The Complete Poems of
Marianne Moore
BY MARIANNE MOORE

The Arctic Ox
Collected Poems
Like a Bulwark
Selected Fables of La Fontaine
(translation)


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TO LOUISE CRANE
Omissions are not accidents.

M.M.
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TO MARY WARNER MOORE (1862–1947)
SELECTED POEMS (1935)
THE STEEPLE-JACK

Revised, 1961

Dürer would have seen a reason for living
  in a town like this, with eight stranded whales
to look at; with the sweet sea air coming into your house
on a fine day, from water etched
  with waves as formal as the scales
on a fish.

One by one in two’s and three’s, the seagulls keep
  flying back and forth over the town clock,
or sailing around the lighthouse without moving their wings—
rising steadily with a slight
  quiver of the body—or flock
mewing where

a sea the purple of the peacock’s neck is
  paled to greenish azure as Dürer changed
the pine green of the Tyrol to peacock blue and guinea
gray. You can see a twenty-five-
  pound lobster; and fish nets arranged
to dry. The

whirlwind fife-and-drum of the storm bends the salt
  marsh grass, disturbs stars in the sky and the
star on the steeple; it is a privilege to see so
much confusion. Disguised by what
  might seem the opposite, the sea-
side flowers and

trees are favored by the fog so that you have
  the tropics at first hand: the trumpet vine,
foxglove, giant snapdragon, a salpiglossis that has
spots and stripes; morning-glories, gourds, 
or moon-vines trained on fishing twine
at the back door:

cattails, flags, blueberries and spiderwort, 
   striped grass, lichens, sunflowers, asters, daisies—
yellow and crab-claw ragged sailors with green bracts—toad-plant,
petunias, ferns; pink lilies, blue
   ones, tigers; poppies; black sweet-peas.
The climate

is not right for the banyan, frangipani, or 
   jack-fruit trees; or for exotic serpent
life. Ring lizard and snakeskin for the foot, if you see fit;
but here they've cats, not cobras, to
   keep down the rats. The diffident
little newt

with white pin-dots on black horizontal spaced-out bands lives here; yet there is nothing that
ambition can buy or take away. The college student
named Ambrose sits on the hillside
   with his not-native books and hat
and sees boats

at sea progress white and rigid as if in a groove. Liking an elegance of which the source is not bravado, he knows by heart the antique sugar-bowl shaped summerhouse of
   interlacing slats, and the pitch
of the church

spire, not true, from which a man in scarlet lets down a rope as a spider spins a thread;
he might be part of a novel, but on the sidewalk a sign says C. J. Poole, Steeple Jack,
in black and white; and one in red
and white says

Danger. The church portico has four fluted
columns, each a single piece of stone, made
modester by whitewash. This would be a fit haven for
waifs, children, animals, prisoners,
and presidents who have repaid
sin-driven

senators by not thinking about them. The
place has a schoolhouse, a post-office in a
store, fish-houses, hen-houses, a three-masted
schooner on
the stocks. The hero, the student,
the steeple jack, each in his way,
is at home.

It could not be dangerous to be living
in a town like this, of simple people,
who have a steeple-jack placing danger signs by the church
while he is gilding the solid-
pointed star, which on a steeple
stands for hope.
THE HERO

Where there is personal liking we go.
Where the ground is sour; where there are
weeds of beanstalk height,
snakes’ hypodermic teeth, or
the wind brings the “scarebabe voice”
from the neglected yew set with
the semiprecious cat’s eyes of the owl—
awake, asleep, “raised ears extended to fine points,” and so
on—love won’t grow.

We do not like some things, and the hero
doesn’t; deviating headstones
and uncertainty;
going where one does not wish
to go; suffering and not
saying so; standing and listening where something
is hiding. The hero shrinks
as what it is flies out on muffled wings, with twin yellow
eyes—to and fro—

with quavering water-whistle note, low,
high, in basso-falsetto chirps
until the skin creeps.
Jacob when a-dying, asked
Joseph: Who are these? and blessed
both sons, the younger most, vexing Joseph. And
Joseph was vexing to some.
Cincinnatus was; Regulus; and some of our fellow
men have been, although devout,

like Pilgrim having to go slow
to find his roll; tired but hopeful—
hope not being hope
until all ground for hope has vanished; and lenient, looking upon a fellow creature’s error with the feelings of a mother—a woman or a cat. The decorous frock-coated Negro by the grotto answers the fearless sightseeing hobo who asks the man she’s with, what’s this, what’s that, where’s Martha buried, “Gen-ral Washington there; his lady, here”; speaking as if in a play—not seeing her; with a sense of human dignity and reverence for mystery, standing like the shadow of the willow.

Moses would not be grandson to Pharaoh. It is not what I eat that is my natural meat, the hero says. He’s not out seeing a sight but the rock crystal thing to see—the startling El Greco brimming with inner light—that covets nothing that it has let go. This then you may know as the hero.
THE JERBOA

Too Much

A Roman had an artist, a freedman,
contrive a cone—pine cone
or fir cone—with holes for a fountain. Placed on
the Prison of St. Angelo, this cone
of the Pompeys which is known

now as the Popes', passed
for art. A huge cast
bronze, dwarfing the peacock
statue in the garden of the Vatican,
it looks like a work of art made to give
to a Pompey, or native

of Thebes. Others could
build, and understood
making colossi and
how to use slaves, and kept crocodiles and put
baboons on the necks of giraffes to pick
fruit, and used serpent magic.

They had their men tie
hippopotami
and bring out dappled dog-cats to course antelopes, dikdik, and ibex;
or used small eagles. They looked on as theirs,
impalas and onigers,

the wild ostrich herd
with hard feet and bird
necks rearing back in the
dust like a serpent preparing to strike, cranes,
    mongooses, storks, anoas, Nile geese;
    and there were gardens for these—

    combining planes, dates,
limes, and pomegranates,
in avenues—with square
    pools of pink flowers, tame fish, and small frogs. Besides
    yarns dyed with indigo, and red cotton,
    they had a flax which they spun

into fine linen
cordage for yachtsmen.
    These people liked small things;
    they gave to boys little paired playthings such as
    nests of eggs, ichneumon and snake, paddle
    and raft, badger and camel;

and made toys for them-
selves: the royal totem;
    and toilet boxes marked
    with the contents. Lords and ladies put goose-grease
    paint in round bone boxes—the pivoting
    lid incised with a duck-wing

or reverted duck-
head; kept in a buck
    or rhinoceros horn,
    the ground horn; and locust oil in stone locusts.
    It was a picture with a fine distance;
    of drought, and of assistance

in time, from the Nile
rising slowly, while
    the pig-tailed monkey on
    slab hands, with arched-up slack-slung gait, and the brown
Dandy looked at the jasmine two-leafed twig
and bud, cactus pads, and fig.

Dwarfs here and there, lent
to an evident
poetry of frog grays,
duck-egg greens, and eggplant blues, a fantasy
and a verisimilitude that were
right to those with, everywhere,

power over the poor.
The bees’ food is your
food. Those who tended flower-
beds and stables were like the king’s cane in the
form of a hand, or the folding bedroom
made for his mother of whom

he was fond. Princes
clad in queens’ dresses,
calla or petunia
white, that trembled at the edge, and queens in a
king’s underskirt of fine-twilled thread like silk-

maid, kept divine cows
and bees; limestone brows,
and gold-foil wings. They made
basalt serpents and portraits of beetles; the

king gave his name to them and he was named
for them. He feared snakes, and tamed

Pharaoh’s rat, the rust-
backed mongoose. No bust
of it was made, but there
was pleasure for the rat. Its restlessness was
its excellence; it was praised for its wit;
and the jerboa, like it,

a small desert rat,
and not famous, that
lives without water, has
happiness. Abroad seeking food, or at home
in its burrow, the Sahara fieldmouse
has a shining silver house

of sand. O rest and
joy, the boundless sand,
the stupendous sandspout,
no water, no palm trees, no ivory bed,
tiny cactus; but one would not be he
who has nothing but plenty.

_Abundance_

Africanus meant
the conqueror sent
from Rome. It should mean the
untouched: the sand-brown jumping-rat—free-born; and
the blacks, that choice race with an elegance
ignored by one's ignorance.

Part terrestrial,
and part celestial,
Jacob saw, cudgel staff
in claw hand—steps of air and air angels; his
friends were the stones. The translucent mistake
of the desert, does not make

hardship for one who
can rest and then do
the opposite—launching
as if on wings, from its match-thin hind legs, in
daytime or at night; with the tail as a weight,
undulated out by speed, straight.

Looked at by daylight,
the underside’s white,
though the fur on the back
is buff-brown like the breast of the fawn-breasted
bower-bird. It hops like the fawn-breast, but has
chipmunk contours—perceived as

it turns its bird head—
the nap directed
neatly back and blending
with the ear which reiterates the slimness
of the body. The fine hairs on the tail,
repeating the other pale

markings, lengthen until
at the tip they fill
out in a tuft—black and
white; strange detail of the simplified creature,
fish-shaped and silvered to steel by the force
of the large desert moon. Course

the jerboa, or
plunder its food store,
and you will be cursed. It
honors the sand by assuming its color;
closed upper paws seeming one with the fur
in its flight from a danger.

By fifths and sevenths,
in leaps of two lengths,
like the uneven notes
of the Bedouin flute, it stops its gleaning
on little wheel castors, and makes fern-seed
footprints with kangaroo speed.

Its leaps should be set
to the flageolet;
pillar body erect
on a three-cornered smooth-working Chippendale
claw—propped on hind legs, and tail as third toe,
between leaps to its burrow.
CAMELLIA SABINA

and the Bordeaux plum
from Marmande (France) in parenthesis with
A.G. on the base of the jar—Alexis Godillot—
evenly blown beside a bubble that
is green when held up to the light; they
are a fine duet; the screw-top
for this graft-grown briar-black bloom
on blackthorn pigeon’s-blood,
is, like Certosa, sealed with foil. Appropriate custom.

And they keep under
glass also, camellias catalogued by
lines across the leaf. The French are a cruel race—willing
to squeeze the diner’s cucumber or broil a
meal on vine shoots. Gloria mundi
with a leaf two inches, nine lines
broad, they have; and the smaller,
Camellia Sabina
with amanita-white petals; there are several of her

pale pinwheels, and pale
stripe that looks as if on a mushroom the
sliver from a beetroot carved into a rose were laid. “Dry
the windows with a cloth fastened to a staff.
In the camellia-house there must be
no smoke from the stove, or dew on
the windows, lest the plants ail,”
the amateur is told;
“mistakes are irreparable and nothing will avail.”

A scentless nosegay
is thus formed in the midst of the bouquet
from bottles, casks and corks, for sixty-four million red wines and twenty million white, which Bordeaux merchants and lawyers "have spent a great deal of trouble" to select, from what was and what was not Bordeaux. A food grape, however—"born of nature and of art"—is true ground for the grape holiday.

The food of a wild mouse in some countries is wild parsnip- sunflower- or morning-glory-seed, with an occasional grape. Underneath the vines of the Bolzano grape of Italy, the Prince of Tails might stroll. Does yonder mouse with a grape in its hand and its child in its mouth, not portray the Spanish fleece suspended by the neck? In that well-plied larder above your head, the picture of what you will eat is looked at from the end of the avenue. The wire cage is locked, but by bending down and studying the roof, it is possible to see the pantomime of Persian thought: the gilded, too tight undemure coat of gems unruined by the rain—each small pebble of jade that refused to mature,

delicately plucked off. Off jewelry not meant to keep Tom Thumb, the cavalry cadet, on his Italian upland meadow mouse, from looking at the grapes beneath the interrupted light from them, and dashing round the concours hippique of the tent, in a flurry
of eels, scallops, serpents,
    and other shadows from the blue of the green canopy.

    The wine cellar? No,
it accomplishes nothing and makes the
soul heavy. The gleaning is more than the vintage, though the
history de la Vigne et du vin has placed a
mirabelle in the bibliothèque
unique depuis seventeen-ninety-seven.
    (Close the window,
says the Abbé Berlèse,
    for Sabina born under glass.) O generous Bolzano!
NO SWAN SO FINE

"No water so still as the
dead fountains of Versailles." No swan,
with swart blind look askance
and gondoliering legs, so fine
as the chintz china one with fawn-
brown eyes and toothed gold
collar on to show whose bird it was.

Lodged in the Louis Fifteenth
candelabrum-tree of cockscomb-
tinted buttons, dahlias,
sea urchins, and everlasting,
it perches on the branching foam
of polished sculptured
flowers—at ease and tall. The king is dead.
THE PLUMET BASILISK

In Costa Rica

In blazing driftwood
    the green keeps showing at the same place;
as, intermittently, the fire opal shows blue and green.
    In Costa Rica the true Chinese lizard face
is found, of the amphibious falling dragon, the living firework.

He leaps and meets his
    likeness in the stream and, king with king,
helped by his three-part plume along the back, runs on two legs,
    tail dragging; faints upon the air; then with a spring
dives to the stream bed, hiding as the chieftain with gold body
hid in

Guatavita Lake.
    He runs, he flies, he swims, to get to
his basilica—"the ruler of Rivers, Lakes, and Seas,
    invisible or visible," with clouds to do
as bid—and can be "long or short, and also coarse or fine at
pleasure."

The Malay Dragon

We have ours; and they
    have theirs. Ours has a skin feather crest;
theirs has wings out from the waist which is snuff-brown or sallow.
    Ours falls from trees on water; theirs is the smallest
dragon that knows how to dive head first from a tree top to some-
thing dry.

Floating on spread ribs,
    the boatlike body settles on the
clamshell-tinted spray sprung from the nutmeg tree—minute legs trailing half akimbo—the true divinity of Malay. Among unfragrant orchids, on the unnutritious nut-tree, *myristica fragrans*, the harmless god spreads ribs that do not raise a hood. This is the serpent dove peculiar to the East; that lives as the butterfly or bat can, in a brood, conferring wings on what it grasps, as the air plant does.

The Tuatera

Elsewhere, sea lizards—congregated so there is not room to step, with tails laid crisscross, alligator style, among birds toddling in and out—are innocent of whom they neighbor. Bird-reptile social life is pleasing. The tuatera will tolerate a petrel in its den, and lays ten eggs or nine—the number laid by dragons since “a true dragon has nine sons.” The frilled lizard, the kind with no legs, and the three-horned chameleon, are non-serious ones that take to flight if you do not. In Copenhagen the principal door of the bourse is roofed by two pairs of dragons standing on their heads—twirled by the architect—so that the four green tails conspiring upright, symbolize fourfold security.

In Costa Rica

now, where sapotans drop their nuts out on the stream, there is, as
I have said, one of the quickest lizards in the world—the basilisk—that feeds on leaves and berries and has shade from palm vines, ferns, and peperonias; or lies basking on a horizontal branch from which sour-grass and orchids sprout. If beset, he lets go, smites the water, and runs on it—a thing difficult for fingered feet. But when captured—stiff and somewhat heavy, like fresh putty on the hand—he is no longer the slight lizard that can stand in a receding flattened S—small, long and vertically serpentine or, sagging, span the bushes in a fox's bridge. Vines suspend the weight of his faint shadow fixed on silk.

As by a Chinese brush, eight green bands are painted on the tail—as piano keys are barred by five black stripes across the white. This octave of faulty decorum hides the extraordinary lizard till nightfall, which is for man the basilisk whose look will kill; but is for lizards men can kill, the welcome dark—with galloped ground bass of the military drum, the squeak of bagpipes and of bats. Hollow whistled monkey notes disrupt the castanets. Taps from the back of the bow sound odd on last year’s gourd, or when they touch the kettledrums—at which (for there’s no light), a scared frog, screaming like a bird, leaps out from weeds in which it could have hid, with curves of the meteorite,
wide water-bug strokes,
in jerks which express
a regal and excellent awkwardness,

the basilisk portrays
mythology's wish
to be interchangeably man and fish—

traveling rapidly upward, as
spider-clawed fingers can twang the
bass strings of the harp, and with steps
as articulate, make their way
back to retirement on strings that
vibrate till the claws are spread flat.

Among tightened wires,
minute noises swell
and change, as in the woods' acoustic shell
they will, with trees as avenues of steel to veil

black opal emerald opal
emerald—the prompt-delayed loud-
low chromatic listened-for down-
scale which Swinburne called in prose, the
noiseless music that hangs about
the serpent when it stirs or springs.

No anonymous
nightingale sings in a swamp, fed on
sound from porcupine-quilled palm trees
that rattle like the rain. This is our Tower-of-London
jewel that the Spaniards failed to see, among the feather capes

and hawk's-head moths and black-chinned
hummingbirds; the innocent, rare, gold-
defending dragon that as you look begins to be a
nervous naked sword on little feet, with threefold
separate flame above the hilt, inhabiting
fire eating into air. Thus nested
in the phosphorescent alligator that copies each
digression of the shape, he pants and settles—head
up and eyes black as the molested bird’s, with look of whetted
fierceness,
in what is merely
breathing and recoiling from the hand.
Thinking himself hid among the yet unfound jade ax-heads,
silver jaguars and bats, and amethysts and
polished iron, gold in a ten-ton chain, and pearls the size of pigeon
eggs,
he is alive there
in his basilisk cocoon beneath
the one of living green; his quicksilver ferocity
quenched in the rustle of his fall into the sheath
which is the shattering sudden splash that marks his temporary
loss.
THE FRIGATE PELICAN

Rapidly cruising or lying on the air there is a bird that realizes Rasselas's friend's project of wings uniting levity with strength. This hell-diver, frigate bird, hurricane-bird; unless swift is the proper word for him, the storm omen when he flies close to the waves, should be seen fishing, although oftener he appears to prefer to take, on the wing, from industrious crude-winged species, the fish they have caught, and is seldom successless. A marvel of grace, no matter how fast his victim may fly or how often may turn. The others with similar ease, slowly rising once more, move out to the top of the circle and stop and blow back, allowing the wind to reverse their direction—unlike the more stalwart swan that can ferry the woodcutter's two children home. Make hay; keep the shop; I have one sheep; were a less limber animal's mottoes. This one finds sticks for the swan's-down dress of his child to rest upon and would not know Gretel from Hänsel. As impassioned Handel—

meant for a lawyer and a masculine German domestic career—clandestinely studied the harpsichord and never was known to have fallen in love, the unconfiding frigate bird hides
in the height and in the majestic
display of his art. He glides
a hundred feet or quivers about
as charred paper behaves—full
of feints; and an eagle

of vigilance. . . . Festina lente. Be gay
civilly? How so? “If I do well I am blessed
whether any bless me or not, and if I do
ill I am cursed.” We watch the moon rise
on the Susquehanna. In his way,
this most romantic bird flies
to a more mundane place, the mangrove
swamp to sleep. He wastes the moon.
But he, and others, soon

rise from the bough and though flying, are able to foil the tired
moment of danger that lays on heart and lungs the
weight of the python that crushes to powder.
THE BUFFALO

Black in blazonry means prudence; and niger, unpropitious. Might hematite—
black, compactly incurved horns on bison have significance? The soot-brown tail-tuft on a kind of lion tail; what would that express?
And John Steuart Curry's Ajax pulling grass—no ring in his nose—two birds standing on the back?

The modern ox does not look like the Augsburg ox's portrait. Yes,
the great extinct wild aurochs was a beast to paint, with stripe and six-foot horn spread—decreased to Siamese-cat

brown Swiss size or zebu-shape, with white plush dewlap and warm-blooded hump; to red-skinned Hereford or to piebald Holstein. Yet some would say the sparse-haired buffalo has met human notions best

unlike the elephant, both jewel and jeweller in the hairs that he wears—
no white-nosed Vermont ox yoked with its twin
to haul the maple sap,
up to their knees in
snow; no freakishly

over-drove ox drawn by
Rowlandson, but the Indian buffalo,
albino-
footed, standing in a mud lake with a
day's work to do. No white
Christian heathen, way-
laid by the Buddha,

serves him so well as the
buffalo—as mettlesome as if check-
reined—free neck
stretching out, and snake tail in a half-twist
on the flank; nor will so
cheerfully assist
the Sage sitting with
feet at the same side, to
dismount at the shrine; nor are there any
ivory
tusks like those two horns which when a tiger
coughs, are lowered fiercely
and convert the fur
to harmless rubbish.

The Indian buffalo,
led by bare-legged herd-boys to a hay
hut where they
stable it, need not fear comparison
with bison, with the twins,
indeed with any
of ox ancestry.
NINE NECTARINES

Arranged by two’s as peaches are,
at intervals that all may live—
eight and a single one, on twigs that
grew the year before—they look like
a derivative;
although not uncommonly
the opposite is seen—
nine peaches on a nectarine.
Fuzzless through slender crescent leaves
of green or blue or
both, in the Chinese style, the four
pairs’ half-moon leaf-mosaic turns
out to the sun the sprinkled blush
of puce-American-Beauty pink
applied to beeswax gray by the
uninquiring brush
of mercantile bookbinding.
Like the peach Yu, the red-
cheeked peach which cannot aid the dead,
but eaten in time prevents death,
the Italian
peach nut, Persian plum, Ispahan
secluded wall-grown nectarine,
as wild spontaneous fruit was
found in China first. But was it wild?
Prudent de Candolle would not say.
One perceives no flaws
in this emblematic group
of nine, with leaf window
unquilted by curculio
which someone once depicted on
this much-mended plate
or in the also accurate

unantlered moose or Iceland horse
or ass asleep against the old
thick, low-leaning nectarine that is the
color of the shrub-tree’s brownish
flower.

A Chinese “understands
the spirit of the wilderness”
and the nectarine-loving kylin
of pony appearance—the long-
tailed or the tailless
small cinnamon-brown, common
camel-haired unicorn
with antelope feet and no horn,
here enameled on porcelain.

It was a Chinese
who imagined this masterpiece.
TO A PRIZE BIRD

You suit me well; for you can make me laugh,
nor are you blinded by the chaff
    that every wind sends spinning from the rick.

You know to think, and what you think you speak
with much of Samson’s pride and bleak
    finality; and none dare bid you stop.

Pride sits you well, so strut, colossal bird.
No barnyard makes you look absurd;
    your brazen claws are staunch against defeat.
THE FISH

wade
through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel shells, one keeps
adjusting the ash heaps;
opening and shutting itself like

an
injured fan.
The barnacles which encrust the side
of the wave, cannot hide
there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,
split like spun
glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness
into the crevices—
in and out, illuminating

the
turquoise sea
of bodies. The water drives a wedge
of iron through the iron edge
of the cliff; whereupon the stars,
pink
rice-grains, ink-
bespattered jellyfish, crabs like green
lilies, and submarine
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All
external
marks of abuse are present on this
defiant edifice—
   all the physical features of

ac-
cident—lack
   of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
   hatchet strokes, these things stand
   out on it; the chasm side is
dead.
Repeated
   evidence has proved that it can live
   on what can not revive
   its youth. The sea grows old in it.
IN THIS AGE OF HARD TRYING,
NONCHALANCE IS GOOD AND

"really, it is not the
business of the gods to bake clay pots." They did not
do it in this instance. A few
revolved upon the axes of their worth
as if excessive popularity might be a pot;

they did not venture the
profession of humility. The polished wedge
that might have split the firmament
was dumb. At last it threw itself away
and falling down, conferred on some poor fool, a privilege.

"Taller by the length of
a conversation of five hundred years than all
the others," there was one whose tales
of what could never have been actual—
were better than the haggish, uncompanionable drawl

of certitude; his by-
play was more terrible in its effectiveness
than the fiercest frontal attack.
The staff, the bag, the feigned inconsequence
of manner, best bespeak that weapon, self-protectiveness.
TO STATECRAFT EMBALMED

There is nothing to be said for you. Guard your secret. Conceal it under your hard plumage, necromancer.

O bird, whose tents were "awnings of Egyptian yarn," shall Justice' faint zigzag inscription—leaning like a dancer—show the pulse of its once vivid sovereignty?

You say not, and transmigrating from the sarcophagus, you wind snow silence round us and with moribund talk, half limping and half ladyfied, you stalk about. Ibis, we find no virtue in you—alive and yet so dumb. Discreet behavior is not now the sum of statesmanlike good sense.

Though it were the incarnation of dead grace?

As if a death mask ever could replace life's faulty excellence!

Slow to remark the steep, too strict proportion of your throne, you'll see the wrenched distortion of suicidal dreams

go staggering toward itself and with its bill attack its own identity, until foe seems friend and friend seems foe.
POETRY

I, too, dislike it.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine.
PEDANTIC LITERALIST

Prince Rupert’s drop, paper muslin ghost, white torch—“with power to say unkind things with kindness, and the most irritating things in the midst of love and tears,” you invite destruction.

You are like the meditative man with the perfunctory heart; its carved cordiality ran to and fro at first like an inlaid and royal immutable production;

then afterward “neglected to be painful, deluding him with loitering formality,” “doing its duty as if it did it not,” presenting an obstruction to the motive that it served. What stood erect in you has withered. A little “palm tree of turned wood” informs your once spontaneous core in its immutable production.
CRITICS AND CONNOISSEURS

There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious fastidiousness. Certain Ming products, imperial floor coverings of coach-wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I have seen something that I like better—a mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly ballasted animal stand up, similar determination to make a pup eat his meat from the plate.

I remember a swan under the willows in Oxford, with flamingo-colored, maple-leaflike feet. It reconnoitered like a battleship. Disbelief and conscious fastidiousness were ingredients in its disinclination to move. Finally its hardihood was not proof against its proclivity to more fully appraise such bits of food as the stream bore counter to it; it made away with what I gave it to eat. I have seen this swan and I have seen you; I have seen ambition without understanding in a variety of forms. Happening to stand by an ant-hill, I have seen a fastidious ant carrying a stick north, south, east, west, till it turned on itself, struck out from the flower bed into the lawn, and returned to the point from which it had started. Then abandoning the stick as useless and overtaxing its
jaws with a particle of whitewash—pill-like but heavy—it again went through the same course of procedure.

What is there in being able
to say that one has dominated the stream in an attitude of self-defense;
in proving that one has had the experience of carrying a stick?
THE MONKEYS

winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The zebras, supreme in 
their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-colored skin 
and strictly practical appendages 
were there, the small cats; and the parakeet— 
trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying 
bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent 
than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament, 
speech, and precise manner of what one might 
call the minor acquaintances twenty 
years back; but I shall not forget him—that Gilgamesh 
among 
the hairy carnivora—that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute 
tail, 
astringently remarking, “They have imposed on us with their pale 

half-fledged protestations, trembling about 
in inarticulate frenzy, saying

it is not for us to understand art; finding it 
all so difficult, examining the thing

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmetrically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase 
or marble—strict with tension, malignant 
in its power over us and deeper 

than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for 
hemp,

rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.”

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IN THE DAYS OF PRISMATIC COLOR

not in the days of Adam and Eve, but when Adam was alone; when there was no smoke and color was fine, not with the refinement of early civilization art, but because of its originality; with nothing to modify it but the mist that went up, obliqueness was a variation of the perpendicular, plain to see and to account for: it is no longer that; nor did the blue-red-yellow band of incandescence that was color keep its stripe: it also is one of those things into which much that is peculiar can be read; complexity is not a crime, but carry it to the point of murkiness and nothing is plain. Complexity, moreover, that has been committed to darkness, instead of granting itself to be the pestilence that it is, moves all about as if to bewilder us with the dismal fallacy that insistence is the measure of achievement and that all truth must be dark. Principally throat, sophistication is as it always has been—at the antipodes from the initial great truths. “Part of it was crawling, part of it was about to crawl, the rest was torpid in its lair.” In the short-legged, fitful advance, the gurgling and all the minutiae—we have the classic
multitude of feet. To what purpose! Truth is no Apollo Belvedere, no formal thing. The wave may go over it if it likes. Know that it will be there when it says, “I shall be there when the wave has gone by.”
Strong and slippery, 
built for the midnight grass-party 
confronted by four cats, he sleeps his time away—
the detached first claw on the foreleg corresponding
to the thumb, retracted to its tip; the small tuft of fronds
or katydid-legs above each eye numbering all units
in each group, the shadbones regularly set about the mouth
to droop or rise in unison like porcupine-quills.
He lets himself be flattened out by gravity,
as seaweed is tamed and weakened by the sun,
compelled when extended, to lie stationary.
Sleep is the result of his delusion that one must
do as well as one can for oneself,
sleep—epitome of what is to him the end of life.
Demonstrate on him how the lady placed a forked stick
on the innocuous neck-sides of the dangerous southern snake.
One need not try to stir him up; his prune-shaped head
and alligator-eyes are not party to the joke.
Lifted and handled, he may be dangled like an eel
or set up on the forearm like a mouse;
his eyes bisected by pupils of a pin’s width,
are flickeringly exhibited, then covered up.
May be? I should have said might have been;
when he has been got the better of in a dream—
as in a fight with nature or with cats, we all know it.
Profound sleep is not with him a fixed illusion.
Springing about with froglike accuracy, with jerky cries
when taken in hand, he is himself again;
to sit caged by the rungs of a domestic chair
would be unprofitable—human. What is the good of hypocrisy?
It is permissible to choose one’s employment,
to abandon the nail, or roly-poly,
when it shows signs of being no longer a pleasure,
to score the nearby magazine with a double line of strokes. He can talk but insolently says nothing. What of it?
When one is frank, one's very presence is a compliment. It is clear that he can see the virtue of naturalness, that he does not regard the published fact as a surrender. As for the disposition invariably to affront, an animal with claws should have an opportunity to use them. The eel-like extension of trunk into tail is not an accident. To leap, to lengthen out, divide the air, to purloin, to pursue. To tell the hen: fly over the fence, go in the wrong way in your perturbation—this is life; to do less would be nothing but dishonesty.
PICKING AND CHOOSING

Literature is a phase of life. If one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if one approaches it familiarly, what one says of it is worthless.
The opaque allusion, the simulated flight upward, accomplishes nothing. Why cloud the fact that Shaw is self-conscious in the field of sentiment but is otherwise rewarding; that James is all that has been said of him. It is not Hardy the novelist and Hardy the poet, but one man interpreting life as emotion. The critic should know what he likes:
Gordon Craig with his “this is I” and “this is mine,” with his three wise men, his “sad French greens,” and his “Chinese cherry”

Gordon Craig so inclinational and unashamed—a critic.
And Burke is a psychologist, of acute racoon-like curiosity. Summa diligentia; to the humbug whose name is so amusing—very young and very rushed—Caesar crossed the Alps on the top of a “diligence”!
We are not daft about the meaning, but this familiarity with wrong meanings puzzles one. Humming-bug, the candles are not wired for electricity. Small dog, going over the lawn nipping the linen and saying that you have a badger—remember Xenophon; only rudimentary behavior is necessary to put us on the scent. “A right good salvo of barks,” a few strong wrinkles puckering the skin between the ears, is all we ask.
ENGLAND

with its baby rivers and little towns, each with its abbey or its cathedral,
with voices—one voice perhaps, echoing through the transept—the

criterion of suitability and convenience· and Italy
with its equal shores—contriving an epicureanism
from which the grossness has been extracted,

and Greece with its goat and its gourds,
the nest of modified illusions: and France,
the "chrysalis of the nocturnal butterfly,"
in whose products mystery of construction
diverts one from what was originally one's object—
substance at the core. and the East with its snails, its emotional

shorthand and jade cockroaches, its rock crystal and its

imperturbability,

all of museum quality· and America where there
is the little old ramshackle victoria in the south,
where cigars are smoked on the street in the north;
where there are no proofreaders, no silkworms, no digressions;

the wild man's land; grassless, linksless, languageless country in

which letters are written not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand,
but in plain American which cats and dogs can read!
The letter a in psalm and calm when
pronounced with the sound of a in candle, is very noticeable, but

why should continents of misapprehension
have to be accounted for by the fact?
Does it follow that because there are poisonous toadstools
which resemble mushrooms, both are dangerous?
Of mettlesomeness which may be mistaken for appetite,
of heat which may appear to be haste,
no conclusions may be drawn.

To have misapprehended the matter is to have confessed that
one has not looked far enough.
The sublimated wisdom of Chuna, Egyptian discernment,
the cataclysmic torrent of emotion
compressed in the verbs of the Hebrew language,
the books of the man who is able to say,
“I envy nobody but him, and him only,
who catches more fish than
I do”—the flower and fruit of all that noted superiority—
if not stumbled upon in America,
must one imagine that it is not there?
It has never been confined to one locality.
WHEN I BUY PICTURES

or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the
imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments:
the satire upon curiosity in which no more is discernible
than the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated
hatbox,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the
waist of the hourglass,
and deer and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal
biography perhaps,
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged
hieroglyphic in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam's grave, or Michael taking
Adam by the wrist.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that
detracts from one's enjoyment.
It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved
triumph easily be honored—that
which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be "lit with piercing glances into the life of things";
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
A GRAVE

Man looking into the sea,
taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself,
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing,
but you cannot stand in the middle of this;
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The firs stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey foot at the top,
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them for their bones have not lasted:
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars moving together like the feet of water spiders as if there were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress among themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting catcalls as heretofore—the tortoise shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them;
and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouses and noise of bell buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.
THOSE VARIOUS SCALPELS,

those
various sounds consistently indistinct, like intermingled echoes
struck from thin glasses successively at random—
the inflection disguised: your hair, the tails of two
fighting-cocks head to head in stone like sculptured scimitars re­
peating the curve of your ears in reverse order: your eyes,
flowers of ice and snow

sown by tearing winds on the cordage of disabled ships; your
raised hand,
an ambiguous signature: your cheeks, those rosettes
of blood on the stone floors of French châteaux,
with regard to which the guides are so affirmative—your other
hand,
a bundle of lances all alike, partly hid by emeralds from Persia
and the fractional magnificence of Florentine
goldwork—a collection of little objects—
sapphires set with emeralds, and pearls with a moonstone,
made fine
with enamel in gray, yellow, and dragonfly blue; a lemon,
a pear

and three bunches of grapes, tied with silver: your dress, a
magnificent square
cathedral tower of uniform
and at the same time diverse appearance—a
species of vertical vineyard rustling in the storm
of conventional opinion. Are they weapons or scalpels?
Whetted to brilliance

by the hard majesty of that sophistication which is superior to
opportunity,
these things are rich instruments with which to experiment.
But why dissect destiny with instruments
more highly specialized than components of destiny itself?
THE LABORS OF HERCULES

To popularize the mule, its neat exterior expressing the principle of accommodation reduced to a minimum:
to persuade one of austere taste, proud in the possession of home, and a musician—
that the piano is a free field for etching; that his “charming tadpole notes”
belong to the past when one had time to play them:
to persuade those self-wrought Midases of brains whose fourteen-carat ignorance aspires to rise in value,
that one must not borrow a long white beard and tie it on and threaten with the scythe of time the casually curious:
to teach the bard with too elastic a selectiveness that one detects creative power by its capacity to conquer one’s detachment,
that while it may have more elasticity than logic,
it flies along in a straight line like electricity,
depopulating areas that boast of their remoteness,
to prove to the high priests of caste that snobbishness is a stupidity,
the best side out, of age-old toadyism,
kissing the feet of the man above,
kicking the face of the man below;
to teach the patron-saints-to-atheists that we are sick of the earth,
sick of the pigsty, wild geese and wild men;
to convince snake-charming controversialists that one keeps on knowing “that the Negro is not brutal,
that the Jew is not greedy,
that the Oriental is not immoral,
that the German is not a Hun.”
the savage's romance,
accreted where we need the space for commerce—
the center of the wholesale fur trade,
starred with tepees of ermine and peopled with foxes,
the long guard-hairs waving two inches beyond the body of the
pelt;

the ground dotted with deerskins—white with white spots,
"as sat in needlework in a single color may carry a varied
pattern,"
and wilting eagle's down compacted by the wind;
and picardels of beaver skin; white ones alert with snow.
It is a far cry from the "queen full of jewels"
and the beau with the muff,
from the gilt coach shaped like a perfume bottle,
to the conjunction of the Monongahela and the Allegheny,
and the scholastic philosophy of the wilderness.
It is not the dime-novel exterior,
Niagara Falls, the calico horses and the war canoe;
it is not that "if the fur is not finer than such as one sees others
wear,
one would rather be without it"—
that estimated in raw meat and berries, we could feed the
universe;

it is not the atmosphere of ingenuity,
the otter, the beaver, the puma skins
without shooting irons or dogs;
it is not the plunder,
but "accessibility to experience."
PEOPLE'S SURROUNDINGS

They answer one’s questions,
a deal table compact with the wall;
in this dried bone of arrangement
one’s “natural promptness” is compressed, not crowded out;
one’s style is not lost in such simplicity.

The palace furniture, so old-fashioned, so old-fashionable;
Sevres china and the fireplace dogs—
bronze dromios with pointed ears, as obsolete as pugs;
one has one’s preferences in the matter of bad furniture,
and this is not one’s choice.

The vast indestructible necropolis
of composite Yawman-Erbe separable units;
the steel, the oak, the glass, the Poor Richard publications
containing the public secrets of efficiency
on paper so thin that “one thousand four hundred and twenty
pages make one inch,”
exclaiming, so to speak, When you take my time, you take
something I had meant to use;

the highway hid by fir trees in rhododendron twenty feet deep,
the peacocks, hand-forged gates, old Persian velvet,
roses outlined in pale black on an ivory ground,
the pierced iron shadows of the cedars,
Chinese carved glass, old Waterford, lettered ladies;
landscape gardening twisted into permanence;

straight lines over such great distances as one finds in Utah or
in Texas,

where people do not have to be told
that a good brake is as important as a good motor;
where by means of extra sense-cells in the skin
they can, like trout, smell what is coming—
those cool sirs with the explicit sensory apparatus of common
sense,
who know the exact distance between two points as the crow flies;
there is something attractive about a mind that moves in a straight line—
the municipal bat roost of mosquito warfare;
the American string quartet;
these are questions more than answers,

and Bluebeard's Tower above the coral reefs,
the magic mousetrap closing on all points of the compass,
capping like petrified surf the furious azure of the bay,
where there is no dust, and life is like a lemon leaf,
a green piece of tough translucent parchment,
where the crimson, the copper, and the Chinese vermilion of the poincianas
set fire to the masonry and turquoise blues refute the clock;
this dungeon with odd notions of hospitality,
with its "chessmen carved out of moonstones,"
its mockingbirds, fringed lilies, and hibiscus,
its black butterflies with blue half circles on their wings,
tan goats with onyx ears, its lizards glittering and without thickness,
like splashes of fire and silver on the pierced turquoise of the lattices
and the acacia-like lady shivering at the touch of a hand,
lost in a small collision of the orchids—
dyed quicksilver let fall
to disappear like an obedient chameleon in fifty shades of mauve and amethyst.

Here where the mind of this establishment has come to the conclusion
that it would be impossible to revolve about oneself too much, sophistication has, “like an escalator;” “cut the nerve of progress.”

In these noncommittal, personal-impersonal expressions of appearance, the eye knows what to skip; the physiognomy of conduct must not reveal the skeleton; “a setting must not have the air of being one;” yet with X-ray-like inquisitive intensity upon it, the surfaces go back; the interfering fringes of expression are but a stain on what stands out, there is neither up nor down to it; we see the exterior and the fundamental structure—captains of armies, cooks, carpenters, cutlers, gamesters, surgeons and armorers, lapidaries, silkmen, glovers, fiddlers and ballad-singers, sextons of churches, dyers of black cloth, hostlers and chimney-sweeps, queens, countesses, ladies, emperors, travelers and mariners, dukes, princes and gentlemen, in their respective places—camps, forges and battlefields, conventions, oratories and wardrobes, dens, deserts, railway stations, asylums and places where engines are made, shops, prisons, brickyards and altars of churches—in magnificent places clean and decent, castles, palaces, dining halls, theaters and imperial audience chambers.
SNAKES, MONGOSES, SNAKE CHARMERS, AND THE LIKE

I have a friend who would give a price for those long fingers all of one length—
those hideous bird's claws, for that exotic asp and the mongoose—
products of the country in which everything is hard work, the country of the grass-getter,
the torch-bearer, the dog-servant, the messenger-bearer, the holy-man.

Engrossed in this distinguished worm nearly as wild and as fierce as the day it was caught,
he gazes as if incapable of looking at anything with a view to analysis.

"The slight snake rippling quickly through the grass,
the leisurely tortoise with its pied back,
the chameleon passing from twig to stone, from stone to straw,"
lit his imagination at one time; his admiration now converges upon this.

Thick, not heavy, it stands up from its traveling-basket,
the essentially Greek, the plastic animal all of a piece from nose to tail;
one is compelled to look at it as at the shadows of the alps
imprisoning in their folds like flies in amber, the rhythms of the skating-rink.

This animal to which from the earliest times, importance has attached,
fine as its worshipers have said—for what was it invented?
To show that when intelligence in its pure form has embarked on a train of thought which is unproductive, it will come back?
We do not know; the only positive thing about it is its shape;
but why protest?
The passion for setting people right is in itself an afflictive disease.
Distaste which takes no credit to itself is best.

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BOWLS

on the green
with lignum vitae balls and ivory markers,
the pins planted in wild duck formation,
and quickly dispersed—
by this survival of ancient punctilio
in the manner of Chinese lacquer carving,
layer after layer exposed by certainty of touch and unhurried
incision
so that only so much color shall be revealed as is necessary to
the picture,

I learn that we are precisionists,
not citizens of Pompeii arrested in action
as a cross section of one's correspondence would seem to imply.
Renouncing a policy of boorish indifference
to everything that has been said since the days of Matilda,
I shall purchase an etymological dictionary of modern English
that I may understand what is written,
and like the ant and the spider
returning from time to time to headquarters,
shall answer the question
"Why do I like winter better than I like summer?"
and acknowledge that it does not make me sick
to look playwrights and poets and novelists straight in the face—
that I feel just the same;
and I shall write to the publisher of the magazine
which will "appear the first day of the month
and disappear before one has had time to buy it
unless one takes proper precaution,"
and make an effort to plèase—
since he who gives quickly gives twice
in nothing so much as in a letter.
anatomize their work
in the sense in which Will Honeycomb was jilted by a duchess;
the little assumptions of the scared ego confusing the issue
so that they do not know "whether it is the buyer or the seller
who gives the money"—
an abstruse idea plain to none but the artist,
the only seller who buys, and holds on to the money.
Because one expresses oneself and entitles it wisdom, one is not
a fool. What an idea!
"Dracontine cockatrices, perfect and poisonous from the
beginning,"
they present themselves as a contrast to sea-serpented regions
"unlit by the half-lights of more conscious art."

Acquiring at thirty what at sixty they will be trying to forget,
blind to the right word, deaf to satire
which like "the smell of the cypress strengthens the nerves of
the brain,"
averse from the antique
with "that tinge of sadness about it which a reflective mind
always feels,
it is so little and so much"—
they write the sort of thing that would in their judgment
interest a lady;
curious to know if we do not adore each letter of the alphabet
that goes to make a word of it—
according to the Act of Congress, the sworn statement of the
treasurer and all the rest of it—
the counterpart to what we are:
stupid man; men are strong and no one pays any attention:
stupid woman; women have charm, and how annoying they
can be.

Yes, "the authors are wonderful people, particularly those that
write the most,"
the masters of all languages, the supertadpoles of expression. Accustomed to the recurring phosphorescence of antiquity, the "much noble vagueness and indefinite jargon" of Plato, the lucid movements of the royal yacht upon the learned scenery of Egypt—

king, steward, and harper, seated amidships while the jade and the rock crystal course about in solution,

their suavity surmounts the surf—

the willowy wit, the transparent equation of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.

Bored by "the detailless perspective of the sea," reiterative and naïve, and its chaos of rocks—the stuffy remarks of the Hebrews—

the good and alive young men demonstrate the assertion that it is not necessary to be associated with that which has annoyed one;

they have never made a statement which they found so easy to prove—

"split like a glass against a wall"
in this "precipitate of dazzling impressions,

the spontaneous unforced passion of the Hebrew language—an abyss of verbs full of reverberations and tempestuous energy" in which action perpetuates action and angle is at variance with angle
till submerged by the general action;

obscured by "fathomless suggestions of color,"

by incessantly panting lines of green, white with concussion, in this drama of water against rocks—this "ocean of hurrying consonants"

with its "great livid stains like long slabs of green marble,"
its "flashing lances of perpendicular lightning" and "molten fires swallowed up,"

"with foam on its barriers,"
"crashing itself out in one long hiss of spray."
MARRIAGE

This institution,
perhaps one should say enterprise
out of respect for which
one says one need not change one's mind
about a thing one has believed in,
requiring public promises
of one's intention
to fulfil a private obligation:
I wonder what Adam and Eve
think of it by this time,
this fire-gilt steel
alive with goldenness;
how bright it shows—
"of circular traditions and impostures,
committing many spoils,"
requiring all one's criminal ingenuity
to avoid!
Psychology which explains everything
explains nothing,
and we are still in doubt.
Eve: beautiful woman—
I have seen her
when she was so handsome
she gave me a start,
able to write simultaneously
in three languages—
English, German, and French—
and talk in the meantime;
equally positive in demanding a commotion
and in stipulating quiet:
"I should like to be alone";
to which the visitor replies,
"I should like to be alone;"
why not be alone together?"
Below the incandescent stars
below the incandescent fruit,
the strange experience of beauty;
it's existence is too much;
it tears one to pieces
and each fresh wave of consciousness
is poison.
"See her, see her in this common world,"
the central flaw
in that first crystal-fine experiment,
this amalgamation which can never be more
than an interesting impossibility,
describing it
as "that strange paradise
unlike flesh, stones,
gold or stately buildings,
the choicest piece of my life:
the heart rising
in its estate of peace
as a boat rises
with the rising of the water";
constrained in speaking of the serpent—
shed snakeskin in the history of politeness
not to be returned to again—
that invaluable accident
exonerating Adam.
And he has beauty also;
it's distressing—the O thou
to whom from whom,
without whom nothing—Adam;
"something feline,
something colubrine"—how true!
a crouching mythological monster
in that Persian miniature of emerald mines,
raw silk—ivory white, snow white,
oyster white, and six others—
that paddock full of leopards and giraffes—
long lemon-yellow bodies
sown with trapezoids of blue.
Alive with words,
vibrating like a cymbal
touched before it has been struck,
he has prophesied correctly—
the industrious waterfall,
"the speedy stream
which violently bears all before it,
at one time silent as the air
and now as powerful as the wind."
"Treading chasms
on the uncertain footing of a spear,"
forgetting that there is in woman
a quality of mind
which as an instinctive manifestation
is unsafe,
he goes on speaking
in a formal customary strain,
of "past states, the present state,
seals, promises,
the evil one suffered,
the good one enjoys,
hell, heaven,
everything convenient
to promote one's joy."
In him a state of mind
perceives what it was not
intended that he should;
"he experiences a solemn joy
in seeing that he has become an idol."
Plagued by the nightingale
in the new leaves,
with its silence—
not its silence but its silences,
he says of it:
“It clothes me with a shirt of fire.”
“He dares not clap his hands
to make it go on
lest it should fly off;
if he does nothing, it will sleep;
if he cries out, it will not understand.”
Unnerved by the nightingale
and dazzled by the apple,
impelled by “the illusion of a fire
effectual to extinguish fire,”
compared with which
the shining of the earth
is but deformity—a fire
“as high as deep
as bright as broad
as long as life itself;”
he stumbles over marriage,
“a very trivial object indeed”
to have destroyed the attitude
in which he stood—
the ease of the philosopher
unfathered by a woman.
Unhelpful Hymen!
a kind of overgrown cupid
reduced to insignificance
by the mechanical advertising
parading as involuntary comment,
by that experiment of Adam’s
with ways out but no way in—
the ritual of marriage,
augmenting all its lavishness;
its fiddlehead ferns,
lotus flowrrs, opuntias, white dromedaries,
its hippopotamus—
nose and mouth combined
in one magnificent hopper—
it's snake and the potent apple.
He tells us
that "for love that will
gaze an eagle blind,
that is with Hercules
climbing the trees
in the garden of the Hesperides,
from forty-five to seventy
is the best age;"
commending it
as a fine art, as an experiment,
a duty or as merely recreation.
One must not call him ruffian
nor friction a calamity—
the fight to be affectionate:
"no truth can be fully known
until it has been tried
by the tooth of disputation."
The blue panther with black eyes,
the basalt panther with blue eyes,
entirely graceful—
one must give them the path—
the black obsidian Diana
who "darkeneth her countenance
as a bear doth,"
the spiked hand
that has an affection for one
and proves it to the bone,
impatient to assure you
that impatience is the mark of independence,
not of bondage.
"Married people often look that way"—
"seldom and cold, up and down,
mixed and malarial
with a good day and a bad."
We Occidentals are so unemotional, self lost, the irony preserved in “the Ahasuerus tête-à-tête banquet” with its small orchids like snakes’ tongues, with its “good monster, lead the way,” with little laughter and munificence of humor in that quixotic atmosphere of frankness in which “four o’clock does not exist, but at five o’clock the ladies in their imperious humility are ready to receive you”; in which experience attests that men have power and sometimes one is made to feel it.

He says, “What monarch would not blush to have a wife with hair like a shaving brush?” The fact of woman is “not the sound of the flute but very poison.”

She says, “Men are monopolists of ‘stars, garters, buttons and other shining baubles’ — unfit to be the guardians of another person’s happiness.”

He says, “These mummies must be handled carefully — ‘the crumbs from a lion’s meal, a couple of shins and the bit of an ear’; turn to the letter M and you will find that ‘a wife is a coffin,’ that severe object with the pleasing geometry stipulating space not people,
refusing to be buried
and uniquely disappointing,
revengefully wrought in the attitude
of an adoring child
to a distinguished parent.”
She says, “This butterfly,
this waterfly, this nomad
that has ‘proposed
to settle on my hand for life’—
What can one do with it?
There must have been more time
in Shakespeare’s day
to sit and watch a play.
You know so many artists who are fools.”
He says, “You know so many fools
who are not artists.”
The fact forgot
that “some have merely rights
while some have obligations,”
he loves himself so much,
he can permit himself
no rival in that love.
She loves herself so much,
she cannot see herself enough—
a statuette of ivory on ivory,
the logical last touch
to an expansive splendor
earned as wages for work done:
one is not rich but poor
when one can always seem so right.
What can one do for them—
these savages
condemned to disaffect
all those who are not visionaries
alert to undertake the silly task
of making people noble?
This model of petrine fidelity
who "leaves her peaceful husband
only because she has seen enough of him"—
that orator reminding you,
"I am yours to command."
"Everything to do with love is mystery;
it is more than a day's work
to investigate this science."
One sees that it is rare—
that striking grasp of opposites
opposed each to the other, not to unity,
which in cycloid inclusiveness
has dwarfed the demonstration
of Columbus with the egg—
a triumph of simplicity—
that charitive Euroclydon
of frightening disinterestedness
which the world hates,
admitting.

"I am such a cow,
if I had a sorrow
I should feel it a long time;
I am not one of those
who have a great sorrow
in the morning
and a great joy at noon";

which says: "I have encountered it
among those unpretentious
protégés of wisdom,
where seeming to parade
as the debater and the Roman,
the statesmanship
of an archaic Daniel Webster
persists to their simplicity of temper
as the essence of the matter:

'Liberty and union
now and forever';

the Book on the writing table;
the hand in the breast pocket.'
AN OCTOPUS

of ice. Deceptively reserved and flat, it lies “in grandeur and in mass” beneath a sea of shifting snow dunes; dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined pseudopodia made of glass that will bend—a much needed invention—comprising twenty-eight ice fields from fifty to five hundred feet thick, of unimagined delicacy. “Picking periwinkles from the cracks” or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python, it hovers forward “spider fashion on its arms” misleadingly like lace; its “ghostly pallor changing to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool.”
The fir trees, in “the magnitude of their root systems,” rise aloof from these maneuvers “creepy to behold,” austere specimens of our American royal families, “each like the shadow of the one beside it. The rock seems frail compared with their dark energy of life,” its vermilion and onyx and manganese-blue interior expensiveness left at the mercy of the weather; “stained transversely by iron where the water drips down,” recognized by its plants and its animals.
Completing a circle, you have been deceived into thinking that you have progressed, under the polite needles of the larches “hung to filter, not to intercept the sunlight”—met by tightly wattled spruce twigs “conformed to an edge like clipped cypress as if no branch could penetrate the cold beyond its company”; and dumps of gold and silver ore enclosing The Goat’s Mirror—
that ladyfinger-like depression in the shape of the left human foot,

which prejudices you in favor of itself
before you have had time to see the others;
its indigo, pea-green, blue-green, and turquoise,
from a hundred to two hundred feet deep,
"merging in irregular patches in the middle lake
where, like gusts of a storm
obliterating the shadows of the fir trees, the wind makes lanes
of ripples."

What spot could have merits of equal importance
for bears, elk, deer, wolves, goats, and ducks?
Pre-empted by their ancestors,
this is the property of the exacting porcupine,
and of the rat "slipping along to its burrow in the swamp
or pausing on high ground to smell the heather";
of "thoughtful beavers
making drains which seem the work of careful men with shovels,"
and of the bears inspecting unexpectedly
ant-hills and berry bushes.
Composed of calcium gems and alabaster pillars,
topaz, tourmaline crystals and amethyst quartz,
their den is somewhere else, concealed in the confusion
of "blue forests thrown together with marble and jasper and agate
as if whole quarries had been dynamited."
And farther up, in stag-at-bay position
as a scintillating fragment of these terrible stalagmites,
stands the goat,
its eye fixed on the waterfall which never seems to fall—an endless skein swayed by the wind,
immune to force of gravity in the perspective of the peaks.
A special antelope
acclimated to "grottoes from which issue penetrating draughts
which make you wonder why you came,"
it stands its ground
on cliffs the color of the clouds, of petrified white vapor—
black feet, eyes, nose, and horns, engraved on dazzling ice fields,
the ermine body on the crystal peak;
the sun kindling its shoulders to maximum heat like acetylene,
dyeing them white—

upon this antique pedestal,
“a mountain with those graceful lines which prove it a volcano,“
its top a complete cone like Fujiyama’s
till an explosion blew it off.
Distinguished by a beauty
of which “the visitor dare never fully speak at home
for fear of being stoned as an impostor,”
Big Snow Mountain is the home of a diversity of creatures:
those who “have lived in hotels
but who now live in camps—who prefer to”;
the mountain guide evolving from the trapper,
“in two pairs of trousers, the outer one older,
wearing slowly away from the feet to the knees”;
“the nine-striped chipmunk
running with unmammal-like agility along a log”;
the water ouzel
with “its passion for rapids and high-pressured falls,”
building under the arch of some tiny Niagara;
the white-tailed ptarmigan “in winter solid white,
feeding on heather-bells and alpine buckwheat”;
and the eleven eagles of the west,
“fond of the spring fragrance and the winter colors,”
used to the unegoistic action of the glaciers
and “several hours of frost every midsummer night.”
“They make a nice appearance, don’t they,”
happy seeing nothing?
Perched on treacherous lava and pumice—
those unadjusted chimney pots and cleavers
which stipulate “names and addresses of persons to notify
in case of disaster” —
they hear the roar of ice and supervise the water
winding slowly through the cliffs,
the road "climbing like the thread
which forms the groove around a snail shell,
doubling back and forth until where snow begins, it ends."
No "deliberate wide-eyed wistfulness" is here
among the boulders sunk in ripples and white water
where "when you hear the best wild music of the forest
it is sure to be a marmot,"
the victim on some slight observatory,
of "a struggle between curiosity and caution,"
inquiring what has scared it:
a stone from the moraine descending in leaps,
another marmot, or the spotted ponies with glass eyes,
brought up on frosty grass and flowers
and rapid draughts of ice water.
Instructed none knows how, to climb the mountain,
by businessmen who require for recreation
three hundred and sixty-five holidays in the year,
these conspicuously spotted little horses are peculiar;
hard to discern among the birch trees, ferns, and lily pads,
avalanche lilies, Indian paintbrushes,
bear's ears and kittentails,
and miniature cavalcades of chlorophyllless fungi
magnified in profile on the moss-beds like moonstones in the water;
the cavalcade of calico competing
with the original American menagerie of styles
among the white flowers of the rhododendron surmounting
rigid leaves
upon which moisture works its alchemy,
transmuting verdure into onyx.

"Like happy souls in Hell," enjoying mental difficulties,
the Greeks
amused themselves with delicate behavior
because it was "so noble and so fair";
not practised in adapting their intelligence
to eagle traps and snowshoes,
to alpenstocks and other toys contrived by those
“alive to the advantage of invigorating pleasures.”
Bows, arrows, oars, and paddles, for which trees provide the
wood,
in new countries more eloquent than elsewhere—
augmenting the assertion that, essentially humane,
“the forest affords wood for dwellings and by its beauty
stimulates the moral vigor of its citizens.”
The Greek liked smoothness, distrusting what was back
of what could not be clearly seen,
resolving with benevolent conclusiveness,
“complexities which still will be complexities
as long as the world lasts”;
ascribing what we clumsily call happiness,
to “an accident or a quality,
a spiritual substance or the soul itself,
an act, a disposition, or a habit,
or a habit infused, to which the soul has been persuaded,
or something distinct from a habit, a power”—
such power as Adam had and we are still devoid of.
“Emotionally sensitive, their hearts were hard”;
their wisdom was remote
from that of these odd oracles of cool official sarcasm,
upon this game preserve
where “guns, nets, seines, traps and explosives,
hired vehicles, gambling and intoxicants are prohibited;
disobedient persons being summarily removed
and not allowed to return without permission in writing.”
It is self-evident
that it is frightful to have everything afraid of one;
that one must do as one is told
and eat rice, prunes, dates, raisins, hardtack, and tomatoes
if one would “conquer the main peak of Mount Tacoma,
this fossil flower concise without a shiver,
intact when it is cut,
damned for its sacrosanct remoteness—
like Henry James "damned by the public for decorum";
not decorum, but restraint;
it is the love of doing hard things
that rebuffed and wore them out—a public out of sympathy
with neatness.

Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish!
Relentless accuracy is the nature of this octopus
with its capacity for fact.
“Creeping slowly as with meditated stealth,
its arms seeming to approach from all directions,”
it receives one under winds that “tear the snow to bits
and hurl it like a sandblast
shearing off twigs and loose bark from the trees.”
Is “tree” the word for these things
“flat on the ground like vines”?
some “bent in a half circle with branches on one side
suggesting dust-brushes, not trees;
some finding strength in union, forming little stunted groves
their flattened mats of branches shrunk in trying to escape”
from the hard mountain “planed by ice and polished by the
wind”—
the white volcano with no weather side;
the lightning flashing at its base,
rain falling in the valleys, and snow falling on the peak—
the glassy octopus symmetrically pointed,
its claw cut by the avalanche
“with a sound like the crack of a rifle,
in a curtain of powdered snow launched like a waterfall.”
SEA UNICORNS AND LAND UNICORNS

with their respective lions—
"mighty monoceroses with immeasured tayles"—
these are those very animals
described by the cartographers of 1539,
defiantly revolving
in such a way that
the long keel of white exhibited in tumbling,
disperses giant weeds
and those sea snakes whose forms, looped in the foam, "disquiet shippers."

Knowing how a voyager obtained the horn of a sea unicorn
to give to Queen Elizabeth,
who thought it worth a hundred thousand pounds,
they persevere in swimming where they like,
finding the place where sea-lions live in herds,
strewn on the beach like stones with lesser stones—
and bears are white;
discovering Antarctica, its penguin kings and icy spires,
and Sir John Hawkins' Florida
"abounding in land unicorns and lions;
since where the one is,
its arch-enemy cannot be missing."
Thus personalities by nature much opposed,
can be combined in such a way
that when they do agree, their unanimity is great,
"in politics, in trade, law, sport, religion,
china-collecting, tennis, and church-going."
You have remarked this fourfold combination of strange animals,
upon embroideries
enwrought with "polished garlands" of agreeing difference—
thorns, "myrtle rods, and shafts of bay,"
"cobwebs, and knotts, and mulberries"
of lapis lazuli and pomegranate and malachite—
Britannia's sea unicorn with its rebellious child
now ostentatiously indigenous to the new English coast;
and its land lion oddly tolerant of those pacific counterparts to it,
the water lions of the west.
This is a strange fraternity—these sea lions and land lions,
land unicorns and sea unicorns:
the lion civilly rampant,
tame and concessive like the long-tailed bear of Ecuador—
the lion standing up against this screen of woven air
which is the forest:
the unicorn also, on its hind legs in reciprocity.
A puzzle to the hunters, is this haughtiest of beasts,
to be distinguished from those born without a horn,
in use like Saint Jerome's tame lion, as domestics;
rebelling proudly at the dogs
which are dismayed by the chain lightning
playing at them from its horn—
the dogs persistent in pursuit of it as if it could be caught,
"deriving agreeable terror" from its "moonbeam throat"
on fire like its white coat and unconsumed as if of salamander's
skin.

So wary as to disappear for centuries and reappear,
yet never to be caught,
the unicorn has been preserved
by an unmatched device
wrought like the work of expert blacksmiths,
this animal of that one horn
throwing itself upon which head foremost from a cliff,
it walks away unharmed;
proficient in this feat which, like Herodotus,
I have not seen except in pictures.
Thus this strange animal with its miraculous elusiveness,
has come to be unique,
"impossible to take alive;"
tamed only by a lady inoffensive like itself—
as curiously wild and gentle;
“as straight and slender as the crest,
or antlet of the one-beam'd beast.”
Upon the printed page,
also by word of mouth,
we have a record of it all
and how, unfearful of deceit,
etched like an equine monster of an old celestial map,
beside a cloud or dress of Virgin-Mary blue,
improved “all over slightly with snakes of Venice gold,
and silver, and some O's,”
the unicorn “with pavon high,” approaches eagerly;
until engrossed by what appears of this strange enemy,
upon the map, “upon her lap,”
its “mild wild head doth lie.”
THE MONKEY PUZZLE

A kind of monkey or pine lemur
not of interest to the monkey,
in a kind of Flaubert's Carthage, it defies one—
this "Paduan cat with lizard," this "tiger in a bamboo thicket."
"An interwoven somewhat," it will not come out.
Ignore the Foo dog and it is forthwith more than a dog,
itself superimposed upon itself in a complacent half spiral,
this pine tree—this pine tiger, is a tiger, not a dog.
It knows that if a nomad may have dignity,
Gibraltar has had more—
that "it is better to be lonely than unhappy."
A conifer contrived in imitation of the glyptic work of jade and
hard-stone cutters,
a true curio in this bypath of curio-collecting,
it is worth its weight in gold, but no one takes it
from these woods in which society's not knowing is colossal,
the lion's ferocious chrysanthemum head seeming kind by
comparison.

This porcupine-quilled, complicated starkness—
this is beauty—"a certain proportion in the skeleton which
gives the best results."

One is at a loss, however, to know why it should be here,
in this morose part of the earth—
to account for its origin at all;
but we prove, we do not explain our birth.
INJUDICIOUS GARDENING

If yellow betokens infidelity,
    I am an infidel.
      I could not bear a yellow rose ill will
        because books said that yellow boded ill,
          white promised well.

However, your particular possession,
    the sense of privacy,
      indeed might deprecate
        offended ears, and need not tolerate
effrontery.
TO MILITARY PROGRESS

You use your mind
like a millstone to grind
chaff.
You polish it
and with your warped wit
laugh

At your torso,
prostrate where the crow
falls
on such faint hearts
as its god imparts,
calls

and claps its wings
till the tumult brings
more
black minute-men
to revive again,
war

at little cost.
They cry for the lost
head
and seek their prize
till the evening sky's
red.
AN EGYPTIAN PULLED GLASS BOTTLE
IN THE SHAPE OF A FISH

Here we have thirst
and patience, from the first,
   and art, as in a wave held up for us to see
   in its essential perpendicularity;

not brittle but
intense—the spectrum, that
   spectacular and nimble animal the fish,
   whose scales turn aside the sun’s sword by their polish.
The illustration
is nothing to you without the application.
   You lack half wit. You crush all the particles down
   into close conformity, and then walk back and forth on them.

Sparkling chips of rock
are crushed down to the level of the parent block.
   Were not "impersonal judgment in aesthetic
   matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you

might fairly achieve
it. As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive
   of one's attending upon you, but to question
   the congruence of the complement is vain, if it exists.
TO A SNAIL

If "compression is the first grace of style," you have it. Contractility is a virtue as modesty is a virtue. It is not the acquisition of any one thing that is able to adorn, or the incidental quality that occurs as a concomitant of something well said, that we value in style, but the principle that is hid: in the absence of feet, "a method of conclusions"; "a knowledge of principles," in the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.
“NOTHING WILL CURE THE SICK LION BUT TO EAT AN APE”

Perceiving that in the masked ball attitude, there is a hollowness that beauty’s light momentum can’t redeem; since disproportionate satisfaction anywhere lacks a proportionate air,

he let us know without offense by his hands’ denunciatory upheaval, that he despised the fashion of curing us with an ape—making it his care to smother us with fresh air.
TO THE PEACOCK OF FRANCE

In “taking charge of your possessions when you saw them” you became a golden jay.

Scaramouche said you charmed his charm away,
but not his color? Yes, his color when you liked.
Of chiseled setting and black-opalescent dye,
you were the jewelry of sense;
of sense, not license; you but trod the pace
of liberty in marketplace
and court. Molière,
the huggermugger repertory of your first adventure,
is your own affair.

“Anchorites do not dwell in theatres,” and peacocks do not flourish in a cell.

Why make distinctions? The results were well
when you were on the boards; nor were your triumphs bought at horrifying sacrifice of stringency.
You hated sham; you ranted up
and down through the conventions of excess;
nor did the King love you the less
nor did the world,
in whose chief interest and for whose spontaneous delight, your broad tail was unfurled.
THE PAST IS THE PRESENT

If external action is effete
    and rhyme is outmoded,
    I shall revert to you,
Habakkuk, as when in a Bible class
    the teacher was speaking of unrhymed verse.
He said—and I think I repeat his exact words—
    "Hebrew poetry is prose
    with a sort of heightened consciousness." Ecstasy affords
    the occasion and expediency determines the form.
"HE WROTE THE HISTORY BOOK"

There! You shed a ray
    of whimsicality on a mask of profundity so
    terrific, that I have been dumbfounded by
it oftener than I care to say.

_The_ book? Titles are chaff.

Authentically
    brief and full of energy, you contribute to your father's
    legibility and are sufficiently
synthetic. Thank you for showing me
    your father's autograph.
SOJOURN IN THE WHALE

Trying to open locked doors with a sword, threading
the points of needles, planting shade trees
upside down; swallowed by the opaqueness of one whom the
seas
love better than they love you, Ireland—

you have lived and lived on every kind of shortage.
You have been compelled by hags to spin
gold thread from straw and have heard men say:
“"There is a feminine temperament in direct contrast to ours
which makes her do these things. Circumscribed by a
heritage of blindness and native
incompetence, she will become wise and will be forced to give in.
Compelled by experience, she will turn back;

water seeks its own level”:
and you have smiled. “Water in motion is far
from level.” You have seen it, when obstacles happened to bar
the path, rise automatically.
SILENCE

My father used to say,
“Superior people never make long visits,
have to be shown Longfellow’s grave
or the glass flowers at Harvard.
Self-reliant like the cat—
that takes its prey to privacy,
the mouse’s limp tail hanging like a shoelace from its mouth—
they sometimes enjoy solitude,
and can be robbed of speech
by speech which has delighted them.
The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;
not in silence, but restraint.”
Nor was he insincere in saying, “Make my house your inn.”
Inns are not residences.
WHAT ARE YEARS (1941)
WHAT ARE YEARS?

What is our innocence, what is our guilt? All are naked, none is safe. And whence is courage: the unanswered question, the resolute doubt—dumbly calling, deafly listening—that is misfortune, even death, encourages others and in its defeat, stirs the soul to be strong? He sees deep and is glad, who accedes to mortality and in his imprisonment rises upon himself as the sea in a chasm, struggling to be free and unable to be, in its surrendering finds its continuing.

So he who strongly feels, behaves. The very bird, grown taller as he sings, steels his form straight up. Though he is captive, his mighty singing says, satisfaction is a lowly thing, how pure a thing is joy. This is mortality, this is eternity.
"We saw reindeer browsing," a friend who'd been in Lapland, said: "finding their own food; they are adapted

to scant reino
or pasture, yet they can run eleven
miles in fifty minutes; the feet spread when

the snow is soft,
and act as snowshoes. They are rigorists,
however handsomely cutwork artists

of Lapland and
Siberia elaborate the trace
or saddle girth with sawtooth leather lace.

One looked at us
with its firm face part brown, part white—a queen
of alpine flowers. Santa Claus' reindeer, seen

at last, had gray-brown fur, with a neck like edelweiss or
lion's foot—leontopodium more

exactly." And
this candelabrum-headed ornament
for a place where ornaments are scarce, sent

to Alaska,
was a gift preventing the extinction
of the Eskimo. The battle was won

by a quiet man,
Sheldon Jackson, evangel to that race
whose reprieve he read in the reindeer's face.
LIGHT IS SPEECH

One can say more of sunlight than of speech; but speech and light, each aiding each—when French—have not disgraced that still unextirpated adjective.
Yes, light is speech. Free frank impartial sunlight, moonlight, starlight, lighthouse light, are language. The Creach'h d'Ouessant light-house on its defenseless dot of rock, is the descendant of Voltaire whose flaming justice reached a man already harmed; of unarmed Montaigne whose balance, maintained despite the bandit's hardness, lit remorse's saving spark; of Émile Littré, philology's determined, ardent eight-volume Hippocrates-charmed editor. A man of fire, a scientist of freedoms, was firm Maximilien Paul Émile Littré. England guarded by the sea, we, with re-enforced Bartholdi's Liberty holding up her torch beside the port, hear France demand, "Tell me the truth,
especially when it is unpleasant." And we cannot but reply, "The word France means enfranchisement; means one who can 'animate whoever thinks of her.'"
Although the aepyornis
or roc that lived in Madagascar, and
the moa are extinct,
the camel-sparrow, linked
with them in size—the large sparrow
Xenophon saw walking by a stream—was and is
a symbol of justice.

This bird watches his chicks with
a maternal concentration—and he's
been mothering the eggs
at night six weeks—his legs
their only weapon of defense.
He is swifter than a horse; he has a foot hard
as a hoof; the leopard

is not more suspicious. How
could he, prized for plumes and eggs and young,
used even as a riding-beast, respect men
hiding actor-like in ostrich skins, with the right hand
making the neck move as if alive
and from a bag the left hand

strewing grain, that ostriches
might be decoyed and killed! Yes, this is he
whose plume was anciently
the plume of justice, he
whose comic duckling head on its
great neck revolves with compass-needle nervousness
when he stands guard,

in S-like foragings as he is
preening the down on his leaden-skinned back.
The egg piously shown
as Leda's very own
from which Castor and Pollux hatched,
was an ostrich egg. And what could have been more fit
for the Chinese lawn it
grazed on as a gift to an
emperor who admired strange birds, than this
one who builds his mud-made
nest in dust yet will wade
in lake or sea till only the head shows.

Six hundred ostrich brains served
at one banquet, the ostrich-plume-tipped tent
and desert spear, jewel-
gorgeous ugly egg-shell
goblets, eight pairs of ostriches
in harness, dramatize a meaning
always missed by the externalist.

The power of the visible
is the invisible; as even where
no tree of freedom grows,
so-called brute courage knows.
Heroism is exhausting, yet
it contradicts a greed that did not wisely spare
the harmless solitaire

or great auk in its grandeur;
unsolicitude having swallowed up
all giant birds but an alert gargantuan
little-winged, magnificently speedy running-bird.
This one remaining rebel
is the sparrow-camel.

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"In America," began the lecturer, "everyone must have a degree. The French do not think that all can have it, they don't say everyone must go to college." We incline to feel that although it may be unnecessary to know fifteen languages, one degree is not too much. With us, a school—like the singing tree of which the leaves were mouths singing in concert—is both a tree of knowledge and of liberty—seen in the unanimity of college mottoes, *Lux et veritas*, *Christo et ecclesiae*, *Sapient felici*. It may be that we have not knowledge, just opinions, that we are undergraduates, not students; we know we have been told with smiles, by expatriates of whom we had asked "When will your experiment be finished?" "Science is never finished." Secluded from domestic strife, Jack Bookworm led a college life, says Goldsmith; and here also as in France or Oxford, study is beset with
dangers,—with bookworms, mildews, and complaisancies. But someone in New England has known enough to say the student is patience personified, is a variety of hero, "patient of neglect and of reproach"—who can "hold by himself." You can’t beat hens to make them lay. Wolf’s wool is the best of wool, but it cannot be sheared because the wolf will not comply. With knowledge as with the wolf’s surliness, the student studies voluntarily, refusing to be less than individual. He "gives his opinion and then rests on it"; he renders service when there is no reward, and is too reclusive for some things to seem to touch him, not because he has no feeling but because he has so much.
SMOOTH GNARLED CRAPE MYRTLE

A brass-green bird with grass-green throat smooth as a nut springs from twig to twig askew, copying the Chinese flower piece—business-like atom in the stiff-leafed tree's blue-pink dregs-of-wine pyramids of mathematic circularity; one of a pair. A redbird with a hatchet crest lights straight, on a twig between the two, bending the peculiar bouquet down; and there are

moths and ladybugs, a boot-jack firefly with black wings and a pink head. "The legendary white-eared black bulbul that sings only in pure Sanskrit" should be here—"tame clever true nightingale." The cardinal bird that is usually a pair, looks somewhat odd, like "the ambassadorial Inverness worn by one who dresses in New York but dreams of London." It was artifice saw, on a patch-box pigeon-egg, room for fervent script, and wrote as with a bird's claw under the pair on the hyacinth-blue lid—"Joined in
friendship, crowned by love."
An aspect may deceive; as the
elephant's columbine-tubed trunk
held waveringly out—
an at will heavy thing—is
delicate.
Art is unfortunate.

One may be a blameless
bachelor, and it is but a step
to Congreve. A Rosalindless
redbird comes where people are, knowing they
have not made a point of
being where he is—this bird
which says not sings, "Without
loneliness I should be more
lonely, so I keep it"—half in
Japanese. And what of
our clasped hands that swear, "By Peace
Plenty; as
by Wisdom Peace." Alas!
BIRD-WITTED

With innocent wide penguin eyes, three
large fledgling mockingbirds below
the pussy-willow tree,
stand in a row,
wings touching, feebly solemn,
till they see
their no longer larger
mother bringing
something which will partially
feed one of them.

Toward the high-keyed intermittent squeak
of broken carriage springs, made by
the three similar, meek-
coated bird’s-eye
freckled forms she comes; and when
from the beak
of one, the still living
beetle has dropped
out, she picks it up and puts
it in again.

Standing in the shade till they have dressed
their thickly filamented, pale
pussy-willow-surftaced
coats, they spread tail
and wings, showing one by one,
the modest
white stripe lengthwise on the
tail and crosswise
underneath the wing, and the
accordion
is closed again. What delightful note with rapid unexpected flute sounds leaping from the throat of the astute grown bird, comes back to one from the remote
  unenergetic sun-
  lit air before the brood was here? How harsh the bird’s voice has become.

A piebald cat observing them, is slowly creeping toward the trim trio on the tree stem. Unused to him the three make room—uneasy new problem.
  A dangling foot that missed its grasp, is raised and finds the twig on which it planned to perch. The

parent darting down, nerved by what chills the blood, and by hope rewarded—of toil—since nothing fills squeaking unfed mouths, wages deadly combat, and half kills
  with bayonet beak and cruel wings, the intellectual cautiously-
  ly creeping cat.
VIRGINIA BRITANNIA

Pale sand edges England's Old Dominion. The air is soft, warm, hot above the cedar-dotted emerald shore known to the redbird, the red-coated musketeer, the trumpet flower, the cavalier, the parson, and the wild parishioner. A deer-track in a church-floor brick, and a fine pavement tomb with engraved top, remain, The now tremendous vine-encompassed hackberry starred with the ivy flower, shades the church tower; And a great sinner lyeth here under the sycamore.

A fritillary zigzags toward the chancel-shaded resting-place of this unusual man and sinner who waits for a joyful resurrection. We-re-wo-co-mo-co's fur crown could be no odder than we were, with ostrich, Latin motto, and small gold horseshoe: arms for an able sting-ray-hampered pioneer— painted as a Turk, it seems—continuously exciting Captain Smith who, patient with his inferiors, was a pugnacious equal, and to

Powhatan as unflattering as grateful. Rare Indian, crowned by Christopher Newport! The Old Dominion has all-green box-sculptured grounds. An almost English green surrounds them. Care has formed among un-English insect sounds, the white wall-rose. As
thick as Daniel Boone's grapevine, the stem has wide-spaced

great

blunt alternating ostrich-skin warts that were thorns.
Care has formed walls of yew
since Indians knew
the Fort Old Field and narrow tongue of land that Jamestown
was.

Observe the terse Virginian,
the mettlesome gray one that drives the
owl from tree to tree and imitates the call
of whippoorwill or lark or katydid—the lead-gray lead-legged mockingbird with head
held half away, and meditative eye as dead
as sculptured marble
eye, alighting noiseless, musing in the semi-sun,
standing on tall thin legs as if he did not see,
conspicuous, alone,
on the stone-topped table with lead cupids grouped to form the pedestal.

Narrow herringbone-laid bricks,
a dusty pink beside the dwarf box-bordered pansies, share the ivy-arbor shade
with cemetery lace settees, one at each side,
and with the bird: box-bordered tide-water gigantic jet black pansies—splendor; pride—not for a decade
dressed, but for a day, in overpowering velvet; and
gray-blue-Andalusian-cock-feather pale ones,
ink-lined on the edge, fur-eyed, with ochre
on the cheek. The at first slow, saddle-horse quick cavalcade

of buckeye-burnished jumpers
and five-gaited mounts, the work-mule and

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show-mule and witch-cross door and "strong sweet prison"
are a part of what has come about—in the Black
idiom—from "advancin' back-
wards in a circle"; from taking the Potomac
cowbird-like, and on
the Chickahominy establishing the Negro,
inadvertent ally and best enemy of tyranny. Rare
unscent-
ed, provident-
ly hot, too sweet, inconsistent flower bed! Old Dominion

flowers are curious. Some wilt
in daytime and some close at night. Some
have perfume; some have not. The scarlet much-quilled
fruiting pomegranate, the African violet,
fuchsia and camellia, none; yet
the house-high glistening green magnolia's velvet-
textured flower is filled
with anesthetic scent as inconsiderate as
the gardenia's. Even the gardenia sprig's
dark vein on greener
leaf when seen
against the light, has not near it more small bees than the
frilled

silk substanceless faint flower of
the crape myrtle has. Odd Pamunkey
princess, birdclaw-ear-ringed; with a pet raccoon
from the Mattaponi (what a bear!). Feminine
odd Indian young lady! Odd thin-
gauze-and-taffeta-dressed English one! Terrapin
meat and crested spoon
feed the mistress of French plum-and-turquoise-piped
chaise-longue;
of brass-knobbed slat front door, and everywhere open
shaded house on Indian-
named Virginian streams in counties named for English lords. The rattlesnake said from our once dashingly undiffident first flag, "Don't tread on me"—tactless symbol of a new republic.
Priorities were cradled in this region not noted for humility; spot that has high-singing frogs, cotton-mouth snakes and cotton fields; a unique Lawrence pottery with loping wolf design; and too unvenomous terrapin in tepid greenness, idling near the sea-top; tobacco-crop records on church walls; a Devil's Woodyard; and the one-brick-thick serpentine wall built by Jefferson. Like strangler figs choking a banyan, not an explorer, no imperialist, not one of us, in taking what we pleased—in colonizing as the saying is—has been a synonym for mercy.
The redskin with the deer-fur crown, famous for his cruelty, is not all brawn and animality. The outdoor tea-table, the mandolin-shaped big and little fig, the silkworm-mulberry, the French mull dress with the Madeira-vine-accompanied edge are, when compared with what the colonists found here in tidewater Virginia, stark luxuries. The mere brown hedge sparrow, with reckless ardor, unable to suppress

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his satisfaction in man's trustworthy nearness,
even in the dark
flutes his ecstatic burst of joy—the caraway seed-
spotted sparrow perched in the dew-drenched juniper
beside the window ledge;
this little hedge-
sparrow that wakes up seven minutes sooner than the lark.

The live oak's darkening filigree
of undulating boughs, the etched
solidity of a cypress indivisible
from the now aged English hackberry,
become with lost identity,
part of the ground, as sunset flames increasingly
against the leaf-chiseled
blackening ridge of green; while clouds, expanding above
the town's assertiveness, dwarf it, dwarf arrogance
that can misunderstand
importance; and
are to the child an intimation of what glory is.
SPENSER'S IRELAND

has not altered;—
   a place as kind as it is green,
   the greenest place I've never seen.
Every name is a tune.
Denunciations do not affect
   the culprit; nor blows, but it
is torture to him to not be spoken to.
They're natural—
   the coat, like Venus' 
mantle lined with stars,
buttoned close at the neck—the sleeves new from disuse.

If in Ireland
   they play the harp backward at need,
   and gather at midday the seed
of the fern, eluding
their "giants all covered with iron," might
   there be fern seed for unlearn-
ing obduracy and for reinstating
the enchantment?
   Hindered characters
seldom have mothers
in Irish stories, but they all have grandmothers.

It was Irish;
   a match not a marriage was made
   when my great great grandmother'd said
with native genius for
disunion, "Although your suitor be
   perfection, one objection
is enough; he is not
Irish.” Outwitting
the fairies, befriending the furies,
whoever again
and again says, “I’ll never give in,” never sees

that you’re not free
until you’ve been made captive by
supreme belief—credulity
you say? When large dainty
fingers tremblingly divide the wings
of the fly for mid-July
with a needle and wrap it with peacock tail,
or tie wool and
    buzzard’s wing, their pride,
like the enchanter’s
is in care, not madness. Concurring hands divide

flax for damask
    that when bleached by Irish weather
has the silvered chamois-leather
water-tightness of a
skin. Twisted torcs and gold new-moon-shaped
    lunulae aren’t jewelry
like the purple-coral fuchsia-tree’s. Eire—
the guillemot
    so neat and the hen
of the heath and the
linnet spinet-sweet—bespeak relentlessness? Then

they are to me
    like enchanted Earl Gerald who
changed himself into a stag, to
a great green-eyed cat of
the mountain. Discommodity makes
them invisible; they've disappeared. The Irish say your trouble is their trouble and your joy their joy? I wish I could believe it; I am troubled, I'm dissatisfied, I'm Irish.
FOUR QUARTZ CRYSTAL CLOCKS

There are four vibrators, the world’s exactest clocks;
    and these quartz timepieces that tell
time intervals to other clocks,
    these workless clocks work well;
independently the same, kept in
    the 41° Bell
Laboratory time

vault. Checked by a comparator with Arlington,
    they punctualize the “radio,
cinéma,” and “presse”—a group the
Giraudoux truth-bureau
of hoped-for accuracy has termed
    “instruments of truth.” We know—
as Jean Giraudoux says

certain Arabs have not heard—that Napoleon
    is dead; that a quartz prism when
the temperature changes, feels
    the change and that the then
electrified alternate edges
    oppositely charged, threaten
    careful timing; so that
	his water-clear crystal as the Greeks used to say,
    this “clear ice” must be kept at the
same coolness. Repetition, with
    the scientist, should be
synonymous with accuracy.
    The lemur-student can see
    that an aye-aye is not
an angwan-tibo, potto, or loris. The sea-side burden should not embarrass
the bell-boy with the buoy-ball
endeavoring to pass
hotel patronesses; nor could a
practiced ear confuse the glass
eyes for taxidermists

with eyeglasses from the optometrist. And as
MEridian-seven one-two
one-two gives, each fifteenth second
in the same voice, the new
data—“The time will be” so and so—
you realize that “when you
hear the signal,” you’ll be

hearing Jupiter or jour pater, the day god—
the salvaged son of Father Time—
telling the cannibal Chronos
(eater of his proxime
newborn progeny) that punctuality
is not a crime.
THE PANGOLIN

Another armored animal—scale
lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity until they
form the uninterrupted central
tail-row! This near artichoke with head and legs and
grit-equipped gizzard,
the night miniature artist engineer is,
yes, Leonardo da Vinci's replica—
impressive animal and toiler of whom we seldom hear.
Armor seems extra. But for him,
the closing ear-ridge—
or bare ear lacking even this small
eminence and similarly safe
contracting nose and eye apertures
impenetrably closable, are not; a true ant-eater,
not cockroach-eater, who endures
exhausting solitary trips through unfamiliar ground at night,
returning before sunrise; stepping in the moonlight,
on the moonlight peculiarly, that the outside
edges of his hands may bear the weight and save the
claws
for digging. Serpentinied about
the tree, he draws
away from danger unpugnaciously,
with no sound but a harmless hiss; keeping
the fragile grace of the Thomas-
of-Leighton Buzzard Westminster Abbey wrought-iron
vine, or
rolls himself into a ball that has
power to defy all effort to unroll it; strongly intailed, neat
head for core, on neck not breaking off, with curled-in feet.
Nevertheless he has sting-proof scales; and nest
of rocks closed with earth from inside, which he can thus darken.

Sun and moon and day and night and man and beast each with a splendor which man in all his vileness cannot set aside; each with an excellence!

"Fearful yet to be feared," the armored ant-eater met by the driver-ant does not turn back, but engulfs what he can, the flattened sword-edged leafpoints on the tail and artichoke set leg- and body-plates quivering violently when it retaliates and swarms on him. Compact like the furled fringed frill on the hat-brim of Gargallo's hollow iron head of a matador, he will drop and will then walk away unhurt, although if unintruded on, he cautiously works down the tree, helped by his tail. The giant-pangolin-tail, graceful tool, as prop or hand or broom or ax, tipped like an elephant's trunk with special skin, is not lost on this ant- and stone-swallowing uninjurable artichoke which simpletons thought a living fable whom the stones had nourished, whereas ants had done so. Pangolins are not aggressive animals; between dusk and day they have the not unchain-like machine-like form and frictionless creep of a thing made graceful by adversities, conversities. To explain grace requires a curious hand. If that which is at all were not forever, why would those who graced the spires
with animals and gathered there to rest, on cold luxurious low stone seats—a monk and monk and monk—between the thus ingenious roof supports, have slaved to confuse grace with a kindly manner, time in which to pay a debt, the cure for sins, a graceful use of what are yet approved stone mullions branching out across the perpendiculars? A sailboat was the first machine. Pangolins, made for moving quietly also, are models of exactness, on four legs; on hind feet plantigrade, with certain postures of a man. Beneath sun and moon, man slaving to make his life more sweet, leaves half the flowers worth having, needing to choose wisely how to use his strength; a paper-maker like the wasp; a tractor of foodstuffs, like the ant; spidering a length of web from bluffs above a stream; in fighting, mechanicked like the pangolin; capsizing in disheartenment. Bedizened or stark naked, man, the self, the being we call human, writing-master to this world, griffons a dark "Like does not like like that is obnoxious"; and writes error with four r’s. Among animals, one has a sense of humor. Humor saves a few steps, it saves years. Unignorant, modest and unemotional, and all emotion, he has everlasting vigor, power to grow,
though there are few creatures who can make one breathe faster and make one erecter.

Not afraid of anything is he, and then goes cowering forth, tread paced to meet an obstacle at every step. Consistent with the formula—warm blood, no gills, two pairs of hands and a few hairs—that is a mammal; there he sits in his own habitat, serge-clad, strong-shod. The prey of fear, he, always curtailed, extinguished, thwarted by the dusk, work partly done, says to the alternating blaze, "Again the sun! anew each day; and new and new and new, that comes into and steadies my soul."
THE PAPER NAUTILUS

For authorities whose hopes are shaped by mercenaries?
Writers entrapped by teatime fame and by commuters’ comforts? Not for these the paper nautilus constructs her thin glass shell.

Giving her perishable souvenir of hope, a dull white outside and smooth-edged inner surface glossy as the sea, the watchful maker of it guards it day and night; she scarcely eats until the eggs are hatched.
Buried eightfold in her eight arms, for she is in a sense a devil-fish, her glass ram’s-horn-cradled freight is hid but is not crushed; as Hercules, bitten

by a crab loyal to the hydra, was hindered to succeed, the intensively watched eggs coming from the shell free it when they are freed—
leaving its wasp-nest flaws
of white on white, and close-
laid Ionic chiton-folds
like the lines in the mane of
a Parthenon horse,
round which the arms had
wound themselves as if they knew love
is the only fortress
strong enough to trust to.
NEVERTHELESS (1944)
NEVERTHELESS

you've seen a strawberry
    that's had a struggle; yet .
was, where the fragments met,

a hedgehog or a star-
    fish for the multitude
of seeds. What better food

than apple seeds—the fruit.
    within the fruit—locked in
like counter-curved twin

hazelnuts? Frost that kills
    the little rubber-plant-
leaves of *kok-saghyz*-stalks, can't

harm the roots; they still grow
    in frozen ground. Once where
there was a prickly-pear-

leaf clinging to barbed wire,
    a root shot down to grow
in earth two feet below;

as carrots form mandrakes
    or a ram's-horn root some-
times. Victory won't come

to me unless I go
    to it; a grape tendril
ties a knot in knots till
knotted thirty times—so
    the bound twig that's under-
gone and over-gone, can't stir.

The weak overcomes its
    menace, the strong over-
comes itself. What is there

like fortitude! What sap
    went through that little thread
to make the cherry red!
THE WOOD-WEASEL

doesn't daintily, the skunk—
don't laugh—in sylvan black and white chipmunk
regalia. The inky thing
adaptively whited with glistening
goat fur, is wood-warden. In his
ermined well-cuttlefish-inked wool, he is
determination's totem. Out-
lawed? His sweet face and powerful feet go about
in chieftain's coat of Chilcat cloth.
He is his own protection from the moth,
noble little warrior. That
otter-skin on it, the living polecat,
smothers anything that stings. Well,
this same weasel's playful and his weasel
associates are too. Only
wood-weasels shall associate with me.
ELEPHANTS

Uplifted and waved till immobilized
wistaria-like, the opposing opposed
mouse-gray twined proboscises’ trunk formed by two
trunks, fights itself to a spiraled inter-nosed
deadlock of dyke-enforced massiveness. It’s a
knock-down drag-out fight that asks no quarter? Just
a pastime, as when the trunk rains on itself
the pool siphoned up; or when—since each must
provide his forty-pound bough dinner—he broke
the leafy branches. These templars of the Tooth,
these matched intensities, take master care of
master tools. One, sleeping with the calm of youth,

at full length in the half-dry sun-flecked stream-bed,
rests his hunting-horn-curled trunk on shallowed stone.
The sloping hollow of the sleeper’s body
cradles the gently breathing eminence’s prone

mahout, asleep like a lifeless six-foot
frog, so feather light the elephant’s stiff
ear’s unconscious of the crossed feet’s weight. And the
defenseless human thing sleeps as sound as if

incised with hard wrinkles, embossed with wide ears,
invincibly tusked, made safe by magic hairs!
As if, as if, it is all ifs; we are at
much unease. But magic’s masterpiece is theirs—

Houdini’s serenity quelling his fears.
Elephant-ear-witnesses-to-be of hymns
and glorias, these ministrants all gray or
gray with white on legs or trunk, are a pilgrims’

pattern of revery not reverence—a
religious procession without any priests,
the centuries-old carefulllest unrehearsed
play. Blessed by Buddha’s Tooth, the obedient beasts

themselves as toothed temples blessing the street, see
the white elephant carry the cushion that
carries the casket that carries the Tooth.
Amenable to what, matched with him, are gnat

trustees, he does not step on them as the white-
canopied blue-cushioned Tooth is augustly
and slowly returned to the shrine. Though white is
the color of worship and of mourning, he

is not here to worship and he is too wise
to mourn—a life prisoner but reconciled.
With trunk tucked up compactly—the elephant’s
sign of defeat—he resisted, but is the child

of reason now. His straight trunk seems to say: when
what we hoped for came to nothing, we revived.
As loss could not ever alter Socrates’
tranquillity, equanimity’s contrived

by the elephant. With the Socrates of
animals as with Sophocles the Bee, on whose
tombstone a hive was incised, sweetness tinctures
his gravity. His held-up foreleg for use

as a stair, to be climbed or descended with
the aid of his ear, expounds the brotherhood
of creatures to man the encroacher, by the small word with the dot, meaning know—the verb буд.

These knowers "arouse the feeling that they are allied to man" and can change roles with their trustees. Hardship makes the soldier; then teachableness makes him the philosopher—as Socrates,

prudently testing the suspicious thing, knew the wisest is he who's not sure that he knows. Who rides on a tiger can never dismount; asleep on an elephant, that is repose.
A CARRIAGE FROM SWEDEN

They say there is a sweeter air
where it was made, than we have here;
a Hamlet's castle atmosphere.
At all events there is in Brooklyn
something that makes me feel at home.

No one may see this put-away
museum-piece, this country cart
that inner happiness made art;
and yet, in this city of freckled
integrity it is a vein

of resined straightness from north-wind
hardened Sweden's once-opposed-to-
compromise archipelago
of rocks. Washington and Gustavus
Adolphus, forgive our decay.

Seats, dashboard and sides of smooth gourd-
rind texture, a flowered step, swan-
dart brake, and swirling crustacean-
tailed equine amphibious creatures
that garnish the axletree! What

a fine thing! What unannoying
romance! And how beautiful, she
with the natural stoop of the
snowy egret, gray-eyed and straight-haired,
for whom it should come to the door—

of whom it reminds me. The split
pine fair hair, steady gannet-clear
eyes and the pine-needled-path deer-
swift step; that is Sweden, land of the
free and the soil for a spruce tree—

vertical though a seedling—all
needles: from a green trunk, green shelf
on shelf fanning out by itself.
The deft white-stockinged dance in thick-soled
shoes! Denmark's sanctuaried Jews!

The puzzle-jugs and hand-spun rugs,
the root-legged kracken shaped like dogs,
the hanging buttons and the frogs
that edge the Sunday jackets! Sweden,
you have a runner called the Deer, who

when he's won a race, likes to run
more; you have the sun-right gable-
ends due east and west, the table
spread as for a banquet; and the put-
in twin vest-pleats with a fish-fin
effect when you need none. Sweden,
what makes the people dress that way
and those who see you wish to stay?
The runner, not too tired to run more
at the end of the race? And that
cart, dolphin-graceful? A Dalen
lighthouse, self-lit?—responsive and
responsible. I understand;
it's not pine-needle-paths that give spring
when they're run on, it's a Sweden

of moated white castles—the bed
of white flowers densely grown in an S
meaning Sweden and stalwartness,
skill, and a surface that says
Made in Sweden: carts are my trade.
THE MIND IS AN ENCHANTING THING

is an enchanted thing
  like the glaze on a
katydid-wing
    subdivided by sun
    till the nettings are legion.
Like Gieseking playing Scarlatti;

like the apteryx-awl
  as a beak, or the
kiwi's rain-shawl
    of haired feathers, the mind
    feeling its way as though blind,
walks along with its eyes on the ground.

It has memory's ear
  that can hear without
having to hear.
    Like the gyroscope's fall,
    truly unequivocal
because trued by regnant certainty,

it is a power of
  strong enchantment. It
is like the dove-
    neck animated by
    sun; it is memory's eye;
it's conscientious inconsistency.

It tears off the veil; tears
  the temptation, the
mist the heart wears,
    from its eyes—if the heart
has a face; it takes apart
dejection. It’s fire in the dove-neck’s

iridescence; in the
    inconsistencies
of Scarlatti.

    Unconfusion submits
    its confusion to proof; it’s
not a Herod’s oath that cannot change.
IN DISTRUST OF MERITS

Strengthened to live, strengthened to die for medals and positioned victories?
They’re fighting, fighting, fighting the blind man who thinks he sees—
who cannot see that the enslaver is enslaved; the hater, harmed. O shining O firm star, O tumultuous ocean lashed till small things go as they will, the mountainous wave makes us who look, know

depth. Lost at sea before they fought! O star of David, star of Bethlehem, O black imperial lion of the Lord—emblem of a risen world—be joined at last, be joined. There is hate’s crown beneath which all is death; there’s love’s without which none is king; the blessed deeds bless the halo. As contagion of sickness makes sickness,

contagion of trust can make trust. They’re fighting in deserts and caves, one by one, in battalions and squadrons; they’re fighting that I may yet recover from the disease, My Self; some have it lightly; some will die. “Man’s wolf to man” and we devour ourselves. The enemy could not have made a greater breach in our defenses. One pilot-

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ing a blind man can escape him, but

Job disheartened by false comfort knew
that nothing can be so defeating
as a blind man who
can see. O alive who are dead, who are
proud not to see, O small dust of the earth
that walks so arrogantly,
trust begets power and faith is
an affectionate thing. We
vow, we make this promise
to the fighting—it's a promise—"We'll
never hate black, white, red, yellow, Jew,
Gentile, Untouchable." We are
not competent to
make our vows. With set jaw they are fighting,
fighting, fighting—some we love whom we know,
some we love but know not—that
hearts may feel and not be numb.
It cures me; or am I what
I can't believe in? Some

in snow, some on crags, some in quicksands,
little by little, much by much, they
are fighting fighting fighting that where
there was death there may
be life. "When a man is prey to anger,
he is moved by outside things; when he holds
his ground in patience patience
patience, that is action or
beauty," the soldier's defense
and hardest armor for

the fight. The world's an orphans' home. Shall
we never have peace without sorrow?
without pleas of the dying for
help that won't come? O
quiet form upon the dust, I cannot
look and yet I must. If these great patient
dyings—all these agonies
and wound-bearing and bloodshed—
can teach us how to live, these
dyings were not wasted.

Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron,
iron is iron till it is rust.
There never was a war that was
not inward; I must
fight till I have conquered in myself what
causes war, but I would not believe it.
I inwardly did nothing.
O Iscariot-like crime!
Beauty is everlasting
and dust is for a time.
COLLECTED LATER (1951)
"I am not treacherous, callous, jealous, superstitious, supercilious, venomous, or absolutely hideous":  
   studying and studying its expression,  
exasperated desperation  
   though at no real impasse,  
   would gladly break the glass;

when love of order, ardor, uncircuitous simplicity  
with an expression of inquiry, are all one needs to be!  
   Certain faces, a few, one or two—or one  
face photographed by recollection—  
   to my mind, to my sight,  
   must remain a delight.
BY DISPOSITION OF ANGELS

Messengers much like ourselves? Explain it.
Steadfastness the darkness makes explicit?
Something heard most clearly when not near it?
   Above particularities,
these unparticularities praise cannot violate.
   One has seen, in such steadiness never deflected,
how by darkness a star is perfected.

Star that does not ask me if I see it?
Fir that would not wish me to uproot it?
Speech that does not ask me if I hear it?
   Mysteries expound mysteries.
Steadier than steady, star dazzling me, live and elate,
   no need to say, how like some we have known; too like her,
too like him, and a-quiver forever.
"In Buckinghamshire hedgerows
the birds nesting in the merged green density,
weave little bits of string and moths and feathers and
thistledown,
in parabolic concentric curves” and,
working for concavity, leave spherical feats of rare efficiency;
whereas through lack of integration,

avid for someone’s fortune,
three were slain and ten committed perjury,
six died, two killed themselves, and two paid fines for
risks they’d run.

But then there is the icosasphere
in which at last we have steel-cutting at its summit of economy,
since twenty triangles conjoined, can wrap one

ball or double-rounded shell
with almost no waste, so geometrically neat, it’s an icosahedron. Would the engineers making one,
or Mr. J. O. Jackson tell us
how the Egyptians could have set up seventy-eight-foot solid granite vertically?

We should like to know how that was done.
HIS SHIELD

The pin-swin or spine-swine
  (the edgehog miscalled hedgehog) with all his edges out,
  echidna and echinoderm in distressed-
  pin-cushion thorn-fur coats, the spiny pig or porcupine,
  the rhino with horned snout—
  everything is battle-dressed.

Pig-fur won’t do, I’ll wrap
  myself in salamander-skin like Presbyter John.
  A lizard in the midst of flames, a firebrand
  that is life, asbestos-eyed asbestos-eared, with tattooed nap
  and permanent pig on
  the instep; he can withstand

fire and won’t drown. In his
  unconquerable country of unpompous gusto,
  gold was so common none considered it; greed
  and flattery were unknown. Though rubies large as tennis
  balls conjoined in streams so
  that the mountain seemed to bleed,

the inextinguishable
  salamander styled himself but presbyter. His shield
  was his humility. In Carpasian
  linen coat, flanked by his household lion cubs and sable
  retinue, he revealed
  a formula safer than

an armorer’s: the power of relinquishing
  what one would keep; that is freedom. Become dinosaur-
  skulled, quilled or salamander-wooled, more ironshod
  and javelin-dressed than a hedgehog battalion of steel, but be
dull. Don’t be envied or
  armed with a measuring-rod.
"KEEPING THEIR WORLD LARGE"

All too literally, their flesh and their spirit are our shield.

New York Times, June 7, 1944

I should like to see that country's tiles, bedrooms, stone patios
and ancient wells: Rinaldo Caramonica's the cobbler's, Frank Sblendorio's
and Dominick Angelastro's country—
the grocer's, the iceman's, the dancer's—the beautiful Miss Damiano's; wisdom's

and all angels' Italy, this Christmas Day this Christmas year.

A noiseless piano, an innocent war, the heart that can act against itself. Here, each unlike and all alike, could so many—stumbling, falling, multiplied till bodies lay as ground to walk on—say

"If Christ and the apostles died in vain, I'll die in vain with them"
against this way of victory? Stem after stem of what we call the tree—set, row on row; that forest of white crosses; the vision makes us faint. My eyes won't close to it. While

the knife was lifted, Isaac the offering lay mute.

These, laid like animals for sacrifice, like Isaac on the mount, were their own substitute. And must they all be harmed by those whom they have saved. Tears that don't fall are what they wanted. Belief in belief marching
marching marching—all alone, all similar,
spurning pathos,
clothed in fear—marching to death
marching to life; it was like the cross, is like the cross.

Keeping their world large, that silent
marching marching marching and this silence
for which there is no description, are

the voices of fighters with no rests between,
who would not yield;
whose spirits and whose bodies
all too literally were our shield, are still our shield.

They fought the enemy, we fight
fat living and self-pity. Shine, O shine
unfalsifying sun, on this sick scene.
EFFORTS OF AFFECTION

Genesis tells us of Jubal and Jabal.
One handled the harp and one herded the cattle.

Unhackneyed Shakespeare's
"Hay, sweet hay, which hath no fellow;"
Love’s extraordinary-ordinary stubbornness
Like La Fontaine’s done
by each as if by each alone,
smiling and stemming distraction;
   How welcome:

Vermin-proof and pilfer-proof integration
In which unself-righteousness humbles inspection.

"You know I’m not a saint!" Sainted obsession.
The bleeding-heart’s—that strange rubber fern’s attraction

Puts perfume to shame.
Unsheared sprays of elephant-ears
Do not make a selfish end look like a noble one.
Truly as the sun
can rot or mend, love can make one
bestial or make a beast a man.
   Thus wholeness—

wholesomeness? best say efforts of affection—
attain integration too tough for infraction.
VORACITIES AND VERITIES
SOMETIMES ARE INTERACTING

I don’t like diamonds;
the emerald’s “grass-lamp glow” is better;
and unobtrusiveness is dazzling,
upon occasion.
Some kinds of gratitude are trying.

Poets, don’t make a fuss;
the elephant’s “crooked trumpet” “doth write”;
and to a tiger-book I am reading—
    I think you know the one—
    I am under obligation.

    One may be pardoned, yes I know
    one may, for love undying.

Tiger-book: Major James Corbett’s *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*. 
PROPRIETY

is some such word
as the chord
Brahms had heard
from a bird,
sung down near the root of the throat:
it’s the little downy woodpecker
spiraling a tree—
up up up like mercury:

a not long
sparrow-song
of hayseed
magnitude—
a tuned reticence with rigor
from strength at the source. Propriety is
Bach’s Solfegietto—
harmonica and basso.

The fish-spine
on firs, on
somber trees
by the sea’s
walls of wave-worn rock—have it; and
a moonbow and Bach’s cheerful firmness
in a minor key.
It’s an owl-and-a-pussy-

both-content
agreement.
Come, come. It’s
mixed with wits;
it’s not a graceful sadness. It’s
resistance with bent head, like foxtail
millet's. Brahms and Bach,
no; Bach and Brahms. To thank Bach

for his song
first, is wrong.
    Pardon me;
    both are the
unintentional pansy-face
uncursed by self-inspection; blackened
    because born that way.
ARMOR'S UNDERMINING MODESTY

At first I thought a pest
Must have alighted on my wrist.
It was a moth almost an owl,
Its wings were furred so well,
with backgammon-board wedges interlacing
on the wing—

like cloth of gold in a pattern
of scales with a hair-seal Persian
sheen. Once, self-determination
made an ax of a stone
and hacked things out with hairy paws. The consequence—

our mis-set alphabet.

Arise, for it is day.
Even gifted scholars lose their way
through faulty etymology.
No wonder we hate poetry,
and stars and harps and the new moon. If tributes cannot
be implicit,

give me diatribes and the fragrance of iodine,
the cork oak acorn grown in Spain;
the pale-ale-eyed impersonal look
which the sales-placard gives the bock beer buck.
What is more precise than precision? Illusion.
Knights we've known,

like those familiar
now unfamiliar knights who sought the Grail, were

duces in old Roman fashion
without the addition
of wreaths and silver rods, and armor gilded
or inlaid.

They did not let self bar
their usefulness to others who were
different. Though Mars is excessive
is being preventive,
heroes need not write an ordinall of attributes to enumerate
what they hate.

I should, I confess,
like to have a talk with one of them about excess,
and armor’s undermining modesty
instead of innocent depravity.
A mirror-of-steel uninsistence should countenance
continence,

objectified and not by chance,
there in its frame of circumstance
of innocence and altitude
in an unhackneyed solitude.
There is the tarnish; and there, the imperishable wish.
II. Later Poems
LIKE A BULWARK (1956)
LIKE A BULWARK

Affirmed. Pent by power that holds it fast—
a paradox. Pent. Hard pressed,
you take the blame and are inviolate.
Abased at last?
Not the tempest-tossed.
Compressed; firmed by the thrust of the blast
till compact, like a bulwark against fate;
lead-saluted,
saluted by lead?
As though flying Old Glory full mast.
APPARITION OF SPLENDOR

Partaking of the miraculous
since never known literally,
Dürer's rhinoceros
might have startled us equally
if black-and-white-spined elaborately.

Like another porcupine, or fern,
the mouth in an arching egret
was too black to discern
till exposed as a silhouette;
but the double-embattled thistle of jet—

disadvantageous supposedly—
has never shot a quill. Was it
some joyous fantasy,
plain eider-eared exhibit
of spines rooted in the sooty moss,
or "train supported by porcupines—
a fairy's eleven yards long"? . . .
as when the lightning shines
on thistlefine spears, among
prongs in lanes above lanes of a shorter prong,

"with the forest for nurse," also dark
at the base—where needle-debris
springs and shows no footmark;
the setting for a symmetry
you must not touch unless you are a fairy.

Maine should be pleased that its animal
is not a waverer, and rather
than fight, lets the primed quill fall.
Shallow oppressor, intruder,
insister, you have found a resister.
THEN THE ERMINE:

“rather dead than spotted”; and believe it
despite reason to think not,
I saw a bat by daylight;
hard to credit

but I knew that I was right. It charmed me—
wavering like a jack-in-the-green, weaving about me
insecurely.

Instead of hammer-handed bravado
strategy could have chosen
momentum with a motto:
Mutare sperno

vel timere—I don’t change, am not craven;
on what ground could one
say that I am hard to frighten?
Nothing’s certain.

Fail, and Lavater’s physiography
has another admirer
of skill in obscurity—
now a novelty.

So let the palisandre settee express it,
“ebony violet,”
Master Corbo in full dress,
and shepherdess,

an exhilarating hoarse crow-note
or dignity with intimacy.
Foiled explosiveness is yet
a kind of prophet,

a perfecter, and so a concealer—
    with the power of implosion;
like violets by Dürer;
even darker.
Look at Jonah embarking from Joppa, deterred by
the whale; hard going for a statesman whom nothing could
detain,
although one who would not rather die than repent.
Be infallible at your peril, for your system will fail,
and select as a model the schoolboy in Spain
who at the age of six, portrayed a mule and jockey
who had pulled up for a snail.

"There is submerged magnificence, as Victor Hugo
said." *Sentir avec ardeur*; that's it; magnetized by feeling.
Tom Fool "makes an effort and makes it oftener
than the rest"—out on April first, a day of some significance
in the ambiguous sense—the smiling
Master Atkinson's choice, with that mark of a champion, the
extra
spurt when needed. Yes, yes. "Chance
is a regrettable impurity"; like Tom Fool's
left white hind foot—an unconformity; though judging by
results, a kind of cottontail to give him confidence.
Up in the cupola comparing speeds, Fred Capossela keeps
his head.
"It's tough," he said; "but I get 'em; and why shouldn't I?
I'm relaxed, I'm confident, and I *don't* bet." Sensational. He
does not
bet on his animated
valentines—his pink and black-striped, sashed or dotted silks.
Tom Fool is "a handy horse," with a chiseled foot. You've the beat
of a dancer to a measure or harmonious rush
of a porpoise at the prow where the racers all win easily—
like centaurs' legs in tune, as when kettledrums compete;
nose rigid and suede nostrils spread, a light left hand on the
rein, till

well—this is a rhapsody.

Of course, speaking of champions, there was Fats Waller
with the feather touch, giraffe eyes, and that hand alighting in
Ain’t Misbehavin’! Ozzie Smith and Eubie Blake
ennoble the atmosphere; you recall the Lippizan school;
the time Ted Atkinson charged by on Tiger Skin—
no pursuers in sight—cat-loping along. And you may have
seen a monkey

THE WEB ONE WEAVES OF ITALY

grows till it is not what but which,
blurred by too much. The very blasé alone could
choose the contest or fair to which to go.
The crossbow tournament at Gubbio?

For quiet excitement, canoe-ers
or peach fairs? or near Perugia, the mule-show;
if not the Palio, slaying the Saracen.
One salutes—on reviewing again

this modern mythologica
esopica—its nonchalances of the mind,
that "fount by which enchanting gems are spilt."
Are we not charmed by the result?—

quite different from what goes on
at the Sorbonne; but not entirely, since flowering
in more than mere talent for spectacle.
Because the heart is in it all is well.

The greater part of stanzas 1 and 2 is quoted from an article by Mitchell Goodman, "Festivals and Fairs for the Tourist in Italy," New York Times, April 18, 1954.
THE STAFF OF AESCULAPIUS

A symbol from the first, of mastery,
experiments such as Hippocrates made
and substituted for vague
speculation, stayed
the ravages of a plague.

A “going on”; yes, anastasis is the word
for research a virus has defied,
and for the virologist
with variables still untried—
too impassioned to desist.

Suppose that research has hit on the right one
and a killed vaccine is effective
say temporarily—
for even a year—although a live
one could give lifelong immunity,

knowledge has been gained for another attack.
Selective injury to cancer
cells without injury to
normal ones—another
gain—looks like prophecy come true.

Now, after lung resection, the surgeon fills space.
To sponge implanted, cells following
fluid, adhere and what
was inert becomes living—
that was framework. Is it not

like the master-physician’s Sumerian rod?—
staff and effigy of the animal
which by shedding its skin
is a sign of renewal—
the symbol of medicine.
THE SYCAMORE

Against a gun-metal sky
I saw an albino giraffe. Without
leaves to modify,
chamois-white as
said, although partly pied near the base,
it towered where a chain of
stepping-stones lay in a stream nearby;
glamour to stir the envy
of anything in motley—
Hampshire pig, the living lucky-stone; or
all-white butterfly.
A commonplace:
there's more than just one kind of grace.
We don't like flowers that do
not wilt; they must die, and nine
she-camel-hairs aid memory.

Worthy of Imami,
the Persian—clinging to a stiffer stalk
was a little dry
thing from the grass,
in the shape of a Maltese cross,
retiringly formal
as if to say: "And there was I
like a field-mouse at Versailles."
ROSEMARY

Beauty and Beauty's son and rosemary—
Venus and Love, her son, to speak plainly—
born of the sea supposedly,
at Christmas each, in company,
braids a garland of festivity.
Not always rosemary—

since the flight to Egypt, blooming differently.
With lancelike leaf, green but silver underneath,
its flowers—white originally—
turned blue. The herb of memory,
imitating the blue robe of Mary,
is not too legendary

to flower both as symbol and as pungency.
Springing from stones beside the sea,
the height of Christ when thirty-three,
it feeds on dew and to the bee
"hath a dumb language"; is in reality
a kind of Christmas tree.
revives in Escudero’s constant of the plumbline,
axis of the hairfine moon—his counter-camber of the skater.
No more fanatical adjuster
of the tilted hat
than Escudero; of tempos others can’t combine.
And we—besides evolving
the classic silhouette, Dick Button whittled slender—

have an Iberian-American champion yet,
the deadly Etchebaster. Entranced, were you not, by Soledad?
black-clad solitude that is not sad;
like a letter from
Casals; or perhaps say literal alphabet-
S soundholes in a 'cello
set contradictorily; or should we call her

la lagarta? or bamboos with fireflies a-glitter;
or glassy lake and the whorls which a vertical stroke brought

of the paddle half-turned coming out.
As if bisecting
a viper, she can dart down three times and recover
without a disaster, having
been a bull-fighter. Well; she has a forgiver.

Etchebaster’s art, his catlike ease, his mousing pose,
his genius for anticipatory tactics, preclude envy
as the traditional unwavy
Sandeman’s sailor
Is Escudero’s; the guitar, Rosario’s—
wrist-rest for a dangling hand
that's suddenly set humming fast fast fast and faster.

There is no suitable simile. It is as though
the equidistant three tiny arcs of seeds in a banana
had been conjoined by Palestrina;
it is like the eyes,
or say the face, of Palestrina by El Greco.
O Escudero, Soledad,
Rosario Escudero, Etchebaster!
LOGIC AND "THE MAGIC FLUTE"

Up winding stair,
here, where, in what theater lost?
was I seeing a ghost—
a reminder at least
of a sunbeam or moonbeam
that has not a waist?
By hasty hop
or accomplished mishap,
the magic flute and harp
somehow confused themselves
with China's precious wentletrap.

Near Life and Time
in their peculiar catacomb,
abalonean gloom
and an intrusive hum
pervaded the mammoth cast's
small audience-room.
Then out of doors,
where interlacing pairs
of skaters raced from rink
to ramp, a demon roared
as if down flights of marble stairs:

"'What is love and
shall I ever have it?'" The truth
is simple. Banish sloth,
fetter-feigning uncouth
fraud. Trapper Love with noble
noise, the magic sleuth,
as bird-notes prove—
first telecolor-trove—
illogically wove
what logic can’t unweave:
one need not shoulder, need not shove.
BLESSED IS THE MAN

who does not sit in the seat of the scoffer—
the man who does not denigrate, depreciate, denunciate;
who is not "characteristically intemperate;"
who does not "excuse, retreat, equivocate; and will be heard."

(Ah, Giorgione! there are those who mongrelize
and those who heighten anything they touch; although it
may well be
that if Giorgione's self-portrait were not said to be he,
it might not take my fancy. Blessed the geniuses who know
that egomania is not a duty.)

"Diversity, controversy; tolerance"—in that "citadel
of learning" we have a fort that ought to armor us well.
Blessed is the man who "takes the risk of a decision"—asks
himself the question: "Would it solve the problem?
Is it right as I see it? Is it in the best interests of all?"
Alas. Ulysses' companions are now political—
living self-indulgently until the moral sense is drowned,

having lost all power of comparison,
thinking license emancipates one, "slaves whom they
themselves have bound."

Brazen authors, downright soiled and downright spoiled, as
and exceptional, are the old quasi-modish counterfeit,

mitin-proofing conscience against character.
Affronted by "private lies and public shame," blessed is the
author

Who favors what the supercilious do not favor—
who will not comply. Blessed, the unaccommodating man.
Blessed the man whose faith is different
from possessiveness—of a kind not framed by "things which
do appear"—
who will not visualize defeat, too intent to cower;
whose illumined eye has seen the shaft that gilds the sultan's
tower.
O TO BE A DRAGON (1959)
O TO BE A DRAGON

If I, like Solomon, . . .
could have my wish—

my wish . . . O to be a dragon,
a symbol of the power of Heaven—of silkworm
size or immense; at times invisible.
Felicitous phenomenon!
I MAY, I MIGHT, I MUST

If you will tell me why the fen appears impassable, I then will tell you why I think that I can get across it if I try.
TO A CHAMELEON

Hid by the august foliage and fruit
of the grapevine
twine
your anatomy
round the pruned and polished stem,
Chameleon.
Fire laid upon
an emerald as long as
the Dark King’s massy one,
could not snap the spectrum up for food
as you have done.
A JELLYFISH

Visible, invisible,
   a fluctuating charm
an amber-tinctured amethyst
   inhabits it, your arm
approaches and it opens
   and it closes; you had meant
to catch it and it quivers;
   you abandon your intent.
HOMETOWN PIECE FOR
MESSRS. ALSTON AND REESE

To the tune:
"Li’l baby, don’t say a word: Mama goin’ to buy you a
mockingbird.

Bird don’t sing: Mama goin’ to sell it and buy a brass ring."

"Millennium," yes; "pandemonium"!
Roy Campanella leaps high. Dodgerdom
crowned, had Johnny Podres on the mound.
Buzzie Bavasi and the Press gave ground;
the team slapped, mauled, and asked the Yankees’ match,
"How did you feel when Sandy Amoros made the catch?"

"I said to myself"—pitcher for all innings—
"as I walked back to the mound I said, ‘Everything’s
getting better and better.’" (Zest: they’ve zest.
" ‘Hope springs eternal in the Brooklyn breast.’"

And would the Dodger Band in 8, row 1, relax
if they saw the collector of income tax?

Ready with a tune if that should occur:
"Why Not Take All of Me—All of Me, Sir?")

Another series. Round-tripper Duke at bat,
"Four hundred feet from home-plate"; more like that.

A neat bunt, please; a cloud-breaker, a drive
like Jim Gilliam’s great big one. Hope’s alive.
Homered, flied out, fouled? Our "stylish stout" so nimble Campanella will have him out.

A-squat in double-headers four hundred times a day, he says that in a measure the pleasure is the pay:

catcher to pitcher, a nice easy throw almost as if he’d just told it to go.

Willie Mays should be a Dodger. He should—a lad for Roger Craig and Clem Labine to elude;

but you have an omen, pennant-winning Peewee, on which we are looking superstitiously.

Ralph Branca has Preacher Roe’s number; recall? and there’s Don Bessent; he can really fire the ball.

As for Gil Hodges, in custody of first—“He’ll do it by himself.” Now a specialist—versed

in an extension reach far into the box seats—he lengthens up, leans and gloves the ball. He defeats

expectation by a whisker. The modest star, irked by one misplay, is no hero by a hair;

in a strikeout slaughter when what could matter more, he lines a homer to the signboard and has changed the score.

Then for his nineteenth season, a home run—with four of six runs batted in—Carl Furillo’s the big gun;

almost dehorned the foe—has fans dancing in delight. Jake Pitler and his Playground "get a Night"—
Jake, that hearty man, made heartier by a harrier
who can bat as well as field—Don Demeter.

Shutting them out for nine innings—hitter too—
Carl Erskine leaves Cimoli nothing to do.

Take off the goat-horns, Dodgers, that egret
which two very fine base-stealers can offset.

You’ve got plenty: Jackie Robinson
and Campy and big Newk, and Dodgerdom again
watching everything you do. You won last year. Come on.
ENOUGH

Jamestown, 1607–1957

Some in the Godspeed, the Susan C., others in the Discovery,

found their too earthy paradise, a paradise in which hope dies,

found pests and pestilence instead, the living outnumbered by the dead.

The same reward for best and worst doomed communism, tried at first.

Three acres each, initiative, six bushels paid back, they could live.

Captain Dale became kidnaper—the master—lawless when the spur

was desperation, even though his victim had let her victim go—

Captain John Smith. Poor Powhatan was forced to make peace, embittered man.

Then teaching—insidious recourse—enhancing Pocahontas, flowered of course

in marriage. John Rolfe fell in love with her and she—in rank above
what she became—renounced her name
yet found her status not too tame.

The crested moss rose casts a spell;
and bud of solid green as well;

old deep pink one with fragrant wings
imparting balsam scent that clings

where red-brown tanbark holds the sun—
path enticing beyond comparison.

Not to begin with. No select
artlessly perfect French effect

mattered at first. (Don’t speak in rhyme
of maddened men in starving-time.)

Tested until so unnatural
that one became a cannibal.

Marriage, tobacco, and slavery
initiated liberty

when the Deliverance brought seed
of that now controversial weed—

a blameless plant Red-Ridinghood.
Blameless, but who knows what is good?

The victims of a search for gold
cast yellow soil into the hold.

With nothing but the feeble tower
to mark the site that did not flower,
could the most ardent have been sure
that they had done what would endure?

It was enough; it is enough
if present faith mend partial proof.
MELCHIOR VULPIUS

c. 1560–1615

a contrapuntalist—
  composer of chorales
and wedding-hymns to Latin words
but best of all an anthem:
  “God be praised for conquering faith
  which feareth neither pain nor death.”

We have to trust this art—
  this mastery which none
can understand. Yet someone has
acquired it and is able to
direct it. Mouse-skin-bellows’-breath
expanding into rapture saith

“Hallelujah.” Almost
  utmost absolutist
and fugue-ist, Amen; slowly building
from miniature thunder,
crescendos antidoting death—
love’s signature cementing faith.
NO BETTER THAN
A "WITHERED DAFFODIL"

Ben Johnson said he was? "O I could still
like melting snow upon some craggy hill,
drop, drop, drop, drop."

I too until I saw that French brocade
blaze green as though some lizard in the shade
became exact—

set off by replicas of violet—
like Sidney, leaning in his striped jacket
against a lime—

a work of art. And I too seemed to be
an insouciant rester by a tree—
no daffodil.
IN THE PUBLIC GARDEN

Boston has a festival—
compositely for all—
and nearby, cupolas of learning
(crimson, blue, and gold) that
have made education individual.

My first—an exceptional,
an almost scriptural—
taxi driver to Cambridge from Back Bay
said, as we went along, "They
make some fine young men at Harvard." I recall

the summer when Faneuil Hall
had its weathervane with gold ball
and grasshopper, gilded again by
a -leafer and -jack
till it glittered. Spring can be a miracle

there—a more than usual
bouquet of what is vernal—
"pear blossoms whiter than the clouds," pin-oak leaves that barely show
when other trees are making shade, besides small

fairy iris suitable
for Dulcinea del
Toboso; O yes, and snowdrops
in the snow, that smell like
violets. Despite secular bustle,

let me enter King’s Chapel
to hear them sing: "My work be praise while
others go and come. No more a stranger

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or a guest but like a child
at home.” A chapel or a festival
means giving what is mutual,
even if irrational:
black sturgeon eggs—a camel
from Hamadan, Iran;
a jewel, or, what is more unusual,
silence—after a word—waterfall of the banal—
as unattainable
as freedom. And what is freedom for?
For “self-discipline,” as our
hardest-working citizen has said—a school;
it is for “freedom to toil”
with a feel for the tool.
Those in the trans-shipment camp must have
a skill. With hope of freedom hanging
by a thread—some gather medicinal
herbs which they can sell.
Ineligible if they ail.
Well?

There are those who will talk for an hour
without telling you why they have
come. And I? This is no madrigal—
no medieval gradual.
It is a grateful tale—
without that radiance which poets
are supposed to have—
unofficial, unprofessional. But still one need not fail

\[ \sqrt{\text{wish poetry well}} \]
where intellect is habitual—
glad that the Muses have a home and swans—
that legend can be factual;

happy that Art, admired in general,
is always actually personal.
THE ARCTIC OX (OR GOAT)


To wear the arctic fox
you have to kill it. Wear
qiviut—the underwool of the arctic ox—
pulled off it like a sweater;
your coat is warm; your conscience, better.

I would like a suit of
qiviut, so light I did not
know I had it on; and in the
course of time, another
since I had not had to murder
the "goat" that grew the fleece
that made the first. The musk ox
has no musk and it is not an ox—
iliterate epithet.
Bury your nose in one when wet.

It smells of water, nothing else,
and browses goatlike on
hind legs. Its great distinction
is not egocentric scent
but that it is intelligent.

Chinchillas, otters, water-rats,
and beavers, keep us warm
but think! a "musk ox" grows six pounds
of qiviut; the cashmere ram,
three ounces—that is all—of pashm.

Lying in an exposed spot,
basking in the blizzard,
    these ponderosos could dominate
the rare-hairs market in Kashan and yet
you could not have a choicer pet.

They join you as you work;
love jumping in and out of holes,
    play in water with the children,
learn fast, know their names,
will open gates and invent games.

While not incapable
of courtship, they may find its
    servitude and flutter, too much
like Procrustes' bed;
so some decide to stay unwed.

Camels are snobbish
and sheep, unintelligent;
    water buffaloes, neurasthenic—
even murderous.
Reindeer seem over-serious,

whereas these scarce qivies,
with golden fleece and winning ways,
    outstripping every fur-bearer—
there in Vermont quiet—
could demand Bold Ruler's diet:

Mountain Valley water,
dandelions, carrots, oats—

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encouraged as well by bed
made fresh three times a day—
to roll and revel in the hay.

Insatiable for willow
leaves alone, our goatlike
qivi-curvi-capricornus
sheds down ideal for a nest.
Song-birds find qiviut best.

Suppose you had a bag
of it; you could spin a pound
into a twenty-four-or-five-
mile thread—one, forty-ply—
that will not shrink in any dye.

If you fear that you are
reading an advertisement,
you are. If we can't be cordial
to these creatures' fleece,
I think that we deserve to freeze.
SAINT NICHOLAS,

might I, if you can find it, be given
a chameleon with tail
that curls like a watch spring; and vertical
on the body—including the face—pale
tiger-stripes, about seven;
(the melanin in the skin
having been shaded from the sun by thin
bars; the spinal dome
beaded along the ridge
as if it were platinum)?

If you can find no striped chameleon,
might I have a dress or suit—
I guess you have heard of it—of qiviut?
and to wear with it, a taslon shirt, the drip-dry fruit
of research second to none;
sewn, I hope, by Excello;
as for buttons to keep down the collar-points, no.
The shirt could be white—
and be “worn before six,”
either in daylight or at night.

But don’t give me, if I can’t have the dress,
a trip to Greenland, or grim
trip to the moon. The moon should come here. Let him
make the trip down, spread on my dark floor some dim
marvel, and if a success
that I stoop to pick up and wear,
I could ask nothing more. A thing yet more rare,
though, and different,
would be this: Hans von Marées’
St. Hubert, kneeling with head bent,
erect—in velvet and tense with restraint—
hand hanging down: the horse, free.
Not the original, of course. Give me
a postcard of the scene—huntsman and divinity—
hunt-mad Hubert startled into a saint
by a stag with a Figure entined.
But why tell you what you must have divined?
Saint Nicholas, O Santa Claus,
would it not be the most
prized gift that ever was!
FOR FEBRUARY 14TH

Saint Valentine,
although late, would "some interested law
impelled to plod in the poem's cause"
be permitted with a line?

Might you have liked a stone
from a De Beers Consolidated Mine?
or badger-neat saber-thronged thistle
of Palestine—the leaves alone
down'd underneath,
worth a touch? or that mimosa-leafed vine
called an "alexander's armillary
sphere" fanning out in a wreath?

Or did the ark
preserve paradise-birds with jet-black plumes,
whose descendants might serve as presents?
But questioning is the mark

of a pest! Why think
only of animals in connection
with the ark or the wine Noah drank?
but that the ark did not sink.
COMBAT CULTURAL

One likes to see a laggard rook’s high speed at sunset to outfly the dark, or a mount well schooled for a medal; front legs tucked up for the barrier—or team of leapers turned aerial.

I recall a documentary of Cossacks: a visual fugue, a mist of swords that seemed to sever heads from bodies—feet stepping as though through harp-strings in a scherzo. However,

the quadrille of Old Russia for me: with aimlessly drooping handkerchief snapped like the crack of a whip; a deliriously spun-out-level frock-coat skirt, unswirled and a-droop in remote promenade. Let me see . . . Old Russia, I said? Cold Russia this time: the prize bunnyhug platform-piece of experts in the trip-and-slug of wrestlers in a rug.

“Sacked” and ready for bed apparently—with a jab, a kick, pinned to the wall, they work toward the edge and stick; stagger off, and one is victim of a flipflop—leg having circled leg as thick.

“Some art, because of high quality, is unlikely to command high sales”; yes, yes; but here, oh no;
not with the frozen North’s Nan-ai-ans
of the sack in their tight touch-and-go.

These battlers, dressed identically—
just one person—may, by seeming twins,
point a moral, should I confess;
we must cement the parts of any
objective symbolic of *sagesse*.
LEONARDO DA VINCI'S

Saint Jerome and his lion
in that hermitage
of walls half gone,
share sanctuary for a sage—
joint-frame for impassioned ingenious
Jerome versed in language—
and for a lion like one on the skin of which
Hercules' club made no impression.

The beast, received as a guest,
although some monks fled—
with its paw dressed
that a desert thorn had made red—
stayed as guard of the monastery ass . . .
which vanished, having fed
its guard, Jerome assumed. The guest then, like an ass,
was made to carry wood and did not resist,

but before long, recognized
the ass and consigned
its terrorized
thieves' whole camel-train to chagrined
Saint Jerome. The vindicated beast and
saint somehow became twinned;
and now, since they behaved and also looked alike,
their lionship seems officialized.

Pacific yet passionate—
for if not both, how
could he be great?
Jerome—reduced by what he'd been through—
with tapering waist no matter what he ate,
left us the Vulgate. That in Leo,
the Nile's rise grew food checking famine,
    made lion's-mouth fountains appropriate,

    if not universally,
    at least not obscure.
And here, though hardly a summary, astronomy
    or pale paint makes the golden pair
in Leonardo da Vinci's sketch seem
    sun-dyed. Blaze on, picture,
saint, beast; and Lion Haile Selassie, with household
lions as symbol of sovereignty.
TELL ME, TELL ME (1966)
GRANITE AND STEEL

Enfranchising cable, silvered by the sea,
of woven wire, grayed by the mist,
and Liberty dominate the Bay—
her feet as one on shattered chains,
one whole links wrought by Tyranny.

Caged Circe of steel and stone,
her parent German ingenuity.
"O catenary curve" from tower to pier,
implacable enemy of the mind's deformity,
of man's uncompunctious greed,
his crass love of crass priority
just recently
obstructing acquiescent feet
about to step ashore when darkness fell
without a cause,
as if probity had not joined our cities
in the sea.

"O path amid the stars
crossed by the seagull's wing!"
"O radiance that doth inherit me!"
—affirming inter-acting harmony!

Untried expedient, untried; then tried;
way out; way in; romantic passageway
first seen by the eye of the mind,
then by the eye. O steel! O stone!
Climactic ornament, double rainbow,
as if inverted by French perspicacity,
John Roebling's monument,
German tenacity's also;
composite span—an actuality.
IN LIEU OF THE LYRE

One debarred from enrollment at Harvard, may have seen towers and been shown the Yard—animated by Madame de Boufflers' choice rhymes: *Sentir avec ardeur*: with fire; yes, with passion; rime-prose revived also by word-wizard Achilles—Dr. Fang.

The *Harvard Advocate*'s select formal-informal invitation to Harvard made grateful, Brooklyn's (or Mexico's) *ineditos*—one whose "French aspect" was invented by Professor Levin, a too outspoken outraged refugee from clichés particularly, who was proffered redress by the Lowell House Press—Vermont Stinehour Press, rather. (No careless statements to Kirkland House; least of all inexactness in quoting a fact.)

To the *Advocate*, *gratia sum* unavoidably lame as I am, verbal pilgrim like Thomas Bewick, drinking from his hat-brim, drops spilled from a waterfall, denominated later by him a crystalline Fons Bandusian miracle.

It occurs to the guest—if someone had confessed it in time—that you might have preferred to the waterfall, pilgrim and hat-brim, a valuable axiom such as "a force at rest is at rest because balanced by some other force," or "catenary and triangle together hold the span in place" (of a bridge),
or a too often forgotten surely relevant thing, that Roebling cable was invented by John A. Roebling.

These reflections, Mr. Davis,
in lieu of the lyre.
THE MIND, INTRACTABLE THING

even with its own ax to grind, sometimes
helps others. Why can't it help me?

O imaginifico,
wizard in words—poet, was it, as
Alfredo Panzini defined you?
Weren't you refracting just now
on my eye's half-closed triptych
  the image, enhanced, of a glen—
"the foxgrape festoon as sere leaves fell"
on the sand-pale dark byroad, one leaf adrift
  from the thin-twigged persimmon; again,

  a bird—Arizona
caught-up-with, uncatchable cuckoo
after two hours' pursuit, zigzagging
road-runner, stenciled in black
stripes all over, the tail
  windmilling up to defy me?
You understand terror, know how to deal
with pent-up emotion, a ballad, witchcraft.
  I don't. O Zeus and O Destiny!

Unafraid of what's done,
undeterred by apparent defeat,
you, imaginifico, unafraid
of disparagers, death, dejection,
have out-wiled the Mermaid of Zennor,
  made wordcraft irresistible:
reef, wreck, lost lad, and "sea-foundered bell"—
as near a thing as we have to a king—
  craft with which I don't know how to deal.

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After coming on Jerome S. Shipman's comment concerning academic appointments for artists.

The committee—now a permanent body—formed to do but one thing, discover positions for artists, was worried, then happy; rejoiced to have magnetized Bach and his family “to Northwestern,” besides five harpsichords without which he would not leave home. For his methodic unmetronomic melodic diversity contrapuntally appointedly persistently irresistibly Fate-like Bach—find me words.

Being expected to create for university occasions, inventions with wing, was no problem after master-classes (stiffer in Germany),

each week a cantata; chorales, fugues, concerti!

Here, students craved a teacher and each student worked. Jubilation! Re-rejoicings! Felicity!
Repeated fugue-like, all of it, to infinity.
(Note too that over-worked Bach was not irked.)

Haydn, when he had heard of Bach’s billowing sail, begged Prince Esterházy to lend him to Yale. Master-mode expert fugue-al forms since, prevail.

OLD AMUSEMENT PARK

Before it became LaGuardia Airport.

Hurry, worry, unwary
visitor, never vary
the pressure till nearly bat-blind.
A predicament so dire could not
occur in this rare spot—

where crowds flock to the tramcar
rattling greenish caterpillar,
as bowling-ball thunder
quivers the air. The park's elephant
slowly lies down aslant;

then pygmy replica rides
the mound the back provides.
Jet black, a furry pony sits
down like a dog, has an innocent air—
no tricks—the best act there.

It's all like the never-ending
Ferris-wheel ascending
picket-fenced pony-rides (ten cents).
A businessman, the pony-paddock boy
locks his equestrian toy—

flags flying, fares collected,
shooting gallery neglected—
half-official, half-sequestered,
limber-slouched against a post,
and tells a friend what matters least.

It's the old park in a nutshell,
like its tame-wild carrousel—
the exhilarating peak
when the triumph is reflective
and confusion, retroactive.
AN EXPEDIENT—LEONARDO DA VINCI'S—
AND A QUERY

It was patience
protecting the soul as clothing the body
from cold, so that "great wrongs
were powerless to vex"—
and problems that seemed to perplex
him bore fruit, memory
making past present—
like "the grasp of the gourd,
sure and firm."

"None too dull to
be able to do one thing well. Unworthy
of praise, an orator
who knows only one word,
lacking variety." Height deterred
from his verdure, any
polecat or snake that
might have burdened his vine:
it kept them away.

With a passion,
he drew flowers, acorns, rocks—intensively,
like Giotto, made Nature
the test, imitation—
Rome's taint—did not taint what he'd done.
He saw as treachery
the all-in-one-mold.
Peerless, venerated
by all, he succumbed
to dejection. Could not
the Leda with face matchless minutely—
have lightened the blow?

"Sad" . . . Could not Leonardo

have said, "I agree; proof refutes me.
If all is mobility,

mathematics won't do":
instead of, "Tell me if anything
at all has been done?"
W. S. LANDOR

_Note_

is someone I can bear—

"a master of indignation . . .

meant for a soldier

converted to letters," who could

throw

a man through the window,

yet, "tender toward plants," say, "Good God, the violets!" (below).

"Accomplished in every style

and tint"—considering meanwhile

infinity and eternity,

he could only say, "I'll talk about them when I understand them."
TO A GIRAFFE

If it is unpermissible, in fact fatal
to be personal and undesirable

to be literal—detrimental as well
if the eye is not innocent—does it mean that

one can live only on top leaves that are small
reachable only by a beast that is tall?

of which the giraffe is the best example—
the unconversational animal.

When plagued by the psychological,
a creature can be unbearable

that could have been irresistible;
or to be exact, exceptional

since less conversational
than some emotionally-tied-in-knots animal.

After all
consolations of the metaphysical
can be profound. In Homer, existence

is flawed; transcendence, conditional;
"the journey from sin to redemption, perpetual."
CHARITY OVERCOMING ENVY

Late-fifteenth-century tapestry, Flemish or French, in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum.

Have you time for a story
(depicted in tapestry)?
Charity, riding an elephant,
on a “mosaic of flowers,” faces Envy,
the flowers “bunched together, not rooted.”
Envy, on a dog, is worn down by obsession,
his greed (since of things owned by others
he can only take some). Crouching uneasily
in the flowered filigree, among wide weeds
indented by scallops that swirl,
little flattened-out sunflowers,
thin arched coral stems, and—ribbed horizontally—
slivers of green, Envy, on his dog,
looks up at the elephant,
cowering away from her, his cheek scarcely scratched.
He is saying, “O Charity, pity me, Deity!
O pitiless Destiny,
what will become of me,
maimed by Charity—Caritas—sword unsheathed
over me yet? Blood stains my cheek. I am hurt.”
In chest armor over chain mail, a steel shirt
to the knee, he repeats, “I am hurt.”
The elephant, at no time borne down by self-pity,
convinces the victim
that Destiny is not devising a plot.

The problem is mastered—insupportably
tiring when it was impending.
Deliverance accounts for what sounds like an axiom.

The Gordian knot need not be cut.
BLUE BUG

Upon seeing Dr. Raworth Williams' Blue Bug with seven other ponies, photographed by Thomas McAvoy: Sports Illustrated.

In this camera shot,
from that fine print in which you hide
(eight-pony portrait from the side),
you seem to recognize
a recognizing eye,
   limber Bug.
Only partly said, perhaps, it has been implied
that you seem to be the one to ride.

I don't know how you got your name
   and don't like to inquire.
   Nothing more punitive than the pest
who says, "I'm trespassing," and
does it just the same.
I've guessed, I think.
   I like a face that seems a nest,
a "mere container for the eye"—
   triangle-cornered—and
   pitchfork-pronged ears stiffly parallel:
   bug brother to an Arthur
Mitchell dragonfly,
   speeding to left,
   speeding to right; reversible,

like "turns in an ancient Chinese
   melody, a thirteen
   twisted silk-string three-finger solo."
   There they are, Yellow River-
scroll accuracies

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of your version
of something similar—polo.

Restating it:
pelo, I turn,
on polos, a pivot.

If a little elaborate,
Redon (Odilon) brought it to mind,
his thought of the eye,
of revolving—combined somehow with pastime—
pastime that is work,
muscular docility,
also mentality,
as in the acrobat Li Siau Than,
gibbon-like but limberer,
defying gravity,
nether side arched up,
cup on head not upset—
China’s very most ingenious man.
ARThUR MITCHEll

Slim dragonfly
too rapid for the eye
to cage—
contagious gem of virtuosity—
make visible, mentality.
Your jewels of mobility

reveal
and veil
a peacock-tail.
BASEBALL AND WRITING

*Suggested by post-game broadcasts.*

Fanaticism? No. Writing is exciting and baseball is like writing.
You can never tell with either
how it will go
or what you will do;
generating excitement—
a fever in the victim—
pitcher, catcher, fielder, batter.
Victim in what category?
Owlman watching from the press box?
To whom does it apply?
Who is excited? Might it be I?

It's a pitcher's battle all the way—a duel—a catcher's, as, with cruel
puma paw, Elston Howard lumbers lightly back to plate. (His spring
de-winged a bat swing.)
They have that killer instinct;
yet Elston—whose catching arm has hurt them all with the bat—when questioned, says, unenviously,
"I'm very satisfied. We won."
Shorn of the batting crown, says, "We"; robbed by a technicality.

When three players on a side play three positions and modify conditions,
the massive run need not be everything.
"Going, going . . ." Is it? Roger Maris
has it, running fast. You will
never see a finer catch. Well . . .
“Mickey, leaping like the devil”—why
gild it, although deer sounds better—
snares what was speeding towards its treetop nest,
one-handing the souvenir-to-be
meant to be caught by you or me.

Assign Yogi Berra to Cape Canaveral;
he could handle any missile.
   He is no feather. “Strike! . . . Strike two!”
   Fouled back. A blur.
   It's gone. You would infer
that the bat had eyes.
   He put the wood to that one.
Praised, Skowron says, “Thanks, Mel.
I think I helped a little bit.”
   All business, each, and modesty.
Blanchard, Richardson, Kubek, Boyer.
   In that galaxy of nine, say which
won the pennant? Each. It was he.

Those two magnificent saves from the knee—throws
by Boyer, finesses in twos—
like Whitey’s three kinds of pitch and pre-
diagnosis
   with pick-off psychosis.
Pitching is a large subject.
Your arm, too true at first, can learn to
catch the corners—even trouble
   Mickey Mantle. (“Grazed a Yankee!
My baby pitcher, Montejo!”
   With some pedagogy,
you’ll be tough, premature prodigy.)
They crowd him and curve him and aim for the knees. Trying indeed! The secret implying.

"I can stand here, bat held steady."

One may suit him;

none has hit him.

Imponderables smite him.

Muscle kinks, infections, spike wounds
require food, rest, respite from ruffians. (Drat it! Celebrity costs privacy!)

Cow's milk, "tiger's milk," soy milk, carrot juice,
brewer's yeast (high-potency)—
concentrates presage victory

sped by Luis Arroyo, Hector Lopez—
deadly in a pinch. And "Yes,
it's work; I want you to bear down,
but enjoy it
while you're doing it."

Mr. Houk and Mr. Sain,
if you have a rummage sale,
don't sell Roland Sheldon or Tom Tresh.

Studded with stars in belt and crown,
the Stadium is an adastrum.

O flashing Orion,
your stars are muscled like the lion.
TO VICTOR HUGO OF MY CROW PLUTO

"Even when the bird is walking we know that it has wings."
—VICTOR HUGO

Of:

my crow
Pluto,

the true
Plato,

azzurro-
negro

green-blue
rainbow—

Victor Hugo,
it is true

we know
that the crow

“has wings,” however pigeon-toe-

inturned on grass. We do.
(adagio)

Vivo-
rosso

“corvo,”
although
con dizionario

io parlo
Italiano—

this pseudo
Esperanto

which, savio
ucello

you speak too—
my vow and motto

(botto e totto)
io giuro

è questo
credo:

lucro
è peso morto.

And so
dear crow—

gioiello
mio—

I have to
let you go;

a bel bosco
generoso,
Impromptu equivalents for *esperanto madinusa* (made in U.S.A.) for those who might not resent them.

- **azzurro-negro**: blue-black
- **vivorosso**: lively
- **con dizionario**: with dictionary
- **savio uccello**: knowing bird
- **botto e totto**: vow and motto
- **io giuro**: I swear
- **è questo credo**: is this credo
- **lucro è peso morto**: profit is a dead weight
- **gioiello mio**: my jewel
- **a bel bosco**: to lovely woods
- **tuttutto vagabondo**: complete gypsy
- **sarrfino uvaceo**: grape-black seraph
- **sunto**: in short
- **verecondo**: modest
RESCUE WITH YUL BRYNNER


“Recital? ‘Concert’ is the word,”
and stunning, by the Budapest Symphony—
displaced but not deterred—
listened to by me,
though with detachment then,
lke a grasshopper that did not
know it missed the mower, a pygmy citizen;
a case, I’d say, of too slow a grower.
There were thirty million; there are thirteen still—
healthy to begin with, kept waiting till they’re ill.
History judges. It will
salute Winnipeg’s incredible
conditions: “Ill; no sponsor; and no kind of skill.”
Odd—a reporter with guitar—a puzzle.
Mysterious Yul did not come to dazzle.

Magic bird with multiple tongue—
five tongues—equipped for a crazy twelve-month tramp
(a plod), he flew among
the damned, found each camp
where hope had slowly died
(some had never seen a plane).
Instead of feathering himself, he exemplified
the rule that, self-applied, omits the gold.

He said, “You may feel strange; nothing matters less.
Nobody notices; you’ll find some happiness.
No new ‘big fear’; no distress.”
Yul can sing—twin of an enchantress—
elephant-borne dancer in silver-spangled dress,
swirled aloft by trunk, with star-tipped wand, Tamara,
as true to the beat as Symphonia Hungarica.

Head bent down over the guitar,
he barely seemed to hum; ended “all come home”;
did not smile; came by air;
did not have to come.
The guitar’s an event.

Guests of honor can’t dance; don’t smile.
“Have a home?” a boy asks. “Shall we live in a tent?”
“In a house,” Yul answers. His neat cloth hat
has nothing like the glitter reflected on the face
of milkweed-witch seed-brown dominating a palace
that was nothing like the place
where he is now. His deliberate pace
is a king’s, however. “You’ll have plenty of space.”

Yule—Yul log for the Christmas-tale-spinner—
of fairy tales that can come true: Yul Brynner.
"It spreads," the campaign—carried on by long-distance telephone, with "Saint Diogenes supreme commander."
At the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour, a rescuer makes room for Mr. Carnegie's music hall, which by degrees became (becomes) our music stronghold (accented on the "né," as perhaps you don't have to be told).

Paderewski's "palladian majesty" made it a fane; Tschaikovsky, of course, on the opening night, 1891; and Gilels, a master, playing.

With Andrew C. and Mr. R., "our spearhead, Mr. Star"—in music, Stern—has grown forensic, and by civic piety has saved our city panic;

rescuer of a music hall menaced by the "cannibal of real estate"—bulldozing potentate,
land-grabber, the human crab
left cowering like a neonate.

As Venice “in defense of children”
has forbidden for the citizen,
by “a tradition of
noble behavior,
dress too strangely shaped or scant,”
posterity may impute error
to our demolishers of glory. Jean Cocteau’s “Preface
to the Past” contains the phrase
“When very young my dream
was of pure glory.”
Must he say “was” of his “light
dream,” which confirms our glittering story?

They need their old brown home. Cellist,
violinist, pianist—
used to unmusical
impenetraria’s
massive masonry—have found
reasons to return. Fantasias

of praise and rushings to the front
dog the performer. We hunt
you down, Saint Diogenes—
are thanking you for glittering,
for rushing to the rescue
as if you’d heard yourself performing.
TELL ME, TELL ME

where might there be a refuge for me
from egocentricity
and its propensity to bisect,
mi-state, misunderstand
and obliterate continuity?

Why, oh why, one ventures to ask, set
flatness on some cindery pinnacle
as if on Lord Nelson’s revolving diamond rosette?

It appeared: gem, burnished rarity
and peak of delicacy—
in contrast with grievance touched off on
any ground—the absorbing
geometry of a fantasy:

a James, Miss Potter, Chinese
“passion for the particular,” of a
tired man who yet, at dusk,
cut a masterpiece of cerise—

for no tailor-and-cutter jury—
only a few mice to see,
who “breathed inconsistency and drank
contradiction,” dazzled
not by the sun but by “shadowy
possibility.” (I’m referring
to Henry James and Beatrix Potter’s Tailor.)
I vow, rescued tailor

of Gloucester, I am going
to flee; by engineering strategy—
the viper’s traffic-knot—flee
to metaphysical newmown hay,
honeysuckle, or woods fragrance.
Might one say or imply T.S.V.P.—
*Taisez-vous?* "Please" does not make sense to a refugee from verbal ferocity; I am perplexed. Even so, "deference";
yes, deference may be my defense.

A *précis?*

In this told-backward biography of how the cat's mice when set free by the tailor of Gloucester, finished the Lord Mayor's cerise coat—
the tailor's tale ended captivity in two senses. Besides having told of a coat which made the tailor's fortune, it rescued a reader from being driven mad by a scold.
SAINT VALENTINE,

permitted to assist you, let me see . . .

If those remembered by you
are to think of you and not me,
it seems to me that the memento
or compliment you bestow
should have a name beginning with "V,"

such as Vera, El Greco's only
dughter (though it has never been
proved that he had one), her starchy
veil, inside chiffon; the stone in her
ring, like her eyes; one hand on
her snow-leopard wrap, the fur widely
dotted with black. It could be a vignette—
a replica, framed oval—
bordered by a vine or vinelet.
Or give a mere flower, said to mean the
love of truth or truth of
love—in other words, a violet.

Verse—unabashedly bold—is appropriate;
and always it should be as neat
as the most careful writer's "8."
Any valentine that is written
Is as the vendage to the vine.
Might verse not best confuse itself with fate?
SUN

Hope and Fear accost him

"No man may him hyde
From Deth holow-eyed";
For us, this inconvenience truth does not suffice.
You are not male or female, but a plan
deep-set within the heart of man.
Splendid with splendor hid you come, from your Arab abode,
a fiery topaz smothered in the hand of a great prince who rode
before you, Sun—whom you outran,
piercing his caravan.

O Sun, you shall stay
with us; holiday,
consuming wrath, be wound in a device
of Moorish gorgeousness, round glasses spun
to flame as hemispheres of one
great hour-glass dwindling to a stem. Consume hostility;
employ your weapon in this meeting-place of surging enmity!
Insurgent feet shall not outrun
multiplied flames, O Sun.
HITHERTO UNCOLLECTED
I'VE BEEN THINKING . . .

Make a fuss
and be tedious.

I'm annoyed?
yes; am—avoid

"adore"
and "bore";

am, I
say, by

the word
bore, bored;

refuse
to use

"divine"
to mean

something
pleasing;

"terrific color"
for some horror.

Though flat,
myself, I'd say that

"Atlas"
(pressed glass)
looks best
embossed.

I refuse
to use

"enchant,"
"dement";

even "fright-
ful plight"
(however justified)

or "frivol-
ous fool"
(however suitable).

I've escaped?
am still trapped

by these
word diseases.

No pauses—
the phrases

lack lyric
force; sound capric-

like Attic
capric-Alcaic,

or freak
calico-Greek.
(Not verse
of course)
I'm sure of this:

Nothing mundane is divine;
Nothing divine is mundane.
LOVE IN AMERICA?

Whatever it is, it's a passion—
a benign dementia that should be
engulfing America, fed in a way
the opposite of the way
in which the Minotaur was fed.
It's a Midas of tenderness;
from the heart;
nothing else. From one with ability
to bear being misunderstood—
take the blame, with "nobility
that is action," identifying itself with
pioneer unperfunctoriness

without brazenness or
bigness of overgrown
undergrown shallowness.

Whatever it is, let it be without
affectation.

Yes, yes, yes, yes.
TIPPOO'S TIGER

The tiger was his prototype.
The forefeet of his throne were tiger's feet.
He mounted by a four-square pyramid of silver stairs converging as they rose.
The jackets of his infantry and palace guard bore little woven stripes incurved like buttonholes.

Beneath the throne an emerald carpet lay.
Approaching it, each subject kissed nine times the carpet's velvet face of meadow-green.

Tipu owned sixteen hunting-cats to course the antelope until his one great polecat ferret with exciting tail escaped through its unlatched hut-door along a plank above a ditch; paused, drank, and disappeared—precursor of its master's fate.

His weapons were engraved with tiger claws and teeth in spiral characters that said the conqueror is God.
The infidel claimed Tipu's helmet and cuirasse and a vast toy, a curious automaton—a man killed by a tiger; with organ pipes inside from which blood-curdling cries merged with inhuman groans. The tiger moved its tail as the man moved his arm.

This ballad still awaits a tiger-hearted bard.
Great losses for the enemy cannot make one's own loss less hard.
THE CAMPERDOWN ELM

Gift of Mr. A. G. Burgess to Prospect Park, Brooklyn, 1872.

I think, in connection with this weeping elm, of "Kindred Spirits" at the edge of a rockledge overlooking a stream: Thanatopsis-invoking tree-loving Bryant conversing with Timothy Cole in Asher Durand's painting of them under the filigree of an elm overhead.

No doubt they had seen other trees—lindens, maples and sycamores, oaks and the Paris street-tree, the horse-chestnut; but imagine their rapture, had they come on the Camperdown elm's massiveness and "the intricate pattern of its branches," arching high, curving low, in its mist of fine twigs. The Bartlett tree-cavity specialist saw it and thrust his arm the whole length of the hollowness of its torso and there were six small cavities also.

Props are needed and tree-food. It is still leafing; still there; mortal though. We must save it. It is our crowning curio.
Selections from
THE FABLES OF LA FONTAINE
THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A fox of Gascon, though some say of Norman descent,
When starved till faint gazed up at a trellis to which grapes were tied—
Matured till they glowed with a purplish tint.
As though there were gems inside.
Now grapes were what our adventurer on strained haunches chanced to crave
But because he could not reach the vine
He said, "These grapes are sour; I'll leave them for some knave."

Better, I think, than an embittered whine.

(Book Three, XI)
THE LION IN LOVE

To Mademoiselle de Sévigné

Mademoiselle—goddess instead—
In whom the Graces find a school
Although you are more beautiful,
Even if with averted head,
Might you not be entertained
By a tale that is unadorned—
Hearing with no more than a quiver
Of a lion whom Love knew how to conquer.
Love is a curious mastery,
In name alone a felicity.
Better know of than know the thing.
If too personal and thus trespassing,
I'm saying what may seem to you an offense,
A fable could not offend your ear.
This one, assured of your lenience,
Attests its devotion embodied here,
And kneels in sworn obedience.

Before their speech was obstructed,
Lions or such as were attracted
To young girls, sought an alliance.
Why not? since as paragons of puissance,
They were at that time knightly fellows
Of mettle and intelligence
Adorned by manes like haloes.

The point of the preamble follows.
A lion—one in a multitude—
Met in a meadow as he fared,
A shepherdess for whom he cared.
He sought to win her if he could,
Though the father would have preferred
A less ferocious son-in-law.
To consent undoubtedly was hard;
Fear meant that the alternate was barred.
Moreover, refuse and he foresaw
That some fine day the two might explain
Clandestine marriage as the chain
That fettered the lass, bewitched beyond cure,
By fashions conducive to hauteur,
And a fancy that shaggy shoulder fur
Made her willful lover handsomer.
The father with despair choked down,
Said though at heart constrained to frown,
"The child is a dainty one; better wait;
You might let your claw points scratch her
When your heavy forepaws touch her.
You could if not too importunate,
Have your claws clipped. And there in front,
See that your teeth are filed blunt,
Because a kiss might be enjoyed
By you the more, I should think,
If my daughter were not forced to shrink
Because improvidently annoyed."
The enthralled animal mellowed,
His mind's eye having been shuttered.
Without teeth or claws it followed
That the fortress was shattered.
Dogs were loosed; defenses were gone:
The consequence was slight resistance.

Love, ah Love, when your slipknot's drawn,
We can but say, "Farewell, good sense."

(Book Four, I)
THE HAG AND HER TWO SERVANTS

An old hag had two maids spinning flax she'd prepare—
Each so skilled the Three Fates would not dare to compare
Their web with the maids' more concealed artistry.
Now the hag had no thought but the pair's industry
And providing the poor things with more and more flax.
Daybreak! with the sea ablaze where the sun had rested,
Spinning wheels contested, distaffs twirled and twisted,
   Droning, "Defter; you're belated;
   Don't stop spinning; don't relax."
Dawn's burnished car, as I've said, had not ascended
Till a rumpled cock had crowed; and thus reminded,
The far worse-feathered hag, more miserable still,
Fumbled on petticoats which grease made unwearable,
Lit a lamp and mustered a skinflint's energy
To rouse her weary pair who slumbered heavily.
   Soured by hard work done in vain,
One eyed her sullenly; the other's elbow stirred.
   Both out of sorts, since under strain,
Vowed in an undertone, "You're doomed, accursed bird";
Then they seized the cock by whom rest was restricted
And cut his throat, as the vow they'd made exacted,
But murder never aids one as intended;
Our cutthroats no sooner slept than, as if demented,
The hag rushed about till the house shook everywhere
To keep them from lying in bed and cheating her—
   A result far from infrequent.
Sometimes by changing situations we abhor,
   We double the predicament
   As these tired girls killed care and brought on more—
Avoiding Charybdis, they had fled to the hag—
   Had swerved from the whirlpool to the crag.

(Book Five, VI)
THE SUN AND THE FROGS

When a tyrant wed, folk gave way to excess
   And, drowning care, would drink and drink.
Only Aesop thought it besotted to think
   Excess results in happiness.
The Sun had once pondered the desirability,
   He said, of marrying.
Instantly each frog community
   Was audibly worrying,
   And every frog wore a frown.
   "What if he has little suns to shine down?"
They asked Fate. "When one can cause us pain,
   Suppose six were drying up the rain.
Sea life would shrivel and every kind of sea spawn;
Farewell, reeds and marshes; soon there'd be no frogs
   And but for the Styx there'd be no bogs."
   Although a frog is a small animal,
What it said, I'd say, seems not illogical.

(Book Six, XII)
THE ANIMALS SICK OF THE PLAGUE

A malady smote the earth one year,
Felling beasts and infecting all with fear,
To prove to them what grave offenders they were;
Although plague was the name by which it was known,
For it literally congested Acheron,
    Warring on creatures everywhere,
It did not bear off all but all were endangered.
    Any that lingered barely stirred—
Could merely breathe and that diseasedly.
    Nothing aroused their energy.
Neither wolf nor fox disappeared
To stalk young prey as it sunned.
The demoralized doves scattered
And love starved; life was moribund.

When the lion had called his constituency
    He said, "Dear friends, this is heaven's remedy
For the sins we have thought a boon.
So he who is guiltiest
Should sacrifice his good to that of the rest
And possibly most of us will then be immune.
In accord with the past, history suggests to one,
    Penance as atoning for evil done.
So without subterfuge, braving the consequence,
    Let each search his conscience.
As for me, I have preyed on flocks of sheep so often
    That I have become a glutton.
    Because they had wronged me? not once.
Moreover I would devour him when I mastered
    The shepherd.
Therefore let me be sacrificed in recompense,
But first make a clean breast, not just I say how I offend:
We must have justice and detect the trespass,

250)
Then rend the culprit's carcass."

The fox said, "Sire, you are too good to rend;
Your sense of honor is excessively nice.
Eat sheep, Sire! Poor dolts, their loss is no sacrifice.
A sinful king? Oh no. You prove when you devour
The beasts that you thought them superior.
As for the shepherd, one would swear
That he went where he ought to go,
Having become to any of us, high or low,
A monster none can endure."

When the fox said this, applause deafened the cur
And no one dared to consider
A tiger, bear, or other beast of prominence
Guilty of any offense.
In fact, quarrelers of evident spleen
Were canonized for their innocent mien.
When his turn came the ass said, "To take a backward glance,
I recall passing clerical domain,
The herbs and grass and hunger close to sustenance.
Fiend take me, how could I refrain?
I nipped off as much grass as would lie on my tongue;
So sinned, if what we say must be disinterested."

They made too much noise to hear what the donkey said.
A wolf pronounced the verdict, to which he clung,
Convinced they had found the animal they must kill—
The battered rapscallion who had made the world ill.
He deserved to be hung as an example.
Eat another's grass! What could be more horrible.
Death, only death was suitable
For the criminal—inflicted at once by spite.
And so, as you are weak or are invincible,
The court says white is black or that black crimes are white.

(Book Seven, I)
MARRIED AMISS

Moral and outward charm are at odds as things go,
   Or I soon would be sharing my name;
For they aren’t found together, and since it is so,
And the sweeter the soul the more faulty the frame,
   Choose one or the other.
Forgive my view that this sums up the matter.
I have seen matrimony and seen it to shun.
Nearly all sigh for bonds that will soon make them sour
And desire former days when they’d not had to cower,
When each has appraised the rash thing he has done.
One time a man whose wife had been making life dreary
   Sent her home to end worry,
   As a money-minded jealous
   Scold, abusive and predacious.
Nothing he did pleased her; nothing was opportune:
Oversleeping and then getting sleepy too soon.
It was too light, it was too dark; affront had become her pose.
The servants were fuming and marriage was her bane:
Men never notice things; squandering again;
   Precipitate; half comatose;
She ranted until her consort, wearying
   And disaffected by her carping,
   Said, “Off to the farm if you must complain,
In your birthplace where there is work to disdain
And Phyllis may need a turkey-matron
   Or a swineherd now and then.”
Supposing he would find her changed presently,
He brought her back, inquiring, “Well, how were things there?
   You passed the time agreeably?
Is farm life a thing for which you could care?”
—“Bearable,” she said; “but the men!
They’re lazier than those who work for you and me.
   Shepherds should not be leisurely;
When I said so, my mere tone of voice gave them pain.
   To hire such idlers is a farce."
— "Fine, my dear," the man said one day and was curt;
   "Your disposition is so perverse
   That anyone near you is hurt;
If but met on some little late housekeeping tour,
   You're more tiresome than one can endure.
What is their fate whose whole lives you make harder,
   The domestics you've hired for your household and larder?

And what shall that martyred man do
Who's compelled day and night to take orders from you?
Go back and be rustic: farewell. And as for me,
   If I ever bring you where I may be,
Punish my sins with one scourge when life is over—
   Two wives like you shackled to me forever!"

(Book Seven, II)
A serpent has mobility
Which can shatter intrepidity.
The tail-tip's mental to-and-fro
And tail-like taper head's quick blow—
Like Fate's—have the power to appall.
Each end had thought for years that it had no equal
And that it alone knew
What to do.
From the first, the head had guided the tail day by day
Till the tail accused God of folly
And begged mercy,
Saying, "I've trailed mile on mile in this way,
Too subserviently.
Was I meant to submit continually?"
I appear to be but a servant,
Though providentially
A sister, so not subservient.
Twins from inception,
Each is each's counterpart
With the scorpion's power to hurt;
Each injects lethal poison.
Revoke the spell I cannot break;
Tell the head you had rather
The tail took us farther
And it regulate the snake.
I shall manifest a restraint
That can give no cause for complaint."
Now granting fools' prayers can but presage ill,
Involving harm not within the giver's intent;
One must be deaf to destructive argument;
But this time God heard; then, as new beadles will,
Our purblind tail could admire
As much as baked bread saw of fire;
Struck a statue in due course,
    A boot, some bark; deaf to remorse,
Fell right into the Styx and drowned her sister.
Tragic rulers, hastening toward a like disaster!

(Book Seven, XVII)
A bear with fur that appeared to have been licked backward
Wandered a forest once where he alone had a lair.
This new Bellerophon, hid by thorns which pointed outward,
Had become deranged. Minds suffer disrepair
When every thought for years has been turned inward.
We prize witty byplay and reserve is still better,
But too much of either and health has soon suffered.

No animal sought out the bear
In coverts at all times sequestered,
Until he had grown embittered
And, wearying of mere fatuity,
By now was submerged in gloom continually.

He had a neighbor rather near,
Whose own existence had seemed drear;
Who loved a parterre of which flowers were the core,
And the care of fruit even more.
But horticulturalists need, besides work that is pleasant,
Some shrewd choice spirit present.

When flowers speak, it is as poetry gives leave
Here in this book; and bound to grieve,
Since hedged by silent greenery to tend,
The gardener thought one sunny day he’d seek a friend.

Nursing some thought of the kind,
The bear sought a similar end
And the pair just missed collision
Where their paths came in conjunction.

Numb with fear, how ever get away or stay there?
Better be a Gascon and disguise despair
In such a plight, so the man did not hang back or cower.
Lures are beyond a mere bear’s power
And this one said, “Visit my lair.” The man said, “Yonder bower,
Most noble one, is mine; what could be friendlier
Than to sit on tender grass and share such plain refreshment
As native products laced with milk? Since it's an embarrassment
To lack what lordly bears would have as daily fare,
Accept what is here.” The bear appeared flattered.
Each found, as he went, a friend was what most mattered;
Before they'd neared the door, they were inseparable.
      As confidant, a beast seems dull.
      Best live alone if wit can't flow,
And the gardener found the bear's reserve a blow,
But conducive to work, without sounds to distract.
Having game to be dressed, the bear, as it puttered,
      Diligently chased or slaughtered
Pests that filled the air, and swarmed, to be exact,
Round his all too weary friend who lay down sleepy—
      Pests—well, flies, speaking unscientifically.
One time as the gardener had forgot himself in dream
And a single fly had his nose at its mercy,
The poor indignant bear who had fought it vainly
Growled, “I'll crush that trespasser; I have evolved a scheme.”
Killing flies was his chore, so as good as his word,
The bear hurled a cobble and made sure it was hurled hard,
Crushing a friend's head to rid him of a pest.
With bad logic, fair aim disgraces us the more;
He'd murdered someone dear, to guarantee his friend rest.

Intimates should be feared who lack perspicacity;
Choose wisdom, even in an enemy.

(Book Eight, X)
THE MOUSE METAMORPHOSED
INTO A MAID

A mouse fell from a screech-owl's beak—a thing that I can not pretend
To be Hindoo enough to have cared
To pick up. But a Brahmin, as I can well believe, straightened
The fur which the beak had marred.
Each country's code is what is preferred.
We are not much concerned about pain
Which a mouse endures, yet a Brahmin would as soon disdain
A relative's; feeling that we submit to a fate
That transforms us at death, to a worm
Or beast, and lends even kings a transition state—
A tenet Pythagoras chose to affirm,
Deduced from that system, of which he was a ponderer.
Based on the same belief, the Brahmin sought a sorcerer,
Eager to right what had been unfair and procure a key
To restore to the mouse her true identity.

Well, there she was, a girl and real,
Of about fifteen, who was so irresistible
Priam's son would have toiled harder still to reward her
Than for Helen who threw the whole world in disorder.
The Brahmin said to her, marveling at the miracle—
At charm so great that it scarcely seemed true,
"You have but to choose. Any suitor I know
Contends for the honor of marrying you."
—"In that case," she said, "the most powerful;
I would choose the strongest I knew."

Kneeling, the Brahmin pled, "Sun, it shall be you.
Be my heir; share my inheritance."
—"No, a cloud intervening," it said,
"Would be stronger than I and I be discredited.
Choose the cloud for her defense."
—"Very well," said the Brahmin to the cloud, sailing on,
"Were you meant for her?"—"Alas," it answered, "not the one. The wind drives me from place to place; I'm whirled through the void:

And dare not offend Boreas; I might be destroyed."

The distraught Brahmin cried To the wind that blew: "O Wind, abide. Be embraced by my child in whom graces dwell."

Boreas complied with a rush, but met a mountainside.

Deterred lest interests coincide, The ground demurred and said: "I might incur trouble—Would be unwise—since a rat who was incommoded Might weaken me by some tunnel he needed."


We retain the traits of the place from which we came. This tale Bears me out; but a nearer view would seem good Of what sophism never had quite understood: We all love sun; yet more, what has a heart and will. But affirm the premise? queer supposition That when devoured by fleas, giants are outdone! The rat would have had to transfer the maid in his care And call a cat; the cat, a wolf-hound; The hound, a wolf. Carried around By a force that was circular, Pilpay would bear the maid to the sun's infinitude Where the sun would blaze in endless beatitude. Well, return if we can, to metamorphosis; The Brahmin's sorcerer, as bearing upon this, Had not proved anything but man's foolhardihood, In fact had shown that the Brahmin had been wrong In supposing, and far too long, That man and worms and mice have in unison
Sister souls of identical origin—
By birth equally exempt
From change, whose diverse physiques, you’ll own,
Have gradually won
Reverence or contempt.
Explain how a lass so fair, incomparably made,
Could not earn for herself redress
And have married the sun. Fur tempted her caress.

Now mouse and girl—both have been well weighed
And we’ve found them, as we have compared their souls,
As far apart as opposite poles.
We are what we were at birth, and each trait has remained
In conformity with earth’s and with heaven’s logic:
Be the devil’s tool, resort to black magic,
None can diverge from the ends which Heaven foreordained.

(Book Nine, VII)
Notes
A NOTE ON THE NOTES

A willingness to satisfy contradictory objections to one’s manner of writing might turn one’s work into the donkey that finally found itself being carried by its masters, since some readers suggest that quotation marks are disruptive of pleasant progress; others, that notes to what should be complete are a pedantry or evidence of an insufficiently realized task. But since in anything I have written, there have been lines in which the chief interest is borrowed, and I have not yet been able to outgrow this hybrid method of composition, acknowledgements seem only honest. Perhaps those who are annoyed by provisos, detainments, and postscripts could be persuaded to take probity on faith and disregard the notes.

M. M.
Selected Poems

THE JERBOA (page 10)
Line 90: "There are little rats called jerboas which run on long hind­legs as thin as a match. The forelimbs are mere tiny hands." Dr. R. L. Ditmars, Strange Animals I Have Known (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), p. 274.

CAMELLIA SABINA (page 16)
The Abbé Berlése, Monographie du Genre Camellia (H. Cousin).
Line 13: The French are a cruel race, etc. J. S. Watson, Jr., informal comment.
Line 32: Bordeaux merchants have spent a great deal of trouble. Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Line 36: A food grape. In Vol. 1, The Epicure's Guide to France (Thornton Butterworth), Curnonsky and Marcel Rouff quote Monselet: "Everywhere else you eat grapes which have ripened to make wine. In France you eat grapes which have ripened for the table. They are a product at once of nature and of art." The bunch "is covered and uncovered alternately, according to the intensity of the heat, to gild the grapes without scorching them. Those which refuse to ripen—and there are always some—are delicately removed with special scissors, as are also those which have been spoiled by the rain."

Lines 43–44: *Mouse with a grape.* Photograph by Spencer R. Atkinson, *National Geographic Magazine,* February 1932. "Carrying a baby in her mouth and a grape in her right forepaw, a round-tailed wood rat took this picture."


**NO SWAN SO FINE (page 19)**

A pair of Louis XV candelabra with Dresden figures of swans belonging to Lord Balfour.


**THE PLUMET BASILISK (page 20)**

*Basiliscus americanus* Gray.

*In Costa Rica*

Line 11: *Guatavita Lake.* Associated with the legend of El Dorado, the Gilded One. The king, painted with gums and powdered with gold dust as symbolic of the sun, the supreme deity, was each year escorted by his nobles on a raft, to the center of the lake, in a ceremonial of tribute to the goddess of the lake. Here he washed off his golden coat by plunging into the water while those on the raft and on the shores chanted and threw offerings into the waters—emeralds or objects of gold, silver, or platinum. See A. Hyatt Verill, *Lost Treasure* (Appleton-Century, 1930).

Lines 13–15: Frank Davis, "The Chinese Dragon," *Illustrated London News,* August 23, 1930: "He is the god of Rain, and the Ruler of Rivers, Lakes, and Seas. For six months of the year he hibernates in the depths of the sea, living in beautiful palaces. . . . We learn from a book of the T’ang Dynasty that ‘it may cause itself to become visible or invisible at will, and it can become long or short, and coarse or fine, at its good pleasure.’ " A dragon "is either born a dragon (and true dragons have nine sons) or becomes one by transformation." There is a "legend of the carp that try to climb a certain cataract in the western hills. Those that succeed become dragons."

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The Malay Dragon
W. P. Pycraft, "The Malay Dragon and the 'Basilisks,'" Illustrated London News, February 6, 1932. The basilisk "will when alarmed drop to the water and scuttle along the surface on its hind legs. . . . An allied species (Deiropteryx) can not only run along the surface of the water, but can also dive to the bottom, and there find safety till danger is past."

The Tuatera
*The tuatera or ngarara.* In appearance a lizard—with characteristics of the tortoise; on the ribs, uncinate processes like a bird's; and crocodilian features—it is the only living representative of the order Rhynchocephalia. Shown by Captain Stanley Osborne in motion pictures. Cf. *Animals of New Zealand,* by F. W. Hutton and James Drummond (Christchurch, New Zealand: Whitcomb and Tombs, 1909).

In Costa Rica
Line 15: *A fox's bridge.* The south American vine suspension bridge.
Line 73: *A ten-ton chain.* A seven-hundred-foot chain of gold weighing more than ten tons was being brought from Cuzco, as part of the ransom for Atahualpa. When news of his murder reached those in command of the convoy, they ordered that the chain be hidden, and it has never been found. See A. Hyatt Verrill, *Lost Treasure.*

THE FRIGATE PELICAN (page 25)
*Fregata aquila.* The Frigate Pelican of Audubon.


Red-spotted orchids. The blood, supposedly, of natives slain by Pizarro.
Lines 37–39: "If I do well, I am blessed. . . ." Hindu saying.

NINE NECTARINES (page 29)
"The Chinese believe the oval peaches which are very red on one side, to be a symbol of long life. . . . According to the word of Chin-nouking, the peach Yu prevents death. If it is not eaten in time, it at least preserves the body from decay until the end of the world." Alphonse de Candolle, *Origin of Cultivated Plants* (Appleton, 1886; Hafner, 1959).
"Brown beaks and cheeks." Anderson Catalogue 2301, to Karl Freund collection sale, 1928.

New York Sun, July 2, 1932, The World Today, by Edgar Snow, from Soochow, China. "An old gentleman of China, whom I met when I first came to this country, volunteered to name for me what he called the 'six certainties.' He said: 'You may be sure that the clearest jade comes from Yarkand, the prettiest flowers from Szechuen, the most fragile porcelain from Kingtehchen, the finest tea from Fukien, the sheerest silk from Hangchow, and the most beautiful women from Soochow.'"

Line 41: Kylin (or Chinese unicorn). Frank Davis, Illustrated London News, March 7, 1931. "It has the body of a stag, with a single horn, the tail of a cow, horse's hoofs, a yellow belly, and hair of five colours."

TO A PRIZE BIRD (page 31)
(Published in Observations [New York, Dial Press, 1924]; not included in Collected Poems.)

Bernard Shaw.

IN THIS AGE OF HARD TRYING . . . (page 34)
Lines 2–3: "It is not the business of the gods to bake clay pots." Turgenev, Fathers and Sons.

POETRY (page 36)
Original version:

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes that can dilate, hair that can rise if it must, these things are important not because a high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what we cannot understand: the bat holding on upside down or in quest of something to eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the baseball fan, the statistician—nor is it valid to discriminate against "business documents and school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the poets among us can be "literalists of the imagination"—above insolence and triviality and can present for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, the raw material of poetry in all its rawness and that which is on the other hand genuine, you are interested in poetry.

Diary of Tolstoy, p. 84: "Where the boundary between prose and poetry lies, I shall never be able to understand. The question is raised in manuals of style, yet the answer to it lies beyond me. Poetry is verse: prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books."

"Literalists of the imagination." Yeats, Ideas of Good and Evil (A. H. Bullen, 1903), p. 182. "The limitation of his view was from the
very intensity of his vision; he was a too literal realist of imagina-
tion, as others are of nature; and because he believed that the
figures seen by the mind’s eye, when exalted by inspiration, were
‘eternal existences,’ symbols of divine essences, he hated every
grace of style that might obscure their lineaments.”

PEDANTIC LITERALIST (page 37)
All excerpts from Richard Baxter, The Saints’ Everlasting Rest (Lipp-
pincott, 1909).

IN THE DAYS OF PRISMATIC COLOR (page 41)
Lines 23–25: “Part of it was crawling,” etc. Nestor. Greek Anthology

PETER (page 43)
Cat owned by Miss Magdalen Hueber and Miss Maria Weniger.

PICKING AND ChoOSING (page 45)
Line 18: “Top of a diligence.” Preparatory schoolboy translating
Caesar. Recollected by Dr. E. H. Kellog.
Lines 25–26: “A right good salvo of barks,” “strong wrinkles.” Xeno-
phon’s Cynegeticus.

ENGLAND (page 46)

WHEN I BUY PICTURES (page 48)
Line 13: Silver fence. “A silver fence was erected by Constantine to
enclose the grave of Adam.” Literary Digest, January 5, 1918;
descriptive paragraph with photograph.
Line 18: “Lit by piercing glances . . .” A. R. Gordon, The Poets of the

THE LABORS OF HERCULES (page 53)
Line 25: “That the Negro is not brutal . . .” Reverend J. W. Darr, in a
sermon.
NEW YORK (page 54)

Line 4: *Fur trade.* In 1921 New York succeeded St. Louis as the center of the wholesale fur trade.

Line 8: “*As satin needlework . . .*” George Shiras, Third, *Forest and Stream*, March 1918; *The Literary Digest*, March 30, 1918. “About the middle of June 1916, a white fawn only a few days old was discovered in a thicket and brought to the hotel. Here, in the company of another fawn, it grew rapidly. During the earlier months this fawn had the usual row of white spots on back and sides, and although there was no difference between these and the body color, they were conspicuous in the same way that satin needlework in a single color may carry a varied pattern . . .”

Lines 18–19: *If the fur is not finer.* Frank Alvah Parsons: *The Psychology of Dress* (Doubleday, 1920) quotes Isabella, Duchess of Gonzaga: “I wish black cloth even if it cost ten ducats a yard. If it is only as good as that which I see other people wear, I had rather be without it.”

Line 25: “*Accessibility to experience.*” Henry James.

PEOPLE’S SURROUNDINGS (page 55)


Line 15: 1420 pages. Advertisement, *New York Times*, June 13, 1921: “*Paper—As Long as a Man, as Thin as a Hair.* One of the Lindenmeyr Lines was selected by Funk and Wagnalls Company, publishers of *The Literary Digest* and *The Standard Dictionary*, for their twelve-page pamphlet on India Paper. India Paper is so extremely thin that many grew fearful of the results when the unwieldy size, 45 x 65 inches, was mentioned. No mill ever made so large a sheet of India Paper; no printer ever attempted to handle it. But S. D. Warren Company produced the paper and Charles Francis Press printed it—printed it in two colors with perfect register. Warren’s India is so thin that 1420 pages make only one inch.”

design consists of single rose bushes in pearl white and pale black outline, posed on a field of light brown ivory so that the whole piece bears the likeness of the leopard's spots."

Line 31: Municipal bat roost. In San Antonio, Texas, to combat mosquitoes.

Line 34: Bluebeard's limestone tower at St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands.


Line 53: "As an escalator cuts the nerve of progress." Reverend J. W. Darr.


Snakes, Mongoose... (page 58)

Line 7: "The slight snake..." George Adam Smith, Expositor's Bible (1890).

Novices (page 60)

Line 5: "Is it the buyer or the seller who gives the money?" Anatole France, Petit Pierre (1918).


Line 15: "The Chinese objects of art and porcelain dispersed by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson on the 18th had that tinge of sadness which a reflective mind always feels; it is so little and so much." Arthur Hadyn, Illustrated London News, February 26, 1921.

Line 23: "The authors are wonderful people." Leigh Hunt's Autobiography.


Line 36: "Split like a glass against a wall." The Decameron, "Freaks of Fortune."


Lines 44, 47, 48: "Ocean of hurrying consonants," "with foam on its barriers," "crashing itself out." George Adam Smith, Expositor's Bible (1890).

**MARRIAGE (page 62)**

Statements that took my fancy which I tried to arrange plausibly.

Lines 14–15: "Of circular traditions..." Francis Bacon.

Lines 25–28: _Write simultaneously_. Miss _A_—will write simultaneously in three languages, English, German, and French, talking in the meantime. [She] takes advantage of her abilities in everyday life, writing her letters simultaneously with both hands; namely, the first, third, and fifth words with her left and the second, fourth, and sixth with her right hand. While generally writing outward, she is able as well to write inward with both hands." "Multiple Consciousness or Reflex Action of Unaccustomed Range," _Scientific American_, January 1922.

Line 42: "See her, see her in this common world." "George Shock."


Lines 65–66: "We were puzzled and we were fascinated, as if by something feline, by something colubrine." Philip Littell, reviewing Santayana's _Poems_ in _The New Republic_, March 21, 1923.

Lines 83–84: "Treading chasms..." Hazlitt: "Essay on Burke's Style."


Lines 101–102: "He experiences a solemn joy." "_A Travers Champs,_" by Anatole France in _Filles et Garçons_ (Hachette): "Le petit Jean comprend qu'il est beau et cette idée le pénètre d'un respect profond de lui-même... Il goûte une joie pieuse à se sentir devenu une idole."

Line 108: "It clothes me with a shirt of fire." Hagop Boghossian in a poem, "The Nightingale."


Line 125: "Marriage is a law, and the worst of all laws... a very trivial object indeed." Godwin.

Lines 146–152: "For love that will gaze an eagle blind..." Anthony Trollope, _Barchester Towers._
Lines 159–161: "No truth can be fully known..." Robert of Sorbonne.

Lines 167–168: "Darkeneth her countenance as a bear doth." Ecclesiasticus.

Line 175: "Married people often look that way." C. Bertram Hartmann.


Line 181: "Ahasuerus' tête-à-tête banquet." George Adam Smith, Expositor's Bible.

Line 183: "Good monster, lead the way." The Tempest.


Lines 198–199: "The sound of the flute..." A. Mitram Rihbany, The Syrian Christ (Houghton, Mifflin, 1916). Silence of women—"to an Oriental, this is as poetry set to music."

Lines 200–204: "Men are monopolists..." Miss M. Carey Thomas, Founder's address, Mount Holyoke, 1921: "Men practically reserve for themselves stately funerals, splendid monuments, memorial statues, membership in academies, medals, titles, honorary degrees, stars, garters, ribbons, buttons and other shining baubles, so valueless in themselves and yet so infinitely desirable because they are symbols of recognition by their fellow-craftsmen of difficult work well done."

Lines 207–208: "The crumbs from a lion's meal...": Amos iii, 12.

Translation by George Adam Smith, Expositor's Bible.

Line 211: "A wife is a coffin." Ezra Pound.


Lines 232–233: "Asiatics have rights; Europeans have obligations." Edmund Burke.

Lines 252–253: "Leaves her peaceful husband..." Simone Puget, advertisement entitled "Change of Fashion," English Review, June 1914: "Thus proceed pretty dolls when they leave their old home to renovate their frame, and dear others who may abandon their peaceful husband only because they have seen enough of him."

Lines 286–287: "Liberty and Union..." Daniel Webster (statue with inscription, Central Park, New York City).

AN OCTOPUS (page 71)
Quoted lines of which the source is not given are from Department of the Interior Rules and Regulations, The National Parks Portfolio (1941).

Line 6: Glass that will bend. Sir William Bell, of the British Institute of Patentees, has made a list of inventions which he says the world needs: glass that will bend; a smooth road surface that will not be slippery in wet weather; a furnace that will conserve ninety-five per cent of its heat; a process to make flannel unshrinkable; a noiseless aeroplane; a motor engine of one pound weight per horsepower; methods to reduce friction; a process to extract phosphorus from vulcanized india-rubber, so that it can be boiled up and used again; practical ways of utilizing the tides.


Lines 18–19: "Each like the shadow of the one beside it." Ruskin.


Lines 29, 62, 80, 112, 116, 195: "Conformed to an edge," "grottoes," "two pairs of trousers." "My old packer, Bill Peyto... would give one or two nervous yanks at the fringe and tear off the longer pieces, so that his outer trousers disappeared day by day from below upwards... (He usually wears two pairs of trousers)."


Line 93: "They make a nice appearance, don't they?" Overheard at the circus.

So noble and so fair.” Cardinal Newman, Historical Sketches.


The Greeks were emotionally sensitive.” W. D. Hyde, The Five Great Philosophies (Macmillan, 1911).

SEA UNICORNS AND LAND UNICORNS (page 77)

Mighty monoceroses,” etc. Spenser.

Disquiet shippers.” Violet A. Wilson, in Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour (Dutton, 1922), quotes Olaus Magnus, History of the Goths and Swedes, with regard to the sea serpent; says of Cavendish as a voyager, “He sailed up the Thames in splendour, the sails of his ship being cloth of gold and his seamen clad in rich silks. Many were the curiosities which the explorers brought home as presents for the ladies. The Queen naturally had first choice and to her fell the unicorn’s horn valued at a hundred thousand pounds, which became one of the treasures of Windsor.”

Sir John Hawkins “affirmed the existence of land unicorns in the forests of Florida, and from their presence deduced abundance of lions because of the antipathy between the two animals, so that ‘where the one is the other cannot be missing.’ ”

In politics, in trade.” Henry James, English Hours (1905).

Polished garlands,” “myrtle rods.” J. A. Symonds.

Apropos Queen Elizabeth’s dresses, “cobwebs, and knotts and mulberries.” “A peticoat embroidered all over slightly with snakes of Venice gold and silver and some O’s, with a faire border embroidered like seas, cloudes, and rainbowes.”

The long-tailed bear. C. H. Prodgers in Adventures in Bolivia (Dodd, Mead, 1922), p. 195, tells of a strange animal that he bought: “It was stuffed with long grass and cost me ten shillings, turning out eventually to be a bear with a tail. In his book on wild life, Rowland Ward says, ‘Amongst the rarest animals is a bear with a tail; this animal is known to exist, is very rare, and only to be found in the forests of Ecuador,’ and this was where the man who sold it to me said he got it.”

Agreeable terror.” “The lover of reading will derive agree-
able terror from Sir Bertram and The Haunted Chamber.” Leigh Hunt’s *Autobiography*.


Line 57: *An unmatched device*. Bulfinch’s *Mythology*, under “Unicorn.”

Line 65: Herodotus says of the phoenix, “I have not seen it myself except in a picture.”


As soft, and snowy, as that down
Adorns the Blow-ball’s frizzled crown;
As straight and slender as the crest,
Or antlet of the one-beam’d beast.

THE MONKEY PUZZLE (page 80)

Line 9: The Chile pine (*Araucaria imbricata*). Arauco, a part of southern Chile.


INJUDICIOUS GARDENING (page 81)


TO A SNAIL (page 85)

Line 1: “The very first grace of style is that which comes from compression.” *Demetrius on Style*, translated by W. Hamilton Fyfe (Heinemann, 1932).

“NOTHING WILL CURE THE SICK LION...” (page 86)

Carlyle, *Letters*.

TO THE PEACOCK OF FRANCE (page 87)

THE PAST IS THE PRESENT (page 88)
Lines 7–8: "Hebrew poetry is prose with a sort of heightened consciousness." Dr. E. H. Kellogg in Bible class, Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

"HE WROTE THE HISTORY BOOK" (page 89)
At the age of five or six, John Andrews, son of Dr. C. M. Andrews, said when asked his name, "My name is John Andrews; my father wrote the history book."

SOJOURN IN THE WHALE (page 90)
Lines 14–15: "Water in motion is far from level." Literary Digest.

SILENCE (page 91)
Lines 2–4: "My father used to say, 'Superior people never make long visits. When I am visiting, I like to go about by myself. I never had to be shown Longfellow's grave or the glass flowers at Harvard.'" Miss A. M. Homans.
Line 13: Edmund Burke, in Burke's Life, by Sir James Prior (1872). "'Throw yourself into a coach,' said he. 'Come down and make my house your inn.'"

What Are Years

RIGORISTS (page 96)
Sheldon Jackson (1834–1909). Dr. Jackson felt that to feed the Eskimo at government expense was not advisable, that whales having been almost exterminated, the ocean could not be restocked as a river can be with fish, and having prevailed on the government to authorize the importing of reindeer from Siberia, he made an expedition during the summer of 1891, procured sixteen reindeer—by barter—and later brought others. Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska, 1895; 1896; 1897; 1899, by Sheldon Jackson, General Agent of Education in Alaska. U.S. Education Bureau, Washington.
Lines 10–11: Creach'h d'Ouessant aeromaritime lighthouse, the first observable—as planned—by ships and planes approaching the Continent from North or South America.

Lines 14–15: “A man already harming.” Jean Calas, unjustly accused of murdering his son, and put to death, March 9, 1762. In vindicating him and his household, Voltaire “fut le premier qui s'élève en sa faveur. Frappé de l'impossibilité du crime dont on accusait Calas le père, ce fut lui qui engagea la veuve à venir demander justice au Roy....” The History of the Misfortunes of John Calas, a Victim to Fanaticism, to which is added a Letter from M. Calas to His Wife and Children; Written by M. De Voltaire. Printed by P. Williamson. Edinburgh, MDCCCLXXVI.

Line 17: Montaigne, captured by bandits and unexpectedly released, says, “I was told that I owed my deliverance to my bearing and the uncowed resoluteness of my speech, which showed that I was too good a fellow to hold up.”

Line 20: Littré (1801–1881) devoted the years 1839–1862 to translating and editing Hippocrates.


HE “DIGESTETH HARDE YRON” (page 99)

“The ostrich digesteth harde yron to preserve his health.” Lyly’s Euphues.

Line 5: The large sparrow. “Xenophon (Anabasis, I, 5, 2) reports many ostriches in the desert on the left . . . side of the middle Euphrates, on the way from North Syria to Babylonia.” George Jennison, Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome.

Lines 7, 17–18, 31: A symbol of justice, men in ostrich-skins, Leda’s egg, and other allusions. Berthold Laufer, “Ostrich Egg-shell Cups from Mesopotamia,” The Open Court, May 1926. “An ostrich plume symbolized truth and justice, and was the emblem of the goddess Ma-at, the patron saint of judges. Her head is adorned with an ostrich feather, her eyes are closed . . . as Justice is blindfolded.”


Line 44: *Eight pairs of ostriches.* See above: *Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome.*

Line 60: Sparrow-camel: στρουθοκαμήλος.

**THE STUDENT (page 101)**
(Published in *What Are Years* [New York: Macmillan, 1941]; not included in *Collected Poems.*)


Line 10: *The singing tree.* “Each leaf was a mouth, and every leaf joined in concert.” *Arabian Nights.*


Line 25: *Jack Bookworm:* see Goldsmith’s *The Double Transformation.*

Lines 33–34: *A variety of hero.* Emerson in *The American Scholar:* “There can be no scholar without the heroic mind”; “let him hold by himself; . . . patient of neglect, patient of reproach.”

Lines 37–39: *Wolf’s wool . . .* Edmund Burke, November 1781, in reply to Fox: “There is excellent wool on the back of a wolf and therefore he must be sheared. . . . But will he comply?”

Line 44: “*Gives his opinion . . .*” Henry McBride, *New York Sun,* December 12, 1931: “Dr. Valentiner . . . has the typical reserve of the student. He does not enjoy the active battle of opinion that invariably rages when a decision is announced that can be weighed in great sums of money. He gives his opinion firmly and rests upon that.”

**SMOOTH GNARLED CRAPÉ MYRTLE (page 103)**

Lines 16–18: “Bulbul is a broadly generic term like sparrow, warbler, bunting. . . . The legendary nightingale of Persia is the white-eared bulbul, *Pycnotus leucotis,* richly garbed in black velvet, trimmed with brown, white, and saffron yellow; and it is a true bulbul; . . . Edward FitzGerald told what Omar meant: that the
speech of man changes and coarsens, but the bulbul sings eternally in the "high-piping Pehlevi," the pure heroic Sanskrit of the ancient poets." J. I. Lawrence, *New York Sun*, June 23, 1934.


Lines 31-32: "Joined in friendship, crowned by love." Battersea box motto.


**BIRD-WITTED (page 105)**

Sir Francis Bacon: "If a boy be bird-witted."

**VIRGINIA BRITANNIA (page 107)**


Line 12: *A great sinner*. Inscription in Jamestown churchyard: "Here lyeth the body of Robert Sherwood who was born in the Parish of Whitechapel near London, a great sinner who waits for a joyful resurrection."

Lines 16-17: *Werewocomoco*. Powhatan’s capitol. Of the Indians of a confederacy of about thirty tribes of Algonquins occupying tidewater Virginia, Powhatan was war chief or head werowance. He presented a deer-skin mantle—now in the Ashmolean—to Captain Newport when crowned by him and Captain John Smith.

Lines 18-19: Ostrich and horseshoe. As crest in Captain John Smith’s coat of arms, the ostrich with a horseshoe in its beak—i.e., invincible digestion—reiterates the motto, *Vincere est vivere*.


Lines 108-110: The one-brick-thick wall designed by Jefferson on the grounds of the University of Virginia.

Lines 115-116: *Deer-fur crown*. "He [Arahatec] gave our Captaine his Crowne which was of Deare’s hayre, Dyed redd." *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, President of Virginia and Admiral of New England, 1580-1631*; with Introduction by A. G. Bradley. Arber’s Reprints.
Line 132: *The lark*. The British Empire Naturalists' Association has found that the hedge sparrow sings seven minutes earlier than the lark.

**Spenser's Ireland** *(page 112)*

Lines 5, 7-8, 63-64: "Every name is a tune," "It is torture," "Your trouble is their trouble." See "Ireland: The Rock Whence I Was Hewn" by Don Byrne, *National Geographic Magazine*, March 1927.

Lines 10-11: *Venus' mantle*. Footnote, *Castle Rackrent*: "The cloak, or mantle, as described by Thady is of high antiquity. See Spenser's 'View of the State of Ireland.'"

Line 12: *The sleeves*. In Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, as edited by Professor Morley, Thady Quirk says, "I wear a long great-coat . . . ; it holds on by a single button round my neck, cloak fashion."

Line 39: "The sad-yellow-fly, made with the buzzard's wing" and "the shell-fly, for the middle of July." Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*.


Line 58: *Earl Gerald*. From a lecture by Padraic Colum.

**Four Quartz Crystal Clocks** *(page 115)*

Bell Telephone Company leaflet, 1939, "‘The World’s Most Accurate Clocks.’ In the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New York, in a ‘time vault’ whose temperature is maintained within 1/100 of a degree, at 41° centigrade, are the most accurate clocks in the world—the four quartz crystal clocks. . . . When properly cut and inserted in a suitable circuit, they will control the rate of electric vibration to an accuracy of one part in a million . . . . When you call MElridian 7-1212 for correct time you get it every 15 seconds."

Line 13-16: "Appeler à l'aide d'un camouflage ces instruments faits pour la vérité qui sont la radio, le cinéma, la presse?" "J'ai traversé voilà un an des pays arabes où l'on ignorait encore que Napoléon était mort." Jean Giraudoux, "Une allocation radiodiffusée de M. Giraudoux aux Françaises à propos de Sainte Catherine," *Figaro*, November 1939.

Line 45: *The cannibal Chronos*. Rhea, mother of Zeus, hid him from Chronos who "devoured all his children except Jupiter (air),
Neptune (water), and Pluto (the grave). These, Time cannot consume.” Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (1923).

THE PANGOLIN (page 117)
Lines 65–66: A sailboat was the first machine. See F. L. Morse, Power: Its Application from the 17th Dynasty to the 20th Century.

Nevertheless

ELEPHANTS (page 128)
Data utilized in these stanzas, from a lecture-film entitled Ceylon, the Wondrous Isle by Charles Brooke Elliott. And Cicero, deploring the sacrifice of elephants in the Roman Games, said they “aroused both pity and a feeling that the elephant was somehow allied with man.” George Jennison, Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome, p. 52.

Collected Later

THE ICOSASphere (page 143)
The Mellon Institute is responsible for a steel globe of a design invented by J. O. Jackson, which “solves a problem which has long baffled draughtsmen and engineers. Anybody who has tried to wrap a rubber ball without wrinkling or waste . . . will understand the nature of the problem. Steel, like wrapping-paper, is delivered in rectangles. . . . Mr. Jackson discovered that Plexiglass . . . has the same plastic flow as steel and . . . will wrinkle back into its exact original shape if placed under proper heat. So he moulded a four-inch sphere out of flat Plexiglass, studied the pattern and worked out a design whereby ‘twenty equilateral triangles—the greatest number of regular sides geometrically possible—could be grouped

Lines 1-4: "In Buckinghamshire hedgerows...." Statement by E. McKnight Kauffer.

Line 7: Someone’s fortune. The $30,000,000 snuff fortune of a Mrs. Henrietta Edwardina Schaefer Garrett, who died childless and without a will in 1930. "Orphan’s Court, Philadelphia, has reviewed more than 25,990 claims for the fortune.... Three persons were reportedly slain in quarrels; ten went to jail for perjury. ... A dozen or more were fined, six died and two killed themselves." New York Times, December 15, 1949.

"KEEPING THEIR WORLD LARGE" (page 145)
"All too literally, their flesh and their spirit are our shield." The Reverend James Gordon Gilkey, New York Times, June 7, 1944.

VORACITIES AND VERITIES... (page 148)
Line 2: "Grass-lamp glow." V. Locke-Ellis.
Line 7: "The elephant’s crooked trumpet doth write."

"Elephants
... Yea (if the Grecians doe not mis-recite)
With’s crooked trumpet he doth sometimes write."

Du Bartas: "The Sixth Day of the First Weeke."

Dance Index–Ballet Caravan Inc.: Clowns, Elephants, and Ballerinas, June 1946.


Line 12: With love undying. As the closing words of the sixth chapter of Ephesians, the phrase lingered in my mind. I wrote this piece, came upon Mr. V. Locke-Ellis’s "grass-lamp glow," substituted it for my less good equivalent; upon rereading his poems later, I noticed the phrase "with love undying," used by him also.

PROPRIETY (page 149)
Line 16: Bach’s Solfeggietto. Karl Philipp Emanuel’s (C minor).

ARMOR’S UNDERMINING MODESTY (page 151)
Line 11: Hacked things out with hairy paws. "The very oldest relics of man’s early ancestors are crudely chipped stone. He gripped them
in his hairy paw and used them to hammer and chop with."


Line 13: Arise for it is day. Motto of The John Day Company.


Line 27: Ducs. "In England, in the Saxon times, the officers or commanders of armies, after the old Roman fashion, were called dukes, without any addition, but after the Norman conquest, the title was no longer used; till, in 1538, Edward III created his son, who was first called the Black Prince, Duke of Cornwall. . . . After Edward the Black Prince, more were made. . . . The Black Prince was created by a wreath on his head, a ring on his finger, and a silver rod." The Book of the Ranks and Dignities of British Society, attributed in the press and elsewhere to Charles Lamb (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924).

Like a Bulwark

APPARITION OF SPLENDOR (page 158)

Lines 16–17: "Train supported by porcupines . . ." Oliver Goldsmith in one of his essays refers to "a blue fairy with a train eleven yards long, supported by porcupines."


THEN THE ERMIN (page 160)

Line 2: " . . . spotted." Clitophon; "his device was the Ermion, with a speech that signified, Rather dead than spotted." Sidney's Arcadia, Book I, Chapter 17, paragraph 4. Cambridge Classics, Volume I, 1912; edited by Albert Feuillerat.


Line 18: Lavater. John Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), a student of physiography. His system includes morphological, anthropological, anatomical, histrionical, and graphical studies. Kurt Seligmann,
Tom Fool at Jamaica (page 162)

Line 6: mule and jockey. A mule and jockey by "Giulio Gomez 6 años" from a collection of drawings by Spanish school children: Solicited on behalf of a fund-raising committee for Republican Spain, sold by Lord and Taylor; given to me by Miss Louise Crane.


Air: Sentir avec ardeur

Il faut dire en deux mots
    Ce qu'on veut dire;
    Les longs propos
    Sont sots.

Il faut savoir lire
Avant que d'écrire,
Et puis dire en deux mots
    Ce qu'on veut dire.
    Les longs propos
    Sont sots.

Il ne faut pas toujours conter,
    Citer,
    Dater,
Mais écouter.
Il faut éviter l'emploi
Du moi, du moi,
Voici pourquoi:

    Il est tyrannique,
    Trop académique;
        L'ennui, l'ennui
    Marche avec lui.
Je me conduis toujours ainsi
        Ici,
        Aussi
    J'ai réussi.

Il faut dire en deux mots
    Ce qu'on veut dire;
    Les longs propos
    Sont sots.

Ted Atkinson said, "He's a real good horse,... real good," and paused a moment. "But I think he ranks only second to Tom Fool. ... I prefer Tom Fool. ... He makes a more sustained effort and makes it more often." Reminded that Citation could make eight or ten spurts in a race, "That's it," said Ted enthusiastically. "It's the mark of a champion to spurt 100 yards, settle back and spurt another 100 yards, giving that extra burst whenever needed. From what I've seen of Tom Fool, I'd call him a 'handy horse.' " He mentioned two others. "They had only one way of running. But Tom Fool. ..." Then I saw a picture of Tom Fool (New York Times, April 1, 1952) with Ted Atkinson in the saddle and felt I must pay him a slight tribute; got on with it a little way, then realized that I had just received an award from Youth United for a Better Tomorrow and was worried indeed. I deplore gambling and had never seen a race. Then in the Times for July 24, 1952, I saw a column by Joseph C. Nichols about Frederic Capossela, the announcer at Belmont Park, who said when interviewed, "Nervous? No, I'm never nervous.... I'll tell you where it's tough. The straight-away at Belmont Park, where as many as twenty-eight horses run at you from a point three quarters of a mile away. I get 'em though, and why shouldn't I? I'm relaxed, I'm confident and I don't bet."

In the way of a sequel, "Money Isn't Everything" by Arthur Daley (New York Times, March 1, 1955): "There's a constant fascination to thoroughbreds," said Ted, "... they're so much like people. ... My first love was Red Hay ... a stout-hearted little fellow ... he always tried, always gave his best. [Mr. Daley: 'The same description fits Atkinson.'] There was Devil Diver, ... the mare Snow Goose. One of my big favorites ... crazy to get going. ... But once she swung into stride ... you could ride her with shoe-laces for reins. ... And there was Coaltown. ... There were others of course, but I never met one who could compare with Tom Fool, my favorite of favorites. He had the most personality of all. ... Just to look at him lit a spark. He had an intelligent head, an intelligent look and, best of all, was intelligent. He had soft eyes, a wide brow and—gee, I'm sounding like a lovesick boy. But I think he had the handsomest face of any horse I ever had anything to do with. He was a great horse but I was fond of him not so much for
what he achieved as for what he was.' With that the sprightly Master Theodore fastened the number plate on his right shoulder and headed for the paddock."


Line 31: Ozzie Smith. Osborne Smith, a Negro chanter and drummer who improvised the music for Ian Hugo's Aï-Yé.


THE WEB ONE WEAVES OF ITALY (page 164)
Stanzas 1 and 2 mainly quotation from "Festivals and Fairs for the Tourist in Italy" by Mitchell Goodman, New York Times, April 18, 1954.


THE STAFF OF AEscULAPIUS (page 165)
Dr. Grace of Grace's Clinic, Brooklyn, decries the need for hospitals and says that I imply it, but the intervention of hospital service for myself and others I cherish, in need of trained skill, apologizes for my allegiance.

Line 11: Time, March 29, 1954, article on the Salk vaccine.


THE SYCAMORE (page 167)
Lines 15–16: Nine she-camel-hairs. Imami, the Iranian miniaturist, draws "with a brush made of nine hairs from a newborn she camel and a pencil sharpened to a needle point. . . . He was decorated
twice by the late Riza Shah; once for his miniatures and once for his rugs.” *New York Times*, March 5, 1954.

**ROSEMARY (page 168)**

Line 17: “*Hath a dumb language.*” Sir Thomas More (see below).

According to a Spanish legend, rosemary flowers—originally white—turned blue when the Virgin threw her cloak over a rosemary bush, while resting on the flight into Egypt. There is in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, a manuscript sent to Queen Philippa of Hainault by her mother, written by “a clerk of the school of Salerno” and translated by “danyel bain.” The manuscript is devoted entirely to the virtues of rosemary, which, we are told, never grows higher than the height of Christ; after thirty-three years the plant increases in breadth but not in height. See “Rosemary of Plesant Savour,” by Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *The Spectator*, July 7, 1930.

**STYLE (page 169)**


Line 10: *Etchebaster*. Pierre Etchebaster, a machine-gunner in the First World War; champion of France in chistera (jai alai), pala, and mainnues. He took up court tennis in 1922, won the American championship in 1928, and retired in 1954. (*New York Times*, February 13, 1954 and February 24, 1955.) *New York Times*, January 19, 1956: “Pierre Etchebaster, retired world champion, and Frederick S. Moseley won the pro-amateur handicap court tennis tournament at the Racquet and Tennis Club yesterday. . . . The score was 5-6, 6-5, 6-5. Moseley, president of the club, scored the last point of the match with a railroad ace. Johnson and McClintock had pulled up from 3-5 to 5-all in this final set.”


Line 27: *Rosario’s*. Rosario Escudero, one of the company of Vicente Escudero, but not related to him.

**LOGIC AND “THE MAGIC FLUTE” (page 171)**

*The Magic Flute*. Colorcast by NBC Opera Theater, January 15, 1956

Line 11: *Precious wentletrap*. n. [D. *wenteltrap* a winding staircase; cf. 

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Line 25: Banish sloth. “Banish sloth; you have defeated Cupid’s bow,” Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN (page 173)**

Lines 1–2: *Blessed is the man . . .* Psalm 1:1.

Line 4: “Characteristically intemperate.” Campaign manager’s evaluation of an attack on the Eisenhower Administration.


Lines 14–15: *‘Would’ . . .*” “President Eisenhower Vetoes Farm Compromise [Agricultural Act of 1956],” *New York Times*, April 17, 1956: “We would produce more of certain crops at a time when we need less of them . . . If natural resources are squandered on crops that we cannot eat or sell, all Americans lose.”


O to Be a Dragon

O TO BE A DRAGON *(page 177)*


VALUES IN USE *(page 181)*

Philip Rahv, July 30, 1956, at the Harvard Summer School Conference on the Little Magazine, Alston Burr Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts, gave as the standard for stories accepted by the *Partisan Review* "maturity, plausibility, and the relevance of the point of view expressed." "A work of art must be appraised on its own ground; we produce values in the process of living, do not await their historic progress in history." See *Partisan Review*, Fall 1956.

HOMETOWN PIECE FOR MESSRS.

ALSTON AND REESE *(page 182)*


Line 4: Buzzie Bavasi. "The policemen understood they were to let the players in first, but Brooklyn officials—Walter O'Malley, Arthur (Red) Patterson, Buzzie Bavasi and Fresco Thompson—wanted the writers let in along with the players. This, they felt, was a different occasion and nobody should be barred." Roscoe McGowen, New York Times, October 5, 1955. E. J. Bavasi: Vice President of the Dodgers. William J. Briordy, "Campanella Gets Comeback Honors," New York Times, November 17, 1955.

Line 6: "How did you feel . . ." [Joe Collins to Johnny Podres]: "The secret of your success was the way you learned to control your change-up. . . .' 'I didn't use the change-up much in the seventh game of the world series,' said Johnny. 'The background was bad for it. So I used a fast ball that really had a hop on it.' . . . 'Hey, Johnny,' said Joe, 'how did you feel when Amoros made that catch?' 'I walked back to the mound,' said Podres, 'and I kept saying to myself, 'everything keeps getting better and better.' '" Arthur Daley, "Sports of the Times: Just Listening," New York Times, January 17, 1956.


Line 16: "Four hundred feet . . ." "Gilliam opened the game with a push bunt for a hit, and with one out Duke Snider belted the ball more than 400 feet to the base of the right-center-field wall. Gilliam came home but had to return to base when the ball bounced high into the stands for a ground-rule double." Roscoe McGowen, "Dodgers against Pittsburgh." Duke Snider "hit twenty-three homers in Ebbets Field for four successive years." John Drebinger, New York Times, October 1, 1956.

Preacher Roe’s number. 28. Venerated left-handed pitcher for Brooklyn who won 22 games in the season of 1951.

“He’s a Jake of All Trades—Jake Pitler, the Dodgers’ first-base coach and cheer-leader.” Joseph Sheehan, New York Times, September 16, 1956, “Dodgers Will Have a Night for Jake”—an honor accepted two years ago “with conditions”: that contributions be for Beth-El Hospital Samuel Strausberg Wing. Keepsake for the “Night”: a replica of the plaque in the Jake Pitler Pediatric Playroom (for underprivileged children).

Don Demeter. Center fielder, a newcomer from Fort Worth, Texas. “Sandy Amoros whacked an inside-the-park homer—the third of that sort for the Brooks this year—and Don Demeter, . . . hit his first major league homer, also his first hit, in the eighth inning.” Roscoe McGowen, New York Times, September 20, 1956.


ENOUGH (page 185)

On May 13, 1957—the 350th anniversary of the landing at Jamestown of the first permanent English settlers in North America—three United States Air Force super sabre jets flew non-stop from London to Virginia. They were the Discovery, the Godspeed, and the Susan Constant—christened respectively by Lady Churchill, by Mrs. Whitney (wife of Ambassador John Hay Whitney), and by Mrs. W. S. Morrison (wife of the speaker of the House of Commons). New York Times, May 12 and 13, 1957.

The colonists entered Chesapeake Bay, having left England on New Year’s Day, almost four months before, “fell upon the earth, embraced it, clutched it to them, kissed it, and, with streaming eyes, gave thanks unto God . . .” Paul Green, “The Epic of Old Jamestown,” New York Times Magazine, March 31, 1957.

If present faith mend partial proof. Dr. Charles Peabody, chaplain at Yale, 1896, author of Mornings in College Chapel, said past gains are not gains unless we in the present complete them.

MELCHIOR VULPIUS (page 188)

“And not only is the great artist mysterious to us but is that to himself. The nature of the power he feels is unknown to him, and yet he

Line 11: Mouse-skin-bellows’-breath. “Bird in a Bush . . . The bird flies from stem to stem while he warbles. His lungs, as in all automatons, consist of tiny bellows constructed from mouse-skin.” Daniel Alain, Réalités, April 1957, page 58.

No better than a “Withered Daffodil” (page 189)
Line 2: “Slow, Slow, fresh Fount” by Ben Jonson, from Cynthia’s Revels.
Line 11: A work of art. Sir Isaac Oliver’s miniature on ivory of Sir Philip Sidney. (Collection at Windsor.)

In the Public Garden (page 190)
Originally entitled “A Festival.” Read at the Boston Arts Festival, June 15, 1958.
Line 27: “My work be praise . . .” Psalm 23—traditional Southern tune, arranged by Virgil Thomson.
Line 38: “Self-discipline.” “President Eisenhower attributed to Clemenceau . . . the observation, ‘Freedom is nothing . . . but the opportunity for self-discipline.’ . . . ‘And that means the work that you yourselves lay out for yourselves is worthwhile doing—doing without hope of reward.’” New York Times, May 6, 1958.

Saint Nicholas (page 196)
Line 3: A chameleon. See photograph in Life, September 15, 1958, with
a letter from Dr. Doris M. Cochran, curator of reptiles and amphibians, National Museum, Washington, D.C.

FOR FEBRUARY 14TH (page 198)
Line 2: "Some interested law..." From a poem to M. Moore by Marguerite Harris.

COMBAT CULTURAL (page 199)

LEONARDO DA VINCI'S (page 201)

Tell Me, Tell Me

GRANITE AND STEEL (page 205)
Line 7: Caged Circe. See Meyer Berger's story (retold in Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol) of a young reporter who in the 1870s was unaccountably drawn to climb one of the cables to the top of the bridge's Manhattan tower, became spellbound, couldn't come down, and cried for help; none came till morning.
Line 9: "O catenary curve" The curve formed by a rope or cable hanging freely between two fixed points of support. "Engineering problems of the greatest strength, greatest economy, greatest safety... are all solved by the same curve," John Roebling said. (Trachtenberg, p. 69.)
IN LIEU OF THE LYRE (page 206)
Written in response to a request from Stuart Davis, president of the Advocate, for a poem.
Line 17: Gratia sum. Bewick tailpiece, “a trickle of water from a rock, underlined by a heart carved on the rock,” p. 53, Memoir of Thomas Bewick Written by Himself (Centaur Classics).

THE MIND, INTRACTABLE THING (page 208)

DREAM (page 209)
Suggested by Jerome S. Shipman’s comment in Encounter, July 1965.

OLD AMUSEMENT PARK (page 210)
Port Authority photograph given to me by Brendan Gill.

AN EXPEDIENT—LEONARDO DA VINCI’S—
AND A QUERY (page 212)
See Sir Kenneth Clark: Leonardo da Vinci: An Account of His Development as an Artist. “Continuous energy. If everything was continuous in movement it could not be controlled by mathematics in which Leonardo had placed his faith.”
Lines 31–36: “Sad” . . . “Tell me if anything at all has been done?”
Dr. Henry W. Noss, Associate Professor of History, New York University, quoting Leonardo da Vinci in a lecture.
W. S. LANDOR (page 214)
See introductory note by Havelock Ellis to Landor's Imaginary Conversations.

TO A GIRAFFE (page 215)
Ennis Rees summarizes the Odyssey, I feel, when he finds expressed in it the conditional nature of existence, the consolations of the metaphysical: the journey from sin to redemption.

ARTHUR MITCHELL (page 220)
Mr. Mitchell danced the role of Puck in Lincoln Kirstein's and George Balanchine's City Center production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

RESCUE WITH YUL BRYNNER (page 227)

CARNEGIE HALL: RESCUED (page 229)

TELL ME, TELL ME (page 231)
Line 9: Lord Nelson's revolving diamond rosette. In the museum at Whitehall.

Hitherto Uncollected

LOVE IN AMERICA? (page 240)
Line 5: The Minotaur demanded a virgin to devour once a year.

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Line 6: Midas, who had the golden touch, was inconvenienced when eating or picking things up.

Lines 10–11: Unamuno said that what we need as a cure for unruly youth is “nobility that is action.”

Lines 13–15: *without brazenness or bigness* . . . Winston Churchill: “Modesty becomes a man.”

**TIPPOO’S TIGER (page 241)**


See Keats’s *The Cap and Bells*.

“Tippoo” is the original form of the name used in the eighteenth century; “Tipu” is the accepted modern form.

Lines 17–20: *a vast toy, a curious automaton* . . . A mechanical tiger “captured by the British at Seringapatan in 1799, when Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore in Southern India, was defeated and killed.” Mildred Archer.


**Selections from**

**The Fables of La Fontaine**

**THE LION IN LOVE (page 246)**

Dedication: *Mademoiselle de Sévigné*. Later Mme. Grignan; daughter of Mme. de Sévigné. Many of Mme. de Sévigné’s letters were addressed to her.
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Have you time for a story
He “Digesteth Harde Yron”
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Head and Tail of the Serpent, The
Here we have thirst
Hero, The

300)
Hid by the august foliage and fruit

His Shield

Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese

Hurry, worry, unwary

"I am not treacherous, callous, jealous, superstitious,
I attended school and I liked the place—
I don't like diamonds;
I have a friend who would give a price for those long fingers all of
one length—

I May, I Might, I Must

I should like to see that country's tiles, bedrooms,
I think, in connection with this weeping elm,
I, too, dislike it.

Icosasphere, The

If "compression is the first grace of style,"
If external action is effete
If I, like Solomon, . . .
If it is unpermissible, in fact fatal
If yellow betokens infidelity,
If you will tell me why the fen
"In America," began
In blazing driftwood
"In Buckinghamshire hedgerows

In Distrust of Merits
In Lieu of the Lyre

In "taking charge of your possessions when you saw them" you
became a golden jay.

In the Days of Prismatic Color
In the Public Garden

In This Age of Hard Trying, Nonchalance Is Good and

In this camera shot,
Injudicious Gardening
"It spreads," the campaign—carried on
It was patience

I've Been Thinking . . .

Jellyfish, A
Jerboa, The

"Keeping Their World Large"

Labors of Hercules, The
Leonardo da Vinci's
Light Is Speech
Like a Bulwark
Lion in Love, The

Literature is a phase of life. If one is afraid of it,

Logic and "The Magic Flute"

Look at Jonah embarking from Joppa, deterred by

Love in America?

Make a fuss
Mademoiselle—goddess instead—
Man looking into the sea,

Marriage

Married Amiss
Melchior Vulpius

Messengers much like ourselves? Explain it.

"Millennium," yes; "pandemonium"!

Mind, Intractable Thing, The

Mind Is an Enchanting Thing, The

Monkey Puzzle, The

Monkeys, The

Moral and outward charm are at odds as things go,

Mouse Metamorphosed into a Maid, The

My father used to say,

Nevertheless

New York

Nine Nectarines

No Better Than a "Withered Daffodil"

"No man may him hyde

No Swan So Fine

"No water so still as the

"Nothing Will Cure the Sick Lion but to Eat an Ape"

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Trying to open locked doors with a sword, threading
Up winding stair,
Uplifted and waved till immobilized

Values in Use
Virginia Britannia
Visible, invisible,
Voracities and Verities Sometimes Are Interacting

W. S. Landor
"We saw reindeer
Web One Weaves of Italy, The
What Are Years?
What is our innocence,
Whatever it is, it's a passion—
When a tyrant wed, folk gave way to excess
When I Buy Pictures
Where there is personal liking we go.
With innocent wide penguin eyes, three
Wood-Weasel, The

You suit me well; for you can make me laugh,
You use your mind
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