

Flowers for Hitler  
by  
Leonard Cohen

Flowers for Hitler

Leonard Cohen

A NOTE ON THE TITLE

A  
while ago  
this book would  
have been called  
SUNSHINE FOR NAPOLEON,  
and earlier still it  
would have been  
called  
WALLS FOR GENGHIS KHAN

by the same author

poetry

SELECTED POEMS 1956-68  
THE SPICE-BOX OF EARTH  
THE ENERGY OF SLAVES

novels

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS  
THE FAVOURITE GAME

Leonard Cohen

Flowers for Hitler

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For Marianne



If from the inside of the Lager, a message could have seeped out to free men, it would have been this: Take care not to suffer in your own homes what is inflicted on us here.

Primo Levi



## What I'm Doing Here

I do not know if the world has lied  
I have lied  
I do not know if the world has conspired against love  
I have conspired against love  
The atmosphere of torture is no comfort  
I have tortured  
Even without the mushroom cloud  
still I would have hated  
Listen  
I would have done the same things  
even if there were no death  
I will not be held like a drunkard  
under the cold tap of facts  
I refuse the universal alibi

Like an empty telephone booth passed at night  
and remembered  
like mirrors in a movie palace lobby consulted  
only on the way out  
like a nymphomaniac who binds a thousand  
into strange brotherhood  
I wait  
for each one of you to confess

## The Hearth

The day wasn't exactly my own  
since I checked  
and found it on a public calendar.  
Tripping over many pairs of legs  
as I walked down the park  
I also learned my lust  
was not so rare a masterpiece.

Buildings actually built  
was planned with blood and fought  
men who rose to generals  
deserved an honest thought  
as I walked down the park.

I came back quietly to your house  
which has a place on a street.  
Not a single other house  
disappeared when I came back.  
You said some suffering  
had taught me that.

I'm slow to learn I began  
to speak of stars and hurricanes.  
Come here little Galileo --  
you undressed my vision --  
it's happier and easier by far  
or cities wouldn't be so big.

Later you worked over lace  
and I numbered many things  
your fingers and all fingers did.  
As if to pay me a sweet  
for my ardour on the rug  
you wondered in the middle of a stitch:  
Now what about those stars and hurricanes?

## Portrait of the City Hall

The diamonds of guilt  
The scrolls of guilt  
The pillars of guilt  
The colours of guilt  
The flags of guilt  
The gargoyles of guilt  
The spines of guilt

Listen, says the mayor, listen to the woodland birds,  
They are singing like men in chains.



## Congratulations

Here we are eating the sacred mushrooms  
out of the Japanese heaven  
eating the flower  
in the sands of Nevada

Hey Marco Polo  
and you Arthur Rimbaud  
friends of the sailing craft  
examine our time's adventure  
and jewelled house of Dachau  
Belsen's drunk fraternity

Don't your boats seem  
like floating violins  
playing Jack Benny tunes ?

The drawer's Condition on  
November 28, 1961

Is there anything emptier  
than the drawer where  
you used to store your opium ?  
How like a blackeyed susan  
blinded into ordinary daisy  
is my pretty kitchen drawer!  
How like a nose sans nostrils  
is my bare wooden drawer!  
How like an eggless basket!  
How like a pool sans tortoise!  
My hand has explored  
my drawer like a rat  
in an experiment of mazes.  
Reader, I may safely say  
there's not an emptier drawer  
in all of Christendom!

## The Suit

I am locked in a very expensive suit  
old elegant and enduring  
Only my hair has been able to get free  
but someone has been leaving  
their dandruff in it  
Now I will tell you  
all there is to know about optimism  
Each day in hub cap mirror  
in soup reflection  
in other people's spectacles  
I check my hair  
for an army of alpinists  
for Indian rope trick masters  
for tangled aviators  
for dove and albatross  
for insect suicides  
for abominable snowmen  
I check my hair  
for aerialists of every kind  
Dedicated as an automatic elevator  
I comb my hair for possibilities  
I stick my neck out  
I lean illegally from locomotive windows  
and only for the barber  
do I wear a hat

## Business as Usual

The gold roof of Parliament covered  
with fingerprints and scratches.  
And here are the elected, hunchbacked  
from climbing on each other's heads.

The most precious secret has been leaked:  
There is no Opposition!

Over-zealous hacks hoist the P.M.  
through the ceiling. He fools  
an entire sled-load of Miss Canada losers  
by acting like a gargoyle.

Some fool (how did he get in) who  
wants jobs for everyone and says  
so in French is quickly interred  
under a choice piece of the cornice

and likes it. (STAG PARTY LAUGHTER)  
When are they going to show the dirty movie?

Don't cry, Miss Canada,  
it's not as though the country's  
in their hands.  
And next year we're piping in  
Congressional proceedings  
direct from Washington --  
all they'll have to do  
is make divorces.

Indictment of the Blue Hole

January 28 1962

You must have heard me tonight  
I mentioned you 800 times

January 28 1962

My abandoned narcotics have  
abandoned me

January 28 1962

7:30 must have dug its  
pikes into your blue wrist

January 28 1962

I shoved the transistor up my ear

And putting down

3 loaves of suicide (?)

2 razorblade pies

1 De Quincey hairnet

5 gasfilled Hampstead bedsitters (sic)

a collection of oil

a eyelash garotteo (sic)

6 lysol eye foods

he said with considerable charm and travail:

Is this all I give ?

One lousy reprieve

at 2 in the morning ?

This?

I'd rather have a job.

## Nothing I Can Lose

When I left my father's house  
the sun was halfway up,  
my father held it to my chin  
like a buttercup.

My father was a snake oil man  
a wizard, trickster, liar,  
but this was his best trick,  
we kissed goodbye in fire.

A mile above Niagara Falls  
a dove gave me the news  
of his death. I didn't miss a step,  
there's nothing I can lose.

Tomorrow I'll invent a trick  
I do not know tonight,  
the wind, the pole will tell me what  
and the friendly blinding light.

## Police Gazette

My grandfather slams the silver goblet down.  
He clears a silence  
in the family talk  
to comment on the wine.

It's hot. Jesus is dying of heat.  
There he lies on the wall  
of the sordid courtroom  
trying to get air into his armpits.  
Judge runs a finger  
between neck and collar --  
hands the sentence down.

Love me this first day of June.  
I'd rather sleep with ashes  
than priestly wisdom.  
Of all the lonely places in the world  
this is best  
where debris is human.  
I kiss the precious ashes  
that fall from fiery flesh.  
On these familiar shapes  
I lay my kisses down.

Hitler is alive.  
He is fourteen years old.  
He does not shave.  
He wants to be an architect.

The first star tonight  
insanely high, virgin, calm.  
I have one hour of peace  
before the documented planets  
burn me down.

## No Partners

dancer! cut them with your yellow hair  
jawbone of silk slash them down  
trouser slices lapel fragments suit debris  
heaped with choppedup stumblers  
beneath her grapewhite piston feet

She was hardly leaping, almost stilled by all the power in  
her, shoulders raised, calling in everything, her elbows  
pressing it into her stomach. She was a single spindle in the  
centre of a cobweb, gathering, growing, winding us all into  
particles of her supreme flesh.

She barely moved but her body screamed out motion. Her  
feet barely struck and lifted, almost stilled by all the power in  
her. Her shoulders were raised, forward, calling in every-  
thing, her elbows pressing it into her belly, fingers getting the  
tidbits, gathering, growing, winding us all into particles of  
her supreme flesh. And when we'd begone she would be in the  
centre of some vast room  
shimmering enormous at rest



On the Death of an  
Uncharted Planet

Bile smell in my room  
Too cold to open the window  
Lying on my bed  
Hand over mouth  
Didn't dare speak  
Out of razorblades  
New pimples  
When suddenly  
I knew it died  
Clean blazing death  
So bright  
So irrelevant  
Puff it went  
Ten times the  
Weight of the world  
Lost to nobody  
New meteors  
New collisions  
What comfort  
At my stomach gnawed  
The divine emptiness  
I ate  
The dirty dishes  
I squeezed my face  
Fat and full  
Free as a bullet  
I did pushups  
On the 11 th story  
Clean blazing death  
So bright  
So irrelevant

Who wouldn't  
Laugh himself  
Into monstrous health  
Just noticing it

## I Wanted to Be a Doctor

The famous doctor held up Grandma's stomach.  
Cancer! Cancer! he cried out.  
The theatre was brought low.  
None of the internes thought about ambition.

Cancer! They all looked the other way.  
They thought Cancer would leap out  
and get them. They hated to be near.  
This happened in Vilna in the Medical School.

Nobody could sit still.  
They might be sitting beside Cancer.  
Cancer was present.  
Cancer had been let out of its bottle.

I was looking in the skylight.  
I wanted to be a doctor.  
All the internes ran outside.  
The famous doctor held on to the stomach.

He was alone with Cancer.  
Cancer! Cancer! Cancer!  
He didn't care who heard or didn't hear.  
It was his 87th Cancer.

On Hearing a Name  
Long Unspoken

Listen to the stories  
men tell of last year  
that sound of other places  
though they happened here

Listen to a name  
so private it can burn  
hear it said aloud  
and learn and learn

History is a needle  
for putting men asleep  
anointed with the poison  
of all they want to keep

Now a name that saved you  
has a foreign taste  
claims a foreign body  
froze in last year's waste

And what is living lingers  
while monuments are built  
then yields its final whisper  
to letters raised in gilt

But cries of stifled ripeness  
whip me to my knees  
I am with the falling snow  
falling in the seas

I am with the hunters  
hungry and shrewd  
and I am with the hunted  
quick and soft and nude

I am with the houses  
that wash away in rain  
and leave no teeth of pillars  
to rake them up again

Let men numb names  
scratch winds that blow  
listen to the stories  
but what you know you know

And knowing is enough  
for mountains such as these  
where nothing long remains  
houses walls or trees

## Finally I Called

Finally I called the people I didn't want to hear from  
After the third ring I said  
I'll let it ring five more times then what will I do  
The telephone is a fine instrument  
but I never learned to work it very well  
Five more rings and I'll put the receiver down  
I know where it goes I know that much  
The telephone was black with silver rims  
The booth was cozier than the drugstore  
There were a lot of creams and scissors and tubes  
I needed for my body  
I was interested in many coughdrops  
I believe the drugstore keeper hated  
his telephone and people like me  
who ask for change so politely  
I decided to keep to the same street  
and go into the fourth drugstore  
and call them again

## Style

I don't believe the radio stations  
of Russia and America  
but I like the music and I like  
the solemn European voices announcing jazz  
I don't believe opium or money  
though they're hard to get  
and punished with long sentences  
I don't believe love  
in the midst of my slavery I  
do not believe  
I am a man sitting in a house  
on a treeless Argolic island  
I will forget the grass of my mother's lawn  
I know I will  
I will forget the old telephone number  
Fitzroy seven eight two oh  
I will forget my style  
I will have no style  
I hear a thousand miles of hungry static  
and the old clear water eating rocks  
I hear the bells of mules eating  
I hear the flowers eating the night  
under their folds  
Now a rooster with a razor  
plants the haemophilia gash across  
the soft black sky  
and now I know for certain  
I will forget my style  
Perhaps a mind will open in this world  
perhaps a heart will catch rain  
Nothing will heal and nothing will freeze  
but perhaps a heart will catch rain  
America will have no style

Russia will have no style  
It is happening in the twenty-eighth year  
of my attention  
I don't know what will become  
of the mules with their lady eyes  
or the old clear water  
or the giant rooster  
The early morning greedy radio eats  
the governments one by one the languages  
the poppy fields one by one  
Beyond the numbered band  
a silence develops for every style  
for the style I laboured on  
an external silence like the space  
between insects in a swarm  
electric unremembering  
and it is aimed at us  
(I am sleepy and frightened)  
it makes toward me brothers



Goebbels Abandons His Novel  
and Joins the Party

His last love poem  
broke in the harbour  
where swearing blondes  
loaded scrap  
into rusted submarines.  
Out in the sun  
he was surprised  
to find himself lustless  
as a wheel.  
More simple than money  
he sat in some spilled salt  
and wondered if he would find again  
the scars of lampposts  
ulcers of wrought iron fence.  
He remembered perfectly  
how he sprung  
his father's heart attack  
and left his mother  
in a pit  
memory white from loss of guilt.  
Precision in the sun  
the elevators  
the pieces of iron  
broke whatever thou  
his pain had left  
like a whistle breaks  
a gang of sweating men.  
Ready to join the world  
yes yes ready to marry  
convinced pain a matter of choice  
a Doctor of Reason  
he began to count the ships  
decorate the men.

Will dreams threaten  
this discipline  
will favourite hair favourite thighs  
last life's sweepstake winners  
drive him to adventurous cafes?  
Ah my darling pupils  
do you think there exists a hand  
so bestial in beauty so ruthless  
that can switch off  
his religious electric exlax light ?

## Why Commands Are Obeyed

My father pulls the curtains: the Mother Goose wallpaper goes black. He insists the spaghetti is snakes and the bench a sheer cliff.

"Then why lead me, Father, if they are true snakes, if it is a sheer cliff?"

"Higher! Be brave!"

"But I was brave outside; yesterday, outside, I was very brave."

"That? That was no ordeal. This is the ordeal, this familiar room where I say the bench is dangerous."

"It's true!" I shouted twenty years later, pulling him out of his dirty bed. "Poor little Father, you told me true."

"Let me be. I am an old Father."

"No! Lift up thy nose. The window is made of axes. What is that grey matter in the ashtrays? Not from cigarettes, I'll bet. The living room is a case for relics!"

"Must I look?"

"I'll say you must. One of your young, hardly remembered legs is lodged between the pillows of the chesterfield, decaying like food between teeth. This room is a case for stinking relics!"

Yes, yes, we wept down the Turkish carpet, entangled in the great, bloodwarm, family embrace, reconciled as the old story unfolded.

It happens to everyone. For those with eyes, who know in their hearts that terror is mutual, then this hard community has a beauty of its own.

Once upon a time my father pulls the curtains: the Mother Goose wallpaper goes black it began. We heard it in each other's arms.

It Uses Us!

Come upon this heap  
exposed to camera leer:  
would you snatch a skull  
for midnight wine, my dear?

Can you wear a cape  
claim these burned for you  
or is this death unusable  
alien and new?

In our leaders' faces  
(albeit they deplore  
the past) can you read how  
they love Freedom more ?

In my own mirror  
their eyes beam at me:  
my face is theirs, my eyes  
burnt and free.

Now you and I are mounted  
on this heap, my dear:  
from this height we thrill  
as boundaries disappear.

Kiss me with your teeth.

All things can be done  
whisper museum ovens of  
a war that Freedom won.

## The First Murder

I knew it never happened  
There was no murder in the field  
The grass wasn't red  
The grass was green  
I knew it never happened

I've come home tired  
My boots are streaked with filth  
What good to preach  
it never happened  
to the bodies murdered in the field

Tell the truth I've smoked myself  
into love this innocent night  
It never happened  
It never happened  
There was no murder in the field

There was a house on the field  
The field itself was large and empty  
It was night  
It was dead of night  
There were lights in the little windows

## My Teacher Is Dying

Martha they say you are gentle  
No doubt you labour at it  
Why is it I see you  
leaping into unmade beds  
strangling the telephone  
Why is it I see you  
hiding your dirty nylons  
in the fireplace  
Martha talk to me  
My teacher is dying  
His laugh is already dead  
that put cartilage  
between the bony facts  
Now they rattle loud  
Martha talk to me  
Mountain Street is dying  
Apartment fifteen is dying  
Apartment seven and eight are dying  
All the rent is dying  
Martha talk to me  
I wanted all the dancers' bodies  
to inhabit like his old classroom  
where everything that happened  
was tender and important  
Martha talk to me  
Toss out the fake Jap silence  
Scream in my kitchen  
logarithms laundry lists anything  
Talk to me  
radio is falling to pieces  
betrayals are so fresh  
they still come with explanations  
Martha talk to me

What sordid parable  
do you teach by sleeping  
Talk to me  
for my teacher is dying  
The cars are parked  
on both sides of the street  
some facing north  
some facing south  
I draw no conclusions  
Martha talk to me  
I could burn my desk  
when I think how perfect we are  
you asleep me finishing  
the last of the Saint Emilion  
Talk to me gentle Martha  
dreaming of percussions massacres  
hair pinned to the ceiling  
I'll keep your secret  
Let's tell the milkman  
we have decided  
to marry our rooms

Montreal 1964

Can someone turn off the noise ?  
Pearls rising on the breath of her breasts  
grind like sharpening stones:  
my fingernails wail as they grow their fraction  
I think they want to be claws:  
the bed fumes like a quicksand hole  
we won't climb on it for love:  
the street yearns for action nobler than traffic  
red lights want to be flags  
policemen want their arms frozen in loud movies:  
ask a man for the time  
your voice is ruined with static:  
What a racket! What strange dials!  
Only Civil War can fuse it shut --  
the mouth of the glorious impatient  
ventriloquist performing behind our daily lives!

Canada is a dying animal  
I will not be fastened to a dying animal  
That's the sort of thing to say, that's good,  
that will change my life.

And when my neighbour is broken for his error  
and my blood guaranteed by Law against  
an American failure  
I dread the voice behind the flag I drew  
on the blank sky  
for my absolute poems will be crumpled  
under a marble asylum  
my absolute flight snarled like old fishing line :  
What will I have in my head  
to serve against logic brotherhood destiny ?



## Why Experience Is No Teacher

Not mine -- the body you were promised  
is buried at the heart  
of an unusable machine  
no one can stop or start.

You'll lie with it ? You might dig deep --  
escape a Law or two -- see a dart  
of light. You  
won't get near the heart.

I tried -- I am the same -- come the same.  
I wanted my senses to rave.  
The dart was ordinary light.  
Will nothing keep you here, my love, my love?

## For My Old Layton

His pain, unowned, he left  
in paragraphs of love, hidden,  
like a cat leaves shit  
under stones, and he crept out in day,  
clean, arrogant, swift, prepared  
to hunt or sleep or starve.

The town saluted him with garbage  
which he interpreted as praise  
for his muscular grace. Orange peels,  
cans, discarded guts rained like ticker-tape.  
For a while he ruined their nights  
by throwing his shadow in moon-full windows  
as he spied on the peace of gentle folk.

Once he envied them. Now with a happy  
screech he bounded from monument to monument  
in their most consecrated plots, drunk  
to know how close he lived to the breathless  
in the ground, drunk to feel how much he loved  
the snoring mates, the old, the children of the town.  
Until at last, like Timon, tired  
of human smell, resenting even  
his own shoe-steps in the wilderness,  
he chased animals, wore live snakes, weeds  
for bracelets. When the sea  
pulled back the tide like a blanket  
he slept on stone cribs, heavy,  
dreamless, the salt-bright atmosphere  
like an automatic laboratory  
building crystals in his hair.

The Only Tourist in Havana  
Turns His Thoughts Homeward

Come, my brothers,  
let us govern Canada,  
let us find our serious heads,  
let us dump asbestos on the White House,  
let us make the French talk English,  
not only here but everywhere,  
let us torture the Senate individually  
until they confess,  
let us purge the New Party,  
let us encourage the dark races  
so they'll be lenient  
when they take over,  
let us make the C.B.C. talk English,  
let us all lean in one direction  
and float down  
to the coast of Florida,  
let us have tourism,  
let us flirt with the enemy,  
let us smelt pig-iron in our backyards,  
let us sell snow  
to under-developed nations,  
(Is it true one of our national leaders  
was a Roman Catholic?)  
let us terrorize Alaska,  
let us unite  
Church and State,  
let us not take it lying down,  
let us have two Governor Generals  
at the same time,  
let us have another official language,  
let us determine what it will be,  
let us give a Canada Council Fellowship  
to the most original suggestion,

let us teach sex in the home  
to parents,  
let us threaten to join the U.S.A.  
and pull out at the last moment,  
my brothers, come,  
our serious heads are waiting for us somewhere  
like Gladstone bags abandoned  
after a coup d'etat,  
let us put them on very quickly,  
let us maintain a stony silence  
on the St Lawrence Seaway.

Havana  
April 1961

## The Invisible Trouble

Too fevered to insist:  
"My world is terror,"  
he covers his wrist  
and numbers of the war.

His arm is unburned  
his flesh whole:  
the numbers he learned  
from a movie reel.

He covers his wrist  
under the table.  
The drunkards have missed  
his invisible trouble.

A tune rises up.  
His skin is blank!  
He can't lift his cup  
he can't! he can't!

The chorus grows.  
So does his silence.  
Nothing, he knows  
there is nothing to notice.

## Sick Alone

Nursery giant hordes return  
wading in the clue taste of bile  
You ate too much kitchen  
went green on the lone loopthelooop  
It will not let you off to sleep  
It is too fast It is too steep  
Crash past a squashed group  
of bible animals lion child kitten  
Where where is your demonic smile  
You vomit when you want to burn

## Millennium

This could be my little  
book about love  
if I wrote it --  
but my good demon said :  
"Lay off documents!"  
Everybody was watching me  
burn my books --  
I swung my liberty torch  
happy as a gestapo brute;  
the only thing I wanted to save  
was a scar  
a burn or two --  
but my good demon said:  
"Lay off documents!  
The fire's not important!"  
The pile was safely blazing.  
I went home to take a bath.  
I phoned my grandmother.  
She is suffering from arthritis.  
"Keep well," I said, "don't mind the pain."  
"You neither," she said.  
Hours later I wondered  
did she mean  
don't mind my pain  
or don't mind her pain?  
Whereupon my good demon said:  
"Is that all you can do ?"  
Well was it?  
Was it all I could do?  
There was the old lady  
eating alone, thinking about  
Prince Albert, Flanders Field,

Kishenev, her fingers too sore  
for TV knobs;  
but how could I get there?  
The books were gone  
my address lists --  
My good demon said again:  
"Lay off documents!  
You know how to get there!"  
And suddenly I did!  
I remembered it from memory!  
I found her  
pouring over the royal family tree,  
"Grandma,"  
I almost said,  
"you've got it upside down --"  
"Take a look," she said,  
"it only goes to George V."  
"That's far enough  
you sweet old blood!"  
"You're right!" she sang  
and burned the  
London Illustrated Souvenir  
I did not understand  
the day it was  
till I looked outside  
and saw a fire in every  
window on the street  
and crowds of humans  
crazy to talk  
and cats and dogs and birds  
smiling at each other!





## Hitler the Brain-Mole

Hitler the brain-mole looks out of my eyes  
Goering boils ingots of gold in my bowels  
My Adam's Apple bulges with the whole head of Goebbels  
No use to tell a man he's a Jew  
I'm making a lampshade out of your kiss  
Confess! confess!  
is what you demand  
although you believe you're giving me everything

## Death of a Leader

Anxious to break a journey's back,  
dismiss itself in ash,  
the sun invaded noon:  
like a bomb seen  
falling from below  
it widened its circumference  
in the middle of the sky.

He stood on his shadow  
Like a dead sundial.  
Children hunting a balloon  
beside a monument  
blended with the figures  
striving on the pedestal.  
Clash of gold and light  
etched the Capitol dome in black.

His speeches returned,  
his hours of applause,  
weight of foreign medals,  
white clothes of too many summers,  
girls with whom he shared his power  
now old and powerful.  
His strategies returned  
diagrammed like a geodesic sphere,  
He balanced them on his forehead  
weaving like a seal.

He was heavy and hot.  
He'd had enough.  
Let his colleagues  
balance the state.

They were so distinguished  
eagle-like, silver-grey.  
Let him fall where his shoes were,  
where his striped trousers led,  
where the dove-coloured waistcoat pointed:  
let him fall down in the sun.

He fell near the balloon.  
Children hushed back  
as if their toy  
could catch the disease.  
Secret Service men,  
ex-athletes chosen for their height,  
made a ring around the body.  
At attention they stood  
while their shadows began as pools,  
lengthened into spikes.  
At any moment you thought  
they might join hands and dance.

The city attended, still at its monuments.  
Everyone was waiting.  
They knew it was being prepared,  
polished, painted gleaming white.  
But when was it coming ?  
When was it coming?

The ambulance!

Havana  
April 1961

Alexander Trocchi, Public Junkie,  
Priez Pour Nous

Who is purer  
more simple than you ?  
Priests play poker with the burghers,  
police in underwear  
leave Crime at the office,  
our poets work bankers' hours  
retire to wives and fame-reports.  
The spike flashes in your blood  
permanent as a silver lighthouse.

I'm apt to loaf  
in a coma of newspapers,  
avoid the second-hand bodies  
which cry to be catalogued.  
I dream I'm  
a divine right Prime Minister,  
I abandon plans for bloodshed in Canada,  
I accept an O.B.E.

Under hard lights  
with doctors' instruments  
you are at work  
in the bathrooms of the city,  
changing The Law.

I tend to get distracted  
by hydrogen bombs,  
by Uncle's disapproval  
of my treachery  
to the men's clothing industry.  
I find myself  
believing public clocks,  
taking advice  
from the Dachau generation.

The spike hunts  
constant as a compass.  
You smile like a Navajo  
discovering American oil  
on his official slum wilderness,  
a surprise every half hour.

I'm afraid I sometimes forget  
my lady's pretty little blonde package  
is an amateur time-bomb  
set to fizzle in my middle-age.  
I forget the Ice Cap, the pea-minds,  
the heaps of expensive teeth.

You don a false nose  
line up twice for the Demerol dole;  
you step out of a tourist group  
shoot yourself on the steps of the White House,  
you try to shoot the big arms  
of the Lincoln Memorial;  
through a flaw in their lead houses  
you spy on scientists,  
stumble on a cure for scabies;  
you drop pamphlets from a stolen jet:  
"The Truth about Junk";  
you pirate a national tv commercial  
shove your face against  
the window of the living-room  
insist that healthy skin is grey.

A little blood in the sink  
Red cog-wheels  
shaken from your arm  
punctures inflamed  
like a roadmap showing cities  
over 10,000 pop.

Your arms tell me  
you have been reaching into the coke machine  
for strawberries,  
you have been humping the thorny crucifix  
you have been piloting Mickey Mouse balloons  
through the briar patch,  
you have been digging for grins in the tooth-pile.

Bonnie Queen Alex Eludes Montreal Hounds  
Famous Local Love Scribe Implicated

Your purity drives me to work.  
I must get back to lust and microscopes,  
experiments in embalming,  
resume the census of my address book.

You leave behind you a fanatic  
to answer R.C.M.P. questions.

### Three Good Nights

Out of some simple part of me  
which I cannot use up  
I took a blessing for the flowers  
tightening in the night  
like fists of jealous love  
like knots  
no one can undo without destroying  
The new morning gathered me  
in blue mist  
like dust under a wedding gown  
Then I followed the day  
like a cloud of heavy sheep  
after the judas  
up a blood-ringed ramp  
into the terror of every black building

Ten years sealed journeys unearned dreams  
Laughter meant to tempt me into old age  
spilled for friends stars unknown flesh mules Sea  
Instant knowledge of bodies material and spirit  
which slowly learned would have made death smile  
Stories turning into theories  
which begged only for the telling and retelling  
Girls sailing over the blooms of my mouth  
with a muscular triangular kiss  
ordinary mouth to secret mouth  
Nevertheless my homage sticky flowers  
rabbis green and red serving the sun like platters  
In the end you offered me the dogma you taught  
me to disdain and I good pupil disdained it  
I fell under the diagrammed fields like the fragment  
of a perfect statue layers of cities build upon



I saw you powerful and I saw you happy  
that I could not live only for harvesting  
that I was a true citizen of the slow earth

Light and Splendour  
in the sleeping orchards  
entering the trees  
like a silent movie wedding procession  
entering the arches of branches  
for the sake of love only  
From a hill I watched  
the apple blossoms breathe  
the silver out of the night  
like fish eating the spheres  
of air out of the river  
So the illumined night fed  
the sleeping orchards  
entering the vaults of branches  
like a holy procession  
Long live the Power of Eyes  
Long live the invisible steps  
men can read on a mountain  
Long live the unknown machine  
or heart  
which by will or accident  
pours with victor's grace  
endlessly perfect weather  
on the perfect creatures  
the world grows

Montreal  
July 1964

To a Man Who Thinks  
He Is Making an Angel

Drop the angel out of your silver spoon  
You'll never get it to your mouth  
You're not dealing with the moon anymore  
or corkscrew unicorns

The moon you kept in a cup  
herds of magic beasts in your pocket  
but this real angel knocks down factories  
with a wisp of hair

Do you think your arms are wide enough  
to cramp her in your heritage  
you with your iron maidens  
brimstone ponds where only sufferers sing

Do you think she's from Chartres you turd  
From Notre Dame out of any church you know  
or even out of some humble inflamed mystic's mind  
She is from a service you have never heard

Ah but she stops my mouth from further curses  
covering my whole heaving body with one of her molecules

## On the Sickness of My Love

Poems! break out!  
break my head!  
What good's a skull?  
Help! help!  
I need you!

She is getting old.  
Her body tells her everything.  
She has put aside cosmetics.  
She is a prison of truth.

Make her get up!  
dance the seven veils!  
Poems! silence her body!  
Make her friend of mirrors!

Do I have to put on my cape?  
wander like the moon  
over skies & skies of flesh  
to depart again in the morning?

Can't I pretend  
she grows prettier?  
be a convict?  
Can't my power fool me?  
Can't I live in poems?

Hurry up! poems! lies!  
Damn your weak music!  
You've let arthritis in!  
You're no poem  
you're a visa.

Cruel Baby

Where did you learn mouthfuls for everything,  
O Dweller in Childsmelling Cloakrooms ?

Chief, do I have to come down and identify  
the bodies I loved?

I forget, I said I forget which breast it was.  
Hers? Yes. Good. Ask her many questions,  
find out, do her horoscope.

Hooray! she has a family name.  
Hooray! she looks like her grandmother.

Doctor Reich call surgery:  
show anal slides of blue come.

Cruel Baby, you lost the world:  
you ate dictionaries of flowers:  
you fell for particular beauty

For Marianne

It's so simple  
to wake up beside your ears  
and count the pearls  
with my two heads

It takes me back to blackboards  
and I'm running with Jane  
and seeing the dog run

It makes it so easy  
to govern this country  
I've already thought up the laws  
I'll work hard all day  
in Parliament

Then let's go to bed  
right after supper  
Let's sleep and wake up  
all night

## The Failure of a Secular Life

The pain-monger came home  
from a hard day's torture.

He came home with his tongs.  
He put down his black bag.

His wife hit him with an open nerve  
and a cry the trade never heard.

He watched her real-life Dachau,  
knew his career was ruined.

Was there anything else to do ?  
He sold his bag and tongs,

went to pieces. A man's got to be able  
to bring his wife something.

## My Mentors

My rabbi has a silver buddha,  
my priest has a jade talisman.  
My doctor sees a marvellous omen  
in our prolonged Indian summer.

My rabbi, my priest stole their trinkets  
from shelves in the holy of holies.  
The trinkets cannot be eaten.  
They wonder what to do with them.

My doctor is happy as a pig  
although he is dying of exposure.  
He has finished his big book  
on the phallus as a phallic symbol.

My zen master is a grand old fool.  
I caught him worshipping me yesterday,  
so I made him stand in a foul corner  
with my rabbi, my priest, and my doctor.

Hydra 1960

Anything that moves is white,  
a gull, a wave, a sail,  
and moves too purely to be aped.  
Smash the pain.

Never pretend peace.  
The consolumentum has not,  
never will be kissed. Pain  
cannot compromise this light.

Do violence to the pain,  
ruin the easy vision,  
the easy warning, water  
for those who need to burn.

These are ruthless: rooster shriek,  
bleached goat skull.  
Scalpels grow with poppies  
if you see them truly red.



I learn nothing  
because my mind is stuffed with bodies:  
blurred parades, hosts of soft lead wings,  
tragic heaped holes of the starved,  
the tangled closer than snakes,  
swarming gymnasiums,  
refuse of hospitals compose my mind:  
no neat cells,  
limbs, rumps, fetuses compose my mind.  
It reels like Leviathan in oldtime cuts,  
a nation writhing:  
mothers, statues, madonnas, ruins --  
I'm stripped, suckled, weaned,  
I leap, love, anonymous as insect.  
There is no beauty to choose here:  
some mutilated, some whole, some perfect severed thighs,  
embryos, dried skin:  
the mass so vast some scales, some liquid never meeting.

Language is gone,  
squeezed out in food, kisses.  
Arithmetic, power, cities never were.  
God knows what they've built today.  
Only the echo I cast in world offices  
returns to damn me ignorant --  
as if I can hear in the screech of flesh  
or talk back with mouth of hair.

## Heirloom

The torture scene developed under a glass bell  
such as might protect an expensive clock.  
I almost expected a chime to sound  
as the tongs were applied  
and the body jerked and fainted calm.  
All the people were tiny and rosy-cheeked  
and if I could have heard a cry of triumph or pain  
it would have been tiny as the mouth that made it  
or one single note of a music box.  
The drama bell was mounted  
like a gigantic baroque pearl  
on a wedding ring or brooch or locket.  
I know you feel naked, little darling.  
I know you hate living in the country  
and can't wait until the shiny magazines  
come every week and every month.  
Look through your grandmother's house again.  
There is an heirloom somewhere.

## Promise

Your blond hair  
is the way I live --  
smashed by light!

Your mouthprint  
is the birthmark  
on my power.

To love you  
is to live  
my ideal diary

which I have  
promised my body  
I will never write!

## Sky

The great ones pass  
they pass without touching  
they pass without looking  
each in his joy  
each in his fire  
Of one another  
they have no need  
they have the deepest need  
The great ones pass

Recorded in some multiple sky  
inlaid in some endless laughter  
they pass  
like stars of different seasons  
like meteors of different centuries

Fire undiminished  
by passing fire  
laughter uncorroded  
by comfort  
they pass one another  
without touching without looking  
needing only to know  
the great ones pass

Waiting for Marianne

I have lost a telephone  
with your smell in it

I am living beside the radio  
all the stations at once  
but I pick out a Polish lullaby  
I pick it out of the static  
it fades I wait I keep the beat  
it comes back almost asleep

Did you take the telephone  
knowing I'd sniff it immoderately  
maybe heat up the plastic  
to get all the crumbs of your breath

and if you won't come back  
how will you phone to say  
you won't come back  
so that I could at least argue

## Why I Happen to Be Free

They all conspire to make me free  
I tried to join their arguments  
but there were so few sides  
and I needed several  
Forsaking the lovely girl  
was not my idea  
but she fell asleep in somebody's bed  
Now more than ever  
I want enemies  
You who thrive  
in the easy world of modern love  
look out for me  
for I have developed a terrible virginity  
and meeting me  
all who have done more than kiss  
will perish in shame  
with warts and hair on their palms  
Time was our best men died  
in error and enlightenment  
Moses on the lookout  
David in his house of blood  
Camus beside the driver  
My new laws encourage  
not satori but perfection  
at last at last  
Jews who walk  
too far on Sabbath  
will be stoned  
Catholics who blaspheme  
electricity applied  
to their genitals  
Buddhists who acquire property  
sawn in half

Naughty Protestants  
have governments  
to make them miserable

Ah the universe returns to order  
The new Montreal skyscrapers  
bully the parking lots  
like the winners of a hygiene contest  
a suite of windows lit here and there  
like a First Class ribbon  
for extra cleanliness  
A girl I knew  
sleeps in some bed  
and of all the lovely things  
I might say I say this  
I see her body puzzled  
with the mouthprints  
of all the kisses of all the men  
she's known  
like a honky-tonk piano  
ringed with years of cocktail glasses  
and while she cranks and tinkles  
in the quaint old sinful dance  
I walk through  
the blond November rain  
punishing her with my happiness

## The True Desire

The food that will not obey. It longs for its old shape. The grapes dream of the tight cluster, resume their solidarity. The meat, in some rebellious collusion with the stomach, unchews itself, unites into the original butcher's slab, red, defiant, recalling even the meadow life of the distant dead animal. But perhaps the stomach is guiltless, for here is cheese, mauled and in disarray, but refusing absolutely to interact with gastric juices. The food has no hope of real life, but still, in these regained, however mutilated shapes, it resists, and for its victories claims the next day's hunger and the body's joy.

There is a whitewashed hotel waiting for me somewhere, in which I will begin my fast and my new life.

Oh to stand in the Ganges wielding a yard of intestine.



## The Way Back

But I am not lost  
any more than leaves are lost  
or buried vases  
This is not my time  
I would only give you second thoughts

I know you must call me traitor  
because I have wasted my blood  
in aimless love  
and you are right  
Blood like that  
never won an inch of star

You know how to call me  
although such a noise now  
would only confuse the air  
Neither of us can forget  
the steps we danced  
the words you stretched  
to call me out of dust

Yes I long for you  
not just as a leaf for weather  
or vase for hands  
but with a narrow human longing  
that makes a man refuse  
any fields but his own

I wait for you at an  
unexpected place in your journey  
like the rusted key  
or the feather you do not pick up

until the way back  
after it is clear  
the remote and painful destination  
changed nothing in your life

## The Project

Evidently they need a lot of blood for these tests. I let them take all they wanted. The hospital was cool and its atmosphere of order encouraged me to persist in my own projects.

I always wanted to set fire to your houses. I've been in them. Through the front doors and the back. I'd like to see them burn slowly so I could visit many and peek in the falling windows. I'd like to see what happens to those white carpets you pretended to be so careless about. I'd like to see a white telephone melting.

We don't want to trap too many inside because the streets have got to be packed with your poor bodies screaming back and forth. I'll be comforting. Oh dear, pyjama flannel seared right on to the flesh. Let me pull it off.

It seems to me they took too much blood. Probably selling it on the side. The little man's white frock was smeared with blood. Little men like that keep company with blood. See them in abattoirs and assisting in human experiments.

-- When did you last expose yourself?

-- Sunday morning for a big crowd in the lobby of the Queen Elizabeth.

-- Funny. You know what I mean.

-- Expose myself to what ?

-- A woman.

-- Ah.

I narrowed my eyes and whispered in his yellow ear.

-- You better bring her in too.

-- And it's still free ?

Of course it was still free. Not counting the extra blood they stole. Prevent my disease from capturing the entire city. Help this man. Give him all possible Judeo-Christian help.

Fire would be best. I admit that. Tie firebrands between the foxes and chase them through your little gardens. A rosy sky would improve the view from anywhere. It would be a

mercy. Oh, to see the roofs devoured and the beautiful old level of land rising again.

The factory where I work isn't far from the hospital. Same architect as a matter of fact and the similarities don't end there. It's easier to get away with lying down in the hospital. However we have our comforts in the factory.

The foreman winked at me when I went back to my machine. He loved his abundant nature. Me new at the job and he'd actually given me time off. I really enjoy the generosity of slaves. He came over to inspect my work.

-- But this won't do at all.

-- No?

-- The union said you were an experienced operator.

-- I am. I am.

-- This is no seam.

-- Now that you mention it.

-- Look here.

He took a fresh trouser and pushed in beside me on the bench. He was anxious to demonstrate the only skill he owned. He arranged the pieces under the needle. When he was halfway down the leg and doing very nicely I brought my foot down on the pedal beside his. The unexpected acceleration sucked his fingers under the needle.

Another comfort is the Stock Room.

It is large and dark and filled with bundles and rolls of material.

-- But shouldn't you be working?

-- No, Mary, I shouldn't.

-- Won't Sam miss you ?

-- You see he's in the hospital. Accident.

Mary runs the Cafeteria and the Boss exposes himself to her regularly. This guarantees her the concession.

I feel the disease raging in my blood. I expect my saliva to be discoloured.

-- Yes, Mary, real cashmere. Three hundred dollar suits.

The Boss has a wife to whom he must expose himself every once in a while. She has her milkmen. The city is orderly.

There are white bottles standing in front of a million doors.  
And there are Conventions. Multitudes of bosses sharing the  
pleasures of exposure.

I shall go mad. They'll find me at the top of Mount Royal  
impersonating Genghis Khan. Seized with laughter and pus.

-- Very soft, Mary. That's what they pay for.

Fire would be best. Flames. Bright windows. Two cars  
exploding in each garage. But could I ever manage it. This  
way is slower. More heroic in a way. Less dramatic of course.  
But I have an imagination.

Hydra 1963

The stony path coiled around me  
and bound me to the night.  
A boat hunted the edge of the sea  
under a hissing light.

Something soft involved a net  
and bled around a spear.  
The blunt death, the cumulus jet --  
I spoke to you, I thought you near!

Or was the night so black  
that something died alone?  
A man with a glistening back  
beat the food against a stone.

All There Is to Know about  
Adolph Eichmann

EYES: ..... Medium  
HAIR: ..... Medium  
WEIGHT: ..... Medium  
HEIGHT: ..... Medium  
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES: ..... None  
NUMBER OF FINGERS: ..... Ten  
NUMBER OF TOES: ..... Ten  
INTELLIGENCE: ..... Medium

What did you expect?

Talons ?

Oversize incisors ?

Green saliva?

Madness ?

## The New Leader

When he learned that his father had the oven contract, that the smoke above the city, the clouds as warm as skin, were his father's manufacture, he was freed from love, his emptiness was legalized.

Hygienic as a whip his heart drove out the alibis of devotion, free as a storm-severed bridge, useless and pure as drowned alarm clocks, he breathed deeply, gratefully in the polluted atmosphere, and he announced: My father had the oven contract, he loved my mother and built her houses in the countryside.

When he learned his father had the oven contract he climbed a hillock of eyeglasses, he stood on a drift of hair, he hated with great abandon the king cripples and their mothers, the husbands and wives, the familiar sleep, the decent burdens.

Dancing down Ste Catherine Street he performed great surgery on a hotel of sleepers. The windows leaked like a broken meat freezer. His hatred blazed white on the salted driveways. He missed nobody but he was happy he'd taken one hundred and fifty women in moonlight back in ancient history.

He was drunk at last, drunk at last, after years of threading history's crushing daisy-chain with beauty after beauty. His father had raised the thigh-shaped clouds which smelled of salesmen, gypsies and violinists. With the certainty and genital pleasure of revelation he knew, he could not doubt, his father was the one who had the oven contract.

Drunk at last, he hugged himself, his stomach clean, cold and drunk, the sky clean but only for him, free to shiver, free to hate, free to begin.



## How It Happened in the Middle of the Day

Hate jumped out of the way.  
Sorrow left with a squashed somersault  
like a cripple winning candy from rich ladies.  
Angels of reason and joy  
plus other Apollonian yes-men at home  
on account of sunstroke  
contributed their absence to the miracle.  
The demons of adulterers, everyday drunks,  
professional irrationalists, the fatuous possessed,  
these cheap easy demons so common  
to the courting procedure,  
refused to appear due to insufficient publicity.  
No shark put its fin on the lips  
of the little waves  
like a schoolmistress demanding silence  
lest drama threaten the miracle.  
Someone began over again and failed --  
noting not a single alien tremor  
in the voices crying: tomatoes, onions, bread.

For E.J.P.

I once believed a single line  
in a Chinese poem could change  
forever how blossoms fell  
and that the moon itself climbed on  
the grief of concise weeping men  
to journey over cups of wine  
I thought invasions were begun for crows  
to pick at a skeleton  
dynasties sown and spent  
to serve the language of a fine lament  
I thought governors ended their lives  
as sweetly drunken monks  
telling time by rain and candles  
instructed by an insect's pilgrimage  
across the page -- all this  
so one might send an exile's perfect letter  
to an ancient hometown friend

I chose a lonely country  
broke from love  
scorned the fraternity of war  
I polished my tongue against the pumice moon  
floated my soul in cherry wine  
a perfumed barge for Lords of Memory  
to languish on to drink to whisper out  
their store of strength  
as if beyond the mist along the shore  
their girls their power still obeyed  
like clocks wound for a thousand years  
I waited until my tongue was sore

Brown petals wind like fire around my poems  
I aimed them at the stars but

like rainbows they were bent  
before they sawed the world in half  
Who can trace the canyoned paths  
cattle have carved out of time  
wandering from meadowlands to feasts  
Layer after layer of autumn leaves  
are swept away  
Something forgets us perfectly

## The Glass Dog

Let me renew myself  
in the midst of all the things of the world  
which cannot be connected.

The sky is empty at last,  
the stars stand for themselves,  
heroes and their history passed  
like talk on the wind, like bells.

Flowers do not stand for love,  
or if they do -- not mine.  
The white happens beside the mauve.  
I have no laws to bind

their hunger to my own.  
The same, the same, the doctors say,  
for they find themselves alone:  
the bread of law is dry.

I walked over the mountain with my glass dog.  
The mushrooms trembled and balls of rain  
fell off their roofs.  
I whistled at the trees to come closer:  
they jumped at the chance:  
apples, acorns popped through the air.  
Dandelions by the million  
staggered into parachutes. A white jewelled  
wind in the shape of an immense spool of gauze  
swaddled every moving limb.  
I collapsed slowly over the water-filled pebbles.

'Lambs in bags are borne by mules.  
Rough bags bruise live necks,  
three in a bag.  
It only hurts when they laugh.

"They'll hang with chickens, head down,  
white chicks in blood shops,  
block shops, cut shops.  
It only hurts when they bleed.

"Boats named for George and Barbara,  
sterns faded rose and blue,  
do their simple business  
in the bottle of the sea.

"Thalassa, thalassa, in the blackest  
weather still you keep somewhere  
among your million mirrors  
the fact of the highest gull.

"Mules flirt with brother slave brick boats."  
Give the man who said all that  
an evil shiny eggplant  
Give him a mucous-hued octopus.

Glory bells, boys in the towers  
flying the huge bells like kites,  
tear the vespers out of the stoned heart.  
A man has betrayed everything!

\*

Creature! Come! One more chance. The Sea of Tin Cans.  
The Sea of Ruined Laboratory Eyes. The Sea of Luminous  
Swimmers. The Sea of Rich Tackle. The Sea of Garbage  
Flowers. The Sea of Sun Limbs. The Sea of Blood Jellyfish.  
The Sea of Dynamite. Our Lady of the Miraculous Tin Ikon.  
Our Blue Lady of Boats. Our Beloved Lady of Holiday Flags.  
Our Supreme Girl of Enduring Feathers. Bang Bang bells  
Bang in iron simple blue.

## A Migrating Dialogue

He was wearing a black moustache and leather hair.  
We talked about the gypsies.

Don't bite your nails, I told him.  
Don't eat carpets.  
Be careful of the rabbits.  
Be cute.  
Don't stay up all night watching  
parades on the Very Very Very Late Show.  
Don't ka-ka in your uniform.

And what about all the good generals,  
the fine old aristocratic fighting men,  
the brave Junkers, the brave Rommels,  
the brave von Silverhaired Ambassadors  
who resigned in '41 ?

Wipe that smirk off your face.  
Captain Marvel signed the whip contract.  
Joe Palooka manufactured whips.  
Li'l Abner packed the whips in cases.  
The Katzenjammer Kids thought up experiments.  
Mere cogs.

Peekaboo Miss Human Soap.  
It never happened.  
0 castles on the Rhine.  
0 blond S.S.  
Don't believe everything you see in museums.

I said WIPE THAT SMIRK including  
the mouth-foam of superior disgust.  
I don't like the way you go to work every morning.

How come the buses still run?  
How come they're still making movies?

I believe with a perfect faith in the Second World War.  
I am convinced that it happened.  
I am not so sure about the First World War.  
The Spanish Civil War -- maybe.  
I believe in gold teeth.  
I believe in Churchill.  
Don't tell me we dropped fire into cribs.  
I think you are exaggerating.  
The Treaty of Westphalia has faded like a lipstick  
smudge on the Blarney Stone.  
Napoleon was a sexy brute.  
Hiroshima was Made in Japan out of paper.  
I think we should let sleeping ashes lie.  
I believe with a perfect faith in all the history  
I remember, but it's getting harder and harder  
to remember much history.

There is sad confetti sprinkling  
from the windows of departing trains.  
I let them go. I cannot remember them.  
They hoot mournfully out of my daily life.  
I forget the big numbers,  
I forget what they mean.  
I apologize to the special photogravure section  
of a 1945 newspaper which began my education.  
I apologize left and right.  
I apologize in advance to all the folks  
in this fine wide audience for my tasteless closing remarks.

Braun, Raubaal and him  
(I have some experience in these matters),  
these three humans,  
I can't get their nude and loving bodies out of my mind.

## The Bus

I was the last passenger of the day,  
I was alone on the bus,  
I was glad they were spending all that money  
just getting me up Eighth Avenue.  
Driver! I shouted, it's you and me tonight,  
let's run away from this big city  
to a smaller city more suitable to the heart,  
let's drive past the swimming pools of Miami Beach,  
you in the driver's seat, me several seats back,  
but in the racial cities we'll change places  
so as to show how well you've done up North,  
and let us find ourselves some tiny American fishing village  
in unknown Florida  
and park right at the edge of the sand,  
a huge bus pointing out,  
metallic, painted, solitary,  
with New York plates.



## Laundry

I took a backward look  
As I walked down the street  
My wife was hanging laundry  
Sheet after sheet after sheet

She ran them down the clothesline  
Like flags above a ship  
Her mouth was full of clothespins  
They twisted up her lip

At last I saw her ugly  
Now I could not stay  
I made an X across her face  
But a sheet got in the way

Then the wind bent back  
This flag of armistice  
I made the X again  
As a child repeats a wish

The second X I drew  
Set me up in trade  
I will never find the faces  
For all goodbyes I've made

## The Rest is Dross

We meet at a hotel  
with many quarters for the radio  
surprised that we've survived as lovers  
not each other's  
but lovers still  
with outrageous hope and habits in the craft  
which embarrass us slightly  
as we let them be known  
the special caress the perfect inflammatory word  
the starvation we do not tell about  
We do what only lovers can  
make a gift out of necessity  
Looking at our clothes  
folded over the chair  
I see we no longer follow fashion  
and we own our own skins  
God I'm happy we've forgotten nothing  
and can love each other  
for years in the world

## How the Winter Gets In

I ask you where you want to go  
you say nowhere  
but your eyes make a wish  
An absent chiropractor  
you stroke my wrist  
I'm almost fooled into  
greasy circular snores  
when I notice your eyes  
sounding the wall for  
dynamite points  
like a doctor at work on a T.B. chest  
Nowhere you say again in a kiss  
go to sleep  
First tell me your wish  
Your lashes startle on my skin  
like a seismograph  
An airliner's perishing drone  
pulls the wall off our room  
like an old band-aid  
The winter comes in  
and the eyes I don't keep  
tie themselves to a journey  
like wedding tin cans

Ways Mills  
November 1963

propaganda

The coherent statement was made by father, the gent with spats to keep his shoes secret. It had to do with the nature of religion and the progress of lust in the twentieth century. I myself have several statements of a competitive coherence which I intend to spread around at no little expense. I love the eternal moment, for instance. My father used to remark, doffing his miniature medals, that there is a time that is ripe for everything. A little extravagant, Dad, I guess, judging by values. Oh well, he'd say, and the whole world might have been the address.

Opium and Hitler

Several faiths  
bid him leap --  
opium and Hitler  
let him sleep.

A Negress with  
an appetite  
helped him think  
he wasn't white.

Opium and Hitler  
made him sure  
the world was glass.  
There was no cure

for matter  
disarmed as this:  
the state rose on  
a festered kiss.

Once a dream  
nailed on the sky  
a summer sun  
while it was high.

He wanted a  
blindfold of skin,  
he wanted the  
afternoon to begin.

One law broken --  
nothing held.  
The world was wax,  
his to mould.

No! He fumbled  
for his history dose.  
The sun came loose,  
his woman close.

Lost in a darkness  
their bodies would reach,  
the Leader started  
a racial speech.

## For Anyone Dressed in Marble

The miracle we all are waiting for  
is waiting till the Parthenon falls down  
and House of Birthdays is a house no more  
and fathers are unpoisoned by renown.  
The medals and the records of abuse  
can't help us on our pilgrimage to lust,  
but like whips certain perverts never use,  
compel our flesh in paralysing trust.  
I see an orphan, lawless and serene,  
standing in a corner of the sky,  
body something like bodies that have been,  
but not the scar of naming in his eye.  
Bred close to the ovens, he's burnt inside.  
Light, wind, cold, dark -- they use him like a bride.

Wheels, Fireclouds

I shot my eyes through the drawers of your empty coffins,

I was loyal,

I was one who lifted up his face.



Folk

flowers for hitler the summer yawned  
flowers all over my new grass  
and here is a little village  
they are painting it for a holiday  
here is a little church  
here is a school  
here are some doggies making love  
the flags are bright as laundry  
flowers for hitler the summer yawned

## I Had It for a Moment

I had it for a moment  
I knew why I must thank you  
I saw powerful governing men in black suits  
I saw them undressed  
in the arms of young mistresses  
the men more naked than the naked women  
the men crying quietly  
No that is not it  
I'm losing why I must thank you  
which means I'm left with pure longing  
How old are you  
Do you like your thighs  
I had it for a moment  
I had a reason for letting the picture  
of your mouth destroy my conversation  
Something on the radio  
the end of a Mexican song  
I saw the musicians getting paid  
they are not even surprised  
they knew it was only a job  
Now I've lost it completely  
A lot of people think you are beautiful  
How do I feel about that  
I have no feeling about that  
I had a wonderful reason for not merely  
courting you  
It was tied up with the newspapers  
I saw secret arrangements in high offices  
I saw men who loved their worldliness  
even though they had looked through  
big electric telescopes  
they still thought their worldliness was serious

not just a hobby a taste a harmless affectation  
they thought the cosmos listened  
I was suddenly fearful  
one of their obscure regulations  
could separate us  
I was ready to beg for mercy  
Now I'm getting into humiliation  
I've lost why I began this  
I wanted to talk about your eyes  
I know nothing about your eyes  
and you've noticed how little I know  
I want you somewhere safe  
far from high offices  
I'll study you later  
So many people want to cry quietly beside you

July 4, 1963

Island Bulletin

Oh can my fresh white trousers  
and the gardenia forest  
and The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich  
and my heroic tan  
and my remarkable quaint house  
and my Italian sunglasses  
can they do for me  
what our first meeting did ?  
I am so good with fire yet I hesitate  
to begin again  
believing perhaps in some ordeal by property  
I am standing by the Sunset Wall  
proud  
thin despite my luxury  
In my journey I know I am  
somewhere beyond the travelling pack of poets  
I am a man of tradition  
I will remain here until  
I am sure what I am leaving

July 4, 1963

## Independence

Tonight I will live with my new white skin  
which I found under a millennium of pith clothing  
None of the walls jump when I call them  
Trees smirked you're one of us now  
when I strode through the wheat in my polished boots  
Out of control awake and newly naked  
I lie back in the luxury of my colour  
Somebody is marching for me at me to me  
Somebody has a flag I did not invent  
I think the Aztecs have not been sleeping  
Magic moves from hand to hand like money  
I thought we were the bank the end of the line  
New York City was just a counter  
the crumpled bill passed across  
I thought that heroes meant us  
I have been reading too much history  
and writing too many history books  
Magic moves from hand to hand and I'm broke  
Someone stops the sleepwalker in the middle of the opera  
and pries open his fist finger by finger  
and kisses him goodbye  
I think the Aztecs have not been sleeping  
no matter what I taught the children  
I think no one has ever slept but he  
who gathers the past into stories  
Magic moves from hand to hand  
Somebody is smiling in one of our costumes  
Somebody is stepping out of a costume  
I think that is what invisible means

July 4, 1963

## The House

Two hours off the branch and burnt  
the petals of the gardenia curl and deepen  
in the yellow-brown of waste  
Your body wandered close  
I didn't raise my hand to reach  
the distance was so familiar  
Our house is happy with its old furniture  
the black Venetian bed stands on gold claws  
guarding the window  
Don't take the window away  
and leave a hole in the stark mountains  
The clothesline and the grey clothespins  
would make you think we're going to be together always  
Last night I dreamed  
you were Buddha's wife  
and I was a historian watching you sleep  
What vanity  
A girl told me something beautiful  
Very early in the morning  
she saw an orange-painted wooden boat  
come into port over the smooth sea  
The cargo was hay  
The boat rode low under the weight  
She couldn't see the sailors  
but on top of all the hay sat a monk  
Because of the sun behind he seemed  
to be sitting in a fire  
like that famous photograph  
I forget to tell you the story  
She surprised me by telling it  
and I wanted her for ten minutes  
I really enjoyed the gardenia from Sophia's courtyard

You put it on my table two hours ago  
and I can smell it everywhere in the house  
Darling I attach nothing to it

July 4, 1963

## Order

In many movies I came upon an idol  
I would not touch, whose forehead jewel  
was safe, or if stolen -- mourned.  
Truly, I wanted the lost forbidden city  
to be the labyrinth for wise technicolor  
birds, and every human riddle  
the love-fed champion pursued  
I knew was bad disguise for greed.  
I was with the snake who made his nest  
in the voluptuous treasure, I dropped  
with the spider to threaten the trail-bruised  
white skin of the girl who was searching  
for her brother, I balanced on the limb  
with the leopard who had to be content  
with Negroes and double-crossers  
and never tasted but a slash of hero flesh.  
Even after double-pay I deserted  
with the bearers, believing every rumour  
the wind brought from the mountain pass.  
The old sorceress, the spilled wine,  
the black cards convinced me:  
the timeless laws must not be broken.  
When the lovers got away with the loot  
of new-valued life or love, or bought  
themselves a share in time by letting  
the avalanche seal away for ever  
the gold goblets and platters, I knew  
a million ways the jungle might have been  
meaner and smarter. As the red sun  
came down on their embrace I shouted  
from my velvet seat, Get them, get them,  
to all the animals drugged with anarchy and happiness.  
August 6, 1963



## Destiny

I want your warm body to disappear  
politely and leave me alone in the bath  
because I want to consider my destiny.  
Destiny! why do you find me in this bathtub,  
idle, alone, unwashed, without even  
the intention of washing except at the last moment ?  
Why don't you find me at the top of a telephone pole,  
repairing the lines from city to city ?  
Why don't you find me riding a horse through Cuba,  
a giant of a man with a red machete ?  
Why don't you find me explaining machines  
to underprivileged pupils, negroid Spaniards,  
happy it is not a course in creative writing ?  
Come back here, little warm body,  
it's time for another day.  
Destiny has fled and I settle for you  
who found me staring at you in a store  
one afternoon four years ago  
and slept with me every night since.  
How do you find my sailor eyes after all this time ?  
Am I what you expected?  
Are we together too much ?  
Did Destiny shy at the double Turkish towel,  
our knowledge of each other's skin,  
our love which is a proverb on the block,  
our agreement that in matters spiritual  
I should be the Man of Destiny  
and you should be the Woman of the House ?

## Queen Victoria and Me

Queen Victoria

my father and all his tobacco loved you  
I love you too in all your forms  
the slim unlovely virgin anyone would lay  
the white figure floating among German beards  
the mean governess of the huge pink maps  
the solitary mourner of a prince

Queen Victoria

I am cold and rainy  
I am dirty as a glass roof in a train station  
I feel like an empty cast-iron exhibition  
I want ornaments on everything  
because my love she gone with other boys

Queen Victoria

do you have a punishment under the white lace  
will you be short with her  
and make her read little Bibles  
will you spank her with a mechanical corset  
I want her pure as power  
I want her skin slightly musty with petticoats  
will you wash the easy bidets out of her head

Queen Victoria

I'm not much nourished by modern love  
Will you come into my life  
with your sorrow and your black carriages  
and your perfect memory

Queen Victoria

The 20th century belongs to you and me  
Let us be two severe giants  
(not less lonely for our partnership)  
who discolour test tubes in the halls of science  
who turn up unwelcome at every World's Fair

heavy with proverb and correction  
confusing the star-dazed tourists  
with our incomparable sense of loss

## The Pure List and the Commentary

### The pure list

The alarm clock invented the day  
Savana the evil scientist  
I loved you in blouses  
It's the laundry ringing  
Your bra was so flimsy  
Albert Hotel sixth floor  
A shoe box of drugs  
I looked for you in the audience  
Lie down forever in the Photomat  
Your sister has blond hair  
Does Perception work  
Do you say zero or oh  
Very few people have thighs  
Etc.

The commentary

1. The alarm clock invented the day. Luckily the glass was broken and I could twist the black moustaches. They turned into angry black whips tethered to a screw in the middle of a sundial, writhing to get free.

2. Savana the evil scientist, foe of Captain Marvel and the entire Marvel family, I summon you from your migrating Mosaic grave. Tireless worker! If I must lose, let me lose like thee!

3. I loved you in blouses. I rubbed sun-tan lotion on your back and other parts. I did this in all seasons. I loved you in old-fashioned garters. I wanted to make a brown photograph about you and pass it around cloakrooms. I would have snatched it away from someone and beat up his face.

4. It's the laundry ringing, ringing, ringing. It's a lovely sound for a Saturday morning, n'est-ce pas? The delivery boy has no place else to go. He is of a different race. Perhaps he's looked through my shirts. I think these people know too much about us.

5. Your bra was so flimsy and light, just a tantalizing formality. I thought it would die in my pocket like a corsage.

6. Albert Hotel sixth floor seven thirty p.m. On the scratched table I set out in a row a copper bust of Stalin, a plaster of paris bust of Beethoven, a china jug shaped like Winston Churchill's head, a reproduction of a fragment of the True Cross, a small idol, a photograph of a drawing of the Indian Chief Pontiac, hair, an applicator used for artificial insemination. I undressed and waited for power.

7. A shoe box of drugs. Isn't this carrying deception too far? Where will you keep your shoes ?

8. I looked for you in the audience when I delivered the Memorial Lecture. Ladies and Gents, the honour is the same but the pleasure is somewhat diminished. I had

expected, I had hoped to find among your faces a face  
which once -- No, I have said too much. Let me continue.  
The pith of plant stems, the marrow of bones, the cellular,  
central, inner part of animal hair, the medulla oblongata  
... I exposed these fine minds to bravery, Etc.

## The New Step

### A Ballet-Drama in One Act

#### CHARACTERS:

MARY and DIANE, two working girls who room together. MARY is very plain, plump, clumsy: ugly, if one is inclined to the word. She is the typical victim of beauty courses and glamour magazines. Her life is a search for, a belief in the technique, the elixir, the method, the secret, the hint that will transform and render her forever lovely. DIANE is a natural beauty, tall, fresh and graceful, one of the blessed. She moves to a kind of innocent sexual music, incapable of any gesture which could intrude on this high animal grace. To watch her pull on her nylons is all one needs of ballet or art.

HARRY is the man Diane loves. He has the proportions we associate with Greek statuary. Clean, tall, openly handsome, athletic. He glitters with health, decency and mindlessness.

The COLLECTOR is a woman over thirty, grotesquely obese, a great heap, deformed, barely mobile. She possesses a commanding will and combines the fascination of the tyrant and the freak. Her jolliness asks for no charity. All her movements represent the triumph of a rather sinister spiritual energy over an intolerable mass of flesh.

#### SCENE:

It is eight o'clock of a Saturday night. All the action takes place in the girls' small apartment which need be furnished with no more than a dressing-mirror, wardrobe, record-player, easy chair and a front door. We have the impression, as we do from the dwelling places of most bachelor girls, of an arrangement they want to keep comfortable but temporary,

DIANE is dressed in bra and panties, preparing herself for an evening with HARRY. MARY follows her about the room, lost in envy and awe, handing DIANE the necessary lipstick or brush, doing up a

button or fastening a necklace. MARY is the dull but orthodox assistant to DIANE's mysterious ritual of beauty.

MARY. What is it like?

DIANE. What like?

MARY. You know.

DIANE. No.

MARY. To be like you.

DIANE. Such as?

MARY. Beautiful.

(Pause. During these pauses DIANE continues her toilet as does MARY her attendance.)

DIANE. Everybody can be beautiful.

MARY. You can say that.

DIANE. Love makes people beautiful.

MARY. You can say that.

DIANE. A woman in love is beautiful.

(Pause.)

MARY. Look at me.

DIANE. I've got to hurry.

MARY. Harry always waits.

DIANE. He said he's got something on his mind.

MARY. You've got the luck.

(Pause.)

MARY. Look at me a second.

DIANE. All right.

(MARY performs an aggressive curtsy.)

MARY. Give me some advice.

DIANE. Everybody has their points.

MARY. What are my points?

DIANE. What are your points?



MARY. Name my points.

(MARY stands there belligerently. She lifts up her skirt. She rolls up her sleeves. She tucks her sweater in tight.)

DIANE. I've got to hurry.

MARY. Name one point.

DIANE. You've got nice hands.

MARY (surprised). Do I ?

DIANE. Very nice hands.

MARY. Do I really?

DIANE. Hands are very important.

(MARY shows her hands to the mirror and gives them little exercises.)

DIANE. Men often look at hands.

MARY. They do?

DIANE. Often.

MARY. What do they think?

DIANE. Think?

MARY (impatiently). When they look at hands.

DIANE. They think: There's a nice pair of hands.

MARY. What else?

DIANE. They think: Those are nice hands to hold.

MARY. And?

DIANE. They think: Those are nice hands to -- squeeze.

MARY. I'm listening.

DIANE. They think: Those are nice hands to -- kiss.

MARY. Go on.

DIANE. They think -- (racking her brain for compassion's sake.)

MARY. Well?

DIANE. Those are nice hands to -- love!

MARY. Love!

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. What do you mean "love"?

DIANE. I don't have to explain.

MARY. Someone is going to love my hands?

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. What about my arms?

DIANE. What about them? (A little surly.)

MARY. Are they one of my points?

(Pause.)

DIANE. I suppose not one of your best.

MARY. What about my shoulders?

(Pause.)

DIANE. Your shoulders are all right.

MARY. You know they're not. They're not.

DIANE. Then what did you ask me for?

MARY. What about my bosom?

DIANE. I don't know your bosom.

MARY. You do know my bosom.

DIANE. I don't.

MARY. You do.

DIANE. I do not know your bosom.

MARY. You've seen me undressed.

DIANE. I never looked that hard.

MARY. You know my bosom all right. (But she'll let it pass. She looks disgustedly at her hands.)

MARY. Hands!

DIANE. Don't be so hard on yourself.

MARY. Sexiest knuckles on the block.

DIANE. Why hurt yourself?

MARY. My fingers are really stacked.

DIANE. Stop, sweetie.

MARY. They come when they shake hands with me.

DIANE. Now please!

MARY. You don't know how it feels.

(Pause.)

MARY. Just tell me what it's like.

DIANE. What like?

MARY. To be beautiful. You've never told me.

DIANE. There's no such thing as beautiful.

MARY. Sure.

DIANE. It's how you feel.

MARY. I'm going to believe that.

DIANE. It's how you feel makes you beautiful.

MARY. Do you know how I feel?

DIANE. Don't tell me.

MARY. Ugly.

DIANE. You don't have to talk like that.

MARY. I feel ugly. What does that make me?

(DIANE declines to answer. She steps into her high heeled shoes, the elevation bringing out the harder lines of her legs,

adding to her stature an appealing haughtiness and to her general beauty a touch of violence.)

MARY. According to what you said.

DIANE. I don't know.

MARY. You said: It's how you feel makes you beautiful.

DIANE. I know what I said.

MARY. I feel ugly. So what does that make me?

DIANE. I don't know.

MARY. According to what you said.

DIANE. I don't know.

MARY. Don't be afraid to say it.

DIANE. Harry will be here.

MARY. Say it! (Launching herself into hysteria.)

DIANE. I've got to get ready.

MARY. You never say it. You're afraid to say it. It won't kill you. The word won't kill you. You think it but you won't say it. When you get up in the morning you tiptoe to the bathroom. I tiptoe to the bathroom but I sound like an army. What do you think I think when I hear myself? Don't you think I know the difference? It's no secret. It's not as though there aren't any mirrors. If you only said it I wouldn't try. I don't want to try. I don't want to have to try. If you only once said I was -- ugly!

(DIANE comforts her.)

DIANE. You're not ugly, sweetie. Nobody's ugly. Everybody can be beautiful. Your turn will come. Your man will come. He'll take you in his arms. No no no, you're not ugly. He'll teach you that you are beautiful. Then you'll know what it is. (Cradling her.)

MARY. Will he?

DIANE. Of course he will.

MARY. Until then?

DIANE. You've got to keep going, keep looking.

MARY. Keep up with my exercises.

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. Keep up with my ballet lessons.

DIANE. Exactly.

MARY. Try and lose weight.

DIANE. Follow the book.

MARY. Brush my hair the right way.

DIANE. That's the spirit.

MARY. A hundred strokes.

DIANE. Good.

MARY. I've got to gain confidence.

DIANE. You will.

MARY. I can't give up.

DIANE. It's easier than you think.

MARY. Concentrate on my best points.

DIANE. Make the best of what you have.

MARY. Why not start now?

DIANE. Why not.

(MARY gathers herself together, checks her posture in the mirror, crosses to the record-player and switches it on. "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies". She begins the ballet exercises she has learned, perhaps, at the T.W.C.A., two evenings a week. Between the final touches of her toilet DIANE encourages her with nods of approval. The doorbell rings. Enter HARRY in evening clothes, glittering although his expression is solemn, for he has come on an important mission.)

HARRY. Hi girls. Don't mind me, Mary.

(MARY waves in the midst of a difficult contortion.)

DIANE. Darling!

(DIANE sweeps into his arms, takes the attitude of a dancing partner. HARRY, with a trace of reluctance, consents to lead her in a ballroom step across the floor.)

HARRY. I've got something on my mind.

(DIANE squeezes his arm, disengages herself, crosses to MARY and whispers.)

DIANE. He's got something on his mind.

(DIANE and MARY embrace in the usual squeaky conspiratorial manner with which girls preface happy matrimonial news. While MARY smiles benignly, exeunt HARRY and DIANE. MARY turns the machine louder, moves in front of



the mirror, resumes the ballet exercises. She stops them from

time to time to check various parts of her anatomy in the mirror at close range, as if the effects of the discipline might be already apparent.)

MARY. Goody.

(A long determined ring of the doorbell. MARY stops, eyes bright with expectation. Perhaps the miracle is about to unfold. She smooths her dress and hair, switches off the machine, opens the door. The COLLECTOR enters with lumbering difficulty, looks around, takes control. The power she radiates is somehow guaranteed by her grotesque form. Her body is a huge damaged tank operating under the intimate command of a brilliant field warrior which is her mind: MARY waits, appalled and intimidated. )

COLLECTOR. I knew there was people in because I heard music.

(MARY cannot speak.)

Some people don't like to open the door. I'm in charge of the whole block.

MARY (recovering). Are you collecting for something?

COLLECTOR. The United Fund for the Obese, you know, UFO. That includes The Obese Catholic Drive, The Committee for Jewish Fat People, the Help the Blind Obese, and the Universal Aid to the Obese. If you make one donation you won't be bothered again.

MARY. We've never been asked before.

COLLECTOR. I know. But I have your card now. The whole Fund has been reorganized.

MARY. It has?

COLLECTOR. Oh yes. Actually it was my idea to have the Obese themselves go out and canvass. They were against it at first but I convinced them. It's the only fair way. Gives the public an opportunity to see exactly where their money goes. And I've managed to get the Spastic and Polio and Cancer people to see the light. It's the only fair way. We're all over the neighbourhood.

MARY. It's very -- courageous.

COLLECTOR. That's what my husband says.

MARY. Your husband!

COLLECTOR. He'd prefer me to stay at home. Doesn't believe in married girls working.

MARY. Have -- have you been married long?

COLLECTOR. Just short of a year. (Coyly) You might say we're still honeymooners.

MARY. Oh.

COLLECTOR. Don't be embarrassed. One of the aims of our organization is to help people like me lead normal lives. Now what could be more normal than marriage? Can you think of anything more normal? Of course you can't. It makes you feel less isolated, part of the whole community. Our people are getting married all the time.

MARY. Of course, of course. (She is disintegrating.)

COLLECTOR. I didn't think it would work out myself at first. But John is so loving. He's taken such patience with me. When we're together it's as though there's nothing wrong with me at all.

MARY. What does your husband do?

COLLECTOR. He's a chef.

MARY. A chef.

COLLECTOR. Not in any famous restaurant. Just an ordinary chef. But it's good enough for me. Sometimes, when he's joking, he says I married him for his profession.

(MARY tries to laugh.)

Well, I've been chatting too long about myself and I have the rest of this block to cover. How much do you think you'd like to give? I know you're a working girl.

MARY. I don't know, I really don't know.

COLLECTOR. May I make a suggestion?

MARY. Of course.

COLLECTOR. Two dollars.

MARY. Two dollars. (Goes to her purse obediently.)

COLLECTOR. I don't think that's too much, do you?

MARY. No no.

COLLECTOR. Five dollars would be too much.

MARY. Too much.

COLLECTOR. And one dollar just doesn't seem right.

MARY. Oh, I only have a five. I don't have any change.

COLLECTOR. I'll take it.

MARY. You'll take it?

COLLECTOR. I'll take it. (A command.)

(MARY drops the bill in the transaction, being afraid to make any physical contact with the COLLECTOR. MARY stoops to pick it up. The COLLECTOR prevents her.)

COLLECTOR. Let me do that. The whole idea is not to treat us like invalids. You just watch how well I get along.

(The COLLECTOR retrieves the money with immense difficulty.)

COLLECTOR. That wasn't so bad, was it?

MARY. No. Oh no. It wasn't so bad.

COLLECTOR. I've even done a little dancing in my time.

MARY. That's nice.

COLLECTOR. They have courses for us. First we do it in water, but very soon we're right up there on dry land. I bet you do some dancing yourself, a girl like you. I heard music when I came.

MARY. Not really.

COLLECTOR. Do you know what would make me very happy?

MARY. It's very late.

COLLECTOR. To see you do a step or two.

MARY. I'm quite tired.

COLLECTOR. A little whirl.

MARY. I'm not very good.

COLLECTOR. A whirl, a twirl, a bit of a swing. I'll put it on for you.

(The COLLECTOR begins to make her way to the record-player. MARY, who cannot bear to see her expend herself, overtakes her and switches it on. MARY performs for a few moments while the COLLECTOR looks on with pleasure, tapping out the time. MARY breaks off the dance.)

MARY. I'm not very good.

COLLECTOR. Would a little criticism hurt you?

MARY. NO --

COLLECTOR. They're not dancing like that any more.

MARY. No?

COLLECTOR. They're doing something altogether different.

MARY. I wouldn't know.

COLLECTOR. More like this.

(The record has reached the end of its spiral and is now jerking back and forth over the last few bars.)

COLLECTOR. Don't worry about that.

(The COLLECTOR moves to stage centre and executes a terrifying dance to the repeating bars of music. It combines the heavy mechanical efficiency of a printing machine with the convulsions of a spastic. It could be a garbage heap falling down an escalator. It is grotesque but military, excruciating but triumphant. It is a woman-creature proclaiming a disease of the flesh. MARY tries to look away but cannot. She stares, dumbfounded, shattered and ashamed.)

COLLECTOR. We learn to get around, don't we?

MARY. It's very nice. (She switches off the machine.)

COLLECTOR. That's more what they're doing.

MARY. Is it?

COLLECTOR. In most of the places. A few haven't caught on.

MARY. I'm very tired now. I think --

COLLECTOR. You must be tired.

MARY. I am.

COLLECTOR. With all my talking.

MARY. Not really.

COLLECTOR. I've taken your time.

MARY. You haven't.

COLLECTOR. I'll write you a receipt.

MARY. It isn't necessary.

COLLECTOR. Yes it is. (She writes.) This isn't official. An official receipt will be mailed to you from the Fund headquarters. You'll need it for Income Tax.

MARY. Thank you.

COLLECTOR. Thank you. I've certainly enjoyed this.



MARY. Me too. (She is now confirmed in a state of numbed surrender.)

COLLECTOR (with a sudden disarming tenderness that changes through the speech into a vision of uncompromising domination). No, you didn't. Oh, I know you didn't. It frightened you. It made you sort of sick. It had to frighten you. It always does at the beginning. Everyone is frightened at the beginning. That's part of it. Frightened and -- fascinated. Fascinated -- that's the important thing. You were fascinated too, and that's why I know you'll learn the new step. You see, it's a way to start over and forget about all the things you were never really good at. Nobody can resist that, can they? That's why you'll learn the new step. That's why I must teach you. And soon you'll want to learn. Everybody will want to learn. We'll be teaching everybody.

MARY. I'm fairly busy.

COLLECTOR. Don't worry about that. We'll find time. We'll make time. You won't believe this now, but soon, and it will be very soon, you're going to want me to teach you everything. Well, you better get some sleep. Sleep is very important. I want to say thank you. All the Obese want to say thank you.

MARY. Nothing. Goodnight.

COLLECTOR. Just beginning for us.

(Exit the COLLECTOR. MARY, dazed and exhausted stands at the door for some time. She moves toward stage centre, attempts a few elementary exercises, collapses into the chair and stares dumbly at the audience. The sound of a key in the lock. Door opens. Enter DIANE alone, crying.)

DIANE. I didn't want him to see me home.

(MARY is unable to cope with anyone else's problem at this point.)

MARY. What's the matter with you?

DIANE. It's impossible.

MARY. What's impossible?

DIANE. What happened.

MARY. What happened?

DIANE. He doesn't want to see me any more.

MARY. Harry?

DIANE. Harry.

MARY. Your Harry?

DIANE. You know damn well which Harry.

MARY. Doesn't want to see you any more?

DIANE. No.

MARY. I thought he loved you.

DIANE. So did I.

MARY. I thought he really loved you.

DIANE. So did I.

MARY. You told me he said he loved you.

DIANE. He did.

MARY. But now he doesn't?

DIANE. No.

MARY. Oh.

DIANE. It's terrible.

MARY. It must be.

DIANE. It came so suddenly.

MARY. It must have.

DIANE. I thought he loved me.

MARY. So did I.

DIANE. He doesn't!

MARY. Don't cry.

DIANE. He's getting married.

MARY. He isn't!

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. He isn't!

DIANE. This Sunday.

MARY. This Sunday?

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. So soon?

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. He told you that?

DIANE. Tonight.

MARY. What did he say?

DIANE. He said he's getting married this Sunday.

MARY. He's a bastard.

DIANE. Don't say that.

MARY. I say he's a bastard.

DIANE. Don't talk that way.

MARY. Why not?

DIANE. Don't.

MARY. After what he's done?

DIANE. It's not his fault.

MARY. Not his fault?

DIANE. He fell in love.

(The word has its magic effect.)

MARY. Fell in love?

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. With someone else?

DIANE. Yes.

MARY. He fell out of love with you?

DIANE. I Suppose SO.

MARY. That's terrible.

DIANE. He said he couldn't help it.

MARY. Not if it's love.

DIANE. He said it was.

MARY. Then he couldn't help it.

(DIANE begins to remove her make-up and undress, reversing exactly every step of her toilet. MARY, still bewildered, but out of habit, assists her.)

MARY. And you're so beautiful.

DIANE. No.

MARY. Your hair.

DIANE. No.

MARY. Your shoulders.

DIANE. No.

MARY. Everything.

(Pause.)

MARY. What did he say?

DIANE. He told me everything.

MARY. Such as what?

DIANE. Harry's a gentleman.

MARY. I always thought so.

DIANE. He wanted me to know everything.

MARY. It's only fair.

DIANE. He told me about her.

MARY. What did he say?

DIANE. He said he loves her.

MARY. Then he had no choice.

DIANE. He said she's beautiful.

MARY. He didn't!

DIANE. What can you expect?

MARY. I Suppose SO.

DIANE. He loves her, after all.

MARY. Then I guess he thinks she's beautiful.

(Pause.)

MARY. What else did he say?

DIANE. He told me everything.

MARY. How did he meet her?

DIANE. She came to his house.

MARY. What for?

DIANE. She was collecting money.

MARY. Money! (Alarm.)

DIANE. For a charity.

MARY. Charity!

DIANE. Invalids of some kind.

MARY. Invalids!

DIANE. That's the worst part.

MARY. What part?

DIANE. She's that way herself.

MARY. What way?

DIANE. You know.

MARY. What way, what way?

DIANE. You know.

MARY. Say it!

DIANE. She's an invalid.

MARY. Harry's marrying an invalid?

DIANE. This Sunday.

MARY. You said he said she was beautiful.

DIANE. He did.

MARY. Harry is going to marry an invalid.

DIANE. What should I do?

MARY. Harry who said he loved you. (Not a question.)

DIANE. I'm miserable.

(MARY is like a woman moving through a fog toward a light.)

MARY. Harry is going to marry an invalid. He thinks she's beautiful. (MARY switches on the record-player.) She came to his door. Harry who told you he loved you. You who told me I had my points.

('The Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairies" begins. MARY dances but she does not use the steps she learned at the Y.W.C.A. She dances in conscious imitation of the COLLECTOR.)

DIANE. What are you doing? (Horrorified.)

(MARY smiles at her.)

DIANE. Stop it! Stop it this instant!

MARY. Don't tell me what to do. Don't you dare. Don't ever tell me what to do. Don't ever.

(The dance continues. DIANE, dressed in bra and panties as at the beginning, backs away.)

CURTAIN



## The Paper

My fingers trembled  
like eyelashes assailed by lust  
I signed a paper preventing  
the Market from loving me  
My childhood friends lined up  
to say goodbye  
I mistook their gesture  
for a firedrill  
and out of habit of hatred  
for the make-believe  
I underlined my signature

Goodbye girls and boys  
I call today in a riper voice  
In the cold mirror of opium  
I saw all our lives  
connected and precise  
as pieces in a clock  
and the shining ladder  
I teetered on was nothing  
but the pendulum

## Nursery Rhyme

A beautiful woman dignified  
the cocktail lounge  
suddenly we were drinking  
for a reason  
We were all Absolutists  
with a rose carved in our minds  
by a 5-year-old brain surgeon  
Gentlemen  
somewhere a shabby wife waits for us  
with some decent news about chickenpox  
But let me speak for myself  
I believe in God  
I have seen angels pulsing  
through the veined atmosphere  
I am alone with a window  
full of bones and wrinkles  
O terrible eyes  
O perfect mouth  
my fantasy shipwrecked  
on the metal of your hair  
Your beauty rides a wet flower  
like a sail above a deep old hull  
I need to touch you  
with my fleshy calipers  
Desire is the last church  
and the ashtrays  
are singing with hunger  
Even if you are the Golden Calf  
you are better than money  
or government  
and I have bent my knee  
Roses are roses  
blue is blue

History Greece Art Measure Face Tree Sphere Blossom  
Terror Rose  
remind me remind me remind me

## Old Dialogue

- Has this new life deepened your perceptions?
- I suppose so.
- Then you are being trained correctly.
- For what ?
- If you knew we could not train you.

## Winter Bulletin

Toronto has been good to me  
I relaxed on TV  
I attacked several dead horses  
I spread rumours about myself  
I reported a Talmudic quarrel  
with the Montreal Jewish Community  
I forged a death certificate  
in case I had to disappear  
I listened to a huckster  
welcome me to the world  
I slept behind my new sunglasses  
I abandoned the care of my pimples  
I dreamed that I needed nobody  
I faced my trap  
I withheld my opinion on matters  
on which I had no opinion  
I humoured the rare January weather  
with a jaunty step for the sake of heroism  
Not very carefully  
I thought about the future  
and how little I know about animals  
The future seemed unnecessarily black and strong  
as if it had received my casual mistakes  
through a carbon sheet

Why Did You Give My Name to the Police?

You recited the Code of Comparisons  
in your mother's voice.  
Again you were the blue-robed seminary girl  
but these were not poplar trees and nuns  
you walked between.  
These were Laws.  
Damn you for making this moment hopeless,  
now, as a clerk in uniform fills  
in my father's name.

You too must find the moment hopeless  
in the Tennyson Hotel.  
I know your stomach.  
The brass bed bearing your suitcase  
rumbles away like an automatic  
promenading target in a shooting gallery:  
you stand with your hands full  
of a necklace you wanted to pack.  
In detail you recall your rich dinner.  
Grab that towel rack!

Doesn't the sink seem a fraud  
with its hair-swirled pipes?  
Doesn't the overhead bulb  
seem burdened with mucous?  
Things will be better at City Hall.

Now you must learn to read  
newspapers without laughing.  
No hysterical headline breakfasts.  
Police be your Guard,  
Telephone Book your Brotherhood.  
Action! Action! Action!  
Goodbye Citizen.

The clerk is talking to nobody.  
Do you see how I have tiptoed  
out of his brown file?  
He fingers his uniform  
like a cheated bargain hunter.  
Answer me, please talk to me, he weeps,  
say I'm not a doorman.

I plug the wires of your fear  
(ah, this I was always meant to do)  
into the lust-asylum universe:  
raped by aimless old electricity  
you stiffen over the steel books of your bed  
like a fish  
in a liquid air experiment.  
Thus withers the Civil Triumph  
(Laws rush in to corset the collapse)  
for you are mistress to the Mayor,  
he electrocuted in your frozen juices.

## Governments Make Me Lonely

Speech from the Throne  
dissolves my friends  
like a miracle soap  
and there's only the Queen and me  
and her English  
Soon she's gone too  
I find myself wandering  
with her English  
across a busy airfield  
I am insignificant as an aspirant  
in the Danger Reports  
Why did I listen to the radio  
A man with a yellow bolo-bat  
lures my immortal destiny  
into a feeding trough  
for Royal propellers  
and her English follows  
like an airline shoulder bag  
I'm alone  
Goodbye little Jewish soul  
I knew things  
would not go soft for you  
but I meant you  
for a better wilderness



## The Lists

Straffed by the Milky Way  
vaccinated by a snarl of clouds  
lobotomized by the bore of the moon  
he fell in a heap  
some woman's smell  
smeared across his face  
a plan for Social Welfare  
rusting in a trouser cuff  
From five to seven  
tall trees doctored him  
mist roamed on guard  
Then it began again  
the sun stuck a gun in his mouth  
the wind started to skin him  
Give up the Plan give up the Plan  
echoing among its scissors  
The women who elected him  
performed erotic calisthenics  
above the stock-reports  
of every hero's fame  
Out of the corner of his stuffed eye  
etched in minor metal  
under his letter of the alphabet  
he clearly saw his tiny name  
Then a museum slid under  
his remains like a shovel

## To the Indian Pilgrims

I am the country you meant  
I am the chalk snake  
fading in the remote village  
I am the smiling man  
who gave you water  
I am the shoemaker  
you could not speak to  
but whom you believed could love you  
I am the carver of the moon-round breasts  
I am the flesh teacher  
I am the demon  
who laughs himself to death  
I am the country you meant  
As the virgin places the garland  
on the soft river  
I can put a discipline  
across your bellies  
I do not know all my knowledge  
and I know that this is my strength  
I am the country  
you will love and hate  
I am the policeman  
floating on Upanishads  
The epidemic burns  
village after village  
in a tedious daily fire  
The white doctors sweat  
the black doctors sweat  
I am the epidemic  
I am the teacher  
whom the teachers hate  
I am the country you meant  
I am the snake beaten out of silver

I am the black ornament  
The ivory bridge  
leaps over the thick stream  
I bring it down with a joke  
I whistle it into ruins  
The sunlight gnaws at it  
The moonlight gives it leprosy  
I am the agent  
I am the disease  
The world stiffens suddenly  
and gravity sinks its teeth  
into village balloons  
and water injures the red of blood  
and pebbles surrender  
their rough little mouths  
and your secret loving names  
turn up in dossiers  
when I show in black and white  
exactly where your thumbs  
and tickets aim

## The Music Crept By Us

I would like to remind  
the management  
that the drinks are watered  
and the hat-check girl  
has syphilis  
and the band is composed  
of former S.S. monsters  
However since it is  
New Year's Eve  
and I have lip cancer  
I will place my  
paper hat on my  
concussion and dance

## The Telephone

Mother, the telephone is ringing in the empty house.  
It rang all Wednesday  
Sometimes the people next door thought it was their  
phone,  
A rusty sound, if ringing has a colour  
as if, whatever the message, it would be obsolete,  
news already acted on, or ignored  
like an anecdote about McCarthy or  
the insurance man about the cheque which has already  
been mailed  
or a wedding of old people  
Did we ever use these battered pots, I wondered once  
while rummaging in the basement. We must have been  
poor  
or deliberately austere, but I was not told.  
A rusty sound, a touch of violence in it  
rather than urgency, as if the message demanded a last  
resource  
from the instrument.  
Harbour of floating incidental information  
our telephone was feminine  
an ugly girl who had cultivated a good nature  
slightly promiscuous  
A rusty sound, like the old girl,  
never "fatale", trying to spread for a childhood chum  
just for auld lang syne.  
Mother, someone is trying to get through,  
probably to remind you of Daylight Saving Time  
Someone must compose your number  
to remind you of Daylight Saving Time  
even though you've changed all the clocks you can reach  
Answer the phone, dust  
Answer the phone, plastic Message-Riter

Answer the phone, darlings who lived in the house  
even before us  
Answer the phone, another family  
Someone wants to say hello about nothing  
Answer the phone, you who followed your career  
past the comfort of gossip  
who listen to the banal regular ringing  
and give your venom to it  
enforce it with your hatred  
until the walls are marked by its dentist's persistence  
like a negro's house  
with obscenities and crosses  
You are a little boy  
lying in bed in the early summer  
the telephone is ringing  
your parents are in the garden  
and they rush to get it  
before it wakes you up  
you who used your boyhood as a discipline  
against the profane --  
your moulding discipline  
you: single, awake, contemptuous even of exile  
Your parents rush to stop the ringing  
which would let you rejoice in Daylight Saving Time  
or how the project is coming along  
and you shall not alter your love  
assailed as it is by your nature, your insight,  
Time or the World,  
though the ringing brocade your contempt like a royal  
garment  
you shall set aside a hiding place  
you shall not alter your love

## Disguises

I am sorry that the rich man must go  
and his house become a hospital.  
I loved his wine, his contemptuous servants,  
his ten-year-old ceremonies.  
I loved his car which he wore like a snail's shell  
everywhere, and I loved his wife,  
the hours she put into her skin,  
the milk, the lust, the industries  
that served her complexion.  
I loved his son who looked British  
but had American ambitions  
and let the word aristocrat comfort him  
like a reprieve while Kennedy reigned.  
I loved the rich man: I hate to see  
his season ticket for the Opera  
fall into a pool for opera-lovers.

I am sorry that the old worker must go  
who called me mister when I was twelve  
and sir when I was twenty  
who studied against me in obscure socialist  
clubs which met in restaurants.  
I loved the machine he knew like a wife's body.  
I loved his wife who trained bankers  
in an underground pantry  
and never wasted her ambition in ceramics.  
I loved his children who debate  
and come first at McGill University.  
Goodbye old gold-watch winner  
all your complex loyalties  
must now be borne by one-faced patriots.

Goodbye dope fiends of North Eastern Lunch  
circa 1948, your spoons which were not  
Swedish Stainless, were the same colour  
as the hoarded clasps and hooks  
of discarded soiled therapeutic corsets.  
I loved your puns about snow  
even if they lasted the full seven-month  
Alontreal winter. Go write your memoirs  
for the Psychedelic Review.

Goodbye sex fiends of Beaver Pond  
who dreamed of being jacked-off  
by electric milking machines.  
You had no Canada Council.  
You had to open little boys  
with a penknife.  
I loved your statement to the press:  
"I didn't think he'd mind."  
Goodbye articulate monsters  
Abbot and Costello have met Frankenstein.

I am sorry that the conspirators must go  
the ones who scared me by showing me  
a list of all the members of my family.  
I loved the way they reserved judgment  
about Genghis Khan. They loved me because  
I told them their little beards  
made them dead-ringers for Lenin.  
The bombs went off in Westmount  
and now they are ashamed  
like a successful outspoken Schopenhauerian  
whose room-mate has committed suicide.  
Suddenly they are all making movies.  
I have no one to buy coffee for.

I embrace the changeless:  
the committed men in public wards



oblivious as Hasidim  
who believe that they are someone else.  
Bravo! Abelard, viva! Rockefeller,  
have these buns, Napoleon,  
hurrah! betrayed Duchess.  
Long live you chronic self-abusers!  
you monotheists!  
you familiars of the Absolute  
sucking at circles!  
You are all my comfort  
as I turn to face the beehive  
as I disgrace my style  
as I coarsen my nature  
as I invent jokes  
as I pull up my garters  
as I accept responsibility.

You comfort me  
incorrigible betrayers of the self  
as I salute fashion  
and bring my mind  
like a promiscuous air-hostess  
handing out parachutes in a nose dive  
bring my butchered mind  
to bear upon the facts.

Lot

Give me back my house  
Give me back my young wife  
I shouted to the sunflower in my path  
Give me back my scalpel  
Give me back my mountain view  
I said to the seeds along my path  
Give me back my name  
Give me back my childhood list  
I whispered to the dust when the path gave out  
Now sing  
Now sing  
sang my master as I waited in the raw wind  
Have I come so far for this  
I wondered as I waited in the pure cold  
ready at last to argue for my silence  
Tell me master  
do my lips move  
or where does it come from  
this soft total chant that drives my soul  
like a spear of salt into the rock  
Give me back my house  
Give me back my young wife

## One of the Nights I Didn't Kill Myself

You dance on the day you saved  
my theoretical angels  
daughters of the new middle-class  
who wear your mouths like Bardot  
Come my darlings  
the movies are true  
I am the lost sweet singer whose death  
in the fog your new high-heeled boots  
have ground into cigarette butts  
I was walking the harbour this evening  
looking for a 25-cent bed of water  
but I will sleep tonight  
with your garters curled in my shoes  
like rainbows on vacation  
with your virginity ruling  
the condom cemeteries like a 2nd chance  
I believe I believe  
Thursday December 12th  
is not the night  
and I will kiss again the slope of a breast  
little nipple above me  
like a sunset

## The Big World

The big world will find out  
about this farm  
the big world will learn  
the details of what  
I worked out in the can

And your curious life with me  
will be told so often  
that no one will believe  
you grew old

## Narcissus

You don't know anyone  
You know some streets  
hills, gates, restaurants  
The waitresses have changed

You don't know me  
I'm happy about the autumn  
the leaves the red skirts  
everything moving

I passed you in a marble wall  
some new bank  
You were bleeding from the mouth  
You didn't even know the season

## Cherry Orchards

Canada some wars are waiting for you  
some threats  
some torn flags  
Inheritance is not enough  
Faces must be forged under the hammer  
of savage ideas  
Mailboxes will explode  
in the cherry orchards  
and somebody will wait forever  
for his grandfather's fat cheque  
From my deep cafe I survey the quiet snowfields  
like a U.S. promoter  
of a new plastic snowshoe  
looking for a moving speck  
a troika perhaps  
an exile  
an icy prophet  
an Indian insurrection  
a burning weather station  
There's a story out there boys  
Canada could you bear some folk songs  
about freedom and death

## Streetcars

Did you see the streetcars  
passing as of old  
along Ste Catherine Street?  
Golden streetcars  
passing under the tearful  
Temple of the Heart  
where the crutches hang  
like catatonic diving twigs.  
A thin young priest  
folds his semen in a kleenex  
his face glowing  
in the passing gold  
as the world returns.  
A lovely riot gathers the citizenry  
into its spasms  
as the past comes back  
in the form of golden streetcars.  
I carry a banner:  
"The Past is Perfect"  
my little female cousin  
who does not believe  
in our religious destiny  
rides royally on my nostalgia.  
The streetcars curtsy  
round a corner  
Firecrackers and moths  
drip from their humble wires.

## Bullets

Listen all you bullets  
that never hit:  
a lot of throats are growing  
in open collars  
like frozen milk bottles  
on a 5 a.m. street  
throats that are waiting  
for bite scars  
but will settle  
for bullet holes

You restless bullets  
lost in swarms  
from undecided wars:  
fasten on  
these nude throats  
that need some  
decoration

I've done my own work:  
I had 3 jewels  
no more  
and I have placed them  
on my choices  
jewels  
although they performed  
like bullets:  
an instant of ruby  
before the hands  
came up  
to stem the mess



And you over there  
my little acrobat:  
swing fast  
After me  
there is no care  
and the air  
is heavily armed  
and has  
the wildest aim

Hitler

Now let him go to sleep with history,  
the real skeleton stinking of gasoline,  
the mutt and jeff henchmen beside him:  
let them sleep among our precious poppies.

Cadres of S.S. waken in our minds  
where they began before we ransomed them  
to that actual empty realm we people  
with the shadows that disturb our inward peace.

For a while we resist the silver-black cars  
rolling in slow parade through the brain.  
We stuff the microphones with old chaotic flowers  
from a bed which rapidly exhausts itself.

Never mind. They turn up as poppies  
beside the tombs and libraries of the real world.  
The leader's vast design, the tilt of his chin  
seem excessively familiar to minds at peace.

## Front Lawn

The snow was falling  
over my penknife  
There was a movie  
in the fireplace  
The apples were wrapped  
in 8-year-old blonde hair  
Starving and dirty  
the janitor's daughter never  
turned up in November  
to pee from her sweet crack  
on the gravel  
I'll go back one day  
when my cast is off  
Elm leaves are falling  
over my bow and arrow  
Candy is going bad  
and Boy Scout calendars  
are on fire  
My old mother  
sits in her Cadillac  
laughing her Danube laugh  
as I tell her that we own  
all the worms  
under our front lawn  
Rust rust rust  
in the engines of love and time

## Kerensky

My friend walks through our city this winter night,  
fur-hatted, whistling, anti-mediterranean,  
stricken with seeing Eternity in all that is seasonal.  
He is the Kerensky of our Circle  
always about to chair the last official meeting  
before the pros take over, they of the pure smiling eyes  
trained only for Form.

He knows there are no measures to guarantee  
the Revolution, or to preserve the row of muscular icicles  
which will chart Winter's decline like a graph.

There is nothing for him to do but preside  
over the last official meeting.  
It will all come round again: the heartsick teachers  
who make too much of poetry, their students  
who refuse to suffer, the cache of rifles in the lawyer's attic:  
and then the magic, the 80-year comet touching  
the sturdiest houses. The Elite Corps commits suicide  
in the tennis-ball basement. Poets ride buses free.  
The General insists on a popularity poll. Troops study satire.  
A strange public generosity prevails.

Only too well he knows the tiny moment when  
everything is possible, when pride is loved, beauty held  
in common, like having an exquisite sister,  
and a man gives away his death like a piece of advice.

Our Kerensky has waited for these moments  
over a table in a rented room  
when poems grew like butterflies on the garbage of his life.  
How many times? The sad answer is: they can be counted.  
Possible and brief: this is his vision of Revolution.

Who will parade the shell today ? Who will kill in the name  
of the husk ? Who will write a Law to raise the corpse  
which cries now only for weeds and excrement ?  
See him walk the streets, the last guard, the only idler

on the square. He must keep the wreck of the Revolution  
the debris of public beauty  
from the pure smiling eyes of the trained visionaries  
who need our daily lives perfect.

The soft snow begins to honour him with epaulets, and to  
provoke the animal past of his fur hat. He wears a death, but  
he allows the snow, like an ultimate answer, to forgive him,  
just for this jewelled moment of his coronation. The carved  
gargoyles of the City Hall receive the snow as bibs beneath  
their drooling lips. How they resemble the men of profane  
vision, the same greed, the same intensity as they who whip  
their minds to recall an ancient lucky orgasm, yes, yes, he  
knows that deadly concentration, they are the founders, they  
are the bankers -- of History! He rests in his walk as they  
consume of the generous night everything that he does not  
need.

## Another Night with Telescope

Come back to me  
brutal empty room  
Thin Byzantine face  
preside over this new fast  
I am broken with easy grace  
Let me be neither  
father nor child  
but one who spins  
on an eternal unimportant loom  
patterns of wars and grass  
which do not last the night  
I know the stars  
as wild as dust  
and wait for no man's discipline  
but as they wheel  
from sky to sky they rake  
our lives with pins of light