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LETTER TO WITTER BYNNER UPON AN  
ANNIVERSARY OF HART CRANE'S DEATH

Old poet, old sensitive,  
we have been lost, you and I,  
in a wrath of years since

*"I saw the marvelous long hands reach up  
As if to place an accent in the wind;  
I saw the water darken on his face  
And knew the sea would not divide for him."*

You had been with him in Mexico,  
and you wrote me afterwards:

*"I saw much of him in Taxco  
and am glad for his release.  
He had to go."*

Do you remember, old poet?  
Did he walk the little time-smooth streets  
and watch the silversmiths of Taxco  
make measured clamor of their intricate art?  
Did he see them shape on a battered mandrel  
whorls of springing silver,  
astonishing projections of those hearts  
most captive in the turgid flesh  
under a total sun?

Did he observe the marvelous hands,  
the quick thick fingers, the intelligent thumb,  
sorting beauty,  
shaping the malleable ultimate,  
rubbing the polished accents  
on poems of heavy silver?

Did he know how the silversmiths dealt with  
 absolutes,  
 values weighed, images carefully consummated,  
 and how they kept their eyes on their work,  
 there against the cool adobe in the hot shade?  
 Sweet Christ, old poet!  
 Couldn't he know that?  
 Didn't he see?

Richard Curry Esler

## AGAMEMNON AT THE THRESHOLD

*"Woman, I have been gone ten years and now  
 It seems you are about to talk another ten."*

11. 914-916

A crowd was listening with hands to measure  
 This great fondness. I could not move or speak,  
 For weight of all her words, her liquid ways  
 Held me like chains. Relentless earrings tolled  
 Curfew across her shoulders. When she turned  
 She pointed praise as I would point a dagger.  
 A dull persistence in her breathless smile  
 Transfixed my eyes. Flank after flank her prose  
 Closed in on me. This was my fate, it cried,  
 A tongue to cut me down. "Enter," it said,  
 "Your palace, dear." I knew I was a soldier  
 Confusing love with hate. Pressed now by brightness  
 Of phrases in the daylight of her flesh  
 Blowing its bangles and its windy silk  
 Around me, I thought of Troy again  
 And death not life beneath the falling walls.

David Posner

**MY GRANDFATHER**

Like a stalk of ripened corn he fell, bearded,  
 An old man of uncertain summers. For who  
 Could reckon by the family clock the weight  
 Of time he bore, a child of village birth  
 In Czarist lands no longer to be touched,  
 Its wormy letters sought excitedly,  
 On map or spinning globe. And so they spoke—  
 He lying low with bag of holy soil  
 Beside the bearded cheek—of marriages  
 And births, of who was old with whom and when,  
 Comparing scores and totalling up the measure  
 Of his length in time, and none could agree  
 Except that, silent on his age, he was  
 An old man.

Time drew him to her lips  
 One somber morning and he lived. No father's  
 Pride accosted him, his mother's joy  
 Was tinged with tears, and Michael the Son of  
 Michael  
 They called him, reviving in name the youthful dead  
 That sired a son he never lived to see.  
 In poverty he grew along the crooked  
 Village street and neighbor woods and meadow,  
 Dancing his dawn in fields among the grazing  
 Goats below whose bellied bags he laughed  
 With pirate lips and mouth. At five, the backless,  
 Squirring bench and scarred, unpainted table,  
 Chant of prayers, singsong lilt of throated  
 Youngsters spreading like a golden cloud  
 About the home-turned-school; Genesis tales  
 Of mighty beginnings, tales of woe, tales  
 Of wonder, splendor-scattering marvels, bearing  
 A child through rainbow arch beneath a screaming  
 Sun to storied land of sand and salty

Sea, of milk and flowing honey; land  
Of Fathers, land of Kings, land of camelled  
Caravans, of spear and jawbone billy,  
Of marshalled tribes and trumpet blares, and over  
All the brooding warmth of the fire-cloud God.

At twelve began his wanderings—his mother  
Dead—and like a cloak too small to wear,  
Too good to throw away, he passed from hand  
To hand in Talmud towns, night guardian  
Of sacred halls where many a time he lay  
Adrift in sleep amid the groaning wreckage  
Of wandering beggars, homeless old men, harmless  
Madmen, and pauper students like himself.  
Until one day, led by parents not  
His own, he stood beside the veiled and virgin  
Bride, placed the simple silver ring,  
Sipped the sweet red wine, and crushed—a groom  
At fifteen—the lucky brandy glass beneath  
His hammering heel. Thus my genesis,  
And my grandfather, before I ever knew him

As the bearded, stern-eyed man in dull  
Black kaftan, dusty derby, and high-button shoes,  
Swaying before the book-lined shelf in whispered  
Prayer, or leading—wrapped in yellowed, black-  
striped

Shawl before the burning candles—holiday  
Hymns of praise and glory that rose above  
The rocking bodies torn with song and spun  
Like a sun in the dark of doom until the last  
Note rang in his throat, and the echoes slapped at  
wall

And window, beat at skin and bone, and fled  
Tingling through the swelling pipes of blood.  
As Michael the Scribe he was known to all;  
Of zealots, the chief; of gad-flies, a sharp and busy

Stinger. And monarch of the Paschal board,  
He ruled in white gown, eased in pillows, with golden  
Goblet, festive plate of roasted egg,  
Herbs, kneaded heap of mortared apple,  
Nuts and wine, shank bone, and triple tier  
Of mottled matzo—chanting tales of miracle  
Might, of swarming frogs and clouds of locusts,  
Boiling plagues and sword-drawn angel sweeping  
Like gusts of desert wind across the bloodless  
Thresholds of sleep-enfolded Egypt. And first  
Among clowns on Purim eve, he strutted in carnival  
Comedy across the synagogue tables, kettle  
Rattling at his waist, head turbaned in towels,  
And songs splashing the laughing, hand-clapped air.  
Until Time ran grey-stained fingers through  
His bristling beard and laid a pinching hand  
Upon his heart. And slowly he walked, with pride  
As bright as fire in his unbowed back and deep  
Brown eyes, in which, when seated at the family  
Table, stars of laughter twinkled as he  
Conjured with a wizard's craft a favorite  
Scene or raised, as in a magic mirror,  
A living image through his mimic art.  
Thus he lived, jealous of his rights as man  
And calling no one master but his God,  
Till caught of a cold, he slept and would not wake.

I shall not see him more, this life or next,  
I do believe. Our paths had parted long  
Before: I to till a stony, foreign  
Soil; he to tend his plot of ancient green,  
Transplanting in alien earth the oak of his elders.  
So on this dying day, I mourn, not him,  
Unpinning to the dust his shirt of flesh,  
But the fallen seed that lies unrooted, sapless  
And alone, in the shadow of that mighty tree.

Samuel A. Weiss

**LIED IM SCHUTT**

Und als ich über die Brücke kam,  
Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über die tote Brücke kam,

Da stand mein Vater und drohte mir,  
Als wollt er sagen: Das dank ich dir!  
Und suchte und suchte, was er nicht fand,  
Und hob gegen mich die alte Hand,  
Der ich im Wege stand.

Und als ich über die Strasse kam,  
Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über die tote Strasse kam,  
Da stand meine Mutter und sah mich an  
Und huschte und wischte hin und her,  
Als wenn's in den alten Stuben wär,  
Und weinte sehr.

Und als ich über den Torweg kam,  
Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über den toten Torweg kam,  
Da stand mein Bruder und lachte mich aus  
Und war von den Flammen ganz klein und kraus  
Und sang von unsrer Kindheit ein Lied,  
Von der Zeiten Glück und Unterschied  
Ein trauriges Lied.

Und als ich über den Garten kam,  
Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über den toten Garten kam,  
Da standen meine Schwestern drei  
Und fragten, ob ich es wirklich sei  
Oder nur die Vergangenheit,  
Und trugen alle ein schwarzes Kleid  
Wegen der toten Vergangenheit.

**SOLDIER'S RETURN**

And as I crossed the well-known bridge,  
    Rubble, only rubble,  
As I crossed the dead bridge,

There stood my father, his menacing face a livid hue,  
He seemed to say, "I owe this to you!"  
He sought and sought what was not there,  
He shook his fists at me in despair  
While I stood there.

And as I came to the well-known street,  
    Rubble, only rubble,  
As I came to the dead street:  
There stood my mother and looked at me,  
She looked—but did she really see?—  
She hustled and bustled and polished and swept  
As in her old rooms, so spotlessly kept,  
And wept.

And as I entered the entrance hall,  
    Rubble, only rubble,  
As I entered the dead hall:  
There stood my brother with a taunting smile,  
He was tiny and crisped by the fire,  
And whispered and pispered a children's rhyme  
About happiness and golden times,  
A heartbreaking rhyme.

And as I went to our garden then,  
    Rubble, only rubble,  
As I went to our dead garden then:  
There stood my sisters, my sisters three  
And asked if it were really me  
Or only the past.  
They were in mourning, and stared aghast  
At me? At the past?

Und als ich über den Schulhof kam,  
    Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über den toten Schulhof kam,  
Da stand mein alter Lehrer so grau  
Und wusste das Gute und Böse genau  
Und wies mit den Finger nach hier und dort  
In der Menschheit Irrsinn und Brand und Mord  
Und fand kein Wort.

Und als ich über den Kirchplatz kam,  
    Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über den toten Kirchplatz kam,  
Da stand am zerschmetterten Turme gebückt  
Meine Liebste und hatte ein Kränzlein gepflückt  
Aus verkohltem Gebälk und zerborstenem Stein  
Und lächelte selig und lud mich ein,  
Ihre Bräutigam zu sein.

Und als ich über das Ufer kam,  
    Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über das tote Ufer kam,  
Da sah ich mich selber im Wasser stehn  
Und sah mich selber von dannen gehn,  
So leicht, so frei, so ohne Beschwer,  
Und glaubte es nicht und ging hinterher,  
Als ob es im Traume wär.

Und als ich über die Ferne kam,  
    Schutt, nichts als Schutt,  
Als ich über die tote Ferne kam,  
Da sah ich die tote Stadt von fern  
Und sah sie aufleuchten wie einen Stern  
Und sah ihre Trübsal und Not vergehn  
Und sah die Erschlagene auferstehn  
Schöner, als je ich gesehn.

Welchen Ruhm und Preis

And as I came to the schoolyard then,  
Rubble, only rubble,  
As I to the dead schoolyard came:  
Among the ruins my teacher stood  
Who knew exactly evil from good:  
His hand pointed to the frenzied world,  
To mankind's madness, and fury unfurled,  
He found no word.

And as I went to the churchyard then,  
Rubble, only rubble,  
As I to the dead churchyard went:  
There stood my sweetheart at the gate  
And held a wreath which she had made  
From crumbled stone and blackened tree  
And smiled so sweetly and beckoned to me  
Her lover to be.

And as I came to the water's edge,  
Rubble, only rubble,  
As I came to the water's edge:  
I saw my image in th swift-running flood  
And saw myself go hither—away—  
So light, so free—oh, free of care!—  
And could not believe it, and followed there  
As if in a dream.

And as I came to the distant land,  
Rubble, only rubble,  
As I came to the far dead land:  
I saw our city from afar,  
And saw her glowing like a star,  
I saw her woe and her grief were gone,  
I saw her ascending, and rising she shone  
Fairer than ever.

What glory, what price

Forderst du, unerforschliches Walten?  
Wie weit  
Sind wir gekommen,  
Was hast Du uns genommen,  
Ungeheuerlichkeit!  
Bist Du noch das ewige Licht?  
So mach uns wieder jung!  
O schmales grünes Reis,  
Das unsere Hände halten,  
Welke nicht,  
Hoffnung!

Hans Leip

### ALS SIE DEN DICHTER BEGRABEN HABEN

Als sie den Dichter begraben haben  
War Einer da, der für ein Wochenblatt  
Einige Aufnahmen machte. Man sah sie später.  
Den steilen Sarg, wie um ein mächtiges Haupt  
Gezimmert, und den aufgeworfenen Wall,  
Die Schaufel Erde in der Hand des Freundes,  
Verwackelt, weil die Hand gezittert hatte.  
Es war, alles in Allem, eine klägliche Feier.  
Abwesend war das Oberhaupt der Stadt  
Abwesend waren die Herren der Akademie.  
Die Blumen waren aus Stroh und die Kränze stachlig.

Dost Thou want, Unfathomable Being?  
How far  
Have we come?  
What hast Thou NOT taken from us  
Inscrutable Power?  
Art Thou still The Eternal Light?  
Oh, renew us!

O tender green twig  
Which our hands are still grasping:  
Don't wilt,  
Hope!

Hans Leip  
translated by Gertrude C. Schwebell

## BURIAL OF A POET

When they buried the poet,  
a man was there who took some pictures  
for a weekly. We saw them later on.  
The high coffin as if framed around a mighty head,  
the cast-up wall,  
the shovel with earth in the hand of a friend  
—blurred—since the hand had trembled.  
It was a piteous ceremony, all in all.  
Absent was the burgomaster.  
Absent were the gentlemen of the Academy.  
The flowers were of straw, and the wreaths were  
prickly.

Wer stürbe gerne in der Rosenzeit?  
Der Pfarrer sprach sehr lang. Die Kinder übten  
Verstohlen still, auf einem Bein zu stehen.  
Einige waren gekommen, die niemand erblickte.  
Sieben Dryaden, zwei Nymphen, ein  
Feuersalamander.

Nicht, dass der Dichter sie besungen hätte  
Doch sie schienen zu glauben, sie gehörten dazu.  
Die Gäste hatten Angst sich zu erkälten  
Ein Toter zieht den Anderen ins Grab . . .  
Sie schlossen ihre Mäntel, starrten gedankenlos  
Die Wolke an, die über ihre Köpfe  
Dahinfuhr schwarz und herrlich—  
Die schöne Wolke, dachte der Photograph  
Und machte eine Aufnahme privat.  
Ein fünfzigstel Sekunde, Blende zehn.  
Doch auf der Platte war dann nichts zu sehen.

**Marie Luise Kaschnitz**

## **DIE EBENE**

Ich befand mich allein mit einem Stuhl auf einer  
Ebene,  
Die sich in einen leeren Horizont verlor.  
Die Ebene war fehlerlos asphaltiert.  
Nichts, aber auch gar nichts ausser mir und  
dem Stuhl befand sich auf ihr.  
Der Himmel war immerwährend blau.

Who likes to die in the time of roses?  
The minister spoke overlong. The children practiced,  
furtively quiet, to balance on one leg.  
Some had come and nobody laid eyes on them:  
Seven dryads, two nymphs, a salamander.  
Not that the poet sang of them  
but they seemed to believe they belonged.  
The mourners were afraid they might catch cold  
'A dead man will draw another man into the grave'  
They buttoned their coats, unthinkingly gazing  
at the cloud which sailed above their heads,  
dark and magnificent—  
Such a beautiful cloud, thought the photographer  
and privately he took a picture—  
One fiftieth second, diaphragm ten.  
But, it turned out, the cloud eluded him.

Marie Luise Kaschnitz  
translated by Gertrude C. Schwebell

## THE PLAIN

I was alone with a chair in a plain  
Which lost itself in a void horizon.  
The plain was faultlessly asphalted.  
Nothing, absolutely nothing, but the chair and I  
were in this plain.  
The sky was forever blue,

Keine Sonne belebte ihn.

Ein unerklärliches, unvernünftiges Licht erhellte  
die endlose Ebene

Wie künstlich aus einer anderen Sphäre  
projiziert,

Erschien mir dieser ewige Tag.

Ich hatte nie Schlaf, nie Hunger, nie Durst,  
nie heiss, nie kalt.

Da sich nichts auf dieser Ebene ereignete  
und veränderte,

War die Zeit nur ein abwegiges Gespenst.

Die Zeit lebte noch ein wenig in mir,

Und dies hauptsächlich wegen des Stuhles.

Durch meine Beschäftigung mit ihm verlor  
ich den Sinn für Vergangenes nicht ganz.

Ab und zu spannte ich mich, als sei ich ein  
Pferd, vor den Stuhl

und trabte mit ihm bald im Kreis, bald gerade aus.

Dass es gelang, nehme ich an,

Ob es gelang, weiss ich nicht,

Da sich ja im Raume nichts befand,

An dem ich meine Bewegung hätte nach-  
prüfen können.

Sass ich auf dem Stuhl, so grübelte ich  
traurig, aber nicht verzweifelt,

Warum das Innere der Welt ein solch schwarzes  
Licht ausstrahlte.

Hans Arp

No sun gave life to it.

An inscrutable, insensible light illuminated  
the infinite plain.

To me this eternal day seemed to be projected  
artificially—from a different sphere.

Never had I sleep nor hunger nor thirst,  
never hot nor cold.

Time was only an abstruse ghost since nothing  
happened or changed in this plain.

In me Time still lived a little  
And this was mainly on account of the chair.

Owing to my occupation with it I did not lose  
completely  
my sense for the past.

Now and then I would hitch myself, as if I were  
a horse,  
to the chair and would trot around with it, sometimes  
in circles,  
and sometimes straight ahead.

I assume that I succeeded,  
Whether I succeeded I do not know  
Since there was nothing in space  
By which I could have checked my movements.

As I sat on the chair I pondered sadly,  
but not desperately,  
Why the core of the world exuded such black  
light.

Hans Arp  
translated by Gertrude C. Schwabell

## FIRENZE

A Firenze in Via Tornabuoni

Una fuciacca di cielo è tesa

Sui fili

Del telefono 8-85

L'altro emisfero si rinfresca

Da Doney e Nipoti

Con una penna di paradiso

Al cappello

E fra le trine un profumo

Di Floride e Splendid Hotels

Un vecchio affogato nella primavera

Trascina un paniere d'iride sul marciapiede

Lungo le vetrine infuocate

Di cravatte di fogli da mille e di liquori

"Due soldi il mazzo le violette

I narcisi e gli anemoni"

La collina di San Miniato

Sciacqua nell'Arno i suoi ori di Bisanzio

I suoi cipressi

E le ville

Il Ponte vecchio incrostato di gemme

I campanili

I tea rooms

Coll'acqua verde

Partono fra due argini felici di sole

Non si può vivere in questa pace

D'azzurri viali

Dove non c'è che un tranvai

Ogni venti minuti

Candele steariche e buste fiorite

Nelle vetrine

E visi di spose e di bimbi

Soffocati di calda noia

**FLORENCE**

In Florence at Via Tornabuoni  
A sash of sky is taut  
On wires  
Of the telephone 8-85  
The other hemisphere is cooling  
At Doney and Nipoti  
With a feather of paradise bird  
On the hat  
Amid the laces a perfume  
Of Florida and Splendide Hotels

An old man drowned in spring  
Drags a basket of iris on the sidewalk  
Along the burning glass fronts of windows  
Of ties of 1000 lire banknotes and liqueurs  
"Two cents a bunch the violets  
The narcissus and the anemones."

The hill of San Miniato  
Rinses in the Arno its Byzantine golds  
Its cypresses  
And villas  
The Ponte Vecchio gem-encrusted  
The church-steeple  
The tea-rooms  
With green water  
Take leave between two bright edges of sun

One cannot live in this peace  
Of blue avenues  
Where a trolley car passes  
Every twenty minutes  
Wax candles and flowered envelopes  
In the windows  
And faces of brides and children  
Smothered by the warm boredom

Alle finestre  
Spalancate sul nulla di mezzogiorno

Un affisso delle Folies Bergère  
O dello Splendor  
E piu emozionante  
Di tutta la storia  
Rassegata in fronte alle torri  
E alle cupole senza dio ne' colombe  
(piccioni del Duomo  
Li mangia il Priore  
Della Misericordia)

La notte si scrive col fuoco  
Sui muri del Centro  
A nuova vita restituito  
Nomi e orari  
Attimi vibrati nell'eternità  
Come questa sigaretta che accendo  
In un caffè d'Europa  
La Rosa  
Il 6 marzo 1915

Su tutte le case degli stranieri  
C'è l'appigionasi  
Le Family pensions  
Non hanno piu amori  
Dietro le bianche cortine  
Non piu yes da oui ja  
Non c'è piu un fiaccheraio al passo per le Cascine  
Non piu serenate di parrucchieri  
Il lume di luna è tutto alla guerra

Non ci siam piu che noi a cantare  
Di disperazione  
Per i vicoli morti  
Oltr'Arno  
A San Frediano

At the windows  
Opened wide on the void of noon

A sign of the Folies Bergere  
Or of the Splendor  
Is more exciting  
Than all the history  
Clotted below the towers  
And cupolas without god or doves  
(The doves of the Duomo  
Are eaten by the Prior  
Of the Misericordia)

Night is written with fire  
On the walls of the Centro  
"Restored to new life"  
Names and time-tables  
Instants hurled in eternity  
Like this cigarette I light  
In a Café of Europe  
La Rosa  
The 6th of March 1915

On all the houses of strangers  
There is a vacancy sign  
The Family Pensions  
Have no more loves  
Behind the white curtains  
No more "yes" "oui" or "ja"  
Not a single hackdriver moves at a pace at the  
    Cascine

No more serenades from the barbers  
The light of the moon has all gone to war.

Only we are here to sing  
Of desperation  
Through the dead alleys  
Beyond the Arno  
At San Frediano

Al Canto alla Briga

Si cammina sulle immondezze

Sui gatti assassinati

E i capelli

Accanto alle porte inchiodate dei bordelli

Appena un lampione e qualche stella appesa ai rami  
in amore

Ci fan ricordare che la vita

Ricomincia tutte le mattine

Voglio scurdarme 'o cielo

Tutte'e canzone e 'o mare

Nelle botteghe fuori la legge

La teppa ride e bestemmia

In chiave d'organino e di coltello

Confitta nel fumo

E nell'afrore del vino bianco e nero

La prostituzione

Imbelletta le cantonate

Sul fondo di vecchie réclames

Ogni donna è un fiore

Caduto da questi giardini sepolti di tenebra

Inzuppato di menta glaciale

E impolverato di minio

Come l'aurora.

A Firenze per tutte le vie

A tutte le ore

S'incrociano le avventure del mondo

Il "Messaggero" di Roma arrivato ora

Ed il vento

Che batte l'occhio giallo dell'orologio della stazione

Entrano dalle persiane aperte

E gonfiano tutti gli hangars multicolori

Della poesia.

Ardengo Soffici

At the Canto della Briga  
One walks on filth  
And dead cats  
And the hair  
Beside the nail-clamped doors of the brothels  
Scarcely a lamplight maybe a star that hangs on  
    boughs in love  
Reminding us that life  
Begins each morning

“I want to forget the sky  
All the songs and the sea.”

In the shops off limits  
The mob laughs and blasphemes  
In organ-grinder key and of knife  
Stuck in smoke  
And in the acrid odor of white and black wine  
Prostitution  
Decorates the corners  
Beneath the ancient billboards  
Each woman is a flower  
Fallen from these gardens buried in darkness  
Drenched in mint julep  
Dusted with red lead  
Like the dawn.

In Florence on all the streets  
At all hours  
The adventures of the world intercross  
The “Messaggero” of Rome newly arrived  
And the wind  
That strikes the yellow eye of the railroad clock  
They enter from the open window blinds  
Swelling all the multicolored hangars  
Of poetry.

**Ardengo Soffici**  
translated by **D. M. Pettinella**

**MATTINA**

La luce non è che un mazzolino di fiori piu sottili  
Un ronzo di mosche d'oro e verdi il cielo  
Senza questo pardessus parigino si potrebbe ballare  
A tutti i piani c'è la musica come in paradiso  
Una signora vestita del tricolor dell'Italia nelle  
    cromolitografie patriottiche  
Evade verso l'oriente  
Jamais de ne voudrais être son chien  
Piuttosto piangere di tenerezza  
Sul miracolo della gente che risuscita ogni giorno  
In questo enigma universale che piglia per un  
    almanacco  
E passa  
E passa con la tranquillità dei giovenchi  
Ah! noi moriremo per aver troppo adorato le cose da  
    nulla  
L'aria d'anilina mi bagna come una camicia tuffata  
    nel turchinetto  
Vedo tutto  
Il baccalà che sperimenta il Nirvana fiorito di  
    pomidori nelle zangole azzurre  
L'ombre delle grondaie abbassate sugli occhi glauchi  
    delle persiane  
Le ombre degli uomini che si sprofondano  
Nella terra trasparente  
E a un tratto capisco questa verità Ogni  
    nuova civilizzazione esce dal riso dei bambini  
Il timpano del sole batte sullo specchio del  
    parrucchiere  
Per farmi sorridere  
Ma non si puo che seguire in silenzio la freschezza  
    delle ore

(I miei capelli sono sinistri!)

**Ardengo Soffici**

**MORNING**

Light is a small cluster of the thinnest flowers  
A buzzing of flies golden and green in the sky  
Without this Parisian cloak one could dance  
On every floor where the music is like heaven's  
A lady dressed in the tricolor of Italy in patriotic  
chromolithographs  
Evades towards the orient  
Jamais je ne voudrais être son chien  
Rather weep for affection  
On the miracle of the people that are revived each day  
In this universal enigma that is taken for an almanac  
And passes  
And passes with the tranquillity of young bullocks  
Ah! We shall die for having worshiped baubles  
The aniline air wets me like a shirt dipped in bluing  
I see everything  
The codfish experimenting Nirvana blooming in  
tomatoes in blue churns  
The shadows of gutters lowered over glaucous eyes  
from window blinds  
The shadows of men that sink  
In the transparent earth  
And suddenly I understand this truth Each new  
civilization emerges from the laughter of  
children  
The eardrum of the sun beats on the barber's mirror  
That I may smile  
But only in silence can one follow the freshness of the  
hours  
(My hair is ominous)

**Ardengo Soffici**  
translated by **D. M. Pettinella**

**TWO POEMS****The Miracle**

Don't be too quick to laugh at miracles.  
We had an old Ben Davis apple tree  
That turned into an orchestra one fall  
With woodwind sounds of wind in applewood.  
And everybody in the neighborhood  
Came by to listen when the wind was right.

It wasn't just the sigh of wind in trees.  
That's fancy talk, and this was something more.

One branch of apples bumped against the roof  
To make the drums.

One stubby twig scraped on a window-pane;  
To save your life  
You couldn't tell it from a fife.

The topmost limb would bang the windmill fin  
Just like a cymbal,  
And two big branches rubbed, making groans  
Like saxophones.

The neighbors would come and listen together  
Whenever we had windy weather.

The night the big storm hit there must have been  
Sixty people standing by the yard  
Because they knew the music sounded best  
Whenever it was blowing extra hard.

There came a gust; the old tree gave a lurch;  
We felt the roots pop underground,  
And there it lay across our kitchen porch.

And here's where the whole town  
Started to disagree.  
The Baptists claimed its last tune was  
*Nearer, My God, to Thee.*  
Our cook said it was  
*Nobody Knows the Trouble I see.*  
The Sons of Erin swore it was  
*The Wearin' O' the Green.*  
A tailor said *Kol Nidre*;  
A gardener said *Aida*;  
A cowboy said *Buffalo Gals*;  
And everyone else said everything else.  
But dad and I said *Home Sweet Home*,  
And sawed the darned tree up alone.

Carlin Aden

### The Cat

There was our old gray tomcat killing little yellow  
chicks.  
The mother hen was squalling in her terror,  
But she flew about the pen and fought.  
I cornered him and caught him in the henhouse;  
He yowled and clawed my arm.  
The scratch  
Consumed my indecision like a match.  
I held him by the scruff until

I found a sack and forced him in.  
He thrashed about and tried to bite me  
As I bound the opening with twine.

I took him through the barnyard to the wood.  
He growled and spat and then was still  
Until we reached the woodlot.

Then he called a low miaow  
As if he knew that any hope  
Must hang on just the proper tone.

If he had called again, he might have won.

I put him down and got a heavy stick,  
And when he moved,  
I hit the sack  
Where I could see the upcurve of his back.

That should have been enough,  
But it was not.  
He fought and tore about so madly  
I couldn't land a second blow.

The binding-twine came loose, and he leaped out.  
He scrambled in a circle.  
Had he cried, it might have been less terrible.  
But scrambling silent with his mouth held wide,  
Through cow dung and dry leaves,  
He fell and ran in circles,  
Fell and ran.

I fed my waning anger on chicken torn and dead  
And hit the cat again.  
I crushed his head;  
One eye popped out.

I see him now as if I still  
Were sixteen, scared and sorry.

I wished to Christ—  
This was not blasphemy,  
He was the one to speak to, and I did—  
I wished for resurrection then and there.

I caved a sand-bank down to cover him,  
Vomited and went home.

Glad my parents were away,  
For half an hour or more I sat alone,  
As I suppose cat killers ought to be,  
Thinking on this three-way thing  
Of chickens, cat and me.

There was a scratching at the kitchen screen  
and, oh good God, the cat!  
That eye hung out,  
And he, too sick and hurt  
To free his crooked mouth of blood and dirt,  
Was trying to get in.

With thirty years gone by, I cannot tell  
The rest, except to say I killed him well  
The second time,  
If one can kill a cat  
As hard and hot and claw-hooked onto life as that  
one was  
And say he killed him well.

There was a cat got killed that afternoon,  
But I would be the last to say how soon  
A mangled cat stops following a boy,  
Stops following a man,  
Stops following.

And I would be the last to say  
A mangled cat stops following.

## FOUR POEMS

## Excrement

I have seen at a tree's base blooming  
a carbuncular lobe  
so stuffed with purple fibrin  
that flesh split bloodlessly.

Not matter to attract fingertips  
it had no smell, no limb, no leaves  
and in its furrows failing green  
designed a sickness on the health of Spring.

And I have remembered a diagram  
that flowered on a page:  
"The Right Cerebral Hemisphere"  
line drawn in tubes of knowledge.

Why did a drawing seem Medusa's crown  
where serpents slept in neat combed curls?  
This figure of arrangement  
gathered to a fist,  
paraphrased to be the proudest  
weapon of a slave or scientist.

I have kicked from the spine of my tree  
a barbarous vegetable blossom.  
Dreading its growth with my heart  
I have struck with my heel  
and a vigor that seemed only partly mine  
in reflex to all mushrooming  
designing  
menace to design.

Beatrice Frackelton

**Nota Bene**

*(for William Carlos Williams)*

I've been backward  
with that wheel-barrow  
from the very start.

O—it's red, all right—  
lacquered,  
bright,  
and slippery from the rain  
and tart  
as any radish  
burning at the heart  
or brain.

But when I try to focus it  
beside white chickens  
(where 'so much depends')  
the composition falls  
apart,  
the contemplative framework  
bends;  
because  
despite all efforts of the will  
I cannot  
get the chickens  
to stand still.

And furthermore  
the chickens that I see,  
peculiarly  
are turned to swans  
or mice  
when I look twice.

So I'm racing

with my wheel-barrow  
 (on loan from Dr. Williams)  
 chasing  
 chickens  
 swans

or mice

in an effort to entice  
 movement  
 into cluster which still stems  
 from something  
 white.

But

I might

as well

not try

(however much depends).  
 Of all the world's egg-born,  
 in whites,

in blacks,

in blends,

I've never found  
 (I never will)

a swan,

a mouse,

a leghorn

that

stood  
 still.

Beatrice Frackelton

**The Red Spangled Ape**

Dark density of knotted pelt  
 Where I, several, pluck embedded burrs.  
 Does a dog have hair or fur?  
 Hair names him closer to his human,  
 Offering god and opportunity  
 Simplified;  
 Gifts to his immaculate honesty.

*But see where the red spangled ape  
 Sits his black forest grinning;  
 Eating his scarlet heart  
 Where the rocks are trapped like seeds.*

*He was born before birth got to him,  
 Gestate in the silver temple;  
 His umbilical seepage threading  
 The vascular structure of waiting bones.*

*O, he belonged;  
 Threading red,  
 Seeping slow,  
 Indestructible,  
 Shrieking.  
 He belonged apriori  
 Like wet to water,  
 Like gelatinous mucus  
 Threading the bent bones.*

A tree toad loops along the road  
 Finding the grass is too tall;  
 And somewhere a gentle serpent  
 Glides through the woven weeds  
 Surely to find him.

There are always the animals' eyes;  
 Alive before living, before loving,

Like bulbs of Trillium lily;  
And the churring of probable chipmunks,  
Politic scurry  
That raises the dog's combed hair,  
The black nap over his tail  
In a ripple of laughter.

Love like fog can fill these woods  
Until the living creatures here  
Lose their way in it,  
Standing arrested on too few feet  
Shy to put another down.

*Only the red spangled ape  
Secretly feasts on his shelter:  
Crimson heart where the rocks are trapped.*

*He belongs.*

*Here.*

*Somewhere.*

*In confident immortality.*

Is it this universal I imagine?  
Or these clusters of particulars?  
Being at once these things,  
I, multiple, kneel  
Combing this dog;  
Fingering a dark forest.

Beatrice Frackelton

**Ten Cent Climate**

Why did I almost buy that bird,  
Pale mediocrity of caged canary ;  
Was it his winter bare to wired inches  
That composed my larger January ?

Boxed birds hang priced at counterfeit:  
Cost of deliberate error adding fraud along with  
score.

Was there a garden once where gold winged sinners  
Ravished a monstrous apple to its rotten core ?

I turned a hard back ; a dime store is a shop  
In which to find large envelopes—not thought ;  
And not a place to conjugate the count of cages  
Or finger any pretense that need not be bought.

Caught in our mutual pang of winter in a chill dime  
store

That bird and I were even—until—unfair—  
He gathered tall the useless grace he wore,  
Higher than any tree I ever saw  
—and sang.

Flung down his theme : stump of his heritage ;  
Diamonds rained reverberant over knell  
Of tin and creatures in a ten cent store  
Consigning me with music to his cell.

I passed a caged canary in weather dead  
As January in a gimcrack store  
Quickly enough ; it didn't take me long.  
Perhaps I fled wondering what prison door  
Had ever opened to a song.

**Beatrice Frackelton**

**FANDI WITH HAT**

Midway, in Africa, between two towns  
 a native moves, half naked and all black.  
 A loincloth, loosely strapped from panther hips,  
 surrounds him, as the shrieking jungle does:

Indignantly the jungle calls him back.

A derby, also black, resolves his head.  
 He found it, obviously discarded, near a road,  
 and wears it now, filthy and old, with reverence  
 like something vaguely sacred and profound.

The truth is that he wears it like a limb,  
 hoping that it will grow, become  
 a part of him. He is not naked anymore,  
 and is quite sure it has undone  
 his Africa within.

**Steve Kowitz**

**IBIS**

Ibis,  
 Ebony and alabaster:  
 In the green caverns of papyrus,  
 He cannot hear the dahabeah's prow  
 Sunder the Nile,  
 Nor the winds from Karnak,  
 Freighted with sand and incense.  
 But the caverns speak  
 With little myriad voices:  
 Scarab, lizard, and dragonfly  
 Eddying pollen among the lotuses.  
 What need has the ebony bird  
 For winds and rivers?

**Thomas Burnett Swann**



I rolled—belly & vertebrae on cracked  
 Linoleum. And my heart was listening.  
*Let us declare sleep tonight—on babies,  
 On hearts; on floor-boards and on ceilings; on wives  
 And on Things.*

“The night would seem to provoke  
 Enumeration,” I said. My heart agreed.  
*And there were dreams, the great sequence of sheep,  
 And other sheep—and beds jumping over beds.*

My heart had memorized the sound of frying.  
 So had the baby; —from the bedroom frying-pan.  
*Crisco, earth-worms, salt & pee, the taste of rent.*

I was sleeping on our ceiling, the blanket  
 Under me. The blanket turned into holes,  
 Into linoleum—and into boards.

God

Was pounding on the floor-boards; he hated  
 Mrs. B., and babies. She began to yell  
 At him.

I was sleeping on the basement  
 Floor—

God damned, and had done away with ceilings.  
*Mrs. B. had disappeared.* The baby  
 Became my belly: and I was sleep, its heart  
 And dreams.

And there was sleep—my wife—my ears  
 And bed, listening, themselves the landlady.

**Robert S. Sward**

**On The Departure of His Telephone, Gas—,  
Electricity, Wife, Daughter & Groceries**

They are leaving me, in Max's, my father-  
In-law's car. The telephone, my wife,  
They are walking down the stairs. Nine flights  
Of stairs. Perhaps ten. The baby cries.  
No one is saying Goodbye. A bag  
Of cans of Campbell's soup

breaks, and cans

Tumble down the stairs. Bean soup, split pea,  
Chicken noodle, chicken gumbo,

clear

Consommé. It is depressing. *God!*

I half expect to get into the car  
With them, my wife, Max, the groceries,  
The baby, the telephone

Dorothy,

The gas-meter, the toaster, the electric  
Hot-plate . . .

it is depressing. I weep;

I put my hand into the waffle . . .

There is no electricity. Bang!

Doors are slamming. Windows. Suitcases.

The wallpaper is slipping off the wall . . .

I weep. I am depressed. I clutch

A group of poems. I sit upon

My Underwood, and eat my poems.

Max giggles. Dorothy (*Reason, Momma—*

Law) comes back for cardboard. Clutching soup,

Bag-shreds, diapers, clothespins,

the hot-plate.



**HERON CHILD**

chill shine alone knife-keen  
brown-bodied child alone,  
tangled pitch of hair,  
picks her way among  
the oval stones. Sand  
sucks on her heel by the lake's  
blazing coin. Far along  
the span that bends around  
the crooks of pools, heron  
stands, quiescent on  
its one taut knee. Blue  
drops rustle in its wing.  
In its immobile head  
a sliding eye fastens  
on the child who knows  
a taking in more rare  
than humans ever see.

**Myrtle Chamberlin**