

THE YALE SERIES OF YOUNGER POETS

47

EDITED BY W. H. AUDEN

THE GRASSHOPPER'S MAN AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ROSALIE MOORE

PUBLISHED ON THE MARY CADY TEW MEMORIAL FUND

The Grasshopper's Man

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
Rosalie Moore

With a Foreword by
W. H. Auden

NEW HAVEN
Yale University Press

LONDON • GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE • OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1949

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Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgments

Some of the poems in this collection have appeared in *Accent*, *Accent Anthology*, *Furioso*, *Pacific Quarterly*, *Quarterly Review*, *Experiment*, *Circle*, *Voices*, *Contour*, *Berkeley*, *The Pacific Spectator*, and *Poetry*.

Other poems have been published in *The Yale Review*, *The New Yorker*, and *Commonweal*.

Dedication

YOU, Lawrence Hart, had better carry a crux-bug,
jump-bob, tick-nut:
Wind up the palm to show—
Say "This makes it go."

Talking with few by hob and raising
Some fire's row an edge.

Or along the dangerous estuaries
The ladies, the cars like swans
Like Hudsons in classes.

But always and among—
You, unlike as Angle or wagon,
Posting another country,
Eyes of skald or reminder,

And one recalls there is something
moves without engine:
Man, contraption, or mill,
What—without house, without hill,
By land by sea constant
Under the night's big johnny-jump
Of lights and latches—turns,
And the poles, the dark one and
the bright.

Foreword

THE history of poetry is an interaction of two histories, a history of theme and a history of treatment, of the various answers given, on the one hand, to the question "what kind of relations, situations, persons, objects, etc., excite the poet most?", and, on the other, to the question "how is that excitement most accurately and completely transmuted into the medium of poetry?" In each case, development is the outcome of a continuous struggle between two diametrically opposed principles. In the history of theme these are: 1) "nothing shall be excluded which does in fact excite the poet's passionate concern," and 2) "everything shall be excluded which does not really excite the poet as a poet." Thus there is always a party (every poet is necessarily a party man, though he may switch sides) which is seeking to extend the range of theme against traditional conceptions of what is a "poetic" subject, e.g., low life as a subject for tragedy, and a party seeking to limit poetry to its true concern as against its improper uses, e.g., teaching or journalism.

Similarly, the party which, in treatment, upholds the principle "everything which is relevant to the subject must be expressed" stresses the importance of intensity as against triviality while the party of the principle "everything which is irrelevant to the subject must be excluded" stresses clarity and unity as against obscurity and disorder.

Miss Rosalie Moore is a member of the Activists, a group of poets associated with Mr. Lawrence Hart, who may be described as adhering to the exclusive principle in regard to theme and the inclusive principle in regard to treatment.

According to their manifesto, *Ideas of Order*,* they believe

* *Ideas of Order in Experimental Poetry*, a Circle pamphlet published by George Leite, Berkeley, California.

that of the two kinds of meaning in language, the denotative and the connotative, it is the latter which is the genuine poetic meaning, and that the truly aesthetic order is the pattern of associations formed by the connotative images, in contrast to the logical structure proper to expository prose.

Thus in her poem, "Dirge for the Living," which is about the haunting of our lives by the ghosts of the past, Miss Moore writes:

They bury their dying in us,
Under some cross-sword stars.

The juxtaposition of "bury" and "cross-sword" causes a mutual reaction: bury turns cross-sword, for example, into crossroads (where suicides are buried), and, vice versa, cross-sword turns bury into marry (the soldier bridegroom leads his bride out under crossed swords).

Such uses of language are bound to have an effect upon the poet's choice of subject. A narrative subject as in a ballad or a ratiocinative subject like that of *The Hind and the Panther* depends too much on denotative meanings to be amenable. As Miss Moore says herself: "I suppose an approach like this had its origin in a particular pleasure in the sound and look of things—sensory data, and other immediate values." This does not mean, of course, that her poetry is simple description, but that, if you wish to proceed from images to reflection rather than, as some poets do, proceed from reflection to illustrative images, sensory data are the natural things to start with.

Historically, this conception of poetry is a reaction—and a healthy one—against the conception of poetry as the defender of the humanist values of intelligence and order against irrationalism, such as has been put forward by that very fine poet Dr. Yvor Winters, and the conception of poetry as an instrument for arousing proper public emotions about

political and social issues, such as was common during the 'thirties.

It is a good thing that we should be reminded that a poem is not, like a teacher, a bridge between the truth and the ignorant reader, which becomes superfluous once the relation between the latter two has been established, but is itself the terminus of a relation.

It is a good thing that poets should be reminded that, in poetry, only what you really feel and care about, not what you think you ought to feel and care about, is of any importance, and that, whether or not it is true that the connotative element in language is the only poetic one, it is undoubtedly true that the commonest and greatest obstacles to honest feeling and expression are preconceived general notions which express themselves in denotative terms.

There are dangers in the activist approach, as in any approach. For instance, there is a danger that the detail may be cultivated at the expense of the whole poem, or the attempt to maintain the maximum intensity at every moment may defeat itself (for example, I do not quite "get," I must confess, such images as "The tall wrenched elephants of other time" or "our pierced insects of sight"), but it saves Miss Moore from writing poems without a genuine impulse because one wants to write *some* poem, or thinks one ought to write a poem about this subject or that, and enables her, when it is successful, to produce lines of great and original beauty, e.g.,

Into our low grasses, with their daylight of poppies,
The horses softly charge—being more, to the dead,
As clouds are.

"Fear by Hanging"

or

There is a hand lets down to us, if there is.
 Sweet waters and temptations, loose your streams.
 For the hugged arm is sweet as a violin
 And longer to resound,
 O soundboard of many singings, tell again
 How close a cover love is, flung on
 Like a cocked sky.

"You Whom I Love"

In conclusion, may I suggest to the reader, whatever his preferences in poetry, not that he should be tolerant of opposing views in the sense of ceasing to hold any, but that, as a lover of poetry, he should be glad that oppositions exist, for poetry flourishes when the opponents are determined and evenly matched but, if any party gains too complete a victory and succeeds in suppressing its rivals, poetry invariably declines.

W. H. AUDEN

Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	5
<i>Foreword by W. H. Auden</i>	7
<i>The Mind's Disguise</i>	13
<i>The Grasshopper's Man</i>	
I. <i>The Grasshopper's Man</i>	14
II. <i>The Beginning</i>	15
III. <i>You Whom I Love</i>	15
IV. <i>The Interim</i>	16
V. <i>The End</i>	17
<i>Flower and Look</i>	19
<i>Still without Life</i>	20
<i>Poem for a Night of Flood</i>	21
<i>Shipwreck</i>	23
<i>The Garden Outside of Snow</i>	25
<i>Night Piece for a Child</i>	27
<i>Moving, by Roads Moved</i>	29
<i>Doors</i>	30
<i>Dirge for the Living</i>	31
<i>Memorial Park</i>	33
<i>Letter to Camp Orford</i>	34
<i>Weather and Month</i>	35
<i>Memory of Quiet</i>	36
<i>Prologue</i>	37
<i>Journeys toward Center</i>	
I. <i>The Lovers</i>	39
II. <i>The Prophets</i>	39
III. <i>The Birds</i>	40
<i>Poem in Two Scenes</i>	41

<i>Ripeness Is Rapid</i>	42
<i>The Wheel</i>	43
<i>Height</i>	45
<i>Personal Atlas</i>	46
<i>Stopshort</i>	48
<i>Stopshort</i>	48
<i>Timepiece</i>	49
<i>Driving by Night</i>	50
<i>Imprecation for an Aesthetics Society with Newts,</i> <i>Warts, Waxes and Pins</i>	51
<i>Parade with Piccolos</i>	53
<i>Vision with Images</i>	54
<i>Fear by Hanging</i>	55
<i>Journey in a Street</i>	56
<i>Appointment, December 25</i>	57
<i>Watch of the Beasts</i>	
I. <i>Beau Monde</i>	58
II. <i>Return</i>	58
III. <i>Parade</i>	59
IV. <i>Poem for St. Anthony</i>	60
V. <i>Lines for a Morality</i>	61
<i>Stand before Him as Would</i>	63

The Mind's Disguise

THE mind's disguise is permanence.
Whether on rock, or on wrecked surfaces,
Wrests the uncluttered wind for the
 needed enemy,
Watches with many turns at once,
Confronts a century.

Learn early, unletter
Your alphabet decision,
Coming down to
Accident's corner of fence:
Enigma, protector of mighty.

And the winged, divisible sorrow,
Granted, almost—like love,
Is shunt from the high forbiddor,
Forehead of No.

The Grasshopper's Man

I. THE GRASSHOPPER'S MAN

How that the grasshopper is a more precise
Lover of God than he.
Light on the rocks it sits—rocking, rocking,
Its locket of dew,
Its no idea of father.
O cocked parenthesis.

But the man the grasshopper has
Stands on his weights,
Holds fingers up
Heavy in tens or fives,
Keeps, without telling,
A coffin-box.

Rocker,
Hopper,
O cock.

How that your man is an engine, is
Ever-producer, ego, layer of eggs, bulleter.

He is a black coat in the dark.
Out in the garden, plotting deaths, I hear him
Plant vegetable after vegetable.

Fathèr, father, and father.
All of the days that have opened their eyes lie staring.
Only the pin-dark eyes, O cock,
Legs of diamond or grass.

And the colored air unseen,
The rainbows, the affections, the glass,
The dew to deck him, or ever
The sky's reversible meadow of rising.

II. THE BEGINNING

Somewhere among the gardens and amazes of Spring—
A man's emerald,
His love.

The garlands are fluted, are round,
Fitting the beautiful skull of the ground.

O pronged and bladed Spring—
The peach, the witch, the perfection:
Sometimes they hear
Shake of a wall of wing
(But where is Thy wall face?)

Their gestures and speaking are low
by the water's race;
The shake of a harp through water;
A wind walks in the grass.

III. YOU WHOM I LOVE

You whom I love with accident
Of truth or book page,
What a small toy room holds us, furnished with
Trinket or mouse;

Come to the window, look at this
Dark land, how by threes or eights

The cloaks come riding, riding,
Before our story tells . . .

There is a square before us
And a circle between,
And I know you fear the decorations
 on cornices
Or fence of faces at bedside,
The windows facing windows,
And swallows like those faces.

There is a hand lets down to us, if there is.
Sweet waters and temptations, loose your streams.
For the hugged arm is sweet as a violin
And longer to resound,
O soundboard of many singings, tell again
How close a cover love is, flung on
Like a cocked sky.

IV. THE INTERIM

In bed they wait, fast;
While the big laborer riding in mid-field harrows,
Provides as Father or Cain.
 (While you dream
You must find the right stones.)

Farther, farther, and farther.
He is light, now, working his tongues together
Of harrow and haw.

In their beds, knocking like rats or woodpeckers
They think of the roosters, clocks,

Engines for waking—
Move limbs like sharpeners,
Rise.

V. THE END

Here is the kitchen's big wall of calendar
Its windows numbered:
The men at breakfast watching
The red 7's and 14's,
The moon's quarter of face.
 Above handles
The children's eyes, the women,
And dread in the ovens.

Over the land, among objects
The hands wander and wander:
Close over thimbles or keys.
See this is Sunday—the opened book
Parts empty and white like hands.

After the concerts
The ladies in a faun's afternoon linger,
Finding the webs dangling from their lashes
The rainbows still on them . . .
(They sat at attention like rabbits, yet missed
The small sharp way of a faun.)

Rocker,
Hopper,
O cock . . .

But one vaguer than rest, does not know—
Canyons for speech, keeps certain keys,

Sometimes imagines under fingers
Stars like strawberries, rides nowhere
His tall gaze, becomes
Minister or fellow and is always
Below fathom, babbler. . . .

But hardest to bear, sudden and without knowing,
He is helped up as onto a hayrick to move
In the clumsy iron way of a saint
Without steam or envy but slow
On a broken axle of sky and with
A wanderer's old patch memory of love.

Flower and Look

FIERCE pansy. Do they use you
For their memory of masks,
Saying "Flower, flower"?

Do they pass—flank of their face,
Their looks, more memory than man?

They are share-keepers, borrowers—
Suck into their eyes the unrepeatd fires.

The prison-lighted tiger they halt;
The moon, like an enemy.

And the mystery floats,
Is a raft loose elsewhere. Take on faith
Its window-quick departure.

Somewhere, oh somewhere on seas, the sharp ship—
What it selects out of wideness;
My streamers go out to this with
Torn melody of gull.

Those, back of glasses,
See less than the eyes of others—
Hold to the opera air,
Playing at absence;

But the truth will come out, if it comes,
By moon and by sea,
Pale as a wall, and certain
Of being beheld by none.

Still without Life

THE mind's circle increases death,
Not weakly, but with
A close and capital waiting.

Death is your ignorance of constants
and horribles, and surely
Your knowledge of this, and walking
behind a friend,
Are the same thing.

Never touch, never see, never counter
in all your life
The solid that owns everything;
Only the objects, not us, have
The purpose to live like people,
The patience to love like boards.

Poem for a Night of Flood

THE roomless place in the mind:
Silence of locks,
Out of the mouths of leaf
No moths rise—the mind to itself mining,
The land over it long gone.

And when at evening, desiring:
The emptying sacks of dusk over shoulder,
The divulged handful,
The best—flung like a goose's stars;
I fear the reveal of moon—
Three-corner face, the sharpener. So that
Hamlet's divided dream would seem the sweet
Of murder by sea,
Not this mirroring, leaf by leaf,
The memory, and no scenery.

Think, think Egypt,
Egypt in flood.
The bears hid, the figure without a back
Falling face forward,
And they knew what it was attached them
like crabs,
Neither cancer nor cold,
But Fear.

Disaster, flower, comforter.

I think there might be something for me again
in those nights,
Those hammers of dug stars.

Down by the flood last night I dreamed again
The water's weed waving;
At midnight the wings lengthen,
The moon in the head
Faces its equal.

Out of this rainful, black, mud-running season
The last of the twelve selves
Becomes a river—
Reality the monster rides the rains:

O man of stone,
I remember your half-acre walk, I encounter—
What's started, what's elected, what's
 coming with rain on stilts to make
Its raid, its wreck, its trust, its tribe,
 its number.

Shipwreck

WATCHING, watching from shore:
Wind, and the shore lifting,
The hands raising on wind
And all the elements rising.

Calmly the wreck rides,
Turns like leviathan or log,
And the moon-revealing white turns upward
(Upward of palms, the dead);
And all of the sea's attack, small tangents and traps,
Is wasted on it, the wind wasted,
Helpless to wreck or raise.

Often in sleep turning or falling
A dream's long dimension
I rock to a random ship:
The one like a broken loon,
Clapping its light and calling;
The one bug-black, signing its sign in oil;
The telegraph-tall, invented—
Moved by a whine of wires;
The *Revenge* riding its crossbar,
Raising its sword hilt:

And I know their power is ended, and all of the
 dreams
Too vacant and inhabited:
The ships with lights on their brows, the mementos,
 the messages,

The cardinals, couriers to Garcias;
and after it all, they say,
The ships make more noise than the sea.

And I look again
At the equal ocean
With its great dead ship.

The Garden Outside of Snow

HAIL! People of absence,
Fallen of snow's thicket;
Here are the picket ghosts
Come to accomplish.

Disbelieve, smile, see instead
Mile on mile asphodel
And nun leaves without rose;
Be the indoorsman, his vest cupboards,
His indoor tittering of sparrow.
And the kitchen-drawer ching,
Playing the countless changes, and
The fetes one plans, coveting
The wrapped hoards of the traders, and thinking
"The ravenly winter is all yours."

But soon in the cloth-still face of a winter
child—shall see
The wide and hill-shaped wandering is no more,
The lockets, the crimes of berries;
The high rocky beds in the mind
Shall run without connection—oh let out
The locked-in bone to roar.

And later, the eye glazing, the walls rearing,
Sees ice is his element—
Flies forward now, but solid in deep and wide
and hovered by
The tall wrenched elephants of other time:
Clear to my mind such cage is.

Also heaven:
Garden of sea-bright cold,
Bluer than price,
Place without mast or knell
Or wren of a child.

Night Piece for a Child

SEEKING the separate forest in the head.
Seeking by roof, by rock, by rise of dead
Some country of unsolved birds.

Seeking the separate place—coast of a shadow
without mariner;
The way by the rocky daylight borrows and
breaks me,
The scenery without excursion
Of the tended eye.

But you, in the very colt and wrack of springtime,
Are nowhere else but here;
Appearing before the moon as weed or performer—
Oh, at sleep,
Come into your lonely mirror.

Where do I turn, startled, from—
Arrive quickly to meet?—
Moon, apple and early,
High wind over the meadow's foal.

And what place keep, that now your face demands me
While I depart and depart?
We double in doubt, like fish doubling in water:
A cage of flying is lost.

But now is your candle undespair
My closest to clear since sea turned up its pennies:

The dark soft in our ears, and the chime
of the scatter-mice;

And over the lawns, the city of roofs—
Flying and flying.

Fend the beetles and forks of light from thee.
Child, little seal,
Sleep in your coveted satchel of sleep.

Moving, by Roads Moved . . .

MOVING, by roads moved—
Will, like a shunted horse,
Nowhere before been, but get
The meticulous present of strangeness.

Place is of all things vaguest,
Terrifying to haul,
No load so heavy before mention,
Or a smile—its vine-thin history.

Place, place—ornamental deceiver.
Be the location constant—its
Circuit of moles or hills—
An illusion, finer than eyes, is.
Invites you to come not in.

One rather remembers
How, in the child's dust,
He took up a fine handful
And heard, through the thews and wheels,
The voice of the horse auctioneer.

Doors

EXISTS, like blinder or mistake:
Door without face.
You never outlive a door,
Pursues you in front,
Predicts absence.

Doors I fear. Hide
In the cattle of page writing,
In your Drydens of old leaves.

Dirge for the Living

I AM the mover of other eyes,
Of other hands than these
That hang from my tree of bones—

(The old knights, ringing their bones for battle)

I am the mover of other hands:
They came at the pitch of dawn,
Planting their spears;
The quick shrank from their crosses.

(Winds paling the land, blow again
The rafters of many men!)

And one came in his iron—in the low evening;
And looking above, he saw the birds at crossbow,
And a horn sounds in his throat,
And he knew he was dead amid valleys on valleys
of horns.

They are dead, they are dead in their bones
And their hands are multiplied;
Their eyes have struck; their bodies
Reel in the faceless sky.

How often, mornings, hoping to hear rise horns,
Hear—(or the antler-crashing dawn!)—no sound
But the sound of my ear's bees.

With our levy of bones and nakedness of leaves
We wake in the cold plateaus,

And the stone in the chest is there—
The crows passing and passing
In blind men's eyes by daylight.
All of the streams are flattening the birds.

How last, how loom those we imaged—
As, turning on a sky, a mountain's horn.
They are a gallery of air away; they are
An iron of cold away.

They bury their dying in us,
Under some cross-sword stars.

Memorial Park

AND the bells sound: the whole bells, bulge bells,
And the breaking bells; the doves
Float in a packet; and the grapple bells
Haul, and the ropes of loves.

Above the square,
That great bell sound makes water of the air;
The men feel apples in their muscles, all of their
Newspapers tipping—hollows of bell so blow
Over their humming bones. And an old man
Says "Bells is all I know."

What if that iron clap and toss might swing
Always its chains of gale?
Sinking a rusty rain,
Striking at base of acorns like a hail;
O rock of iron waters!—there might come
The broken rain between these groves and me—
As the loose lilies bloom
Sometimes at gaps of pits or tombs.

Letter to Camp Orford

LOOKING skyward by daylight I see only
The branchless falling.

Nights, there is a well-bottom of sky.

And the old men go for the mail in the mornings,
With their hands let down like pails;
What they hold is held flat between spars;
Later they dream of their hands broken, as rocks.
"So the dipperful summer leaves us."

Evenings, they lean to the long vines.
"He went off," they say, "as the light was
felling the treetops.

Where he is now is a dry place;
No ship lifts its bones."

And after their canyons of talk, after—
Rising, the rocky moon—
They take the white roads singly,
Seeking the same old Hebrew wells, like men
Whose hands are withheld from stones.

Love, I remember well
How, out of dusk, you builded around us bark
So that our tree lengthened: how, even then,
We watched the old men go home
With a candle of wet in our bones.

Weather and Month

THE weather blew through its year
Its months of moon mothing,
Its spools unwinding.

O flake and feather of moon—O air:
The throat having its own
Moon in the muscle—
full is the bell-shook hollow.

But the watery month leads nowhere, or the strings
Beneath this spring—
the peeled bird out of air
Shines over shallows.

Looking, everywhere looking, out of our stones of eyes—
Hoping to see, to find,
In the stone-swung moonlight
Or wasp waters.

Memory of Quiet

STILL as a moth face on the water,
This flower in air is.

White as the marsh behind the moon
In Ares.

In the room, the petals fall, but do not alter:
Lie like ladles.

Some ball of glass created out of this
Blows through our objects:
Holds, as a bowl its lilies,
Us from the troubled season.

We recall that,
 and the boat slid—
The unheard drop of leaves furnishing the world;
And saw, by the lantern's thorn,
The serpent water
Lit, and the rice-small face.

Oh quakeless seemed
The rim of that flower by moon throw.

Like an under-ocean moon, tall from sea ground,
This memory from a watery height
Sinks silver down.

Prologue

THIS wire along sky
Stains—swings wire.
The street's long people,
And at the curb, the bunched bird.

And seeing one with bubbles rising
Out of the palms . . .
(O window-fill of sun, of sea, watching!)
And the litter of streets like lost, like separate wings—
And some of the people turning.

How down Niraea as rocks
Little candid streams run
("Springs and wood-cocks")—how,
Out of leaves looking,
The carved eyes;
How, hitting at ankles,
Flowers.

The one, over again, in aisles, in entrances,
Coming as through glass.

Or nights, down stairs of light,
Coming—and the watchers:
I know you, they said.

Sometimes again in a wax light
And at aisle end—
Thought, seen.

In the brief, actual places—
In the clear cages.

Or in the square, the stones clear
In the lowered rain.

Journeys toward Center

I. THE LOVERS

FOR these happiness liese
In their drugged dark
And flat pans of eyes.

Through the window by legerdemain
Come coffins of sun.

Afterwards, they remember as irrelevant
The dusty boards, the pear skin.

And still the love that they looked for lies
On the lion side of a furnace.

Later they go
With pennies across their eyes—
Searching, as rubbing hands over bones;
Seeking in faces the frank skull.

In a leaf-rustle sleep they speak,
And long after, are still;
They see as graves do,
They glitter like old logs.

II. THE PROPHETS

The bell rain—blowing across the barrows.
The flowers hold against it their small bowls,
And the hills keep blowing.

Out on the air, at a place where the raindrops cross
In a manner of stars and streets:
in back of this,

The man with a letter A for a mouth;
He speaks.
Remember his whipping face.

Many who stand in back of wire or water,
Whose mouths are marble moving,
Whose hands—
Heavy with sea.

And the rain changes its hills;
The water is filling the flowers up like roofs.

III. THE BIRDS

The birds—their trumpet wings.
There is no man but has heard them in his time,
Their shadows a fall of stones.

By house, by hedge, he is thinking his one-time birds,
Dreaming their jungle of wind.
By dark he hopes to hear their heavy hinges;
And he goes to the door,
And looks at the few corn stars.

What fish-striking bird dives here,
And into what skull's eyes?

Remember, as in the mirror-turning autumn,
The marsh eyes and moss body of love.

Poem in Two Scenes

THE cliffs falling and falling across water:
The winds held on a string.

Fall—

The white birds, like lost wave tops, as we lean
To eyes bluer than bells.

Where from this wandering well was there ever
pasture?

In a closeted field I stood,
And the crowned cattle—
The moonlight among pears or on steps,
The night's closing of books.

Now into the dark's two masts I fold only
My love (is a turning ship);
The winds letting their white out—Oh by day
The sun's keys on the water.

Or waiting, waiting, with a patch of heart
And the sails flat to the windows:

Remember the old man, pointing the crows and corn,
Into that tasseled sleep.

Ripeness Is Rapid

RIPENESS is rapid as plum-drop, as invader.
Plume-fall of evening captures the Turk's
East, and I wonder—
The bright-ribbed Alexander . . .

Many in the berried light, riper,
The women.
But he came with a stiffness of swan,
With a tongue thick with galleys.

As one with toads or jewels at mouth speaking,
(And the waves pounding at Cypress)
He came, left hanging in air
The shaking cliffs and carrions.

Moonlight, wilderness cover;
The small wind dries on the bush,
The sail folds in Marmora.

Oh when will he return to this wooden moonlight,
when uncover
All we were ever to see—that unfilled tomb
The women murmur for.

The Wheel

THE sea laying it down, the sea saying it,
In the ear's wheel, casino of self,
The sea saying it.

Near my face is a horneted
Constellation of faces;
In my blood,
A wire to win.

The sea saying it, with cast ships,
With gambler's matches.

Girl, goddess in a hip's narrows,
That wishing machine you pray by
Is no boy-bringer.
O mouth with a crestfall of pennies;
My true heart lies within
A nickel-fall of this.

Out on the sea is a truer rising
Of wires without ships.
The stars cross in the life lines,
and the sea
Saying, saying it, under.

One at the thin edge bends, and the hair
floats forward.
Rise, as to try no more
The neck's stem of coral.

O daughter,
Pull from the water and see crumple
The pimpled star. Comfort your cold with cold.
And the reef of the rocky stars seems to your ship
Far over and far out,
As in a dream about that other woman
The mariners beware of.

Height

THE heron moonlight feathers the full air.

Across this light lying like unturned feathers
I see the precipice night.
The waters clear. What was not clear before
Is clear with a clearness of cliffs.

Flying is strict and casual.
The snowstorm in its glass breaks harder
Than moons their swan snow.

Considering
How all the slow birds go from us
In our own slipped-axe minute of flying.

Personal Atlas

MOON: the lighted hall of a bell.

Down on the slopes, the cows brilliant as ants
Move in the floated grass.
Listen, their warm bells.

This, after the seas—
The racket of rocks on rocks,
Or vessels spilling anvils.
No longer the old ships,
Their whale hulls.

On imaginary voyages through races,
Through odysseys of ashes I have been
And calendars of stars:
Nations—their moss, their twigs,
Their men and histories,
Their tower-making of piled boughs.

By the low, waving sea they drove their axes;
In groves, with bees warming the air.
Then all the swarmed leaves came down about them,
And they stopped for the saws of wind;
And the morning came,
And it showed in the East like a shell,
And they knew they had thorns of eyes
And feet of trees.

Or raising buildings out of stone and eyes,
Wait in the narrow pass:

The night breaks walls,
Its granite crumbs leaking,
And the hero descends—
Hacking through space like a buzz saw.

Turn, turn to the night,
Though cities are shaking in water,
Though nations be knots of birds:

To the pound of light on these knolls,
The alternate stars,
And the cows—their island stopping,
Their backs like moon-maps.

Stopshort

MANY times alone in that place,
But neither afraid nor lonely,
I have splintered its dark with a candle
and heard
The corners of the house
Fly away in pigeons.

Stopshort

OLD man standing among clods.
Stares ahead of him
As seeing himself in a spoon's back.

The clods are not rolling.
They are stiller than rolled-up rocks.

At his feet,
A potato has the face of a dug-up moon.

Timepiece

To see in the punctured dust the sow bugs
clocking.
These constellations of buds or beetles
time us
More than the cocks do,
More than the winding tides.

And the ants sharpen their spheres,
And the stars, their spiders;
The sky's spider turns:

Never you left your acorn place
For nightly signs and wanders,
For ants like meters,
For the repeating stars.

Driving by Night

DRIVING by night in the weed rain
Down rails of light
Among posts and the barking frogs,

With the life-sized spring of things as they pass
Into waters and windshields—

Have you seen them rear
With loom of giraffes and lupins
as we ride,

The dark passing us like a freight?

We are going to meet a train to meet a train
to meet a Who and a train.

It will come with racket of rocks
Like a blooming of boxes.

When the smoke unrolls, and the appearing swan
Is someone descending from the coach
In a small but unsteady hat: Hello,
The grave-small mouth,
The print feet.

And the train goes, pulling its bullets of window—
Whistles south in the night
With millions of empty ditches.
The depot is full of parks.

You may carry either the luggage or
The key-cold hand of our relative.

Only the bull eyes of the engine
Got out onto the Orion stages of light.

Imprecation for an Aesthetics Society with Newts, Warts, Waxes and Pins

I'M ready now to cat-chase those porcelain
people, get after them
With bells like fire buckets, damn them
With my own personal damn.

Let them float into the gardens like little
images

In saint formation.

I will spank their loaves
With a butterfly spanker.

Neither shall I retreat,
In lemon light and at tea-tile,
The narrow man, half cloak,
Visage of hornet—
How he lifts with his tongs a lid,
Half open Dante,
Allows, briefly, the tongues to chime
Like cricket box.

Achieve, if you will, in the room—
By brilliant suffocation of cat fight—
A speech, as of mouse to mouse

By antenna flicker,
By needle-whisk.

Let them wear taller hats to show who they are;
A burnt beetle like an imitation butler
Traverses their underwear.

The goldfish leap in their vases.
The gullet grate
Opens its plaza of dark.

Parade with Piccolos

THE drops starting like tacks.
Bull-snorting umbrellas
Refuse rain. Hair
Breaks at the roots to lightning—
“I can see
How hard it is, how very hard it is
To live in this climate.”

Down by the docks the rusty, raising sea
Is cocking the boats apart—
The fog fat in their barrels,
Their boilers like old Venuses.

Uptown, General Sloat on a slab
Takes the rain better
Than some of your modern generals.

Sun—and the sky is a bright, buttery sack;
The crowds put out their little bacon flags,
Lift up children to see:

How it comes with kicking of kettles,
The hairpins marching.

When again shall we press knots with
our knuckles?
Crack rain-petal?
Hold in our hands the parsley sunlight?

Vision with Images

TAKE any vacuum, any sweeping of leaves,
And the dead will fill it—as women with a war.
They rattle together like a coalition of spoons—
convention
Of friendly octopuses.

They stand for you at crossroads
With a mad-dog joy; to arrive
By accident is their fever.
In parks and sanctuaries they arrive in triplicate,
Flinging together like horse-clatter.

Of the dead I say (I said) you cannot break
Their solid sky with a bird.
Their repeating, oval faces, watch on watch,
Circle the heavens like a barber's catch;
For them the joyful platters
Escape down corridors; a stove
Their Cerberus is.

Fold, fold them their faded flowers.
Without them the windowless world would be
A kitchen of eternity.
Let them trouble the monasteries; fumble
For keys in their rib-bags; let them, even,
Enter among you—
They and their salt-sprinkling hands.

Fear by Hanging

WHAT a battle the dead make among the kitchen knives
Racketing, and plucking the harps of forks.
Oh the faucet is shedding silverware—
Oh from their play I fly—
I retreat like a storm of plates.

In a small upstairs hill
A bird is sharpening.
Always and always, visiting the rounds of hills
With their gulfed kings, I feel the rising of
The knights taller than wells—
And the dark in their throats is a man tall
with hanging.

Under their floors are seas: their old machines,
their anvils.
There watch you walk not loud,
But hearing a whine in belfries,
Turning three times on a cold heel.

But oh, the dead coming
Are cliff pushing on cliff in a march of walls;
Their gable voices are calling down wells on wells;
They come with a filling of bells.

Into our low grasses, with their daylight of poppies,
The horses softly charge—being more, to the dead,
As clouds are.

Journey in a Street

THERE was a vendor
Speaking in octaves . . .

He speaks, and they hear him in the
sparrow rain:
His talk like stave-split.

Often—the reed voice,
The slant face.

And the dark lets down its bales, and oh
The night is a hanging Harlem.
The people are gone—their faces of
old leaves.

Under a bough of lamp irons
Here is a choir of paper boys.
The people pass—stare.

In the square,
A flight of pigeons like kindling-splinter.

(And often I see, as framed in a guilt of light,
The spare hands
Dealing suns among orchestras.)

Walk through the narrow streets,
Through scaffolds of sun follow:
you did not know

"The place where the blaze was, yet you have
found it

(Coming across corpses of sticks
And sparrows, their little match bones).

Appointment, December 25

THE star that broke in the forehead of the horse
Was my dancer, and the tree
With the boughs full of broken windows
Was my three-four, my pointed time.

The in-back-of People.
They sat with the backs of chairs; the silence
Lay in their palms like rings.

It was
The alphabet-colored confusion we turned to:
The melodious winding of goats:
And the piece of the storyteller with bent hair.

While down our spines' small banging pianos
we heard, rather,
The Germans coming,
Their lungs loud in all of our buried cans;
And over the lean roofs all night
The marbles rolling and rolling,
And the light—opening like a bird mouth.

In a waterless room, my contemporaries at tables
Playing, with parasol hands;
And I, by the tide-high sill,
Of Christmas and the memory of Christmas
Hanging a circle up to a window;

And the waltz tree goes by
Or cricket of star
(What a rusty letter box your greeting was)
And the cat comes up the walk
With his lighthouse eyes.

Watch of the Beasts

I. BEAU MONDE

TO have the world repeated with
The smooth diction of mirrors, to have
Walls, not covering, but speaking the light, to see
The images, like carp from net to net,
Thrown to the cool, impeccable silver.

What you see here is again seen, has been
Rehearsed elsewhere, is known to itself
Like the look on a cockatoo.

Never to find out is all.
Never to turn and look at the beasts of air.

II. RETURN

And in the hills of dark
For tunnels we have tigers.

It is a long way from here back, but I remember
Walking the dark, cage by cage.
Or breaking with bushes the sea; or shut
In sheds of the moon-high grass—
Knowing the bells of heat about our heads,
Hanging, not ringing.

This old unsunk bell.
In what rusty dream do you become our cave's mouth?
The barrel-bursting soul should be
Enough hollow, enough hiding;

But this place gone back to
Rolls and rolls
With hills coming like breakers.

III. PARADE

Oh children, here come the elephants,
Their heads full of palms.
How they walk like overturning ploughs,
How their hearts pump their old mountains.

Roll, roll, roll through the ripened streets
The clear cannibals of dream.

By pits of unlighted lakes I have felt turn
on me eyes
Like moons that are rocks;
And I wanted to be in any stand of street
With the sun cracking.

They come a leaf-stepping pace,
The sun turning their spangles;
The spaniels dance like old children.

And the tall crowd turns,
And the buildings like tipped idols urge them;
The street is the emptiest river:
Give them their traffic to drown in.

Till, in the street, the rabbit wears his rags;
Till the beasts return, return
With their ruts of eyes,
Or standing in marble wait—

Mouths filling like fountains,
To break our faces in their waterfalls.

IV. POEM FOR ST. ANTHONY

In the grape of the lion's eye
Is something not settled here
Or anywhere in the epistles.

And when the roses bloomed in the limited
edition

They founded the cult of St. Anthony,
Seeing in the desert adders frying,
Or in the wood, an uncle of toad—
How he moves without oars
Like a boat wagging.

Wander, among the eyeless trees wander,
Pondering how heaven
Is a larger and sunlit cage.

But our lion is tailored, his waistcoat,
Goblet figure of host,
Walks full of amber—shines
Amid a zodiac of hors d'oeuvres.

How by the banks the dandelions blow,
Circle by circle,
And the fixed stars also,
Leaving the sphinx unlit.

How the lions look everywhere at us
With the whiskers of clocks.

V. LINES FOR A MORALITY

Often in crack of cup, or at nightfall
Seeing the spool of ghost,
recall
Eve's high railway of laughter.

I have supped early and by tree-light.
The page by lamp, its palor, its print cliffs;
The burnished dog dreams bird-kill;
The snake in my pocket is wound.

There is a spindle turning to unsay
All we can ever tell.

I must get back by some roar out of shell
To that garden: myself see
The deer by pencil-light,
The devil thrush-steep in thorn—
Meet him with slot or sling;

The snake, his orchid head,
Shows in some honor's butterfly:
Flashes his chain eye—mounts by
a stairway of rose
Into Heaven's grate;

I have seen the fields at evening
Full of cathedral-tatter,

And I fear what is vacant,
What marked with a clover-spot,
Or sky with a fork of crow . . .

(How the world dwindles like a bundle) . . .

Or seeing some ship grow small—tip—
Sail in the eye's apple:

For I know what kind of a place it is we came to,
And sleep is slant, and the breakable crawling
 of ants
That daylight is:

The sun cold in the window—so by night
Glistens your glacier dragon;
 so by dawn,

The silver, asleep man stirs,
 and his battle hands
Move toward their dead—
His mind, to a summit of birds.

Stand before Him as Would

(FOR G. M. HOPKINS)

STAND before Him as would:
 horse-jumping hurdle;
by England's stony hedge,
 poor low hogful of arrows.

Men with sea high always at eyes there were:
 walls on walls of them full,
waiting as legions
 His hawking or watching,

while in the hewed valleys of Wales
 Gerard strove,
 (horneted is he?—hive enough?)
waited as drum's breast
 roll of moon over brake,
or slit by morning's uphill,
was arrowed as hog to all of it:
saw as with spears—struck.

Foreigner tongue than fog is everywhere to some;
vessels lie under home:
 wreck is deepest;
he truer than Deutschland down,
relicked in sea wrack,
 and the
spool dark wind him.

Wilderness-Slayer, comest with whole
or star-divided face?
 Stung flower

in pool's handful of shallows,
 be sunrise to us:
 to our pierced insects of sight,
 ancestor.

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