

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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TWO POEMS

Barn Owl

Where specimens were goats and bounding burros,
we came upon a killer in a cage —
a barn owl, eyeing the dog, hunched to pounce,
its beak a knife in a downy heartshaped face.

A definite line looked like a mouth but wasn't,
containing its face in the redgold feathery rest —
it looked like a leer, the line of a murderous smirk
of someone unrepentant though confessed.

For the bird had been arrested, it merely opened
the unworkable maimed umbrella of its wings
as if to swoop from spaciousness on mice,
like a snake behind glass displaying its useless fangs.

It clung with long curved claws, an aspect of evil,
an ugly epitome, hate's face on a perch
and yet its fierce appearance was only natural;
nature has other faces as frightful, or worse —

just an owl, after all, a round eyed ridder of pests,
locked out of rafters, the imprisoned gaze
of guilt that's written on a face of innocence —
Athene's emblem, anything but wise.

Harold Witt

Bull

Picasso's or Spain's bull, a fierce, horned snorter
hooves into art's or the heart's thin chinashop
smashing those *objets* to such smithereens
what ticked and tinkled bangs to spring disorder —
the sky's too blue, too many flowers come up.

He fed subdued, head down in a winter meadow
where ruminant harems rustled; now he comes
drumming like thunder toward his spotted queens,
a death black Taurus or Jovian albino
with jewel huge testicles in a bag that swings.

Placidity is shaken by his taking.

Fans, mantillas, as he enters rings
flutter and twitter; speared, he shrinks
to steaks and belts, while a matador is making
time in a boudoir, another sport of kings.

But still he's vigorous; in his bloody prints
the calf that tottered at its mother's dugs
rears ready, like an ox intact on cups
exhumed from tombs, or in myths of labyrinths,
half bull, half not, he battles till he drops.

And sudden, cowboy ridden, how he bucks
at rude rodeos, an impulse no one tames—
men fall as he kicks. By his tail or horns
tossed in sessions, he is dogged and shot,
whose wild fertility, nevertheless, remains.

Harold Witt

TWO POEMS**The New Jersey Turnpike**

This is a Christmas toy for everyone.
It even comes pre-assembled: all you do
is accept a ticket for a dollar
more or less and you can drive right through,
over the rollercoaster road with a whoop
and a whee! and a holler, as you swoop
under the cross-country buses and vans
and the choo-choos clattering across the sky,
past yards of wires on Erector Set towers,
an electric airport with planes that fly,
factory smoke-stacks that puff real smoke
and model villages with wound-up folk,
until you reach the countryside, where hay
and corn fields painted green and yellow
lollop by with clever figurines
of cows that moo and bulls that bellow,
and pretty horsies with tails that swish:
those mirrors on the grass contain live fish
—which you could catch if they'd let you stop
but they don't as a rule till you come out
on the Delaware; and make it faster
than the General, who by another route
in frosted December ferried his band
of tiny bumpkins to bleed for the land.

Robert Cullen

Christmas Eve on Park Avenue

The trees, of course, are authentic,
uncut, with roots in the stone.
We had to wire the lights, like anyone else,
but you'll observe the delicate colors:
canary diamond and pearl.
The effect is quite satisfying —
joyous to match the season, within
the limits of good taste: we think
it strikes precisely the right note.
(Did the wise men who traveled
all that distance to adore Him
scuffle with the shepherds at the door?)
We have carried out the motif
by attaching jingle bells to our toy
poodles' emerald collars
and sprigs of holly to our wives'
minks. The slightly plastered doormen
whistling for taxis in the dusk
and helping us in and out with ties
from Sulka's, pins from Cartier's,
and chateau-bottled wines
add the necessary comic relief,
as in a play of Shakespeare. The cross
high in the night sky is by courtesy
of the New York Central Railroad.
Unfortunately, there was nothing
we could do about the furriers
hurrying past with sheepish grins.

Robert Cullen

HOMAGE TO JUAN DE LA MATA, GUITARISTA

"... in the midst of the drinkers ..."—Pablo Neruda

I would be moved. The meter clicks
over the taxi's drone. Lamps flicker
like candles on tables in a cave.
In falling shadows beneath a liquor
poster a girl plucks at her combs.

Growing aware (the national art)
how probed I was by colorful shafts,
the blood no more than a discipline
in how to bleed, when I had laughed
at my soul at its strange uses, myself

a serpent boasting to eat its tail,
Sorrow I gave up — Gét out! I shrieked.
Like master, like slave. But Sorrow clung.
Out of sobrieties, techniques,
she wailed: What have you cast away!

Nothing! I sneered, Nothing but caped
scorn, rage white as a wall, emetic
the will to thrive could not contain,
nothing but you! New York ascetic,
hacked, eased I travel, to prove it's true.

A fancy club. They advertise
flamenco. Minimum. Doorman. Wedged
by the best boutiques. Inside, I see
well-dressed ladies and men fledged
with talk at the bar, stylized gestures.

They all speak Spanish. Pointing beyond
to a crowded dining room, the host
inquires: For Dinner? and for the Show?

—No, no, I say, making the most,
 —at this expense, I have come to hear
 flamenco! — *¡Claro que sí!* He's bored,
 motions away from a poster of
 banana-hatted girls and boys
 with ruffled sleeves. Now I am shoved,
 lightly but firmly, entering,
 by red-girt waiters in a frenzy,
 rushing the clientele with drinks
 who watch a tuxedoed guitarista
 rigidly seated. Drunk. I think,
 Why not? Executives? And me?

No. Spaniards, too. Waiting to see
 the Show. Who don't toss dollar bills.
 Don't sit here longer than they must.
 Poorly he plays (*olé!*) until
 they rise, and, when they've left to eat,
 he stops. Flashes that seared a space
 of bars with *cante jondo!* Such
 refusals to please! Accepting requests,
 he answers every one, but much
 like the leering masks in Holy Week —
 striking saeta's eerie rasp
 and thud into this lushness. Cuts
 it short the moment Americans
 are moved to clap. And the jaw juts:
 he flings into the Lincoln Brigade
 stunt or Mexican pop tunes
 they think are Spanish. Now an Anglo
 green from Méjico cheers, and he
 is given Bach. I do not know
 who is perverse. We need more drinks.

¡Borracho! By no one is he fazed!
 Hung head on swivel wrist above
 the spidery hand, he plays into
 the night, bravura, kinds of love:
 beggars who flung pebbles beneath

a Princess' wheel who wouldn't return
 their worship, delicately of dolls
 in the torils at five o'clock,
 gratefully (doubtless) of the files
 who would observe the Show and so

acknowledge him. Self-pity's part
 of this. The rest (can positivists,
 taught to expect so much that they
 have preconceived all ends, repressed
 all gifts, yet know?) is that he lets

none pity or flatter him. Performs
 these matters himself. He knows he is playing
 here. So he affords graveness to drive
 whispering strings to a knout flaying
 who listen — bogged like the bulls in Sorrow.

David Galler

THE ARC FROM NOW

Down the moss-wet shadow that was my Montana,
 The sunrise avalanched in toppling mist,
 And when I rose I was strapped to the sky
 And lashed with the stinging sweetness of pine.
 I hurt with famished breathing
 To take it all at once,
 And all I took was heady, swirling wine.

Spring was a careless, clumsy colt of a boy
 Who leapfrogged the mud for the first buttercup;

Found it melting the pebbled snow,
And grubbed it crushed and smudged to school,
And running up the planks
That docked the sludgy yard,
He springboarded off poor little easterfrocked Jane.

Then the mud-fresh day was choked at night
By the scented scum in the tin washtub.
But always there came a thundercrack
That switched off the light and gave him the dark.
Then agog with a fumble awhile,
Agape with his part in the lightning,
And out to the porch for his armful adoption by sky.

The storm broke and the lull of summer set,
And drove the cool and the boy to the creek
Where panting the current and swimming the air,
He slipped to the brake of a white-water boulder,
And cast the Royal Coachman,
Watched it bobbing red,
And tingled with the snap that closed forever's ring.

Forever ringed to the mother, master, and judge.
As my eye is bent by the saddle of space,
My robin-bill mind is forced to the land
To teach, to nourish, to magnify.
I have learned of my womb in the trout,
My emerging with leg and with wing,
And now I stroke in warmth my golden link and band.

Forever the seed, the constantly molding birth,
The immanent then but an arc from now,
And now but a further curve of then.
I am a memory of myself.
The knowing of what I am
Is the knowledge of what I was.
And the circumference of time ends my wanton
becoming.

Richard Gustafson

THE GRANDFATHER

My grandfather, half-retired to Storrington,
Thrived on a village practice there, Dickensian
Eccentric of the Nineteen Thirties. Round his home
The soil was sandy, whitish, fine, and tough plants
thrived.

On hillsides tangled with pine, the heather sparked
Dark violet tongues. A snake-path wound uphill
Behind the bungalow to a pine-fringed plateau —
Glimpsed as scrag-pine ragged on the hill's horizon
From the back door, through the glade of slender
birches

That swayed and shivered in my grandfather's
garden.

A path at the end of his lane ran off into woodland;
It was here, from a thick elm branch, we'd slung our
rope
And swung in the moist air brushed by leaves.

Mostly it was summer at my grandfather's home,
And he bulked large, a sun himself, matured
By summers from a vanished century of manners.

At five he'd sat on Dickens' knee, heard rich
Descriptions from the books; had later made himself
A character to fit his own flamboyance,
Stepping as a student out of Pickwick
Into Barts.

But I remember him at seventy,
After nearly fifty years of doctoring —
Mellowed in his role, fastidiously dressed
(Wing-collar, pinned cravate, black frock-coat,
spatted shoes) —
A tall, big-framed Victorian with a pagan

Sense of nonsense. Still I see him winking
 Through his feigned severity, his large creased face
 Grimacing a welcome at us from the terrace.

Almost every other weekend till his death
 We drove to Sussex, five (and sometimes six) of us—
 Four grandsons squirming in the car's back seats —
 Arriving untidy and ravenous for dinner.
 And over the roasts that my grandmother carried
 In triumph to the table, the Doctor presided,
 Delivering sickening post-mortem asides.

But at dusk, after long explorations in the hills,
 To the sandpit, the still, glinting pool in the forest,
 We'd hear him (waving a half-smoked cigar in his
 hand)

Tell of the night-jars rasping their pleas at the moon,
 Of no-armed, no-legg'd Nipe riding his pony-trap
 Cloaked through sandy lanes, of Gadshill and
 Dickens,

Of patients he'd treated, of Barts escapades.

We did not hear him talk about the 'outside world.'
 He had no taste for making story-teller's fictions
 Of the nightmare terrors that kept Europe sleepless.
 Soon enough, he knew, we'd have to live with
 nightmare.

Thirty-eight. By then he'd come to hate the cant
 Of public leaders, and their sick infective talk
 (Undoctored madmen, he called them. Later I read
 this,
 Scribbled on an unused sheet of casebook paper.)

He preferred to charm, with tales of things and
 people we knew.
 (Nipe, for instance, was the local builder; drove his
 trap

With reins twined round his steel-hooked wooden
stumps).
And in his last year, sweating drugged against
cancer,
Wrote a book of tales for us—a gauche and clumsy
book,
Its words retaining little more than ghosted echoes
Of his rasping tone, the sudden grating emphasis
That braked a sentence into silence; lacking body,
His large frame—the creased face, thick-lipped
curling mouth,
The eyebrow, hand and eye he fleshed them with in
speech.

When my grandfather died, my world became
smaller
By seventy-four summers (buried now beyond the
rubble
Of another war) and Europe was already ranting,
Strutting stiff-legg'd to the frenzy of a race-mad
voice.

I was eight. I did not understand. They told me
He had gone away. His garden kept its birches still,
And pigeons mated in the terrace dove-cote.
Nothing stopped because he'd died, except our visits.
Two or three times more we drove to Storrington.
My grandmother stayed till she'd sold the bungalow.
The plateau pines stood spiked and rigid on the hill.

Christopher Hampton

THREE POEMS**Still Rhyme**

If there were senses sweet to lose
 Then sound were one:
 How quietly the leaves must close
 In ears of stone.

Ever clearer phrases shadow
 Body of song;
 Hear the gonging golden meadow,
 Visioning.

If silence could be gathered so,
 Whiter than wind,
 I might unlisten to the snow
 Fairly designed.

Pat Wallace Latner

Tourist

The world is wearing banker's clothes,
 Staring from merchants' eyes;
 I share the wardrobe of the rose;
 Am not in any wise

A voter in its polling place,
 And no grey citizen
 Shall legislate my lawless face.
 Be damned, I'll wear the sun,

Skippping among the grave and bland
 Unseemly as a fire,
 Taking green legends by the hand
 To houses of desire.

Pat Wallace Latner

The Others

Wiving the wind too long to hear
 Gossip of wings beside the ear,
 The catwalkers red hatted go
 With oily tread, exactly slow,

To set, with gravity, the bones
 Of high and naked hives of rooms;
 Taking girders from the cranes
 As dancers, dancers in their arms:

Panther to the curving wind
 On paths no wider than a hand.
 Precision oiled; exactly slow;
 And intimate with air they go.

Pat Wallace Latner

BUTTERWORT AND THE STATE OF NATURE

(*Pinguicula vulgaris*: leaves insectivorous, flowers insectophilous)

“Sex is just a start. You must feel
 A pollen count, negotiate a deal,
 Make procurement — then push your act
 Relentlessly to an accomplished fact;
 And if there should be trembling as you leave,
 Don’t let their flowery fuss make you believe
 You owe them anything. They’re coy and sweet—
 But they have ways of making all ends meet.

"You beginners tend to feel remorse,
 Ignoring stigma, using tumid force
 To suck out nectar. But what do you expect?
 For all their fluttering, they always collect,
 And they've got tricks besides that aren't in books:
 Have you watched them hammer home their hooks
 And suck away all innards, to the skin?
 Look: isn't that withered wreck some of your kin?"

Don't tell me about symbiosis; this
 Is war. The younger generation's kiss
 Is death to faded parents; queens exhaust
 Their faithful lovers; derelict and lost,
 Infants are replaced with fuzzy balls
 Of filial rags. The boldest leader crawls
 Discreetly back inside himself and lets
 His left side never know what the right side gets.

Something is unbegotten, never yet
 Conceived of, needed: some flowering of regret
 For wastelands, something with a sense of pain
 For every loss, that suffers from the rain
 Falling on the unjust, knows how to rejoice
 At sun in hostile countries, has a voice
 That burgeons with compassion and with reason.
 Can such a thing be born in this dry season?

Philip Appleman

SPEAK EASY

My grandfather, who read Aquinas,
 Stole out at night
 And spoke easily to the women
 In the speakeasies:
 His wife fretted,
 Listened to soap operas
 With all of that exhausted loneliness

She could master for an afternoon,
And said, 'Father, I am through.'
But he never heard.
His own father, minister
Itinerant (picking up handouts
Each Sunday for the boy to wear
And eat—who hated the world—
The religious bigots
Who clothed him in the oil of their unction:
'Such a sweet boy!')
Had said in his pulpit one unambiguous
Sunday morning:
'Prohibition is a violation
Of the Nature of Man.'
The people cried in ecstatic horror,
The press victimized its hero,
And finally a throat-tickled synod
Acquitted him by a vote of One
And demoted him to limbo.
Grandfather, with that flower in his buttonhole
And the girls on his arms,
Must have thought the speakeasy a limbo:
He quoted James Whitcomb Riley
And Thomas Aquinas with fervor;
He sinned with joy.
And at last sobered up enough
To die and be buried
In a rite
That was, in my child eyes,
Like the inclusive world —
Confucian, Jewish, Catholic, and even Protestant —
Everything he read and loved
On quiet Sunday mornings
When his wife, fearfully,
Loved him and tried to understand.

Charles B. Tinkham

THREE POEMS

Bombs

Once I heard a man who has some reputation
as a poet, critic, and factotum of language
declare that it was impossible to slip the Bomb
into a poem. The fact, he said in frosty tones,
transcends the symbol. (I think he paraphrased
a textbook he had written.)

I agreed,

until his teeth had trapped the sirloin
poised on his fork: after a chew or two,
damn if a thread of red juice didn't stitch
its way along his shiny chin. So I *wrote* a poem
with the Bomb in it, which some fool editor
is going to publish in an autumn issue.
Clearly there are several worlds of possibility,
which, in contradiction to my primitive physics,
must occupy the same time at the same space.
It seems also true that the time they occupy
is not really occupied at all: it is a huge
hole blown in that universe where Johannes,
his textbook, and I used to eat dinner.

Donald W. Baker

Les Revenants

You are back from everywhere you were,
Expensive tickets exhausted, passport soiled
Like the laundry, *Gemütlichkeit* lost somewhere.
The prize anecdote spoiled

By a friend who has been there before.

So freedom is not an absence
 From executive hours in gray suits,
 Nor one thousand dollars and no cents
 Spent on calvados, lederhosen, cheroots,
 And a whole night with a Moroccan whore.

Donald W. Baker

The New Junior High School

Strict as a suburb, this recent block of America,
 Vivid with function and taxes. Progress machined
 into bronze,
 Aluminum, marble. Metallurgical brain of America
 Polished for speech and inspection. From entrance of
 glass
 The orderly shrubs descend to supervised
 playgrounds,
 Parade the macadamed approaches. On eagle-topped
 staff
 The flag of Tippecanoe and Vincennes flaps at the
 sun.
 Panel and window are brilliant with wealth, wealth,
 wealth.

Inside, the controls. The contemplative hum of
 devices
 Adjusting the heat and humidity. Dustless the
 shimmering
 Floors and flawless the sea-green walls, the vigorous
 light.
*Mechanical, Principal's Office, Boys. Counselor's
 Room*
 For adjustable children. GYMNASIUM.
 AUDITORIUM.

Aseptic with glass, antiseptic with tile, the
 classrooms
 Exude seduction to chalk, make arithmetic epicurean.
 Greenboard and desk are sterile with health, health,
 health.

Committees and councils of highly responsible
 citizens,
 Planners and schemers, righteous proclaimers of
 numbers:
 Is it to be distinguished from the cooperative bank,
 The latest prison, the foyer of the psychiatric clinic?
 —Listen. Far away the sea weeps, the wind staggers
 the cedars,
 The nautilus roars for the cocked ear, and the
 unlocked mind
 Wanders the tide-swept beaches, marvels at language
 of gulls
 And grasses, at histories printed by naked feet in the
 sand.

Allocate dollars for buses. Apportion space by the
 square
 And air by the cube. Insist on the Pledge and the
 Bible.
 Install the enlightening screen, the teaching machine.
 Adjust the curriculum, cleverly stagger the schedule.
 —Look. Near my window adjustable daughters
 (units of family),
 Unbudgeted eyes reflecting the sky (a unit of
 physics),
 Are picking unscheduled spring beauties (units of
 botany)
 To allot in a cheeseglass of water their unit of love.

Donald W. Baker

CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE

Carlos Drummond de Andrade is the most important poet of the second phase of Brazilian Modernism, a literary phase that began with him in 1930|. Born in Itabira in the state of Minas Gerais, October 31, 1902, Drummond—today an archivist at the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro—has provoked more passionate discussion and a wider range of differing interpretations than any other modern poet in Brazil. Among younger Brazilian artists, writers, poets, and critics—Drummond is undoubtedly the most admired intellectual.

Alienated from “everything in life that is open and talkative,” Drummond is hard as diamond in his sarcasm and irony: that is the Mineiro in him. He is economical of means that persevere to heroic ends: that is the Scottish ancestry in his blood. He is grateful for little things, wants to live and love “without mystification”: that is the Carioca he would like to become. After a generation of constant literary growth, Drummond has achieved in his poetry a perfect fusion of sensibility and reason: that is the history of his genius.

These thirteen poems that I have translated into English, with the help of Yolanda Leite, represent Drummond in his various moods and phases over the past thirty years. The poet himself selected the poems for translation.

John Nist

Rio de Janeiro
15 October 1961

THIRTEEN POEMS
BY CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE
Translated by John Nist

Childhood

To Abgar Renault

My father mounted and rode to the fields.
My mother sat sewing at home.
My little brother slept.
Alone, a boy among mango trees,
I read the story of Robinson Crusoe.
A long story that never ends.

At noon, white with light, a voice that learned
to lullaby in long-ago slavery—and never forgot—
called us for coffee.
Coffee black as the black old woman,
tasty coffee,
good coffee.

My mother kept sitting and sewing,
looking at me:
—Shhh. . . Don't wake the baby.
Then at the cradle where a mosquito whined.
And she sighed . . . how deeply!

Far away my father rode
in the endless brush of the farm.

And I didn't know that my story
was more beautiful than Robinson Crusoe's.

Santa Claus in Reverse

To Alfonso Arinos

Santa Claus came in through the back door
(in Brazil chimneys are not practicable),
came in as cautious as a husband after a spree.
Fumbling in the dark, he flipped on the switch
and light struck the submissive things,
things that endured as things in the mystery
of Christmas.

Santa Claus cased the kitchen with clever eyes,
found a cheese and ate it.

Then he took from his pocket a cigarette
he didn't want to light.

Maybe he was afraid of setting fire to his
artificial beard

(in Brazil every Santa Claus is clean-shaven),
and he walked through the moon-white hall.

—That is the children's room.

Santa went in, his mind made up.

The children lay dreaming of another, more
beautiful, Christmas —

but their shoes bulged with toys:

soldiers women elephants ships

and a celluloid president of the republic.

Santa Claus squatted and dumped all that stuff
in his endless red cotton handkerchief.

He made a bundle and tied a knot, but he drew
it so tight

that, inside, women elephants soldiers president
fought—because of the squeeze.

The children slept on.

Far-off, cockcrow announced the birth of Christ.
Santa Claus quietly returned to the kitchen,
switched off the light, and left by the back door.

In the kitchen-garden, Christmas moonlight blessed
the vegetables.

Souvenir of the Ancient World

Clara walked in the garden with the children.
The sky arched green over the cut grass,
the water ran golden under the bridges,
other elements waved: blue, rose, orange;
a policeman smiled, bicycles wheeled past,
a girl stepped on the lawn to catch a bird,
the whole world—Germany, China—everything lay
hushed around Clara.

The children looked at the sky: it was not forbidden.
Mouth, nose, eyes were open. No danger.
Clara feared only flu, heat, insects.
Clara feared missing the eleven o'clock streetcar,
waiting for letters slow to arrive,
not always being able to wear a new dress. But she
walked in the garden, in the morning!
They had gardens, they had mornings in those days!

Confession

I did not love my fellow man enough,
I did not eradicate hookworm or cure the itch.
I merely uttered a few musical words,
late at night—when I returned from the party.

I gave without giving and kissed without kissing.
(Blind perhaps is he who hides his eyes
under the in-a-door bed.) And in the half-moon
treasures fade away, the choicest ones.

From what was left, how could I make a man
and everything he implies of gentleness:
of vegetable agreements, murmurs
of laughter, surrender, love and pity?

I did not love even myself enough—
almost, but no. I loved nobody.
Except for that bird—it was diving blue and crazy—
which exploded against a wing of the plane.

Science Fiction

A man from Mars met me on the street
and backed away from my human impossibility.
Afraid, he thought: How can such a being,
who annuls his life
in the very process of living,
exist?

The man from Mars walked off, and I followed.
I wanted him for a witness.
But refusing to enter a dialogue, he evaporated
into the problem-starred air.

And I stood alone in myself, abandoned by myself.

Quadrille

John loved Teresa who loved Raymond
who loved Mary who loved Jack who loved Lili
who loved nobody.
John went to the States, Teresa to a convent,
Raymond died in an accident, Mary stayed an old
maid,
Jack committed suicide, and Lili married J. Pinto
Fernandes —
who was not a character in this story.

Boy Crying in the Night

In slow and lukewarm night, dead soundless night,
a boy cries.

His cry beyond the wall, the light behind
the windowpane—
are lost in the shadow of muffled steps,
of exhausted voices.

And yet, I hear even the drop of medicine falling
upon the spoon.

A boy cries in the night, behind the wall,
beyond the street,
far away a boy cries, maybe in another city,
perhaps in another world.

And I see the hand that lifts the spoon,
while the other holds the head,
and I see the oily thread trickling down
the boy's chin,
trickling down the street, trickling through the city
(only a thread).

And nobody in the world exists except that boy
crying.

The Itabiran's Confession

For several years I lived in Itabira.
First of all, I was born in Itabira.
That's why I'm sad, proud: made of iron.
Ninety percent iron in the sidewalks.
Eighty percent iron in the souls.
And this alienation from everything in life
that is open and talkative.

The will to love, which paralyzes my work,
comes from Itabira, from its womanless, horizonless,
white nights.

And the habit of suffering, so full of distraction,
is a sweet heritage from Itabira.

From Itabira I have a few gifts to offer you now:
this Saint Benedict by the old saint-maker

Alfredo Duval;

this tapir hide spread on the sofa in the living room;
this pride, this bowed head . . .

Once I owned gold, owned cattle, owned plantations.
Today I am a public official.

Itabira is only a photograph on the wall.
But how it hurts!

Big World

No, my heart is not bigger than the world.
My heart is much smaller.
Not even my sorrows fit in it.
That's why I prefer to tell about me.
That's why I strip myself,
that's why I shout for attention,
that's why I haunt the newspapers, expose myself
 crudely in bookshops:
I need everybody.

Yes, my heart is very small.
Only now do I see that men do not fit in it.
Men stand outside, they are in the street.
The street is immense. Bigger, much bigger
 than I expected.
But the street too hasn't room for all men.
The street is smaller than the world.
The world is big.

You understand how big the world is.
You know the ships that carry oil and books,
 meat and cotton.
You have seen the different pigmentations of men,
the different sufferings of men,
you know how difficult it is to endure all that,
 to pile up all that
in the lonely breast of one man . . . without an
 eruption.

Shut your eyes and forget.
Hear the water on the windowpanes,
so calm. It advertises nothing.
Yet it drains onto the hands,

so calm! flows, flooding everything . . .
Will the sunken cities be reborn?
The drowned men—will they come back?
My heart doesn't know.

Stupid, foolish and fragile my heart.
Only now do I see
how sad it is not to know certain things.
(In the solitude of my private person
I have forgotten the language
men use to communicate.)
A world ago, I listened to the angels,
the sonatas, the poems, the pitiful confessions.
I never heard a human voice.
Truly, I am very poor.

A world ago, I traveled to
mythical lands, easy to live in,
islands minus problems, but tiresome and calling for
suicide.

My friends sailed to the islands.
Islands ruin a man.
Yet some of my friends have survived
and brought news
that the world, the big world is growing every day,
part fire and part love.

Now then, my heart too can grow.
Part love and part fire,
part life and part fire,
my heart grows thirty feet and explodes.
—Oh, future life! we will invent you.

The Elephant

Out of my few resources
I manufacture an elephant.
A piece of wood
pulled out of old furniture
may prop him up.
And I will fill him with cotton,
with silk, with sweetness.
The paste will hold in place
his floppy ears.
The trunk winds:
it is the happiest feature
of his architecture.
But there are also his tusks,
made of that pure material
which I cannot imitate.
What ivory wealth to be
tumbling in the dust of the circus

without damage or depravation.
And there are finally the eyes,
where in deposit dwells
the most fluid and permanent
part of the elephant,
innocent of all fraud.

Here is my poor elephant
ready to go out
to look for friends
in a tiresome world
that no longer believes in animals
and places no trust in things.
Here he is: an impressive and fragile
mass, who fans himself
and lumbers slowly along,
his hide stitched
with flowers of cloth
and clouds—allusions
to a more poetic world
where love reassembles
the natural forms.

There goes my elephant
through a crowded street,
but the people won't look at him—
not even so they can laugh
at his tail, which threatens
to abandon him.
He is full of grace, though
his legs are no help
and his overstuffed belly
sags to the point of collapse
at the slightest touch.
He demonstrates elegantly

his minimum of life,
and not one soul in town
is willing
to take to himself
from that sensitive body
the fugitive image,
the gait so clumsy—
but hungry and touching.

But hungry for pitiful
beings and situations,
for meetings under the moonlight
in the deepest ocean,
beneath the roots of trees
or in the bosom of shells,
for lights that do not blind
and yet shine through
the thickest trunks.
That gait which moves
without squashing the plants
on the battlefield
in its search for places,
secrets, episodes
unrecorded in any book,
that gait whose style
only the wind, the leaves,
the ant recognize,
but men ignore—
because they dare show themselves
under a curtained peace
and only to lid-blinded eyes.

And now late at night
my elephant returns,
but returns tired out,

his staggering pads
melt away in the dust.
He did not find
what he wanted,
what we need,
my elephant and I—
what I love to use for disguise.
Exhausted from seeking,
his vast machinery breaks down
like the tearing of paper.
The paste unsticks,
and all his inner stuff—
forgiveness, tenderness,
feather, cotton—
gushes out on the carpet
like a dismantled myth.
Tomorrow again I begin.

The Witch**To Emil Farhat**

In this city of Rio,
where two million people live,
I am alone in my room,
I am alone in America.

But am I really alone?
A moment ago a noise
proclaimed life at my side.
True, it is not human life,
but it is life. And I feel the witch
caught in the tropic of light.

Where two million people live!
And I didn't need so many . . .
I needed only a friend,
one of those quiet, discreet friends
who read a line of Horace
but secretly influence
life, love, flesh.
I am alone, I have no friend,
and at this late hour

how can I try to find a friend?

And I didn't need so many.
I needed only a woman
who could have entered this very instant
to accept my tender hunger
and save from destruction
this mad moment of wild love
that I have to offer.

In a city where two million people live,
many a likely woman
stands asking herself in the mirror,
paces up and down the time lost
before morning comes
to bring milk, the newspaper and calm.
And yet, at this empty hour
how can I find a woman?

This city of Rio!
I have so many caressing words,
I know the buzzing of insects,
I understand the most violent kisses,
I have traveled, fought, learned.
I am surrounded by eyes,
hands, loves, quests.
But if I try to break through to another,
what I find is only the night
and a terrible loneliness.

Companions, hear me!
This turbulent presence
seeking to shatter the night
is not simply the witch.
It is rather an inner confession
on the outgoing breath of a man.

José

What now, José?
The party's over,
the lights are off,
the gang has gone,
the night's grown cold,
what now, José?
what now, Joaquim?
what now, you?
you who are nameless,
who make fun of others,
you who write verses,
who love, protest,
what now, José?

Got no woman,
got no speech,
got no love,
can't drink,
can't smoke,
can't even spit,
the night's grown cold,
daybreak has stalled,
the streetcar has stalled,
laughter has stalled,
utopia has stalled,
and everything's over,
and everything's fled,
and everything's mouldy,
what now, José?

What now, José?
Your sweet talk,
your moment of fever,

your feasting and fasting,
your library,
your gold mine,
your suit of glass,
your incoherence,
your hatred—what now?

Key in hand,
you want to open the door—
there is no door;
you want to drown in the sea,
but the sea has dried up;
you want to go to Minas—
Minas no longer exists;
José, what now?

If you could scream,
if you could groan,
if you could play
a Viennese waltz,
if you could sleep,
if you could tire,
if you could die . . .
But you don't die—
you are tough, José.

Alone in the dark
like a beast of the wild,
without any theory of gods,
without even a naked wall
to lean against,
without a black horse
to gallop away,
you march, José!
Whereto, José?

Being

The son I didn't have
would be a man today.
Fleshless, nameless,
he runs in the breeze.

Sometimes I meet him
in the crossing of clouds.
He leans on my shoulder,
weightless as sunlight.

I ask my son,
object of air:
In what grotto or shell
do you remain abstract?

There, where I lay,
his breath answers me:
You did not understand me,
and yet I called to you,

as I still call to you
(far away, beyond love)
where nothing, everything
yearns to take shape.

The son I didn't have
creates for himself.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade
—translated by John Nist

ADVICE TO A PROPHET. *By Richard Wilbur. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$3.75.*

This poet's suave grace with words, his moderate and humane wit and his total control of form have been growing from book to book. He now emerges as one of the truly "elegant" poets of our time — and one possessing tremendous excitement. This is surely Wilbur's finest volume to date, one packed with drive, dominated by satisfying emotional responses.

THE MACMILLAN POETS. *A series.*

The lack of profits from publishing books of poetry (with a few rather spectacular exceptions) is quite well known and sadly documented. All the more credit then goes to a company like Macmillan for the efforts it has been putting into this continuing series. The volumes are uniformly handsome, well made and expertly chosen. Some recent titles in the series are: "Medusa in Gramercy Park" by Horace Gregory; "Beasts in Clothes" by Harold Witt; "Poems from a Cage" by Dilys Laing; "Initial A" by David Schubert; "Selected Poems" by Francis Golfing. As you can see, established writers, some less well known and, in the case of David Schubert, one who died in 1946 but whose work is gathering increasing interest. Any or all of the titles are worth your attention. All cost less than \$2.

IN THE STONEWORKS. *By John Ciardi. Rutgers University Press. \$3.50.*

THE PURGATORIO. *By Dante Alighieri. Translated by John Ciardi. Mentor. 75c.*

You can never tell where John Ciardi will turn up next. In this first volume we find him among the "earthy" poets. It is a collection of strong and brilliant poems that assault us directly. The verse and subject matter grasp our attention at once and hold firmly. In the second volume we find Ciardi among the scholars. This is the second part of Dante's immense work Ciardi has translated and as in his version of "The Inferno," again we have the

hard formalities of the original's *terza rima* loosely rendered into more flexible modern form. This may not be strictly Dante but it is infinitely smooth and readable as English. It may even help to make Dante less talked about and more read.

A MARIANNE MOORE READER. *Viking. \$6.95.*

The mind of Marianne Moore is a wondrously varied thing. It ranges in interest from poetic "observations" to book reviews, baseball, translating LaFontaine into witty English, painting, and the naming of automobiles. Samples of all these interests are here. What more need be said? She delights us as she always has with these treats and tricks for eyes, ears and perceptive intelligences.

WORKS AND DAYS. *By Irving Feldman. Little, Brown. \$3.95.*

This is one of the most promising first books to come along in many years. Written with marked deference to the Jewish vision of the streets of New York, it has none of the verbal or emotional excesses that often mar this type of personal poetry. Feldman is a craftsman who can handle not only language but the obviously theatrical aspect of his personality. He is wholly honest and we can watch him with a good deal of interest and expectation.

SKELETON OF LIGHT. *By Thomas Vance. University of North Carolina. \$3.50.*

It comes as refreshment to realize that some young American poets are still primarily concerned with the spirit of things. Vance is such a one, and a very good one. His poetry is pure lyric that intellectually feels rather than tells. He wins us by image, not force — but he *does* win us!

NOTE: Two recent volumes of special interest to our readers: "Modern Brazilian Poetry" translated with an Introduction by John Nist. (Indiana University Press) Many of these selections were first published in the Journal. "Doors into Poetry" by Chad Walsh. (Prentice-Hall) This is a new textbook by one of the Journal's editors.