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KOWLOON

I am counting cities in the rain:
   the time of walking Customhouse
with Campbell — another down-and-out —
both half-crazed, coats aflop,
muttering lines from Eliot's plays;
that time I caught a tram in Christchurch
under the cathedral's dripping gong;
or alone in Auckland believed I'd found
how the Yeatsian weather went.
You weren't with me then, nor are
you now in this rain-bespattered town
the lights embrace — though I see your face
and hear your plaintive mermaid song.

Cities have their voices, sounds
which murmur softly as the surging foam
and, presumably, are places men
call home, eventually become
locations people learn to like.
It rains they say, in Washington
and storms have blown on Waikiki;
but little anyone knows who walks
the night-reflecting streets alone:
a pair of shoes, a facility
to count, a measure of grief and pain,
what the wind has blown beyond
the rain-swept night towards Kowloon.

Hong Kong, 3rd September, 1968.

A I H Paterson.
LA PLAGE

When the wind’s flourish suddenly shakes
the saw-tooth edges of the dunes
into a flurry and torment of sand,
and the day is late and the sun has gone;
when birds wheel from star-fall
and brown-skinned girls from the water shout
to the wall-eyed breakers and the sea,
waves leap and salt blows
bitterly up to the darkening trees;
when up from the water, tired children
bring buckets, shells, spades,
the restless shadows of fretful dreams,
and the beach seems empty, as cold and strange
as the hands of the drowned, slowly,
shoes filled with sand, come
the sad-eyed watchers — those who have been
with Pharoah’s daughter and the infant Moses.
They have seen a country as black as the clouds
which cover the moon when night closes
blind eyes to the hunting owl —
they walk in sorrow at what they have found.

Auckland, A I H Paterson.
1967.
LEARNING TO SWIM

Today I sailed a boat that ranged the reaches of the wind, but the waves were bewildered and the delicate clouds knew of your absence, the fact that I have tried to shape a life without you and have failed. Carolyn, birds still fly, fish swim, trees move their branches against the wind, but never again your round eyes will answer mine, the sun’s excitement engender love when daylight dims.

I have seen how women glide gently over marble floors, and bathe from beaches where the tide heaps sand upon a golden shore...

Let some latter-day Ulysses come and teach them how to swim — their hands and hair were never yours, I have no loving left to give.

Today I sailed a boat that ranged the reaches of the wind.

*Singapore,*

*18th August, 1968.*

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SKETCHES OF A CHILDHOOD

Once a fortnight the district nurse came around and all the children at school had to have their hair combed with a kutu comb. This was a very strong close-set long-toothed comb that hurt when it was pulled through the hair at first, (the kids' heads jerking violently with the force of the comb as it caught in the tangles, and the tears coming involuntarily into their eyes because it hurt so much), until it broke all the knots and ran through smoothly. Then it was quite pleasant with their heads hanging over the basin and one of the senior boys or girls combing furiously, yet tenderly, almost lulling them to sleep. But at the same time they would be watching the basin and listening to hear if a kutu fell into it. If one did it made a small metallic pingling sound.

The Josephs were always shocked and surprised and even a little hurt if one was found on them. They couldn't believe it, for they were a clean family. Their mother was a clean woman and kept them clean and their house was always spotlessly clean. But they knew that the rest of the children would know that it came from the Eru kids, especially
Molly who was lousy with them, for they lived down their way and they often played together on the way home from school. You couldn’t help getting them sometimes mixing with all the other kids around. Everyone knew that. Or they hoped they did. Why even the pakeha kids were found to have some in their hair at times. And what a shock that was.

If a kutu was found in the hair they had to have their heads washed in disinfectant along with the other unfortunates. This was a very embarrassing moment, for all the other kids would stare at them as if they had something wrong with them. Yet going around with the smell of disinfectant in their hair for the rest of the day wasn’t so bad really. In fact it was quite pleasant.

Some of the pakeha parents resented their children having to be put through this inspection. They complained to the teachers. Some gave their children notes saying they were not to be inspected. And others even kept their children home those days, if they knew before hand what time the district nurse would be coming around, because the inspection was compulsory and everyone came into it. And there were some pakehas who said, “why should our children be treated like Maoris? It’s only the Maoris who get it. That’s where it comes from. It’s a Maori thing. Why......” The Josephs’ heard some of the pakeha kids repeating this. So there would be a great silent rejoicing amongst the Maori kids whenever a kutu was found in one of the pakeha kid’s hair. They thought it amusing and one back on the pakehas.

About every three months the district nurse with the aid of the teachers looked all over the childrens bodies to see if they had hakiaki (scabies). The children would have to pull their clothes away up to their necks and the boys had to drop their trousers down around their ankles while the nurse and teachers inspected them. If they were senior children they would be allowed to go out into the porch to be inspected.

Nick Joseph was always embarrassed whenever it came his turn to be inspected, even when he was a primer boy. But the nurse was very quick and unless she found spots on you it was over in no time, before you had time to really think about it. And it was always a great relief when you got through without them having found any spots on you. For you could never be really sure whether you had them or not, especially if they were only starting. But if a telltale sign was found you would have to stand there for some while, sometimes with your trousers down while the nurse and the teachers gathered around to inspect you closer. Turning you around, touching you, and peering closely at you to see that it was hakiaki. Again you couldn’t help catching them sometimes, no matter how clean your mother kept you for the Eru kids were covered in them most of the time. And sometimes when Colonel Eru came up behind you and put his arm around you, while you were walking home from school, you would feel the squishy wetness of a sore rubbing against your leg and you couldn’t very well tell him to go away because you didn’t want to hurt his feelings.

If they only had a spot the nurse would put that thick dark smelly ointment that she kept in a container the size of a four gallon petrol tin and that looked like grease, on them. So that all day long they would have the smell of it in their nostrils and would be very uncomfortable for they would feel it sticking to their clothes. And it left a stain on the boys trousers on the inside and on Nick’s pyjamas and the sheets of his bed. The children all hated it and Nick felt sorry for some of the kids for they had to go around, sometimes for several days, with this horrible smelling ointment smeared practically all over their bodies because they were covered all over with sores. And the smell would be all over the classroom and nearly make the children sick, it was so strong.

Rowley Habib.
HUSBAND AND WIFE

And you dangle your ‘old flames’ before my eyes,
Like the apple before the donkeys nose,
And tell me how much more men they were than me.
And all I can say in defence is that you knew them first
And why didn’t you marry them instead?
God knows, you say, they asked you enough times.
And you say you were confused. Which brings me to the point.
I’ll tell you why you married me and not one of your ‘old flames.’
Because they put you on a pedestal and kissed your feet.
When all you wanted was to be treated like a woman.
And I treated you like that woman.
Brought you down off that pedestal, where you were lonely.
But then you found there were stones down off that pedestal,
And not only ankle-deep grass to carpet your feet.
And I dragged you over some of those stones
Because I felt you’d been on that pedestal too long.
So now you wish to be back on that pedestal again.

Rowley Habib.

GRIEF

Some songs sing only for the dancer.
Why? Some questions will not sleep with an answer.
Tomorrow, when they all stop asking
What the crying is about, I will fasten
Myself to something strong, somewhere,
And not wait to catch it unaware.
Recounting days when the cup overran
I duly record, it is dry once again.

John Cording.
ANGELA

Chalk is the image that comes to mind:
bloodless white, brittle, easily worn down.
Sitting in the close café,
watching her rest an arm on a chair
and numbly hold a cigarette,
I would allow myself to imagine
her fine lines not so much a sketch
as a medium come to life.
No one has seen her lately.
She has left her umbrella at Toby’s,
the rent due,
and a curiously scattered set of slates
that no refinement of felt or sponge
can restore to a precisely original shade.

John Cording.

UNFATHOMED DEPTH

I have a cavity in a tooth,
It pains me today.
A spot of ink adorns
The end of my nose;
My pen has attacked me again.
My lips are flecked with words
Like old men’s grey spittle.
My errands are legion
And my boots idle,
My ideas like fevers
And my will in a dream.
I look out on the morning,
Paint over my window,
And conclude unfathomably,
As my stomach concurs avidly,
That today the only matter of gravity
Is my cavity.

John Cording.
SMOKED GLASS

Tension of fitting
these new fragments
to this frame.

I am heavy with glass
    leaden light
formal divisions.

I am looking out
    look in
through these arabesques
smoked diamonds
multicoloured panes.

I see my father
old bulb blower
toiling to throw
his warm grains
in her hot retort

silicon child
brittle
amorphous
frozen too soon
because he did not know
the warm breath of his teacher.

For you
Theodore
I prepare to submit to the hot flame
your glass-house was never a prison
in it you learnt to dance
    visibly
the sound of your voice shivers my opaque walls.

May I
like you
become fluid with translucent structures.

Russell Haley.
GREEN ON GREEN

Emerald eye of
Dead-Dog pond
Sunday morning
we walk the fallen polished trees
watching for frogs.
Fat bells peal
chimneys of
the Organ House
puff notes of
smoke.

Sudden remembered dream —
intricate passages
tennis nets
drifting rafts...

I catch a shrew in the dry grass
and hold
for a moment
without knowing it
summer...

dissolving
like the image of a dream coin
in the palm
on the sound of an airgun.

Walking the logs once more
I see the green surface
broken by
green bodies
of frogs.

The shadow of a cloud moves over the pond.

Russell Haley.
KINNERET (LAKE TIBERIAS)

A still small sea
Engulfed in wrecked events,
Its pellucid waters
Unplumbed by transient buoys.

At ten and two a paper boat
Caresses its surface—
Capernaum and Tabgha
Are reapportioned to the thousands.

F M Auburn.

THE HOLLOW HEART

The sun swings

in the global sky

eyellow as the dawn
yellow as the dawn
my hollow heart escapes
from the wild garden
of your light-flushed skin
and beats against a traffic world
systolic
diastolic
systolic
diastolic
crying double the double cry
till there is nothing left of you

The sun swings
in the burning desert of streets
where flaming images
burst up
from walls and pavements
but still my hollow heart escapes
from you
fleeing by ragged roads
to the hills that bribe me
to forget your yellow body
which sears my flesh
with the brand of he who runs
The sun swings
    pitiessly
in a global sky
    e
    l
    o
    w
yellow as your hair
and the sunmetal of your loins
that touched the sun — and me.

Frederick Parmee.

A WOMAN TAKING HOME ROSE BUSHES
ON A CORPORATION BUS

Weighed down with carrying
children and rose bushes
slack-mouthed and tired
she sits down in the bus
a solitary rose bloom
bobbing beneath her chin
For her no perfumed garden
of the lute and tryst
where men are broken
for truth or a kiss
Nor rose red city
half as old as time
No seventh son to mark
by a cadency of rose
to be chrismed by bishop saint
and sally forth to burn
mud huts and unruly peasants
with the same casual brand

Her seventh died
when the old man came home
one Friday night from the pub
and kicked her in the guts

Sub rosa
under the rose to bed
and Harpocrates bribed to silence
when Venus lifts the latch

But her venial indiscretions
on picnics and carseats
have paled long ago

Alone she sees over detergent bubbles
bursting like H-bombs, white roses
blooming against a clapboard fence
for reality is always present in her dreams

To those who grow judicial roses
for our time, the purposes are sharp
to poets
and women carrying rose bushes
the thorns and gouged eyes.

Frederick Parmee.
ROSY CROCHET
(from 'Pipe Dreams in Ponsonby')

Walking one
    high
    bright
    clear
midnight
through the clear streets
    I
met Anna
    of the 5 towns
    &
    put my hand
    on
    her
shoulder. we walked a slow
    quiet
    mile
    or 2/ under trees &
streetlamps. talking quietly all the while
    of life & death & love
    especially
    love.
    not
putting it on her
by any means O
    no! just
finding out
about old friends
    &
good times
long ago.
    yes.
& holding hands up jervois road
to where we could see the harbour lights

&
then a long silent time
down
college hill
to where
beneath the beautiful gasworks
we were joined by
her great sisters

& brothers
dressed like the very poor
but filled with quiet joy

&
the sensual peace of angels!

walking quietly through the deep streets
into the heart of night/ & under the gentle hands of time
remembering all the good lives/

long ago.

David Mitchell.

THE LEADER

Winds foil and stars bewilder,
Food dwindles, time wears;
His ship’s company will not be harmonised,
Wrangle, confound his ears
With dissident voices;
But the lookout utters no cry:
Moonstruck floundering water
Heaves greenly by.

While one faction badgers the devil
And others browbeat the lord,
He has scope to be Superman, startle
The snarling rabble he has aboard
With sudden boon of mountains;
But the lookout utters no cry:
Ironic horizon
Underlines a blank sky.

Katherine O’Brien.
POEM AT MORNING

After you
let there be no one
I said

After you
the dark rain
will be mine
and the oceans
will attack me
after you

After you
no peace
after you
no reconstruction

After you
memories will plague me
your breasts linger
your kiss insult
your coming prowl the air

After you
it has been much like this

WE SHALL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER
ALWAYS HAVE EACH OTHER
you said

But after
and after you
let there be

Windows

Rhys Pasley.
BLUES

I was recently told by the executive of a local recording company that any Record Album with the word "Blues" in the title was almost sure to sell. This rather remarkable statement is indicative of the current fantastic, although often superficial, worldwide interest in the blues.

The Blues exists today in a variety of social and musical contexts, in the rural south of the USA, and in the Negro ghettos of that country, it can be heard performed by both the singers of the folk song revival and the idols of the pop scene. The latter two categories are the ones through which the blues gets its main public exposure, and this often gives a distorted picture of blues as a whole.

It will be the purpose of this talk to give a brief historical background and description of this potent musical form.

The blues can be best described as the musical vernacular of the American Negro. This peculiarly Afro-American Art form demonstrates the prime difference between African and European musical concepts in that African music is primarily rhythmic in character while European music has always been essentially melodic and harmonic. The first slaves taken to the USA learnt many of their masters' melodies but gave them a distinctly African quality. What gave Negro folk music in general and the blues in particular its uniqueness was the way in which the slaves made use of Rhythmic Melody.

It is beyond the scope of this talk (and the scope of my musical knowledge) to delve very deeply into the formal musical characteristics of the blues. It can be said though, that the blues generally tends towards a 12 bar form composed of 3 four bar lines.

However a study of only a few authentic blues performers will reveal blues stanzas of 11, 13, 14, 15, or 17 bars. We can say then briefly (although rather ponderously) that the blues song is distinguished by both its structure and content and that it has certain standard although always variable musical characteristics.

Social scientists tell us that an increasing number of people feel alienated by the depersonalised society in which they live. This could provide a clue to the amazing popularity of what is basically the music of disenfranchised underprivileged ethnic group ie "The American Negro." As a form of expression, blues are usually a statement of personal misery. At the very heart of the blues is a transmuted expression of criticism or complaint the very creation or singing of which serves as a balm or antidote, and as a way for singer and audience to share mutual social and emotional experiences. It should be mentioned here that we generally think of the blues as a musical form, because this form seems so self-evident, and because the music is so often very moving. We tend to overlook the fact that in it's natural setting the blues is not primarily conceived as music but as a verbalisation of deeply and commonly felt personal meanings.

It is convention that this verbalisation be sung. Even the word "SING" often has a different connotation to country people. When for instance a preacher exhorts his congregation to "sing it." He is thinking of verbalisation, of an emphatic emotive statement, rather than what we think of as music. In most country music, and in the blues, music is a vehicle for the statement but is seldom the statement itself.

Harold Coulander an authority on American Negro music believes that our passion for constant change has infected our view of folk cultures, and that the widely held view that the blues evolved from earlier religious and secular folk musics is not necessarily correct. He says:

"The persistence of Archaic Blues songs in cultural backwashes of the South together with other Negro songs both religious and secular that clearly antedate the civil
war, suggests that the blues form may be far older than is generally recognised and that it may have existed for a long time with parallel forms out of which it supposedly developed.

Although the exact origins of the blues are unknown it seems reasonably certain that they jelled into their present form sometime in the 19th century if not earlier. There is in fact good reason to believe that something closely akin to the blues was performed in the towns and on the plantations of the Rural South in the antebellum period. The transition that has occurred from the rural and traditional blues styles to the contemporary urban and usually electrically amplified blues could alone be the subject of a book, and a brief outline must suffice here.

As we have already shown a rural folk culture such as the blues is not likely to evolve into more sophisticated or advanced forms while existing in its natural environment. When this environment is broken up, exposed to mass media, or evacuated, the music must either become extinct or adapt. During the first Negro migrations from the rural south to the industrial northern cities the country blues provided a link with home and a familiar way of life in alien, and often hostile cities of Chicago, New York and Detroit. Hence the colossal (for the time) sales of country blues records to the "race" market in the cities. A chronological listening to blues recording from 1923 to the present will show more clearly than any amount of writing how the blues adapted to the new environment just as it's exponents and audience did.

The blues today is a tough driving often heavily amplified music, it is music of the city. It is often cynical and angry. Although it has lost much of the direct earthiness of the old country blues, there are still the essential qualities and traditional strengths which make it an increasingly meaningful mode of expression to thousands of people the world over.

Max Winnie.

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE –

In those extremes
Which we do not have here –
Itch of sweat, suns weight,
Rain through iron to the brain –
She's busy — calm, fair.
Old infants who don't cry,
Thin children with still eyes
Who neither laugh nor play
Which we do not have here –
In schools where hunger claims
And droops a hungry head,
In fields where custom squats

18
And rules old lines of waste
She’s busy — calm, fair —
No grace, no gratitude,
Grudge against a life set on
At births blind ordering
Which we do not have here —
Wounds from any rage
(Attack, defence draw blood)
Beyond a cause, a blame
She’s busy — calm, fair
With heart and hands for pain
Which we do not have here.

Mark Richards.

FUTURE

Now look up less often
At the drop of a leaf
To see her at the door —
No more empty sighing
Play back life less frequently —
The voice of the sea is not only hers.

But silent words still flow
For a coda — a sign
To live to sigh to love — ?
And hung on questioning
Hooked on the thread of truth
Breathe and move to the fret of the barb.

All for nothing for all —
One jigsaw piece
Of seascape whose shoreline
Is over the horizon —
Reach to the patterns edge
And die a foetus curled in a query.

Mark Richards.
HERON

Half-tide hunter
On new-swept shallows,
Lord of the ripple fringe —
Scourge of small crabs,
Flounders' nemesis
Spear plunging from the light —
Gothic warrior,
Stone-carved with your lady
In the cathedral bay —
Byzantine king
In hieratic pose,
Keep ritual with death —
Steadily home
With an even beat
And the last of the tide.

Mark Richards.
SHE TIDE

Full and softly
Make the bay on cockle mud
Crab-pitted channel banks
Olive weed, rusty papa shelf —
Breathe gently
Murmur on a shingle pillow
Move quietly out towards
Another urgent bays fulfilling —
Heres no will:
Rhythm, bloodbeat, moondrag —
Stay — stay beside my house
The bays wide arms a haven —
In this place
I talk, do, make myself
In mirrors — stay — your return
Is changing certainty, is loss.

Mark Richards.

UNICORN

green grows greyer to
my eyes; no gilded tulips
nor blue roses please me—
my eyes are weary waiting
for a mortal maid to come
i’ve been tossing leaves
so long, one part of me is tree
scenting the sap
in the ferns soft cup dreaming
of the only maidens lap—

Jack Frances.
dreaming, she nearly
blew her fine nose on a flower;
she looked so lovely—
i had to hold her handbag
myself small creased half-alive

Jack Frances.

THE WEATHER CLOCK

When Joan came swinging out the sun would shine;
But boot-and-mackintoshed Darby prophesied rain.

Sun buttering a patch on the kitchen floor
Told Joan it was right she had left her narrow door;

Rain in cataracts descending fast
Confirmed old Darby's gloomy forecast.

Sun plus rain? The most mixed-up weather
The ill-matched couple were never seen out together.

At most they would stand aloof, each at a door,
Like neighbours who were not speaking any more.

But when the household children lay asleep,
Did they still their polar distance keep?

I tell you this! says Joan. I tell you that!
Says Darby. Perhaps they fought like dog and cat?

Or with all differences reconciled
Sat together by their fire, and smiled

To think how little other people knew
Of what went on when they were out of view.

Soon the house would wake; the frost flowers fade;
And the children rise and inspect their strict parade.

Ruth Dallas.
APOCALYPSE – NGAURANGA

Cows with shopping bags filled the unit,
bulls roared in the pubs, I saw
sheep meandering in offices, listened
to pigs grunting on Billygoat Hill.
I went to work; outside the killing shed
a new stink climbed up my nostrils.
The chain had started, from each
jigging hook a hanging carcase slid,
dead men and women dripping blood
scrunched up in spreaders, nodding
their inverted heads. Recognising
in their bloody frames the faces
of my family and friends,
I stoned my knife and went to work,
hacking their heads and splitting
breastbones, a nameless sorrow
buried in my being while my body
worked in its habitual rhythm.
I did not wake in terror till
I heard loud laughter from the hill
above.

A W Peterson.

THE LAST LAUGH

Once was grass,
and moist, shadows,
where watchful trees
formed living shelter
from driving salt,
prowling sea fingers
caressed storm winds
when hopes grew.
Toys of time
marched out across
the springing life
in savage contentment
proud weapons ready.
Once was blood;
spear, musket, rocket,
in common graves;
footstep and green
forgotten, time heads
back to zero.
Once was thought,
and slowly sand ...
and slowly sand ...
and slowly, sand.

A W Peterson.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY
(for James K Baxter)
The details may be lost among
the lessons we have since learned,
but that day is incised on
this untempered memory
like a stone grating on a sword,
when we wandered down
to the city via every coffee house
in George Street, when you
asked of how growing kumaras
would stay a hardening of the blood.
And rumbling out beyond St Clair
the sea has spoken to us.
There is nothing spectacular
in this; it is the kind of thing
you accept, bending your shoulders
a little as though time
were sizing you up for its coffin —
the grave beckons, we will all die
old barbarians. But then, then
we raided nothing but arguments
and the jars on the mantelpiece,
to celebrate in our
different ways a coming of age.

P F Ireland.

LETTER AT THE CLOSE OF WINTER
(for Alan Ivory)

You speak of autumn; and suddenly
I have heard it all before.
Yes, heard it until every word
is as dead as the leaves I trample
walking across the cricket ground
to post my mail. And the fear
that your nervous tension will
one day ceased to force out poems
haunts us all. What will become
of us? We are all damned to speculate.

Am I sure of what you are looking
for? I don’t know; I have my own
problems. My life is like
a crucifix come unstuck from a wall
out of negligence. Who’s to blame?
God knows. My grasp of most things
is feeble enough, but this I do
know; we see things like conquerors,
as an old photographer sorting
through a box of negatives
believing as real what are only hopes.

P F Ireland.
LANDSCAPE

considering
the emptiness of images
the unworthiness
of being someone
who is like all men:
the transparent by-product
of nothingness,
absolutely
forbidden words
signifying the situation
absolutely,
and then
when
a borrowed imaginary occasion
arises
on a black moor
of sympathy —
for the continuance
of movement
a silence reigns

Jules Riding.
My name is Staedler.

Staedler
Staedler
Tirquareau
No,
Nor Tenzing
Nor Taylor
My name is Staedler.
Nor Gallant
Nor Gold
Nor
Picket
Stroll
Nor Soldier,
My name is Staedler.

My mask is Staedler.

When I try
At last
To shift
The mask
Of
Staedler
I fail.
You ask me
Who is Staedler.
I am Staedler.

Jim Horgan.
DHOW WOMAN

Where twice the blue brake
Touched her fire
She turned her eyes
Towards the sea;

She turned her sight
From the sun-white dhow
And said no love
Could pay her dream;

Where the sea shone twice
She gazed on time
And time was pale
Aquamarine.

Jim Horgan.

OWN

If only Messiaen knew
That a plastic bag
Swinging from the clothesline
Catching the sun,
Brought more colours of the celestial city
To me
Than his music
Ever did.

Ian Matheson.
The complete casuality of her hand, the tender roundness of her shoulder.

All strength of belly and legs—complete support to relaxed, reposèd, surging woman.

The Acrobat, Rodin Exhibition 1968.

J. Murray
TIMELY WARNING

We all lie down to small deaths nightly, 
disturbed by dreams, nightmares of despair, 
seldom waking to full wonder of each other. 
Of late, I note, your heart has become 
too attuned to dull weather, sluggard Time, 
but grant some evidence yet of residual life.

To kiss and withdraw seems the all of love, 
a making which might ruck immaculate sheets. 
So soon to grow weary of passion and desire, 
coldly escaping into easy attitudes of death?

Tomorrow, or next week, your spectral voice 
could perambulate the lonely, moon-wet lawn 
where twin footprints exit together — you, 
dispossessed of lover, the neighbour of wife.

Robert Thompson.

HIGH ROOM

His love will come, eager up the stairs, 
where the poet sleeps over words unsaid, 
kissing him awake in the high rented room, 
bringing him warmth, and a sense of doom. 
With wine or gin, they will talk poetry, 
while he stokes the fire with broken chairs. 
Too remote from life in his private mortuary, 
now loving reverses his inward-looking sight, 
and joyously he rides the intervening night. 
Many are the poems written silently in bed.

Robert Thompson.
SHOULD I PRESUME

First love is still within, the last to come.
Recall those Sundays all kissed away
in the hot fern, among cooling dunes,
with no ground gained, small recompense;
(nerves rubbed raw, senses alerted)
until first time willing — O soft hand
guiding yours to rituals of initiation.
Such a touch should have been savoured,
but only kindled flash fires soon to ash.

First love is still within, the last to come.
Should I presume to touch you there,
to trigger that quick response? Or must
we conform to conventional rules, play
farcical roles with that serious intent
of near-passé temptress, fast-aging boy?
Since honesty remains (frequently lost
along with virginity) lean down to life —
beds are for two, graves for single sleepers.

First love is still within, the last illusory?

Robert Thompson.

ANOTHER MODERN MEDICAL MIRACLE

One’s bones, since inaccessible
are therefore much neglected.
By operation, mine have been removed
and plastic ones inserted in their place.
My reassembled skeleton
sits in my favourite chair.
I converse with it late in the night.
Each of us pretends to be the other.
Should I have my skin removed and stuffed?

Dennis List.
SWEET GEGENSCHEIN

The moon where it fell  
lay bleeding in the mountains  
That beast lay waiting  
at the perihelion  
its metal hands baited with cheese  
The planetary clockwork broke  
down — we are eclipsed  
The chain that tethers the moon is  
loose and flailing in the sky  
I found she who I thought had died  
but sprang happily to meet me in  
that motel cum old folks’ home  
where I was buying grapefruit  
juice that morning  
The blue eyed beast is up the tree  
and the bird is on its cage.

Dennis List.

PARTING

When you shone one pointed world to another  
the liquid light inviolate shattered  
farther than it launched us  
scrambling from shell to gutter edge  
scudding precious levitation over the gilded dark  
the birch stuffed root through your man-made wall  
roses bursting from the tumbled earth  
off each blade the grass shaved and burned  
we have the patch and our parting  
holy place in time  
we are the scent makers  
the petal being sweeter crushed

Trevor Reeves.
WHOLEDAY

the great lake takes its stone load off
itching shingles
rolling on among bedcovering clover
a flexiglass man in a hamburger hat
stuffs into a bag
shoots off
transistor canister cackling gutteral wash
we warm
each other
in the candle haze
metaphysic flares searing
the marvelled unsold world tuned
to shadow
listen
even the flowerfire rata is disturbed to a whisper

Trevor Reeves.
WILD HONEY

In the ocean of the East I
stalk Shellback's winter & purchase
grass my solitary thoughts
about his fallow ache.
dhows turnturvy in the eye's tide
& my fingers on the sun's lute
calloused by the ash that from
a white sky falls in the dead.
dust our thoughts to niggerhunt dry sex
& pimps prodding their fish for sail
where the town's rutrish sisterhood
whisper themselves in the dead.

come on down if you're randy...
there's frolic enough within

Shellback banged his ragged worm there
& hugely craked his hardy seed —
bellbacked, hatchetfaced wreck,
was my own snatch. I screwed
her only to howl in her paunch

where trod the final Unhatched
grieving werewolf of the womb.
delivered act & deed
for his summer's turn in the dead
before the sunstroke she

the whalebone god still she waits
shelltracked to rage five moons
high & couple herself complete
his horn through the ironst stays
to her loves in the dead

;its goatlegs clapped over
this last hellshacked grotesque of Now,
her quick self swansung of Leda

the bearded vulture beats his
wings desperate at the scar

Alan Brunton.
STOP INSIDE THE SUN

O Mary, Mary compromised
how does your godling grow?

There is forever makes a wink in dance
as rubric to the waiting snakelady’s
worldide face that ramrods the soldier’s breast.
The Footloose Kid, eponym.

Firts germ spilled in the ear by
singular conjunctions of
cormorants, for her hole had
shrunk to a mouse’s lip—
by the antlered eater
of forest gods then,
eventual deliverance, a
Tuscan madonna’s umbilicus
yoked suburban the neck
of the unholy detritus
fat in her gut: birth of blood
where the sun had strangled the sea.

So sired of essence and tauscratch
of the Old God of the Flies, a sense of sulphur
patched in the child’s longlegged locust eyes plagued
new Egyptians of the native brain.

The Footloose Kid’s threebloked nightmare
and instinct of self cried to be off with
the croak of Uranus, urgent elf with his bullock
Father gunned down at high noon of belief.

Acharge the moon’s conventual cycle
his women circumgo night betimed
the prickle with which episcopalian
desertchrist femaled his queer sex.
To confirm auction of the member
his tear’s mad heat was monthly staunched
by a thineared stag of the cult...
for this worm in the grass, unlike
a lizard’s rag was not germinant.
The soothsaied godling teats a black
sow in the Sea of Dreams.
A raven fixed to a stone there is
with three screws and the mind’s forbidden bone
that every cue of the sun’s millenium
gathers enough leaves to incinerate
in the earth itself completely.

Alan Brunton.

POINT AND COUNTERPOINT

By “saved” and “lost”
The heart is crossed;
By Hell and Heaven
The soul is riven —
The whole divided,
The One derided
By cloven foot
And double tongue
And the split Tree
Where Christ hung.

Good and evil,
God and Devil,
Black and white,
Left and right —
With light and shade
All form is made;
By the pull
Of pole to pole
The atoms dance
And the worlds roll.

For from the height
All views are seen as blended
And foe by seeming foe
To be befriended
As in the One
All things are comprehended.

Willow Macky.
NOT WITH A BANG

There has been a lot of talk about “culture” recently. First the National Development Conference’s Social and Cultural Committee; now the National Arts Federation (NZ). The general idea seems to be to bring “culture” to the public at large so that “people can be made aware of the greater possibilities for living latent within them.” (NDC Social and Cultural Committee Para 55) — an ideal which seems to me entirely laudable, though rather loosely defined by those who have been doing most of the talking. The NDC had some sensible things to say about the general nature of “culture” (especially paras 42-55) provided the wheat can be sorted: a greater pity, then, that such thoughts are so sadly belated — they must have been abundantly apparent to many for a long time. Furthermore I am sure that such ideals are behind the NAF’s thinking although so far no one has been able to confirm or deny this.

But I wonder whether either the NDC or the NAF realises the full implications of its position, at least insofar as it can be deduced from the present state of creative “art”: further, if either of them does so, whether it seriously intends to proceed from the limb on which it may appear to have placed itself, to the even further-out regions of the “cultural” world.

From this point it seems pertinent to enquire of both NDC and NAF just how many creative artists have figured in their deliberations. By “creative” artists I mean men and women who are daily actively involved in the realisation (not the reproduction or performance, nor the administration) of new works of art. How many of these people a, are on the NDC Committee, b, made submissions to that body, c, were invited to the NAF’s foundation meeting, d, are on the NAF’s steering committee? I am open to correction, but I think a tiny minority only.

Yet para 46 of the NDC’s committee report says “Once the community has demonstrated what it wants ...” — as if the community can know what it wants when it doesn’t know what is going: the present “cultural” system has relentlessly seen to that.

My conviction of the truth of this last point is thus borne out by the fact that so little account has been taken of the creative artist in the present machinations. Yet surely these people are those most able to pass on ideas which are currently shaping their crafts? Or perhaps the talkers aren’t especially interested in these ideas? Their activities to date seem to confirm this.

I really wonder if the NDC and the NAF actually have anything approaching a philosophy or ideal of art, and moreover of its community function, if there in fact be such a thing.

The greatest fear must be that it is the ambition of those presently interested in promoting the arts merely to graft present “cultural” activity onto a larger section of the community on the assumption that the status quo (albeit a little enlarged) is the magical answer to today’s sagging public interest. In light of the current failure to involve, the status quo is however, manifestly not what very many people want otherwise they would be heading for halls and galleries in large numbers. There is much justification for saying that despite its protestations to the contrary, the NDC’s incipient “status quo-ism” is expressed in, say, para 49, in the reference to “... the number of exhibitions performances, and works of art ...”

Again, the statement of NAF’s progenitor Mr Arthur Hilton earlier this year to the NZ Federation of Chamber Music Societies to the effect that “you and I certainly don’t want our tastes altered” seems to confirm my greatest apprehensions that at least some arts spokesmen have a fixed and unalterable notion of art (“taste”) which is also depressingly narrow in scope. Mr Hilton’s scheme for “under twenty-five’s”
concerts sounds simply like a souped up version of what happens at his over twenty five’s concerts (though hopefully without the fur-coast and snoring – still, one never knows).

If the plan then, for more of the same (with, in deference to the NDC a bit more “local content”) but now government-blessed in small (non returnable) bottles — some may prefer the tubes — labelled “Culture” and available at all good stores?

A better plan would be to stop flogging the dead (or at least dying) horse and get on with the business of placing before people the cultural experience which might make them “aware of the greater possibilities for living latent within them.”

The time is not yet here when I can believe that even a few official representatives of the “arts” have a general grasp of the notion that “culture” is not a thing that can be imposed, or given out on a plate or in literal or figurative bottles to a society or to the man in the street; “culture” for the average person is something which happens to him when circumstances are in favourable phase. His “Culture” is not measured by the number of times he goes to the Town Hall or the gallery, or the theatre, but rather he senses it in terms of a state of awareness of many things his understanding of himself, of his fellows, and of his place (not his “role”) in humanity (not just in society) and in his sensory appreciation of his physical surroundings, visible, aural, and tactile.

Until enough people can make enough noise to bring this to the notice of the pundits, their efforts to fertilise us should be strenuously resisted. They will not be pleased: if they chance to listen, NDC (S and C) and NAF will have become redundant.

Gordon Burt

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PAN IN KARORI

So pure, so clear the sudden notes —
It seemed the music heard
(Too bird-like for a human voice,
Too complex for a bird)

Woke, delicate and perfect,
In my suburban ear;
I searched the sky, the houses,
Then turned enchanted

With mouth to his recorder,
And dawdling school-boy feet,
Pan wandered piping, dreaming
Up Donald Street.

Ruth Gilbert.
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