

3

CALIFORNIA

A JOURNAL OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

QUARTERLY

EUGENE FRUMKIN

EDWIN ROLFE

EDITH WITT

BERT MEYERS

MELVIN WEISBURD

RAY FABRIZIO

LES THOMPSON

DAVID LEMON

TERESA MANN

MILLEN BRAND

DON GORDON

WALDEEN

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY

VOLUME 3 / NUMBER 3

1954

A CLEAN 6 X 9 READING EDITION

Elegy for a Soldier of the Spanish Civil War opens a number whose strongest movement comes through poetry. The fiction—The Year of the Tree by Teresa Mann; The Old Furnaces by Millen Brand—moves among private crisis, social pressure, and public consequence, with each story's title and setting supplying a distinct point of entry. The poetry runs from Elegy for a Soldier of the Spanish Civil War and The Conquistadores (excerpts from Canto General), shifting between grouped poems and single lyrics rather than settling into one house style. The printed contents bring together 2 works of fiction, 26 poetry entries, giving the issue a deliberately mixed pace across genres and forms.

This edition resets the journal's literary texts for reading. Each piece begins on a fresh reader page and identifies its original journal page and PDF scan page; advertisements and decorative matter are omitted. Artwork and irreducibly visual material appear as labelled original plates.

CONTENTS

Notes on Contributors	<i>Contributor notes</i>	2
Edwin Rolfe: 1909–1954	<i>Memorial</i>	3
Elegy for a Soldier of the Spanish Civil War	<i>Eugene Frumkin</i>	3
Seven Poems	<i>Edwin Rolfe</i>	6
Proclaim, Proclaim	<i>Edith Witt</i>	12
At the Slow Equator of Twenty-Five	<i>Eugene Frumkin</i>	16
The Waiting Room at the County Hospital	<i>Eugene Frumkin</i>	16
Elegy for a Tailor	<i>Eugene Frumkin</i>	17
Pity the Child	<i>Bert Meyers</i>	18
The Love Romantics Have	<i>Bert Meyers</i>	19
My Father	<i>Melvin Weisburd</i>	19
The Elephant	<i>Melvin Weisburd</i>	20
Peacock: Orange County Park	<i>Ray Fabrizio</i>	21
Golden Gate Bridge	<i>Ray Fabrizio</i>	21
Count Nine	<i>Les Thompson</i>	23
Pages from a Sketch Book	<i>David Lemon</i>	29
The Year of the Tree	<i>Teresa Mann</i>	32
The Old Furnaces	<i>Millen Brand</i>	38
Consider the Meaning of Love	<i>Don Gordon</i>	41
The Dissenter	<i>Don Gordon</i>	42
The Travelers	<i>Don Gordon</i>	42
Riddle	<i>Waldeen</i>	43
The Quartz Heart	<i>Waldeen</i>	44

Jury Duty	<i>Joanne de Longchamps</i>	44
Snowmountain	<i>Joanne de Longchamps</i>	45
Pacific Ocean, the Present	<i>Jeannette Maino</i>	46
Doppler’s Effect	<i>Melissa Blake</i>	47
Song of the White Ant	<i>Melissa Blake</i>	48
The Several Advantages of Living Under a Tin Roof	<i>Melissa Blake</i>	48
The Pondo War	<i>Bernard Raymund</i>	49
The Conquistadores (excerpts from Canto General)	<i>Pablo Neruda</i>	56

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 2 / SCAN PAGE 4

Notes on Contributors

BERT MEYERS is another of the group of younger Los Angeles poets whose work is featured in these pages. Two earlier poems MELISSA BLAKE prefaced the writing of poetry by a career as a dancer, teacher of modern dance and ballet, and choreographer for stage musicals and films. Her first volume of verse, *Creatures of the Big Sur*, was privately printed.

MILLEN BRAND, novelist and poet, is fiction editor at Crown Publishers. His best-known novel is *The Outward Room*. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Accent*, *THE CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY*, and other magazines. His present contribution is from a work in progress, *Local Lives*.

RAY FABRIZIO is a young Los Angeles poet who contributed his first published poem to our Winter, 1953, issue. He works weekends as a professional musician.

EuGENE FRUMKIN is another young writer of Los Angeles and an editor of the forthcoming new magazine, *Coastlines*. He appears in our pages for the first time.

DoN GoRDON is the author of two volumes of verse, *Statement*, 1943, and *Civilian Poems*, 1947, and has twice previously contributed poems to *THE CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY*.

DAVID LEMON, born in Newark in 1916, was an instructor of art at Elmhurst College, Illinois, from 1938 to 1943. Now living in San Francisco, he informs us he is "presently engaged in free-lance laboring and scroung- JOANNE DE LONGCHAMPS sends us her contributions from Reno, Nevada-a region that increasingly influences the content of her poems.

JEANNETTE MAINO has published verse in many magazines and has contributed short fiction to the *Prairie Schooner*.

TERESA MANN, a recent graduate of U.C.L.A., is interested in both playwriting and short stories. She is making her first appearance in print in this issue.

appeared in our Vol. III, No. 2.

PABLO NERUDA, internationally famous poet and statesman, was long exiled from his native Chile. He is represented here, as in our Spring, 1952, issue, by a generous portion of his book-length poem, *Canto General*, a paean to the lands and peoples of the Americas.

BERNARD RAYMUND'S work has appeared in *Story*, *Decade*, *The Tiger's Eye*, *The Arizona Quarterly* and many other magazines. He lives in Safety Harbor, Florida.

EDWIN ROLFE was preparing a new volume for publication at the time of his death last May. Most of his poems here presented are from that collection, which will appear under the title *Words and Ballads*. His wellknown history, *The Lincoln Battalion*, is soon to be re-issued.

LEs THOMPSON tells us that *Count Nine* is his first published story. He is a graduate of Reed College and of twenty-seven months' infantry duty in Europe. He has worked as a farm laborer, schoolteacher, shipping clerk, postman, janitor, and librarian.

W ALDEEN, distinguished dancer and dancecritic, is almost as well known as a poet and as the translator of Pablo Neruda's works. She lives in Mexico.

MELVIN WEISBURD lives in Los Angeles and is an editor of the new magazine *Coastlines*, soon to appear.

EDITH WITT has contributed short stories to *Common Ground* and *Script*. She is a resident of San Francisco.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 3 / SCAN PAGE 4

Edwin Rolfe: 1909-1954

The enduring strength of Edwin Rolfe was derived from and shared with the people. His best work speaks to us personally, helping us to remember not merely what we are but what we have yet to become.

His grievous death occurred as our last issue was going to press. There we announced that in our next we would present a selection from his unpublished poems.

THE EDITORS

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 3 / SCAN PAGE 5

Elegy for a Soldier of the Spanish Civil War

Eugene Frumkin

A gentle wind quiets his brow,
His star-crossed dreams, a man with Spain
In his blood, a sane Quixote-how
Bravely he charged the warmill in the days
Now bullet-fled and dead as bones!
And wisely charted were his ways,
Among the slings, among the stones,
As he walked the world against the grain.

His mind was always ripe with fields
Of stars and crosses, friends beneath
The Spanish earth, good seed to yield
A love of that ghostly nation, bled
To the wishing bone. He loved the leaves
Of long gone autumns and the dead
Flowers he saw where the sword cleaves,
And made of all a simple wreath

Of poems for cities dead and men
A tear's time seen, seen through the tears
In the eye of his blood-infused pen.
The gipsy wind has stolen him
And he too has lost the feral spin
Of mosquitoes in the mind, the grim
Scraping of files beneath the skin.
The wind is still. He nothing hears.

The sky is raw with reddish arcs
And yellow clouds hover, pretending
To the sun's dominion; no bird marks
The twilight slate with graceful curving
Nor abstracts of gyrating plumage.
Cold the forecast of the sky-serving

Mercury of our time; we rummage
Among the fallen stars, depending

On Christ who crossed to death ages
Ago and now, a lifelike waxen
Figure, is the prop of churchly stages.
We skim the ice, our words are smoke;
The skates of fear turn us to some last
Stroke of the sun, our passions cloak
Direction and we grope in vast
Meaningless figures, bungling oxen

Under a palsied yoke. However,
In the soft moments when the poet's lips
Opened his beliefs to me, never
Did that iron horseman of our hope
Ride more irresistibly through
The carnage of lost wars. What scope
His hunger had hunting the true
Flesh of love, wider than the worship

Of the rigid kneelers at the altars
Of artificial light! A man
Of balsa wood and crepe, whose fault or
Bane lay in the excess he willed
Of his too love-weak heart, he fought
More than dream battles, surely killed
More than tin soldiers. At times I caught
A glimpse in this tiny sparrow man

Of the goshawk straining in his eyes
To catch the wind, and yet this hawk
Too rarely rose in the clear skies
Of his poems. His voice is lost
Where Dylan and Yeats found words to boom,
Gold, rhythm-bobbing bells, across
The plains of our senses. But in the room
Where we, Phaedos to his talk,

Apprentices of the craft of words,

Listened, the moon-webbed seas enfolded
The living, dying men and birds
Of barb-wire beaches, and held the shore
In gentle sway until my heart
Could feel the world at ebb no more,
But all, all caught in his calm art,
The seas of peace coming on, moulded.

Each land is one now, Ed, and Spain
Is anywhere you lie, the part
Of you that would not sleep. The pain
You left behind took root in time,
Will blend with spring, survive the frost:
O such as you stay warm beneath the rime
Of years, and where your star crossed
A friend's, he marks the place in his heart.

[5]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 6 / SCAN PAGE 8

Seven Poems

Edwin Rolfe

Be Proud

Be proud, young rejoicers, jesters, poets,
of the rich lore of your art, of your sure way
of seeing the heart beating when all others
describe the deceptive skin and the hypocrite eyes.

Tell of the wars but do not forget the dawn's
light on the first squad of sentries: how they see
with wonder the new day's birth and how its light
is meaningful beyond their power to explain.

Neither ignore the seasons, nor their clothes
upon our earth: men remember the grass
and sun and the snow of winters: these remain
always with them, beyond words, even in dream.

Yes, these are the things that live in men longest,
that glow in their sacred moments, that spring to the brain
as seed leaps toward the earth, to grow, to flower
in darkness, to kindle life, always to be reborn.

This is our art, O brother, comrade, friend:
speak of these things always or others will forget them.
The wisest father's best bequest to his son
is his own unwritten work, the words of the poets.

Paris-Christmas 1938

You will remember, when the bombs
invade your softest midnight dream,
when terror flowing through your limbs
brings madness to your vulnerable room;

you will remember, when you stare at walls

familiar, patterned in a memorized
design, and watch the plaster as it falls,
abrupt, concussive-and you shrink back dazed

[6]

and all your body, that a moment past
was quiet, relaxed upon the comforting bed,
will stiffen, flex in fear; a host
of insane images will bring the dead

of many cities back to life again:
the dead you pleasantly ignored, and hid
from self and others; you will clutch the lone
solace of men who soon too will be dead

and count your sins, and know that they were crimes,
and curse your quiet, and respect, at last, these dead;
yes, you .will remember-when the initial bombs
insanely fall into your life-Madrid.

Vincent

The Borinage receded, at last, like a bad dream
although he strained to retain it in his vision.
Like sodden sand, dark and weighted like leaden
reluctance, he watched it slip through the sieve of his hand
and memory; until at length all that remained
was the somber cottage in the somber region,
the room illumined darkly, and the workmen,
with faces smudged by the cold stuff of fire,
eating their sodden roots at the end of bleak day.

Later, much later, the damp still deep in him,
eating away at the arteries of his burdened brain,
he saw, for the first time, sunlight. And was dazed,
then dazzled out of his darkness. Child of the cold fog,
he fell in love with light, saw how it foamed
in specks and dots and whorls and hurricanes
of brilliant hysteria; and his burning brush
cut fiercely through the cold traditional palette,

exploding into pigment more radiant than sun.

Then, toward the end, mixed madness and self-murder,
killed cold, and coddled forms, killed ways of seeing
object as object. Turned wheatfields into seas,
flowers to forests, faces into fields
of constant, bitter combat; and a small room
into a history more true than any book.

Finally, defeated as all are finally defeated,
severed and sent off the famous ear, preparing
a small symbolic grave prophetic of the last one.
Called, weaker every moment, for help, help!
But no one heard except a penniless brother.
And no help came. What could he do but die
who saw the blazing truth denied, the lie
of coldness wooed, praised in salons, enshrined?

Went down at last. And those-how few-who mourned,
mourned a mad and victorious man,
an undefeated eye.

In Praise Of

To understand the strength of those dark forces
phalanxed against him would have spelled surrender:
the spiked fist, the assassin's knife, the horses'
eyeless hooves above as he fell under.
To understand the sum of all this terror
would a priori have meant defeat, disaster.
Born of cold panic, error would pile on error,
heart and mind fall apart like fragile plaster.

Therefore I honor him, this simple man
who never clearly saw the threatening shapes, yet fought
his complex enemies, the whole sadistic clan,
persistently, although unschooled. Untaught,
he taught us, who could talk so glibly, what
the world's true shape should be like, and what not.

Undersea Poem

A word unearths the hidden dream,
draws its essence up from the morass
where it lies gleaming like a drowned jewel
for the living hand, man's lyric touch.

[8]

A chance gesture fills all the emptiness
around the jewelled but unfound idea:
a dim sound, a chime of sudden music,
or the fancied glint of a girl's eye.

A straw shadow on the chamber wall
before sleep-misted eyes, or a casual
light in the street or, in the sky,
a passing, unknowable brilliance.

And all, all, like the touch of the vivid hand,
retrieve the stray fugitive, plumb the well
where the drowned child lies lost, its words
unspoken, in its unsuspected hell.

Dawn Song

The dusk of dawn, the prophet called it:
that birth-hush of gray when from the eastern sky
the colors spill and spread as from a careless
primitive's palette; and overhead
the trees whose invisible branches moaned the whole night long
leap suddenly to green;

and greenest, purest song
bursts forth from the frail throats
of delicate birds. Alas, too soon, too late
the dawn comes on
and wakes the sleeping world
and breaks on me.

But I, its sole insomniac, in a drugged trance,
having reversed the old inheritance

of prehistoric ancestors, cry out
with pallid joy;
and find myself, a modern mariner,
becalmed in the clamorous morning.
Unlike those savages
who dragged themselves to darkest holes to die,
I long to die in daylight. And to this desire
all night in travail I fight the windmill pain
of breathing, living, of my treasonous heart
that pounds the blood like lacerating drums
through the dark deltas of my arteries
and brain. At last it comes,
too late, too soon, the dawn:
and wakes all life and calms me into sleep.

At my small window
the violet glows, and the invading gold
startles my room with coldest sun. Outside,
across the avenue as narrow as a shroud,
the memorized landscape wakes anew.
A lone sparrow sings a raucous madrigal
from his red podium; then, flying, soars
the sudden sky of day, graceful, aflight,
a stone's throw distant, but with no thought of stone,
no consciousness of anything but dawn,
a bird's dawn, wherein no human thought
or pam or joy or waking plays a part,
nor of this heart that, with its world
of friends and loves and acts and memories,
pounds on toward certain doom.

The dawn comes with its birds and forebodings.
Wakes all the sleeping world in a fever of trembling.
I rise from bed, force the granite from my chest.
We argue, body and myself, for mastery,
and I know we are all on the brink of a smiling, delicate di~aster.
Nevertheless I bathe, I dress, I smile at my wife,
do all the expected things, in the early dawn,
as I hear the beating wings swoop down

on all the world; and take my vitamin pill
and pretend I see no ends, only beginnings,
and that all is undoubtedly right,
all's magically well.

[10]

Bon Voyage

Permit me refuge in a region of your brain:
carry and resurrect me, whatever path you take,
as a ship creates its own unending wake
or as rails define direction in a train.

Permit my memory refuge: but not the recent years
when grains of dross obscured the bars of truth.
Delve deeper back in years to your first youth,
passionate, clean, untarnished by small fears.

And if your conscience truly bears my memory,
rekindle if you can the dying candle light:
let the wake not lose its contour, nor the bright
reflected sun waver as the rails glide by.

My wake and rail attend you, welded and wed,
through the blind tunnels of the years ahead.

[11]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 12 / SCAN PAGE 14

Proclaim, Proclaim

Edith Witt

NOEL

ADAMS put the telephone receiver down
and looked across the living-room to his wife Mary. The air between
them
seemed to tremble so that he saw her bulky figure and her quiet
lovely face
through waves of tenderness.

He said, "The cab will be here in a moment'.
He crossed the room and touched her shoulders lightly and
brushed her
forehead with his lips. He reached down gently to the small grey
zipper bag
packed weeks before, but she clutched it firmly, close against her.

"No;" she said. "I have to hold something'.
The doorbell rang. He straightened up and looked at her and all of
him
welled up into his eyes. He kissed her and turned abruptly to the
door.

"Have we forgotten anything?" she said.
But it was not the cab. A man stood at the door beside a narrow
wooden
crate.

"Mr. Noel Adams, Jr.;" he said. "Sign here'.
"Present for the baby;" Noel called to Mary.
The delivery man helped Noel lift the long crude box inside the
door and
stand it up against the wall. Noel brushed his hands together but.
the feel of
rough wood and the pungent smell of sap still lingered on his skin.

"Did he say 'Noel, Jr.'?" Mary asked.

"Don't worry. We'll give it to Mary, Jr., too, if that's who she turns out to be.' Noel pulled a curling sliver off the crate and chewed it between his teeth.

"Who is it from?"

"There's no return address. I'll open it later-afterwards.' He dropped the sliver into his pocket as he crossed the room. He put his hand on Mary's cheek and lifted up her face. "Are you all right, darling?"

"I'm fine;' she said. "I'm perfect. How are you?"

The doorbell rang again.

"Well .. ' said Noel, not turning toward the door.

"Yes;' said Mary, and bent down to the suitcase and slid the zipper back.

"I just want to be sure I haven't forgotten anything'."

[12. The Calif{J'rnia Quarterly J

"Sure;' said Noel, and leaned down over her, catching the fragrance of her skin. "Toothbrush?" he said.

"Yes, yes;' she said, fastening the bag, looking about the room.

"There isn't anything we haven't taken care of?"

He took her arm. She let him take the bag.

"We're all set;' he said. "Don't worry now. Don't worry about a thing'."

In the cab he held on tight to Mary's hand as if that way he shared the pain she felt (and listened to the ticking of the meter, nicking off the minutes, . chipping out the centuries, the cab wheels spinning like the earth).

"You don't think there's anything we've forgotten to do?" said Mary.

"No;' laughed Noel. He rubbed his thumb along her hand. "I think we

really made it:' (The search for a home, the search for a job, the things done without, the planning, the learning, the dreaming and hoping.) "Six dozen diapers, wasn't that the final count?" said Noel. "What more could any baby ask than that?" Mary laid her head down on his shoulder. "To say nothing of all the presents;" added Noel. (The spoon of silver dug in Africa perhaps; the ribboned booties and the linen bibs-and what field of flax, what nationality of shepherd and in what hut the sound of silkworms gnawing through the leaves?)

The taxidriver turned around, turned back and spoke up to his rear-view mirror. "I'm trying not to hit the bumps;" he said. "I'm trying to make it as smooth as I can'."

"Thanks, chum;" said Noel. "You're doing fine'." (Smooth as a time machine and how many millions of human beings clearing the way ahead, building the road, rebuilding, mending, rebuilding.)

"I wonder what it was that came just now;" said Mary.

"Surprise;" said Noel. "Big surprise'."

"Or who it's from'."

"I'll let you know'."

The cab slowed down, eased over to the curb beside the hospital.

The driver hopped out, jumped to the door. They started up the steps. (The forests felled and tree-logs racing down the rapids; the red ore shovelled from the earth and sun-hot liquid pouring from the hearth; the bricks laid end to

end and one by one, and rivets tossed like comets through the air.)

The taxidriver waved. "You'll never regret it;" he grinned. "I've got
two
of my own'."

It was a boy. Six pounds seven ounces. Mother and baby doing
well. Noel
sat on his heels beside the bed and looked at Mary's face. They were
the only
three on earth. This wonder had never happened in the world
before. Mary's
eyes closed slowly, her lips moved, smiling in content. "Will you buy
the
cards, Noel, the announcement cards ... '."

[13. Proclaim, Proclaim J

Noel kissed her gently and tiptoed from the room. (Ah, yes, the
cards,
triumphant swell of horns and trumpets, wild sweet strings of
violins, pro-
claim, proclaim, a child is born.)

The nurse took him down the corridor (beyond the wizard's
cauldron
boiling superstition, beyond the corpse-stealer running through the
medieval
night, on and on beyond the scientists, the social changers,
impoverished,
pilloried, imprisoned) to the window of the nursery where she
pointed out
his son. He stared, his breath caught in a rush of amazed
belief-finger-curved,
heart-beating human bit, nine-month product of a thousand
centuries. Oh,
my son, my son. And then he saw the other human bundles, row on
row,
and infants born that day across the world to such as he and Mary.
The baby

stirred, thrusting his tiny fist into the air. There is nothing, thought
Noel
fiercely, absolutely nothing that I would not do

He wandered restlessly along the street, a fresh rough sliver in his
pocket
and an undone feeling chewing at his brain. What was it he should
do, besides
the cards? What was it Mary would ask the next day? What was it
that his
son would some day ask?

A plane came overhead. His steps quickened as he turned toward
home.
His head kept jerking upward in some long-remembered motion, as
if he
feared the plane would reappear. The lights were on in his
neighbor's house
and everything was quiet on the street.

His key stuck in the lock and when he rattled at the door, he heard
the
clatter of something falling down inside the house. Across the
threshold lay
the wooden crate. He had to step over it to get inside the house. He
switched
the light on and stood staring at the box.

He got his hammer and screwdriver from the kitchen and pried the
nails
loose along the top edge of the crate. The address side was
uppermost and
as he worked he kept glancing at the name, Noel Adams, Jr., and
seeing in
. his mind the helpless infant form and tiny fist and Mary's peaceful
face against
the whiteness of the pillow.

He got the nails pulled far enough so he could raise the top board
up and
slip his hand into the box. He touched excelsior. His hand groped on
until it

felt a card. He drew it out and held it to the light. It said, In case it is
a boy.

There was no signature. He did not recognize the writing. He turned
it over,

scrutinized it closely. That was all it said-In case it is a boy.

He sat down on his heels again, worked quickly at the nails. He
shoved his

hand impatiently again beneath the upper boards. He dug into
excelsior, felt

grease along his fingertips, dug down. He touch~d cold steel.

It shivered up his spine. His hand gripped round it, slid trembling
down

the whole familiar length. His finger touched the trigger and his
hand recoiled.

He jumped up to his feet. His heart was thumping. The sweat
stood out

across his upper lip. He had to get it out of there. Before the baby
came. He

had to find out who had sent it so he could send it back.

He snatched his heavy marking crayon from among his tools and
scribbled

[14. The California Quarterly]

over the address, over and over again, with all his might, but
underneath he
could still see his baby's name.

He stumbled, rushing to the telephone and called the hospital.

"I just wanted to know, could you tell me please, how Mrs. Adams
and
the baby are:'

"They're fine. They're doing fine:'

He had to get the thing out of the house. Before he brought the
baby

home. He didn't have much time. He had to find out who would
send a thing

like that and send it back. Before the baby came. He had to send it
back. He

had to find out. Before he brought the baby home ...

He raced out to his neighbor's house and pounded on the door.

"Help me!" he shouted. "Help me!"

His neighbor and his neighbor's wife came running and together
they all

flung themselves down on the box and beat the nails down with
their hands .

[15. Proclaim, Proclaim J

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 16 / SCAN PAGE 18

At the Slow Equator of Twenty-Five

Eugene Frumkin

At the slow equator of twenty-five,
The suns are a hail of age, unwelcome
On sphere of Earth; the moons are pebbles,
Lost in my dreams' engulfing ocean.

No longer does winter fly to the west
Of my will, nor is summer's plumage the color
Of my lover's hair. The seasons will circle, .
Dim feathers in the sky of my vision.

The metaphor on the mantel is trite,
But the monotonous beat of its measure is now
Dramatic. What new sound will the climax
Make? What new image is death?

Yet in the mid-day sun of twenty-five,
It is still too early to think of the world's
Stable burning, while my wild horse
Of countless visions remains unriden.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 16 / SCAN PAGE 18

The Waiting Room at the County Hospital

Eugene Frumkin

(For Dr. Marvin Marsh)

Gangrenous day! Caries
Of the old Hebrew, once
Marcher in the torah pageant,
Moaning to the sweet of his God
On the stretcher of his last belief,
Wheeled through the gauntlet of eyes
To the rubble room, to wait

In the pile of people. The choir
Of calypso-hearted quiet;
The young mulatto taped
To the spirit of the mummy room,

[r6 J

Hearing the names unwind
To a vault-gapped cadence,
Waiting in the masked and cryptic

Light. Aztec hearts,
Scalpeled out, bled
For their gods on the teocalli
Altar-the senoras here,
Amid a rosary of thoughts,
Feel, too, an obsidian
Presence in their temples, waiting.

No microscope sees
These poor shuttling in the culture
Of the charity-raw room,
Nor stethoscope hears
The cyclone of hearts in the silence,

Nor fluoroscope reveals
This anatomy's hidden lung.

Then, doctor, do as you must.

Your love, not in teaspoons
At appointed hours, but always,

By the whole bottle, must tonic
All these patient, who wait

In the chemical air for the day
When a better solution prospers.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 17 / SCAN PAGE 19

Elegy for a Tailor

Eugene Frumkin

Myopic old tailor, you poked at life
As at the eye of a needle. The bird-dreams
Skimmed through your mind with their falcon screams
And vanished. Stiff eyelids blackballed your wife,

While your face hung limp in Cyclopean sleep.

The twelve lizard hours you daily pursued
In sewing circles. tired you. You suffered, slued
Around the master axis, but wouldn't weep.

You lived beneath the humid clouds of press
Machines and walked on grass of wool and cotton,
And in spring breathed the sweat of walls hot in
Golden fur. Lost, to you, life's summer' dress.

But the Talmud, father, was prophet still of pleasure-
Antique made richer by teachers' voices, old
Silver tucked away deep in beards, and sold
To you before you dozed in bankrupt leisure.

While the tombs of viciously mounting skulls
Made marmoreal the fields, you quietly waned
To the grave; museum of Jehovah you gained,
Until Messiah's rod startles your pulse.

O tailor, muted totem-head in state,
How mourn your sterile decades? Yet in this place
Where I, you loved too little, scan your face,
You are the chalk that scrapes my mind's grey slate.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 18 / SCAN PAGE 20

Pity the Child

Bert Meyers

Pity the child who finds
green gates of childhood close,
the enchanted eye learns
what everybody knows,
and grey-haired hunters stalk
the forests of the blood.

That child has seen the grave
parental towers fall
at the slightest stroke;
the mighty adult crawl
to what it hates; and heard
the long, collapsing sky.

Such enemies that camp
upon the heart's wild shore
invade the mind. The world
hammering at its door,
the stricken hope lies down
in an iron lung of dreams.

[18]

Blame the weather, that keeps
letters of love unsent.
All children should be told
that fairy tales aren't meant;
meant, perhaps, for an hour,
they only warm the years
that we all live in the cold.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 19 / SCAN PAGE 21

The Love Romantics Have

Bert Meyers

The love romantics have
that makes them shake and sweat
beside a golden head,
is wonderful and sad
and aches between the legs.
Such lovers cannot wait
to set their marriage date.

But those sweethearts who
have explored instead,
inside and out of bed,
the sense of I and thou,
go slowly to the judge.
They wear each other's breath
and only fear love's death.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 20 / SCAN PAGE 21

The Elephant

Melvin Weisburd

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 19 / SCAN PAGE 21

My Father

Melvin Weisburd

My father, a laborer, forty eight, divorced three times, timid
And always tired, comes home with the furnace blast in his ears
And speaks in an empty egoless voice. His grey stubble is dry
And electric, and his eyes, reverberatories of fire. Thin
And hollow, he burned the core out of himself until his marrow
Flowed, flipped his cigarettes away, half smoked, lifted castings
Above purple fumes, almost above his head from a strength
Of not believing in doctors. His passion was fire, and his love
Was his death. Now against the remaining womanless days
He walked abroad the earth in robes of heat waves,
Diaphanous excrements of hell and this world.

Tired and timid, alone in the corner of his kitchen
U mil the cool shadows formed in the summer, at 7: 30,
He finished his coffee and his papers, and
Cool, clean, and in pain, rises and sends
Two clocks, two clocks,
Ahead of him
Into the night.

The Elephant

If this beast love is nothing like an elephant
It is certainly as ungainly, and if this figure astonishes
It is because what is inside of us is no less distressed
At losing one's head, than any tubulated pachyderm
Harassed at the point of being eaten whole.
Love, too, shrieks its nasal terror at being four-footed.
But what else can it be with its thick hide
If it must hold our violent stomach
And keep our heart from piercing our shallow breast?

I really don't mean to unsize the voluptuous beast-
Although we can see through its magnificent eyes

The microscopic emptiness of ourselves
Rioting through the heavens; or to pirate his
Poor fancy when we, unrequited, seek a solitary
Death, just as he does amongst his ivory.
But since the elephant dies more calmly,
Why bother to make love a ,figure for the poor
Animal's own corpulent, but tidy sex?

It is simply that my love is downtrodden
Enough for me to look no farther than the traces
Of its struggle, and to follow a kind of elephant
To its stupidity. You have to see these things for yourself,
Or, if you are still smitten with the humbugs
Rapt on the arteries of our sentiment
And still pursue the enamored trail,
Dramatizing everything in sight, make sure you are a true
Hunter, for elephants can kill, or, inconstant,
Steal away as silently as a fox-.

[20]

No, I think love is as serene as an elephant
Fated to dignify any circus.
See for yourself the physique of this fool:
Come, take a look into its past:
Here you see these folds of conundra,
These compresses of apathy about the eyes,
This naive assertion of its snout
Honking like Jumbo in jungle bucolics.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 21 / SCAN PAGE 23

Peacock: Orange County Park

Ray Fabrizio

The metal-bodied peacock, comet-tailed,
saunters idly through his public yard,
and with his pride diffuses rusty footprints
in the dust and the dead off-season leaves.
Nervously he shuttles; eyes the trees.

The park is still.

But now the brass shriek
of a peahen corkscrews through the brush and jerks
his neck alert in blues and greens. He staggers,
snaps his feathers in a wild rattling screen,
becomes a trumpet, blares his intention,
makes a cyclone with his sex, and then
he quickly disappears behind a bush.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 21 / SCAN PAGE 23

Golden Gate Bridge

Ray Fabrizio

I walk along the hanging concrete road-
swinging span of orange-painted steel,
leap of iron slung into an arch,
strung bracketed, baffling the leaden sea.

Bridge above the purple bridge of horizon,
the-Golden Gate bends over the commerce
of the bay, wing over the gulls and the ships
below that weave across its liquid shadow.

I listen to the mutter of the metal,
hear the salt wind plucking cables, setting

[21]

girders snarling like a giant harp;
not an Aeolian Harp by whim suspended

in some fairytale tree, but pounded into
the fog by those who forged it metaphor
of formulas and mathematic dreams,
and did not stop at dreams or formulas.

Below, the sea recalls the skeletons
of some, workers of hammered hope, who clung
to the steel strings and the hung clamor, but
unwelded, fell into the shadowed vault;
gave evidence of their humanity.

In the architecture of its imminence
I witness the taut monster of man's direction
and hear the restless rivets of his will
that built a shrine above the vanquished sea
more real than any one man's private vision.

[22]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 23 / SCAN PAGE 25

Count Nine

Les Thompson

"K

EEP UP THE LEFT! Keep up the left! Jab him!" Cecil said and I did what he told me, although at that time I hardly knew a jab from an uppercut. I was just going on sixteen, a boy, in my second year of high school and Cecil was the first person, white or colored, to treat me like a grown man. So I tried, I really tried hard, to act like one while he was around.

"That's enough, Little Joe;" he said to me. "Take a shower, Johnny.'" Johnny giggled as Cecil took off his gloves. There wasn't any shower in that old store building off South Main that we used for a gym. Cecil swatted him on the rump good-naturedly and Johnny-went up the street still giggling.

"Boy, you really had him going;" Cecil said. "He's scared of you. You had him on the run all the time, Little Joe.'" Joe wasn't my name, but' with the Golden Gloves coming up in Centralia, Cecil had told me I had to have a fighting name that would look good on the card. It was easy to agree because I still felt that Clarence was a sissy name-so he had been calling me Little Joe and telling me how good a puncher I was for about two weeks. As a matter

of fact, my sparring partner, Johnny, was smaller and faster than I was and continually beat me to the punch, but when Cecil said Johnny was scared of me, I almost believed him.

"They's only two good kinds of work for a colored man," he'd say some-times. "Fighting good or managing good fighters. If you can't do either one, I guess it's all right to wash cars." Because that's what he did. He washed cars every day at Mulford's O.K. used car lot on Marcy Street over by the post office. He got only fifty cents a car, but he always quit at four o'clock sharp so we could go to the gym and train until I had to leave for supper.

"Come on, Joe," he said. "I'll show you how to jab and hook." He walked up to the big bag and sunk his fist in it, two-three times. "There, you see?" he said. "First the jab, then the hook." He did it again and his dark hands made the bag jump like it was in pain. "Now you try it."

Though I still had my gloves on, my hands stung when I hit the bag. "That's it, Little Joe," he said, "Only turn your wrist." He shadow-boxed around the bag for a while, then brought the left in straight as a string, twice, hooked hard with it, and finished up with a terrific right that almost tore the bag loose. "Got him!" he said, and grinned.

"Gee, Cecil, you ought to go back in the ring. I bet you could beat that Olsen's head off."

"He's champ now, Joe;" Cecil said. "I'm too old. Oh, I could beat these
prelim boys yet, but you don't want to get punchy. Boy like you's got
a real
future, but 'fore you start, I want you to remember it ain't worth
getting
punchy.'" He reached up and pushed in his nose flat to his face.

"Took the
cartilage out;" he said. "Cost too much for broken noses all the time.
Old
Cecil's not pretty now.'" Before I could answer, he showed his big
white teeth
in a smile. "Made four thousand dollars on one fight;" he said, and
looked
straight at me.

"Was that before you drew with Hostak?"-
"Yeah. That was in Chicago. Babe Risko. He beat me clean.'" He
looked
down at me and smiled again. "Come on, Joe, let's see you hit that
bag. You
got some tough boys ahead of you at Centralia. You got to be ready.
We
want to both make a name, don't we?"

We trained for two or three more weeks like that, and Johnny kept
beating
me to the punch, but Cecil didn't seem to notice. He went on telling
me how
I scared Johnny, and after a while I did feel tougher. I guess that
was because
I s~ far hadn't got hurt. Johnny was only fourteen or so and
whenever he'd
hit me a couple of times Cecil would call time for the round. Then
he would
say to Johnny, "I want you to mix it more, sp,irmate. Don't move
around so
much. We got to get Little Joe in shape.'" That way I would hit
Johnny once

in a while and feel better about it all. I never did gain what you
would call
confidence, but when it came to the week of the fight, I was ready to
try
hard because I didn't want to disappoint Cecil.

He was more excited than I had ever seen him that last week.
"You'll win
~t, Joe," he said. "Then I'll get you some pro fights. How'd you like
that, huh?
We'll get a few tarik-town fights and it won't be long till we're going
places.'
He roughed up my hair. "It'll be good to be back in the money
again," he said,
but he was so far ahead of me that even I, who liked to do
everything he said
just because he said it, could not believe that it would come true.

Friday before dinner I wound my shorts and gym shoes in my jock
strap
and sat on the front porch waiting for Cecil. My mother tried to get
me to put
on a sweater, but I felt too old to take advice about something like
that. She
finally gave me a dollar and made me wrap a towel around my gear.
Then
Cecil drove up in his old Ford coupe, and for the first time I got a
look at
him as he must have been when he was still at the top. He was
magnificent in
a neat grey felt hat, and when he opened the car door, I had to stop
and stare
at him. His dark suit looked very expensive and so did the big wide
necktie
and shiny black-and-tan shoes. He wore round silver cuff-links with
a kind
of flower pattern stamped on them, and it seemed to me that
everything must
be new, but his grin wasn't at all self-conscious.

C 24. The California Quarterly J

"A big-time fighter's manager got to look prosperous;" he said in a rich voice, and we laughed together. As we drove away, my mother told me to be careful, and I was a little bit sore, I remember, because I thought then that I knew what I was facing.

"You eat yet?" Cecil asked.

"Didn't have time. I'll get a hamburger when we get there'."

"A hamburger? For a fighter? You got to have a steak!" Cecil said.

"I'll stop at home and get some money. It's all right. We'll get ten, maybe fifteen dollars for expenses'."

"I got a dollar;" I said, but he wouldn't pay any attention, and in a few minutes we stopped across the highway from the trailer camp where he lived.

When he came out a few minutes later, a woman in a print dress came out with him, carrying a baby, and a ragged little four-or-five-year-old hung unto his legs while he talked. It was the first time I had ever seen his family, but he didn't introduce me. He just walked back to the car and started it up without saying a word.

"Kind of dry out here;" I said, to break the silence. "Your shoes got dusty'."

He drove around the bend in the road, then stopped, and got a rag out of the glove compartment to polish his shoes. He grinned up at me then. "We're going to both look good tonight, Little Joe;" he said. "There maybe'll be some big-shot promoters there. Maybe we'll do some real business'."

It was more than a two-hour drive to Centralia, and we stopped
after a
while in the state capitol and went into a diner next to the Senator
Hotel
Coftee-Shop.

"We want the biggest, juiciest, sirloin steak you got for Little Joe
here;"
Cecil said, but we had to settle for a big hamburger pattie. "We don't
have
any call for steaks;" the waitress said. "You want something like that
you go
next door~" Cecil looked out the window at the hotel, then he
turned back
to me.

"I guess we don't want to monkey around with senators, do we?"
he said.
Over his shoulder I could read the little placard in the window: "We
Cater to
White Trade Only!" I tried to act like I had not seen it.

"No. This place is good enough for me;" I said.
When the food came, I made a great show of eating, and pretty
soon Cecil
was talking about the Golden Gloves and giving me advice on how
to handle
a southpaw in case I should get one in the draw. "Crowd him;" he
said, "and
keep your right high. I never seen a southpaw yet could beat a good
right-hand
puncher like you'." He made me feel good talking to me like that, but
I was
still doubtful when we drove into Centralia at seven-thirty and
parked the car
behind the Athletic Club.

I watched a heavyweight match while Cecil talked to the promoter
and got
everything fixed up. The gym was a small one and it was already hot
and full

of smoke. A barrel-chested fighter with hair all over him was boxing
a tall
boy. This boy danced up and down, keeping his elbows close
together in

[25. Count Nine J

front of him, and I thought he was very fancy, bobbing and weaving
back
and forth-almost as fancy as Cecil. But in the second round the
barrel-chested
man hit him very hard a couple of times in the breadbasket and he
looked as
if he were going to break in two. A little later the referee stopped
the match,
but not before I had got an idea of what I was in for.

When Cecil came back, he told me very simply that either I or
another
boy was going to fight last year's lightweight champion. "We got
here a wee
bit late, Little Joe;" he said, "and everybody drew but us!." He looked
at me
keenly. "The other boy'll fight him if you don't want to;" he said.
"Nobody
going to make you fight him:"

"I'll fight him;" I said, speaking very quickly before I lost my nerve.
Cecil smiled. Then he paused and frowned. "I don't think I ought
to let
you, Little Joe. He's an awful tough boY:"

I tried not to think what last year's lightweight champion would
look like
or what he would do to me. "We came here to fight;" I pointed out,
and Cecil
couldn't deny it, so I went into the dressing room and unwound my
gear.
Cecil went away and brought the promoter back with him, a
sharp-faced

little man in a chalk-striped suit who gave me a paper to sign. It said
that I
was over sixteen and that I had not received money for boxing
before. I signed
it without saying a word, although the first part of the statement
was not true,
and then the promoter went away and Cecil began to talk to me.

"Remember to keep the jab going like I told you;" he said, settling
into a
crouch himself and showing me. "Keep it right in there all the
time-boom!

... boom!-like that. You keep it up there and you keep your chin low.
When

he comes in on you, you shift your right foot back and hook him.

Then you
jab him again, blocking with your right-boom! ... boom!-like that.

Dance
in and out, in and out, jabbing all the time-jab, jab, jab. When he
tries a

hook, you block it, you step inside and you give him the old
right-wham!"

He danced around, shadow.:boxing in his nice suit, his wrists going
in and

out of the starched shirt cuffs like pistons. It was good to watch him.

He
bobbled and ducked, pushed out both hands to shove off an
imaginary
opponent, straightened up on his toes and danced backwards,
flicking out his
left. He stopped suddenly, feinting with the left and driving the right
in hard,

as to the midsection. His instructions trailed away to a mumble, and
I saw

that he had forgotten me. The strange pantomime went on for a
minute or

more after that while the sweat came out in separate drops and
rolled down

his face. He caught sight of me as he danced backwards again with
his hands
held high, and he stopped and took a big breath. "Wish I was
fighting him,
Joe;' he said, and I could not answer. Somehow it all gave me the
idea that this
first fight for me was his last chance.

It seemed like longer, but it could only have been about a
half-hour before
I was in the ring rubbing my basketball shoes in the resin-box and
taking deep
breaths. Cecil, now in his shirt-sleeves, put in the stool and I sat
down, feeling
the weight of his long blue robe hanging from my shoulders. I was a
little
dizzy.

[26. The California Quarterly]

Across the ring, last year's lightweight champion sat talking easily
to his
manager. He was a pug-nosed boy with a little wry mouth, and he
was older
and looked tougher than I knew myself to be. He didn't remind me
in any
way of Johnny, and I wondered if I would be able to hit him at all.

After the referee introduced us and we went back to our corners,
Cecil
pulled off the robe and smacked me hard on the back. Then he
rubbed with
his palm the area between my shoulder blades. "Get in there and hit
him
first;' he said in a low voice, and I caught up the tension. He put in
my
mouthpiece as the bell rang, and gave me a shove toward the center
of the
ring. "Go get him, Little Joe;' he said.

I tried-I tried very hard to hit the other boy first, but it seemed
that I

couldn't do more than occasionally push him away in that first round. My arms felt heavy and he hit me a lot. My lower lip tasted of blood, and all the right side of my face was numb when I got back to my corner. It was like leaving a dentist's office after an extraction and feeling as if you could not go back for the next appointment. I slumped down on the stool, and the cold water trickling down my face gave me the sensation of being a long ways away. Cecil's face was close to mine, and he crooned in my ear in a kind of soothing sing-song as he worked me over. "Got to keep your right up, Little Joe. You got him real worried out there. You're doing fine. Remember what Cecil tells you. He drops his left just before he hooks. When he does that, hit him with the right'."

The bell rang distantly, and I was shoved out into the ring again. This time I pulled a fancy trick. I was clipped three or four times on the nose and backed up fast as I saw a right coming. Just as I hit the ropes, I remembered what Cecil had told me once about using them. I laid my weight into the ropes hard and stuck out my right hand as I came off. It hit the other boy and he staggered around, and I was paralyzed for a second as I thought he was going to fall. But he didn't. He grabbed me around the shoulders and hung on till the referee pulled him off. Then he hit me square in the face so hard I thought my nose was broken. I fell back feeling for the

ropes, but I guess he had spun me around while he hung on to me
because
there was nothing behind me and I sat down. I turned around,
leaning on one
glove as I started to get up and there was Cecil hanging over the
apron of
the ring, shouting at me to stay down. "Count nine!" he yelled.
"Count nine!"

I tried to count, but before I had got clear which number to start
with, I
realized the referee must have been counting all the time, so I pulled
myself
up by the ring rope and covered up my face as the boy came in again
and hit
me. He kept hitting me until the round ended and I was numb all
over and
my knees were weak. As I went back to my corner, I remember
being sur-
prised and pleased that I knew where it was. Cecil slapped my
cheeks, but I
hardly felt it, and he put the sponge in my mouth for awhile. "Lucky
punch,
Little Joe:" he said. "Keep the left out. Don't let him get close. Move
around
more, and work on his body. He's keeping his hands high now.'" I
heard the

[27. Count Nine]

words, but nothing registered. He may as well have been talking to
the ring~
post. The bell rang again and it seemed as if I was in the middle of a
night-
mare. It was just a struggle to keep consciousness. Everytime I got
hit at all
it went clear through me, and I remember nothing exactly in those
two last
rounds but falling on the stool and feeling the water, smelling
something

sharp and hearing Cecil talk to me.

At last he said, "Come on, Little Joe, let's go. It's all over'."

He helped me down from the ring. We jostled against people as
we went

back to the dressing room and they spoke, but I didn't catch the
words. When

finally I lay on the table in the dressing room I would have liked to
go to

sleep and forget it, but I hurt everywhere.

Cecil worked on me for a very long time, and I stared at his face
without

really seeing it as I felt his hands kneading my muscles. By the time
that I

was able to speak, I saw that he was crying, so I was silent until
after my

shower. As I put on my clothes, I could hear him speaking with the
promoter

outside the door of the dressing room.

"I don't care how far you drove, Cecil;" the promoter was saying.

"You

saw the crowd. I didn't take in enough to pay the referees'."

"But Ed, we got to have expense money. The boy needs a doctor.

Just

five dollars then. Come on. He got to have it'."

"Can't do it, Cecil, I tell you. It's out of the question. You should
have

thought of that when you brought your boy down here. You pretty
near

got him killed'."

"Just three dollars, Mister Ed. Just something'."

"God damri it, Cecil! Two dollars, and that's all!"

"Thank you, Mister Ed'."

That was all I heard, but I could not look at Cecil wheQ he came
back.

He held out the money, and when I didn't take it, he stuffed it into
my shirt

pocket. He wasn't angry. He just looked worn-out, older. His
 manner had
 changed. I didn't quite know what I expected him to say, but when
 he opened
 the car door for me under the streetlight, he put one hand on my
 shoulder
 and ran the tips of his fingers over my face.

"Just look at you, boy;" he said sadly. "Now what will your ma and
 daddy say?"

(continued from inside front cover)

If Dr. Pauling is right (and we think he is), perhaps this is no Fish
 Story
 but rather an expression of Reasonable Hope: that our country has
 passed
 the crisis, that it is convalescing from its virulent attack of rigor
 mentis, and
 that the year 1955 may see in America the kind of activity for peace
 that not
 even the most myopic Academician can ignore.

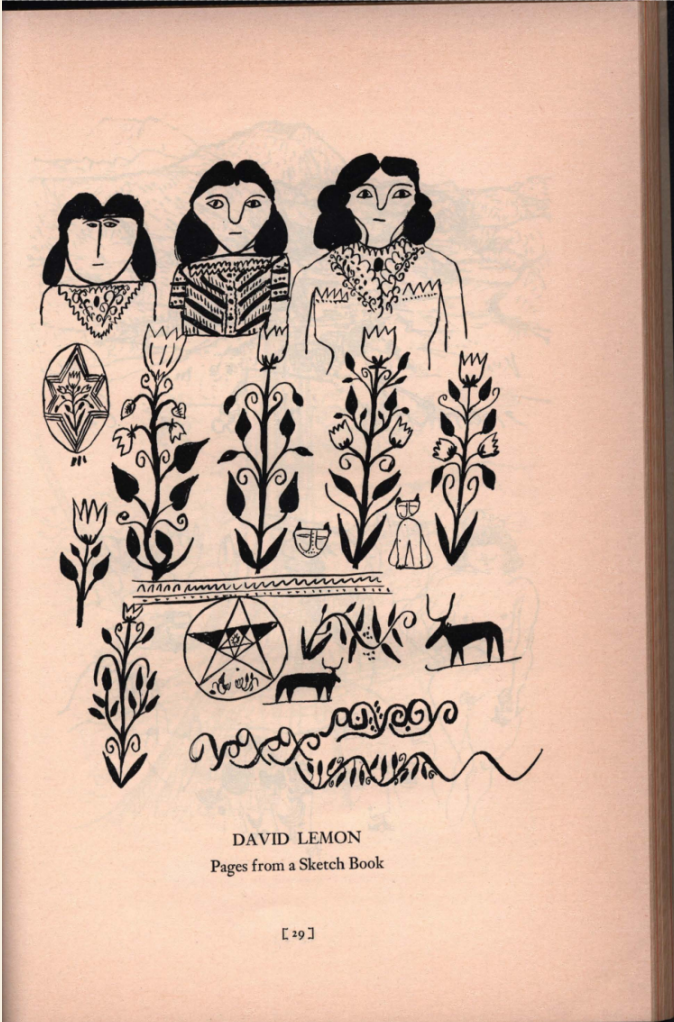
THE EDITORS

[28. The California Quarterly J

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 29 / SCAN PAGE 31

Pages from a Sketch Book

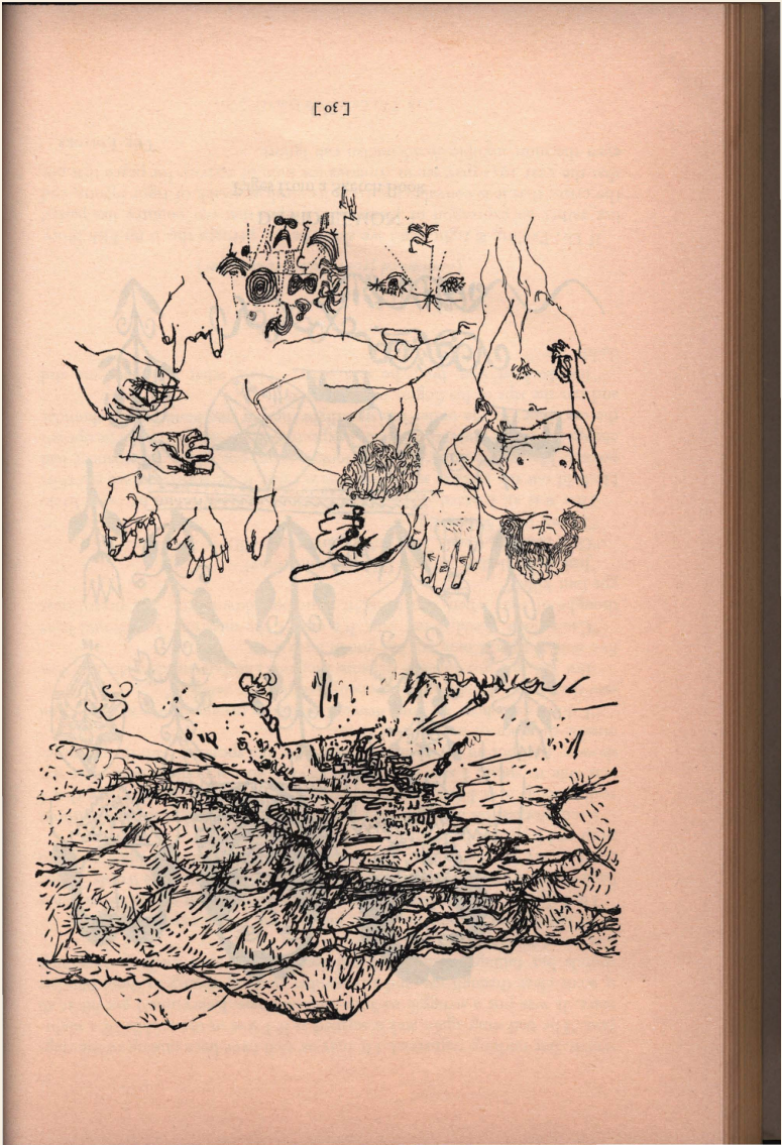
David Lemon



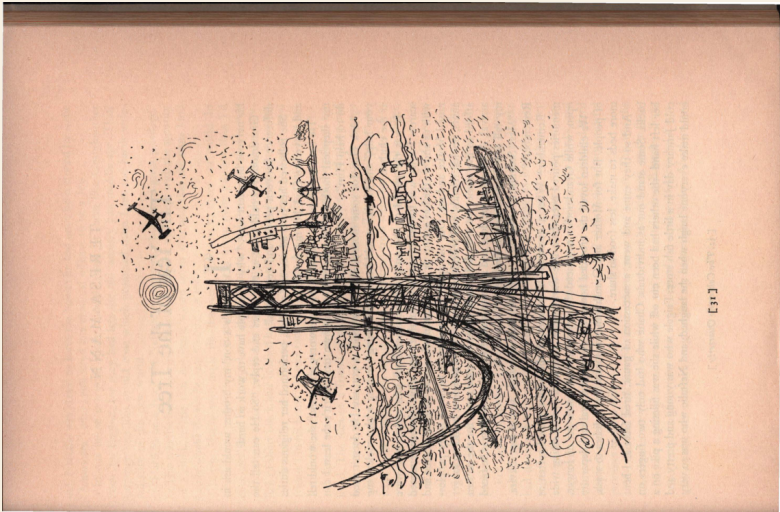
DAVID LEMON
Pages from a Sketch Book

[29]

Original artwork plate / scan page 31



Original artwork plate / scan page 32



Original artwork plate / scan page 33

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 32 / SCAN PAGE 34

The Year of the Tree

Teresa Mann

"I F THERE'S A Goo;" my brother would ask in his nervous impatient way, "why do people have to work so hard?"

Grandmother would wink at the others and reply, "So He can tell the difference between people and vegetables." She followed her own advice and worked, performed her religious duties and prayed to God, but not for aid.

"He has enough to do without having to worry about me;" she would tell my skeptical mother. "I'll take care of my own troubles, it's the least I can do to help. Him." "Ask Him for some money; if He's as good as you say He doesn't need your help;" and Mother would begin the evening's ironing with a violent tug at the clothes.

It was the period of the early thirties when both jobs and money were scarce. Father was forced to work in another city while Mother remained with us and worked in a shop. It was Grandmother who cooked, cleaned and raised Motke and me. Our old apartment was made to house many peopleaunts, uncles, friends, and friends of friends. When someone could no longer afford to live alone, we crowded a little closer to make room for the newest arrival. A knock at the door and a visitor would appear, trembling as he faced my tall and formidable grandmother.

"Mrs. Steinman, remember me? I'm Berl Shuster's son. From Skvira. Remember?"

Remember? What a question! The faces of the adults would soften as memories poured over them like warm water. The door would swing wide open, while Grandmother embraced the newest arrival, a stranger no longer.

We children loved the crowded house, the constant arrival and departure of people. But for Mother and Grandmother it meant more dishes to wash, more beds to make, less food to share.

And so they came and went, a succession of gaunt, tired faces and bent backs. Some stand out as individuals. Chane who had only two

fingers on her left hand-the others had been cut off while she was filleting a pike on a cold January day in a little fish store; Feigele who was young and pretty and could make everyone laugh when she laughed; and Neftalie who was so very [32. The California Quarterly] old. Neftalie was afraid to leave the house; he had once been stoned by some "Americans" who considered it a criminal offense to be a Jew.

In our house everyone spoke Yiddish. Most of them like Grandmother knew no English, for they had left the old country past middle age. Their language was like an old coat which protected them from the harsh unfamiliarity of this new world.

"Hard to be a Jew;" old Neftalie would sigh, "but also a great privilege." This was the home in which Motke and I grew up. I slept with the security of a child, certain that my home would never alter and that the same kind hands would always be near to care for me.

It was Motke who made the discovery that was to upset our world. In December of 1930 he came running into the house more jubilant than I'd ever seen him. He dragged me and my cousin Ketsl into a corner. He was so happy, so eager to talk that he began jumping up and down while his cowlick of short black hair bobbed half a dozen times before he became coherent.

"Sammy;" he cried, "Sammy has a Christmas tree!" Sammy was a school friend. "In his house;" Motke ran on. "I saw it. It's got lights you can turn on! Red and blue and they make colors on the wall! "

I turned away from them and began to rub the floor with the palm of my hand. The idea of a friend of ours with a Christmas tree was thrilling and upsetting at the same time. Christmas trees were things we saw in strange windows at night, in department stores, in pictures. They were foreign objects, to be admired but not touched. Christmas trees were not for Jews. For a moment everything familiar was lost to me, and I experienced a fuller, deeper loneliness than I had known in all my nine years.

Ketsl's thin, apathetic body now sprang up in excitement. "A Christmas tree?"

I turned back and looked at them. She and Motke were facing each other ~nd smiling. I wanted to tell them how I felt, but they were older, and I preferred my fear to their laughter.

For days we spoke of the tree only in whispers. We went to visit Sammy and I forgot all my apprehensions when I saw his tree. It was just as Motke had described it a tall tree with colored lights covering its long branches. Sammy, bursting with pride, kept pulling the light plugs to show us how they worked. Each time the oddly shaped bulbs were relit, some of my fear disappeared. My desire for a tree grew as strong as Motke's and Ketsl's, and when we got home I ran to tell Grandmother about the tree. Motke and Ketsl stopped me and locked me in the closet until they believed my tearful promises to keep still.

We decided to ask for the tree in the evening after supper. This was the best time in our house. We would sit in a corner of the kitchen, on the floor, while the adults gathered around the old wooden table to tell stories. Some were traditional folk tales such as the legendary exploits of Herschel Catropolier, some were written by great literary heroes like Sholem Aleichem, and [33. The Year of the Tree J others were tales of home. They told of the dowry swindle at Malke de Grine's wedding, and of how Yankele, who had hidden in a wine barrel to escape a Cossack raid, was drunk for a week. We children squirmed with delight as we listened. These were moments of glory for, our elders as well. Often the ugliness and persecution of the old country would be forgotten, and only the laughter and loveliness of the people remained.

"I don't know;" one would state seriously, "here the flowers don't smell as sweet'." "That's because the air's better at home;" a second would reply, while a third would sum up: "Ay, America!"

Grandmother told the best stories, I think. When she talked everyone kept still and listened. She had a quietness, a depth, which drew people to her. She spoke of how the villages had looked with the white snow tucking them in, and of the multi-colored noisemakers which the children shook and banged during Purim festivals. She remembered other things, too-how lack of sanitation killed half the babies, and how Death rode with the Cossacks on their pogroms and drove the Jews from their homes.

When she spoke of these things everyone would sit quietly for a few moments. But the sadness never lasted long. A new story would begin, and the shadows on the walls would once more dance their pleasure.

The evening we planned to ask for the tree started out just like any other. Feigele began to pour hot tea and thin clouds of steam rose from

the tall glasses. Sugar cubes were clasped firmly beneath tongues to soften the taste of the bitter tea. Someone said, "Do you remember...?" and the evening began. Ketsl, Motke, and I pushed up to the table. A few times Motke tried to speak, "Mama, Mama, today we.. '!' But no one noticed. I began to feel hot and upset; I even started to leave the room, but Ketsl caught my dress and spoke a harsh threat into my ear.

It was Grandmother who finally noticed our fidgeting. "Leah;" she said to Mother, "the little one looks hot. Come here, baby, let me feel;" She held her hands out to me. • I saw the worry-lines come into Mother's face as she left the ironing board. I wanted to run and hide my face in her lap; I wanted her to hold me and say she would always love me; but I never got the chance. Motke looked at me and decided that I was his weakest link. Conversation had ceased; all eyes were on us. He inhaled.

"We want a Christmas tree, please!" He had spoken more loudly than he intended, and the words seemed to bounce off all the walls. A difficult silence followed, and then someone, Neftalie, I think, breathed, '-Ay, America!' The quiet didn't last. Mother began to shout: "Shame, have you no shame, little devils? You will kill us all before our time!" "America;" said Tevye, the old village smith; "where Jews come to find peace. In our graves, that's when we'll have peace." [34. The California Quarterly]

Chane had been holding her crippled hand. She stared at its missing fingers. "They will leave us nothing, not even the children!" Feigele was not laughing now. She spoke softly, harshly. "When I see a Christmas tree, I think pogrom!" The deep anger we had unloosed frightened me, and I felt even Ketsl take a backward step.

Then Neftalie rose. He doubled his old fist and shook it threateningly at an unseen opponent. "You will not drive us out;" he roared. "No more will you drive us out!" Then he sank back into his chair and glared.

I began to cry. Eyes focused on us once more, but this time they held no affection or even friendliness. Grandmother's face was hidden in her hands; Feigele had her arms about her and was speaking in a low, rapid voice. "To bed!" said Mother, and then Motke and Ketsl began to cry too. All the voices began shouting again, but our cries of "Christmas tree!" were the loudest.

The following night was Friday and everyone grouped tightly about Grandmother as she lit the candles to greet the Sabbath. Usually we paid little attention, but this night the act took on its original ceremonial

quality. We watched as she placed the candelabra carefully upon her crocheted tablecloth. With the lighting of the seven candles the room was transformed into melting surfaces of black shadow and gold light. While Grandmother then chanted the holy words, the light searched her face, deepening the wrinkles and stressing the white transparency of her hair. She seemed very old, and I wished she would move away from the candles.

The next days brought a tense, uncomfortable atmosphere to our home. Everyone looked at us sadly, with a touch of hostility. Even Feigele did not smile or joke, nor did she try to tease us or tweak our noses. We avoided the grown-ups they had turned into enemies bent on ruining our happiness.

Each day we cried bitterly and the two magic words never left our lips. Finally Mother lost all patience, and her hands that were worn from ironing and machine work found new strength when applied to our struggling bodies.

But what affected us most was the change in Grandmother. She seemed lost in thought, withdrawn from us completely. She told no stories, spoke little, even forgot to slap our hands when we reached for food not meant for us. She seemed to be always praying. At work her lips moved constantly, and when the last dishes were put away she read her Bible, seeking an answer to a question we could not understand. We felt that we had been deserted by our staunchest ally.

Our tears were sincere. We were suffering with an intensity grown-ups never realize is possible to children. Gradually, as we saw our cause was lost, our tears stopped flowing. But we no longer took turns counting trees glimpsed in street windows; and, in unspoken agreement, we kept our feet from wandering to Sammy's house. The sight of a Christmas tree now brought only pain.

The adults seemed to feel that with the end of our crying the crisis had [35. The Year of the Tree J passed. They even tried to assume their former attitude toward us. The kitchen meetings were resumed, and a certain new zest was now added to the stories of Jewish life. Grandmother, however, did not participate.

One evening at supper, a week after we had first asked for the tree, Grandmother remarked that we were not looking well.

Mother looked at us. "It's nothing. They've been hurt, but they'll live. They get too much their own way.'" She set her lips. "It's time they learned they too must live by law. They'll learn that life can be cruel and lonely. They must learn to survive in it.'" Grandmother watched Mother attentively while she spoke, then she looked around the table at the others who were nodding in agreement. She saw our flushed faces, for we were embarrassed at being spoken of before the others. Then she left the table. A moment later we heard the front door close.

After the dishes were done the kitchen darkened and we turned the lights on. Mother rose to do the ironing, but no one talked. We waited. The creak of a chair, the noise of the iron hitting the board, were the only sounds in the room... until the front door opened.

Mother stopped ironing. "Ma?" she inquired. "It's me, just a minute;" and then Grandmother stood in the doorway. She was smiling at us the way she used to before all the trouble began. But it was not this that froze us; it was the tiny bare Christmas tree she was placing on the table.

It is impossible to describe what I felt, what I know Motke and Ketsl felt. It was all the joy a child is capable of. It was the warmth of mother's kiss and the thrill of a circus at night. It was our re-acceptance of people and a renewed conviction that life was good.

She turned to face us and we ran fighting to see who could get closest to her. "Ahe, you're strangling me. Let go!" But she was holding us close and ruffing our hair. "Is that what you wanted? Speak! Me you can tell. I'm not that Tsar.'" A real Christmas tree. I suppose it was a very small tree; I suppose it was scrawny and probably the needles fell from it too readily. But a child has the gift of enchanted vision, and on our kitchen table we had the most beautiful tree in the world. We felt its sharpness against our skin, and bent our quivering noses to inhale its fragrance, running confusedly between the tree and Grandmother to bestow more wet kisses on her face.

"Ma!" Mother's voice broke the stunned silence. "Ma, do you know what you've done?"

Grandmother sat down. She looked tired. "I think I've done right;" she said. "We are Jews;" said Chane. "True;" the answer came, "but did God say we couldn't have a tree? These same trees we loved and worked beneath in Skvira. God gave ten commandments, all other laws were made by men.'" She walked to the stricken old man and put a hand on his

shoulder. "Neftalie, I know we're not through yet with [36. The California Quarterly J pogroms, or stonings. That's why you and I can't love the tree; our memories are too young. But the children, how can it hurt?"

"They'll forget us;" prophesied Chane. Grandmother spoke to us then, and we leaned forward trying to catch all the words. "When you are older you will want many things as you wanted this tree. So think first, Do I want this so I can forget I am a Jew? or because it will make me a wiser and stronger person? If it is for the last reason, fight for what you want, and with each struggle you will grow. You will learn what in life is important and what is unimportant.'" Mother shook her head. "What are you saying to them?" "You've become so bitter, my daughter!" She was looking at Mother the way she always looked at us, protectingly, lovingly. "You never had a chance to be young, so you steal from your children. Let your children learn slowly and let their troubles be children's troubles, or we will destroy each other. They will learn that life is not all good, you must learn that much of it is!" It was the first time I had seen my Mother cry and it made me love her very much. She knelt down, put her face in Grandmother's lap and wept, just as we did when we were hurt, and that was funny too, because I'd never thought of Mother as young.

Then she raised her head, kissed Grandmother, and smiled, almost shyly, at Motke and me. "Do you suppose this is the beginning of the stories they will tell?" she asked.

We never had another Christmas tree. We never really wanted one again. It was to be many years before we could fully understand all that Grandmother had said, but she had bound us more closely together. In time we grew and our struggles matured us as Grandmother had said they would; but the year of the Christmas tree I have never forgotten, nor has anyone who was there.

[37. The Year of the Tree]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 38 / SCAN PAGE 40

The Old Furnaces

Millen Brand

(Percy Hertzog remembers his father)

"Slag I liked. That was a sight when they dumped it, it run down and light everything up so you could see it for miles.' His varnished chair's curve follows the slope of his body as he leans back in the night-time kitchen. A cigarette breathes gently: "Furnaces used to be all around here, Pottstown, Bechtelsville yes, and Macungie, Emaus, Topton, and Alburtis. All gone now except Bethlehem. The one at Alburtis I used to watch tapped many a night. Four men with the big pick pick at it and work till they get it open, then the iron flowed out like water into the sand-the molds. I tell you the molds 'looked; fresh made, ready for the metal. They tapped it at eight and twelve and four. I stayed to see the second one at twelve. I was nine or ten then and sneaked out the houseyeah, I guess my mother knew where I went, but couldn't keep me, no, she couldn't.' He squeezed the end of his cigarette and opened the slide door in the stove and flicked the butt in. "My fat~er worked there fifteen years, about from the time I was born until the furnace closed. When I used to go, he was on the bottom and top both in charging. Yes, I would come and my father would be on top and the men would call up, 'Percy's come!' 'Send him up!' my father would call, and they would put me between two buckets, so I'd go up. The first time I walked up a stairway went zigzagging up-I near fainted. After that I always went with the buckets. So I would go up to the top. But I could not always go up. Sometimes there was danger-gas. If a top man was new, sometimes he was overcome by the gas. One burned. But the older men could tell it, and kept some gauze, lighted it and threw it in, and so burned the gas. There was two furnaces then, number Seven and Eight they called them. Three men worked at the bottom and one at the top, twelve-hour shifts. When my father was top man, he was quick, and the men so could of ten get an hour to sleep. Three buckets went up at a time, and as soon as they were up, they must be emptied. Yes, 'the bell' must be filled, and so, when it got filled, it went down slowly by itself, emptied, then come up

again. The charge used coal, coke, limestone, and three kinds of mine red mine, a bluish kind, and salamander. The salamander was heavy. No man could lift a bucket of salamander. Even a shovelful was hard. Not that they shoveled the mine much. The gondola cars was small, and they tipped them and shoved them in, they had a handle for it, and so scooped down the mine. They dragged the cars back all by hand. Yes, that was the method when my father was top man.

"You would think my father was big, but he wasn't. No, he was small like me, not much bigger than me. One year he worked five days more than there is days in the year. Yes, that year he worked three hundred and seventy days. Man on one shift was sick so after my father worked Thursday days, he worked also Thursday nights, the twelve-hour shift, then again his own shift Friday days. That night when he went home after working thirty-six hours, come the foreman and said the man's still sick, 'Could you make shift again?' Father said, No. The foreman said, 'I'll give you a helper, just so somebody that knows is there'. So Father went back to work!" Percy stares at the time gone. He presses his hand to the side of his mouth so that his lips seem folded on his words. "Yes, my father he worked hard, and I never remember him tired. He just kept working and if one said, 'Don't you want to rest now?' he said, 'No, I can rest when I'm dead'."

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 42 / SCAN PAGE 43

The Dissenter

Don Gordon

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 41 / SCAN PAGE 43

Consider the Meaning of Love

Don Gordon

of the murderers;
Examine the heart as the brain goes blind
with fear;
Observe the flower in particular when the house
is burning.

They blew up the island like a fish in a hole
in the killer Pacific:
That was the day the world embraced itself,
That was the day for lovers under the sign
of the active cloud.

When in the hour of night the windows are lit
in the famous buildings,
A cold wave crosses the frontier of a generation
in its sleep,
The coyote howls, the vulture comes down
from the sky.
It is the hour of fever, the hour to study
the nature of love.

Everything is lost to the dead, they are
not continuous,
The generals are not continuous nor the diplomats.
Fired on
. Or flattened or strangled by vines, the cities
are restored
By love in the living, the continuity of healing
and remorse.

Remember the flower in particular when the house
is burning;
Revive the heart as the brain goes blind
of the destroyers.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 42 / SCAN PAGE 44

The Travelers

Don Gordon

The Dissenter

People will turn the middens we bequeath:

the hunters
or the hunted
express the age.

The facts go with the cities into the rock strata:

someone is not to be spoken to
someone is not to occupy the house
in the sacred wood
dangerous thoughts are exported
on the outgoing tide
it is verboten to play with the
dissenter's child.

The tributaries feed into the sea
of violence.

The iron cells multiply like the amoeba;
the nucleus
In each is a man who does not agree
with the warden.

They nail in the hands and feet
the bill of attainder,
They display in the German silence
the broken mirror,
The image of forbidden people.
They need an enemy to tear apart

in the mad season
When the air is burning and the cloud
signals unbearable change.
The dissenter is born alive on the edges
of the weather.

The endurable voyages are those I do not take.
The gulls drop like summer on the nervous heads
in transit;
The iron statesmen receive them with grins
in the foreign parks.

[42 J

The sun is a gold branch of my tree
as they meet themselves
At the tombs of leathery kings, the moon
over the house
When they leave the Gothic block on the spine
of the natives.

The birds move in their southern arrows.
The travelers return,
The snapshot of the overfed shrewd pigeon
on their fingers,
Always out of focus in the corner the same
opaque eye:
to whom does it belong?
to whom is it visible?

I have wondered if they know
the Qame of the child with glaucoma,
As I wonder how they sleep
with their eyes full of bones.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 43 / SCAN PAGE 45

Riddle

Waldeen

Love is profound, but love is pleasure;
love is not an aerial thing,
a weightless, shapeless feeling without measure:
love is the sinew, the flesh and the bone.

But speak not to me of the animal kingdom,
of protoplasms and the nerves of beasts;
we who know love know its freedom
from all that is marked: as the grave : "ith a stone.

[43]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 44 / SCAN PAGE 46

The Quartz Heart

Waldeen

The belabored heart
numb but scintillant,
amethyst-pronged quartz
weighted and inert, contains
the afterglow, the bitter
chiselled glint,
the lucent retrospect.

This mineralized heart
perplexedly hewn
by sorrow's violent fluency,
has crystalline spikes
of variant height and potency:
some to blind like snow,
some to barb with frenzy.

What construction of flesh and bone
be shaped and webbed to hold
this silent prismatic load?
Leaf and mold convert their substance
while such enduring stone
thinks to have found a resting-place:
undisturbed, unstirring, alone.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 45 / SCAN PAGE 46

Snowmountain

Joanne de Longchamps

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 44 / SCAN PAGE 46

Jury Duty

Joanne de Longchamps

The seldom-visitor to public buildings
learns the first hard lessons of its chairs,
needs patience in the drafts and weighty airs-
A citizen removed from secret self
discovers time is longer than he knew
as now, again, the trapped eye travels up
to march on molding, amble with the clock.
He may deplore the civic architecture
or walk the inner-maze of his conjecture .

. But this is prologue; from the dusty branch
of unwished waiting springs our bud of doom,
like evil foliage tension grips a room.

This random audience off shopper's street,
from workday dens or snug suburbia
is named and sworn, assembled to condemn;
presumed quite fit to cast a cutting stone.
We see the living half of death's duet
led out from cell to stony stranger's view.
He killed his wife-the matter rests with you.

But faces, O the faces disconcert,
no raveling these maskers for the thread
of what is hidden always in the head.
The judge more bland than any mandarin;
calm lawyers setting verbal chessmen out
are suave or strident in a planned intent
to checkmate. We confuse the king with pawn-
These witnesses are speaking as by rote.
If words are weapons honed to sever breath
how far this skillful play seems from a death.

An indoor drama has usurped a world
 as seasons slide like leaves beneath our feet.
 Unreal snowfall on the actual street
 becomes but segment of a window-view.
 Not under leafy silt or snow but speech
 the days are drifted. Has a truth been sifted
 or obscured beneath the long barrage?
 The court reporter winds a mile of words:
 the bailiff's gavel drives a nail of fear.
 A verdict is one other word to hear.

Snowmountain

From valley floor and smokestack town
 we came to this mountain dimension,
 the cold fact of winter as eye would have it
 in white script, a fable of snow
 alive with graved aspen, grave pine
 in each part burnished and blazing.

Clean here; high bright precipitous and struck with pure sunfall. Our tears glaze the dazzlement:

lungs test the knives of the air
 and blood's small warmth, our animal fire
 seems threatened. We crouch in our bones.

Soundless down vertical acres
 a skier drops like a spider, spins out
 sudden tracks in a web of descent.
 He has skimmed the new cream of the snow
 and released us, glossed over the menace,
 crossed over the sheer malevolent mountain.

The warm dumb beast that cowers in blood
 sensed death in alpland. But we are saved
 by the way a landscape alters with figures,
 is reduced to a backdrop. We seem to conquer-
 This motion restores us: motion the catalyst
 changing the primitive pause of fear
 to sudden joy. We shout to the mountain.

JEANNE T'T E MA IN O

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 46 / SCAN PAGE 48

Pacific Ocean, the Present

Jeannette Maino

The ocean, flirting white lace petticoats
Is intimate and small and only bound
By the thinnest line a child might draw around
The sea ... horizon line with tiny boats.
And on the flattened bay the sea-weed floats.
My heart remembers not the world is round
Forgets infinity; and hears the sound
Of gulls along the wind as cheerful notes.

The days have gone when I looked, never free
Of tears, with eyes too weary and afraid
To stop at clouds or dropping, distant line
But searched on farther, farther, strained to see
The secret islands dark with trustless shade,
The endless waves that washed your life from mine.

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 47 / SCAN PAGE 49

Doppler's Effect

Melissa Blake

Doppler's Effect

The grasshopper alights
With a noise like a child's toy unwinding.

Ancient, Egyptian, Biblical insect
You have five legs.
Impossible, an unnatural number.

Did this amputation occur
In combat as fearsome
As a dinosaur battle?
Was that fine fat thigh
Eaten by one of your cannibal kind?

Or did the weaponless cicada, dying,
Miraculously wound you
Before the ceasing
Of his piercing whistle
Chopped the night listener's
Insomniac ears?

The grasshopper soars silently away.

Why this difference
This clicking arrival
And noiseless departure?

Nothing other than
The bent sound of the bells

On an ice-cream wagon
Key changing in a space of air
The depressed, bending groan
Of a horned automobile passing.

[47]

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 48 / SCAN PAGE 50

Song of the White Ant

Melissa Blake

I warm my hands before the fire
And sometimes turn my back
While termites in the cypress log
Change from white to black.

If we should burn in atom's blaze
Earth's surface glaze to glass
Will God benignly warm his hands?
Or merely burn his ass?

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 48 / SCAN PAGE 50

The Several Advantages of Living Under a Tin Roof

Melissa Blake

It doesn't leak:
Mist fizzles on it
Showers indent its corrugated keyboard
Hail hundred dozen jackhammers it
Wind wrinkles it
Hurricane shakes it like a rug.

Branches scrape questions on it
Leaves ping pong, then skate down it
Buds shotgun it.

Cat claws slatepencil it
Bird feet tickle code on it
Sun warms it:
Friends pebble signal us on it.

[48 J

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 49 / SCAN PAGE 51

The Pondo War

Bernard Raymund

The Pando War

IN

THE ANNALS of conflict the war between
the village of Pando and the Brotherhood must seem to have been
inconclu-
sive; but to the villagers it was nothing short of a stupendous,
humiliating
defeat. They have never to this day determined how it happened,
and they
have many reasons, none correct, why it should not have fallen as it
did. But
human reason is notoriously frail.

Every year Pando contracts upon itself, sees its young people
emigrate to
the city, watches the gilt sign of the Bank of Pando tarnish and
decay, surveys
the weather-gutted remnants of what once were two busy flouring
mills, sighs
and looks the other way. True, Pando has three motor sales agencies
whose
glittering plate-glass fronts lend it an air of prosperity. But like the
filling
stations, these are run by and for "foreigners;" whose revenue flows,
by chan-
nels unknown to the Bank of Pando, to distant parts. Besides, what
resident
of the village can afford a car under ten years old? Those newest
models glit-
tering behind the false-fronts, those marvels of engineering genius
you hear

described on the radio, are reserved for prosperous and bearded
farmers whom
Pando knows and envies as "the Brothers." They can afford new cars,
new
tractors, new herd sires, new everything. What Pando gets, if at all,
it gets
second-hand, after the Brothers have switched to something newer,
some-
thing better.

Neither Amish nor Mennonite, though outwardly resembling both,
these
fortunate brethren call themselves the Nectarine Brotherhood, speak
a dialect
neither Dutch, nor Walloon nor German, disdain neither wine nor
tobacco,
and are even known to hold community dances-though what their
dancing
must be like Pando cannot conjecture. And their settlement is
dominated by
a huge church with a truncated steeple, built of bilious brick of their
own
manufacture, containing what is said to be the finest pipe-organ
outside of
Dresden.

However much Pando resents their prosperity as a reflection upon
the
stagnation of village life, the village has for many years benefited
from it
and smiled upon the Brotherhood, no matter how absurd their
ways, as an
assured source of income and bringer of all good things to Pando,
such as
they are. The first conflict between town and country arose over the
ques-
tion of schooling. From the founding of the settlement, Nectarine
offspring

had been educated in the brick school adjoining the church. Here
Nectarine
maidens reputedly taught their pupils that the world was flat, that
sun, moon
and stars revolved about it as in Old Testament times, and that the
wages of
juvenile delinquency was a prompt Old Testament thrashing in the
school
woodshed.

However, as an education it could not have been wholly bad.
Numbers of
those from the Nectarine school have made places for themselves in
the aca-
demic and scientific world. It was no accident that the Brothers'
large herd
was the first in the country accredited tuberculosis-free: the
veterinarian who
devised the accrediting system came from the Nectarine school.

But with the building of the centralized school at Pando, a
building as
repulsive as the Nectarine church and twice as expensive, the
Brothers were
notified that hereafter they must send their children to sit with the
"gentiles"
in the Pando classrooms. The Brothers said no. What was the matter
with
their school anyhow? They weren't bright, maybe? This they said
neither
loudly nor defiantly, that being against the Nectarine religion. But
they set
their bearded lips, hired a new damsel from their midst for the fall
term, and
opened the doors of the sulphurous building on the first Monday in
September
as usual.

Pando began to cast black looks across the valley at the
Brotherhood. They
thought they could get away with it, did they? Well, let them try!
Pando's
grievance was not sentimental: funds for the new school were
apportioned by
the state strictly on a per capita basis. Empty seats meant fewer
dollars. If
the Brotherhood kids did not fill them, no one else could. The
Brotherhood
would put Nectarine children on that school bus or else ...

Correspondence flowed between the Pando school board and the
Brother-
hood. It all flowed one way-no letters were answered. After a
decorous in-
terval, the Pando truant officer visited the Nectarine Community,
took the
deacon bodily from the seat of the Brotherhood combine, and threw
him into
a "gentile" jail. The Nectarines bailed him out at once, for cash; but
it was
a great day for Pando when the first bus-load of little girls in black
bonnets
and solemn little boys, their galluses sewed to the tops of their long
black
pants, filed demurely into the new and expensive centralized school.

Pando exulted, but having tasted Nectarine blood, was not
satisfied. It was
recalled that during the War the Nectarine youth had unanimously
refused
military service, preferring the pick and shovel of the C.O. camp to
the alco-
holic rigors of the barracks. Pando patriots held spirited meetings in
the
lodge rooms above the A & P. Threats were breathed against the
"yellow so-
and-so's:" Why, look at 'em, look at the way they work-and they don't
even

[50. The California Quarterly J

own title to the houses they live in. Everything in the name of the
 Commu-
 nity. If that wasn't Communism, what was it? How could they have
 built
 their creamery and that big grain elevator along the railroad if they
 weren't
 Communists? What right did they have to sell their grain direct to
 Chicago
 instead of through the decent, the upright, the American brokers in
 Pondo?
 And what right did the Nectarine creamery have to refuse milk from
 other
 farmers? American farmers? They said it "wasn't up to standard"?
 Fellow
 citizens, that there is just another piece of their double-talk. They
 are delib-
 erately trying to force honest Americans to sell their herds!

On Saturday night Nectarine youths were ambushed and roughed
 up.
 Their parents, coming from the A & P with the weekly groceries,
 found their
 expensive sedans daubed with yellow paint. Pondo Ku Kluxers, who
 had gone
 shivering underground at the death of Harding, staged a motorcade
 down
 Main Street and burned a cross in the Nectarine church yard.

The Brotherhood was mute. But their trade in Pondo diminished to
 a
 trickle, dried in time to nothing, while Pondo gritted its teeth to
 watch the
 Brothers of a Saturday drive right through town, without stopping
 on their
 way, to trade at the county seat. Well, their kids were still in Pondo
 school.
 They couldn't get around that, could they?

It was at the time of these disorders that the distinguished
geologist, Dr.
Vosebius, came home to give an address at the Nectarine church.
Pondo
neither knew nor cared, but it would have been well had Pondo
listened. Dr.
Vosebius brought with him a collection of lantern slides and a
projector-
probably the first to profane those sacred precincts-with which to
illustrate
his talk on the Geology of the Pondo Valley.

Their valley, he explained, had in ancient times been crossed by
the mighty
Pondo River, at this point perhaps four miles wide, which, rising in
what are
now the Great Smoky Mountains, flowed northward to empty into
what is
now Hudson's Bay. In the course of geologic ages it had cut deep
escarpments
in the limestone, so that at this point the stream was overhung by
cliffs as
much as a thousand feet in height. Nobody knew exactly: even
geologists-
Professor Vosebiu~ smiled with engaging humility out upon his
large audience
-do not have all the answers. It might have been nine, or even eight
hundred
feet. For the glaciers of the Second Ice Age had filled the bed of the
Pondo
River to the brim with gravel, obliterating the great cliffs and
creating the
fertile plain in which the Brotherhood found their living. And the
town of
Pondo had been built precisely on the edge of the great
underground escarp-
ment, so that half of it lay over what might be called the abyss.
As the lights were extinguished and the Professor's projector
focused. on

the screen before the organ, a low hum spread through the
congregation. It
was not so much a hum of pleasure as what might be thought of, in
a gath-
ering less pacific, as almost vindictiveness. You might have said that
though
the Brothers smiled in their beards, it was a smile of not-so-gentle
triumph

[51. The Pondo War J

over Pondo. They might be dumb; but what they had suffered
greatly sharp-
ened their grasp of what the Professor's remarks portended. They
leaned
forward in the pews, their womenfolk rustled with an expectancy
almost in-
decorous, one of the Nectarine progeny even squealed with
excitement. It
was as if the speaker, ghostly in the cone of light cast by the lantern,
stood
before them as the prophet of their cause, the voice of their
suffering, the
token of their final vindication.

This, of course, Professor Vosebius did not know. He continued
placidly
to describe how, though hidden through the aeons, the Pondo River
con-
tinued to eat at its banks, to carry away the soft, overlying gravel,
until, in
historical times, it had caused a perceptible sinking of the floor of
the valley.
This sinking, he said, was facilitated by the fact that much of the
underground
water was now being used by the cities along the course of the
ancient stream.
Probably his listeners knew that, throughout the State, capital
industries and

air-conditioned buildings used daily eight billion gallons of artesian water,
all from the Pondo River. Consequently-though
other factors operated as
well-the rate of subsidence of the overlying soil had in recent years
increased

(Dr. Vosebius turned his paper to catch the light (rom his lantern)
from point
four-one-two inches per annum to four point five-six-five inches in
the past
year alone!

In other words, and the Professor thought this a conservative
estimate, the
land on the other side of Pondo, the "weak" side, was sinking ten
times as
rapidly as it did, say, in 1888! What this might mean in time to
Pondo Village,
Dr. Vosebius could not predict. Already residents had written to the
State
Geologist inquiring what was the matter with their wells, while oil
company
officials were, he knew, apprehensive about the safety of the large
pipe-line
that crossed the valley. So that ...

Even as the Professor spoke to the chosen, things were beginning
to happen
in Pondo. Had you remarked afterwards to any of the Brothers that
this was
an extraordinary coincidence, they would have raised their heavy
brows and
smiled with slow secretiveness. And you would have recalled that
the Brother-
hood did not believe, among other things, in coincidence.

No one in Pondo has ever given an intelligible report of what
happened
on that night. But here is about the way it was: When the
westbound nine-

o' clock manifest thundered through town, the station agent found himself suddenly out of his swivel chair and sitting on the floor, hard. At the same time the door of his office swung open silently to the night. Nor thereafter could he make it stay shut. It was recalled afterward that the freight seemed to give everything in town an almighty shaking. But this was long after the event-the agent had been afraid to speak of what had happened for fear that folks would think he had fallen asleep at his key.

Then there was the matter of the pool balls-no one gave that the slightest credence at the time: When things grew quieter they were able to fit it into

[52. The California Quarterly J

the picture of the night's happenings. Two games were in progress at the time: the Town Marshal was playing McBee, local champion and owner of the Pondo Pool Hall, while at the other table the barber, reputed head of the Klan, was paired with an individual whose name, in the excitement that followed, has been lost to history. Both games were broken up simultaneously by the fact that the pool balls all rolled to the far end of the tables and refused to stay anywhere else. The Marshal accused the onlookers of a practical joke and was accused in turn of having something stronger on his breath than Life Savers. Nobody paid any attention to the barber's corroboration: his word was no good anyhow.

What promised to turn into a sweet scrap was violently interrupted when the plate-glass front of the Chrysler showroom opposite bulged outward and exploded, showering passersby with fragments, while the cement sidewalk in front sank thundering into the basement. The Marshal dropped his cue, hoisted up his pistol-belt, and ran for the door. All Pondo swarmed into Main Street while the bell in the Methodist steeple tolled, horrifyingly, once.

"We been bombed!" the Marshal bellowed. "Call the Fire Department, somebody!"

"It's them Brothers;" the barber screamed. "It's one o' their dirty Communist plots!"

"Ketch the so-and-so's before they git away!" the crowd babbled. The fire-siren howled over Pondo Valley, the fire-truck rattled up with a terrific crunching of broken glass ... but there was no fire; nor, happily for them, were any Nectarines present. The Marshal, in a frenzy of importance, set a block on the Nectarine road with two armed deputies to guard it, while behind his back the crowd stormed into the Pondo Emporium and in noisy ecstasy appropriated every shooting-iron and every last box of ammunition. And as they screamed out upon the hunt there was a blinding flash from the far end of town; the power line toppled, and every light in Pondo went out.

It was at this moment that a car from the Nectarine community drove up

to the barricade and was stopped by the Marshal's imperious paw.

"Kumawn!"

he yelled. "Outta thar, all o' youse!" He wrenched the car door open; the

occupants filed out meekly; the light of the Marshal's torch revealed, as ex-

pected, the broad-brimmed black hats, the curly beards, of startled Brothers.

It shone, too, on the starched shirt-front of their distinguished guest.

"An' who might you be?" the Marshal barked.

"I'm Dr. Vosebius;" the Professor explained mildly. "I .. '."

"He's a Rooshian!" screamed the barber. "A Soviet spy, 'at's what he is!

Hold 'im, ev'body!"

Dr. Vosebius was seized roughly by both arms, the muzzle of a Smith &

Wesson was snuggled lovingly beneath his vest. The armed mob packed the

street, pressing the Nectarines to the wall; a dozen hands reached into the

car where in the rear seat sat the Professor's projector, still warm.

"Careful!" Dr. Vosebius spoke crisply. "Don't touch that, please!"

[53. The Pondo War]

"It's another bomb!" howled the barber. "Th' devils're gonna blow us to

bits!"

It was fortunate for Dr. Vosebius and his hosts that the crowd scattered so

rapidly and so far. He was left alone with the Marshal in an island of tran-

quillity in which the persuasive voice of science might be heard.

"Gwan now;" the Marshal commanded. "Turn that thing off yuh got in

th' car or it'll be th' worse fer yo use'."

"Turn what off? What in the world are you talking about, sir?"

"Yuh know darn well. Yuh set one off awready. Now yuh wanna
finish
us. Yuh de-activate that there bomb before I knock yore teeth in!"

"Bomb?" The Professor swallowed an hysterical giggle.

"De-activate?"

Why, my dear sir, that's my projector-to
show lantern-slides, you know.
I've been giving a talk out at the Nectarine homecoming. You should
have
been there!'

"Oh, yeah?"

"Certainly. Then you might have been, well, forewarned of-of
what might
happen here!'

"So yuh knew it was gonna happen all along?" The Marshal's tone
grew
even more threatening. "Yuh knew Pondo was gonna be tore to bits
this way?
Good gosh! I gotta notion to lock yuh up right now before yuh do
any more
harm!"

"Don't tell me you've had a landslip already!" Dr. Vosebius
exclaimed.

"Who would have thought? This very night you have a landslip!"

The word was taken up and carried through the crowd;
encouraged by
the Marshal's presence, they pressed around their captives, their
anger now
obliterated by curiosity. Only the barber's limited intelligence
protected him
against the contagion. "Don't listen to him!" he cried. "'At?s all just
propy-
ganda!"

But they did listen while Dr. Vosebius attempted a thqmbnail
summary of
his evening's lecture.

"Landslip;' he says. "Darn if I ever heard o' such a thing'.
 "Kinda earthquake, 'at's what he means'.
 "I'll be darned. A earthquake?"
 "Might not be another one fer a hundred years'.
 "Might be another tomorrer'.
 "At's a nice thing to think about!"
 Public opinion was summed up by the Marshal, though in terms
 that must
 have mystified the Professor. "Now;' the Marshal roared, "will youse
 guys
 b'lieve what I was tellin' yuh about them pool balls?"

As Pondo discovered the next day, not all the havoc was confined
 to Main
 Street: where had stood the new, the splendid, the triumphantly
 centralized
 Pondo School, was now nothing but twisted steel and heaps of
 scrofulous
 brick. All the village turned out to mourn.

[54. The California Quarterly J

"Yuh see;' said the Marshal, big with the learning he had imbibed
 from
 Professor Vosebius, "she sat right a-straddle o' thts here escrapmint
 they talk
 about. So when it hit her .. '.'
 ·"I still say;' chattered the barber, "on'y a bomb could do that. Why,
 "Aw, gwan home 'n' soak yore head!" the Marshal snarled at him.
 Evidently the Nectarine community had heard of the disaster, for
 presently
 the deacon of the Brotherhood arrived. If he remembered the
 cockroaches of
 the Pondo hoosegow, now likewise levelled, he gave no sign.
 Approaching
 the Marshal he blandly offered a plug of Apple tobacco. "Pretty bad,
 what?"
 ·he smiled through his beard.

The Marshal gloomily cut off a chew, replaced his knife in the pocket of his dungarees. "Darn bad. That school cost us sixty-five grand if she cost a penny'."

"I know. I know. Cost us too, Marshal. We pay taxes on her too'." The Marshal stared at the deacon, pushed his hat to the back of his head.

"Darned if yuh ain't right there;" he agreed with some wonder.

"Wouldn't be surprised if youse paid more'n we did. Now what are all these kids gonna do fer an eddication?"

The deacon spit diplomatically, wiped his beard with a brown hand. "Well, tell you what, Marshal. Us Brothers talked it over before I come. We want you should send the kids over to our school. The teachers with. Not so much room, maybe, but the big ones can use the church. Our women can fix 'em their noon meals'."

"Now whatta yuh know about that?" The Marshal turned in amazement to his curious fellow-citizens. And Pondo hung its collective and much-battered head with shame.

[55. The Pondo War J

The Conquistadores

CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY / VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3 / 1954
JOURNAL PAGE 56 / SCAN PAGE 58

The Conquistadores (excerpts from Canto General)

Pablo Neruda

Translated by W ALDEEN

I

They Come

By Way of

the Islands

The butchers desolated the islands.
Guanahani'. came first
in this history of martyrs.
The sons of clay watched her smile
shattered, her fragile deer form
scourged, and even when death came
they understood nothing.
They were bound and wounded,
seared and burned,
they were gnawed and buried.
And when time in its waltz turning
danced among palm trees
its green ballroom was empty.

Only bones were left
rigidly placed in form
of a cross, to the greater
glory of God and men.
From the imperial sands
and Sotavento's foliage
to the clusters of coralline
slashed Narvaez' blade.
Here the cross, here the rosary,

here the Virgin of the Garrote.
Jewel of Columbus, phosphoric Cuba,
received a banner and knees
upon her wet sands.

[56. The California Quarterly J

Now Came Cuba

Then came blood and ashes.

Afterwards the palm trees stood alone.

Cuba, my love, they tied you to the rack,
they gashed your face,
they parted your pale gold limbs,
they tore your hymeri of pomegranate,
they ran you through with knives,
they sundered and burned you.

Down the valleys of sweetness
went the annihilators,
and across the flat cliffs the helmet
crest of your sons was lost in mist,
but they were overtaken, one
by one until they died, severed
in the storm, without their warm
flowering earth, fluent
beneath its plants.

Cuba, my love, what fevers
tremored you from foam to foam,
until you became purity,
solitude, silence, density,
and the small bones of your sons
became dispute for crabs.

• III

They Reach

the Sea of

Mexico

The assassin wind reaches Veracruz.
In Veracruz the horses are disembarked.
The ships are crammed with talons
and red beards from Castile.
They are Arias, Reyes, Rojas, Maldonados,

[57. The Conquistadores]

sons of Castilian neglect,
familiar of winter's hunger
and the lice of taverns.
What do they see, elbows on rail?
How much of what is to come, of the lost
past, the errant feudal wind
over the flailed fatherland?

They did not leave their Southern ports
to lay their people's hands
on plunder and death!
they see green lands, liberties,
broken chains, constructions,
and from aboard, waves that dwindle
upon shores of compact mystery.

Would they go to death or new life
beyond the palm trees, in that hot air
which like some strange oven turns its full
mouth upon them from the torrid lands?
They were the people, hirsute heads from Montiel,
hard gnarled hands from Ocafia and Piedrahita,
blacksmiths' arms, eyes of children,
watching the terrible sun and the palms.

Ancient hunger of Europe, hunger like the tail
of a deadly planet, inhabited the ship,
hunger was there, exposed, a chill roving
axe, stepmother to peoples, hunger tossing dice

throughout the voyage, billowing the sails:
 "Further, else I devour you, further
 else you return
 to mother, brother, Magistrate and Priest,
 to the Inquisitors, Hell, the Plague.
 Further, further on, far from lice,
 from feudal whip, the dungeon,
 the galleys heaped with excrement'."

And the eyes of Nufiez and Bernales
 fastened onto the boundless light
 repose, and life, another life,
 innumerable castigated family
 of the world's poor.

[58. The California Quarterly J

Guatemala

Guatemala the lovely, each stone slab
 of your mansion contains a drop
 of ancient blood devoured
 by the jaws of tigers.
 Alvarado crushed your lineage,
 broke the astral steles,
 wallowed in your martyrdom.

And the bishop entered Yucatan
 behind the pale tigers.
 He collected the deepest wisdom
 yet heard in the air
 of the world's primal day,
 when the first Maya wrote
 observing the tremble of rivers,
 the science of pollen, the rage
 of The Bundle-Carrier gods,
 the migrations across
 primeval universes,
 law of the beehive,
 secret of green fowl,

language of stars,
secrets of day and night
gathered on the shores
of earth's unfoldment!

VIII

A Bishop

The bishop raised his arm,
burned books in the plaza
in name of his small God
making smoke out of old pages
worn by the darkness of time.

And smoke does no~ return from the sky.

[59. The Conquistadores]

Homage to Balboa

Discoverer, the wide sea, my spume,
latitude of moon, water's empire,
centuries later they speak to you
through my mouth. You reached
your full measure before death.
You elevated fatigue to the skies,
and sweat conducted you through
the stern night of trees to the edge
of the total sea, the great ocean.
Your gaze bound in marriage
the extension of light and the small
heart of man, a cup never before upraised
was filled, the seed of lightning rays
arrived with you, and a torrential thunder
rolled over the earth.
Balboa, Captain, how diminutive
your hand on your visor, mysterious
doll of discoverer's salt,
bridegroom to oceanic loveliness,
son of the world's new womb.

Through your eyes entered
like cavalcade of orange blossoms
the dark scent of stolen marine majesty,
there sank into your blood an arrogant dawn
that lodged in your soul, man possessed!
When you returned to the secretive lands,
somniaulist from the sea, green captain,
you were a man dead, whom the earth awaited
to receive your bones.

Fatal bridegroom, treason was fulfilled.

Not in vain for history did crime enter malignantly,
the falcon devour its nest, and serpents congregate
to attack each other with fangs of gold.
You entered the frenzied twilight
and your straying steps still drenched
by ocean depths, robed in radiance
and wedded to the vastest foam,
brought you to the shores of another
sea: that of death.

[60. The California Quarterly]

A Soldier Sleeps

Lost in dense terrain
the soldier arrived. He was total
weariness and fell among lianas and leaves,
at foot of the great Plumed God:
who stood
alone in his world so newly
arisen from the jungle.

He looked at the strange
soldier born of the ocean.
He looked at his eyes, his bloodied beard,
his sword, the black brilliance
of armor, the fatigue fallen
like mist over this head
of a child butcher.

How many zones of darkness
so the Feathered God might emerge
and unfurl his magnitude above
the forests, in rose-colored rock,
how much disorder of frantic waters
and wilderness night, the overflowing
spring of unborn light, the rabid ferment
of lives, destruction, the flour
of fertility, and then the coming
of order, order of plant and sect,
elevation of carved stones,
smoke from ritual lamps,
firm ground for man,
establishment of tribes,
tribunal of terrestrial gods.

He quivered every scale of stone,
felt the descent of dread
as if it were insect invasion,
amassed all his powers
and made rain fall on roots,
conversed with the earth's currents,
sombre in his robe

[6r. The Conquistadores J

of immobile cosmic rock,
and he could move neither claw nor teeth,
nor rivers, nor earthquakes,
nor meteors sibilant
in the vault of his kingdom,

and there he remained, transfixed stone, silence,
while Beltran de Cordoba slept.

XII

Ximenez de Quesada (1536)

They advance, they advance, now they arrive,
my heart, see the ships,
ships along the Magdalena,
ships of Gonzalo Jimenez,
they arrive, now the ships arrive,
river hold them back, close
your devouring banks,
submerge them in your heartbeat,
snatch away their greed,
turn your fiery snout upon them,
your cruel vertebrae,
your eye-consuming eels,
cross their path with the massive
alligator, with his clay-colored teeth
and primeval armor,
fling him as a bridge
across your sandy waters,
hurl the fire of jaguars
from your trees, let fly
your blood-sucking mosquitoes
Mother river, spawned in your seed beds,
blind them with black dung,
engulf them in your hemisphere,
imprison them among roots
near your sombre couch,
and corrode their blood
devouring their lungs and lips
with your crabs.

[62. The California Quarterly J

Now they have entered the virgin forest:
now they pillage, bite and kill.
O Colombia! Protect the veil
of your secret red jungle.

Now they raise the knife

[63. The Conquistadores J

above the oratory of Iraka,

now they seize the zipa,
now they bind him. "Yield
the jewels of the ancient god;
jewels that blossomed
and gleamed with the dew
of the Colombian morning.

Now they torture the Prince.
They have slashed his throat, his head
stares at me with eyes no one
can close, eyes beloved by my
green and naked fatherland.
Now they fire the solemn residence,
now follow horses,
torments, swords,
now a few coals are left
and among ashes
the unclosed eyes of the Prince.