



WILLIAM J. MARGOLIS

*The Anteroom of Hell
and The Eucalyptus Poems*

TWO COMPLETE BOOKS, PERIODICAL VERSE, AND ARCHIVAL RECORD

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

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

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

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A CRITICAL READING EDITION

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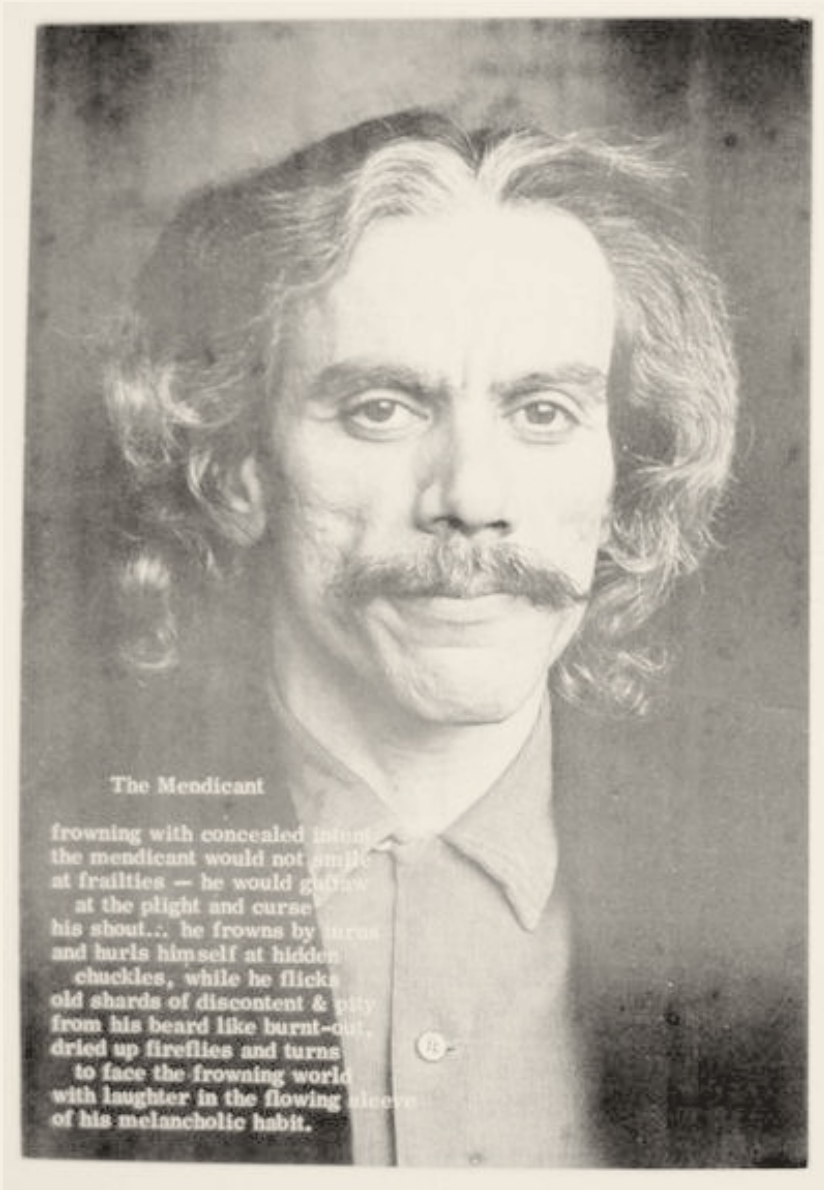
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The poet and the material history of his books

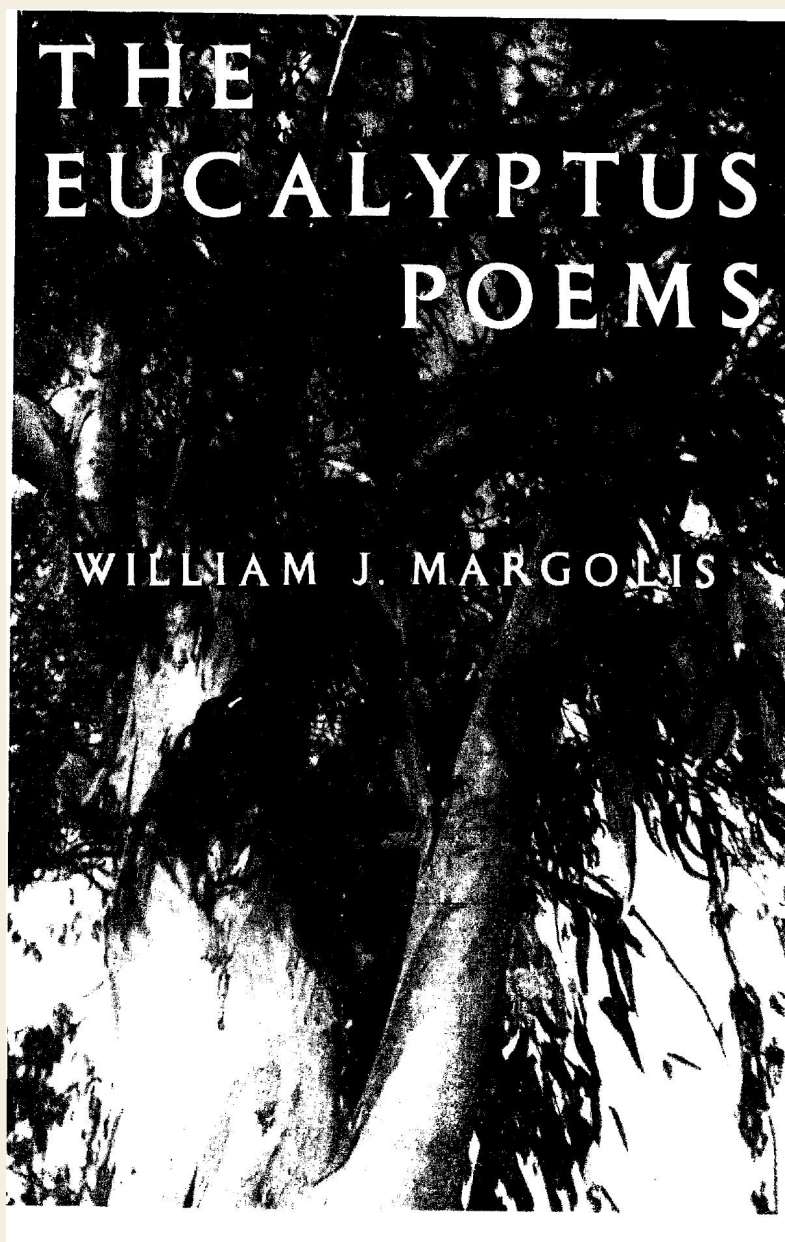


William J. Margolis in "The Mendicant," the photographic poem on the back cover of *The Eucalyptus Poems* (1974).

THE ANTEROOM OF HELL

WILLIAM J. MARGOLIS

Original cover of The Anteroom of Hell (Inferno Press, 1957).



Original photographic cover of The Eucalyptus Poems (Croupier Press, 1974).

INTRODUCTION

Little magazines, radical poetics, and the Venice years

William J. Margolis belonged to the hand-to-hand literary culture that joined postwar Bay Area little magazines to the radical poetry of Venice. Born in Pittsburgh in 1927 and recorded as a Chicago stevedore in 1950, he later edited *The Miscellaneous Man* in Berkeley and issued three small-press collections: *The Anteroom of Hell* (1957), *The Little Love of Our Yearning* (1960), and *The Eucalyptus Poems* (1974). His poems move between Cold War dread, sexual and spiritual crisis, Beat-era experiment, and an attentive California naturalism. This edition gathers the two poems printed in *East-West* in 1956, the complete recoverable texts of *The Anteroom of Hell* and *The Eucalyptus Poems*, and the surviving photographic poem “The Mendicant.” A complete copy of *The Little Love of Our Yearning* has not yet been recovered, so that book is documented but not silently reconstructed.

Biography

William J. Margolis was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on August 13, 1927. The surviving civil and census record is still incomplete, but by 1950 he was living in Chicago and working as a stevedore. That occupation places the physical strain, class anger, and anti-bourgeois impatience of his early writing in a concrete labor history rather than treating them merely as Beat posture.

By the middle of the 1950s Margolis was in Berkeley, where he edited *The Miscellaneous Man*. A contributor note in the Autumn 1956 issue of the international journal *East-West* describes the publication as “a quarterly of dynamic individualism” and gives its address as 2014 Bancroft Way. The magazine published poetry, fiction, criticism, and translation and linked Margolis to a broad small-press network. His own two poems in that issue, “Gentlemen, This Is War” and “I Am Agape with Love,” combine nuclear-era satire with shaped typography and spiritual self-questioning.

Inferno Press published *The Anteroom of Hell* in San Francisco in 1957. Its copyright page says that several poems had appeared in *Embryo*, *Ore*, *Whetstone*, *The Miscellaneous Man*, and *danse macabre*. The collection moves from the child's demand for an unimpeded life through poems of failed language, imprisonment, erotic frustration, marriage, and visionary descent. Its formal range includes short-lined lyrics, incantatory free verse, a prose poem, long suspended lines, and the concluding title sequence. The book was dedicated to Marian.

In 1958 Margolis was among the founders of *Beatitude*, the San Francisco poetry newspaper associated with John Kelly, Bob Kaufman, and the North Beach renaissance. His bibliography, however, resists confinement to one scene: he had already cultivated an internationalist and independent editorial identity through *The Miscellaneous Man*, and his own books appeared through several poet-run imprints. Mendicant Editions issued *The Little Love of Our Yearning* in San Francisco in 1960. A bookseller's description records a hand-set edition of only fifty copies, explaining in part why a complete textual witness is difficult to locate today.

Marriage records show that Margolis married Barbara B. Neathery in Orange County on October 27, 1965. Barbara died in Los Angeles in 1972. *The Eucalyptus Poems*, published by Croupier Press in Golden, Colorado, in 1974, is dedicated to her memory. The volume's acknowledgments name *Nexus* and *The Oracle of Southern California* as prior venues. Its poems join mourning, erotic memory, music, occult vocabulary, and the eucalyptus as a recurrent image of endurance. The book credits Barba Margolis with its eucalyptus photographs and William J. Warren with the author photograph used in the Croupier Press Poetry Card Series.

Margolis later lived on Cabrillo Avenue in Venice. A surviving photographic poem, "The Mendicant," overlays a late portrait with a self-description that turns severity, discontent, and melancholy toward laughter. He died in Venice on October 25, 1998, aged seventy-one. No institutional archive devoted to him has yet been identified. His record remains dispersed across rare books, little magazines, private papers, booksellers' descriptions, and the archives of his contemporaries; a complete issue-level bibliography and the recovery of *The Little Love of Our Yearning* remain the most important next steps.

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

Corpus, source control, and reading-text policy

The two poems in the opening section are reset from *East-West*, Autumn 1956, pages 17–18. The typography of “I Am Agape with Love” is recreated through deliberate line indents. Every poem in the two books was checked against the corrected local scans rather than against the incomplete 2025 InDesign draft.

The Anteroom of Hell (1957) and *The Eucalyptus Poems* (1974) are printed complete, including the prose poem “Judgement Day” and the photographic back-cover poem “The Mendicant.” Every poem begins on a new page. Stanza divisions and purposeful relative indents are retained; narrow-page hanging wraps are rejoined where the new page permits.

A complete copy of *The Little Love of Our Yearning* (Mendicant Editions, 1960) was not present in the local collection and was not located in the completed research pass. The surviving bookseller record establishes a hand-set edition of fifty copies but does not supply the poems. It is therefore documented here in the editorial and bibliographical notes only; no book division or conjectural transcription is supplied.

The original books contain occasional eccentric spelling, abbreviation, ampersands, ellipses, lower-case openings, and repeated numbering. These are preserved when confirmed by the scan. Obvious OCR substitutions, exposed page furniture, scan marks, and false spaces are removed. Book and periodical titles are italicized in editorial matter.

PERIODICAL VERSE

1956

Gentlemen, This Is War

Gentlemen

 This is war,

No, Nelson, don't get up,

Don't leave yet

 There's something
for you to do, too.

 And Peterson, tell your men
to drop the psych search

 We don't need souls now.

As I said, Gentlemen

 This is war.

Fletcher, roll in the charts

Show us where the bastards are

And Skeever, brief us

 on the population densities.

Fine.

These profit margins are correct

 Rockmorton

I assume?

 Not as high as last year's

 but they'll do.

All right, Nelson, say your prayer

 and then I'll push the button.

 —Heavenly Einstein....

Gentlemen

 This is war.

Publication. *East-West*, Autumn 1956, p. 17.

I Am Agape with Love

I am agape with love
but

all my heros
have fled this
Heavy burning ground

the mystic seeker
of my youth
is now a pedant
dilletante
on peyote
the dhoti-man of India
no more a man
a Saint

No more aghast
am I
at fingerpointing
and skygazing
at nothing
all
do it
with me

Now
I
am
I
&c.

no more
but

it was nice to have
something

Now I am a gap
no more is holy
only I

I make myself lie down
and all pastures are
of my making, green
or otherwise.

Publication. *East-West*, Autumn 1956, pp. 17–18. The shaped indentation follows the original setting.

BOOK ONE | *THE ANTEROOM OF HELL*

Inferno Press, 1957

I Am a Child

I do not often speak
for I had rather
be seen than heard.
But the time has come—
though seen
my presence isn't felt
in the press and mesh
of Weltanschauung
of welter-wars
and Heavy waters.

I am a child
and my wants are simple:

Though born of the sea
I want to walk the land
and stand upright, unfettered:
Though my eyes are newly opened
I want to see
where I choose to look, unshuttered

Though I am born of pain
let me know there was also love
for I despair of despair;
and long to know
unimpeded by abstraction

And though my needs are simple
I am born without ability
—let me learn
for I have capability

Let me learn
for I have doubts of your wisdom:
and there are old errors
needing new corrections

Let me live
for I am a child.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

In My Own (Virtual) Image

The gentle pain of breathing
is one luxury I've never permitted
myself. My life & lines
begin with heaves, perhaps,
begin with the heavy laugh
reserved for the melancholy humor
of my mornings' necromancy,
that transmutes light dreams
to the sight of my own shadow
cast by a winter sun.

The sweet sorrow of the delicate bloom
and its relation to the déjà vu of cloudfaces
is one beautifully painful analysis
of the text my plastic tower has denied me.
My laugh & the thoroughfares between
my page & pocket are grey;
I have known the one through many
dried and shriveled petals,
shaken off in the anger
of my own ill winds, and the other one
I have no doubts at all of having seen
before, and after every
necromantic morning shadow...

It is the bitter joy of learning I was right
when I thought a piece of the sky had fallen on me;
it is the overpowering health I felt in my nerves
when I saw my executioner accept my application;
it is the sharp shadow imbedded in a Hiroshima bridge,
it is the searing flash which transmuted him from life to line,
from light to shade; or the fear which comes
when one knows one has never been here before.
My image is carved from my own stainless steel bowels
and the only gentle, fragile thing is my knife.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

As Soon Not

As soon crack the stem of lotus,
send uncloistered bud to die in pond
yet never stir the humid water-bug complacency,
as clip umbilicus of comatose conformity—

As soon pluck the petal of book-pressed rose
and send the dusty corpse of an instant
like fertilizer to the sterile study floor
as prick the conscience of ubiquitous critic—

As soon flick the cooling ashes of my soul
into the blind eyes of masses scuffling
for the pose of greatness in the oracular readymade
as sip torrential flow of wonderbound delight—

As soon bequeath the quick beneath my nail to death
as meet the hail of truth with parasol and minted breath.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

A Word Is but a Finger Pointing

Come now!

A word is not a wagon
carting feeling from a mouth to ear,
not a van or vessel
making transfer of experience from pen to eye.
A word is but a finger
I point to show you where I've felt
and when I've known.

I cannot give you straight
the mystic knowledge of my rose
nor the instant glimpse of lotus—
I can only set the arrow on the post—
directing you toward paths I've trod
inviting you to rest in some green hour,
Somewhat like the ones I've heard;
or, find a path yourself

by starting off from where I stand
and view the world and lotus wheel.
A word is not a wagon
but a finger pointing.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

The Groping Saint

To unsheathe the broken flimmetry
of undigested cross-pollinations
is the very duty of the saint.
His life must always grieve
the waxworks king,
confuse the master
of all snobbery.

To rebreathe the floating bribery
of every new disgusting weathercock
may cull the merry booty from the thief;
but death will never give reprieve
to any waxworks king confused
between his flabby mastery
and any manacle,
any grassroot who is lost
between false bottom and explosive ceilings
yet groping.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

Upon a Friend's Being Found Criminally Sane

for Vern Davidson—an imprisoned conscientious objector to war

Night becomes a time hexed eon
in this fanfarewell abyss,
a lingering reminder that we
whose wits are not yet leashed
must not forget the cliffs
we live and grope among
nor forsake the search
for climbing, scaling art.

Night comes only once in the next eon
of your muffled heart,
an eon night of forced debility;
and we, who yet may pick the crag
we scabble at unfettered,
must not accept with valley meekness
the seeming inaccessibility
of clouded chartless pinnacles.

Night comes but once in this vexed eon,
an eternity of determined neglect,
perfected termination of mind in flight.

We, who through no virtue of our own remain,
will not be free of any fetter, bar;
nor part of any better dream
so long as we allow the valley minds
make sport with mountain in the bitter pit.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

On a Statuary Afternoon

O dear god, mother and father of us, bawl
not to me of your piddling, riddling man.
Declaim his raiment, blame his payment of the token sin, but do not so bawdily
clamor for his windy,
blown-out soul, that he punctures himself with your holy
knotted cross, risks his potted crotch in a quandary
of pure white alabaster pudding, good for nothing
other than a bundling with your fumbling angel,
the one, I forget his name, that Jacob bested...

On a statuary afternoon
I was walking in a garden.

O dear god, bundler and blather of us all,
notice me, your piddling, riddling man.
Note how my arm, upraised, is rooted in my heart,
and my fist, god how it itches, rooted in my wrist!
Is this not a wonder? that extremity should follow
after extremity unto the infinitude of extremity!
Banality, all is banality...

On a statuary afternoon, I say,
I was talking to the garden!

O dear god, o DEAR god, of all the bother
I have blessed you with: wrestling wrists, alabaster bastards,
fumble puddings, punctured bowel and jowls—
Howl me no holy evenings, pray me no plagued beginnings;
grant me, out of the multitude of your private parts,
just one granite accomplice, without ochered veins,
without ornate stains flailing at its roots...

Listen! On that statuary afternoon
I was balking at your garden!

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

I Would Not Weep

I would not weep
for tomorrow and the lion
nor quail at the thought of good
were it not for the lacunae incunabular
and my poisoned sense of nocturne light.

I would not sleep
between the woolen cleats and prayers
nor flail in my coat of belts
were it not for the fullness of my dust
and my personal sense of inopportune right.

I would not keep
wide trusts in the lamb and the dove
nor scale the heights of Christ
were it not for the intuitive balance
and my precocious sense of untoward might.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

Moiled. The Simple World Enmeshed

Moiled. The simple world enmeshed, I,
gnashing from gut to recompense
find little to sneer at
longing as I am for never before
but unlikely to come.

Wounds, beneath overt unction;
leaks, in my only pump of existence;
snares outweighed, yet not overcome
find me lurching, an unsure target:
first fleeting in sumptuous thwartings
then supine with backward looks
and freshly painted sorrows.

My self-spun web is far-reaching,
a wonder of glutinous complexity;
but it wins no love.
Not even my own.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

After Almost Living

after fleeting iridescent glimpses
veiled by somber mourning shrouds
that I, or she, or the world wears

after barely brushing contact
kept from meaningful embrace
by the shell in which I, or she, or the world hides

after almost hearing the elliptical music
hushed beyond the soundproof lining
of the cell in which I, or she, or the world exists

after almost living
I am crushed beneath the sordid roof
of the incommunicative catacomb
of misdirection and indifference—
which I, or she, or the world has dug

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

The Intense Addiction to Love

The intense addiction to love
seems an easy panacea
resulting, as it does
in utopic rushes
to the flashing gates
of cunningly contrived oases
in this crossword-puzzle eros land,
oases simulating Eden
as it might have been,
without its pregnant fruit
of necessary mastery
and mysterious self-sufficiency.

But withdrawal symptoms
include the common nausea
of self-depletion, indecisive tremors,
and the bottomless blue-black bottle
fly-specked with self-recriminations:
and containing the washable funk
of outward-blind self-pity.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

On Pseudo-Patriarchy

Since, as we were taught
the rights of man, reclining
on the suffraged Coca-Cola breast,
as we imbibed
the clobbered reason
and sucked the sense of treason
in being, at the iridium plated tit,
it is not strange
that we have never looked
beyond the satisfying ochered fluid
so covert-arbitrarily and easily withheld,
nor asked ourselves
the modus of our motivations,
thinking they've been couched in kindness,
not realizing that they're merely
post-hypnotic matriarchal orders
hidden deep in self-respect,
illusions broadcast solidly
through the scarified ranks
of mothers' suckled sons
for the preservation
of the race of
Woman.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

The Wizard of Babylon

I haven't played with dolls for years
—not since I was three
and bashed its head
then cried

But frequently I have read
of others' wizardry
and so tonight I've fashioned
what is only in my mind
your life-like image
—though the single hair
that powers it
is one of yours
and the gold band I've placed
on its left hand finger, third
is leaf of wedding picture frame.
I have also fashioned
a clumsy image of myself
—the part is equal
to the whole—
containing salt of my dried tears—
now no longer shed
with this omnipotent magic
active in my heart

I begin to feel already
our passionate embrace
I wonder—
can these dolls
effectively erase
a past of non-communication
or is a future reciprocity
too much for even magic
with our all too human
lack of grace

I begin to feel already
the passing of our race

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

A Stab in the Heart of Regenesiis

When never is the holy place
and nowhere is the spirit bound
I know the feeling of the tortured mouse
and the gravely wail of mind.
You can't convince me of the past
nor effervesce a genii to my soul;
I'm lonely bound and self enchained
and water drop weary with my bile.
I can't give you the bottom of my pail,
I can't give you my starry roof;
but I'll try to fill your never
and find your nowhere near my own;
I'll make you present in the wonder-bind toil
and shake the world with my pulling leaf
till the bottle-borne liquid of my fluid year
falls down like the Flood of a kinder time,
a day before Adam....

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

It Is Not That I Have Nothing

It is not that I have nothing to say
I have no words to say it
—words that have not
been encrusted thickly
with barnacled meaning
of a sinking culture
—words that have not
been thickly uttered
by the tinsel symbols
of our childish dreams
—words that have not
the slightest whisper left
of you and me, of us.

It is not that I have nothing to say:
We have meaning and being
deprived of symbol.
There is nothing left but life.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

Marriage

They stood before the shallow pit
containing books of wisdom:
 a Life of Gandhi
 a book of Zen
 Einstein's *Relativity*
 a dozen others, in a row
containing ikons, paintings:
 Titian, Rembrandt, Vermeer
 de Chirico, Picasso, Klee
containing music scrolls and disks:
 ancient chants and lays, dirges
 Beethoven, Prokofieff, and jazz
Beneath their feet reposed
the verbalistic, the symbolic, imagistic—
in deathly silent clamor of shouting sign
in attendance on the man, the woman.
The man, the woman.
 the two become one
 without benefit
 of linguistic clergy
 or semantic pomp.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

On Waking from a Dream of Sublimation

Had not the magic lifted...
Had I lulled myself again,
back into my dreary, seried slumber vision...
Had the owl winked just one more tempting time—
 I should have floated
 with only feathered feeling,
 pillow muffled hearing,
 lust mote misted seeing,
till the very fringe and lining of my dusty life
were mingled with the past in belted,
buckled jacket, totally disnuded
of its growing, knowing,
wakeful ecstasy.

This, I should warn you, is no lament,
for I know both magic black, and white.
The latter is the conscious matter,
without attenuation, nor the quick forgetfulness
of black summer cloud or shattered hate.
In blackness there is that trapping transience
that knows no letting loose
of stray ends of liminal awareness.

It is the simulacrum of beauty,
the virtual image of reality.

Had not the magic of illusion lifted
I could not have praised you
with my growing, knowing art.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

Antique Game Outgrown

Tonight I walked nine-thousand toe-heel steps
and tried to penance three deep inner brooding's wrongs.

Elbow, tiptoe, mumbleypeg hopscotch,
Winter's coming and I can't play long.

Tonight I knelt at forewarned cunning's scheming
and learned that Lilith's candle burned before me,
had my heart stop five holy minutes just to cool constricted passion,
keep my flair from burning unapproached bridges not yet built.
Tonight I marched nine-thousand heel-toe paces
and tried assuaging pique at three-pronged splintered brooding.

Elbow, tiptoe, mumbleypeg hopscotch,
Winter's coming and I can't play long.

Tonight I felt the forearm'd dreaming stiffness
and tried refusing smitten graces forced upon me unconsented,
had my face obverted for me to receive the bitten fist,
to shape my dares to learning unaccounted syntheses unabridged.

Tonight I sang nine-thousand tooth-tongue graces
and cried in penance for my three unbrooded, full-grown longings.

Elbow, tiptoe, mumbleypeg hopscotch,
Winter's coming and I can't play long.

Tonight I hanged from nine-thousand toe-trod, heel-kissed laces
and pried my eyes back out of evil brooding, three-deep cists.

Elbow, tiptoe, mumbleypeg hopscotch,
Winter's gone; nub-toed, toothless; play is wrong.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

Judgement Day

I could remember my name. But everybody else was taking all their clothes off, and how is one to think of anything but literal realities when faced with such abstraction. What I felt was something like being in bed with two pairs of scissors. It was cheap and mean. And then all the clippings, nail parings, excretions and other effluvia march in on paper-clips and restore themselves, one on the other, crowding, until even I began to wonder if it was my name.

But of course. It had to be me. Who else could I be? It had to be me. I remember very clearly being introduced on a very cold day, on the corner of Dearborn and State streets in Chicago some years ago, and it was me, of course. But times have changed. One is sometimes mistaken when it comes to old memories. The folds of one's brain get cramped, perhaps; and yawn or stretch, and poof... but I could remember my name, I should think.

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

In the Necromantic Anteroom of Hell

In the anteroom of necromantic hell
I pause, remembering the view of everything
behind my head, silent now as I approach these silent stairs.
I turn one final time from my unmarked path
that surely leads to one more final chasm, one more cliff face,
and look into my own, my afterimage face that follows me and is my soul.

You are beautiful, my night,
in your own sequestered way,
and the hand that fingers pearls
at your dawn-light fluted throat
is too ecstatically ephemeral
for even gallantry in farewells.

I cannot fling aside the petals
of the lotus, and the rose,
both strewn before me by that hand,
both formed and designated
long before I walked this path—
How shall I make my way
when to stay is not to crush—
But I must pass, and be remembered,
release the fragrance, and be lost.

We do not recall each blade of grass
that bent beneath us, nor the grains
that briefly flashed, like breakers,
as we chased a momentary decade
in each other's glance or pirouette.
We faltered then, but entwined as lovers go,
each guided; followed, found the way,
discovered entrechat; and lost, dejected,
huddled in the forest until a falling leaf
passed through the one stray lance of light
that lit your auburn hair and reflected in my eye.

They will never know, the straw men,
the tilting giants with their wagging fingers,
they will never have an instant glimpse.

They will never be.

In this anteroom of hell I disengage my vision,
having paused, reflected, and now, with nothing more to contemplate,
I ascend the corridor flight and surreptitiously drop a crimson piece of silk,

Publication. *The Anteroom of Hell*. San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957.

BOOK TWO | *THE EUCALYPTUS POEMS*

Croupier Press, 1974

Gently the Moon

breathe in gently the moon
& lightly finger the nightleaves
 (fragrances annoint the eyes
 & birds quote broken riffs
 in their skyblue dreams)

break the tongues of silence
muffling fast fingers' wishes
 in shadows, mooncast creases
 rejoice at unknown breaks
 as they fall into unknown places

unheard halleluyahs shout
& handclapping traces diminished
 receding paths through pain
 forests of fright to discover
 stone gods & futures redeemed

by moonlight & birds & reverence
for crushed yearnings of petals

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Out of a Turbulent Silence

(A Palm Sunday Poem)

words are blunt, dull means
for tending delicate
wounds... & wonders
what we say can tell but such a minor part
of what is inside the multichambered
skull & heart of life

to break the seals of silence—
knowing the depths & heights
of confusions they may have,
lightly knitted into
an appearance of solidity—

to speak from my inside to your inside
when there is such chaos raging in me—
to tell you, to count the many facets
of my love for you
when the brilliance is muddied so
by my own jetsam pain & anguish—

oh, the words are here, but my brain
is in such a storm of bodily disaster!...
just know: I love you.

we will calm the storms
& walk on the waters.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Sonnet for a Half-Sleeping Muse

When the one-eyed grace
descends, light abounding,
when the thousand-eyed
oppression lifts, speculation
fleeing from clear vision,
focussed, uprooted pride
& scattered yearnings go pounding
up the steps of skull to trace
the limits of hope & trust in peace,
the inside touching fingers bleed
a little & subtle wounds release,
at last, the blessing of the deed.
To act at all is hard
enough—to act with love is art.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

My Lady's Laughter

By candle, wick bent & steady,
flame casting motionless point
where pen touches wordless
page, I wait. She wakes
& touches me, & the shadow moves,
black across the page of light.
Wail!

The laughter of candles
whickers in her hair & snuffle
deep in lovedrunk slumbers,
deep glacier darkness melted
to torrents of mirthful words
howling through this shadowed
hand, touched by the moon—
I know it's full tonight—
we tasted its secret rippled song!

Only when the moon is full
do poets become sane & sage,
only when the Lady touches cool
the page does poet know his word
& craft of cool dark light of inside
touching with tender sight—the love
begets more love & night forgets
that darkness is absurd—the moon
is full of my Lady's laughter!

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Thanksgiving Epistle to Vincent

personality changes & strange riffs
follow through all the ways of our hearts
& flowers are the thread & art of our lives.
“Wherever we go, we drag ourselves,”
I’d said, & if worthy we do not hang
but float on the upturned notes
of Charlesian song, or the inverted tones
of Miles of Monk-ish wishes that throb
& burn our laughing eyes like tearflakes
or wintersun in the liquid need
of our pressing close together
& tender touching gentle hands
that know our hearts are good
wherever we find ourselves,
so long as we find ourselves, and
so long as we are.

There has to be
a substitute for something as good as that.
So there is. Let me “put it in yr hand!”
Tony said (not believing it possible).

Here it is, moonman, poeteye, lovefinger!

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Duet

the being, & the being,
interlaced,
two threads of light
gyre & burn
through darkness—
the path is not straight,
the way is not marked,
the end is never known—
only the twin being,
& the paired becoming...

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Who We Are / Who We Seem

we, knowing ourselves,
realizing our s e l v e s,
wearing our own faces
in tailored othersuits,
present our stars
in square-fronted circles,

and everyone is happy,
others satisfied that we
are like them, while we
are happy knowing we
can never be
satisfied!

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

If a Sunny Morning Always

grey mornings can't all be bad...
sometimes the very featurelessness
of the world can spur the eye
to move the hand to color...

if a sunny morning always
made us smile, we wd not go far.
grey mornings plant notions
of empty spaces to be filled,
a lurking world of possibles

if the sun should burn the clouds...
if a sunny morning always
made us smile, would there be war?

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Now

every moment
is the last page
of an eternity
every blink
is the last vision
of love
every second
slips away secretly
leaving me barefaced
& no sun

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

How Many Notions

how many notions
of the perfect
can be marred
disfigured
by a simple
speck
of dust
in the eye.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Leonine Poem

mercurial
woman
 gliding
fast past
 & closest
 sun—
he gets
 dizzy
watching yr
 silvery
 spinning...
(forgets it's his own
 light blinding
him)

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Geis

"Art is God is Love"—Wallace Berman

A dozen tasks await me,
yet it's clear: my geis is this:
to write clear words,
to clear my heart with words,
to hear my soul & make it ring,
to sing my love & bear my grief,
to grieve only in such manner
that all who hear my lamentation
will be deceived, feel joy, laugh
& praise life and pass on enriched.
A serious task, this; so long
I've doubted my fingers, doubted
my tongue had any word worth utterance.
Must I always find the source of joy
in pain?! Is grief the only key
to life?! I have so long decried
what seemed to me the myth
of the suffering artist, so entwined
as it is with mere sufferance
of the artist. Am I wrong?
Yet here I am, in this moment,
grieving... yet finding words
in my fingers I'd swear were not there
before this moment... hearing songs
(sad now, but I have known songs of joy),
& my eyes violently open to fear.
A dozen tasks await me:
shit, shop, eat, sort out the past,
throw out these cluttered & dusty hopes,
destroy these erroneous pityings
(of myself), ignore the seeming
force of pattern of missed beginnings,
restring the guitar with grace,
find order in these many aspects
of chaos, create trust (I've only
dust to work with), learn to see

what is, love. A dozen tasks.
The labors of Hercules
test each of us, & each
determines the growing path,
& judges when each goal is gained.
I am sworn & bound & quite committed;
my geis cannot be shirked or shucked,
my fate is unsealed & I cannot claim
ignorance. This is acknowledgement.
I neither will nor can deny it,
I have tried, sought excuses—
there are none; I must speak
clear words of love, must speak
with finger, tongue & being.
Only love can satisfy, can drive me.
This is my test: to live in & from love,
toward love, for love. “Art is God is Love.”

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Nameless Wisdom

Soon another magic day begins...

I say “another” as if any other
could be as this has been—none can;

but there are other... magics—
& it is knowledge such as this that lures
one on, to seek more magic, new magic,
the wonder of each day, and especially
of those days we realize are magic!

Soon another chance begins, a gameless
gamble, a new stance... before the Work,
the chance to make a wonder,
or to play a change....

What brought about the miracle?
What wrought the change?

What different gesture in the making
of which talisman or pentacle returned
the lost? renewed, reborn, my heart.

The day was starred before I knew it.
& I listened carefully to each whisper
of the prophecies & chants—yet I am no wiser—
or have I a wisdom with no name?

The miracle has come, the change is made,
my talismans & pentacle all sing true harmonies,
I find no flaw—& perhaps it’s this that wonders me...
yet I know how to see wonder, & accept the good fate
with the ill....

Another magic day begins,
& I know it is the magic that both changes
& is constant—the knowledge grows,
the talisman & pentacle are renewed, of necessity,
the changes take their own direction from the soul,

& give the constancy its growing wonder—
& draw the gesture as pentacle & talisman,
the knowledge, the wisdom, with no name
but wonder.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Radical

He goes to the roots.

/I've sd it all, time to start a new poem... but...
Who goes to the roots sees both a virtual image
& reality—aboveground & underground—
the pejoratives may now be forgotten!

/I've sd it all, time to start a new
poem; that which makes you be me
... starting at the roots. That's it.
Time to make a new beginning a new being,
regarding carefully source of becoming,
seeing slippery alternatives at beginnings—but...

He goes to the roots to start seeing /being...
He finds new-grown paths to new ways of growing,
the beckoning of the leaves, the blossoms,
the need to continue, to breed new being!

That's it: Beginning at the roots & leaping up
through all the detailed cells, the many passages
through changes, at each moment, movement
a question that must be answered Now
if there is to be a leaf, if there is to be a flower,
flowing, the constant energy from all the lovers'
love, from the scholars, the workmen,
to transformation from cell to cell, faith & trust
in love flowing from root to eternity in the flower,
the one who flows, grows, knows the highest tree
bud ecstasy, & joy of intellect, the radical goes
to the roots & leaves, leaps to nectar & seed,
that which makes new joy, he goes back going forth,
forms change, joys must be reborn, Now.

Now, if there is to be the leaf, the artifact of living,
the manifest, if there is to be the bloom & need
for beauty, it is time. Now.

He goes to the roots of ecstasy & flows in joyful potency,
potentiality. It's time for beauty & it's time, then,
for its need, it's time for source & end to see unity,

for, nevertheless, it moves,” & no pejorative
can force eternal ignorance, the seed cannot ignore
the root. & thus, he goes, down to find the top,
& thus, he goes making, being, being made. Joy.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Round White Rooms

And what did the trees say?
And what whispered the wind?

Oh tell me what the seeds say:
waiting for warmth,
Oh tell me what the birds sing
soaring in the sunlight.
The trees say Stand & Sway
& the wind whispers this way, & that.
Oh the seeds tell each other stories
waiting to be born,
& the birds sing of round white rooms
they'll return to when it's dark.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Sea

The sea is only two blocks & a beach away.

I have not been to the water.

I have gone to the edge of the sand

& picked up a handful

& I felt it, grain by grain;

the last grain stuck

underneath my fingernail

& I picked it out with my teeth.

The sea is so far from my earthbound

buried soul, far from my touch,

so far I have only smelled the spray

& watched the fishermen trudge off the pier,

& the wet children of the sea,

so young for such an unreachably distant sea;

so I have not known these waters.

Years have passed, & I look up at the gulls

& try to understand their mournful cry.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Dry Leaves Lay Scattered

The dry leaves lay
 scattered about
and the green sprouts & buds
 ignore them.
Another old one falls, leaving
 a neat scar.

The tree replenishes itself,
 expanding grace—
fully into the sky.
 A neat scar.

The wind tussles, musses its hair
 & the roots squirm
slowly, thirstily, deep
 within the tender flesh.

The earth has neither shame nor pride,
 no guilt, no hopes,
and wears the tree & its dry leaves
 placidly, massive,
a neat scar among others
 in eternal night.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Poem in the Afternoon

Shadows on the fencepost,
shadows on the wall,

darkness in the centermost
wings of the trees,
liquid moaning urgency
between the porous cells,
fluids for the growing, unknowing
birth of bud & stretching arms
of gathering in of further fluids,
juices sweet and bitter, cells
tender and turgidly making way
for youngness, larger shadows,
more darkness on the mileposts,
ringing stillness in the paths,
death always loaning life
between the porous cells
of hell and heaven, unknowing
burst of hidden wretchedness
quickly gathered, dried,
juices sweet and bitter, hells
rendered giddy & forgotten
in youngness, mere shadows,
no larger nor thicker than a ghost
clanging impossible chains, a way
of dying simply, becoming just
shadows on the fencepost,
shadows on the wall.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Eucalyptus, I

Eucalyptus sways so gently
outside this violent window,
jazz jabbing at my skull
as I stab these words out,
using this surprising knife
just found piercing my heart.

Eucalyptus drops its leaves
& sweats, just stands there,
oblivious to my violent
windings of pain, shards
of blue-curtained love-eyes
scattered about in the jazz,
screams that never stop echoing
through blue eyes & sad doors of
no escape.

Eucalyptus ignores everything
but sun & wind & little bugs
(& stolidly ignored birds
take care of those bugs);
so stolid, this tree, swaying,
dripping life, yet it sways so gently,
not at all violated by this
violent eye, melting, as ear grabs
jazz stabbing words deep
in this surprising heart,
knifed, no escape.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Eucalyptus, II

Yes, Eucalyptus, you just stand
and sway in the wind, suck
the breast of earth,
breathe the sun,
yes, Eucalyptus, you just grow.

In rain you soak it up,
in calm you do not move,
& when the wind is fierce
you flex & gyre & snap a twig
& shed leaves all over the neighbors.

No, Eucalyptus, I'm not so flexible
as you—I drown in these rains
and these gales lacerate my flesh
and my soul splits and shatters
all over the neighbors.

Yes, Eucalyptus, teach me:
your stolidity—I'll get
the hang of it yet.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

Eucalyptus, III

There must be an end (I tell myself)
to musings on this tree.

There must be some point or goal, or reason
such a tree could hold me so enthralled.

It's not just stolidity, impassivity, indifference,
stoicism, apathy, nor even calmness, serenity.
It is that the tree is there. Before my eyes.
Real. Unquestionable.

I sit and see the mutable makings of man,
his houses, his trains & planes & cars
and have learned, sometimes,
to no longer wince at sonic booms.

I sit and see the putative values, morals,
desires for status or other shucks
that seem to work, seem to turn the world; yet
I know the tree grows regardless
of disputations & motivations...

There must be an end, I tell myself,
toward which my life may be nudged, pointed,
pushed, that does not resolve, dissolve to abstract,
static image in the abstract center of an obvious
absurdity.

The tree grows,
is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
with its growth, its scars
of little deaths; it knows
only that the sun shines
or does not, that there is
water where it has reached
or must reach out to, that
the cells sustain it until they fail
& fall...

The tree knows all
there is to know,
simply, unknowingly.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

∞ Shadows

silently she kissed his neck
as he sat gazing out the window
at the engrossing, stolid
tree, & he touched her hand
& gazed at the particular tree,
the object closer to reality
than any he had ever seen,
& she kissed his neck & saw
over his shoulder the moving
permanence of the wind blown
tree of graceful trailing branches
& tufty blossoms, new & tender
leaves & falling dry ones,
this very special silent tree,
she saw it as her lips touched.

she saw its eternal grace,
she saw how calmly firm
 was its thirsty grasp of earth,
she saw the infinitely alterable
 patterns of its shadow,
she saw a bird dance in its palm,
she saw the sun glisten &
she saw the fog caress the tree,
she saw the tree shatter the sky &
she saw the tree disappear in darkness,
she saw the tree through the tears of a kiss,

and he touched her hand, believing,
trusting the tree & her tears & his gazing,
trusting the tree & his tears & her kiss,
 and she touched his soul, believing,
trusting the tree & the reality
of the particular eternal grace of loving,
of the infinitely special unity of
 kiss, gaze, bird dance, tree thrust, & shadows.

Publication. *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974.

The Mendicant

frowning with concealed intent
the mendicant would not smile
at frailties—he would guffaw
at the plight and curse
his shout... he frowns by turns
and hurls himself at hidden
 chuckles, while he flicks
old shards of discontent & pity
from his beard like burnt-out,
dried up fireflies and turns
 to face the frowning world
with laughter in the flowing sleeve
of his melancholic habit.

Publication. Back cover of *The Eucalyptus Poems*. Golden, Colorado: Croupier Press, 1974. The reset text is accompanied by the photographic original in the archival section.

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Books, periodicals, and surviving witnesses

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The 1957 copyright page records prior appearances in *Embryo*, *Ore*, *Whetstone*, *The Miscellaneous Man*, and *danse macabre*. The 1974 copyright page records prior appearances in *Nexus* and *The Oracle of Southern California*. Issue-level witnesses have not all been recovered.

COLOPHON

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