

THE WORM

Nothing daunted is the worm
Who builds his home and builds again
And if he is the robin's nourishment
He knows his time by inches is well spent.

As humble as the worm the man I scribe,
A number on his wrist and yet alive.
He has seen his naked saints waiting to be gassed
In line before the showerhouse where he passed.

He has seen his children brained and young love die
Embracing in the infernal fire of the crematory.
He has hidden in the forest, been covered by the tide,
This digit is a single victim of man's pride.

Once he took his well loved burgher ease
In summer gardens to catch the fickle breeze
And nap evenings after dinner in his easy chair
And know a wife and children in his care.

Then he was described as dangerous and inferior being
(He had done nothing wrong, this didn't mean a thing),
Corrupting zealot of a hateful race,
The anti-superman, and showed it in his face.

His kind must die, the orator exclaimed,
Lest they pollute our greatness, re-declamed,
And so his being and essence was hunted down,
Rounded up, insulted and driven from the town.

To perish in barbaric installations,
The offering of the total state, felicitations
On your martyrdom, my brother. You will wear a starry crown
And will bring the angels down.

What has he learned of the goodness of God
Who was smashed by Hitler's rod?
What is sacred in the plight
Of he who mourns his wife and children in the night?

He has no place to hide, no one to love.
Was he betrayed from below or was it from above?
What is the benefit of being alive in this refugee's disguise
Under an alien sun, a stranger sacrifice?

Reality has cut him like a knife
For the innocent offense of Jewish life.
Where is the world, that plaintive dream
That turned into the nightmare of the Nazi's scheme?

Where shall he find the fortitude to trust
The murderous gentile who ground him into dust?
Was he a communist or dangerous alien
To come under the devil's talion?

What makes hatred like a bayonet
Rip through the flesh
To destroy the heart and guts
And humanity to trash?

Who proclaimed the marching dogs of force,
The pennants of a people's mighty curse,
The cant, the drivel and malaise
That found erotic, terrible gods to praise?

Driven by irrational spur of lust
That stiffens every maiden's bust,
Rascal, find the better man
And lead him to the killing pen.

To seduce the 20th Century with a myth
Their airplanes dropped streamers of fire bombs,
Their oath to England, where he found himself,
To make of temples ruins and home small tombs.

Seek him out across tumultuous waters gray,
Ghost and damned they seek their gentle prey.
As the spider needs the fly,
One of them must surely die.

Find him, the man with the guilty number in his blood,
He has escaped his ironic master's mood,
The scapegoat of a nationalism in flood
Where giants grind him as their daily food.

THE FLY

(Poem upon a sermon)

Fly upon Madonna's gown,
Do I see thee fret and frown?
"All is blackness here," I hear,
For the hem is black and dear.
"I do not like this art at all!"
It buzzed and flew across the hall.

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THE DAYS AHEAD

The days ahead are dangerous,
The days ahead are rude.
The days ahead are dog days, too,
Soaked in blood and brood.
The days ahead are numbered,
The days ahead are too few.
The days ahead are numbered
As the leaf upon the dew.

CHILDREN AT EASTERTIDE

Little children in their Easter clothes,
More beautiful than these by far
The angels are,
To church discreetly go
With little prayer books and tiny shoes,
Full of wisdom and truth
Of which they sucked the soothe,
Where mother guides them to their pews,
And father genuflects before the altar,
Speak not in hushed tones
Before those sainted bones,
And mother reads her psalter.
Mass begun they listen to the Latin,
Pray and repent,
Save us Gesu, they've kept the Lent
And we have said our matins.

INDIA

The soldier's days like elephants pass

Building a temple of ivory time.

The elephant boy calls out the beat

And the elephant works like an ass.

The tiger years will disappear

After the hunt and the trembling spear,

The cold drinks in the pulsing shade

From a lady's slipper filled with fear.

Bwana Sun rules all the sky,

The fronds of the palm hang full as flesh,

The dancers bang on their tambourines

And rattle their bells to catch the eye.

The cobra kills, white plumed death

And the mongoose kills with fiery jaws

And the fakir sits in the sun and plays

With magic, while the world draws breath.

The soldier dies on an evil day,

Letting the iron rope slip from his grasp,

Kissed at last with the final kiss

And sleeps the rest of retirement pay.

SPIRIT OF THE WOOD

Spirit of the wood, are death and birth your dream?
Your voice calls from the fallen trees
Or so it seems.

Your voice is sweet as youth and love,
Like rustic springy flowers, the treasure
Of God's young heart, that does us move

To love and thought and patient work -
Invisible, I hear your name
In the morning light that clefts the dark.

And should I follow your call into the fog
And tangled growth that bars the path to man
And follow you across the precarious bog.

There I would die, you airy sprite,
And aloud I'd cry your secret, forgotten name
That's like the dew of morning, or souled night.

OSEE'S LAMENT

Step on a snake, so sharp the pain and dangerous.

This hurt could kill and kills not.

Ache, ache oh heart once young and amorous,

Dreams, dreams come now where once was thought.

She has gone up to the temple of Baal,

She who made my humble bread and gave me three children,

Slave of a master made by human hands,

The curse of this Holy Land and Holy Race.

Fertility its promises, crops, full bellies, larders full,

These are reserved to God alone to give.

No statue painted gold whose sin is hers

Can bless, she is accursed and yet my love is strong.

What predisposition explains this harlotry

Sacred to the Phillistine, that demands her sex,

Her freedom. My heart, how bitter is the sting of sin.

PROVINCETOWN

An angel walking on the roof diminishes,
Frightens away the suicide's ghost.
The stationary stars scintillate in the black gel of the sky
Over the moonlit, racing sea full of cod speeding under the prows
Of fishing smacks, swishes around the piling of the wharves
And whispers an interminable nocturne, of art and love and pilgrimage.

In the doorway of the night I stand and eavesdrop on the dialogue
Of the actors of the Provincetown Theater.
When I was mad, when I was mad and walked upon that beach
As we walked together over the hardpacked sand from Haifa to Jaffa,
Sequestered by the booming surf, passed the tall minarets, the ruins
Of this Orient town towards this love where the seas sweep beneath the floor
And saw three ancient barques waiting in the sound,
Their red patched sails furled in the great dawn
Under the masonry of onrushing Heaven.

IN THE DOCTOR'S STUDY

Fantasy has become reality, as terror is contained
In a convex glass, or rage, seeing one's face in the silver morning pot,
Great nose forced fiercely forward tapering away to kiwi eyes.

Under the sword of Samurai the autographed poet's first editions
And the busts of Shelley, Shakespeare and Byron,
Miniature ivories, pallid among the Dresden coffee cups.
He, Dionysus eyed, adds goat's cream to his coffee,
Spoke of Freud, Vienna, the Flying Tigers,
Told me this would never do.

Up in Central Park

The busts of Roman emperors appeared in the silvery mist of morning,
Tiber's spirits, the pupils of their eyes washed away by old seas,
Formulating tragedy.

WADI

A river was where the river runs dry,
Slit in the desert, baked, scaling wound,
Scar of battles with wind and sun.
Once its muddy rainbow colored torrents raced
Temples of Araby, now arid bed
Of thorns, broken dry roots, bones and shards.
A man could die of thirst here now
Where once he and his camel quenched their longing.
The whirlwind catches the tumbleweed in his prophecy
And they dance wildly in the smoldering sun.
Friend the river is dry passage,
No more frequented by life, the river's gift,
Awaiting other seasons.

DOUBTS, FLY TO REST

Doubts, fly to rest, like the restless gulls
Ever searching over the changing sea,
Rest, be done tormenting me,
Storms themselves must have their lulls.

Beating your white wings around my head;
The unspoken word, the suggestive tone,
The moods, the ennui, the ceaseless moan
Of those who die, till I am dead.

At last I lose myself in sleep
And meet the demons and the Devil
Who are anxious to work evil
Upon my harmless slumber deep.

A perfect faith I pray therefore
To meet the blows of ageless wings
Whose tumult round me grows and rings
Until I lose my life in love once more.

PREDESTINATION

Predestination was her word of life.

We live for it through endless suffering and strife,

The turmoil of our most terrible days,

The habit of our most bitter ways.

Remember the past of all your race,

Where they wandered, what they had to face.

Pray, pray for those yet to come

And view the future with no more alarm.

Little did I have a notion

Of all the serious devotion

Squandered on me before I was

Seeking for Heaven's final clause.

MANNEQUIN

Mannequin, your eyes are sudden blue.

You weep and I am weeping too.

Has divorce your beauty blighted?

The moth attacked your clothes?

Male mannequins must be cruel - -

Here is something for your nose.

Mannequin, you are an image,

A statue in your plumage

With complexion soft as fruit.

Tell me dear, am I the brute

That has caused two living tears to start

As raindrops on a rose that touch my heart.

THE COUPLE

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Bedazzled by the pagan sun/they stood upon the beach of Eve
And feared not death that havoc wrought
Nor for the sick nor wounded grieve
But felicitous rainbow sought
Who had won young love's reprieve.

They bedded down in honeysuckle by a tree,
The splayed lightning cracked around its crown.
They found amusement in a bewildered flea
While tide's tumult shook the waters down.

Who could join them? They are complete,
Correct, a unity short lodged of God,
Whose perfection of head and hands and feet
Is at evens finding nothing odd.

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name and address

THE NYMPH

Dangerous, enounce your oracles fraught with sense,
From your footstool fountain I'll not drive you hence.
Largess of Lyra sleeping in the sky,
Hunting as lynx the woods, the bye and bye.

What set you there was my own slight of hand
And there you'll dream of love until you're banned,
A laughing candle in the awful dark,
A friendly fountain in the human park.

Sing me of Pleiades,
Nymph, I know you're no Eumenides.

STORM ON GALILEE

Here is a storm, the Saviour sleeps.
Wake Him up for terror of the deep.
Wake Him for the power He keeps
To calm the rollers and bind the troubled skies
And bring us to our Paradise.

"Why feared you tempest on the sea?
Did you not know that you were safe with me?"
So all who dread and have anxiety
Are safe from peril on the sea.

"What man is this that does command the storm?
He will preserve us from immortal harm!"

TO COMPASSIONATE

Compassionate of order,
Sparkling atoms of blue rain shatter silence.
Violins in my blood digress
Upon unearthly happiness;

Jesus, coming in from the sea,
His long hair askew, and he stands like a pattern on the sand.
The fishers' nets are heavy with catch
Struggling for life, to be free
And then die perfectly.

Coming in from the sun, rumors of desert wind.
In Galilee, the brink of evening passes
Like a harmony, the shade of evening will follow
While we bend once more till moonlight
The breeze caressing our sweated bodies to coolness,
Count the harvest of Tiberius, one hundred fold and more.

THE OLD MAN

The poor get in my blood and I would fain
Find faith and happiness and miracles again.
I cannot bear the strident voice
Of Vice. I make my choice
Of Virtue's Lady and my Hopes and Deed
of Alms are hers. The seed
Of Truth has born its fruit in me
And I have practiced Charity.

The bad think of all things ill
Because it goes not to their will.
Our warmth they arrogantly chill
With decorous unbelief,
But Death, their master, like a thief
Will steal away their every thought
While I am praying, as I ought.

The good anticipate reward.
The bad end bad and they are bored
With their trite lines on their lying stage
Where they claim for life they rage
Until in final senility
They have achieved an immobility
Whilst we gain Heaven, Grace and Love
From our true home, that is above.

THE SURREALIST

Begone planet, whirling dervish of a star,
Can't you disappear and leave us to the night?
The myriad stars, one for each beloved,
We'd see without your pious glare,
The pale mysterious moon, we'd queen,
Whose resonant, harplike light fathoms our unbelief
And promises the cool peace of relief.

Begone exorcist, whose reason like a slide rule
Or carpenter's level, builds more and more insights.
I see and hear the demons come and go,
Leave us in peace to our magic show.

Words, words, each word a charm, a spell
To beget the passions that we know,
Like wonderful white horses in the foam
Or the inscrutable melody of a pristine poem.

ESPRESSO TAMARINDO

Yes she smiles the sweetness is in the drink
Two lemons you's need to sour it

Prying mind at naked flesh

Save me, keep your humor fresh!

The cat is Whitey what we call

Once we didn't have no cat at all!

That man in the window

He doesn't have no shinbone

And his hat

Is a living bat!

Did once we sit on a little cloud

In this cafe, the music loud

And before they shut the place down I took a hand

And held it tighter than the sand.

Yes she cries your eyes had pith

And shall we seal all with a kiss

Kisses to others I give freely

But I fear your mouth is mealy

(eyes are my spell)

Clap of thunder seals all right

Bitter tears are shed at night

Jealous are they for their mother

You see she'll never love another.

Sweetness is the bottom of the drink

Lemon pits, tea leaves, spilled sugar,

ESPRESSO TAMARINDO cont.

Ah, my fair lady, take my hand

It will run as fine as sand.

THE DANCE PARTY

The children with powerful, unmanageable emotions stand enthralled
in the garden of the damned,
The sluts paradise, the hedonist's perfect expression.
The Japanese lanterns flicker and wave.
They are cordial but there is an undertone of dislike
For all persons and places are like this. Their laughter
Is imprisoned, beyond despair.
How fair they are, I marvel, each bloom fresh as a current of air.
A lethal poison is better than none. They sip like butterflies
The nectar of verbana through glass straws
And curse the evening. The scent of jasmine looms from the canals
They own and ply. The band begins to cry and so they dance
Like madmen, with no strength, but dutifully and patiently,
Their many scents converging upon the polished floor
And a flower blossomed upon the wall.

AN APPARITION

Seek you motherhood to praise?

Gaze whereon I kneeling gaze.

It is the Queen of Heaven's Host,

Lover of the Holy Ghost,

Maid most mild and gentle,

Kind and true,

In her blue mantle,

I swear to you.

THE SNAKE

There is a snake sucks at my heart,
Of all the beasts a beast apart.
I cannot loose him by suffering or art.

He whispers of his knowledge, pleasure.
He'd find me uses for my liesure
To know my man and take his measure.

I kneel before the Holy Virgin
To save me from my common sin
And ease the pangs that burn within.

ST. MONICA'S

I saw a church descend from Heaven,
All Heaven lit, in phases of perfect geometry,
Cubist, but of light Divine, to comfort
Who asked after Mistress Truth, and inquired
Of man, what was his end and where
And sought in books and looks
For hope because the tragedy and absurdity,
The weariness overwhelmed his strength,
Bastion against unknown fears.
He was as warped as wood rained on.
He laughed with love to see.
It was my wish to see St. Monica's settle there
In what was an empty lot, already mistress,
As if to resume her parish place
For the salvation of the human race.

SOLILOQUY

Weary of the empty gestures of mummings
I fled to Him
Who can beautify with a touch what He has created.

My misfortune and disgrace
From Him proceeded
Who can ennoble with a breath
What He has created.

In our masks of grief and pain
He is the solace of our prayer.
In our arduous labor He the rudder and the Polestar
Of our being. When tears are shed
They come from Him to heal
And He laughs among the trumpets.

The jackass braying and kicking up his heels
Owes life to Him
And the orangeblossom frailly shaken by the wind.

ANGELA

Her beauty rare was like the daystar's light
And fickle beast I am I took a fright
To see the shining truth before me stand
Who had been so bad and jammed,
And yellow hair and smiling eyes
Remembered me in Paradise.

And wolf that lurks and ape that grins
Were busy with their daily sins
While beauty rare smiled at the plight
Of men and nations in the night.

A DEDICATION

These are poems forged in my heart,

To Cecilia's bower fly.

These are for my prayers and art,

David's coward I'll not be.

Find a heart to understand,

To be kind as kindness is.

Bring me home with God's good hand,

This my message and my bliss.

Suffering is our lot on earth,

Who'd not welcome gentle mirth.

Tragedy will have its day,

String my lyre and let me play.

NOCTURNE

The sea pours in the sea's throat.
The moon drifts away from a cloud.
Two lovers press before the tide, moon-driven,
Haunted, their blood as one
And soon to part.
Cool winds bind the tides.
The stars are shining, their rays glittering.
A soldier stands poor and humble,
Hidden in the shadow of a lifeboat.
He understands and nods to the sea's sooth.

A WOMAN'S HAND

A woman's hand is amorous, small and neat,

Her crowning glory is her hair,

Her humility, her feet.

Her tender heart will miss a beat

To have caught you in the snare

Of her charms so debonair.

Her eyes reflect man's sovereign gaze

And order all our childish ways.

Her lips form vows of perfect love

But seldom to the fruit of gave.

WASHINGTON SQUARE

Sun of science, whirling over the tenements decaying in your light,
Survivors of the heavy rains of spring and winter's deep frost,
The stately glass apartments, where new riches are exchanged for old
And the still doorman stands like a flower,
The old churches, dusty and embattled in the life of streets,
Spinning over the fountain where innocent girls race against the jets
Their wet, bright dresses clinging to their skins,
Where impromptu concerts of guitar and banjo sing in the dust of streets,
And we perspire, our cameras hanging around our necks.
It spins before the end of everything, a sign seen by a few.
The blue eyed atom scientist watches the sun's journey,
"Plenty of time" he whispers with cold lips.

I lie down in the short grass, on the cool shell of the earth,
Watch the dogs frolic on their holiday, recline among poor youth
Where many years ago I found the dead pigeon and left my tennis shoes.
There where the sirens with long hair sat, the actress strolled in tangerine
Dress and red slippers. It was for the young then and now
And being for the young there is a place for age and childhood.
The children with the sister play at jumprope, the old men talk and doze.
The engineer's statue is settling to the right before the bed of tulips
Miraculously springing from the pavement. The ice cream man is here.
Beyond the fountain Garibaldi draws his green bronze sword.

Tonight is festival. The streets in Little Italy are beaded with
Electric light. A fountain of electric light bulbs.
How cool will be the night between the fire escapes,

Up the narrow streets black and serpentine, singing the jazz of malcontents.

A great hand reaches to still the spinning sun, throws it back in place
And it becomes a wonderful white horse again.

Goateed Negroes promenade beside their white frows
Pushing perambulators between the crowded benches, proud and pensive
as dancers.

The male accents are deep and proud, baritone like satyrs domesticated.
There is a sudden shower, a rain of little pearls,
A sudden mist of tears, a cerement, a sport disjoins the day
That in a moment of intense dreaming, of infinite longing
Leaks through the chiarascuro roof and disappears
Licked up by the lusty sun.

The foeter of cat is gone and I smell sausage frying,
It spits and sings, umbrellas close, we slowly begin to walk again.
The rain evaporates like a kiss against the hard breast of a street
And earth gives off the ancient odor of its thirst.

Leonardo Da Vinci anatomy in the dusk,
I see through clothes the muscles and the joints
Of people perched like chickens around the fountains rim.
The mystery of evening, like a corpse discovered outside the camp
Secretes other mysteries, and bleed thick resin drops
Where the dead return from their cities and stare
Into the mellow air at children in their underclothes
Who have transported the afternoon away.

Music is silent after 6

Iris, the law here, the rainbows bend.

The photographs take off their clothes as I enter the cafe.

"What is a bosom?" asks a child.

"A ladies chest," her father answers.

I have suckled art and learned her milk is sweet.

I thought of adolescents in the grass

Who kissed and kissed again, heedlessly in love, for how long,

And combed their long nymph hair.

I remembered the Neapolitan trio making musike in the Roman dusk,

The man who begged for brandy for his heart,

The boy wrestling with his theory in his lap, who believed in birdsong,

The paintings all day, and the emotions that made the paintings.

Cyclops made a mighty mouth. An electric light bulb burned whitely in
his forehead.

It was already night.