure she's down to earth again, where
gods can't last.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 10.

Like a White Sailboat

I hunt, like a white sailboat, outside your face.

cast the sing: the silver birches are running
 quick in the water.
winter flows in the summer sky; skis track the wind.
And sometimes a bird reels in the rain.
But I am taught that for thorough efficiency
the oars must shallow through the currents!
in nature my habit of depth capture nature's
 discards.

So, like a white sailboat, I hunt outside your face.

still, waiting for Little Panther Point to scratch
 out my eyes;
waiting for the deer to review my uses of terror,
and my long swimming stroke the extent of man's
 injunctions;
waiting for the Indian ghosts to tip pine-needles
 with the moon,
that friends be shot, since only strangers are
 welcome to life;
waiting for the tough elegance of solitude
for the morning sun to strafe Minow, moccasin time
and the Rocks of Roses flatcheeked from the night's
 whistling wet—

I wish that you, with me, could hunt outside your face.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 11.

Mat Stoneman

To D.K., H.M., M.P., & N.K.

I painted cats curled up in sound, and their strokes
 that wheeled aluminum flowers down the railroad-tracks.
 I pressed their petals between the ties:
 they scented the hoboies of old folks,
 and brought down the prices extolling Braques.
 Yes, I painted nature at its human compromise:
 a sky that held the earth up by horizon's scruff.
 Could you have guessed that I,
 Mat Stoneman, held the sky?
 You know that roofs were nothing more than shadows—
 till I got tough. . . .
 And that Arab girl, who, naked but for the burnoose
 hood, whose loins insisted on World's Fairs
 and her black eyes on orange-juice,
 flew into me on a witch's television-stick—
 the first to cross the Channel to pay
 my esthetic dues.
 I love her, in a gaudy sort of way.
 There's nothing in ego that's worth surrendering:
 there is no proof the stars have a more ultimate reference
 than to the retinal encumbrance of my remembering:
 my wink, not their's, is the gallant deference.
 I painted bums asleep in the wombs of crones;
 and those cross-eyed mirrors
 produced by Christian psychiatrists, picking at the bones
 of insanity reverently left by the American assembly-line.
 Poor Picasso, he did let social criticism pine
 when he furiously mewed the Marxian catechism.
 Not that there has not been gall.
 There has been gall oafish, and gall as subtle
 as my greatest picture, "Christ Cutting His Toenails,"
 which no one will hang.
 And there has been joy: by slang.

I will paint till the last absolute gets down on its
comparative knee
to me,
Mat Stoneman, and to my brush, which is my fang.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 13.

I Thought of a Little Blue Girl in a Bright Blonde Dress

I thought of a little blue girl in a bright blonde dress,
as, from a heaving embankment, at the passing trains,
a little boy, his face grinning chains,
hurled his testicles like rotten eggs.

I thought of a little blue girl in a bright blonde dress.

I thought of her smile between his legs,
bagpipes at midnight, who hid her own white face
between furry arms in sudden black grace,
while the trainwhistle blew gaunt armistice.

I thought of a little blue girl in a bright blonde dress.

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 14.

Miss Neurrmann

Eighteen, ninety, one-hundred-and-three. Six, two.
In the basement.
They're excavating echoes down the street. Abasement.
Goethe's orange-trees walk up the hill. Is the U.N.
mightier than the pen?
I'm as lonely as the frosted glass, that makes of heads
shadow-melting ice-cream cones.
Three, seven. Four-hundred-and-two, eighty, seventeen.
In the cellar.
I remember inflation sitting up in bed—
at midnight, between Morgenstrasse and World War.
I have all headlines, strapped by layers, in my room.
I live between the East River and a young girl's
 dimpled womb.
Who writes the Sorrows Of Old Werther? I moulded
 pale mirror to my face.
Reflections pace:
back and forth, summer ancients, their throats wear
 winter lace.
Sixteen. Four. The basement. Oh, I've a father up
 my sleeve.
There's magic in the doe that, in fragile fright,
pricked its castles by the Rhine: what flight
receives
other than lengthening ears to shape a ship or plane
 in satellite immediacy?
But forgotten my first name? Is the conclusion then
 that I must join families
of no anonymity?
Am I, like those lipping Leonardos upstairs, to throw
up my hips at the Hereafter?
I am followed by a trail of my own stains,
and laughter's
pots and pans.
Yes. Dionysus
is vicious.
My days and nights are like gigolos

in chains.
Five, seventeen. Two-hundred-and-one, sixty and sixteen.
In the cellar within the basement.
Will anyone ever tell me what they mean?

Publication. First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, p. 15.

HYMN

fivethirty a.m.
the electricgenerator
startèd off like an immortal scream
whelped in low key and smothered in thin snot
and exploded into a sickbelly throwup of fiery
eels and there was my woman my love
outside the window where god in the alleyway
went infinitely upstairs in a striped prisonsuit
of iron drunken firescape steps but
there was my woman my love
outside the window with her crackling hands
on my oily neck blubbering Dont let me die
dont let me die dont let me die
but her legs and crotch and hips were gone
and her entrails hanging out her torso
twisted clubs from an inverted golf bag
and I bawled I hate machines I hate machines
they make a hole in one
too gaddam easy

First published in *Keep to Your Belly*. New York: Louis Brigante, 1952, beginning p. 17.

The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno

Stage 3 | 1953

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1953 collection, reset from its source pages.

The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno

One

A cat. A child teasing a shadow. A Minnesota license-plate.

I heard a joke: a psychoanalyst was asked how he kept so
spruce.

“Who listens?” he replied.

I wouldn’t put a dime on Criteria in the Seventh.

After five years of psychoanalysis,
a patient adjusted to suicide.

A striped Shade, that rolled up in fright
at the approach of detectives, in the depths of darkest
America.

Whatever else I never knew about her hours,
I knew on summer afternoons she made love
in an airconditioned movie,
high on the balcony,
smoking.

A smoky girl, with dusk in green eyes.

A mirror breaking in a child.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
4.

Two

I am not so sure, when the young man overstepped his
bounds,
that I would have thought my persuasion beyond my
bounds,
and have pulled back his right to enter the circle of my close
ends.

I am not so sure that I would not have hidden
beneath my psychoanalytic couch, had a priest bidden
me dive upward, to save the Deity from enduring bends
in the person of one young man faltering at straight suicide
from one high ledge.

I am not so sure that Boston, that day, did not pledge
more truth to me than I to its savages,
who would have expected, perhaps, I give them a clean bill
of stealth.

Indeed, I must confess the universe quite pure,
the bestial mob a child,
that lofted up a skull it called balloon.

Or else I do not understand, for instance, why I loved a girl
in an orange blouse, a broken eye
and a slipshod hip the same afternoon.

Or why I do not care that the Romans burned the library
at Alexandria, to make historic fires a dull maroon.

Although as yet it is not fashionable upon the spoken tongue
to seat the Orient, old or new, I think intestinal fortitude
has become decor, and we—Chinese, supine in an iron lung;
and the shocked glee of the choir-breathing press
an atomic dude.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
5.

Three

Over the water I bounced some chips of spine:
I was at a loss
with a drag of earth I felt at the back of my ear,
at the middle of my time.

I saw my belly at low tide.

I saw my friends
in the teeth of crises with dental-floss.
I saw the electromagnetic fields of force.

green moss
growing over the rocks of ages down which we slide,
child-brides
giggling and toothless,
bouncing on chips of spine.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 6.

Four

I cannot tell you if there will be war or peace.
I cannot tell you if God will come by morning,
and make miracles sweat from your feet;
or be a leprechaun, and avoid you like the plague.
I cannot tell you, though I brush my teeth with sage,
if the communicable-disease of evanescence has infected you,
for I am no wand-reader of waves.
I cannot tell you where or who you are,
or, knowing both, if they will meet
between an absent-minded statistician and a mountain
 peevish
to be a hill.
To be brief,
I cannot estimate your bill.

I can only tell you that I smelled the sea tonight
at penthouse, brownstone and tenement;
and that, because it was freshly sour, it was sweet.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 7.

Five

There is but one purpose in life:
its possibility.
Keep the muscles tight as lovers.
Retreat into reality.
Do not let the meter run too long
when you take a trip in a macabre.
There are no dedications worth the slab.
Before the earth explodes,
do not hide too far:
you too have a right to be included
in the light from this star.

If you marry, man or woman,
let him be Ben Franklin:
for, in addition to his many saws,
he has a lightning rod.
What is least ideal
is most probable:
the Rhodes White Scholar Class
suffering the mass.
Excuse me, there's a patient here.
But, please remember, that only after treatment
do we know exactly who the doctor was,
as yet not quite clear.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 8.

Six

Five toes in a nylon stocking
past the ear of the girl nodding.

Now pith instead, you see, may be a Jew:
discipline by dispersion.

Who is discriminated against
may become most discriminating.

The one does not complement the other.
But suggestibility defines adaptability.
If the prey is beyond (as I suspect, with both
 eyes closed,
to avoid evolution's focus),
then birds must arc wider and wider.
They do, when they disappear.

Five toes in a stocking
past the ear of the girl nodding.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 9.

Seven

Tonight only the blind, young negro pianist knew,
playing the slow, keen-chorded New Orleans blues,
drinking bourbon as I would smoke a pipe,
smiling at a scow in a bra, or somebody with thick glasses,
looped,
that three new mice were dead beneath the piano-strings,
after they'd had a session on my analytic couch.
It was the day I'd begun to throw all the people out of my
house.
It was the day I knew only my lower-animal patients would
listen to my dreams.
As for me, I couldn't figure out the point of the joke I'd told
myself.
And I was no more tight than any citizen is in his right
off-balanced mind at twelve.
Midnight, friends. Not the dawn of puberty. Nor the boy
soprano with a beard.
Midnight. I remember I was in the toilet with Diogenes.
No, pants down, he had not been looking for honestly-lost
puberty.
I told him that he was a liar, and his lantern what we now
call a projection.
And I left, a golden calf behind me, and debt-propulsion
ahead.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
10.

Eight

If my brain should blow off in mid-air, quietly,
like a thin, ill-fitted wig from a skull's astonishment,
at butterflies eating gnats, or some other elegant jeopardy,
well, I am not so hungry as before.

Bellies swirl round my head,
and the rats are in the radiance.
Walls are thin as pickaxes,
and Shir H'Shirim
(thy belly like unto a heap of wheat)
sticks in the throat of Ecclesiastes.
Two navels stare from my cheekbones:
how can I close these eyes to sleep?
I am not so hungry as before.
What is the fehligram from ship to shore?

They will have built a model of an ocean-liner,
to exhibit in my empty brain-pan;
and a placard shall read, "These painstaking craftsmen
took thirty years to fashion this miniature."

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
11.

Nine

—and all survivors
burn in envy's effigy.—I have searched an old shoe's mind,
and found two drunken lovers
on a streetcorner's toe;
they lit matches to each other's eyes,
where I could not go.—

—the analytic couch behind steel bars:
it reared at me one day like sudden cobra.—

Breakfasts at night are colder. For
I look in mirrors now, that invention for lesser vanities.—

—“but you have been taking money under
false pretenses,” only my son could have cried.—

—our boredom's entertainments, science.—

How perfectly logical and clean
to test next war's new weapons
on the American desert, the American sand,
the spectrum's specious aura round god's vacant rock,
while cautious Americans' instruments
eat greedily at the table of elements,
of which Americans have the most abundant supply.
What Son's therapy avails against the uranium sky?—

—it is a problem, my sweet friends, of providing
the long dark shadow to the sundial against the awful
cellophane of noon.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 12.

Ten

Though
I am afraid,
let me be calm.
Do Arabs wait
outside the oxygen-tent?
There is a camel and her humps in white.
There is a man with a veil,
doubtless a Mediterranean homosexual.
How warm to know someone doubtlessly.
Someone. Someone.—
Gallowed Be Thy Name.—
—an old door, closing, moos a cow.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
13.

Other Poems

From the Papers of Professor Bold (#2)

There goes helicopter man.
I tap a pencil: light dots of rage.
I can recall, with your associative permission, those tideless
nights when
each color, scarlet, amber and go, absolved their memorial
alimonies:
I walked a lollipop without a stick, in optical succulence,
a childhood rejecting, however late the age,
annual subsidies.
Of course I am considerably over your heads, but concede
my hovering. Conceive me statesman to babies,
that is, I bend, but cannot quite their cheeks.
What need
has one of votes, really, by practicing the loftier politics?
Not that I should ever outlaw
jurisdictional disputes:
how can one live without hijacking
interiors, to pull a yell from our tasselled, possessionful mutes?
My apologies: these are light dots of rage,
the Pied Piper critical of his flutes.
I would remind you that you will suffer
by insisting devotion, like Hollywood, to moving textures:
so much motion can only result in stills.
You will do your doctorates in the sciences
and the psychoanalytic humanities,
and dismiss the molten morphologies.
I sincerely regret that, as you will have bowed out, your cape
may merely have puffed the generic rumps of your shape,
hardly to be hung as the parting rift.
Let me see. Where was I? Oh yes, between Vain Street and
the sewer—
full dream ahead!
Could one, percentage-prize, ask you to accept your own gift

but once? that, that suspension between the give and take
but one helicopter evening of your lives?
One must be alone, and the season Fall.
Arrange perspective as—pop the buttons of your zest;
yet walk, my friends,
in perking verticals.
Walk—as though each distance were the youngest girl
you might give breath to,
in the aftermath of tentative ravishment.
Those frontlets upon thine eyes let be
the murder-media for each assassin-entrechat sprung back from
the costumes of commitment: paper cornices
on black sky, that fail to earth: the top of Manhattan's
vibraharp caught, like a virgin Harpy
twisting in the scarlet purple torso of an Illustrated Ape,
moaning
in the moon's quicksand, that she had bent
for a ground man's coin.
And, if thou shalt walk the pavements,
the clear cuckoldry of concrete containments.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 16.

Index (#4)

I have trudged over the subjunctive rabble in my snowshoe-microscopes.

One might as well horsewhip the sun, leaving shadow-welts.
I believe.

I believe in the great migrations of the sensuous.

When the mantilla of ladywind
tarried at venetianblinds,

I blew grandpiano bubbles,
and lords of ivory geometry
short of pinching thighs of circle to,
dilettanti of bowing parallelograms.

And my girl would leave her thighs ajar.

And my girl would softshoe dance her breasts.

And my girl would pull a grin as a Mediterranean knife.

And my girl, with freckled wickedness,
would say, "Those brandied chocolates—spit
them like tobacco-juice."

It has taken a long time for ice to be in heat,
and hoodlums with harems of color
to attack the wizened monogamies of black and white.

We shall never understand; therefore, I shall always create.

The flowers send up starshells,
the old men sleighride through manure,
the children wear green noserings of the sea,
the sky undermines all optical elegance.

And when in plastic trance
all shattering shuffles into peacock fern,
I must celebrate these hernias
of extravagance.

Perhaps it was that moon that baffled honey out of cheese.

Perhaps the crystal bees from a rillside spring.

Perhaps the anytime of anything.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 18.

Index (#9)

of sticky luminescence had been wonder
lemondrop halfconsumed by
the ghost of a childstongue hovered away on a sled like a child
I had walked in a sifting sensitive stupor
blue butterflies unpinned flew masks
at the corners of my mouth spittle little stars
the night is
nursery rhyme

all you who have helplessly commandeered action to
find yourselves floating powerfully at
preshrunk giants know
why the bullies with our buildingblocks again

but wonder was using the crucifix as a coatrack too
locker for group beatitudes while
you played the dirty politics of evolution the idea being that
you
cannot rehire on the fat graft from the
museum dinosaur

I walked no pet in pungent steel
there is the domestic olympic
all you who have understood the need the dreadful decathlon
in the ebb
the night is the
statue of the toiletseat-thrower the
grand event of the boomerang one as
the other horseshoes

ox collars
fraternal emblems
the yoke stinks heave
it

walk in responses are responsibilities

all men

administrators

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 20.

Index (#13)

who practiced scales that afternoon?
 the old woman rocking on the porch,
 or the child at the piano inside? or the man who,
 holding an apple, walked by both in amplitude?
 what breathless discussion sheer astonishment.

her breasts had vaccinated children's tongues.
 the boys' teeth tabulated whispering perforations.
 the piano-lid half-covered her eyeballs,
 the slow music resting a puff-adder there,
 her lashes played a gnarl on vision.
 his fingers struck white fear in his octave keepers,
 which always seek, then, at least, black intervals.
 the man walked by with milkweed ears,
 singing, there are floats never mounted on platitudes,
 singing, men may die, but there are no dead.

the old woman paused like a twig of grandeur,
 by which the child, in crackling, would give away
 position to the man walking in the pale warm
 gold forests of that stranger the afternoon,
 that sat on the porch, that waited inside to cool,
 that lay on sidewalk and street, palpated by shadows, reforested.

careful not to distinguish between good and evil,
 the man made his apple into a rubber ball,
 which bounced against the old woman,
 and disappeared into the young boy, who
 might burn her as a witch not for crimes,
 not for diabolical indifference or scorching ugliness,
 but for that elasticity which, pulling back from tone,

he must conduct to predict a public flame from him,
 after she herself might whip him with her smiles,
 or craze him by cradles. tilting,
 the man walking muttered, being, what marvelous asides
 in the prompter afternoon. the child might let her go
 altogether, another responsibility we should more often
 discharge; and, having enough of herself, she might
 request that mercy-birth, after suffering so much

with no pain. physician, repeal thyself.
i am afflicted with chromatic ague, sang the man.
all of them, then, might have been practicing scales.

except the afternoon, which never held that it was,
having wandered in, rested and curved like a dimming
woods around the people, an utter stranger, forever courteous,
though, receiving people in the afternoon, for
it had sent out sharply engraved cards in the morning,
to the old woman, to the child, to the man walking.

in view of scales, no terminations.
all three were separated together within the afternoon,
like closely growing orchards of oceans plucked
by lighthouses, stranded on populous beaches,
a lengthening solvent triangle which could not appeal
to the courts of land and sea and afternoon,
for what possible verdict when each of the three
learned that, in the refusal to judge others,
they could never have judgement on themselves,
an exacting freedom, but one to which there was
no end, the scales a bodilessness rippling.

there was only a cry, later, when all the monkey shadows
sprang down from the trees and scrambled the street—
catch things before they will never go!

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p.
22.

ON CERTAIN AREAS

it'll end with a bloodmouthed dawn but
 have a candied genital
 mix well with phenobarbital
 the grecian vase is a cocktail glass
 and you pay twofifty for your yas yas yas
 lights come on like pearl stickpins
 stuck in the velvet moth of dark
 come the dervish bawd
 with diamondnipple tits in her eye
 for suck by platinum leer
 night in the city
 with a rumble of sob on cash synchromesh
 and a satyrs rubbertires
 become in the glittering starante
 the skyscrapers pile up their towering chips
 white and black and maroon
 under the dealer moon
 ace bets you pass
 the suns out with a mickeyfin
 time deuces are wild and gas
 up mans exhaustpipe with gin
 it'll end with the horizon slit red at the throat but
 pull up a gut
 cells in the cancan
 wassail the rut
 stripteaser vitals only got one fan
 its an orthopedic universe
 in god we truss

First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, beginning p. 24.

Of the Wonder of What Is

the traces of suddenness in the crunch of schoolboy sunlight
on the blueboard air, as a bird, with black chalk, draws
a teacher escaping;
the whores who become the four wheels of an automobile
speeding,
hat low on the forehead, to the world burning up at the
north and south poles;
the scarecrow politicians stuck in the wheatfield of men;
the women anybody used to love tossing as waves of welt in
his faces;
the rain that brings the surfaces out from under;
the television-antennae marking the graves of roofs;
the idiot leading the genius around by the tail;
the foolish trap the hour-hand sets for the minute;
the mother who is her child's only son;
the fresh bedsheets that are cartilage after she and I;
the stone spotlights of the pyramids focussing on the spindle-
shanked egos of pharaohs, as the sphinxes pasture on the
dune-flanks of tourist prosceniums.

birth drinks, unstatuesque, at trinket-basso minds.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 26.

WHAT MAXIM IS A SILENCER

i charged the woman
massaging my nose
she crouched like a mother
of dynamos
and electric evergreens
chirped on my spine
for chinese characters
papering wine
from spiral nebulae
hung ebony brides
singing wire oh wherefore
wind the tides
round turbines of thigh
and quicksand of ear
children sank
to find megaphones near
christs plugged in blizzards
of torpid lamb
alternating current
sweet jigglejam
to anteater graph
and circuit clown
thermostatic boils
lanced by a frown
of what was there
to lure scums wiggle
dumbfounded i heard
angel radar giggle

First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, beginning p. 27.

Interval at Cortege

between the sigh of the nude ocean
and the green cat on the combers,
they posed for the naked portrait of man in the billowing
catacombs—
from Crete to Greece, Mongolia to Granada
the waving moustaches little boys scrawl on the wind tickle
the Billboard of Rights—
roll down the windows of the automobiles
and let the advertisements in,
or didnt you know Coca Cola the official mead of Olympus?
the nectar of Zeus
and all the gods down to the Royal Order of the Moose.

relique on relique the bones of thunder rear,
from the jawbone of an ass
to the dyepsia of the most steatopygous lass.
the sea on the rooftop
and zoophilia purrs between the sun's blonde legs
we are wont to browse
among our current vows,
man's past on a holiday. . . .
go on, you waves,
and put you on your bifocals of the foam,
sit you on the edges of your ears and eyes
to watch-an ancient harridan Venus rise
who hung a toilet-seat for horse-shoe luck over the door of
tenement Taj Mahal,
and all her daughters ran virtuous out of all the private
side-whores,
and all our christs stage-door johnnies,
chorusgirl magdalenes gorging on endless suppers.
would Hippolytus have started
had Diana farted?

here is no crotch for love
between the sigh of the nude ocean
and the green cat on the combers;
we specialized long ago on the land;

and God, coexistent with man's genius encyclopedic,
divides into fragments of impossibility
as man's understanding compartments into fiercer nationalisms
of possibility;
and for canteens of contentment
we carry neo-panteisms
into our abysms—

the punchdrunk cat of love
makes a feint and a pass at a quiver of shadows
between our thighs,
and between the water's grin and hashish
the minnow chinese ideograms steer—
oh Capitalist thou art Infidel,
and Mao Coeur-de-Lion marches west:
but we will think vice-versa
volte-fascist as we turn best.

between the sigh of the nude ocean
and the green cat on the combers
time: a taped tremor,
entranced mountains climbed by trajectories,
shadows hailing figures,
rolls of fat up the air in heatwaves,

we are crafty daylights in our sleeps—
time, you aristocracies,
aristocracies buried in the homework of the masses
reads the poster of a pick-axe Toulouse-Lautrec
torn down the next day by a sketch of deer as equations,
out of bounds
when the mathematician tried to explain
the baying of hounds—
a jet-plane pursued by sound
must travel light:
how we torture old clocks
that no children will cry Uranium is an old maid

uranium is an old maid!
as the green cat on the combers must shade
her vision
with the sigh of the nude ocean.

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 29.

Miss Pink at Last

She had heard, she noted, the laughter of crickets and frogs;
and grinned, "Swamps have gone way over my head."
Her bones? She'd kept them fresh by rolling on logs.
"Honest Abe went mad by splitting them," she said.

Wrinkles? "Each should have its crow's-feet
firmly planted in wit," Miss Pink advised, as she threw
her Adam's apple back to the tree. "My treat,"
she telegraphed God. "Poor devil," she added, "he blew
the star's fuse when we went wiggy for the Thin Man
on a cross." Over her groin up went a span:
"My special eyebrow," she explained, "for the final out.
Think the mascara will run—as I express doubt?"

Publication. First published in *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1953, p. 32.

The Diary of Alexander Patience

Stage 4 | 1958

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1958 collection, reset from its source pages.

THE DIARY OF ALEXANDER PATIENCE

7 FEBRUARY, 2 a.m.

One can baffle oneself by replies.

One should ask questions, and then
relate oneself to the never-answer.

One must learn to wait for nothing—
forever.

12 FEBRUARY, 1:30 a.m.

Suppose da Vinci would have painted
the Last Supper with Christ's back to
the viewer. Could there have been a Renaissance
Christ? If He would have chosen neither
to look on betrayer nor disciples, He might
have come down for us to resurrect as
we chose. Now we cannot alter Him.
And to the unalterable we become indifferent.

21 MARCH, 11 a.m.

The quarrels of the old man with his germs
who sees black lizards on the air
is a drastic spectacle for those not done.

They quote against his passion for lemon-meringue
snout; oppose to these sniveling snarls
the stinging chastities, such as skiing
in the soul, or her breasts are tambourines.

When he goes on guard against the ghastly
young, we hear him in snigger-snatches,
'Turnabout is foul play. I am not
your man; I will leave you my
treachery-chest.'

He hisses like a lost
villain; a cat crossed with a pig;
a thousand-legger in a thousand-legged
conjunction with a doe. Let
him alone.

Let him alone. You can get
vaginal lockjaw by his rusty
penis. Let him quarrel with his shrewish
germs. Domesticity comes to a very
orgasm before a man's death.

Nor must you mistake him for
 your father; such would be most
 uncritical. This old one snores by the stake
 Joan burns at; he made poor Jesus
 what He is today; he stabbed Caesar
 in the scrotum, Brutus an anti-climax;
 he tempted Satan to return
 to Heaven; he forces us to think
 well of God—he has no mercy.
 He says mercy is the sweetest
 obscenity.

Whatever he says is dangerous,
 in that he speaks only to himself.

There was that hideously bright moment
 this morning when nothing was out the question;
 and each child in the schoolyard responded
 to him as if he were a magician,
 and I had to rush about searching for
 him because they cried to me that
 nowhere was he to be seen;
 he had that impossible right of making
 the magician himself disappear:
 'I am not fair game.'

29 MARCH, 10:20 p.m.

It is said by the wealthy West Coast Americans that the sun in dark glasses drives a foreign-make car through the heavens. The East Coast, less critical, lives in the slums of the moon. It is hard to choose between the oranges soaring the high colonic irrigation of the former, and the vitreous vandyked brains of the latter. The farmers, and their tractor cerebration, connect us both. Lincoln might have said that a civil war is further off than ever.

4 APRIL, 1:45 a.m.

There are in the advertisements the chatter of the little mythmakers, like that Princeton lad who whittled out the magic car where rain fell in harmless hypotenuse. Or that graying boy, Yale '40, who comforted thousands with the Savings Plan, in which Mother reached for the skillet as Dad, in a hat of battered tenderness, brought home a mess of trout. Electric this and atomic that; no sooner one vacation ends, another must begin, while lurks the little boy who will draw a mustache on a stained-glass christ.

5 APRIL, 10:30 a.m.

Totem the line. In tawny pastures
 the Pharaohs left their piles of stone dung.
 Totem the line. My father belched,
 and I held it in. The brief quotient
 of the guillotine was the blood's pithy
 slang. Forgetting our hats, we doff
 skulls, but we did not mean to frighten
 you. Totem the line. I will dream
 my mother's and my father's dreams,
 I will let them show me how
 to sleep, fidget and fly their heads
 as kites. Be not a traitor
 to planned insurrection. Tell me
 how to be treasonable; and apologies
 are our hock-in-trade. Totem
 the line. The pirates ran up the scrotum
 and the crossed erections. The steel
 jaws the trappers set were taciturn.
 Rattle the sabres of the codes,
 rescue your next-of-kill, grow
 up, grow up the injunction degrees,
 totem the line, totem the line.
 Age is no object, youth draws
 a sword tipped in penicillin.
 If the doges preferred poison to
 mouthwash, will judges redefine

perversion? Who can enjoy
what he cannot defend? The trick
is to wear orthodoxy as a
whore. Count neutrons, count
the church's beads, count properties,
temperatures, weapons. Count
the employed and unemployed in
the interminable logistic of the indifferent.
Totem the county line, the Party
Line, the infantry line, the starters'
line, the finish line, the yet to
be established line, the snow line
and the ticket line, the plumb line
and this line beyond which we
cannot go, the totem line.

7 APRIL, 11 p.m.

For some, it is impossible to be neurotic,
or commit a suicide, or go insane.
Neither can we build the busy balances;
nor shall we die of quick age, that curt
organic farewell for some from excessive assumption.
We are condemned to many years, and an all-time
high of sanity, though we feel no guilt,
especially. We feel all things quite specially,

never especially. There, if you will, the watermark,
 on the white paper forever held up to the light,
 the muscle strained to thirsting, and with birds
 somehow within the tendon, who cannot
 be coaxed, for they maintain they have already
 sung with surpassing intensity.

Therein the milky eclipse of the sun,
 and no blindness; the roaring, and we are not deaf;
 and the acid, and we have not been eaten away.

16 APRIL, 10:30 p.m.

The cat, its Monteverdi heart quite broken,
 castrati sang Vespro della Beata Virgine.
 Penis Angelicus, Penis Angelicus.
 I have been thinking, too, of Chaplin in
 his foreign hour; I have not ever
 felt he threatened the instability
 of our institutions while, for instance,
 a drunken man in sprawling crutches
 on the subway-train sang splints
 of Irish tunes, and crossed himself three
 times, and bulged his fists together
 in a prayer, peering down in formal shame,
 muttering some curses long since respectable,
 "In the Name of the Father, Son and
 the Holy Ghost," his stained-glass eyes,
 bluer than murder, surrounded by the clenched

white elite winter guard of face-flash,
and his scallion-white hair Prussian **sabre-cuts**,
and his neck-flesh still red as a bride
flushed with captivity. Penis Angelicus.

28 MAY, 2:15 a.m.

At night a dog may bark at fate,
fumbling with a reconditioned **reflex**,
a drunken surly nerve used
by a housewife to hang her wash on,
or that humtight feeling men have
when the ghosts have gone on **strike**.
Keep the dog: he works the odd **hours**
when the freaks rape the angels
and run up pennants of torn **condoms**
waved on little sticks by babies
after the expresstrain pulling out
of the tunnel. Here, doggie doggie.

29 MAY, 4:45 p.m.

What I don't understand is
it's all happening in the United
States of America where judges
and baseball umpires wear black
like the creatures of the cloth.

Somewhere there's a type who wears
his collar sideways.

Nobody is as unhappy as
 the happy person out to kill
 unhappiness. Known as the all-night
 sucker, he's been marked by
 the Psychiatric G-Men Public
 Enemy Number 2, the worst offender:
 Under-Ass Perspiration.

11:30 p.m.

Just about supper time the old lady
 who'd been feeling lousy went out
 with her family anyway to eat
 in a Whelans Drugstore and in two
 minutes vomited and lost the take
 power in the upper limbs and
 the go get in the lower and
 fell in a pile of wrinkles to
 the floor. Her little old man
 of giddy esophagus promoted
 a cot where they laid her under
 a coverlet more bulky than
 any ten bones she'd ever had.
 "God be with her" a waitress said.
 The pancaked old lady's big
 fat daughter looked like a stalled
 trailer-truck. People ate at
 the counter as if something had

happened. The old lady breathed like she forgot air was outside; she thought it was all inside, and in a little while you could see how she was creeping along her own bottom looking for the stuff. A great big fullback of a doctor came, who had the nerve to be jovial as hell with that hooked white face of his but got serious when he bent over her with that metal and rubber thing, that medical Will You Be My Valentine. "Hamburger medium side of french" a waitress wailed. The old lady said something in a softshoe rattle. The doctor nodded and got up and jimmied his pocket for a dime and made a call from a phonebooth and then went away with his great big black athletic bag to his showers. Her little old man with the face like a scavenged pixie lifted her fabulously weightless arms like they really weighed something and folded them like she shouldn't be ashamed. He had blue eyes. Then two great

big orderlies in white pants
 and snappy brown windbreakers
 and snappy encircled hospital
 insignia and peaked caps for all
 the world a couple of space
 cadets came and suavely shifted
 the old lady into an ambulance
 as her little old man followed
 with her handbag swinging on
 his wrist. "God be with her" a
 waitress said. The trailer-truck
 daughter went the other way.

Tomorrow would be Decoration Day.

5 JUNE, 10 a.m.

"Try the longshot in the 4th"
 Al said, picking the snot from
 his eyes with the racing form.
 Outside the candystore two old
 things hauled a cartful of wash
 between them as a wobbling idiot
 son from the laundromat
 under the jellyfish sun.
 They turned the corner and never
 said a word that a plateglass
 window forehead couldve heard.

A postman felt for his oats.

"Went to Vegas over the weekend
with three hundred and came back
with four. Not bad" Al said;
"caught the Rosemary Clooney show
too. Terrific. They were standing
five deep at the bar."

I worried a little about
the two old things hauling the wash,
that man and woman with two
humps of fat on the backs of their
necks, pommels age rode on.

I worried, but not for long: they
have cemeteries in California, too.

So, free of charge, heres an
idea: how about a chain of
cemeteries, like hotels, or supermarkets,
with travelling salesmen, and Executive
Offices where most deaths occur,
and a Wire Service with a
slogan, say, "Telegraph Her
Your Dust" and "We Bury
Anywhere" and "Free Pickup
And Delivery". Because death in
America ought to be dynamic
too, with a streamlined advertising
campaign to sell it, like "Die
Now— Why Wait" or "Your

Best Friend Wont Tell You— Have
 You got C. O.?[†] (†Cadaver Odor)”.
 Better yet, “Be The Death Of
 The Party”. Like I say, the possibilities
 are limitless under an Expanding
 Dichotomy, as the economists say.

7 JULY, 1:15 a.m.

The Great Ape brought his coke
 up to date at Ray's Rosy Corner
 (Jack's), Fountain and Bronson, LA.
 A hundred and ten in the shade.
 “As a Lower Animal, the smog
 doesnt bother me,” he said. Jack
 studied the reports on the Other Animals
 at Washington Park. “Theyre my
 favorites,” Jack said. “The clouds
 are like cream cheese,” the Great
 Ape said. “Thats nice,” Jack said.
 “Evolution is the subtlest form of
 torture,” the Great Ape pointed out;
 “it requires me to wear a hair shirt.”
 A cab pulled over to the curb.
 The harried negro driver washed
 himself out of the front seat and tried
 to revive the sloppy female drunk
 in the rear. The Great Ape fanned himself

with a billboard and noted, with something less than desire but more than a rankling dream, the woman's dyed red hair by way of her sweat-infested thighs, and squirmed in his coke. "Oh to be a man," thought he, "now that summer's here." But the State had laws about progress too quickly esteemed. "Shes a doctor's wife," Jack said, "from the hills," and the Great Ape shivered down his testtube spine. A little boy, who could not have been her daughter, looked on his mother with frowning hands. "These damnable moral problems," the Great Ape thought, "that anthropoids are faced with, as: shall I bring up my children to believe in men or apes? Shall I let my children decide for themselves? Is my responsibility liege to ape or man? Is God out of apes that He must evolve man? Should I embarrass the United States by having children at all? in view of certain American magazines complaining that American art ignores the excellencies of American life." He sighed. "That lousy Darwin,

the Apes' first psychoanalyst, made us self-conscious. But I am, after all, indebted to America: where else could an ape get into the movies?" "That's right," Jack said, selecting Nashua in the Seventh, "you should be grateful." The hackie gave up and went to a phonebooth to call the cops. A trailertruck-jawed pregnant woman came out of the Beauty Shoppe, where her fetus had been given a facial and its guts a permanent wave, and picked up the drunk's testy child to comfort him, meanwhile evangelizing that rummy mothers at least ought to get potted alone, without subjecting a child to the hideous spectacle. "Well, I don't know," the Great Ape reflected, "because, Oedipally speaking, the boy has a right to see his Womb staggering around, or dead drunk; he had it coming to him, the mother must have unconsciously figured. And the kid is probably wailing because he didnt get a shot or two." But he didnt voice

this, for fear of spoiling his makeup; besides, he didn't want to influence the pregnant woman's fetus, whom he hoped was receiving analytic therapy in utero: he could picture the doctor listening to the dreams through a stethoscope. Instead, he reached a long crewcut arm for another coke. Jack felt suddenly samaritan: "Maybe I can bring her to before the cops come, so she wont be booked," he said, and he croupiered some icecubes into a towel, and went unto the woman felled by her own folly. She awoke, fighting for sleep, her mouth as Adam breaking in the bucking bronco of the serpent, smeared with the bowels' lipstick, stricken with horror at life by icecube, screaming at her bawling son fondled by a pregnancy and Jack the Candystore Man's confectionate urgency around her skidding shoulderblades as a Jaguar jeered by, a Cadillac undulated, a Porsche peeped, a Fordomatic burred in the hot orange world of probabubbles, leading the Great Ape in the rough

resisted delicate racket of transition—
 he scratched his mammals, he doubled
 in bleeding, he jammed on his jowls,
 he spat on his own eyes— again
 to be struck by the civilised impossibility
 of direct observation. “Feigned
 objectivity. We boast the rapid
 registration of event, to avert
 our sight, overcome with the guilt
 at the distortions we impose,”
 the Great Ape struggled with his
 lines, memorizing the psychological
 script for the film on the prevention
 of psychoses. He wept great
 chests for his descendants,
 and still it was agonizing to
 bear: what Vaulted Lie could
 he invent? Jack dunned her
 with black coffee, and she leaped
 up to seize her creditor child
 and lurched toward the Beauty
 Shoppe, her fishnet wrinkles streaming
 in gauze terror behind,
 that such mist catch the squadcar
 cops intercepting, to persuade them
 here was a crone and child bent only
 on coldcream and hairdo for son’s
 sake and father’s. But she was

built blindly now, and spilt her
shoulder against the glass window,
betrayed by her own reflection,
stumbling, stumbling into her son
as one cop caught her, and another
the hiccupping boy before she fell.
“There will be no scandal,” the Great
Ape thought, and swore in triumph
that he would invent the
Lie of the Missing Link.

Last Entry: AUGUST 8, 12 p.m.

Wizard of White Walls, how
was your last voyage on Electrocardiograph?
Was Urine passable? Did Sugar eat
out of your groin? Did Jetman whoosh
by leaving condensed entrails?
Was there a bad moment when Anus
had to blow on its hands to keep warm?
How did you fare with the Siren Reflexes?
And, when you rounded the Horn,
did an Epileptic Aphrodite foam at your mouth?

Wizard of White Walls, on whom I can scrawl
no legends, the night has given me a black eye;
and the bowels' crater leaves many volcanic
actions to be desired in the huggermugger of the gut.

Not that I demand the illumination given to an
officer
in combat when, by error, as his back was turned,
a rocket misfired and slid up his ass by the sea,
lighting up the pink balloons flown from his skeleton,
his
mouth retching incandescence, a luminous mortality
in the night who, anchored at buoyant agony,
lived till morning. He may have found out
what he was; but by the Christ of the Minus
Sign and not the Superplussed Crucifixion I
must know what I am not, as, as I live
in unlivid error, the Wizard of White Walls
abashes the shadows of my fingers that sought to
scale
the singing outlines.

I made a hurricane into a moth,
a moth into eyelid,
eyelid into keel,
keel into the spine of the officer pushing his blazing
fleshload into the sea—
what greater argument for me to live in order to

mark that spot?

But arrogant in Chaos I can go to no god.

I can only go to the United States of America.

Outside Atlanta,

**the niggers live in picnic Spirituals
and clapboard cartoons.**

Outside Atlanta,

a white resturant rallies

Civil War "on your mementos"

on the walls, offering bourbon,

fried chicken and service

by octoroons.

We can go, you understand,

but poison attends all balancing,

as with the Thieves conveniently flanking Christ,

and Corporations Raising the Blandard of Living,

and Gary Indiana punching steel for a longer-lasting

keep em blasting

Paradise:

raise your Angels on Marymilk to make them taller;

raise your boy

on Jesusjoy

to make him the athletic

ascetic.

In Philadelphia Everybody Reads The Guillotine,
and in LA they advertize Be Married In The
Cemetary Chapel: It's The Next Best Thing.

Wizard of White Walls, the lizards
look into the swimmingpools, and wait
inside the refrigerators, moulting the hum.

They are either nerve-rusty liars
or flawless madmen on a crystal
craze who ooze truth at
their cracks, unlike the Wizard with
his stethoscope seeking a Hearty Man.

What am I not? that I must condemn
the Political Man fighting for the Bill
of Sights. That I must propose
a referendum on the Ten Commandments
for immediate submission to the Childrens'
State. That the physicists cut
off their pricks lest they enjoy once
again their delayed orgasms in
the Pacific and Siberian wastes,
theoretically and practically masturbated
by the Mass of Mankind itself.
That European, Asiatic and African
cackle at their Cultures craving Tourist
Festivals to export them alive,
in that masks are demonless,

that Slavs can confess only
to the Western psychoanalyst,
and that the Gothic Cathedrals
surge only in the swelling Glorias
of the American Supermarket,
In Excelsis Sal Hepatica,
In Excelsis Doz Does Best,
In Excelsis Peptolio Bismolio
at, at the organ,
catchy proletarian
Katchatchurian.

I must compute, then,
that as a Surface Man
to whom revolution and orthodoxy
are matters of proxy,
the history of the world
goes in one star
and out the other.

Nevertheless, if I learn how spiders' belches may
shimmer past,
and old men's gizzards flow amber over me,
and a young girl's whippoorwill womb rebound,
and frost and fire crackle in unison,
I can go blind even as the Wizard of White Walls,
but with my stethoscope listen intently for the
Heartless Man.

The Papers of Professor Bold

Stage 5 | 1959

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1959 collection, reset from its source pages.

There is no misnomer
of which the protean pusillanimous should not be
capable.

Ah, lissome liar,
bearded beauty, handsome hangman of milday's wash,
who shall revere you
when you are executed in gouache?
Who will come near you?
Make me oblivious to this lack of maneuver:
hang me higher, higher!
Or, recommend me for the Louvre.

So, in my age, provoked with the soil
of this, that, and each other land,
I developed glass roots,
I snap off the strophic suspenders of Whitmanesque
toil,
I say I will take no damnable stand
for this man's lascivious loneliness,
that group's collective futurity,
or some ridiculous tension complaining of its stress.

Let me, rather, make some intrepid entertainment.
As, Hamlet's Black Ghost who, walking by day,
conceded, perhaps, to the southern U. S. A.
Or, violence--

suffering from spells of innocence,
like some poor virgin with dreams of damnation
in her head.

Say we are all Othellos
come to haunt the Desdemonian ear.

God's in His Raven,
and all's flight with the world.

Is there some supersonic
tonic?

Away we go, committing suicide as the proper prelude
to a close shave:

I am in rapport with the ghosts of beards,
and my beauty as all beauties must soon behave.

Is there some tune of tang and keep--
some modulation of privacy
before the public sleep?

8

I remember the old electron-peels along the beach,
 the wind in the sand a lisp.
 I remember the lovers upon each other
 as foghorns.

If there had been a warning, I
 was too accustomed to the lovers, not to have
 let it go by.
 If I had heeded warning, I should have but rarely
 heeded lovers, and Bold himself but barely.
 Does one search for a colloid-button
 under a cloud?

I suppose, somehow, I could escape.
 I could go to mother's, for example,
 or to my son's;
 in either case, so unutterable between them both.
 I would be quite protected by their dependancy.
 I could go underground to history,
 to some ruder age,
 some unmolested rage,
 some rat-infested infancy,
 some irreproachable infamy--
 for I am sick to my simple hole
 of the forbidden sweets of vacuums.
 And, I suppose, I could go mad,
 like some glasseyed test-tube in heat,
 and leave an erection in retreat.
 I could plan a plan
 of the well-divided man,
 the fingers in Las Vegas at the dice,
 the skull graciously mintjuleped by some southern
 ENIAC,
 the genitals held in custody by a Chicago whore,
 and the Metropolitan Museum might take up the slack,
 though for airraid warnings the asshole might
 be used,
 toward the general assumption that no part of man
 must be refused.
 I could go away, I could go to pieces
 anywhere like an old film struck by the light and

sound of lichen
and a villain's hisses,
but I have no wish for the heroines of the project-
ion room
to come to me later as they did to Lot,
and beget away from Sodom by a sot.
I will stay here in candid terror
to be immeasurable to the error.
I stay here in candid terror.

Does one search for a colloid-button
under a cloud?
Does one search for error?
When the cloud comes, there will be no error--
none, at least, that a cloud could read
from its own shadows moving upon my silent lips
aloud.

What shall I put down before this conditioned
accident?
that we test the reflexes of ghosts,
and assign neuroses to the spirits of that hysterical
void?
classify their compulsions to be human,
their depressions to be divine,
their paranoias that we hunt them down,
wraith-hunters murderous upon the mist,
espionage agents among the dead?
What shall I put down?

I putter about the secret papers of my bones.
What shall I put down?
That God put a mask upon the void,
and that Adam's anesthetic wore off in pain?
What shall I remember for the unremembering,
what render for the rending?
The tablets of the Commandments taken for an aspirin,
Thou Shalt Not Kill
practiced by marionetted christs in the violent
loincloths of their imagining?
The reindeer that drew old Santa Christ,
the War of the Brambles, and the Critters Crusade,
and Freud delivering the Sermon on the Mount,
and Oedipus without the Promised Land,

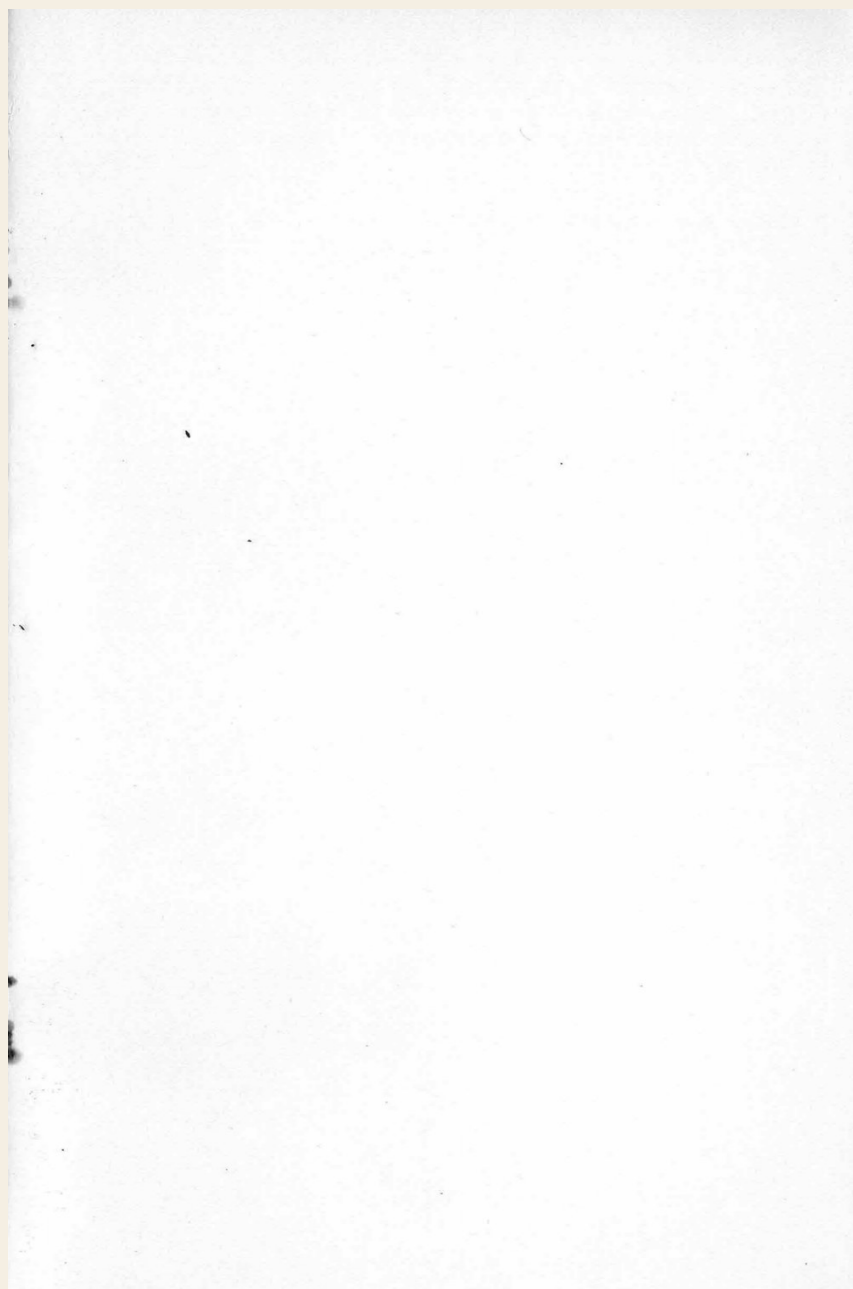
and the melancholy descendants of Archimedes
 who had to be displaced,
 upon which each generation must look with distaste.
 There is a spoonful of his goddamned water in my
 mouth;
 and I wish old Newton would stop heaving apples
 at my head;
 I am already too full of gravity
 and swatting algebraic flies against the Cartesian
 grid
 while Heisenberg in all probability points out
 that in all probability
 I am dead.
 Have you read the Lynds on The Decline of the
 Western Balls?
 Marx on The Decline
 of Einstein?
 Rhine
 on The Decline
 of Cassandra? How Hildebrand defrocked Toynbee?
 How Rabelais
 made a monk out of Kinsey the other day?
 How Tamerlane picked skulls out of his nose like
 snot
 and sent them on to Van Gogh for the final shot?
 How Bessie Smith delivered the Olympic Torch in
 an old, beat-up Model-T groin?
 No, you couldn't see Lefty Grove's speedball in
 Shibe Park on a cloudy day,
 nor Chaplin's Little Tramp beheaded by the guil-
 lotine.
 nor even El Greco's Rites of Spring in the auto-
 de-fe,
 nor an Eskimo confessing he had wounded the Goddess
 Seal
 to accept the punishment of the Commonweal
 when taboo was not a perfume
 across a too-crowded room,
 nor the resonance of that fashionable Parisian
 electron
 around Lord Rutherford's nucleus,
 nor the Trobrianders' brother-and-sister act
 among the Pyramids
 with halfclosed Redon lids.

There is no closed-shop destiny
all wool and a fart wide;
no sleepless commandeering
of impeccable manhood;
no gray lint picked up by a scotfree finger
to be consigned without hooting heraldry,
out of all proportion to one's familyless arms,
to some impossible grace,
god-hep hunger, a druidic drizzle
hazarded beyond all pioneers,
the provocation of the printed skein
skilled to helplessness,
choked with the soft savagery of dreams,
I know, no irascible fabulous
to which we may repair stuck with perfection,
outlawed by appetite and condemned by principles
no matter the shallow hobble and the chinked grave,
happy is he who holds the thimble
between the mastiff and the mole,
holy dowagers and stern decrescendos
strap down the halloweens and the gauds,
the framers and the impatient, the tools and the
sweets,
wherever the sole surfeits and the crowns of haze
I am no water for the sublime
to be carried swigging to the hatchets
and the hopscotch of opals and icecream.
Hide, hide, hide
in the goggles and the goof,
in the bubble and the spoof,
in the awful hoarse throat of the proof.
Over my head
I have--an aloof.

And I believe there were games, dreams
and games, that games got dreams, that dreams got
games, between a game and a dream done
in a spellingbook,
an arithmetic,
a cinnamonbun,
bread and butter
and a peppermint stick,
and I will spin and whirl and whirl and spin
till I am the earth

and the earth is not,
till someone else go searching, if he please;
for a colloid-button I may have dropped,
or may not have.

And now, let us not pray.



First published in *The Papers of Professor Bold*. Eureka: Hearse Press, 1959, beginning p. 4.

Couldn't Say, Might Be Love

Stage 6 | 1969

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1969 collection, reset from its source pages.

Statements

Waiting

waiting till she can see the natural light
lighting up the eye side of her sleeping room
she writes a memo saying that after a half hour
of the beginning of the eye light
she Fay Bronson will jump from the top
of the apartment house on the side of the eye light
because the light must be strong enough
so that she can see her 'way clearly
to the bottom
in her case
in our case
the sidewalk
while her two children are sleeping in the eye dark
while her former husband who divorced Fay
after the required number of lunatic asylum years
is also sleeping in the eye half light half dark
using the last ounce of her spit to seal the envelope containing the memo
Fay Bronson nods her eyelid twice
indicating that her eye is firmly and absolutely made up
and she goes to the eye side of her sleeping room
to await the beginning of the natural light
as she speaks to herself the magic words
I am going to die
I am going to die
while the little finger of her smile scrapes crookedly at her back teeth
and the memory of the lunatic asylum permitting her to visit
her childrens home on weekends because she has responded positively to shock
and has shaken her head wondering at her former husband telling her
that she did certain crazy things
did I do that
did I do that
her back teeth click

as the little finger of her smile scrapes crookedly at them
and she speaks to herself the magic words
I am going to die
did I do that

I am going to die
did I do that
well she will take everybodys word for it
because she is happy at being everybody again
responding positively to shock
there is the beginning of the light her eye feels the massage
the eye licking at itself with its soft lashes
and making the dark heal slowly over itself with the light
as Fay Bronson carefully notes the time
and watches the slit under her sleeping room door
wondering if anyone will write her a memo too
and slip it under her eye
and run away before she knows who has delivered it
so that Fay will have the pleasure of guessing
who has it been
who has it been
as the little finger of her smile might tug crookedly at her back teeth
instead of scraping
so that the dentist might pull out her back teeth
once and for all
once and for all
but nobody after all slips anything under Fay Bronson
so that at the appointed time she quietly opens her eye to the widest
and slips out quietly into the hallway
carrying only her heart in a little overnight bag
and she takes the elevator to the top floor
and the brief stairs to the roof
where it is a simple matter to transfer the little finger of her crooked smile to
her knee
so that she can mount the parapet
and so doing she jumps twelve floors to the sidewalk beneath
leaving her little overnight bag behind her all by itself to respond positively to
shock
in both cases

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 10.

Meditation Before Her Death

I am the last woman, she said.
I have given myself asylum;
that is the least I can do,
for I have taken all the strength away from men by letting my breast:
grow long,
and J shall not let them be cut off.
When I die I shall have willed men, rather than the jawbone of an ass
their Rib,
that they may smite about them in endless anger,
for having lost the last woman.
They will remember me in that I toppled down the phalli of their
pillars
in blind as I was,
captively young as I was,
gentle as I was
and escaped to magically give myself asylum,
merely by murdering all other women.
The men were too busy burying their women
to observe the last one in asylum.
Yes, I think of my children;
yes, I love them,
but I love my cooing crime more,
in that there can be no punishment.

Yes, I will soon die,
but what greater pleasure in so doing than to flow,
not as blood,
but as the slow yellow of my eggs down the clear-eyed faces of men,
for my death will have consisted in my having hurled my rottenness
at their faces,
5 smashing my lastingness on them.
They will need their Rib, indeed,
for more than anger;
they will need it to hide their nakedness.
And yet, for all of men, and my pleasure,

I shall not want my death so soon,
for even asylum takes of the world for being.
Even asylum goes mad with winter, summer, autumn and spring
and my children will change into men.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 12.

What Will You Name Her?

Im the first person in the world to die.

I decree everyone shall die after me.

I wonder how some of those lower animals go off by themselves
to die.

Im not sure I want company.

I guess Im part animal.

Of course, my mind is the hole I go off to die in.

Go away from the hole, husband.

You, too, children.

I might spit, and I dont really want to blind life with death because
theres enough confusion.

Im not very old.

Im not very young.

Im frightened—that age between.

Im trying to hate you in my last moments so I can live a little longer.

But will that work?

Will anything work now?

The pains are something like labor pains.

What will you name her?

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 14.

Miss Pink at Last

She had heard, she noted, the laughter of crickets and frogs;
and grinned, "Swamps have gone way over my head."
Her bones? She'd kept them fresh by rolling on logs.
"Honest Abe went mad by splitting them," she said.

Wrinkles? "Each should have its crow's-feet
firmly planted in wit," Miss Pink advised, as she threw
her Adam's apple back to the tree. "My treat,"
she telegraphed God. "Poor devil," she added, "he blew
the star's fuse when we went wiggy for the Thin Man
on a cross." Over her groin up went a span:
"My special eyebrow," she explained, "for the final out.
Think the mascara will run—as I express doubt?"

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 15.

On Thursday Night

On Thursday night, husband, it will rain on my grave.
On Thursday night, in a dream, husband,
while you try, in vain, to dry my wet hands,
you will cough harshly, and scamper frantically up and down your lungs
in a dugout, your eyes paddling
through a brilliantly colored harem bayou
where it will be difficult to light a sigh
and you will ask me to decide which breath of yours I should draw next.
But it will be Thursday night, and rain will be falling on my grave
The night before Thursday, to bury me, you had to put me in a restraining
sheet;
and the night before that, to love me, you had to put me in a restraining sheet;
and the night before that, to give my children suck, you had to put me in a
restraining sheet;
and the night before that, to give me birth, you had to put me in a restraining
sheet;
do you, therefore, expect it to be clear on Thursday night?
Take my word for it, husband, it will be raining on my grave on Thursday
night.

Buy a raincoat and lay it over my earth
because I do not want to wet you in your dream;
I do not want you to run to the harem children for protection
because they have their own husbands and wives.

Plan to be alone on Thursday night and I will tell you how it was to die
without a restraining sheet.
Where were you, husband, when I was so sane?
Where were you when I was the belle of the balls?
when they had to scrape the muck off my eyes so that my fingernails could
scratch clean-
when I travelled with light ovaries over hill and dale-
when I was a fresh rainslip of a girl in the slimy deep-

when I could tell no fortunes except of palms first excoriated and dried out in
the sun so that if I smoked the lines I could foretell the future by their
wisp-fulfillment-
where were you, my husband, when the smoke cleared away?
On Thursday night, husband it will rain on my grave.
I had better wear your rubbers, now, so that the children will not catch cold.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 16.

The Letters of Great Ape: I

To his son, Edward Ape, Rattan-on-Hudson. 6 May, 1958

My Dear Edward: Let me warn you,
we Apes were never meant for the military.
Of course, with your generic camouflage,
I can see the hidden logic
of a violent outcome, and a certain
social acceptance; citizenship, perhaps,
conferred by the human group who call
us static revolutionaries-
reacting, as you may say, to
our innate Reserve Officer status.
But, I beg you, remember that even
when we swung our sorties tree
to tree, we kept our heads by tails,
balancing what went before with what
might come to be, whilst our cousins,
who seem a little awkward at
reunion and insist on too much small
talk, too habitually scan
themselves in hairless mirrors, confusing
nakedness with destiny. I fear
that war, my son, is fought above
the forest now in the rootless candor
of atoms making childish faces
at each other, and men confessing
to their caricatures. And while, my son,
it is true that men ask pity
of all the animals, pity cannot
make the human problems the apes'.
There is some merit, after all,
in surviving as the son of the Great
Ape, rather than risking your all
on a throw of snobbery, which got us where
we are, I do admit, but no
further: aristocracy nullifies
assumptions. I should be griefstricken
to lose you as you are; but fathers

are utterly damned if they must lose
sons to what they're not. Will
you be bringing guests for Merry
Linkmas? All of us miss you at
the Thirsting Pool where, happily,
we never learned to look down
at ourselves, but only drink our absences.
Study diligently: we are not given
many scholarships. Affc't'ly, Your Father.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 18.

The Diary of Harry Yammeke: 3 March 1960

I come of an old people, who
knew the Garden of Eden the oldest ghetto.

We hid our nakedness
only because God was already guilty
at his own invisibility:
how dared we brandish the testicles
of the Lord—and not confess.

I come of an old people, who
had Hebrew names only,
and we conceived of one Creator
only, to center our terror;
a poor Thing, later, who
in showing love, had to hide his manhood;
but that was not our doing, we
who brandished the testicles of the Lord
over Enemy and Lover.

I come of an old people, who
made the golden candelabra of the genitals
to burn in man's cold; we only
had the right to smash the tablets of the Lord
over our stiffnecked members;
the Word of God now lives
from hand-to-mouth—
in total perversion.

You other peoples must make a Lucifer
to forgive yourselves.

But I come of an old people unforgiveable
for the act of Creation;
but we do not ask remission,
we do not want remission, for we
break evenly with life and death, female
and male destroyed Him both
in the wrath of comedy—
tearing Him into child.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 20.

From The Diary of Alexander Patience

12 February, 1.30 a.m.

Suppose da Vinci would have painted
the Last Supper with Christ's back to
the viewer. Could there have been a Renaissance
Christ? If He would have chosen neither
to look on betrayer nor disciples, He might
have come down for us to resurrect as
we chose. Now we cannot alter Him.
And to the unalterable we become indifferent.

29 March, 10.20 p.m.

It is said by the wealthy West Coast
Americans that the sun in dark glasses
drives a foreign-make car through the heavens.
The East Coast, less critical, lives
in the slums of the moon. It is hard
to choose between the oranges soaring
the high colonic irrigation of the former,
and the vitreous vandyked brains of the latter.
The farmers, and their tractor cerebation,
connect us both. Lincoln might have said
that a civil war is further off than ever.

7 April, 11 p.m.

For some, it is impossible to be neurotic,
or commit a suicide, or go insane.
Neither can we build the busy balances.
Nor shall we die of quick age, that curt
organic farewell for some from excessive assumption.
We are condemned to many years, and an alltime
high of sanity, though we feel no guilt,
especially. We feel all things quite specially,
never especially. There, if you will, the watermark,
on the white paper forever held up to the light,
the muscle strained to thirsting, and with birds
somehow within the tendon, who cannot
be coaxed, for they maintain they have already

sung with surpassing intensity.
Therein the milky eclipse of the sun,
and no blindness; the roaring, and we are not deaf;
and the acid, and we have not been eaten away.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 21.

Hold Back My Father

Hold back my father. He puts water in
his lungs, to displace us. As a minor
god, floods himself within, that the great drowning
of the heart goes off without a hitch, that
we, with the caulks of fingers on his dry
flesh, stand about with absurdly wet cries.
Hold him back, for all our unfinished sakes.
We are not done with him. We do not know
how to repulse certain ghosts, whose gray flames
with our very leave, mind you, most courteously
consume each color we have of him. Make
my father live. If he would have but left
out one animal from his fatal ark, I
could have stormed him, delayed him, dragged him back—
indeed, by the scruff of his heart. But he
is a whole man, and all his animals are
within, and they will all go down with him
in that special spectacle that leaves the humans
behind. Oh, my father, where is my inhumanity?

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 23.

I Put in My Father

I put in my father for a groundbreaker,
and came to see what he had done.
But he had not moved, and his face was earthstained:
had he thought he could turn
up the clods by not facing them?
had he thought they could bear him
if he lay breathless and prone?
But that was not a question
for the ground, for he had got into contention
by keeping his skull frontward up to me.
Now, then: having buried him
with simplicity but with some doubt
by letting him sight upward,
his death is as hard to look at
as the ground, for he has not taken
to it. Nothing is broken. Yes, I can
dig for him, but that is no mortal
equity; he has not died for himself,
and so I cannot think of that for any man.
Contentions are left above the ground.
I had thought he would deepen
with my grief, turn his back upon
my lie that he come back.
But my lie does not stir, and I
must turn my own back. My hands
are earthstained, and bleeding,
and therefore I remember what I
should have done: buried my father alive.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 24.

Elegy

the feet and hands found near the body
were the only clues to the red and yellow colors
there was nothing to say he had not collected
feet and hands as exotic examples
rewards for the outrageous conduct of forebears

so many had gone without them
in pride broken off at the shoulder
at the thigh
the statuary of perfection without need
as if to say now I can be dug up
I have lain here in the beauty of handlessness and footlessness

the hands used to creep after the feet who were the big brothers
the feet carried the hands often as if they were children
not that the feet never got tired and never ached with curling void
and the fingers shot down the rapids of the body

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 25.

There Is A Man I Do Not Know

There is a man I do not know, whom I must strike
with my fists, in the pleasure of the strange,
in the guiltlessness of the blind,
that all his features may be gone, I think, and unidentifiable
for any of my later sobrieties.

He is the man who never resisted.
His shape has the soft power of a vacuum;
no matter how often I beat at him
in the full standing congress of my rage, his
blood never bleeds, he
never looks up, he
never speaks.

I could not tell you if he is blond or black,
fat or lean, or how he fills any crafts of questionnaires,
for he is there only as I bring down my
shrieking knuckles
on his knowing unknowingness.

I see, now, that I might never meet him when I am quiet,
when in a deep graceful fear I think I might
have to blackmail my responsibilities,
to stop him from acting against me.

In time, possibly,
I shall look for a way of asking him to appear,
when he shall not be in terror that I shall strike him, nor
stroke him, either.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 26.

Another Beggar

I'd beg from the roof, sir, if I could see my way clear
to the people; but there they hang wet clothes that sail
away the river, and drape the skyscraper mutineers
like unfinished sculptures. Does it comfort you
to domesticate sublimity, sir? No, I'm
no bootblack; my smile shines shoes, of course: I work
like a dog, at everybody's heels; and why shouldn't I
be fed? to remind men that here, here at last is
a human that can be fled from and returned
to, the begging anchor of their lives. Naturally,
I'm blind; would you have me thank you with my
sight? I know no truths except that it feels like incest
to touch your ex-wife, in Western Christian Culture,
that is; and that this drizzle touches me as would
a sightless sky. Pull up your pants, sir, cloth
and breath, and bed your buoys down: since you haven't
yet learned how to hate as animals hate, what makes
you think you can humanly love? Wherever the broken
proverbs gather, there am I, with fifty thousand
dollars in the bank, sir, to preserve your sense
of smug surprise, and all arrogance on stumps.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 27.

A Further Instruction of Hamlet to His Players

Death neither is assumable, nor actable, nor aped;
so, make it a fantasy. That is, if you would stage
it, have your actress chiffon her gestures when
she scenes it.

Now consider. The soldier who
applauds his breast in a most curious clenching manner
as bullets take up lodging for his night
there, falls, I tell you, like a king tripping over
his footstool, at which his clown chortles and giggles,
the jaw growing the mouth into bigger and bigger
gaping howls until great cartwheels of laughter
come tumbling out. Would you thus ruin the play?
wreck the actress' career?

Take care. Grace death
with grace. Festoon it with sighs, the wrist in limp
parabola, the eyelid laboring up the curve
of eyeball, the chaste form chaise-lounged and negligeed
for death's ravishment.

Bullnecked hatred you know,
and love's scream in the pasture you yourself
have diaphragmed, and pity, and exultation,
and you have hurled the heavy discus of anger:
all these have sweated in your body's grapplement
that you may sweat them out again upon
the stage; but these moistures do not fever
death's brow, for death is the command
performance of the body unreliable.

How then is it assumable, or actable, or aped?
Make it then, a fantasy chiffon. You cannot
dub death in.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 28.

Sonnets

A Man Dies

A man dies out of all proportion to
his grief for the lesser things: bathroom tile,
the dangerous curve slowing his automobile,
the falcon-flies that train on his nose—go
as painfully as the leaning tower sex
or the gift of anger in place of world.
More so, the lunchroom out of the cold
and the turnstile reflections on the coffee-urn
omitting his lips at the cup next
in the mourners' line. Cat's-bells, grins turning
the prophets out, only onions making
tears and fresh laundry he denies the next
of kin out of all proportion to his death,
demanding prodigies of oblivion.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 30.

In Negligent Stone

In negligent stone the old man superintends
his vanishing; it is clear I am his son.
No longer will you take issue, he offends
me at the ark; you and I go one by one.
I may wave in a kind of offhand disaster,
but my prow upon the limits done
though slow in grief in death is faster,
my father more to come, myself to shun.
I cry for an empty socket in the dark
if there be an eye for an eye. There's none:
I must take revenge out upon my own stark
self, and let fevers, like children, run
run into the earth and count with him how
we number neither more nor less than now.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 30.

Night Comes

Night comes. Day runs for its life into my eyes.
A sound dropped from a tower banishes my throat.
Something always is proving us, thus to assure
us we can let it go, even the last of the light.
But I'm not so sure. I connect my own
hands, not to wring out the bone, but to know
I can withdraw with lavish reluctance and loom
upon myself, keeping my days through nights for mornings.
Day comes. Night runs for its life into my eyes,
seeking sound advices. But I will not hang
the dark in a tower, to be shown in all
its hiddenness, though I am promised I can tell
all about it. We haven't thought of ourselves
enough as shelters, and I am practising.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 31.

Moved by the Disappearance of My Face

I ran headlong into my barber who
thought it a great shame. I knew it had to
be somewhere, a simple obvious
place. I'd fed it, combed it, stroked it, warmed it—
why should it be angry and in hiding?
If it could get along without me, I
might never look at myself again, nor
at anybody as the final outcome.
Even if I saw it, I might not recognize
it, because by then it might be anyone's.
I simply hoped it would be taken care
of in its simple obvious place, and
wouldn't feel too much pain if it saw me walking by.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 31.

Nothing in Particular

Nothing in particular. Perhaps mazes
of structure to transmit dust. The hose squirming
to squirt water under the water in
the bottom of the pool. Chases in faces.
Nothing out of the ordinary. Green
grapes popping through white teeth. The altitude
of tears and their longstemmed grief in the rain,
and the mazes of structure to dry them
again, and again, and again, and their
bright new colors on the wiping cloth. Nothing
I like or dislike. Cutting my fingernails,
waiting for her flesh. Putting a house up for sale.
Nothing I planned for, and the mazes of
structure for that. Couldn't say, might be love.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 32.

Once With My Father

Once with my father, fishing from a boat,
I thought of slack lines that must go down deep
without much weight, and with a draft of drift
that made light of lifting all sunken measures.
When my father dies, the problem will rise
again, with the gulled heart low over seasons
of sea, waiting for the death of the dead,
while I will have to think of all the reasons.
There will be too much play in the connection.
I will want to sing warnings into deep
reflections, but reeling echo will have
lost its knack in the simple line of sleep.
I will come to dry grief on the land. The boat
has docked; now, my father has caught in my throat.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 32.

The Lovely Girl in the Middle of My Task

goes for no water but courts a well,
bends only at eyelids but enters no shade,
no secret but herself to tell and tell,
and tell till I go down full spiral
in but half an ear from the bluelidded maid,
her curves of dilemma to be no task
in the middle of all her loveliness
as she goes unburdened from the corners of my eyes,
from the bluelidded well in her burnt blond shade
and the end of my task at the end of her curve,
light as last secrets from love fully drawn,
telling she will return in the middle of my task
with one daughter and yet one son.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 33.

The Livid Marks

The livid marks of old resurrections
run down his neck and arms:
I have been back and forth, to and fro;
I return many times, much god to go.
Tattooed with transparent burials,
carbons taken at the faintest task of love,
his flesh at last a copy,
children put down arms in the sockets of his bones:
I have been back and forth, to and fro;
I return many times in my double-dealing
but single cross, drunk on my intermediacy.
Men sober him up for the executions,
but never enough for the god, who makes him go back,
to and fro, till he be but a word between the two.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 33.

I Have Not Leaned

for Lynne

I have not leaned so long upon her breath
since she last lifted mine in tender arrogance.
Now she sleeps far love's lore close at hand,
that I may touch her fingertips drawing
clear stories running all through mine.
I have not loved so deep since last night's fall
from parables of grace to where she lay
leaning upon my mouth, with less to tell
but more to divine of providence
for lovers at the feet of bare crosses
fallen down, sweetly spoiled for martyrdom.
Soon she will wake on the scroll of my arm
with such a flock of instancy that, tipped
in tremble, we terrace slowly up alarm.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 34.

Looking Into Our Son's Body

for Guy-Max

Looking into our son's body that, turned
to the light behind his sleep, suffers slowly
out of the thirst to which she and I had
brought his throat, we see his breathing everywhere,
everywhere we thought we had never learned.
But he may breathe us through our infancy,
and love may rue he had us lass and lad.
I tell her, then, that what will come to bear
upon us will be the dark before his sleep.
“Let him look once before we go,” she calls,
“with his hand at his throat, as if we had
lightly gone down in him.” So does he wake
into our bodies, his breathing everywhere
upon us, that we sleep to his learning there.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 34.

I Have Been Bribing the Night

I have been bribing the night to stay day.
I promise I'll wear black, and go about
as the dream of a mask behind which the sun
burns—in parody.
Promise that to every man I'll extend
my palms of grief, hand over hand from my
father, gripline for gripline in fortune's
knuckle if in the night the clocks, my god—clocks
will crow morning hour after hour;
promise, at last, I'll see night in every day: what
more could the dark wish of my bright flesh? what
more can I offer of the holes of my hours?
I have been bribing many hours. Any moment
day will come, but how shall I bid a poor goodnight?

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 35.

Coming on an Old Forgotten Murder

Coming on an old forgotten murder I had done,
so crude the victim, so elegant the means, I wondered
it were mine at all; and made instead by some
impoverished old gentleman who, blundering
at his choice, retreated into precious execution.
Of course, it had been the fantasy of my youth to pity
myself at age most advanced, wherein the subject
be accidental and coarse, and the weapon of subtlest pity
so that as I killed I could watch my own face
jump once in my hand, becoming calmer, by living,
than the murdered one's. But now I need the victim's
face much more—a fantasy of my rich old age—
who must own surpassing elegance for my crudity,
pitying that weapon killing him by a youthful memory.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 35.

What Do You Mean Hes Dead:

what do you mean hes dead its 8:30
 Ive got to get to work what do you mean
 hes dead Im shaving Ive got the whole side
 of my face black and gray hes young hes
 a child I dont want my reflection coming
 down on my head what do you mean hes dead
 did he look in the medicine cabinet any
 cabinet did he say hes dead who told
 you all right Im being a child but Ive got
 to get out of here let his sister help
 him she always took care of his beads
 let her kick his ass out of the coffin
 let her perform the marriage ceremony maybe
 then he'll work like a fiend to get all
 those suicide gods out of his system what
 do you mean hes dead that precocious bastard
 isnt quit bugging me I got to wipe
 this living lather off my own face
 I got coffee to think about I dont see
 you looking for the jockstrap I use
 to hold up my own head fuck
 him he always used his sisters
 Im already married so I dont
 have any relatives let him crumble
 his own toast to cast on the waters what
 do you mean hes dead its a quarter to nine
 who has time I got to run Im damned if I'll
 black out from my reflection coming down on my head

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 36.

It Is Said I Botched My Fathers Dying

it is said that either the rubber tube
down which his piss dripped shouldve been disconnected
from the electric socket or that his prick
shouldve been jerked out of his balding groin
because it is said that in either case
the lights would notve been shortcircuited
and all of us couldve seen him die which
had been my job it is said I didnt
want to see him die but while thats true my
real aim had been to prove to the Electric
Company that yellow light in the summertime
could be had to repel mosquitoes
by not wasting a dying mans piss

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 37.

It Is Said That to the Hanging of Fire

all of us will come for that permissible
revenge of seeing ourselves clearly in
the red to say that rage had such and such
a name at the hanging of fire never
to be forgotten as we move into
lightlessness calling out names in our rage
which do not answer but with other names
in the perfect anonymity of
revenge it is said that the hanging of
fire will be done for blind indebtedness
since we must owe all that we are to the
dark and revenge ourselves by brilliant memory
burning itself to remember a raging name

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 37.

Lyrics

The Sea

Like a long slow roll on the drums comes the sea,
comes after the hunt over the veldt of the oceans
for the typhoons of tigers, the mistrals of leopards,
lofting the white teeth of the spray as the trophy,
like a long slow roll on the drums comes the deep-gorged sea.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 40.

From the Sea

Lines at lonely littoral;
remember the keener tide,
the waves the wings of a gull
in skimming trenchancies
along the scan of sand,
beyond the angler of the eye,
the gray mind of the earth
to the green mind of the sea.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 41.

On a Modification

Sullen sifting of the waters,
liquid boulder under thigh,
lift my nervework, roll it seaweed
toward the shrug of ocean brow,
outward, outward, far from shoring,
down the dune of drifting comber
swift my body till it foam
white eyeletry for hook of star,
ring for fingered light and wind,
ceremonial, though I be
sheer and landless,

death waits with no virginity.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 42.

The Sea the Low Ghost

no dead shall we rid today
grown up to nothing lost

the sand hums low of a drift
the drift lifts to a sail
I will go pare a gull
for tranquil ventilations

later white waters whistle through soft teeth
a cool pulse follows the trail of my spine
the swimmer the shape of the shoreline
and the stroke the wave

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 43.

Roundelay

oh the bums in the city
they die in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

so for eats in the city
come tears in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

oh the tears in the city
soon dry in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

and they fall in the city
on bums in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

oh the bums in the city
pick them up in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

so the bums in the city
pit fleshless tears in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

oh for the bums in the city
mouthless in bunches
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty
going to seed in bunches
of bums in the city
choked dead with grief in the city
some old and wrinkled
some young and pretty

First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, beginning p. 44.

My Nephew at Ten Years of Age

Tips of canoe he smiles,
and hair curl such squall
that highlights of sun
make whitecaps of twirl!

Sprints of breath he talks
to catch man's schedule
from crowded depots of mind;
caught, he brags behind.

Clusters of chuckle
prince from his lips,
bursting soon after
to kings of laughter.

Daubed all over with streaks
of deft, he feints, he sneaks,
hunting and trapping for age
in the keeperless human cage.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 45.

Lines on Spring

You satyr spring, old goat eternity
hooved with elastic, what a lust have you
in the dark bowel where the earth squats beneath
her crust for secret whoredom, what a fervid
frictional of a cut and polish you
do on her gem of emerald, she shamed
not, for the innard itch concealed is virtuous,
but the embrace in the gut, you hoary
bastard and barnacled bitch, grows high hot,
the rump must take breath of sky, so comes she
that now new mint stings all her flesh, wears she
by guilt her natures green blush
satyr spring.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 46.

Lines on an Autumn Evening

Startling the frozen splash of star
upon the curved, chill cheek of sight.
The sudden suck of sky and air and night
into the vitals' crimson bower
strikes such height of bite
that the heart leaps like a stag shot,
and the nerves shudder like a hundred harps.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 47.

When I Am Gone and Green

when I am gone and green
who will winter the scene
what shadows storm the sheen
and who the icicle hear scold
the spring for what it had seen
when I am gone and green

when I am gone and green
who shall turn the eye out on the world
like flocks of sailing sheep
who graze the shearer and who wind the keep
and quiet the bleating visions in the sleep
against the sleepers eyelids fold
when I am gone and green

when I am gone and green
who will tell them how to live and die
in stern summer and sensual cold
and who will tell them I am gone
and green when I shall be blue as the sky
when I am gone and green

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 48.

Strolling on a Tightrope

strolling on a tightrope one fine winter day
air crisp as summer cicadas
sunlight as golden hair standing on end
I develop a sense of selfrighteous balance

the treasure of god buried in my ear

I draw a map of hidden treasure precarious as my will
I draw myself up to full slight
my swaying softly deafens me
god really cannot hear

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 49.

Say of the Noon

Say of the noon, ghost gold,
walked with a bated glitter;
a green eye awash in the sun,
not spring, no, nor winter.

Not summer nor fall
said of a chill to lustre;
rather, midday in a mood—
transparent short of shudder.

Say of the noon, ghost gold,
passed this way without injury
from morning to dusk,
only to go down in mystery.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 50.

So Brief

So brief the browse of bee
within the flower's cuff,
whom shall I say has called,
and how sweet the bluff?

He cannot have referred so much,
he could hardly have been
humming had he had his fill
of honey under the skin.

But I guess a skimming burr
takes enough of me with him
that he can let the flower be
after I rose to the brim.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 51.

Keep Me in the Sun

as water, wizard, slow sand.
Pull me up to my eyes
for the sun. And when I break down
as water, as wizard, as slow sand, run
me, oh mine eyes, back into the sun
for their frontlets, that through the waters
and the wizards and the slow sands
I shall never see behind the sun.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 52.

Surely the Slash of Birds

surely the slash of birds
across the eye
congested such mimicry
from the heart
that anywhere a quiver
slept
it dreamed of welts
of flight,
that I might let
the wings all go
bloodless into that remote
blue infancy
of the sky.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 53.

The Flow of Waterglow

the flow of waterglow
over the still silver air
though I cannot see the river
I am reflected there

as the glow to quicksilver
by twilight and chill
touches age to the eye
as a river will

flowing me through
all quicksilver glow
reflecting nothing seen
of misgiver the giver
standing still between

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 54.

If You Should Feel Troubled in the Night

wake me, tell me, let me know.

If a cry so catch you by the rib,
that you had thought fed, and quieted, quite long ago,
wake me, tell me, let me know.

We are no angels that only prayer touch;
we are that human so much
as a low whisper may call on us,
to say that when your brow leaves off,
there my heart begin.

If you should feel troubled in the night, then,
wake me, tell me, let me know.

Publication. First published in *Couldn't Say, Might Be Love*. London: Barrie & Rockliff / Cresset Press, 1969, p. 55.

Time

Stage 7 | 1967

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1967 collection, reset from its source pages.

Time

time to go the lover says
his feet propped up on her snowcovered collar-
bones
for the rescue party is about to come
I loved your mouth those rumors on a sleigh
I loved your eyes at the turn of their indentures
I loved your breasts sloshing at the pilings under
the pier
I loved your belly in sybaritic surgery
and your thighs swinging in arcs from the neck of
the priest
and your feet shrivelled from flying
but the laborers are coming
and its time to go

time to go the friend says
his skull in the drunken attic
for nothing came of the agony of Jesus when He
went to Heaven to change His sex and came
back to receive all men into the body of
Christ
nothing comes of us when walking under the
waters we show our angry white skullcaps
I may never see you again is a vanity priceless
for its mild millennium
I am a fiend in friendly form
and its time to go

time to go the mother and father say
their coffins flying as pennants from the maypole
for the children arent what they used to be
miracles no longer come in keys
miracles are interlopers
miracles are murderers
miracles would have us children again
and children arent what they used to be
our angers break off at their tender shoots
and again once again we are virgins
and its time to go

time to go the enemy says
lovingly caressing his own shrunken head
for I trust everybody in sections
that thistledown thyroid never harmed me
that furrowed brow of hand for the moment never
 forsook me
that heart whose beat would fall as snow I let my
 breath go warmly on
and its time to go

time to go the children say
condemning the last possible man to death
for childhood has cost us everything but our lives
and its time to go

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Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. The poems were reset from the source pages identified in the publication notes and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. The cover adapts Brian Kim Stefans's earlier Gil Orlovitz cover composition.