

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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MICHAELIS THE MAGICIAN

took off the hood,
unhitched traces,
said:

Go twenty paces,
walk twenty more,
lift the earth,
and what you see,
report.

Grateful for release
the beast reported:
I saw something
that over a hairshirt
wore silk.
Another that,
over lace,
wore nettles and stone.
Another, the harder I looked,
became bare, and the last,
as I looked away,
became cloth.

Michaelis the Magician
struck him hard between the eyes.
He shuddered,
and became man.

Brian Swann

ORPHEUS

1.

I have a story to tell you, lady, some
old lie about a poet. You
will not believe it.

We sit here waiting
for something extraordinary to happen,
something to blast us out of the polite
restrictions of a proper conversation,
something big. I have a story, lady,
that will raise your hair,
a calculated bomb to blow you up.

Listen:

Orpheus charmed trees
and the waves of the sea
with his improbable melodies

(being Greek, his profile
was extraordinarily handsome)

2.

(Chanson Blanche D'Orphée)

On this hill, lady,
I play my lute,
enchancing birds
till they sit stock still
while ants
dance
and my words move mountains.

(Chanson Noire D'Orphée)

The cave is dark
and hot as hell.
My baby's there,

there on a slab in this god-forsaken place

I sing, then, sing
out of the bitter fury of my veins.

3.

Walt Whitman walks on the harbor, watching
sea-gulls scatter, his beard full of lice.
There he goes, with his body electric,
chanting his chansons in the morning,
never shaving.

Walt eyes the sailors, with their bodies electric,
electric to him, Walt Whitman,
chanting his chants in the morning,
never shaving.

4.

Garcia Lorca chants Walt Whitman—
Orpheus in the saddle,
his beautiful eyes are gleaming.
Never will there be an Andalusian
as handsome as he.

Now the worms eat him,
now the worms chew up Garcia Lorca
shot in the head for political reasons.

5.

I don't understand this at all.
Think of Tennyson,
of Longfellow.
They were poets.

Why must you be so unpleasant?

6.

Consider Orpheus, then :
 old & bald & lonely
 (with an eye for the ladies)

he goes on singing, singing
 in a city run down by barbarians

(on the high & honeying hill
 the lovers—)

Jack Foley

THE WILL TO FIND

I now begin exploring all you are,
 I enter tangled moods that veil your bones.
 I came as I have come to all unknowns,
 Cautiously, beginning from afar,

Approaching slow, like a storm-turned trader ship
 That tentatively scouts an unmapped shore
 Before it ventures in, riding the roar
 That breaks against a narrow, rocky strip.

I came like Leif the Norseman: long at the helm,
 His bloodshot eyes straining toward rising rock —
 Did months of northern waters overwhelm
 His rigid dream? Did he for an instant balk?
 With all the cold Atlantic in his mind
 Did he, one moment, fear the will to find?

Paul Smyth

TWO POEMS**Widow**

Another night unfurls its million leaves of shadow.

Cars go by on the highway, one and another:
faint hiss of the lights against my skin—
white lights, colder than steel.

I lie so still I am only another leaf.
I lie alone in my bed. I feel no grief.

My bed, still charged with summer,
is hot like a body, hot like sunstruck earth,
hot and flowering around me
with darkness.

Accident

Accept the fact, the tire is going to blow:
there on the highway the car will begin to sway;
for a moment things will wobble, an unsteadiness
will take possession; then the veering, then the
incoherence,

and the invisible wolf who lives inside
will come howling out.

Sandra M. Gilbert

SHADOW AND STONE**1.**

Your shadow twinned you to the garden wall
Before your final going. Now, at will,
The wall recites your shadow to me still
As, stone on mortared stone, your outlines fall
Exactly into seeming. I stare
At nothing there
and see it all.

2.

Polished, chiseled, piled,
Beautifully abused,
The stone at its core remains
Undisturbed, unused.

Strung gems, the heavy anchor
Leashed to the convict's chain,
The Sphinx—each tightly sings
The selfsame hard refrain:

“Unfeeling, I endure.”
Just so the pebble lies,
Aloof in soaking rain,
Indifferent to the skies.

Such bleak placidity
Of ever-smoothing skin
Never lets a drop
Of caring enter in.

3.

Skin-deep, your shadow stirs, but cannot lure
Its author back; nor can my mind release
Its fancies yet, unclasp a myth, police

The wayward hope. I turn to stone, endure
The trickeries of light, and face
My shadowed place
In stony peace.

Eliana Beam

WINDOW

As a teenager I spent night after night driving
lead-footed through the plowed heart of Ohio,
in my father's truck going some other place
past dark farms, each with its white house
and a front window framing an easy chair
and the head of the family reading
or dozing in the lamp's warm oval.

Ten years of driving into tonight,
coming alone back home to Delaware
and wife and children past white houses
still with a dreamt fear; the road turning,
the car slowing and now, inside, in the chair,
in the soft, eventual circle of defining light,
myself glancing up as the headlights flash past.

Robert Flanagan

THE ENCHANTMENT

Sweet Merlin, searching that red book
 as if the quick orange fox and the green tree
 and the whole earth swung from it—
 will a dragon seize you,
 grapple and roar and eat you,
 or a goblin spring at you,
 if you don't know the right rune?
 don't you ever tire
 of cobwebs in moonlight
 and bending and staring
 and spiders and pouring
 and crouching and muttering
 over what wasn't and can't be?

No, Madam. I never tire.

But do you know moonlight
 only when it dusts the ragged pages
 overspread with your beard?
 so many things like moonlight—
 webbed casement, silver tower,
 spring leaves and winding rivers,
 an eagle's wings and maiden's hair—
 even the beard of a dour old man
 sitting here muttering and scowling.

Ah, Merlin, doesn't the moonlight ever
 creep through your door,
 circle you, tug at you
 with its small hand?
 have you never thought—

Ah, Merlin—

In the meadows of the moon
 beside a shining sea,
 each bush becomes a silver rune,
 an enchantment every tree.

I know the uses for moonlight,
Madam.

But Merlin, why so cross?
I've only come to amuse you!

Nimue, I would not be a great magician
if I could not read hearts,
hearts and the maze of minds.
I know yours, see the web,
know you intend my death.
but you are just another face,
another face—with lines—so—
and angles—so—nothing more.
I am weary.
let an old man study.

But how can you accuse me
who stands waiting at your door
as at none other—
waiting only to please you
in an idle hour?
it is hard to be rebuked
for such intentions.

I only thought that,
in all your life,
you have never seen

moonlight on grass
and silver showers
through golden hours—
never have these passed
hard door of your tower!

Can't one say these things
who has come dancing

along the moonlight
by the river?

I am too old for dancing.
choose someone younger
to dance along your river.

Merlin, it is hard
to stand at your door,
as at none other—
hard for a proud heart
to have to ask again—
only that you talk to me
and not growl.

Only that you would come,
come an hour just to see
moonlight on the grass
and silver showers
and the moon's white flowers—
will you not look
from your high tower?

Nimue, I am a strong man,
high, high in counsel,
the thought behind the Table.
a man with never any need
but for his books
and his own counsel.
never have I needed idle talk
of flowers and rain
to rest my heart upon.
never have I needed a young face
to make me happy.
for I am a strong man.
would you have them say
that Merlin at the last was vanquished?

But a strong man too needs rest.
you cannot think to always stand
stubborn as an old tree
striving against the wind?
what harm to think of a place
where there is no labor
and no need for strength?

Nimue, I am a wise man.
I have studied long seasons
all the world's turnings—
seen the stag run and the grass spring
and the snow melt and the planets turn.
I have seen the earth
from a great distance
and therefore know it well.
and I have seen the heart
from a high, high distance
and therefore know it very, very well.
would you have them say
that Merlin proved a fool at last?

But surely a wise man knows
a man may be so wise
as to miss everything—
the hart's grace
and the hart's speeding,
the grass springing
and the earth laughing.
surely a wise man knows
that to miss these things
is to make his mind a cage?

For the heart can take no rest
when vanquished by the mind,
for then whatever its quest,
it always seeks, it cannot find.

Nimue, I am an old man,
have seen many seasons.
my sun is not young now
as it once was.
its rays will not linger.
I have learned to accept
wind and snow and rain
and my time's ending.
would you turn me now
against myself with your pleading?
would you sing of spring
to one who sees only winter?
do not turn an old man against himself--
would you have them say
that Merlin showed a child at last?

Nimue, I know what you intend.
but stand here a moment.
I would say your face is fair
if I've remembered how to judge.
just the face to beguile an old man
with songs of spring.
I wonder
if I could remember
when have I looked last?
when have I ever looked, I wonder?
I wonder?

yes, your face is fair.
when have I really seen
what angles, lines
that formed a face
were really doing?
your eyes could sparkle
eternal bright stars
or be the cool well
which has no ending.
so could many another's eyes,

were Merlin's luck better.
 your arms could be beacons
 to guard against the night.
 so could many another's arms,
 had Merlin been wiser.

Surely I should have seen
 lines, angles come together
 to form some other face
 than one who would seize my heart
 only to sting it?

For I see you now,
 all your intent.
 see Merlin too
 and all his doings.
 and in the end,
 who will judge between us?
 I have watched the sun and moon,
 earth's seasons and its goings,
 the fox and earth's turnings—
 leaf casement raven tower
 sun stars grass rain
 moon shadows endless runes.
 never did I try to solve the greatest—
 rune that combines
 seasons and their goings
 fox and earth's turnings
 leaf casement raven tower
 sun stars grass rain
 moon shadows all other runes —
 all in any face
 under the sun!
 and in the heart's yearning.

So Merlin has need too,
 and a human face
 is more than he thought.

Perhaps Merlin has been too strong
to be strong any longer.
perhaps Merlin has become a child,
seeing newly if too late.
perhaps Merlin is a fool at last—
this his only wisdom.

All your promptings,
all your webs,
hold truth among their snares.

Let us go.

But think—they will say in Camelot
that Merlin, he was a wise man,
but for all that, a fool at the last.

Child, life is more a joke—
and a better one—
than they can ever understand.

And in Camelot they will say
that Merlin, he knew sun and moon,
but not his own heart.

Ah, Nimue, life is more a joke—
though not too bitter a one—
than you will ever know
through all your webs.

But come, I cannot blame you.
Merlin is the cause
of Merlin's enchantment.

Your arms will seem sweet
while I have them.
That is enough.

But Merlin, I fear
should they prove not sweet enough—

for who can tell—
that you should blast me by some magic.
would you frighten a poor woman so?

No, Nimue. I am finished with magic,
and with all my learning!
it was dear to me once
but all things change.
come, let us go

To the meadows of the moon
where I will hold you well,
where we will learn to read the runes
of moonlight and all its spells.
to the meadows of the moon
where I will hold you well.
I'll keep you in my arms,
we'll listen to the grass,
I'll keep you from all harm,
and let all troubles pass.

Earth is turning,
night, night is burning—
it ruins my learning!
now come with me
and search with me
for that singing sea,
for the meadows of the moon
and each tree a silver rune—
though there is no returning!

Mary Kelly

JUBILEE

Well here I am Lord
still,
like Samuel.
A little deaf
with age
but if you face me
when you speak
and raise your voice a bit
I'll hear
because I know your ways.
It's just that I move
slowly now
and sometimes I
forget.

Adelyn Dougherty

MACHINE

Twilight. Clambake. Basement hall
(that Westbrook Rod & Gun Club,
O heart aflame). Nearby dump fires
dance. The dawn will be brown.
Clam water, drawn butter, shells
& fingers sticky with clams
like entrails or genitals,
mouthfuls of sand. Here smoke, beer,
& O, the sinister guitars.
My brothers dance in clangor.
The clam cooker laughs. Flashbulbs
even flash. I am dancing with Machine

who served me clams, le dernier cri
she says she teaches me. Soon
music dies, I thank her, I bow.
The drunk young brothers press
their swooning little thralls
outside the john along dark walls.

“Machine wears her skirts so high
we see where she’s greased.” Adage.
Her teeth burst her lips beneath
a knuckle fleshed, her thighs
pyramid watermelon pink, greased
& shining, red hair a little coarse
on her head. She scissor &
teeth creamy gears, she crack open
hoss chestnut ball, she red hairy.

A smart aleck tries to mash her.
She hits him with her beer. He hits
her back, soaks her clothes & hair,
crashes glass, foam, splinters.
I touch her arm, she flinches.
Go, I send her, to the john.
A blonde congratulates the masher:
“Machine,” she says, “is in there
combing her hair like mad.”

Midnight. Garbage cans heaped
with grays & browns: shells.
Romances vanish into night closets,
car seats, couches, dirty sheets,
getting greased. Machine comes out
composed, polite: “Goodby, good night.”
Goodby, you clamshell teeth,
you rocks our oceans
crash against, & break out white.

Kenneth Rosen

ORALS

Half of them cough and the crippled one wittily grunts toward me, you remind me of Theda Bara. A distant relative I blush because it's true. Already his eyes are full of no. Smoke boils up from the table, the scraped faces freeze on me until I wish I hadn't come. Suddenly a glass voice clangs and what do you think of adultery? Now it's not easy to be clever under his florescent glare but I look right back and ask how that's relevant. He doesn't like that at all, scratches an ear and wants to know if Tottel's third cousin by a later marriage of course is significant in 19th century bibliography and my God he's serious I sweat inside my specially lengthened drab suit beginning to think of oceans, imagining that the walls could drift out slowly and even the floor slide away, not able to suppose just then why Marvel didn't write the same poems that Donne did briefly in 72 seconds or where Fulke Greville was while Spenser was having his fire. The two faces I thought I knew keep dissolving, their eyes float to shelves where words live predictably. Are you certain of those dates a British accent whines through teeth that have never lived outside New York City. A stranger bends into his shoes as if the laces were

nastily disappointing. We know your record
 the Milton man spits through a belch but
 you understand the requirements. Couldn't
 you just have a baby?

Lyn Lifshin

JONATHAN SCHWARZ TAKES TO THE AIR

JONATHAN SCHWARZ	and on a
LEANED AGAINST	winter day
THE CORRAL AND	he flew
THE SWEAT ROLLED	his solo flight
DOWN THE CRACK OF	and far below
HIS ASS AND HE	against the
SAID TO HIMSELF	winter fields
I'VE RODE THIS	other
FENCE IN SUMMER	olive green
SPRING AND FALL	and umber
FOR THIRTY YEARS	saw the
BY HORSE AND JEEP	shadow
PECKER-DEEP IN MUD	of his cessna
AND SPITTING COTTON	trail
BROWN WITH DUST	a marsh hawk
AND I TELL YOU NOW	with a patch
BEFORE I DIE	of snow
I'M GONNA FLY	above her tail

Archie Laun

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS

Sun.

79° at 9 A.M.

slightly below us in a shaded river hollow, young corn rows are coming up on the diagonal but not yet knee-high. Greenhill Cemetery is just across the dirtroad from the church. today is Sunday, the fourth day of July.

the first bell is ringing now.

(Bill Prosen gets 50¢ to come over early and pull the rope ten times.) why does everyone here lie still? turn over then turn over .

we can speak as we can speak (even try

to interpret sound if we can only remember.)

turn over all the ears which have been

pressed down for some while

against the solid silence

of old, old rocks.

shake out the grubs, the fungus, fallen seeds and sand

and listen to today.

the fourth day of the seventh month:

(The Age Of Independence).
 (Let The Sunshine In).

This ear hears echoes from the troposphere:
 Guns of unreason exploding some place;
 Unseasonable crying; also thin shrieks of highflying
 birds, passed by computered machines
 on their way into other time;
 Reproduced noises
 Electronic Video edited
 Not face-to-face words.

This ear hears contrapuntal singing or is it chanting:

Gloria in Excelsis Deo.

Deus mortuus est.

Forgive us our sins

as we forget our commandments.

The dead will *have* to remind them somehow that

Forever (anywhere) is a *long long* time.

My God, My God,

(they are questioning at random)
 Why hast *thou* forsaken *me*?

in the church
 the piano snaps in this humidity.
 and the people scattered in the pews
 move their fans on sticks a little faster for a while;
 and uncross their legs (perspired together) and cross them the other way;
 and cross themselves the right way;
 and cross the velvet and walnut trays with (let me count the) silver (ways);
 and cross the country graveyard on their hurried worried
 way out.
 our ears lying up against the grassroots
 hear their footsteps passing about,
 and the sound of their souls inevitably passing on. Amen. Amen.
 Sun.
 90° at forehead-dripping noon.
 (hard on
 people celebrating the Fourth of July falling on Sunday.)
 carnivals
 may not operate in little towns on Sunday, until after sundown.

'till then, only the ferris-wheels of the mind shall go around. so the shooting gallery lady, Gloria, doesnt bother with any underwear and invites the 18-year-old-guess-your-weight-for-25¢-boy to slip over after lunch and guess her weight, for free. "Mac . . .

Where is that damned kid, anyhow?

I told him not to get into mischief in this town . . .

It's Sunday."

"He aint in any mischief, Bill. He's in Gloria, I think."

"For crissake — on *Sun* day?!

at *one* P. M.

in the middle of a *heatwave*

in *Illi nois*

Remind me not to hire *anybody* under 30 next year; and *that's • an • order!!!*"

You are old, Father William.

Mac in Gloria.

Gloria in Excelsis.

Paradise Pudding on the table

In the church picnic-grove . . .
 But the jello in it is melting rapidly.
 Fourscore and seven years ago
 Our forefathers brought forth
 The same as everybody today
 Brings forth: children . . .
 (Only then, there was more food.)

Sun.

100° in the shade at 3 P.M.

BANG!

"It's too *early* for firecrackers, Jeff and Jack;
 Mary-Sue you put your shoes back on right *this*
 minute; I dont care if you DO like to walk in clover
 with barefeet; there's bees in clover, you know;
 Get 'em on *now*, miss.
 And dont you kids run across those graves over there
 where you're playin' either."

"What'd she say?"

"Wait a minute; I have to put my shoes on;

She said not to run across these graves; She said
It isn't respectful of the dead."

"This one is Grandpa Stevens.

He hasn't been dead very long.

I saw him sittin' on the platform
only last year on the 4th. of July.

He had on an old brown uniform; and a hat.

"Jeff and me went by his window
that night after the fireworks

when he was takin' his clothes off, didn't we Jeff?

His shades were up and we

saw him undressin'; he had ribs

and all his skin hung off his

bones like wet Kleenexes. He put

his medals in a big matchbox

but his hands were shaking

when he tried to catch the thin string that you pull the light with;

and the string kept movin' about.

So finally Mr. Stevens

came in and put down the shades and

turned the light out
for him.

I wouldn't mind being a soldier and fightin' someday,
would you, Jeff?"

"Not fightin'.

But I'd hate to get old
and look that way."

You are young, little Jeff
and Jack and Mary-Sue.
Youth For America.
Help Keep America Beautiful. (Young.)
Keep your teeth straight and weight
down.

O beautiful for made-up eyes
for amber waves of hair.
And also for forest-lawns and flowers
and flags on grass graves everywhere.
But it comes to pass
in the Course of human events
that we shall all be only ribs

and other bones; and that our hands
shall shake when we think of
 putting out the light. Every night.
 (The \$64 question being
 whether we will wake up.)
 Or, we can sit up very late and
 read the Gettysburg Address and Hamlet
 to reassure ourselves
 that those, patient, under sod
 shall have a new birth;
 and that humanity
 surely shall not perish from the earth.
 Alas, poor Grandpa Stevens.
 Some know me. (well.) (once.)
BANG! BANG!

Moon.

85° at 9 P.M.

no breeze crinkling up the yellow reflection
 on the small man-made lake, smeared out shiny-wet and dark.
 sweaty people are packed into the park,

"Why?"

"Why?"

Well, why not, man? Look at it that way,

Why not ?? Why not ?"

(somebodyreallyoughttowriteabook.)

Charlotte A. Raines

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHERS

1.

Descartes gave us
the ghost in the machine.

Nobody like ghosts.

There are no ghosts
in our machines
some people argued.

The ghost just rides along
and doesn't drive
enjoys the ride
like Mr. Epiphenomenon
some said.

The ghost is there
all right
(and alas)

says Herbert Feigl.
But so what?
It don't bother
us mechanics at our work.

The ghost is really
a ghostly ghost
only a manner of speaking.
Use verbs instead of nouns
and watch him fade away
some say.

This poem is really a ghost.

2.

Berkeley has gone away darkly
because nobody is thinking him
not himself nor me nor you
nor God.

So let's set up a sort of roster
for Berkeley's sake
and read this poem
perpetually
and make Berkeley be.

3.

Kant is unable
kant is jargon
kant is tilting
kant is begging
kant is merry

Thy name

(for everyding)

shall be

(in somekind of Transcendence)

Immanuel.

4.

Let this bagel
explain Hegel.
Dough is all stuff
a mixture of
gaggles waggles
haggles draggles
in a word

the whole world
shaped somehow around
and by that awful

Absolute
hole.

5.

Wittgenstein is our Hoyle
drawing lines and goals and out-of-bounds
around swamps.

What can't be said
can't be thought.

Just try to imagine everything possible
only an unknowable wiggle
till what can be known
is read off the grids
we throw across the squiggle.

It's the that behind the how
that sucks us in
and we wade that void
naming without draining
futilely
despite Wittgenstein.

Robert L. Tyler

THE MUSKRAT

Blacker than the swirling silt
The muskrat rose
And scattered the moon like silver chub
Before his nose.

The look was permanent
He fixed on me—
Then the moon gathering itself
Like mercury.

Robert Siegel

DRIVING THROUGH WEST VIRGINIA*for R. J. Conley*

The snake on the sign
moves ;
I see it move
fast on the road ;
the car slams into the snake
right & left then
left & right frightened
left again between a ledge
& a coal tipple (its black
beams gone for firewood :
smell of eggs frying in
bacon grease).

There are lots of wood
houses with chimneys &
every house has a porch &
a swing on the porch & an
old man & his wife who sit in
the swing & glare back at
the world.

My world constricts in the snake's
squeeze ; I drive in
& out of the morning
& stop at the snake's head :
there is a town & a filling station.

The tall hillbilly rings
back the pump, wipes
several bugs' squashed lives
into a damp rag.
"Ya know," he says, "they are
sons a bitches in this world."
Back in the brush

a cat
screams into the hill
hunting field mice.

3 boys in a Charleston movie house
belch & fart between giggles. Like
3 night swimmers in a stone quarry
they burst from under their pile of
popcorn. They yell:

*run, you there,
listen,
Mr. Projection Man,
run the rape scene
again, ya hear?*

the knife in the sky
above
the neck
& body
bent like an S
the knife back in the sky
like a thin cloud
slips from the hand
startled
the fingers curl
& crack w/ the heat of the
blade it slips &
falls in technicolor.

I killed a blacksnake
as a boy in Southern Ohio
severing its head with my hoe;
in a sweat I cut again &
again into its cream colored
belly; it rolled from side to
side in the weeds
& would not die that day.

The snake's head bites
the tail of another snake
that moves & curls in
& out of the afternoon.
It rolls on its back
showing its white concrete
belly to the sun
& slides over a hill.

Dean Deter

IN CHICAGO, ON A BUS

In Chicago, on a bus, two ladies talked:
how they had breakfast with champagne
on the river-bank. It was 1928; it was
early October, and they saw a heron
in the faint light. The sun rose over
the river; the heron flew to remoter water.
Come, then, gentle ladies, let us return
there. An arm for each of you, I will wear
gray-striped trousers, a simple, open shirt.
And you in your pale dresses. We do not deny
the years, but go out the Midway, on 61,
through Joliet to the river, to have
breakfast with champagne, while a single
heron flies further for its wild places.

John Taggart

TRIAL

Reflections based on B. G. Mitchell's
 Parable of the Stranger (cf. *New Essays
 in Philosophical Theology*)

1.

What happened to the quivering night?
 When did he leave it, its long low
 Sheets of fog, rolling down
 Through labyrinths of knuckle-jointed fear?
 Where did I meet that stranger? The man who came
 As shadows come, and then grew into
 A darkling shape, a quiet presence, and more—
 An outstretched hand, assuring gaze,
 And smiling lips many secrets old.

Occupied city, with guns everywhere. Only
 A far-off echo now, and footsteps in the street
 To remind me. Nothing would have changed,
 No nagging throbs unnumbered
 From kaleidoscopic memories of what had been,
 What voice had faded from a lonelier storefront,
 Near a stiller fountain, lost in heavier fog.

Laughter that jostles, laughter that rips
 Lonely spurts of laughing ennui,
 Guns and searchlights and marching men,
 Smell of the grease and the T.N.T.
 Here is my city, here where once
 I said to myself "I'm free."

2.

After the night, I looked for him. He stood alone,
Yet seemed to all within our group a good fellow,
Whose sweat was certainly just as cheap as ours.
He worked all day with us. We all complained to him,
As men will do, and said "What good is all this,
All this drawn-out blazing toil?" We loaded wood,
And hoped to find ourselves a hero, knowing well
That in this doleful town of static laughter
Heroes are few.

A lover once, when all his world was laughter-lit,
Asked his heart this question: "Can any man be
certain

His faith won't crack, or chip, or rust,
Can he know somehow that
It won't be swept away by time's
Relentless swath?" A whispered answer
Is the only one that life and death
Will grant. The world can merely smile,
It never understands such silly babbling.

3.

I was that lover . . . and in that room,
I linger still amid the hundred sparks
That kindled once a thousand tiny flames
Of joy. But no more does my sun-baked heart
Find comfort in a prayer, a look,
A cup of water gently offered. I thirst the more. . .
Has that cold chalice passed away from me?

Days passed. He joined the enemy; and when he left,
He spoke no chiding words. And when I saw his eyes
(How strange they are in retrospect!) their
Darkened orbs pierced through me, past me,

Far beyond into an ancient dream.
My thomas-heart found no reply, night's chilling wind
Brought no relief along the ghostly streets.

Tear-stained eyelids, and eyes that rain
Endless rivers brimmed with despair.
Row upon row of marching soldiers
Muffled sounds of death in the air.
Night had not lost its wondrous spell,
But I forgot how to care.

4.

Occupied city, guns and searchers
Everywhere . . .

But sometime, when the long inquiry ends,
When the painful numbed feeling
Disappears, when winter finally closes out
Her bleak, bloodshot slumber,
I'll turn my gaze to greet
Once more the spring. There, a light,
Fragile, ineffable, will arise.

In a crowded room, I'll stand —
A child, but not afraid. I shall know
That death has vanished, as I feel
A cooling breath of purer air.
Then never shall I face the mist of
Shrouding darkness, but with childhope awakening

I shall reach out to the outstretched hand again,
To know the smile that's many secrets old.

Peter J. Murray

**AN EXAMPLE OF HOW A DAILY TEMPORARY
MADNESS CAN HELP A MAN GET THE JOB
DONE**

My brother knows the man
who really is Smokey the Bear.
I have seen a picture of him
wearing his other head
and smiling his human teeth
into the camera.

Days
he feels, walks, sweats,
and talks to campers.

Nights
he lives in Memphis
under the name of Simpson,
sleeping off the woods
and the smell of fire.

Mornings
he puts on the fur suit,
and goes to work
only a little madder
than the day before.

It is the stares he draws
driving
that keep him going.
The hairy head
slips over his,
and the darkness closes
around him, deep
and comfortable
as a growl.